



Q&A

Molebo Mothibe

Managing Executive: Client Coverage

Q: Can you tell us about your journey to become the Managing Executive of Client Coverage at Nedbank CIB?

A: Believe it or not, I started off in medical school because I wanted to be a doctor. But after two years, I realised my heart just wasn't in it. So, I made a big switch to economics and completed my honours at the University of Pretoria. During my honour's year, I was recruited by Standard Bank for their graduate training programme. Initially, I was placed in retail banking, but it didn't take long for me to realise that wasn't where I wanted to be. I was fascinated by the investment bankers in their sharp suits, and I knew I wanted to be part of that world.

So, I took a bold step. I started eating in the canteen where the investment bankers ate, introduced myself to a senior banker, and made my pitch. A few months later, I got the call to join the coverage team as a sales support manager and was soon promoted to account executive. From there, I moved into a markets sales and structuring role in the interest rate team. I even spent some time at Investec before landing at Nedbank. Every move was a calculated step to gain more depth of experience and get closer to where I ultimately wanted to be.

Q: What does your day-to-day role involve?

A: There's no typical day for me, and that's what keeps things exciting and challenging. I juggle a lot of responsibilities – managing my team, ensuring everyone is working together, and balancing various competing interests. My days are filled with client strategy and engagement activities, from high-level meetings to on-site visits at manufacturing plants and mines. I also spend a lot of time mentoring young professionals, helping them navigate the complexities of client coverage. It's a dynamic mix of diplomacy, strategic planning, and hands-on client interaction that keeps me constantly on my toes.

Q: Why is client coverage critical for Nedbank CIB and its clients?

A: Client coverage is the backbone of delivering client-centric solutions. We maintain a single view of the client, balancing their needs with the bank's profitability. Our role is to allocate resources effectively, ensuring the best return on limited resources. We also focus on cross-selling the right products, tailored to each client's specific needs. This holistic approach, combined with deep sector insights, enables us to develop strategic sector and client plans. The coordination function we provide ensures that client service teams are aligned, bringing the right expertise and seniority to the table for each client interaction.

Q: Can you share some of the most impactful initiatives you've led?

A: One of the most impactful initiatives I led was developing Nedbank's water sector strategy during Cape Town's Day Zero crisis. My title then was Executive for Energy and Water, and I was tasked with formulating an approach to addressing the water crisis – despite initially delegating the task, I eventually took it on myself, diving deep into understanding the sector's complexities. This initiative went beyond addressing the immediate crisis – it laid the groundwork for a comprehensive water strategy for South Africa. It involved collaborating with key product stakeholders, engaging with senior leaders, contributing to climate risk meetings, and ultimately positioning Nedbank as a proactive solution provider in the water sector.

Q: How do you encourage innovation to improve client relationships and service delivery in your team?

A: We drive innovation by making sure everyone stays plugged into the latest industry trends and by encouraging cross-sector collaboration. For example, our transport sector lead is active in the SA Transport Forum, which helps us stay ahead of the curve. We also hold regular knowledge-sharing sessions where our sector leads share their insights and discuss emerging trends. This way, we can connect the dots between different sectors and come up with creative, forward-thinking solutions for our clients. It's all about keeping the team engaged, informed, and ready to innovate. Lastly, we drive thought leadership within our sectors and encourage our people to take advantage of such opportunities.

Q: How do you motivate and lead your team to excel?

A: Motivation is all about creating a dynamic and inspiring environment where everyone feels valued and excited about their work. We celebrate every win, big or small, with a lot of enthusiasm. Whether it's a shout-out in a team meeting or a formal recognition, we make sure that every achievement is acknowledged. I believe in creating a sense of healthy competition and camaraderie. We keep the energy high by setting clear goals and rewarding success. It's about making everyone feel like they're part of something special, where their contributions matter and their potential is limitless.

Of course, we can't overlook the importance of remuneration. People want to feel that their hard work is recognised and rewarded. You can always tell when someone has had a good remuneration discussion – they walk out of the room with a spring in their step.

Seeing that motivates others to strive for the same recognition. It's about combining intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to keep the team driven and committed.

Q: What are your long-term goals for client coverage?

A: I want to build an aspirational brand that people are eager to be a part of. Consistency in service delivery is key, ensuring that every client interaction is seamless and exceptional. Success for me is when clients choose us. I'm also focused on diversifying our talent pool, bringing in fresh perspectives and skills. I see a future where talent moves fluidly between other parts of the bank and client coverage, making it a highly sought-after function within the bank. Ultimately, my goal is to create a strong pipeline of successors, ensuring that client coverage continues to thrive and evolve long after I've moved on.

Q: What advice would you give to aspiring leaders?

A: My biggest piece of advice is to know your "why" – understand why you do what you do. This clarity will keep you motivated during tough times. Networking is also essential; build and maintain relationships throughout your career. And don't be afraid to step into your next level of discomfort. Growth often comes from pushing beyond your comfort zone and taking on new challenges.

One of the most important things I've learned, especially as a mother, is the power of setting boundaries. When my son was born, I realised that I needed to be fully present both at work and at home. Know when to switch off and focus on family. For example, I won't play golf because it takes away six hours on a Saturday morning when I'd rather spend that time with my loved ones. Maybe when my children are older...

Being fully present is crucial. If you try to juggle everything without clear boundaries, you end up giving mediocre attention to everything. But when you set specific times and parameters, you can really shine. For young women who feel they need to choose between their career and personal life, remember that setting boundaries is your secret weapon. It helps you stay balanced and focused.

