Q&A

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Mentorship, sponsorship and 'lifting as you rise'

There is a difference between a mentor (who gives advice) and a sponsor (who advocates for you behind closed doors). Have you had a sponsor, and how did that dynamic work?

One of the most valuable lessons I have learnt is that mentors and sponsors play very different roles in a career. Mentors challenge your assumptions, provide perspective and help you become a better leader. Sponsors do something much harder: they use their credibility to create opportunities for you when you are not in the room.

Throughout my career, I have been fortunate to work with leaders who recognised my potential before I fully recognised it myself. They trusted me with increasingly complex mandates, encouraged me to take on stretch assignments and advocated for me when leadership opportunities became available. They expected exceptional performance and held me accountable, and that combination accelerated my career far more than advice alone.

As a leader today, I try to pay that forward. Sponsorship means creating visibility for talented women and helping them step into meaningful opportunities, even when they may not yet feel ready.

As a successful leader now, what standard do you set for yourself when it comes to mentoring the next generation of female analysts and associates?

I believe leadership should be measured not only by the results you deliver, but by the leaders you develop. My responsibility is to create opportunities that build confidence through experience rather than simply offering advice.

I encourage young professionals to take ownership early, participate in client conversations, present their thinking and become comfortable making decisions when the answers are not always obvious. Equally important is creating an environment where people feel safe to ask questions, challenge ideas and learn from mistakes.

Curiosity, resilience and adaptability are as important as technical capability. Above all, I want the people in my team to believe they can achieve more than they thought possible.

What is the most rewarding piece of advice you've ever given to a younger colleague that you watched them successfully put into practice?

The advice I give most often is simple: Don't wait until you feel ready.

Many talented people, particularly women, believe they need to master every requirement before putting themselves forward. Meanwhile, opportunities often go to people who simply have the confidence to raise their hand.

I encourage colleagues to focus on learning agility rather than perfection. Every meaningful role I've taken involved learning something new. Growth rarely happens inside your comfort zone.

Watching young leaders embrace stretch opportunities, build confidence through experience, and eventually become mentors themselves is incredibly rewarding. Their success reinforces my belief that confidence follows action, not the other way around.

Peer-to-peer support is vital. How do you build a strong network of allies among other women working in law, audit and banking to support your transaction pipelines?

Successful transactions are built on trust long before mandates are won. Throughout my career, I have invested in authentic relationships across banking, legal, audit, advisory and regulatory communities. Those relationships are built over time through collaboration, integrity and mutual respect.

Women across these professions often understand the challenges of building credibility in demanding environments. Supporting one another creates stronger professional networks and better outcomes.

I believe in sharing knowledge, introducing talented people to one another and celebrating others' achievements. Ultimately, when women support one another's success, the entire industry benefits.

How can corporate finance institutions move beyond 'diversity checkboxes' to create environments where young women actually want to stay long-term?

Representation is only the starting point. Inclusion is what determines whether talented women stay and build long-term careers.

Creating sustainable environments requires deliberate action. That means equitable access to meaningful work, transparent promotion processes, visible sponsorship, flexible career pathways, and leaders who genuinely invest in developing people.

Culture matters just as much as policy. Young professionals want workplaces where they feel heard, challenged and trusted. They want leaders who provide honest feedback, encourage different perspectives, and reward performance fairly.

Importantly, organisations should measure leaders not only on financial outcomes, but also on how effectively they develop diverse talent. Leadership should include building future leadership.

The financial services industry has made significant progress, but there is still work to do. The organisations that will attract and retain the best talent are those where inclusion is embedded in everyday leadership decisions, rather than treated as a standalone initiative.