Q&A

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Tactical blueprint for the next generation

What is your message for a young woman at university, looking at the long hours and intense pressures of M&A and thinking, "I don't know if I belong there"?

Do not decide from the outside that you don't belong on the inside. When I was starting out, the world of corporate transactions felt unfamiliar and intimidating (I had much preferred litigation), but I learnt that unfamiliarity is not a sign something is not for you; sometimes it is simply the beginning of something new.

Yes, M&A is demanding. There will be long nights, complex transactions, and deadlines that test you. But there will also be great learning, and the opportunity to help shape businesses and economies. Some transactions demand exceptional dedication, but those hard moments don't define the practice.

Don't let that reality discourage you before experiencing the fulfilment that M&A offers. Give yourself the opportunity to discover whether the work excites you. If, after experiencing it, you decide it is not the right path, that is a valid choice. But let your decision be informed by experience, not assumptions.

Beyond mathematical brilliance and financial modelling, what is the single most underappreciated 'soft skill' required to survive and excel in capital markets?

In my experience, it is commercial judgement. Capital markets demand technical excellence, but that alone does not make a great lawyer. The most pragmatic lawyers look beyond securities law and regulatory requirements to understand the commercial objective of a transaction, stakeholder priorities, and the risks that genuinely matter.

A prospectus or regulatory filing can be legally flawless, yet fail to serve the client if the lawyer lacks appreciation of the commercial realities driving the deal. Commercial judgment is knowing what is a fundamental risk versus a negotiating point, when to push, and when a practical solution is the better path.

Clients need lawyers who can see the destination, anticipate challenges, and help them get there efficiently. Technical skills earn you a seat at the table, but commercial judgement makes you a trusted dealmaker.

When negotiating your own compensation, performance bonuses, or equity partnership within an advisory firm or bank, what is your golden rule?

Know your value before you walk in, and be able to prove it. Early in my career, I assumed good work would speak for itself. It does not. In a busy practice, even well-intentioned partners cannot track every contribution unless you make it visible.

Build your case on evidence, not emotion. I track the transactions I have contributed to, the problems I have solved, and the value I have created for clients and the firm. The conversation should not be "I deserve more"; it should be, "here is the value I have delivered and continue to deliver."

Negotiation is something we do for clients every day. We should approach our own careers with the same discipline. I say this especially to women in professional services: advocating for your value is not arrogance; it is taking ownership of your career.

How should junior professionals build a visible, respected personal brand in a regional industry that often prioritises behind-the-scenes execution?

Focus less on being visible, and more on being valuable. Visibility follows value.

In a profession where much of the work happens behind the scenes, your reputation is built in the details people observe every day: the quality of your work, your reliability under pressure, your responsiveness, and how you treat everyone you work with. Build your brand by becoming known for excellence before you become known by name.

At the same time, do not assume good work will always speak for itself. Be intentional. Write articles, contribute to industry discussions, attend events, and ask thoughtful questions. Approach networking as building genuine relationships, not collecting contacts.

In a regional market, people remember those who are curious, prepared and engaged. Your personal brand is built through consistent delivery, professional relationships, and the trust you earn over time.

When your strategic advice or valuation is met with heavy scepticism by a traditional, old-school corporate board, what is your personal strategy for reclaiming the floor and defending your thesis?

I never fight scepticism with defensiveness; I fight it with preparation. When an experienced, traditional board challenges a recommendation, the resistance is rarely about the analysis alone. It is often about the assumptions behind it. My first instinct is to understand what is driving the scepticism.

Once I understand the concern, I bring the conversation back to evidence – comparable transactions, regulatory considerations and assessed transactional risks. I respect the experience in the room while remaining confident in my judgement.

Credibility is built through humility as much as conviction. If a concern has merit, I acknowledge it. The goal is not to win the argument; it is to help the board make a well-informed decision.

The most persuasive adviser is the person who has done the work, understands the commercial realities, and can explain not only the risks of acting, but also the risks of not acting.