

Why you should start your career in M&A

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Jobs in M&A are among the most contested and competitive in investment banking. But beyond the potentially large bonuses, what are the advantages of working in M&A - does it make sense to start in M&A if you do not want to be banker for life? Below are a few additional reasons why we think the idea of starting your career in M&A is compelling.

1. The money is great

As a junior banker, you will accumulate money rapidly because of bonuses and because working 24/7 means that you are not spending money. Many use the money to live the high life: expensive holidays, dinners out, clothes, cars, and gadgets. Wise junior bankers tend to keep the cash to realise bigger dreams. Examples include saving to invest in a startup for wannabe entrepreneurs, use it to finance a top MBA, invest in property/other assets, or simply build a safety net before taking a more high-risk, high-return type of job.

2. It builds your resilience and stamina

Working in M&A teaches you how to consistently deliver under very high pressure. It's a bit like going to the Army. After a couple of years in M&A, you should be able to handle last-minute situations, keep your cool at all times and produce high-quality work at 3 a.m. in the morning without a problem, which is a great asset in any job.

3. It teaches you discipline and attention to detail

Those long hours spent checking models and presentations and making everything perfect to the tenth decimal point will transform you into a highly efficient analytical machine. You will leave M&A with a lot of built-in automatisms that will be an asset throughout your future career. Ex-M&A bankers can make sense of complex data intuitively and rapidly, and they have extremely high quality standards.

4. It develops your people skills

M&A is a very tough environment to navigate and requires a lot of street smarts - there is a strong hierarchy, people are stressed and tired all the time, the stakes are high, people get fired every year, and it is highly competitive. The thick skin and "political skills" you will learn in M&A will be a great asset in any other environment.

5. It gives you early exposure to "big picture" corporate strategy

Apart from management consulting jobs, no other job can give you the same level of exposure to corporate strategy at such a junior level. You'll be working with CEOs and CFOs on corporate restructuring, strategic acquisitions, and IPOs; the learning curve will be unparalleled.

6. You will learn to multi-task and manage projects

"Multi-tasking" sounds easy. But when you are working on three deals at the same time, it is 3 a.m., and you still need to work through another 15 urgent requests to be completed by 9 a.m., your skills are really put to the test. M&A bankers are great project managers. Learning to prioritise, break down tasks, and stay cool under any circumstances are some of the skills you will develop in little time.

7. M&A is a stepstone to any work you choose to do next

Corporate strategy, private equity, hedge funds, startups, you name it. M&A is one of the few jobs that opens the door to practically any other job in the business world. If you are not sure what to do next but want to keep your options open, M&A is the ideal start to your career.

8. The downsides

The job has its downsides, of course. Apart from the fact that the hard work might reduce your lifespan by a couple of years, many junior bankers do turn into obnoxious individuals after a stint in M&A. If you lose perspective, M&A could turn you into a narrow-minded, arrogant, money-driven machine that only measures life success in number of deals closed and year-end bonuses. The secret to avoid this is to maintain hobbies outside work, keep your ego in check, stay in touch with the real world as much as possible (i.e. have non-banker friends), maintain a healthy lifestyle, and don't forget your long-term goals and dreams you had before signing for the job!

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