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Growing up, what did you want to be?

From a young age I aspired to become a professional athlete or dancer, with competitive sports and dance being integral to my upbringing. Over time I gained a deeper understanding of the sports and arts landscape in South Africa and recognised the challenges of establishing a sustainable career in this field.

Although sports no longer play a central role in my life, I continue to compete at a high level in netball. I have had the honour of representing the Johannesburg Netball Association in multiple SPAR National Netball Championships throughout the years.

So, what drew you to corporate finance?

My career path found me unexpectedly. In matric I applied to study BSc Physiotherapy so that I could stay connected to sport. However, the University of the Witwatersrand placed me on a waiting list for BSc Physiotherapy and accepted me for BCom Accounting, a programme I hadn't even applied for. This unexpected shift opened a new path, though it was not one I embraced immediately. I quickly realised that becoming a chartered accountant, tax practitioner, internal auditor, or management accountant did not resonate with me.

Through a process of career elimination and discovery, I eventually found my way to corporate finance in 2017.

This journey began after I had created a LinkedIn profile, which led to a recruiter reaching out and presenting a graduate programme opportunity at Cadiz Corporate Finance, a boutique corporate finance firm. During the interview I was captivated by the passion and intellect of the interviewers and the niche merger and acquisitions (M&A) opportunity they presented. This is how M&A found me – and I have never looked back. Despite the initial confusion, my journey led me to a career I truly love.

What was it like stepping into a male-dominated space as a woman of colour?

I embraced the challenge of working in a male-dominated environment. Observing how men network intentionally and assert their presence inspired me to do the same. I was determined not to be just a so-called flower in the room and have actively worked to ensure I am present and engaged in every conversation. Despite my proactive approach, working in such an environment comes with its challenges. Promotions and employee benefits often require more justification compared with my male counterparts, and the effort put in can sometimes go unrecognised.

To navigate these challenges, I have sought guidance from senior mentors who have walked a similar path. I have also invested my time in leadership programmes, such as the Tabono Women Advancement Programme, which gave me new perspectives on personal branding, intentional networking, and seizing opportunities to collaborate with other teams. These efforts have broadened my network of potential sponsors who can attest to my contributions and recognise my hard work on platforms or forums beyond my immediate reach.

How do you manage work-life balance, especially in such a demanding space?

Work-life balance is subjective and varies depending on the different phases

of the transactions I am working on. I approach it day by day; some days start early and end late, while other days allow for a breather, an early dinner, and the opportunity to log back on later in the evening. During downtime, I make an effort to enjoy it. When it's crunch time, I focus and deliver. Adaptability is key. However, I am intentional about maintaining work-life balance over the weekends to ensure that my energy is devoted to other aspects of my life.

What are your thoughts on the M&A space in the current climate?

There is significant momentum, particularly with the Government of National Unity restoring investor confidence. We are witnessing inbound acquisitions into South Africa, as well as JSE Limited (JSE) listings in the consumer, retail, and healthcare property sectors. Notably, the JSE listings include Assura plc's secondary listing, Boxer Retail Limited, and Rainbow Chicken Limited also listing late last year. When looking ahead, I anticipate a strong continuation of M&A activity.

I have had the privilege of working on several complex and high-profile transactions, including the cross-border acquisition by a global retail group, Frasers Group, that acquired Old Mutual Private Equity's leading sporting and outdoor recreation company, Holdsport Group. I was also involved in Sun International's acquisition of Peermont Holdings.

When looking back, what would you tell your younger self?

Don't be afraid to evolve. Let your curiosity guide you, even when things don't go to plan. There's power in trying, learning, and starting over. You don't need to have all the answers at once. Just start and keep building. You'll find your way, even if the route is messy.

