

# Q&A

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**Q Where did your financial markets journey begin, and how did you end up where you are today?**

A My journey began as a trainee accountant at Deloitte South Africa where I obtained my CA(SA) designation. I subsequently spent time working in various finance and product control roles in New York, Los Angeles and London. I had always wanted to enter the corporate finance space from very early on in my career, it was male-dominated and as such I initially faced quite significant pushback from recruiters and potential employers. In 2008, I joined Absa Group in the finance space and managed to secure a front office role in 2010. I have since secured my CFA designation, worked on one of the largest banking transactions in Africa (the acquisition by Absa of eight African banks), and built a leading affordable housing finance business from scratch. Building this business included everything from defining the strategy, hiring and training the team, building trusted relationships with key industry players and concluding transactions in a very competitive space.

**Q Did you have a mentor at any point in your career? If so, who were they and what did you learn from them?**

A I haven't had an official mentor until very recently, but over the years I have had the opportunity to work with truly amazing, talented individuals. These colleagues all possessed different skills that I was able to learn from. They were always very open to sharing their knowledge and experiences, and helping me to progress. I would say the most beneficial lessons have been around being thorough and solutions-focused.

**Q What, if any, hurdles have you had to overcome in an industry that has traditionally been male-dominated?**

A The biggest challenge remains being accepted as a serious contender in the industry, as opposed to being seen as the support. This hurdle remains for women, no matter where you are in your career. It can only be addressed and changed by facilitating and driving the success of more women in our industry.

**Q What are some of the most memorable deals you have worked on?**

A My most memorable deal was the acquisition by Absa of banking entities in Kenya, Ghana, Botswana, Mauritius, Zambia, Tanzania, Seychelles and Uganda in 2012. I loved the entire

experience, including exposure to different countries on the continent, structuring, legal and regulatory considerations. It was one of the greatest learning experiences of my career.

There have been many very meaningful deals in my affordable housing career, each making a significant contribution to housing in South Africa. The highlight, by far, has been providing various debt finance packages for the construction and refurbishment of the Johannesburg inner city. These transactions were driven by a shared desire to champion the live-work-play revolution through mixed-use developments that uplift the inner city in a collaborative and inclusive environment.

**Q What advice would you give to young women who are looking to enter to financial markets?**

A If anybody ever says "no" to your dreams, use that as your fuel to push harder and to strive for more. 🚀

