

Gigi Nyanin

Corporate Finance | Transactor



Gigi joined RMB Corporate Finance (RMB) in February 2023, following a position as Project Director: Tax Thought Leadership at the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA), where she led the planning and execution of the SAICA tax thought leadership function. Prior to joining RMB and SAICA, Gigi was a Senior Associate in the Tax and Exchange Control Department at Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr Inc (CDH), where she provided corporate tax advisory services focused largely on mergers and acquisitions, corporate restructures, private equity and venture capital fund formation, BEE structuring and cross-border transactions.

Gigi is an Admitted Attorney and Notary Public.

Q What led you to pursue a career in corporate finance?

A While in my third year of studying law at the University of Johannesburg, I enrolled for a six month introductory tax course. That's where my interest in and deep appreciation for tax began. While serving my articles at CDH, I was fortunate enough to be granted an opportunity to serve a full years' rotation in the tax department (well, technically I was the only candidate attorney who requested a rotation in the tax department at the time – I wonder why?!). I was bitten by the tax bug, and I have never been able to shake it. While at CDH, I formed part of a team that specialised in the intricate world of tax optimisation / structuring for mergers and acquisitions. I was exposed to a multitude of corporate and commercial transactions, including private equity fund formation and portfolio movements, business restructurings, acquisitions, disposals and BEE structuring. It was during this time that I garnered a true appreciation for tax and how it represents a critical intersection of law, finance and economics. In recognising the

importance of staying current with the ever-evolving tax laws and regulations, I decided to pivot and accept a position at SAICA to deepen and broaden my knowledge of tax and best practices to ensure that my skills remain at the forefront. My role at SAICA reinforced my commitment to lifelong learning, as I was required to keep abreast of the frequent updates and reforms to our tax policy to manage and compile member communications and ultimately, execute on SAICA's member value proposition.

One of the key attractions of corporate finance for me is the ability to work on high-impact deals that shape the future of a business. I am particularly drawn to the strategic aspect, where corporate finance professionals are intricately involved in steering companies towards sustainable growth and profitability. My role at RMB has offered me the unique opportunity to blend my knowledge of, and interest in tax with critical advisory functions, like financial planning, analysis, capital raising and investment management – all of which contribute to the financial well-being of clients and the broader economic system.

Q What, in your opinion, is the hardest part of structuring M&A deals?

A Tax is a complex and changeable area of law, and an effective advisor needs a sound understanding and insight into the commercial aspects of our client's decisions, much of which comes with experience. The learning curve is, therefore, unavoidably long, and requires a continued commitment to learning and service excellence. I believe that balancing the provision of ethical tax advice with achieving a client's financial outcome is a challenging task. It requires a nuanced understanding of tax laws and regulations, and the ability to develop strategies that optimise financial benefits, while maintaining full

compliance with the tax laws. Navigating this delicate balance demands meticulous attention to detail and a strong commitment to integrity.

Q What is your favourite sector in which to do a deal and why?

A My favourite aspect of working in corporate finance is the opportunity it provides me to engage with and learn from multiple sectors. This makes each deal unique and intellectually stimulating. This diversity not only broadens my professional experience, but also enables me to apply my corporate solutions expertise across various industries.

Q Did you have a mentor and, if so, what was the most important thing you learnt from them?

A Absolutely. I have been privileged to have a number of mentors throughout my career. One of the most important things I learned from each of them was the value of integrity. My mentors emphasised how maintaining honesty and transparency, even in challenging situations, is crucial for building long-term trust, relationships and credibility with clients and colleagues. This lesson has profoundly influenced my approach to work, assisting me to prioritise ethical considerations in every decision I make, both professionally and personally.

Q If you could have dinner with any woman in history, who would it be and what would be the first thing you asked her?

A It would have to be the Notorious RBG, also known as Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg (who is well known for her work as a lawyer, advocate and Supreme Court Justice in the United States). I would ask her what kept her motivated to continue advocating for justice and equality, even in the face of setbacks and challenges. 🍷