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Principal: Energy Finance

What attracted you to the world of investment banking?

It wasn't intentional at first; I studied electrical engineering on a bursary from Eskom and started in plant operations, wearing overalls, safety boots, and a hard hat. At the time, personal protective equipment wasn't even made to fit women properly. Over time, I gravitated towards project development and project management, which led me into the commercial side of the business. Finance became the natural next step, especially as I began putting together business cases.

What did you want to be as a child?

My family wanted me to be a doctor. I remember being fascinated by nursing at one stage, but I also went through a phase where I wanted to be a chartered accountant, not because I knew what that meant, but because I liked the sound of it. I loved maths and science, which led me into STEM subjects. Growing up in the Eastern Cape, I was surrounded by teachers in my family and a strong community that encouraged education, especially my mother, who was also a teacher. I was fortunate to receive support from an early age.

Was it a daunting but exciting entry into a male-dominated career path?

Definitely. In engineering, gender didn't define the work – the problems needed solving. But I do remember how in 2005 finding safety boots and overalls

that fit women was a challenge. These might seem like small things, but they shape the working environment. Over the years, I've worked with men as colleagues, subordinates, and leaders. I learnt early to hold my own. Today, I don't walk into rooms trying to prove myself; I bring confidence in my knowledge and focus on the task. However, networking remains challenging: informal settings like golf courses often exclude women, making it necessary to put in extra effort to build authentic relationships.

Why did you choose energy finance, and what has made you successful?

Energy is my bread and butter. It's where I started and what I know best. The alignment between engineering, project management, and energy finance made the role at Nedbank a perfect fit. I continue to conduct technical due diligence on renewable energy projects and work with clients and technical advisers. I enjoy problem-solving and site visits where I get to wear my safety boots again.

How do you manage the work-life balance formula?

I've stopped aiming for 'balance' in the traditional sense; instead, I've found a rhythm that works for us. My children are older now and wonderfully resilient. My days are unpredictable – I'm often in meetings or on the road, so I end up doing focused work in the evenings. But when I'm on leave, that time is sacred. We have a strong support system at home, including my niece, who's like an older sister to my kids, and that makes all the difference.

How do you deal with challenges?

I try to ensure that challenges find me well – mentally, physically, and spiritually. That means being proactive about my well-being, staying reflective, and being self-aware. I take my mental health seriously and value therapy and prayer as tools that help me stay centred. Alone time is also essential; I've learnt to gift myself a reset when I need it.

Any advice to young women interested in project and energy finance as a career?

Go for it. But don't go it alone. Build intentional relationships. Reach out to people in the sector. We live in an age of access – use LinkedIn, attend industry events, send that message, and ask someone for a coffee chat. This field isn't easy – it demands hard work and continuous learning – but it is incredibly rewarding.

