

# MERGERS&ACQUISITIONS

## Most Influential Women Q&A: Jennifer Cotton, Madison Capital Funding



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**Jennifer Cotton, managing director, chief underwriting officer, Madison Capital Funding**, is one of 36 dealmakers named in **Mergers & Acquisitions' 2019 Most Influential Women in Mid-Market M&A**. [Click here](#) for the full list. This year, we asked the dealmakers to tell their stories in their own voices through Q&As.

### How did you get into deal making?

After business school I accepted a position in a rotational program at a regional bank [National City Bank]. My first stop was credit and I never left. My first role out of the program was underwriting loan participations. I loved learning about new companies, industries, structures. From there I went on to source and manage middle market relationships before joining Madison Capital. I am so fortunate that I landed in an industry and role that aligns so perfectly with my interests

## **How has a mentor helped your career?**

My earliest mentor was a woman [Martha Osowski] I worked with at the University of Rochester, a job I held after completing my undergraduate degree. She was impressive and held a high-ranking position. She had a real "presence" and I could tell early on that the expectations she set drove high quality results. And if she was ever bothered by being one of a small number of women in the room, she didn't appear to acknowledge it. She was a working mother with two young children - and though she had her MBA she was working on her EdD. I didn't realize it at the time, but what resonated most with me was her drive to succeed, her quest to continue learning and her ability to balance a successful career with a busy family life.

## **What is your current role?**

As Chief Underwriting Officer I am responsible for all aspects of Madison's underwriting process, including diligence, structuring and documentation, all of which is handled by a very experienced group of team leaders (7) and 38 underwriters. I am also a member of our Investment Committee and our Senior Leadership Team. Not surprisingly, I spend a lot of time interacting with people and participate in almost daily conversations about everything from transaction structures to diligence issues to talent development. I believe my role is to protect our most valued assets - our investments and our people.

## **Describe a recent deal.**

In my current role I don't work on individual deals, though as a member of Investment Committee I see every deal opportunity our teams recommend. I also spend a significant amount of time educating myself and our deal team members on documentation terms and more importantly the impact they may have on our recoveries. Given the current market conditions I find myself playing a very important advisor role to our deal teams as we execute a disciplined approach to lending, but still balance our desire to grow.

## **How do you support women?**

I am a member of the Simon Women's Alliance at the University of Rochester's Simon Business School (my alma mater) and have joined others advocating for women's career paths in financial services. I will often take calls or meetings to discuss my experience and provide advice to other women on how to manage their careers. Most importantly, I believe that my success will pave the road for more women and my example will encourage others to remain steadfast in career paths.

## **What is your advice for women?**

Maintain a positive, "can do" attitude and seize any opportunity to learn - knowledge is power. Recognize the experience you have, but more importantly recognize the experience you don't have and find ways to fill in the gap. Remember that you own your career and the path you're on may not be linear - some of the best opportunities may take you in a completely, unexpected direction.

## **When you're not making deals, what is your favorite thing to do?**

My ideal days off allow me to do something for myself (cycling class, running or reading a book/magazine) and something with my family. I have three young kids and they're now keenly aware of my work schedule. They love reading with me, playing outside, or just seeing me pick them up from school. Time is my most scarce resource so making the most of every minute is a top priority.

*Mary Kathleen Flynn*