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Q Where did your corporate finance journey begin, and what led you to pursue a career in the space that you are in?

A Post my Honours in Accounting, I was very fortunate to gain immense experience and knowledge in various industries, namely motor, insurance, telecommunications, and finally in Banking. As a number cruncher, I spent most of my years in Finance until I took the plunge in 2019 to join Absa Investment Banking Division as a Business Analyst. I had found my niche, enjoyed the exposure to deal structures in Africa, competitor analysis, business modelling, enhancing operational efficiency and, ultimately, collaborating with various stakeholders across the African continent. During COVID, to manage an increase in distressed clients, I was further exposed to capital management, risk-weighted assets, and building a risk model to assess financial metrics. I challenged myself to step out of my comfort zone, build my inner strength, and be more adaptable to change. By trying something new, I stirred up creative juices to take the risk to draw upon a new skill. This role, together with my collective experience set me up to advance my career in a managerial position as the COO of Investment Banking.

Q Did you have a mentor at any point in your career? If so, who were they and what did you learn from them?

A I have had various mentors at different points in my career, receiving diverse opinions, insights, and perspectives to develop my worldview. They have helped shape my career by thinking differently, being one step ahead, taking accountability, and providing a confidential sounding board for ideas and challenges. The most influential mentor that shifted me out of my comfort zone

was the late Sean Lamprecht. He taught me that procrastination is the thief of time, and ‘nothing ventured, nothing gained’. Whether you succeed or fail, there are always key lessons learnt. All successful people have taken risks, failed, picked themselves up, and risked again until they figured it out. He showed me how to enhance networking opportunities, take advantage of a walk to the coffee shop with the “boys”, and how to leave a lasting impact. He told me to take a seat at the head of the table, even if you don’t know the topic, as it automatically builds more confidence to participate in the discussion. Other than providing professional development, he also supported me in my journey when I was diagnosed with colon cancer, and helped me to navigate the biggest challenge I’ve endured in my life. I am now in remission but, with immense sadness, I lost a mentor, inspiring leader, and friend in a cycling accident. Rest well, Sean.

Q What are some of the most memorable projects you have worked on?

A In an operational role, to drive business optimisation and efficiency, you are continuously challenged to enhance systems and processes. Whether it is driven internally or from a regulatory perspective, change is always constant. However, the most memorable project was the automation of the product profitability model. Many hours were spent to build an optimal model that was supplementary to business ask; however, different stakeholders had different perspectives of an optimal model. This was the most challenging part, to satisfy all expectations by exploring various opportunities. The benefit was increased collaboration across the teams, and appreciation for the expertise and the value-added thinking that contributed to the success.

This successful implementation of the model led to my change in career, redefining my goals, and considering other opportunities with enthusiasm.

Q What piece of advice would you give a young woman joining your team?

A No one is coming (a Mel Robbins quote). A shift in mindset can make all the difference between success and failure. It’s all up to YOU! Try to align your passion with your job, and steer your career in that direction. Learning is a career-long process – be honest about what you don’t know, and diligent about filling the gaps. Champion your achievements, be resilient and proactively reach out to mentors! Be the best version of yourself!

FUN FACTS

Current book on your nightstand: I’m a non-fiction fan. I like learning about real-life events, so the book I’m currently reading is *Screw it, let’s do it* by Richard Branson. The take aways are 1. believe you can do it; 2. opportunities are always there and it is ok to try again; and 3. keep persevering and enjoy what you do!

Preferred music genre: Nothing specific, very mood dependent, but I do lean towards Indian music. Music makes me happy, cheerful and relaxed. Thankfully, I understand Hindi!

Preferred holiday destination: A recently took a ‘girls trip’ to the Maldives, a tropical paradise with white sand and turquoise ocean to relax, reflect, re-energise and have fun – soul-feeding and breath-taking! Any time again. Loved it, laughed so much, and realised that I can chill!

Three words that your colleagues would use to describe you: Passion, empathy and integrity. 🇳🇬