



## Ntsapokazi Cossie

Principal: Principal Finance



*It has been 15 years since I proudly completed my post-graduate academic studies and transitioned from being a student to following a professional career. I am filled with mixed emotions as I reflect on the journey thus far. I look back with fondness to my days as an audit clerk, carrying around red and green pens (to tick up audit packs), closing my first deal, gaining international business experience, and volunteering at a national level. I have also learnt valuable lessons while overcoming hard moments, like job application rejections, missed promotions and lost deals. I've learnt that the sun does shine again.*

I was never sure which career path I wanted to take when I finished high school, and decided to become a chartered accountant because I thought it would give me more career options. My field of study turned out to be one of the best decisions I've made, as the career opportunities that I encountered far exceeded my expectations. While I do not attribute it all to my qualification, I recognise the role that it has played. For example, I found my first mentor during my articles through a professional body affiliated with chartered accountants (CAs). After completing my articles at Deloitte, and spending some time abroad while working and travelling, I joined Deloitte's Corporate Finance Team, where I primarily focused on acquisition and vendor due diligence. I was introduced to the world of mergers and acquisitions (M&A), where I soon realised that there are so many elements to concluding a transaction, and I wanted more of the action.

I bumped into an old friend from university who worked in leveraged finance, and as she described what her job entailed, I became so intrigued that I decided to look for opportunities in this area of investment banking. I soon joined the Acquisition and Leveraged Finance Team at Nedbank Capital,

now Nedbank Corporate and Investment Banking (CIB). I loved the thrill of closing deals, working with like-minded people who enjoyed working and playing hard, finding solutions for complex transactions, and the exposure to a broad range of clients and industries. Some of the deal teams that I have been part of have concluded the following transactions:

- 1 Intertoll International Holdings BV's purchase of a 50% stake in Bombela Concession Company (RF) (Pty) Ltd from Murray and Roberts Holdings Limited.
- 2 Multicurrency facilities for Aspen Pharmacare Holdings Limited, where Nedbank was the mandated facility coordinator.
- 3 Initial mandated lead arranger and bookrunner, acquisition funding packages for Ascendis Health, where Nedbank was mandated lead arranger.
- 4 Steinhoff's acquisition of Pepkor.
- 5 Fidelity's acquisition of Protea Coin's cash management business.
- 6 Shareholder facilities for some of South Africa's leading investment holding companies.

I also gained international business experience while working as the Chief of Staff to one of the founders of Discovery Limited (Discovery) and Chief Executive Officer of Vitality Group International Inc (VG), the international arm of Discovery.

The greatest gift from this experience was expanding my professional and personal network in a way that I never thought possible. It was also during my time at VG that I had the honour of joining the alliance of volunteer resources across South African business bodies through the Business for South Africa (B4SA) Public Health Workgroup during the

COVID-19 pandemic, where I was part of the team that helped the South African government with the procurement of personal protective equipment and ventilators for the public and private sectors.

My love for dealmaking saw me return to investment banking, and I rejoined Nedbank CIB in 2021. I am now part of the Principal Finance and Family Offices Team that focuses on bespoke financing solutions, typically underpinned by equity value across Nedbank's Investment Banking franchise.

I've had two formal mentors in my life. My relationships with them were helpful in the early stages of my career, particularly as I navigated being a black woman in corporate South Africa. They helped me to navigate a world that is often hostile to those who are different. Over the past few years, I have drawn mentorship support from a wide network of people, many of whom have become personal friends and who offer diversity not only in race, gender and age, but also in their professional background and life experience. I also believe that sponsorship may be more valuable than mentorship, and I attribute my professional growth in recent years to this advocacy.

The enormous loss caused by the pandemic, and the birth of my daughter in 2020, became powerful reminders for me of how precious life is. The definition of success differs from person to person, and to me it means: 'living purposefully and showing up authentically in everything that I do'.

We all have a responsibility to pay it forward, remembering the help we've received along the way, sharing what we have learnt and always being curious to learn, including from younger people. Always be kind. Take risks and make decisions – if a decision turns out to be a bad one, learn from the experience and remember Nelson Mandela's famous quote: 'It always seems impossible until it's done.' 