



Q&A

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What initially drew you to a career in your field?

I actually began by studying a BSc in chemistry and biochemistry. However, after I graduated my B.SC Hons. I realised that it wasn't the right space for me and pivoted to study law, where I've since had a fulfilling career.

What did your path into this field look like – was it intentional or did you discover it along the way?

I started my articles in an insolvency practice during the global financial crisis in 2008. Work slowed down quite a bit during my commercial rotation in 2009, and when I was retained as an associate, I chose to return to insolvency practice. Then, business rescue was introduced just as the 2008 Companies Act took effect in 2011. You can say that I evolved with the profession, and continue to do so even now. This profession really chose me, rather than the other way around.

Can you share a defining moment or turning point in your career so far?

One day, early on in my career, I was walking to court when I was confronted by a vagrant who tried to grab and kiss me. That experience was incredibly unsettling, but it taught me that confidence is a really important characteristic as a woman in this field. I decided to walk with confidence and purpose after that, and was never accosted again, but, more importantly, it changed how I carry myself professionally. More recently, being involved in the restructuring of an airline, and hearing from a stakeholder how I helped buy time for her and her family, gave me real meaning and purpose in this work.

How have you built resilience in a high-pressure, male-dominated environment?

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One of the most essential qualities that somebody needs in this profession is grit, because it's not an easy environment to operate in whether you are male or female. By persevering through obstacles along my journey, I have found that the greatest catalyst for developing grit is finding the right mentor.

What role do you think mentorship plays in building a legal career?

The right mentor is not necessarily someone specific to your career, but it's somebody who is willing to guide you. A sponsor, on the other hand, will speak for you when you are not in the room, and be willing to raise your profile when you are not able to do so yourself.

Your mentors and sponsors are not necessarily the people that you work with either. They can be people within your wider network. For this reason, I also think it's important to remember that networking isn't about going for teas and coffees – or champagne and small talk. It's about rolling up your sleeves, getting involved in your profession, meeting people, and creating meaningful and lasting connections - some of whom may become your mentors and sponsors.

What advice would you give to someone younger starting out in this field?

Organisations like the South African Restructuring and Insolvency Practitioners Association and the Turnaround Management Association not only give you access to formal education through accredited courses, but also the opportunity to learn from their members, who are often generous enough to share their struggles and triumphs. Find a mentor who will guide you, and sponsors who will promote you when you are not in the room. Lastly, and probably most importantly, find meaning in what you do. 🙌