



DealMakers®  
WOMEN 2024

Women of SA's  
M&A and Financial  
Markets Industry



## DealMakers WOMEN 2024

Women of SA's M&A and Financial Markets Industry

Marylou Greig

Editor

In the 25 years that **DealMakers** has been tracking the transactions and advisers of the South African mergers and acquisitions industry, we have seen notable progress in the advancement of women in the workplace, particularly in the last ten years. This has been driven by a combination of legislative measures, corporate initiatives, and advocacy efforts. But it has also had much to do with the great strides that women have made in showing up for themselves, knowing their worth, and claiming their seat at the table.

National Women's Day, celebrated on the 9th of August each year, and first celebrated in 1995, provides an opportunity to pay tribute to the generations of women whose struggles laid the foundations for the progress made in empowering women and achieving gender equality to date. It is another chance for women to get motivated, inspired and to unlock their own strength and determination to make a positive change.

As a country, we have much to be proud of, and the day offers an opportunity to salute the gains attained for women, and to recognise their achievements in politics, sport, in the economy, and in academia. These women serve as positive and powerful role models that inspire young girls and defy outdated stereotypes of women's capabilities.

Ongoing efforts are needed to address persistent challenges, such as the gender pay gap, representation in specific sectors, workplace culture, and work-life balance. By fostering a more inclusive and equitable

work environment, South Africa can harness the potential of its female workforce, and drive sustainable economic growth and development.

The profiles which decorate the pages of this 4th edition of the magazine offer women words of courage and inspiration. Each woman featured has a unique story to tell and important advice to impart. Women are strongly encouraged to learn from other women who have worked hard, overcome obstacles, and gone on to achieve their goals. What is clear is that the growing matrix of experience of the women in this industry is a powerful force, one that is succeeding in uplifting those women with less experience as they themselves rise and shatter the proverbial glass ceiling.

The feature will be released at the second **DealMakers** Women's Day networking event, which builds on last year's success and will, once again, include a panel discussion. This year's panel members are Lydia Shadrach-Razzino, a Partner at Baker McKenzie; Taskeen Ismail, Chief Financial Officer at Sanlam Investment Management; Mandy Ramsden, a Director at Questco Corporate Advisory; Sindi Mabaso-Koyana, Managing Partner at AIH Capital; and Lynette Finlay, Chief Executive Officer at Amabutho Investment Managers.

My grateful thanks go to all in the industry who continue to support and participate in this feature and, in particular, to my colleague Vanessa Aitken who has spent many days and nights ensuring that it grows and evolves each year. 🙌

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# Showcasing the women of Nedbank Corporate and Investment Banking.

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# Women are the issue.

For as long as there are too few women in leadership positions, it will remain an issue. And while the true might of women in our industry is showcased only once a year, there's a bank that will fight to bring their unique expertise and insights to the table every day.

**This Women's Month we look towards a future where women are not just an annual issue, but feature in every edition.**

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# Anél Bosman

Group Managing Executive: CIB

## Nedbank Corporate and Investment Banking's unshakeably bold culture: Empowering women in leadership.

Anél Bosman, Group Managing Executive, embodies the unshakeably bold spirit of Nedbank Corporate and Investment Banking (Nedbank CIB). Her journey is one of resilience, courage, and impact.

**As the first woman in South Africa to lead an investment bank, her leadership style aligns seamlessly with Nedbank's culture and prioritises diversity and inclusion, ethical conduct, accountability, and influential people management – values deeply embedded in the bank's operations.**

Anél's leadership approach is rooted in her upbringing in an Afrikaans family with an engineer father and a schoolteacher mother. This instilled in her a sense of curiosity as well as discipline and, combined with her entrepreneurial spirit, has shaped her into a leader who values creativity and diligence.

During Anél's studies at Cambridge University she expanded her worldview. That prepared her for leadership in a dynamic industry. Her strategic vision and adaptability were tested when she assumed the role of Managing Executive at Nedbank CIB during the Covid-19 pandemic, a time when she emphasised the importance of empathy, strategic vision, and a deep commitment to inclusivity.

Reflecting on 2020, she highlights the power of teamwork and the importance of having incredible people who care deeply and support each other at Nedbank CIB.

Anél's leadership style is characterised by unshakeable boldness. But what does it mean to be unshakeably bold? According to Anél, being 'unshakeable' means facing the gritty truth and knowing we will persevere. It involves having a steadfast commitment to one's values and principles regardless of the challenges faced. Furthermore, being 'bold' requires courage.

The word 'courage' comes from an old Norman French word meaning heart or heartfulness and being unshakeable and bold means doing the right thing in a humane way. 'Sometimes courage is not necessarily about doing anything. It is about being sensitive and open to our own and

others' vulnerabilities in the face of uncertainty,' Anél says. 'Being open to not knowing, to stepping out of our comfort zones, to working in new ways, to slowing down to listen, to having the courage to put yourself in another's shoes, to ask for help, to inquire into views that are different to our own, and to challenge our thinking while knowing that we don't have all the answers'.

**'So, it is vital that we as leaders create an environment where people can be unshakeably bold in having the courage to speak out, bring new ideas and provide leadership beyond the traditional hierarchy,' she observes.**

'We must choose to be unshakeably bold, both in our contributions and in strengthening our capability through working in teams. Bold teams take bold action, scale solutions, and build solid cultures that are human-led, intentionally diverse, psychologically safe, and built for speed and execution – but always in the right way. This approach underscores the importance of teamwork and collaborative effort in achieving strategic goals,' Anél highlights.

For Anél, this unshakeably bold culture isn't just a slogan; it's a lived reality. Her career reflects this commitment to empowering everyone, encouraging diversity and driving positive change. As Nedbank continues to champion this culture, it remains a beacon of progress and equality in the banking industry.

**Under Anél's guidance the representation in leadership roles of women and people of colour has increased. Her support and participation in initiatives such as the Diversity and Inclusion Task Force and the Voices of Change subforums have driven considerable progress in creating an inclusive workplace.**

Anél also launched the Tabono Women Advancement Programme, focusing on assisting women with core competencies to advance within business. To date, 98 women have attended. They have developed skills to address systemic barriers, and to create space for dialogue on critical aspects of Nedbank CIB's nomination processes.

**By surrounding themselves with a diverse group of people, embracing inclusivity, and staying true to their purpose despite challenges, leaders can navigate complexities, build sustainable businesses, and create a more meaningful and equitable society. It boils down to taking risks, embracing innovation, and challenging the status quo with a sense of compassion and care.**

These attributes create a powerful leadership style that drives the business to seize opportunities in an ever-changing world. It also involves being unshakeably bold in impacting the world while staying true to a vision, using financial expertise to partner with clients, and working together towards a strong, equitable, and inclusive South Africa.





# Q&A

## Molebo Mothibe

### Managing Executive: Client Coverage

#### **Q: Can you tell us about your journey to become the Managing Executive of Client Coverage at Nedbank CIB?**

**A:** Believe it or not, I started off in medical school because I wanted to be a doctor. But after two years, I realised my heart just wasn't in it. So, I made a big switch to economics and completed my honours at the University of Pretoria. During my honour's year, I was recruited by Standard Bank for their graduate training programme. Initially, I was placed in retail banking, but it didn't take long for me to realise that wasn't where I wanted to be. I was fascinated by the investment bankers in their sharp suits, and I knew I wanted to be part of that world.

