Q&A

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Career journey and navigating the deal room

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

From an early stage of my career, I knew I wanted to work in an environment that would constantly challenge me, where no two days would be the same, and where I could combine analytical thinking with relationship building while making a tangible impact on businesses and the broader economy. Corporate and Investment Banking offered exactly that.

What appealed to me most was that it demands both technical excellence and strong interpersonal skills. You need to understand financial models, capital structures and risk, while also building trust, influencing decisions and working with people from different backgrounds and perspectives.

I was also inspired by the opportunity to engage with founders, CEOs, CFOs and other captains of industry. Growing up in Soweto, those boardrooms once felt worlds away. The idea that I could one day contribute to those conversations was highly motivating and became a personal challenge to prove that no room was beyond reach.

My journey into Corporate and Investment Banking was not defined by one lucky break. It was the result of consistently investing in my development, taking on challenging assignments and embracing opportunities that stretched me beyond my comfort zone. Early in my career, I built a strong foundation in corporate credit and later transaction advisory and leveraged and acquisition finance, where I developed rigorous analytical skills and learned how to assess risk, evaluate businesses and understand value drivers. I later broadened my experience through corporate development before moving into my current role.

Each role prepared me for the next and reinforced the importance of mastering the fundamentals before seeking greater responsibility. Breakthroughs are rarely dramatic moments. More often, they are the culmination of preparation, resilience and consistently delivering when opportunities arise. When preparation meets opportunity, careers are transformed.

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?

A defining moment in my career came shortly after moving into corporate development, when I was asked to lead and coordinate a buy-side process alongside the CFO. It represented a significant step up in responsibility.

I was effectively running the end-to-end process, working directly with senior executives while coordinating internal teams and external advisers. My role was to bring structure to a fast-moving environment, align stakeholders and keep the transaction on track against demanding timelines.

The challenge was amplified by the fact that it was a first-of-its-kind transaction for much of the team, with no internal playbook to rely on. I helped shape discussions around valuation, articulate the strategic rationale and ensure equal focus on post-deal integration and execution.

A key part of the experience was learning to influence without formal authority. Balancing differing perspectives from advisers, technical teams and senior leadership tested my judgement, communication skills and ability to remain composed under pressure.

What stood out most was not only the successful execution of the process, but what it revealed about my own capabilities. It showed me that I could operate effectively in high-stakes, ambiguous environments and that I could be trusted with senior-level responsibility earlier in my career than I had imagined. The experience reshaped my confidence and shifted my mindset from executing transactions to helping shape outcomes.

Perhaps the most meaningful moment came when the CEO publicly acknowledged my contribution at a leadership conference. It was significant not because of the recognition itself, but because it affirmed that the value I brought was visible at the highest level of the organisation. That transaction remains a turning point in my career and continues to influence how I approach complex deals and leadership opportunities today.

Corporate finance is notoriously demanding. Was there ever a moment you faced a major setback or a deal collapsed at the eleventh hour, and how did you pivot?

One of the toughest aspects of M&A is investing months of effort into a transaction that ultimately does not close. After extensive analysis, coordination and stakeholder engagement, a failed deal is inevitably disappointing. However, the key is not to dwell on the outcome, but to focus on what can still be gained.

Every transaction provides valuable insights into market dynamics, competitive positioning, growth opportunities and strategic priorities. Rather than viewing an unsuccessful outcome as a failure, I view it as intelligence that can inform better decision-making.

In one instance, although a transaction did not proceed, the lessons from the process helped shape an Africa-focused growth strategy, influencing capital allocation and future strategic priorities for the executive team.

The experience reinforced a principle that has stayed with me throughout my career that not every deal closes, but every deal should leave you better informed. Setbacks only become failures when the lessons are not captured and applied.