

FROM RELUCTANT RECRUIT TO TRAILBLAZER

When Shanell Domike, a Certified Financial Planner (CFP) at Veritas Wealth Management, received an email suggesting she apply for the ASISA Academy [Independent Financial Advisor \(IFA\) Internship](#) late in 2020 she almost overlooked what turned out to be a career-defining opportunity.

Domike had recently completed her BCom at the University of the Western Cape (with majors in Accounting, Finance and Economics) and was putting in all the hours she could at her student job. The pay was per hour and she was working long shifts so that she could buy some furniture for the new home she was soon to move into. She applied, nonetheless, and is so grateful for that today.

"I had no idea what financial planning even was," she admits. "At university, we only really heard about becoming a Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA), an economist, or an accountant. Financial planning just wasn't on the radar."

Taking a leap of faith that day was a critical step on her journey. Today, she is a Certified Financial Planner and fulltime employee at Veritas Wealth Management. She is also an advocate for other black women entering the industry and has recently joined the ASISA Academy Alumni Committee.

Growing up in Johannesburg, Domike knew her strengths lay in finance or business, but her ambitions didn't always align with this. "I wanted to study something creative, maybe drama or visual arts, but my dad said over his dead body ...," she laughs. She ended up doing a commerce degree and has no regrets. "It worked out better than I could have imagined," she says.

She has been doing a lot of thinking about how to be part of making the profession more inclusive. Joining the ASISA Academy Alumni Committee was a first step. She has started to reach out to others like herself to form networks of encouragement and solidarity.

"There aren't that many females of colour in financial planning, or finance at all," she says. "It's important for us to show up, to be visible and to support each other."

After her initial application to the IFA Internship, Domike forgot about it until she received an email asking her to make a video of herself answering some questions. At the time, she was packing up to move to her new home. "My place was a mess. I didn't look great. But I found a proper shirt and made the video, thinking if I don't do this now, I might miss the opportunity altogether."

When she hit the send button, she was thinking, "I really messed that up!" But it wasn't long before she was called to an interview. This time, she prepared carefully and thoughtfully. Afterwards, she thought it had gone well and that it was only a matter of time before she was offered a place on the internship. She was disappointed when she wasn't selected by that firm.

Then she got a second chance. The team at Veritas Wealth Management wanted to meet her. She went into that interview feeling unsure of herself and felt quite out of her depth throughout the meeting.

"I walked out thinking, 'Flip, what am I going to do with my life?' " But, two weeks later, she received the news that Veritas Wealth Management had selected her as their intern for the 2021 IFA Internship.

From the outset, Veritas Wealth Management founding partner Barry O'Mahony let Domike know he believed in her. "I quickly realised how lucky I was to be placed at Veritas," she says.

"At the beginning of the internship, you do an induction (that was online because of the Covid-19 pandemic)," she says. "Simultaneously, Barry is putting me into admin and saying, now you are going to do para planning. Then he says you are going to do financial planning, and you are going to come to meetings with the team."



Shanell Domike: CFP and a member of the ASISA Academy Alumni Committee

O'Mahony says the ASISA Academy was a great partner, working in the background, preparing Shanell for the new environment. "As a small business, we would not have been able to do this type of preparation."

He adds: We are now in the process of starting her on the journey of co-planning on several clients, letting her take the lead more in those meetings and follow-ups. We are really excited for the future path she is on with us. We hope that the pathway is clear for her and how her career will develop at Veritas over time."

Domike says: "In university, they teach you how to calculate interest and amortisation, but they don't teach you how to listen, how to ask the right questions, how to be present with a client," she says. "The internship gave me the foundation, but being at Veritas taught me how to truly connect and add value."