So, I took a bold step. I started eating in the canteen where the investment bankers ate, introduced myself to a senior banker, and made my pitch. A few months later, I got the call to join the coverage team as a sales support manager and was soon promoted to account executive. From there, I moved into a markets sales and structuring role in the interest rate team. I even spent some time at Investec before landing at Nedbank. Every move was a calculated step to gain more depth of experience and get closer to where I ultimately wanted to be.

#### **Q: What does your day-to-day role involve?**

**A:** There's no typical day for me, and that's what keeps things exciting and challenging. I juggle a lot of responsibilities – managing my team, ensuring everyone is working together, and balancing various competing interests. My days are filled with client strategy and engagement activities, from high-level meetings to on-site visits at manufacturing plants and mines. I also spend a lot of time mentoring young professionals, helping them navigate the complexities of client coverage. It's a dynamic mix of diplomacy, strategic planning, and hands-on client interaction that keeps me constantly on my toes.

#### **Q: Why is client coverage critical for Nedbank CIB and its clients?**

**A:** Client coverage is the backbone of delivering client-centric solutions. We maintain a single view of the client, balancing their needs with the bank's profitability. Our role is to allocate resources effectively, ensuring the best return on limited resources. We also focus on cross-selling the right products, tailored to each client's specific needs. This holistic approach, combined with deep sector insights, enables us to develop strategic sector and client plans. The coordination function we provide ensures that client service teams are aligned, bringing the right expertise and seniority to the table for each client interaction.

#### **Q: Can you share some of the most impactful initiatives you've led?**

**A:** One of the most impactful initiatives I led was developing Nedbank's water sector strategy during Cape Town's Day Zero crisis. My title then was Executive for Energy and Water, and I was tasked with formulating an approach to addressing the water crisis – despite initially delegating the task, I eventually took it on myself, diving deep into understanding the sector's complexities. This initiative went beyond addressing the immediate crisis – it laid the groundwork for a comprehensive water strategy for South Africa. It involved collaborating with key product stakeholders, engaging with senior leaders, contributing to climate risk meetings, and ultimately positioning Nedbank as a proactive solution provider in the water sector.

#### **Q: How do you encourage innovation to improve client relationships and service delivery in your team?**

**A:** We drive innovation by making sure everyone stays plugged into the latest industry trends and by encouraging cross-sector collaboration. For example, our transport sector lead is active in the SA Transport Forum, which helps us stay ahead of the curve. We also hold regular knowledge-sharing sessions where our sector leads share their insights and discuss emerging trends. This way, we can connect the dots between different sectors and come up with creative, forward-thinking solutions for our clients. It's all about keeping the team engaged, informed, and ready to innovate. Lastly, we drive thought leadership within our sectors and encourage our people to take advantage of such opportunities.

#### **Q: How do you motivate and lead your team to excel?**

**A:** Motivation is all about creating a dynamic and inspiring environment where everyone feels valued and excited about their work. We celebrate every win, big or small, with a lot of enthusiasm. Whether it's a shout-out in a team meeting or a formal recognition, we make sure that every achievement is acknowledged. I believe in creating a sense of healthy competition and camaraderie. We keep the energy high by setting clear goals and rewarding success. It's about making everyone feel like they're part of something special, where their contributions matter and their potential is limitless.

Of course, we can't overlook the importance of remuneration. People want to feel that their hard work is recognised and rewarded. You can always tell when someone has had a good remuneration discussion – they walk out of the room with a spring in their step.

Seeing that motivates others to strive for the same recognition. It's about combining intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to keep the team driven and committed.

#### **Q: What are your long-term goals for client coverage?**

**A:** I want to build an aspirational brand that people are eager to be a part of. Consistency in service delivery is key, ensuring that every client interaction is seamless and exceptional. Success for me is when clients choose us. I'm also focused on diversifying our talent pool, bringing in fresh perspectives and skills. I see a future where talent moves fluidly between other parts of the bank and client coverage, making it a highly sought-after function within the bank. Ultimately, my goal is to create a strong pipeline of successors, ensuring that client coverage continues to thrive and evolve long after I've moved on.

#### **Q: What advice would you give to aspiring leaders?**

**A:** My biggest piece of advice is to know your "why" – understand why you do what you do. This clarity will keep you motivated during tough times. Networking is also essential; build and maintain relationships throughout your career. And don't be afraid to step into your next level of discomfort. Growth often comes from pushing beyond your comfort zone and taking on new challenges.

One of the most important things I've learned, especially as a mother, is the power of setting boundaries. When my son was born, I realised that I needed to be fully present both at work and at home. Know when to switch off and focus on family. For example, I won't play golf because it takes away six hours on a Saturday morning when I'd rather spend that time with my loved ones. Maybe when my children are older...

Being fully present is crucial. If you try to juggle everything without clear boundaries, you end up giving mediocre attention to everything. But when you set specific times and parameters, you can really shine. For young women who feel they need to choose between their career and personal life, remember that setting boundaries is your secret weapon. It helps you stay balanced and focused.





# Q&A

## Siphokazi Mziba

Credit Executive: Africa Credit Risk

### Q: Can you tell us about your background and how you ended up in your current role?

**A:** So, I grew up in Durban and I was raised by a single mom. Growing up, education was always a big deal in our house. I knew that if I worked hard in school, it would open doors for me and my family. I worked hard at school and got into a great high school in KwaZulu-Natal, which led to a great scholarship that enabled me to attend the University of Cape Town. At university I decided to study accounting. I initially explored different options to complete my articles and found my home in the Nedbank CA training programme. And it was this programme that enabled me to rotate through various specialities in Nedbank CIB, giving me a broad perspective and flexibility early on. It was during my articles where I discovered my love for credit, and the space afforded me the ability to explore various industries.

### Q: What drives you in your work every day?

**A:** The dynamic nature of my work and the opportunity to contribute to impactful projects really keeps me going. I love being part of innovative projects that push boundaries in a calculated and structured way. The variety of sectors I deal with keeps things interesting. Plus, I'm motivated by my family – my husband, my 3-year-old, and my 3 dogs. Balancing work and family are challenging but also incredibly rewarding.

### Q: How do you balance your career and personal life, especially as a woman in a demanding field?

**A:** It's all about setting strict boundaries and being intentional with my time. I've gained confidence through building expertise in my area, which helps reduce the nervousness that comes with new challenges. Asking for help, delegating tasks, and keeping open communication with my support system at home are essential. I also make sure to switch off from work to spend quality time with my family. It's a constant balancing act, but being organised and having a supportive network make it manageable.

### Q: What advice would you give to your younger self?

**A:** I'd tell my younger self to be patient and kind to myself. It's so important to work on that inner

voice that doubts one's abilities. Over time, I've realised my value and that I deserve to pursue my goals. Being kind to yourself and patient with your progress is crucial. This self-compassion helps overcome self-doubt and allows you to put your best foot forward in both your career and personal life.

### Q: How have you dealt with imposter syndrome, especially as a woman of colour in a male dominated industry?

**A:** Imposter syndrome is something we all face, especially women of colour in male dominated industries. For me, preparation and knowledge are key. Being well-prepared boosts my confidence. It's also crucial to identify the aspects of a role that trigger imposter syndrome and focus on building skills in those areas. Building a strong network of mentors and peers is vital – they offer support and validate your capabilities. This external validation helps combat imposter syndrome, because it's not just you who sees your potential; others recognise it too.

