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Q What led you to pursue a career in M&A | the Financial Markets?

A Rebellion! My grandfather really wanted me to be a medical doctor. I had good academic results in high school, but also a rebellious streak, and I was determined to study anything other than medicine. One of my cousins worked at a bank and he gave me my first glimpse into investment banking as a career option. He had great passion for the work he did, and that resonated with me – I wanted to be exactly like him. Back in 2007, banking was really the ‘in’ place to be and, looking back, I am very grateful that it is where I landed. As it turned out, my grandfather ended up being quite proud of me for being a banker too.

Q What, in your opinion, is the hardest part of an M&A deal | financial market transaction?

A The hardest and the best part – the people. If financial market transactions were based only on hard facts and numbers, and run entirely by algorithms and artificial intelligence, this would be a very boring business. Adding people to a process introduces biases that are often covered by fields like behavioural finance, as well as an element of dealing with anxiety in the face of a more volatile and complex world, but also the need for relationships and trust. Looking beyond shareholders for a moment, our clients keep our bank running, and that is why it is so important to be solution-driven. This means focusing not just on the result, but also on the experience during the journey of concluding a deal. It also requires one to think in a relationship-based, long-term manner that shows the client’s needs were met at all points in the process. It is the discipline of solutioning with the mindset that profitability

and client solutioning are not zero-sum, but co-exist as one cohesive way in which we do business.

Q Capital markets worldwide have been a rollercoaster for the last few years – where do you think capital markets in South Africa are headed, given our current political, economic and social climate?

A We are definitely moving into an increasingly volatile world where information is more freely available, but being able to adequately synthesise and analyse it is more complex. Things continue to evolve faster, and markets are more reactive to new information than ever before. And this will continue to get quicker, resulting in market movements which are fast, and asset prices which swing widely. While South Africans have a lived experience of load-shedding (forced power cuts to manage pressure on the electricity network) and slowing economic growth, we must also note that the global macro-outlook has also been volatile. It has certainly been one of the more volatile times in recent history for our clients to run their businesses and portfolios and, for us, one of the more volatile times to give them good advisory services. However, climates like this offer good deal opportunities, and many a profitable deal has been made when there is heightened volatility. One needs to operate with a high degree of risk-consciousness, balanced with a growth mindset for the country and all our businesses operating in it.

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

A I wish that I had the self-belief that I have now, much earlier in my career. Nedbank has a highly empowering culture,

and I have always enjoyed strong support when I have wanted to change paths or grow in my career here. Notably though, this type of culture requires a high level of initiative to maximise the opportunities it presents, and it requires ownership of one’s own growth. To paraphrase Invictus, I would whisper in my 25-year-old self’s ear, ‘you and only you are the master of your fate.’

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

A You are enough and more. Work from a place of humility and work harder than anyone else you know, but do not hesitate to share your opinions and thoughts. Always think with the client’s problem statement in mind, and how you can solution for it. Lastly, keep on learning – once you stop learning and educating yourself, your time in this business is coming to an end. It does not always have to be formal learning, but rather a good balance of acquiring new skills through practical deal experience and formal education.

FUN FACTS

Current book on your nightstand: *Sapiens* by Yuval Noah Harari – it’s like a textbook on human and socio-economic evolution, and this is my second time reading it.

Item ticked off your bucket list: Flying a plane. I flew a Simba XL during a flying class and it was a majestic experience!

Item not yet completed on your bucket list: Getting my pilot’s licence someday; visiting Nepal; and drinking wine in Sicily.

Your worst trait: I can be too easily influenced by a slice of good chocolate cake. 🍫