Q&A

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Career journey and navigating the deal room

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 began in rooms with high-net-worth individuals, advising on lending and investment products. But the conversations were rarely about products – they ranged from building real wealth to planning for the unthinkable: what happens to a family's legacy if that person is no longer around. There is a particular kind of trust that comes with holding someone's personal finances in your hands: you sit with the hardest questions life throws at people, and help map the outcomes; that is not a transaction, that is a responsibility.

That grounding put me in front of senior executives – CEOs, CFOs, directors – people who held the power to change the course of my career, very early on. One of those relationships did exactly that. A CEO I worked closely with recognised in me the same instincts that make a good wealth banker: reading character, building trust, operating with discretion, and executing decisively. He saw those instincts belonged on a trading floor and offered me a position, with the chance to learn to deal FX.

I said yes without fully knowing what I was saying yes to. That first step into the dealing room changed everything. The environment, the speed, the pressure, the way markets force split-second decisions on imperfect information – I was instantly hooked. Being surrounded by seasoned traders helped me to have the courage of my conviction, and this was the spark that ignited my love for global markets and trading – one which has never left me. From there, my path bent naturally toward trade finance, where I could fuse that market instinct with the relationship and risk skills I'd built early on.

Looking back, my breakthrough was not a deal or a promotion. It was a network of people who had quietly observed how I worked and were willing to open a door because of it. That changed the course of my career, and taught me something I still carry in this industry: a reputation for integrity, the relationships you build along the way, and people who will vouch for you will move you forward more than a line on your CV.

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?

My defining deal was not a single transaction – it stretched over years, not months, and tested every time constraint we had while we worked to bring meaningful revenue into the organisation. Every time I thought we'd landed something – scope, terms, structure – the client moved it again. After many rounds, the doubt wasn't about the technical stuff. I knew the mechanics. It was quieter and more annoying than that: am I steering this, or just absorbing whatever they throw and calling it patience?

What kept me steady was experience, and the people around me. A deal like that doesn't run on one person's resolve – it runs on a deal team and an internal network that holds each other accountable quietly, day after day. Nobody wanted to be the one who let the others down, so everyone kept showing up: prepared, patient, pulling in the same direction.

The deal team had a thorough understanding of the client at a granular level: not just the business, but the different people inside it, and what kept each of them up at night. Every interaction was about making it effortless to deal with us, so that the people with whom we'd earned trust became the ones fighting for us internally. By the time we presented our solution, the conversation had already shifted – our ask for the mandate was expected, and we could stand on what we had earned.

That deal reaffirmed my position as a trusted adviser, not just an execution partner. It taught me something I now carry into every long, complicated deal: it's the people around you, and the standards to which you hold each other that get you there. As Nelson Mandela said, "it always seems impossible, until it's done."

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?

If I could go back to my first week, I would hand myself one test and tell myself to use it on everything: could I explain the ask to my kids? If I can't break it down to its plain, honest logic, I don't understand it well enough yet – and neither would anyone I'm advising.

Getting there takes a few deliberate habits. Invest time in your internal networks early – the people around you are the fastest route to understanding how the deal actually works: not just the technical mechanics, but who holds the real influence, and where the friction sits. Pause and understand every part of the transaction before you touch a model or send an email – not just your slice of it, but how it fits together end-to-end.

Ask the questions upfront, not three steps in, when the gap has already become a problem. And speak up – engage with the people around you, even when you think you should already know the answer. Say what you see, even if you're the most junior person in the room. Push for clarity, rather than nodding along. If you can't explain it simply, you actually have not understood it.

That is also where composure comes from. When the pressure is on and the room goes quiet waiting for an answer, calm does not come from performing confidence – it comes from knowing you understand the transaction inside out and have done everything within your control to get it right. Evidence beats reassurance every time.