



Q&A

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Mentorship, sisterhood and 'lifting as you rise'

In your journey, have you experienced the difference between a mentor (who gives advice) and a sponsor (who actively advocates for your promotion behind closed doors)? How are you playing the role of sponsor for others now?

I have experienced the difference between a mentor and a sponsor, although in my own journey, some people have played both roles. A mentor offers guidance, shares lessons from experience, and helps you think through important career decisions. A sponsor goes a step further by actively advocating for you, recommending you for opportunities, and speaking for your potential in rooms where you may not be present.

From the start of my career, I have had a colleague who not only advised me, but also genuinely wanted to see me succeed. That person has consistently encouraged my growth and advocated for me, even when I was not in the room. This has shown me that sponsorship can be powerful because it creates access, visibility and confidence.

I try to play that role for others by recognising good work, recommending skilled people when opportunities arise, and creating visibility for colleagues whose abilities I know and trust. In that way, I see sponsorship as a practical way of lifting others as you rise.

What is the most rewarding piece of tactical advice you've ever given to a junior female colleague that you watched her successfully put into practice?

The most rewarding piece of tactical advice I have given to a junior female colleague is to never be ashamed of not knowing something. It is often from asking questions, even the simple ones, that we learn, build confidence and gain experience.

Seeing junior colleagues speak up, ask questions and seek clarification reminds me that this is where growth begins. A question may seem small in the moment, but it can open the door to deeper understanding and better judgment over time.

There is a Rwandan saying, "Nta mwana uvuka ngo yuzure ingobyi," which means that no child is born big enough to fill the baby carrier. To me, this is a powerful reminder that everyone starts

small, and with the right support, courage and experience, they eventually grow into their potential.

Building a deal pipeline relies heavily on networks that are often built in informal spaces. How can young women build authentic, high-value networks on their own terms?

Young women can build authentic, high-value networks on their own terms by being confident in who they are, speaking clearly about their ideas and ambitions, and choosing professional spaces that respect their boundaries. In practice, this means being intentional about the rooms they enter, the conversations they participate in, and the relationships they choose to nurture. Strong

networks should be built on mutual respect, shared values, and a genuine professional purpose, rather than on pressure to fit into informal spaces that may not feel comfortable or appropriate.

From my experience, building such networks is not always easy, particularly where some interactions become uncomfortable or move outside the professional context. For that reason, it is important for young women to speak up when a networking relationship becomes inappropriate, to set clear boundaries, and to focus their energy on relationships that support their growth, credibility and long-term career development.

Who was the first person in the African financial sector to take a genuine gamble on your capabilities, and how did that shift your professional trajectory?

The first person in the African financial sector to take a genuine chance on my capabilities was my Managing Director at ENS in Rwanda. Starting my career at a prestigious law firm as a fresh graduate with limited practical experience, required someone to see my potential before I had fully proven myself.

That trust strengthened my confidence and taught me that when someone believes in your ability, you have a responsibility to honour that trust through hard work, discipline, and a willingness to learn. It also shifted my professional trajectory, helping me move from the idea of becoming an in-house counsel to embracing the path of a legal practitioner, which I have enjoyed so far. 