### Q: How do you stay ahead in a constantly changing field like mining for example?

**A:** Staying ahead in mining involves a lot of reading and keeping up with industry news. But beyond that, you need to get out there with site visits, meet with managers, and understand the operations on the ground. For me, banking the rest of Africa can't be done from an office in Johannesburg. You must engage with the local dynamics and understand the unique challenges and opportunities each country presents. Networking, attending conferences, and leveraging mentors and peers also play a role in staying ahead.

### Q: What are your future aspirations?

**A:** I'm passionate about leading change. I want to lead in a dynamic way and make a broader impact. Currently, I'm building and diversifying my skill sets in preparation for future leadership roles. When the right opportunity comes, I want to be ready with the skills, knowledge, and insights necessary to make a meaningful contribution to the organisation.

### Q: What would you change in Nedbank if you had a magic wand right now?

**A:** CIB is focusing on it now, but further

emphasising the need for bolder strategies groupwide. When we decide on a key strategy, we need to put everything behind it and ensure everyone is aligned (unity across clusters). We are great at being a green, sustainable bank, and I believe we can apply the same boldness to other strategies to stay innovative and competitive as competition is fierce.

### Q: What excites you about Africa?

**A:** Africa's untapped potential is immense. The people are vibrant and dynamic, with a strong sense of resilience and adaptability. Despite the challenges, there's so much room for development and investment, and I believe we can make a real difference. The continent's resources and the unique perspectives of its people make Africa an exciting place to work and grow.

### Q: What advice would you give to a young woman who wants to learn from you?

**A:** First, be kind to yourself and work on your inner voice. Second, be intentional about your career. Figure out what you enjoy and where you want to end up, and then take steps to get there early on. Look for mentors, build your network, and be proactive in your career planning.

### Q: What do you do for fun?

**A:** I have a bit of an obsession with horror movies. I even go to the cinema alone to watch them. I also love boxing to relieve stress and keep fit. Travelling is something I love; it keeps me grounded and allows me to experience new places and cultures. I balance my love of food with my fitness routine, trying new workouts to keep things interesting. Most of my friends are in Cape Town, so I often visit them, combining my love for food, fitness, and friendship.







# Q&A

## Sujal Roy

Associate Principal, Regulatory and Sponsor at Corporate Finance

### **Q: Please share the story of your career journey and of what led you to take up your position in corporate finance.**

**A:** My journey into corporate finance wasn't exactly as I had planned. I worked in the Sponsor Team at Rand Merchant Bank (RMB) in 2008 and that served as an incredible training ground – I discovered a passion for the job and a dynamic environment. After 4 years at RMB, I worked for a decade at various smaller firms and with brilliant leaders who contributed significantly to my professional and personal growth. I've been with Nedbank for 20 months now as part of the Regulatory and Sponsor Team within the Corporate Finance Advisory Division.

My career path has been anything but linear – I stumbled and encountered a few setbacks in the past 10 years. Experiencing failure, followed by hard-won recovery, has made me more resilient and adaptable. My ability to bounce back from setbacks has been crucial in my career and I have managed to land on my feet time and again.

### **Q: Did you always know you wanted to work in finance?**

**A:** Not at all. I've also worked in other fields, like management consulting, and even lived and worked in Shanghai teaching English to adults. What draws me to corporate finance is continuous learning and the varied nature of the transactions I work on. I like to keep busy and move – implementing systems and processes and teaching and training to ensure that a high standard is set and maintained. My role provides me with the opportunity to do all these things.

### **Q: What skills are essential for success in corporate finance and advisory roles?**

**A:** Firstly, a passion for business and making connections, along with a strong work ethic, is paramount due to the sheer volume of work and the need for perfection. Attention to detail, the ability to think laterally and learn quickly, resilience, a thick skin, and skills of negotiating nuanced outcomes are all crucial. The last 2 especially come with time and experience.

### **Q: How do you ensure your team stays motivated and aligned with Nedbank's strategic goals?**

**A:** I strive to make life easier for those around

me, whether they are above, below, or next to me in the hierarchy and I try to drive and enable practices and behaviour that support this. I have a strong sense of fair play and often think from a team perspective. I believe that surrounding yourself with intelligent, capable, and purpose-driven people enables organisational growth. I create a space of belonging by leading by example, being considerate, and understanding my colleagues' motivations. This naturally aligns the team with Nedbank's goals and successes.

### **Q: Do you think women face more obstacles in the finance sector than men? How have you overcome these challenges?**

**A:** Personally I haven't faced male gender bias fully. Surprisingly I've encountered more unsupportive higher-ranking females than males in my career. This has always been jarring, considering that I come from a family of strong, supportive women. However, as future leaders, my peers and I are determined to change this narrative. We aim to uplift and support our junior colleagues and create environments where everyone can thrive. Fortunately, I am now seeing the emergence of strong, emotionally secure, diverse female achievers in corporate finance.

### **Q: What opportunities exist for women in corporate finance today, and how can they be best leveraged?**

**A:** At the start of my career I struggled to find a role model and didn't have a mentor either. With the proliferation of social media I am heartened to see inspiring women of colour who share their time, wisdom and energy with us. I routinely and in my own time attend female networking and leadership events.

It is crucial to drive a narrative of understanding and upliftment, creating environments where uncomfortable truths can safely be spoken about without fear of penalty or censure and where we continue to hold ourselves and others accountable.

### **Q: What emerging trends do you see having the most impact on corporate finance in the next 5 years?**

**A:** The corporate finance landscape is constantly evolving, and we are already seeing the trend towards increased automation, artificial intelligence, alternative energy sources and a growing call for sustainability and

environmental, social and governance factors to shape investment decisions. We live in the information age and are marching bravely towards sustainability. Firms that are aware of this and agile enough to act upon these trends will likely succeed.

### **Q: How, do you think, can the corporate finance industry better support and promote diversity and inclusion, especially for women?**

**A:** Creating environments that support and promote diversity and inclusion is not a tick-box exercise but rather a behavioural change over time. An organisation's culture flows down from its leaders.

We live in a constantly changing world and are a diverse team of people from different backgrounds, cultures, and lifestyles. Individuals that are self-aware enough to recognise this as well as disregard any of their own unconscious biases, that act in an independent and fair manner often succeed together with uniting people and thus, organisations towards a greater purpose and higher achievement.







# Q&A

## Gertrude Dube

Head of Public Sector, Construction and Technology, Media and Telecommunications Finance

### Q: Gertrude, can you tell us about your background and what led you to your current role at Nedbank?

**A:** Absolutely! My story is quite wide ranging, but I'll do my best to condense it. My parents were in exile in Botswana, where I grew up and did most of my schooling. I also earned my BCom degree at a university in Botswana. After that, I became a chartered management accountant. Back in the day it was challenging to qualify as a chartered accountant in South Africa, especially from a foreign country, so I ended up in the United Kingdom, sponsored by the Council for Refugees, to write my Chartered Institute of Management Accountants exams. In 1991, after I had completed my studies, I returned to Botswana and started my career at Zimbank in credit risk and regulatory reporting. This experience gave me a solid foundation in banking.

My career brought me to South Africa, where I joined Telkom, managing the finance function of their fleet leasing division. I was responsible for an operating budget of around R600 million and managing a fleet of vehicles including panel shops. After a successful stint there, I felt the need to return to banking, which led me to Nedcor Investment Bank, Nedbank's investment banking arm at the time. I've subsequently held various roles, from structured finance to my current position in public sector banking, heading up a team focused on infrastructure development and other critical sectors.

