



Cebile Hlophe

Head:Finance

Q&A

Q What led you to pursue a career in Private Equity?

A I accompanied a friend to her investments lecture at varsity, and enjoyed the lecture so much that I ended up adding Finance as a major. I decided then that I wanted to pursue a career in the financial services/investment industry, and Private Equity was a perfect fit.

Q What, in your opinion, is the hardest part of a PE deal?

A Pricing. Buy-side and sell-side will always have a differing view on pricing, so price negotiations are the hardest part. And the reality is that there is too much capital chasing too few deals, which can drive up prices, making negotiations even harder.

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

A I have no specific preference; however, from an impact perspective, I would say education. We have a serious education problem in South Africa, so investing in education is critical as it has an impact in different areas of the economy. However, most of the time, it gets overlooked because of the low return profile.

Q If you could change one thing on your career path to date, what would it be and why?

A I would not change a thing; every decision has come with a lesson learnt, and with some of the lessons learnt, I will do things differently going forward. But I would

never take away the lessons – they have contributed to shaping who I am.

I've always viewed life as a series of little steps, and every step is a building block to a bigger picture. A change in any of the steps I have made would also change the bigger picture. Generally, there are things one looks back on in life and thinks, "I should have done this, instead of that", but then the wisdom comes from having made that specific decision, and the experiences that come with it, and some of those experiences are very valuable.

Q What piece of advice would you give a female entrepreneur looking for funding?

A Do not sell yourself short. As women, we tend to be modest about our worth, what we bring to the table, and our capabilities. Women are the most hardworking people I know, but we don't always get the recognition that we deserve because we are too modest.

Also, become a good storyteller, and remember, "investors invest in things they understand." They need to understand what problem you are solving and how it will change the marketplace. You need to have a good story, and be able to communicate it. The people holding the cheque book need to hear your vision and know that you are passionate about it.

Q What, in your opinion, is the worst thing an entrepreneur could do when pitching for funding?

A Not being sure of their projections, and not having a clear understanding

of the market they are in, or getting into. Doing proper research is key. A funding pitch is basically a sales pitch – you can't sell if you don't have a clear understanding of your product or don't know your story well. You need to anticipate every possible question and have an answer for it. Most of the time you only get one chance, which is a make or break moment.

Also, one of the most common mistakes that people make when pitching to funders/ investors is to make their presentations complex. They assume that because their investors are smart, they will be most comfortable with complex ideas and complex presentations. This is not the case; complexity can be off-putting. As humans, our brains love simplicity. A great pitch should be made simple for the people you are presenting to.

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

A A spa day. There is nothing that being pampered can't fix. A full day of pure relaxation does the trick for me.

FUN FACTS

Favourite Colour: White, I love the calming effect of white.

Current book on your nightstand: I'm currently busy with a Tax Advisory and Opinions course, so The Income Tax Act is keeping me company at the moment.

Dog or cat person: Not a pet person. 🐾