



CFA Society South Africa

Kelly de Kock, CFA

Chief Operating Officer: Private Client Securities, Treasury and Fiduciary Services at Old Mutual Wealth

1. How did you become involved in financial services – was this something you always wanted to do?

I completed my Accounting articles in the Consumer and Industrial division, and wasn't really sure what I wanted to do after that. A friend introduced me to someone in Old Mutual Corporate Finance and it sounded so interesting that I decided to give it a try. Fourteen years in financial services later and I've never looked back!

2. What obstacles did you face on your career journey?

My greatest obstacle has always been myself! For the longest time, I really wasn't sure what my next move was, so I kept trying different career paths, thinking that one would stick. Eventually I was in a role that I knew wasn't right for me, and I decided that it was time to figure out what I wanted to be when I grew up (I was 37 years old at the time!). I realised that what I really wanted was to learn how to run a business, but my challenge was that I had no relevant experience. I was very fortunate to interview with someone who was able to look past my lack of experience and see that I had the potential to be a leader. He appointed me to a COO role and gave me the guidance that I needed to succeed in the role. I will always be grateful for that opportunity and try to do the same for others where I have the opportunity to do so.

3. Who or what inspired you?

I have been really fortunate to work with some amazing men and women who have inspired me in different ways. The greatest lesson I learned from the women I encountered in my career was that they never focused on the challenges, only the opportunities. This was particularly true with the women that I've worked with in The Association of Black Securities and Investment Professionals (ABSIP) – many of them are true powerhouses who never let the fact that they were the only woman in the room silence their voices. They have so much to offer, and they know how to make themselves heard.

4. When were you introduced to the CFA Charterholder qualification and what made you decide to become a CFA candidate and pursue becoming a Charterholder?

At the time that I decided to pursue becoming a CFA Charterholder, I was working in Corporate Finance and not yet sure what the next step in my career would be. What I did know was that being a CFA Charterholder would be a huge advantage in any career I decided to pursue, and would also be highly relevant to the role that I was doing at the time. It was hugely challenging at times, but I have never doubted that the sacrifices made in attaining the prized title of CFA Charterholder were absolutely worth it. In my experience, this designation earns you a seat at a very prestigious table, and provides you with an opportunity to prove that you deserve to be there!

5. What advice or words of learning would you impart to younger women at the early stages in the career in the investment industry?

Develop yourself as a person and focus on your character and the kind of person you want to be, and the rest will follow.

I know that's not really career advice, but if you don't know who you are and what you stand for, what can you really bring into a workplace or contribute to the industry?

I think that, at all stages in our careers, our focus needs to be on finding our purpose and passion and bringing that into whatever career we choose to pursue. If you aren't able to do that in the career that you've chosen, then choose a different one. Our options are only limited by our imagination!