### Q: What excites you most about working in the public sector?

**A:** The public sector is often misunderstood and underestimated, but it's where we can make the most meaningful impact. This sector drives crucial infrastructure projects that are the backbone of our economy, such as rail, ports, pipelines, and energy. Despite challenges like load-shedding, institutions such as Transnet, Eskom and Sanral are vital. Funding these projects not only supports economic growth but also improves the quality of life for many communities, especially those that are underserved.

As a South African bank, we pride ourselves on using our financial expertise to do good. This means driving projects that might not be glamorous but are essential for societal development. Public sector projects align with several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation) and SDG 9 (industry, innovation, and infrastructure). These projects directly impact communities, providing infrastructure that wouldn't exist without our funding. What excites me the most is knowing that our work makes a tangible difference in people's lives.

### Q: How have your experiences shaped your approach to your work and leadership?

**A:** Joining the banking sector a few years after 1994, exclusion was still prevalent, and it took a lot of negotiation and resilience to navigate that environment. These experiences taught me the value of diversity and inclusion. When we talk about the Rainbow Nation and the value of diversity, we acknowledge that everyone brings something unique to the table because of their different backgrounds and

experiences. I've made it a point to mentor young African females, especially those from rural areas, helping them navigate and succeed in this environment. I believe in creating a culture where everyone feels included and valued. This commitment is driven by my belief in giving back and helping others overcome the challenges I faced. While overt discrimination might not be as blatant today, unconscious bias still exists. People often don't realise the impact of their words and actions, and part of my role is to address these biases and promote a more inclusive environment.

### Q: Can you tell us more about your mother's influence on you?

**A:** My mother, who is turning 91 this October, has been a tremendous influence. She was a strict teacher who valued education and hard work. Despite the challenges, including my father's early death, she raised us with a strong sense of discipline and determination. Her stern but loving approach taught me the importance of perseverance and striving for excellence.

She taught us the importance of education and working hard to achieve our goals. For example, she would check our homework meticulously, ensuring it was done correctly, sometimes even late into the night. Her influence has been a guiding force in my life, reminding me that I can achieve anything regardless of others' perceptions if I apply myself. This belief in self-determination and resilience has been crucial in my career and personal life.

### Q: What advice would you give to young women aspiring to enter the banking sector?

**A:** I'd advise them to be clear about their motivations and understand that hard work is essential. Work-life balance is a choice and, while it's important, young women must be prepared to put in long hours, especially when required. Many young professionals are attracted to investment banking because they perceive it as glamorous, but it's far from that. They need to understand the fundamentals of banking, not just the specific products they work with.

It's also important to look out for mentorship and be willing to learn from every experience. Understanding core aspects of banking, such as treasury and credit, is vital. They should never be afraid to voice their opinions and contribute meaningfully. I always tell young professionals to come prepared with solutions, not just problems. This proactive approach is crucial for their development and success.

For young women, navigating unconscious biases and asserting their presence is especially important. They need to understand that their unique perspectives are valuable and that they should never shy away from expressing their ideas. Mentoring young African females is a passion of mine because I've seen first-hand how transformative it can be.

### Q: How, outside of work, do you unwind and manage stress?

**A:** Golf is my go-to activity for unwinding. It requires patience, time and focus, and I find it incredibly

therapeutic. My brother-in-law introduced me to it and it allows me to think and reflect on various aspects of my life and work. Whether I'm having a great day on the course or not, it teaches me resilience and the importance of a positive mindset.

Playing golf also offers a wonderful opportunity to meet new people and even to conduct business in a relaxed setting: I've met many interesting people on the golf course and have had productive business discussions there. Additionally, my daily commute provides time for reflection and preparation, helping me stay balanced and ready for the day ahead.

### Q: What role does mentorship play in your leadership style, and why is it important to you?

**A:** Mentorship is a cornerstone of my leadership style. Having never had a mentor myself, I understand the challenges of navigating a career without guidance. This drives my commitment to mentoring young professionals, especially African females from rural areas. These young women often face a unique set of challenges and cultural barriers, which can impede their progress. By providing mentorship, I aim to help them build confidence, develop critical thinking skills and navigate the corporate environment.

Mentorship is more than career advice; it's about helping individuals recognise their potential and understand their worth. I teach mentees to voice their opinions confidently and approach problems with a solution-oriented mindset. By mentoring these young professionals, I want to create a more inclusive and supportive workplace where everyone can thrive.

### Q: Given your experience, what key lessons have you learned that you'd like to share with aspiring bankers?

**A:** One of the critical lessons I've learned is the importance of understanding the basics of banking. It's about more than just the specific products but about understanding the overall business, including treasury and credit. This broad understanding is crucial for making informed decisions and managing risk.

Another important lesson is the value of hard work and perseverance. Success in banking requires dedication and a willingness to work long hours when necessary. It's also essential to be proactive and come prepared with solutions, not just problems. This approach demonstrates competence and builds confidence and respect among peers and superiors.

Lastly, I've learned the importance of creating diversity and inclusion. Different perspectives bring valuable insights, and creating an environment where everyone feels valued and included leads to better decision-making and a more dynamic workplace.





# Q&A

## Genevieve Naidoo

Property Finance Divisional Executive of Valuations, Project Management and Sustainability

### Q: Tell us about your background and how you got into property finance.

**A:** I took the road that was less travelled: While my siblings entered mainstream fields like accounting and engineering, I pursued a Bachelor of Science with honours in quantity surveying (QS). This choice was quite unexpected for my parents. After graduating, I joined a small QS company in Johannesburg, working on projects like the AIDS Research Centre in Hillbrow and the upgrade of Main Street in Johannesburg CBD. These projects were remarkable not only for their social impact but also because, as a female QS of colour, I stood out in an industry that was not diverse at the time. One day I stumbled on a newspaper article about a graduate programme at a bank. I knew nothing about banking, being a brick-and-mortar person, but I decided to give it a shot. Out of 2 000 applicants I was one of the 17 chosen. That marked the beginning of my journey in banking and property finance in 2005. Initially, the programme was supposed to last a year, but after 6 months I was offered a permanent position. From there my career took me through various roles at Standard Bank and Nedbank. I've been with Nedbank since, focusing on property finance, sustainability, and innovation, creating value-added services for clients.

### Q: What excites you about property finance?

**A:** It's called the property bug – you either love it or hate it. I absolutely love it. There's something incredibly satisfying about seeing buildings come to life and knowing that you played a part in those projects. While buildings get a bad rep because of their intensive carbon footprints, there is also a positive impact, with jobs created and communities uplifted. It's about the tangible results and the impact you can see. When we started the Property Finance Africa business at Nedbank, it was exciting for me because it involved breaking new ground. When I was interviewed, I mentioned wanting to be part of Nedbank's first Africa transaction for property finance. Three months later we closed our first deal in Kenya. It's incredibly fulfilling to be part of something new and challenging and to see the real-world impact of our work.

