

Sonwabise Mzinyathi

Acting Chief Investor Relations and Liaison Officer



POWERING POSSIBILITY

Q *What led you to pursue a career in investor relations?*

A I've always loved international trade, and have followed foreign direct investment decisions from a young age. I studied international relations, and my dream was that I'd graduate and go to work for Merrill Lynch or Lehman Brothers. My plans did not pan out; instead, I went on to become a Diplomat, working for the then Department of Foreign Affairs – now known as International Relations and Corporation (DIRCO) – before joining the private sector. I've since gone on to occupy senior external affairs roles, and now at Exxaro, I find myself working in investor relations, working for one of the greatest companies globally, and doing exactly what I dreamt of doing when I was at university. Except now, I come with the rich industry experience of public, private and NGO sectors, and the roles I've occupied have given me a 360 degree view of the markets. I wouldn't be as developed and capable of my role had my own plans panned out. My career has shown me that a career path is not always linear; the road less travelled is often the most painful, but also the most fulfilling, and it's taught me to be patient. Everything is as it should be.

Q *What was the toughest deal you have worked on and why?*

A I would say heading up the M&A communications in Africa for Thomson Reuters when the financial and risk business was being acquired by Blackstone to become Refinitiv and, shortly thereafter, acquired by the London Stock Exchange Group. Sleep was a luxury during that time. Running became

my outlet, and really helped my mental and physical health, but the end result was beautiful.

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

A Firstly, admit to yourself that things have gone wrong, and then ask yourself why they went wrong. The theory about asking why five times before you get to the real answer really works, so I'd suggest that you think deeper than just your first answer, because these are the learnings you'll take to your next deal.

Then you need to forgive yourself, because you'll always feel like you've let yourself and the organisation down; and even if it wasn't your fault, you'll still feel bad that it didn't work out.

Deals are painful, long journeys, and by the time the deal is done, you're attached to this project you've been working on for months and sometimes years. So, it's important to detach yourself.

Lastly, go on holiday. The holiday can be as simple as going to spend the weekend at your parents' house to hear them complain about the neighbours, their aching joints and to ask you to make tea every hour. Regardless, you'll need the reset.

Q *Did you have a mentor and, if so, what was the most important thing you learnt from them?*

A I have been privileged to have had both mentors and sponsors throughout my

career. They have taught me the value of lifting as you rise. Wherever you are, it's important to be uplifting and to coach and mentor others, and to be structured and intentional about it. The insights you have could assist someone unlock a problem they have been struggling with for years. It's our responsibility as leaders to give of ourselves.

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

A Family. I'm a family-orientated person and I feel privileged to have a family that supports me the way they do. I now also have friends who have become family to me. I wouldn't be able to do half the things I do without my family. I'm really grateful that I get to go home to a loving, warm and peaceful home every day. They create a balance in my life.

FUN FACTS

Favourite colour: Pink hues.

Current book on your nightstand: *The Brain*.

Item on your bucket list: To chase summer.

Preferred holiday destination: Anywhere with an Indian ocean view.

What genre of music would one find on your favourite playlist?

I have an eclectic taste in music, so you'll find everything except Rock. 🎧