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Q *Where did your corporate finance journey begin, and how did you end up where you are today?*

A After completing my articles at Ernst & Young I took a position specialising in international tax and transfer pricing for three years. This structuring knowledge set the foundation for me to start a career in banking, where I initially joined to assist with the management of structured finance deals. I continued to pursue other opportunities in investment banking, and soon took a position in debt advisory services, where I had the opportunity to structure debt in several industries, with a focus on mining. With the challenging economic conditions in South Africa, it became evident that my debt structuring skills were a good fit for the distressed debt and turnaround environment. Specialising in distressed restructures became my passion over the past eight years, providing me with a tremendous sense of purpose knowing that the restructures directly contribute to the fight against unemployment and positively contribute toward the economic stability of South Africa.

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 My mentors came in various shapes, sizes, and ages throughout my career. The most impactful mentors were those who believed in my abilities, kept me focussed on my personal and professional goals, and never gave up on me throughout the challenges of raising two beautiful children while building a career. There is nothing like having a mentor who will back your decisions and stretch

you beyond your comfort zone while being willing to support you during challenging times and failures. I regard every team member that I work with as a mentor. The younger generation keeps us “experienced” bankers tech savvy, ensuring that we reassess the ways things have always been done; while my peers keep my feet firmly grounded while providing day-to-day support through the highs and lows. Nothing warms the heart quite like celebrating your successes with your tribe at the end of the day.

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

A The distressed restructures that I have worked on include several JSE-listed heavyweights and some public sector operations. These assignments require the team to find solutions to support clients through challenging times, protect the bank’s capital, and bring about strategic dialogue between all stakeholders involved in these complicated transactions. The solutions typically include new equity raisings, debt-to-equity conversions, and debt restructuring (which ranges from structured commodity finance and leverage finance to project finance). We do whatever it takes and what is best for the client, while making sure that we protect the bank’s capital.

Q *How did the COVID-19 pandemic affect your work or career?*

A Specialising in distress, we found ourselves in the eye of the storm with the number of deals, clients, stakeholders, and touchpoints multiplying overnight. I quickly learned that collaboration and

teamwork were paramount in terms of dealing with the massive increase in workload. With that said, the need to balance family and work obligations has been centre stage over the past two years. Initially, the virtual work environment appeared to be the great equaliser where working moms could show up for meetings at any time day and night. I was willing to be always available for work while believing that my family continued to get the best of me being at home. Eventually, the realisation dawned that attending virtual meetings while doing homework with the kids or talking to my children while typing away at a report had the potential to rob both my work and my family of the best of me. I now realise the value of being fully present in all areas of my life – personal and professional – and bringing my whole, authentic self to every occasion. The new virtual work habits created so many opportunities to move faster and get the job done, but I continue to value human contact and personal care, which remains invaluable to us all as humans. I must add that in person negotiations are so much more effective... and fun!

Q *What advice would you give to young women who are looking to enter the corporate finance market?*

A The investment banking world is well suited to those who are not afraid to extend themselves to try something new. Success is determined by thinking differently, doing differently, and always showing up as your most authentic self. Academic preparation is important and will open doors, but from there it will be your confidence, creativity, and energetic attitude that will assist you to turn a job in banking into a passion for your career. 🙌