### Q: What challenges have you faced as a woman in the property sector?

**A:** The sector has evolved, but it wasn't easy when I started. As a female QS of colour, I often faced disregard and disrespect on construction sites. There were many instances that were disheartening. I realised quickly that I had to constantly prove my competence and earn respect, which my male counterparts did not necessarily have to struggle through. I realised life was not fair or equal, and this would be tougher than I would have imagined. Support structures and mentors were crucial. I remember many harsh instances as a junior QS where clients would disregard me. The sector wasn't transformed. It was tough but having good support structures really helped. I've had great mentors and sponsors who backed me, believed in me, and provided guidance. This support has been essential in helping me overcome obstacles.

### Q: Can you tell us about the mentors who influenced you?

**A:** I have been fortunate to have had many great mentors and sponsors. They have provided guidance, support and different perspectives. I have enjoyed the conversations, even though some have been tough to digest. Good mentors give authentic guidance from their experiences and help you navigate your career, even when uncomfortable. It is important to be open to feedback and ensure adequate self-reflection when

embarking on a mentorship journey. Then synthesise the information and be sure to use the tools.

### Q: What achievements are you particularly proud of?

**A:** In March 2023 we had the first Excellence in Design for Greater Efficiencies (EDGE)-certified green building expert in our business. The accolade was a milestone for Property Finance and Nedbank as it was the first of its kind among all banks in South Africa. Over the next few months we set up the first fully fledged EDGE expert team in banking to assist clients with certification, which is in strong alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals the bank has adopted. The first certified green building project at Nedbank was a significant milestone. Our team achieved this with the Nexus 1 office building certification in the Waterfall precinct in December 2023. It's incredibly humbling to know we did something groundbreaking and positively shifted the market. We have received many accolades for the technology and innovations we have developed. From internal recognition as Top Team in CIB to industry awards, the journey thus far has been exciting and rewarding.

### Q: How do you balance your professional and personal life?

**A:** Balancing work and personal life takes deliberate effort. I make time for the things that are important to me, such as family and friends as well as activities that interest me, like padel or Pilates. Sometimes, I multitask by listening to an audiobook on the treadmill. Women, especially those with children, face additional burdens. Organisations must support women through different life phases, like returning to work after maternity leave. I've seen women struggle to reintegrate into the workforce after having children, trying to be their best while juggling multiple new responsibilities. Menopause, which was previously taboo, is another challenge women are now vocal about. Organisations that support women through these phases will become employers of choice. It's about making deliberate choices and ensuring what's important gets the attention it deserves.

### Q: What advice would you give to young women entering this space?

**A:** Be open to listening and absorbing from great leaders. Early-career professionals often have a set plan, but life doesn't always follow a straight path. Embrace opportunities, even if they aren't part of your original plan. My role in real estate credit wasn't part of my career plan, but it turned out to be a fascinating and enriching experience. Being open to unexpected opportunities is critical. It's part of a career journey and helps you grow in ways you might not have anticipated. Also, enjoy what you do: When you are passionate about things that are important to you, you can turn lemons into lemonade. Be self-reflective; this is a great skill to ensure you learn from your failures, you take what serves you, and you discard what doesn't. Every experience is an opportunity to learn.

### Q: How do you unwind?

**A:** I'm a wine enthusiast and have completed some studies through the Cape Wine Academy. One day I'd love to make my own bubbly or Chardonnay. I am busy with a neuro-linguistics programming practitioner course, which helps me understand and influence people. I find it fascinating to learn how people think and behave. And in the roles we fulfil, it is an art. I also love listening to audiobooks, usually while on the treadmill. My last read was *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo*, in which I found a great escape from the chaos of a busy world. I spend time with family, especially my dad, who always has fascinating

stories about growing up through the apartheid days, the Group Areas Act, and the 1949 riots. Cooking is another happy place for me, especially when entertaining at home.

### Q: What legacy do you want to leave?

**A:** I would like to be recognised for my contributions to the sector, shifting orthodox thinking and promoting a low-carbon environment. Recycling and reusing materials, renewable energy, energy efficiency in buildings, and water efficiency are at the top of my mind, especially in the South African context. Just like with the global effort to close the hole in the ozone layer, collective action can achieve great results. I believe we can do the same with current environmental challenges. I want to be part of the solution, ensuring we leave the planet in a better state for future generations.

### Q: How do you see the future of property finance?

**A:** Environmental, social and governance (ESG) considerations as well as climate resilience will be key themes that will require due consideration in the sector. Many of our clients have commenced on this journey but we still have a long way to go. Considering that the built environment is a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions globally, the sector will have to change. Sustainability is here to stay, and we are seeing a move across client segments focusing on preserving value through greener and lower-carbon-emitting buildings. Banks will need to partner with the clients in their sustainability journeys. The impact of climate change has been hugely underestimated. Tornadoes, flooding, and wildfires are just examples of what the South African market has experienced, which is mostly unprecedented and has significant implications in the insurance space.

One key aspect of sustainability is value preservation through green buildings. Property owners want good tenants, stable cash flows, and reduced operational costs, which sustainable buildings offer. But the expense is a huge inhibitor. Greening a building costs money, and the cost of certification creates a further barrier to entry. Through the Green Residential Development Bond issuance, we could provide up to 4% back to clients for these costs, which helped create the impetus and interest in the market. And many other banks have now followed suit. We also created an in-house team of green building certification experts to help clients on this journey. There are under 1 500 certified buildings in South Africa, and as a sector we have a massive journey ahead.

### Q: What changes would you like to see in promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the property sector?

**A:** The sector has come a long way, but there's still much to do, especially at the board level, where female representation is lacking. Inclusive teams bring richer, more diverse thinking and more informed decision-making. We need to go beyond ticking boxes and leverage the opportunities that diverse teams bring.







# Q&A

## Ilana van Schalkwyk

Sector Lead of ICT

### **Q: Ilana let's start with your journey. Why ICT, and how did you get started?**

**A:** Information, communication and technology (ICT) has always been fascinating to me. I started my career at an international bank, working from the ground up in various roles to understand the bank's operational make-up. I've had diverse exposure within the financial services sector, but ICT stood out because it's dynamic and integral to every country's digital journey. I wanted to be part of the digital evolution, especially from a banking perspective, to build my reputation in the ICT sector. Embracing the challenge, I stepped out of my comfort zone, initially covering the manufacturing and diversified sectors and then moving to the dynamic world of ICT. Technology is an intricate part of every country's digital journey and has an impact on its gross domestic product. Being part of this sector allows me to contribute to these broader economic goals, which is both exciting and fulfilling.

### **Q: Tell us about your role at Nedbank within the ICT space.**

**A:** My personality naturally leans towards helping others, which fits in well with my career journey. As the ICT sector lead, I establish strategies aligned with what's developing in the sector. This involves identifying key emerging themes and opportunities. I thrive on the excitement of the ICT sector's fast-paced environment and the opportunity to shape strategies that keep us ahead of the curve. My role involves constant learning and adaptation, ensuring that we meet the clients core banking requirements.

### **Q: What sets Nedbank apart in the ICT sector?**

**A:** Nedbank's strengths in the ICT sector lie in our focus on Green energy solutions and ESG initiatives, which align well with the sector's objectives. Data centres, for instance, are high consumers of energy and are increasingly looking for alternative energy solutions to meet the high energy requirements. Our strong foundation in banking the telcos, combined with our shift towards funding the growth within the Fibre and Data centre segments, positions us well to meet the banking requirements within the ICT sector. We are constantly exploring new ways to support our clients and enable the growth within ICT sector.

