Q&A

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Personal reflections and integration

Do you believe AI will act as an equaliser that lowers the barriers to entry for women looking to launch their own boutique advisory firms, or will it further consolidate power among the global hyperscale institutions that own the technology?

Whilst not a complete equaliser, I believe AI has the potential to lower some barriers for women building boutique advisory firms. Capabilities that once required significant investment, including research, data, analysis and support tools, are becoming more accessible. That helps narrow the gap between smaller firms and larger institutions.

Technology will change how advisory firms operate, but it will not replace the qualities clients value most. Clients are not paying for information, which is increasingly abundant. They value judgment, experience and the ability to apply both to navigate complexity, challenge assumptions, manage stakeholders and execute well when the stakes are high.

AI should therefore be leveraged to reduce time spent on routine work, such as first model drafts, information gathering and presentation formatting, so more time can be spent on critical thinking, strategic problem solving and relationship building. The firms that will succeed will be those that combine technology with human insight, trust, credibility and sound judgment.

The phrase 'work-life balance' can feel mythical in transactional finance. How do you personally define and manage the integration of a demanding career with your personal life?

I don't believe in the concept of work-life balance. Realistically, one will always demand more attention than the other at different points in time. What matters to me is being intentional with my time and fully present wherever I choose to be. When I commit to an important meeting, family time or catching up with friends, I try to give it my full attention. That means being honest about how far I can stretch myself and accepting that every commitment comes with a trade-off.

That sometimes means saying no. Earlier in my career, I found that difficult because I felt obliged to be everywhere and involved in everything. Over time, I have learnt that saying no to one thing is often what allows me to show up properly for something else. Being honest with myself, and with others, has freed me from much of the guilt that can accompany those choices.

The same principle applies at work. In a live transaction or with a client, that is where my attention belongs. Deal making is demanding because it is fast paced, complex and constantly evolving. It requires focus, resilience and comfort with uncertainty. For me, integration is not about dividing life into equal parts. It is about being fully present in the part of life that needs me most at that moment.

When the deal closes and the adrenaline drops, how do you intentionally disconnect, recharge, and protect your mental well-being?

Anything that does not require a digital device helps my mind slow down. We have access to endless information, but constant consumption has a cost. At some point, the brain needs space to process, not only absorb.

For me, recharging starts with simplicity. Silence, a good book, time outdoors and quality time with family and friends help me regain perspective and quiet the mental noise that builds during a busy transaction cycle. A walk in nature, a good book enjoyed out in the sunshine or an unhurried conversation reminds me there is a world beyond emails, meetings and deadlines.

Recovery is not a luxury in transactional finance. The profession relies on judgment, clear thinking and decision-making. Time away from the desk helps me reset, and some of my best ideas have come when I have stepped back rather than pushed harder. I usually return with more energy, more focus and greater clarity.

How has your definition of 'success' changed from when you were an ambitious graduate to who you are today?

My definition of success has changed from achievement to impact. Earlier in my career, success was often measured by titles, transactions completed and the recognition that came with professional achievement. Those milestones still matter, but they are no longer the main measure of a successful career.

Today, success means doing work that has meaning and contributes to something larger than myself. It is helping a client achieve an important objective, supporting a colleague through a difficult challenge, or seeing someone I have mentored grow into a confident professional in their own right.

Watching someone you have coached or mentored build confidence, take on bigger challenges and achieve goals of their own has become one of the most satisfying parts of a long career.

I have also learnt that success should not come at the expense of the things that matter most. Being present for family, maintaining meaningful friendships and protecting your sense of self are achievements too. Ultimately, I hope people remember me as someone who contributed meaningfully, supported others generously and built relationships that lasted beyond the deal.