

RUTH STOFFBERG'S APPROACH TO HER CAREER IS "ASK ANYWAY"

Ruth Stoffberg grew up in Hanover Park, Cape Town, and she did the maths early. Her parents couldn't afford to fund her studies, and she realised the only way to university was to earn her way in – so from Grades 10 through 12, she worked towards that goal. The scholarship she won through TSIBA Business School gave her more than an education, though – it gave her the template for everything that followed: identify what you need, ask for it and then do the work.

At TSIBA, two things shaped her direction. The first was economics and business – her favourite subjects at school, and the reason she'd wanted to study in the first place. The second was a chance connection with Andile Dyonase, a TSIBA alumnus she reached out to while he was living in Berlin. He told her about an industry she'd never considered: asset management. And he told her about IMACS.

The IMACS@TSIBA programme opened up a world Ruth hadn't known existed. Growing up, her reference point for finance was banking: the basics. IMACS went far beyond that. "It was mind-blowing," she says, "and not only for me. It was about educating myself and then also other people about what the financial industry means, how one plans for the future, budgeting, spending habits, saving for the short, medium and long terms, retirement."

That first ask – reaching out to Andile – led to a scholarship application for IMACS, which led to an interview at Prudential (now M&G Investments), which led to them funding her course and hosting her internship. It was during that interview that she met the woman who would become a mentor: Valda Clarke of Valda Clarke Coaching. "Through work, coaching and mentorship, I completed the internship," Ruth says. At the end of it, she was offered a one-year contract with M&G.



Ruth Stoffberg. An Investment Operations Manager at Prowess Investment Managers.

The contract ended in 2018. Through her previous manager's guidance and continued check-ins, Ruth applied for a graduate programme at Prowess Investment Managers in 2019. She's been there ever since – working her way up to her current role as Investment Operations Manager.

Earlier this year, Prowess recognised Ruth with two company awards: Leadership Impact and Outstanding Achievement. She credits much of that recognition to the work of restructuring and developing her business unit – making it more efficient, more independent, and more focused on adding value to clients and the organisation. And the same instinct that drove her to seek out mentors is now the thing she's building into her team: one-on-one feedback sessions, coaching conversations, a culture where people move systematically toward their goals.

For IMACS students thinking about finding a mentor, Ruth says the first step is courage. "You need to acknowledge that you need help to move from point A to point B," she says. "Mentorship creates awareness of your blind spots. And there's an accountability part – you have to report on your progress, and through that you're able to see the change, and then continue moving forward."

"The worst thing someone can say is no. And you don't know that yet," she adds. "Challenge yourself to ask regardless, even if your voice shakes."