### **Q: Which technology excites you most within the ICT space?**

**A:** Predictive data is incredibly exciting. It integrates elements of psychology, providing key insights on consumer buying patterns and how they interact with online goods and services. AI is another fascinating area, particularly as it

relates to smart homes and the Internet of Things. This glimpse into the future keeps me engaged in the ICT fast lane. The continuous evolution of digital technology is both challenging and thrilling. The possibilities that AI and predictive data bring are vast, and they keep me motivated to stay at the forefront of technological advancements. It's about imagining how these technologies will shape our future and preparing for that today.

### **Q: How do you measure success in your role and for your team?**

**A:** Success in my role is deeply rooted in teamwork. Our client coverage model is based on strong relationships. It's about understanding the client's business intimately and providing solutions that make sense to their changing business requirements. This requires always having your finger on the pulse, especially in the fast-paced digital world of ICT. We measure success by the strength of our client relationships, the relevance of our solutions. My team and I work closely with the product teams, leveraging each other's strengths to deliver the best outcomes for our clients. The dynamic nature of our sector demands constant innovation and adaptability, and our success hinges on our ability to meet these demands effectively.

### **Q: Mentorship seems important to you. How has it shaped your career, and what does it mean to you?**

**A:** Mentorship has been critical throughout my career. I've had multiple mentors who guided me and kept me on the right path. Mentorship is a two-way street; it feeds both the mentor and the mentee. I also mentor others and find it incredibly rewarding. For example, I helped an introverted team member come out of her shell by giving her small challenges, like greeting two people daily. It's the small acts of kindness that can make a huge difference in someone's career. Mentorship has not only shaped my professional journey but also my personal growth. It's about giving back and empowering others to reach their potential. The satisfaction of seeing someone grow and succeed is immense, and it reinforces the importance of supportive and nurturing relationships in the workplace.

### **Q: Tell us a bit about your personal story?**

**A:** I'm just an ordinary girl with an extraordinary story. I've faced challenges, including a health scare during Covid, when I was diagnosed with breast cancer. It was a difficult time, but I overcame it with the support of my family, team and clients. This experience made me realise my strength and resilience. It also taught me the importance of vulnerability and the kindness of others. Despite these challenges, I've continued

to push forward in my career, finding strength in overcoming adversity. My personal journey has been one of growth and learning, constantly evolving as I navigate the complexities of both my professional and personal life.

### **Q: What advice would you give to women entering the ICT space?**

**A:** My advice is to open yourself up to learning and stay patient. The ICT space is dynamic, and keeping up with the trends is essential. Read, study, and never stop educating yourself. Hard work and patience will eventually pay off. It's also crucial to recognise that change is constant, and you have a voice in this sector. Embrace the opportunities, and don't be discouraged by the challenges. The path may not always be easy, but persistence and a willingness to learn will lead to success. Believe in yourself and your abilities, and remember that every step, no matter how small, is progress.

### **Q: If you could wave a magic wand for a day, what would you change within the sector?**

**A:** I would focus on getting more young people involved, particularly in underserved areas. Educating and involving them in the digital economy should be the norm, not the exception. This would ensure a more inclusive and dynamic future for the ICT sector. By accelerating efforts to reach underserved communities, we can tap into a wealth of talent and potential that is currently underutilised. This approach not only benefits the individuals but also strengthens the sector.

### **Q: Lastly, share some fun facts about yourself.**

**A:** Well, I'm a good cook, especially when it comes to Indian and Asian cuisine. I love good music and I'm a secret nerd - I love reading. It feeds my soul and keeps me inspired. Cooking is my creative outlet and allows me to unwind and express myself in a different way. Conversely, reading provides a constant source of knowledge and inspiration, fuelling my passion for continuous learning and personal development.





# Q&A

## Janet Kluever

Principal: Transactional Services Sales  
Power and Infrastructure

**Q: Tell us about your background and what led you to your current role at Nedbank Corporate and Investment Banking.**

**A:** After qualifying as a chartered accountant, I began my career in various financial and commercial roles. However, I soon realised that I wanted something more challenging and decided to venture into building my own consulting business. In a twist of fate, before the end of my second year as an entrepreneur, I was enticed to join a previous employer to focus on business development and various corporate finance activities.

After a fruitful 10-year tenure, the opportunity to work in banking presented itself, and I eagerly seized it, leading to my current role at Nedbank Corporate and Investment Banking (CIB). This journey has been incredibly fulfilling, and I am most grateful to the individuals who afforded me these opportunities.

**Q: What was the defining moment that steered you towards the energy sector?**

**A:** The significant implications of South Africa's energy challenges, particularly their effects on investments and job creation, have played a crucial role in guiding my career path towards the energy sector. The opportunity to be part of the solution to such a critical challenge is highly motivating. I am passionate about making a difference – not only for our clients and the bank, but also for the broader community – knowing that it impacts the livelihood of every South African.

**Q: Tell us about your team and how you manage them.**

**A:** The Power and Infrastructure Sector Team within Transactional Services is driven by purpose. Our focus is on optimisation and innovation in the renewable energy space to provide the best solutions and add value for our clients. We have a dedicated sales team supported by an extensive back-office team, and every individual plays a critical role in the ultimate success of the team.

Our core responsibilities encompass providing short-term funding, trade, as well as global- and transactional-banking solutions to clients. Each member of the team is an extension of our work family, and we look out for and support each other in both professional and personal capacities.

**Q: Balancing work and personal life in such a demanding field must be challenging. How do you manage it?**

**A:** Balancing work and personal life is an ongoing challenge, but prioritisation is key. I am fortunate to have a supportive partner who understands and is patient when I need to focus all my efforts to meet the demands of work. I rely on a strong support system to handle the day-to-day needs of the household, allowing me to be emotionally and psychologically present for my children. Whenever we have the opportunity, we make sure to spend quality time together as a family.

**Q: Mentorship seems important to you. Can you tell us more about that?**

**A:** Mentorship is a critical aspect, especially for young professionals entering the workforce. Early in my career, I found myself in a male-dominated industry and was fortunate to have a mentor who helped me navigate the environment and find my voice. Now I strive to pay it forward by guiding and empowering others. I encourage young professionals, especially women, to be confident, learn from their mistakes and assert themselves. Mentorship plays a vital role in empowering the next generation.

**Q: What are your views on the shift towards renewable energy in South Africa?**

**A:** The shift towards renewable energy is both inevitable and crucial, as highlighted by the historic and current challenges in the energy sector. Increased access to renewable energy sources is fundamental to the broader goals of environmental sustainability and social equity.

**Q: Where do you see the energy sector in South Africa in 10 years?**

**A:** In the next decade the energy sector in South Africa will undergo a dynamic and transformative period. The transition to renewable energy, advancements in storage technologies, and the evolution towards a decentralised generation and distribution network are key drivers of change. I believe the development of a trading platform that enables free trade of electricity and other innovative approaches will optimise energy supply and overall stability for the sector. I look forward to witnessing the success of achieving a sustainable and resilient energy sector as well as the derived opportunities

for economic development and job creation.

**Q: What role does Nedbank CIB play in this transition?**

**A:** Nedbank CIB plays a crucial role in the renewable energy transition of South Africa. We are a leader in financing renewable energy projects and contribute to developments that shape the sector. Our dedicated teams continuously innovate to provide the most economical solutions, ultimately benefiting end users. We are committed to sustainability and creating a greener future for all.

