



My Journey to CFO

CFO, FINANCE, CAREER JOURNEY, CORPORATE

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**I started on a typical path post university, 10 years at EY as an auditor.....
I loved every minute of it.**

[Ernst & Young \(EY\)](#) had a great [culture](#), good clients, great people in the teams, great training, 360 feedback and opportunities to work on projects outside of client work.

I remember EY with fond memories and I remember the day I finished up there were many tears, it was 15th October 2010. EY pushed hard, but they also rewarded hard workers that delivered. I got overseas conferences (Japan, Venice), to lead a global project for a new tool, which allowed me the opportunity

to lead, get people onboard and manage a big roll out for the ANZ region.

I loved my team, and my clients, favourite client being [Village Roadshow](#) – what's not to love about Theme Parks and Movies. I learnt so much, but probably didn't realise it until I left.

My first job out was Telstra, [Sensis](#) business unit – Technical, Reporting role. Likely considered a backward step – you are over-qualified in a lot of respects but under qualified in other respects. **I was lucky to have a great team, peers and made some great friends along the way.** I loved the industry. I loved being part of something and driving and making a difference and seeing that difference come through.

4 years after I started at Sensis, it was sold to [Private Equity](#), which was where my career went from interesting to super-duper interesting. Working with the private equity firm to carve out from Telstra and set up the business under private ownership. It was a big change. I took a lead role in working with new shareholder to manage the transition and help build the business in the new world.

This included [zero based budgets](#), [cash flow reporting](#) & [forecasting](#) and understanding the capabilities required to deliver on the change in strategy. It wasn't just a big change for Finance but for the whole business, but finance become central to how the business operated and therefore the role I took was pivotal to the success.

Over the next 5 years, I worked as Deputy CFO, then transitioned to CFO and looked after Strategy, Finance, Operations and IT. My role continued to expand.

I really enjoyed the experience and breadth of the role. Navigating strategy, to building a budget and metrics to measure success and the capability in the business to drive the outcomes required.



We found over the period, people self-selected, and private equity wasn't for everyone. It was about achievement, delivery and ensuring that all key metrics are met. Incentives ensured that the key metrics were measured, tracked and managed.

The private equity approach was hardcore and a lot of lessons were learnt along the way, but for me I realised this was the environment that I enjoyed, I loved the change, execution and an ability to drive an improved outcome in the results.

Since I finished up at Sensis, I have done a number of roles with other private equity firms – doing interim CFO roles, managing transitions, integrations, operating models, strategy, business plans etc, working with different companies to actively manage an acquisition (from DD) to the first [100 days](#), which will make or break a business and set the tone for the new world.

These projects require different skillset but a driver that can help move things forward and ensuring that there is a plan to deliver on the synergies baked into the plan. I have done this under the banner of [Whiteark](#). I have other clients, but mainly working with PE on assessing, strategy, plan and execution for deals, and that is what I love.

I love the planning but then being able to get in there and really deliver. **My finance experience, private equity experience and breadth of roles, has allowed me the opportunity to jump into consulting to private equity with both feet.**

Not sure where my journey will land me, maybe back as a CFO one day, but for now enjoying the freedom, challenge and drive of working for myself and picking my clients and making a difference every day.



With my background as CFO – we have a range of tools and FREE templates that we have generated that might help you with your day-to-day life as well. You can explore and download the templates [HERE](#)

If we can help you, reach out for a no obligation chat to [Jo Hands](#) on 0459826221, or jo.hands@whiteark.com.au