# Q&A

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**What initially drew you to the fast-paced world of corporate finance, and how did you secure your first major breakthrough in the industry?**

My career path differs from that of many traditional bankers. I studied engineering and later transitioned into the environmental sector, where I enjoyed a highly rewarding career for nearly two decades. By 2017, I felt I had reached a point where I was no longer learning and growing at the rate I wanted. I realised that career longevity is often less about staying within a single discipline and more about remaining curious and adaptable.

Through a chance reconnection with a former colleague at Standard Bank, what began as a coffee conversation unexpectedly evolved into a new career opportunity. It was a path I had never envisaged, given my background. Standard Bank took a chance on me, and I equally took a chance on the bank.

What drew me in was the opportunity to work at the intersection of finance, strategy and real-world impact. I quickly discovered that corporate finance is ultimately about solving complex problems, creating opportunities, and helping clients navigate important decisions. The experience has been immensely rewarding, allowing me to work alongside talented professionals who are committed not only to commercial outcomes, but also to broader socio-economic impact across Africa.

**Looking back at your career, what do you consider your 'defining deal' - the one that tested you the most or reshaped how you view your capabilities?**

Shortly before the COVID-19 pandemic, I was managing a significant workload, including a high-profile transaction that attracted substantial public attention. The experience tested my resilience, judgement and ability to balance competing priorities under considerable scrutiny.

There were differing stakeholder perspectives, challenging timelines, and a need to ensure the integrity of the assessment process at every stage. Navigating these dynamics required both technical expertise and relationship management. I learned that credibility is built not only through technical competence, but also through consistency, transparency, and the ability to engage constructively when views differ.

The experience reinforced the value of my earlier consulting career, and demonstrated that many leadership challenges transcend industry boundaries. It also gave me confidence in my ability to operate outside my comfort zone and showed me the importance of remaining anchored in principles, particularly when decisions are complex and highly visible.

**South Africa's macroeconomic climate has thrown plenty of curveballs over the last few years. How has your approach to structuring deals evolved to mitigate these local risks?**

I have learned that understanding a client's challenges is as important as recognising their potential. Rather than applying rigid requirements, I seek to work with clients within the context of their existing systems, capabilities and data.

South African businesses operate in an environment characterised by uncertainty, whether that relates to regulation, infrastructure constraints, energy challenges or broader economic pressures. In this context, advisors need to be practical and solution-oriented.

This collaborative approach supports clients on their development journey while fostering trusted advisory relationships. Although it often requires greater effort upfront, it delivers more sustainable outcomes for clients and the bank alike. Some of the most successful engagements I've been involved in have come from investing the time to understand where a client is today, rather than focusing solely on where we would like them to be.

**AI has significantly accelerated the pace of due diligence, compressing timelines that used to take months into weeks. How does this hyper-speed environment change your risk management strategy and pressure during a transaction?**

In my experience, AI has enhanced productivity and responsiveness, enabling better outcomes within shorter timeframes. It allows professionals to process information faster, identify patterns more efficiently, and focus attention on the issues that matter most.

However, technology cannot replace human judgement, intuition and relationship-building capabilities developed through years of experience. Transactions ultimately involve people, and people rarely make decisions based solely on data.

Rather than increasing pressure, AI allows professionals to spend less time on routine tasks and more time interpreting information, exercising judgement and developing creative solutions. The greatest value of AI is not simply speed; it is the opportunity it creates for advisors to spend more time engaging deeply with clients, understanding context, and delivering insights that technology alone cannot provide.

**If you could go back to the very first week of your career, what is the single piece of technical or professional advice you wish someone had given you?**

Trust your sense of purpose. Early in my career, I expected engineering to provide constant intellectual challenge. Instead, I discovered that technology solved many of the problems I had anticipated solving myself. What ultimately mattered was impact. Each career transition felt risky, particularly after investing years developing expertise in a specific field. Yet every time I followed a sense of purpose, it opened opportunities for growth, learning and meaningful contribution.

Looking back, I would encourage my younger self to embrace change more confidently, and to worry less about having the perfect plan. Some of the most rewarding opportunities emerge unexpectedly and require a willingness to learn, adapt, and trust your capabilities. The transferable skills we gain throughout our careers often become our greatest advantage in ways we cannot foresee at the time.