

Ciska Kloppers

Director



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

A It was pure luck for me. Like most newly qualified CAs, I didn't know exactly where my path would lead after completing my articles, and I was interviewing for anything and everything. I joined Questco for a two-month temporary position, without really knowing what corporate finance would involve. I fell in love with the industry and the nature of the work right away. Long story, short – I am still here 11 years later. Corporate finance is an ever changing and evolving industry. Having the opportunity to interact directly with the boards of companies, industry experts and other M&A deal teams means you never stop learning. It's been a joy to see both M&A teams and boardrooms expand with female presence over the decade that I have been involved in the industry.

Q *What, in your opinion, is the hardest part of a transaction?*

A Every transaction is different. Sometimes it's getting out of the starting blocks (specifically when the scope is, as we say, clear as mud). Sometimes it's that moment when things look like they may tip over, and sometimes it's the negotiations. Personally, however, I would say the toughest part across most deals is the implementation phase. Once terms are negotiated and agreements are signed, you think the hard work is over, but success isn't reached until you have reached deal closure. When the negotiation adrenaline starts waning, deal fatigue can start setting in. You realise there are still some hard conditions to get through to closing, which is not always within your deal teams' control

and can often be long dated (difficult when you are generally not a patient person!).

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

A I like working across various sectors, but if forced to choose, I would have to say its mining and resources. You need to work hand-in-hand with the on-mine operational teams, geologists and mining engineers to create the link between what's in the ground and what's on the balance sheet. I also like doing deals that are backed by tangible data that provides a long-term view. You need to understand the fundamentals for different commodities, which gives you an insight into a variety of downstream sectors across the economy.

Q *When things go wrong, what advice would you give about moving on?*

A The way you handle mistakes is more important than not making any mistakes. Never act rashly; take a step back and think things through before you react. Debrief with your team as soon as possible – the load on your shoulders becomes lighter once it's shared.

Q *What piece of advice would you give a young woman working on her first deal?*

A Two things - firstly, back yourself and tackle your deal with confidence. If you have questions, then someone else does as well. If something doesn't seem right, it probably isn't. If you don't understand the scope, it hasn't been explained properly. Secondly, don't just be a passenger – contribute. If you have an idea, people want to hear it.

Q *What attributes do you think are essential for a good M&A executive?*

A An ability to apply knowledge and skills across different disciplines. When thinking of M&A, people tend to think, "it's just negotiation". But negotiations are often just a small part of a very long road. To be a well-rounded corporate financier, you need to become the expert in various disciplines, whether it is valuations, structuring, taxes or legal and regulatory – you need to be able to wear all the hats at the same time.

Q *What is one thing that makes your life easier and that you really wouldn't want to do without?*

A My EU passport. Being able to travel visa-free between Europe and SA has opened work and life arrangements. The world becomes a small place quite quickly.

Q *What do you do to unwind and get away from the stress of work?*

A I like being out in nature, enjoying an all-consuming activity that forces your mind away from work for more than just a couple of hours, whether it is hiking, climbing, snowboarding or riding; as long as it involves fresh air and a lack of phone signal.

FUN FACTS

Favourite restaurant:

Easy-going pizzeria – as long as it has good wine.

Unusual hobbies:

Riding motorbikes in the mountains.

Item on your bucket list:

Sushi in Japan.

Your worst trait: I probably talk too much. 🗣️