



Menique Botha

Principal: DCM



Q *What led to your career in financial markets?*

A I am part of a generation of South Africans that went to London as youngsters in the late 1990s to early 2000s, seeking greener pastures and adventure. Back then, before the great financial crisis, London was a city with many opportunities, and it was easy to find employment in the financial services industry if you were self-motivated and willing to hustle. There were many young graduates from South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand who had worked as security guards or in catering jobs and eventually ended up in front office banking or finance roles.

With London as my base, I travelled all over Europe and Asia for a couple of months, earning in a strong currency and working entry-level accounting (read: filing) jobs to enable my wanderlust. After about nine months, I had run out of money and decided to settle down and find permanent employment. I studied management accounting, and credit seemed like a good entry point. I was appointed as a junior rating analyst at Standard and Poor's, and it was everything I had hoped for – a very internationally focused environment with many learning and development programmes, and a healthy corporate culture. That I could keep travelling was the biggest win! I'll be forever grateful for those early years in credit ratings – it was a fantastic springboard for a career in debt capital markets (DCM).

Q *If you could change one thing in your career path up to now, what would it be and why?*

A I would tell my younger self to back herself more, to have faith in her own abilities and interactions, and not to wait for permission from others to achieve her goals. Women so often put their heads down and do

the work, but are not very good at celebrating their successes. My younger self suffered from a measure of imposter syndrome. I always felt that I didn't fit the mould of a finance employee perfectly, that many other people were better suited for my role. That I was just 'lucky'. The truth is that I deserved to be there and that I worked hard for my place in the sun – success comes to us in all shapes and sizes.

I now know that self-confidence is the basis from which all leadership grows, and that understanding my strengths and weaknesses, surrounding myself with positive influences, and learning from my failures, all helped me towards reaching my full potential.

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

A Take risks: Speak up and say what's on your mind. Express yourself by sharing your ideas, opinions, creativity and individuality.

Be disciplined: You will most likely work in a pressure cooker environment in deal phase, and the ability to stay disciplined and perform tasks under scrutiny will distinguish you from the rest.

Make sure to have a deep knowledge of the product: There is incredible power in leading with knowledge and relevance. Starting with a solid foundation of the product will help you better serve your client. They will feel supported and empowered to use your team's offerings and share positive experiences.

Q *What is your favourite sector to work in?*

A I love all my corporate clients, but if I must pick a single sector, it would be the property sector. I love the entrepreneurial spirit

of its people. Many management teams in this sector have built their businesses from scratch and are very passionate about what they do and with whom they deal. And they are straight talkers, just like me! Also, our property finance team is a large lender to many local DCM issuers, and so it takes a real collaborative effort across investment banking teams to provide clients with holistic funding solutions.

Q *How do you celebrate closing a big deal?*

A The first thing that the team does after closing a big transaction is to pop the champers or open a nice bottle of wine! After a public bond auction, we like to treat our clients to a celebratory lunch, where we debrief and discuss auction day. But mostly, we eat, drink and plot our next move! A public bond raise can take six to eight weeks to complete, and we have quite a few deadlines to meet during that time, so it's lovely to take it easy with the broader deal team once the pressure is off.

FUN FACTS

Favourite Colour: Nedbank green, of course!

Current book on your nightstand: *Lessons in Chemistry* by Bonnie Garmus.

Item ticked off your bucket list: In 2009, I went on a road trip through Yemen with a boyfriend. Not exactly a traditional 'bucket list' item, but I'm grateful to have seen that part of the world before it was closed to tourists. It's definitely not a trip that you should tell your parents about in advance – it's not safe!

Outstanding item on your bucket list:

I want to cycle the length of Cuba and visit the country's key historical colonial and revolutionary sites. I plan to do this once my kids are a bit older. 🇨🇺