**Q: How do you unwind after a busy day?**

**A:** There is nothing like catching up with my children to take my mind off work-related matters. I enjoy listening to their unique perspectives and insights on various topics. Their sense of humour is contagious and typically the highlight of my day.

**Q: What legacy do you want to leave?**

**A:** I aspire to be remembered as a professional who brought unwavering energy, positivity, innovation, and mentorship. I believe in fostering a culture of continuous improvement and making a meaningful difference to our clients and the community.

**Q: What advice would you give to a young woman entering the energy sector?**

**A:** The energy sector presents numerous prospects for those seeking to make a positive impact. Recognise the privilege to live with purpose and strive to contribute meaningfully every day.







# Q&A

## Rajshree Mistry

Regional Head of Transactional Services Sales

### **Q: Can you share your background and how you got to where you are today?**

**A:** I am one of 5 children and married with 2 teenage boys. Due to our family circumstances and limited opportunities while growing up, a strong sense of independence and responsibility was instilled in me. The overarching pathway to achieve this was to ensure that we were educated so that we could progress in life. These traits have guided me throughout my personal and professional life.

After matriculating I started working and had to study part-time to complete my BCompt degree. I completed my articles at PwC. After qualifying as a chartered accountant, I was selected for a secondment to the United Kingdom (UK) for 6 months. This was an incredible experience (being my first trip overseas!) that exposed me to different cultures and broadened my horizons from a work perspective.

After returning from the UK, I joined a new team at PwC Pretoria focusing on due diligence. We merged with the Johannesburg team and I progressed to senior management level. In 2004 I was approached by a former colleague to join Nedbank and have grown in various roles since then.

### **Q: What made you join Nedbank, and how has your career grown since then?**

**A:** Nedbank formed a new team called Specialised Debt with the focus of providing our corporate clients with long-term funding. My financial, analytical and business skills in unpacking and understanding corporates and identifying risks in their business complemented their requirements. This role enabled me to unlock the entire funding value chain from a client's initial request to providing financing. During my career at Nedbank I've held a variety of positions, including sector lead for a public sector portfolio, focusing on transport entities. This role really deepened my understanding of the industry and its challenges, as well as contributed to the development of my relational managerial skills.

When Client Coverage was restructured, I moved to the Transactional Services product area, initially focusing on working capital funding, and with subsequent restructures this expanded into the multitude of Transactional Services offerings. Although challenging, these

restructures offered opportunities for growth and learning, helping me build resilience and adaptability.

### **Q: As a woman in a historically male-dominated field, what challenges have you faced, and how have you overcome them?**

**A:** Being initially one of the few females in the team at Nedbank, I had to ensure that I was technically strong and had the necessary skills set to complement the team. Getting acknowledged for my skills and knowledge was not always easy. However, Nedbank's supportive and inclusive culture has been crucial to my achievement, helping me overcome any challenges.

I've worked in a number of sectors over the years and I am currently the Regional Head for 3 sectors in Transactional Services Sales: Automotive, Transport, Freight and Logistics; Mining and Chemicals; and Power and Infrastructure. This position requires knowledge of value chains and how different sectors complement each other. For instance, new energy deals in the power sector are dependent on the strategies of mining sector clients. This knowledge enables us to provide our clients with comprehensive solutions to support their business growth strategies.

### **Q: You've mentioned the importance of family support in your career. Can you elaborate on that and tell us what advice you would give to young women aspiring to enter the banking and finance sector?**

**A:** My family has been instrumental in enabling growth in my professional career, providing me with unwavering support. I am thankful for their contribution to my life, which enables me to navigate various obstacles while at the same time remaining grounded and balanced.

For young women aspiring to enter the banking and finance sector in sales, I would suggest that a solid understanding of financial and credit fundamentals is crucial. Building relationships within and outside your organisation is vital for long-term success. Additionally, it is critical to have good interpersonal and communication skills, particularly in a sales role.

Above all, maintaining a positive 'can do' attitude is essential. Although sales challenges can seem daunting, having an optimistic mindset will help

you excel and provide your clients with effective service.

### **Q: What changes have you observed in your industry over the years, and how do you want to be remembered professionally?**

**A:** The future of the banking and finance industry is vibrant, with many opportunities for innovation and growth. At Nedbank Transactional Services, we provide comprehensive solutions to our clients, covering everything from short-term facilities and asset-based finance to trade finance and day-to-day transactional banking. We aim to create a unique value proposition that sets us apart from our competitors. It's a journey, and we're always evolving to meet our clients' needs. It's all about 'hunger for success' and that is what drives our growth.

The automotive and transport industry has seen significant shifts in gender diversity over the past few years. Women are now more prevalent in senior roles, such as chief executive officer and chief financial officer and those in treasury. This shift is encouraging and shows that there is plenty of room for women to advance in these industries. It's an exciting time to be part of this transformation, and I'm looking forward to seeing even more progress in years to come.

Legacy, for me, means being remembered for the positive impact I have had on people in mentoring and contributing to their development, enabling them to grow alongside me and thus achieving greater success in all our endeavours. This is underpinned by my deep values of responsibility, resilience and integrity.





# Q&A

## Ronelle Singh

Principal: Syndication and Distribution

**Q: Where did your finance journey begin, and what led you to pursue a career in this space?**

**A:** My journey in the financial markets started back in 1998 at a state-owned company called the Trans-Caledon Tunnel Authority (TCTA). I was responsible mainly for the funding and management of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project. Over my 13 years at TCTA I held various positions, from accounts clerk to junior dealer and eventually dealer strategist. Funnily enough, I initially applied for a receptionist position, but during the interview the CFO saw potential in me for a bigger role. That moment was a game-changer for me. I joined Nedbank in 2008 and have since moved up to my current role as Principal in the Syndication and Distribution Team, specialising in bond distribution.

**Q: What motivates you in your role at Nedbank Corporate and Investment Banking, and what do you enjoy most about your work?**

**A:** I'm a people person, so interacting with people from diverse groups and cultures really excites me. I love connecting borrowers and investors, structuring transactions that benefit everyone involved. My role is dynamic, allowing me to engage with C-suite executives, senior government officials, and various stakeholders, giving me a unique perspective on the financial markets. It's incredibly fulfilling to make a difference in the institutional market by providing much-needed credit. Plus, I enjoy the challenge of finding common ground between clients and investors, ensuring successful transactions.

**Q: What does a typical day look like for you in managing bond distribution?**

**A:** My day revolves around networking and relationship management. I spend a lot of time on the phone with investors, gathering market insights, discussing trends, and spotting transaction opportunities. While I'm part of a larger team, the bond distribution aspect is primarily my responsibility. Recently, I brought on a new team member to share my knowledge with and ensure continuity. Mentoring and investing in people is a big part of my job, and it's something I'm passionate about.

**Q: How have you navigated the challenges of working in a traditionally male-dominated industry?**

**A:** Navigating a male-dominated industry means leveraging my unique perspectives and experiences. I always make sure my voice

is heard. Preparation is key; I do thorough research on clients and their needs to guide conversations practically. Strong female role models, like my former CEO at TCTA, inspire me. She showed me how to own my space confidently. It's about continuous learning, being adaptable, and asserting my expertise.

I've been part of the Nedbank team that has received many awards such as the Investment Bank of the Year Award at the Environmental Finance Impact Awards 2021 for a R2 billion tier 2 issuance that was linked to a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), and the Local Currency ESG and Sustainable Finance Deal of the Year Award at the Bonds, Loans and Sukuk Africa Awards 2022 in recognition of our issuance of a R910 million SDG-linked subordinated additional tier 1 capital instrument. Also, I was a Nedbank Top Achiever in 2015 and Corporate and Investment Banking Top Team Achiever in 2022.

