



Mardé van Wyk

Private Markets Principal

Q&A

Q Where did your journey begin and how did you end up where you are today?

A My journey was that of an unexpected encounter with private market investments that resulted in the kindling of a passion for everything it entails – an epic love story of sorts. This all happened during a secondment stint at Africa’s largest asset manager that led to a career pivot from audit to investments and an opportunity to earn my stripes by being involved in some epic transactions, with exposure few are afforded and one I will be eternally grateful for. There was no turning back after that! As they say, the journey continues...

Q What, if any, hurdles did you have to face in an industry that has traditionally been male dominated?

A Being the only women in the room is an experience in itself. Rather than seeing this as a hurdle however, I’ve embraced this as an opportunity to fight stereotypes through demonstrating competence.

Q Did you have a mentor and if so, tell us about that person and include the most valuable thing you learnt from them?

A Throughout my career I’ve crossed paths with many exceptional individuals, each of whom have contributed something unique to my journey. However, what I do recall from early in my career was the impression Albertinah Kekana left with me. Her presence in every interaction she partook in was undeniable, something I continue to try and emulate in my engagements today.

Q What is the biggest / most complex transaction you have worked on so far in your career?

A Standout transaction by a long way was the AfriSam Cement ZAR21bn balance sheet restructure.

Q Which deal challenged you the most and why?

A AfriSam Cement was such a unique experience with many extraordinary elements that requires a trilogy of books to contextualise. Bar the sheer scale of quantum involved, every day came with the need for strategic thinking and flexible solution design, whilst managing the complexity of a cohort of stakeholders with constant behaviour psychology at play. My memory of it being framed by Michael Katz’ words “with respect...

Q What has been the Best and Worst day in your career so far?

A The day I walked out of the office of where my investment journey started, permanently, was extremely emotional. It was the best and worst day of my career all in one.

Q What advice would you give to other women thinking of entering the Private Equity industry?

A Be authentic, nothing will serve you more.

Q Did the COVID-19 pandemic with the various lockdowns, changes in working habits etc. bring about any major changes for you from a work / career perspective?

A Before COVID, I’d already started a transformational personal journey, which COVID allowed me to focus on unapologetically. Once progress was evident, my risk tolerance changed on a personal level, with each bit of risk embraced leading to positive outcomes in my life. I hope to continue this trend of being brave enough to embrace what makes me uncomfortable in order to maintain forward momentum.

Q What are three words you would use to describe yourself?

A Tenacious, driven and diligent. I’ll take the compliment.

Q What qualities would you say are essential for a woman to thrive in the PE industry?

A PE requires confidence (whether quiet or loud) - not ego, not arrogance.

Q What in your opinion are the most exciting elements of working within the private equity space?

A Being able to translate the theoretical into real world impact that you can measure, that evokes all your senses, that solicit an emotional response.

Q Working within the PE/VC space, you meet many new entrepreneurs. Which women entrepreneurs stood out for you and why?

A There are many, however, a common theme being their passion for what they do and perseverance against all odds, that oozed authenticity at all costs.

Q What is your favourite quote?

A “Nothing clears the mind like a lack of alternatives” - unknown

Q Who is your female role model and why?

A The most phenomenal woman – my one and only mother. The embodiment of strength and independence, balanced perfectly with femininity and empathy, whilst always seeking out joy in this thing called life.

Q What is one goal you have set yourself for 2022 and are you on track to reach it?

A To not sweat the small stuff. It’s harder than I thought. 🙌