My personal story is one of resilience and determination. I empower and mentor other women and always strive to create opportunities for growth and development. I embrace my authenticity – bringing my whole self to work and leading with integrity, empathy, and inclusivity – and hope to inspire others to do the same.

**Q: How do you balance your professional responsibilities with your personal life?**

**A:** Balancing professional responsibilities with my personal life is crucial for sustained success and well-being. To achieve this balance, I prioritise self-care, set boundaries and lean on my support systems. Running has become a major part of my life and a way to de-stress. I've completed 2 Comrades Marathons and a few ultra-marathons, which has taught me about endurance, building mental strength, resilience and learning from failure. Setting boundaries is also crucial: I've learnt to say no when necessary to maintain a healthy work-life balance.

Spending time with my family, especially my 2 daughters and my beautiful granddaughter, and enjoying moments of doing nothing are equally important to me. These activities help me recharge and maintain perspective.

**Q: What advice would you give to a young woman aspiring to enter your field?**

**A:** Invest in yourself and your career. Embrace continuous learning and don't be afraid to be vulnerable and ask questions. Curiosity

and adaptability are key traits. Building strong relationships and networking with industry peers are essential since much of our work relies on these connections. Lastly, own your successes and use them to build your narrative. Recognise your achievements and let them speak for themselves.

**Q: If you could change anything for yourself and your team, what would it be?**

**A:** For myself, I wish I had been more assertive in owning my successes earlier in my career. It's important to acknowledge and communicate your achievements confidently. For my team, I would create an environment that supports psychological safety, encouraging open and honest conversations. I would also dispel the negative narrative around failure, promoting it as a stepping stone to success. Lastly, I would focus efforts on fostering an inclusive environment that empowers and encourages younger colleagues entering the bank to engage in open dialogue and ultimately feel valued in their respective roles.

**Fun facts**

I am a 2-time Comrades Marathon finisher, having completed my second race this year. My running journey started in May 2021, and I've since completed a few ultra-marathons and a few trail marathons too, with the Lesotho Ultra Trail being the most memorable. Running has become my absolute joy and a great way to de-stress.

My family and friends often ask me what's next after Comrades. My sights are set on climbing the legendary Mount Kilimanjaro. I thrive on challenging myself beyond my comfort zone, always testing my physical and mental limits. My colleagues would describe me as ambitious, hardworking, and strong-willed.







# Q&A

## Sibongile Hlongwane

Head: Commercial Banking  
and Retail Foreign Exchange Sales

**Q: Can you give us a bit of background about yourself and how your academic and early career experiences have shaped your approach to working in financial markets?**

**A:** I've been with Nedbank for my entire career, and I think my blood is green at this point. I started in a graduate programme with Peoples Bank, a small financial institution at that time. One memorable experience was a breakfast with the late Lot Ndlovu, where we were asked about our aspirations. I boldly claimed I wanted to be in treasury, not fully understanding what it entailed, but fascinated by it being at the heart of every organisation. Nedbank supported my curiosity, leading me to the market environment. My journey has been one of building relationships, looking for opportunities, and learning by doing.

I remember being seconded to the treasury briefly, which was eye-opening. It was initially intimidating, especially since the room was predominantly led by white males, but it was also exciting. Coming from Soweto, I felt like I had a lot to prove. My academic background was simple: I did a BCom, and seeing the practical application of what I'd learnt was fascinating. Over time I built relationships with people on the desk and made it known that I was interested in any opportunities. Eventually, 3 years later, I joined the market's environment, starting on the Money Market Desk, looking after retail clients. That was my introduction, and it's been a fulfilling journey ever since.

**Q: What's a lesser-known aspect of your role that you find fulfilling?**

**A:** One aspect I find truly exciting is the collaboration with different teams. I'm in Nedbank Corporate and Investment Banking (CIB), looking after Nedbank Commercial Banking clients, which means engaging with stakeholders outside of CIB. Their businesses are structured differently, so our interactions bring fresh perspectives and innovative solutions. It's challenging but fulfilling because these engagements lead to holistic client solutions to drive market growth. It's about leveraging our best practices and being open to learning from others.

Another fulfilling part of my role is using intuition in our flow business. We have daily engagements with clients, providing market insights and discussing their projections. Sometimes, a currency movement prompts me to reach out

to a client, leading to large trade executions. The thrill of executing a successful trade, especially when the client's strategy works out long-term, is incredibly fulfilling. It's about remembering client needs and being proactive in our engagements.

**Q: How have global economic trends and geopolitical events influenced your decision-making?**

**A:** They've taught me to be adaptable. The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of embracing change and adapting quickly to new circumstances. This requires us to be open to different perspectives, challenge our own biases, and be willing to pivot our approach in response to shifting circumstances. This adaptability and critical thinking are crucial in a rapidly changing market landscape.

**Q: What are your hobbies and interests outside of work that help you maintain a fresh perspective and bring creativity to your role?**

**A:** I absolutely love hiking! It's a great way to meet diverse people from different industries and age groups, which gives me new perspectives. One memorable hike at Farmhouse was with creatives and artistic individuals, in stark contrast to my usual life in financial services. I also enjoy travelling and observing fashion trends, which keeps me mindful about presentation. I even took up sewing, though unpicking mistakes is not my favourite part!

Hiking, in particular, teaches endurance. As you embark on a hike, you begin at a comfortable pace, but as the trail becomes more challenging, you learn to embrace the journey, appreciate the small wins and relish the exhilarating moments at the summit. It's a metaphor for work: even when chasing money, which motivates me daily, the journey is just as important as the destination. Hiking and these other activities help me return to work with a fresh perspective and renewed energy and creativity.

**Q: What role does emotional intelligence play in your interactions with clients and colleagues?**

**A:** Emotional intelligence is crucial. In transitioning from a senior dealer to a manager I've learnt to empathise and build trust. It's about understanding what drives people and communicating. Being a supportive voice has made a significant difference, especially during

challenging times like the Covid-19 period. It helps you build deeper connections and gain valuable market intelligence from clients.

Before I headed up the desk, I was a senior dealer, driven by execution and the thrill of closing deals. However, in management, emotional intelligence plays a vital role. It helps me empathise with both clients and employees, building trust and effective communication. Understanding people's motivations and being human in our interactions, especially during tough times, are critical. For example, during Covid-19 being a friendly voice and showing understanding went a long way in maintaining client relationships.

**Q: In what ways do you mentor or support other women looking to enter the financial market sector?**

**A:** I enjoy mentoring and supporting women, especially those from underprivileged communities who might not know much about our industry. I share my story and the effort behind my success, making it clear that achieving goals takes hard work and perseverance.

I spend time with young women at my church, telling them about my journey. Many people think that success is about material possessions. I make sure they understand that my journey didn't happen overnight. It started with small steps and a lot of hard work. Seeing someone from their own community achieve success can be a big motivator.

In addition to sharing my personal journey, I aim to impart practical insights and expertise in foreign exchange. I believe empowered decision-making is crucial, especially in underprivileged communities where access to information is limited. By sharing knowledge, I hope to equip individuals with the tools they need to make informed decisions that will lead to improved career choices and a brighter future.





# Women should submit.

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