



Deal Makers

WOMEN 2023

Women of SA's M&A and
Financial Markets Industry



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Marylou Greig
Editor

Women's Month in South Africa holds important significance as we continue to work together to empower women in all spheres of life. August is the time to reflect on the many achievements of the brave women of our past who fought against gender, race and class oppression, and to remember them as those who laid the foundation for the gender equitable society we work towards in South Africa.

Although the status of women in this country has improved in recent decades, gender inequalities persist, and the fact remains that women are still largely underrepresented in leadership positions. Education is one of the most important aspects of human development, and eliminating gender disparity starts by building a foundation with education in the early years, on which to increase the status and capabilities of women as they take their rightful place in teams and in corporate South Africa's boardrooms.

This, the third edition of the DealMakers Women of SA's M&A and Financial

Markets Industry, seeks not only to highlight the incredible women in this space, but also to offer inspiration to young women, and to give them courage where needed, as well as the realisation that they are not alone. Reading these profiles and thought articles, the clear takeaway is that feminine traits bring a different dimension to leadership – one that is more collaborative, empathetic and focused on relationship-building; essential elements necessary to complete a well-rounded team servicing an industry which navigates people dynamics.

This year, this feature will be released at the inaugural Women's Day platinum networking event. The panel facilitator is Lydia Shadrach-Razzino, a partner at Baker McKenzie and a previous winner of the DealMaker of the Year award. She is joined by Janice Johnston, CEO of Edge Growth Ventures, Fawzia Suliman, CFO of the JSE, and Ego Iwegbu, co-founder and CEO of The Good Mineral, MSLONDON Cosmetics and Miss Salon London. 

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Sally Hutton
Managing Partner

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Getting to 50/50: Retaining women in corporate law goes well beyond high salaries

Despite the progress made towards achieving gender equality and diversity in the major South African law firms in recent years, it is undeniable that the retention of women in corporate law continues to pose significant challenges. Getting this right is a competitive differentiator – those who do will have access to a far greater pool of talent and will reap the long-term rewards of the investment that they have made in their women. Diverse teams also make more robust and creative business decisions, which contribute to better business results both for the firm and for clients.

Achieving real and measurable change requires a deliberate plan – proactively driven and supported at the most senior levels – which is aimed at setting women up for success and creating an inclusive and gender-equitable environment.

Leading gender equity from the front is a top priority for us. For instance, we were the first major South African law firm to appoint a woman to a senior leadership role in 2015, the first to adopt a formal gender strategy, the first to adopt parental transitional coaching, the first to join the 30% Club, and the first to sign up to the United Nations' Women's Empowerment Principles. Change is contagious, and we have been delighted to see similar shifts in other

South African law firms, including in their senior leadership teams, many of which now also include women.

Currently, 47% of all our partners are women (a significant increase from November 2015; when we first adopted our formal gender strategy and women made up only 35% of our total partner body). In addition, 54% of our legal services team and more than 59% of our total firm are now women, and women make up 44% of our senior leadership team (Board and Excom). We are very conscious of the importance of role modelling, and actively consider diversity in all leadership appointments, including our practice leaders, business unit heads and sector leaders. It is also important to give young leaders the space to learn leadership skills in multiple roles over their careers.

Women face some unique challenges in rising to the top in corporate law firms, and our strategy is organised across multiple pillars aimed at addressing these, such as building a more flexible work environment, access to quality clients and work, and business development and profile building, ensuring our policies and procedures support our strategy, employee engagement and culture, and eliminating gender stereotyping and unconscious bias. We also seek to make a broader impact through our CSI and pro bono efforts. Our Gender Strategy Working Group (GSWG), which includes senior male and

female partners and is a subcommittee of the Board, oversees our gender strategy and sets fresh concrete initiatives and targets each year that are intended to achieve our overall strategy.

BUILDING A MORE FLEXIBLE WORK ENVIRONMENT

One of the most common reasons that women leave corporate law is for a better work/life balance. Transactional work is fast paced with long hours and urgent deadlines, and many women are tempted by in-house counsel roles that promise more predictable hours.

In response, we have worked very hard to create a more accommodating and flexible working environment. Teamwork and collaboration are key to managing workload, and there are significant benefits to working in a large firm with deep bench strength and multi-disciplinary expertise. Often, women who move into small in-house legal teams tell me that they actually find that environment more stressful because they have to do everything and are restricted in their ability to brief external counsel in the face of increasing cuts on legal spend.

A difficult transition period often occurs when women return to these demands after taking maternity leave. It can feel overwhelming until one finds a rhythm and a new way of working, and often women feel conflicted and leave practice at this point. Our parental coaching

programme (which is aimed at all new parents – men and women) is designed to help equip our people (and their line managers) with the skills to adapt to this. We also expect and encourage our men to be active and involved parents, and we encourage role modelling that helps address the historical societal imbalance in caregiving responsibilities, and challenges stereotypes.

Giving our people the space to manage their professional and personal commitments is also key. Long before COVID, we adopted a flexible working policy that allows remote and/or flexi-time arrangements. We also have a myriad of part-time working options, and most of our lawyers currently work remotely two days a week.

We have also recently adopted an Of Counsel role as an alternative career path for lawyers who may not want to continue with or into full partner or equity partner roles. This is a critical tool to provide a flexible career path and prevent an exit from practice, but with the possibility of re-entry into partnership at any point.

ACCESS TO QUALITY CLIENTS AND WORK, AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND PROFILE BUILDING

Every year, we undertake a pay analysis at various levels to confirm that the firm pays consistently and fairly for performance. However, success as a corporate lawyer – and financial reward – depends to a great extent on one's ability to generate revenue. This, in turn, relies upon access to quality clients and work.

Accordingly, we proactively seek to ensure that all our people get the exposure they need to showcase their talents. We proactively

encourage diversity in all client pitches, thought leadership opportunities, conference speakers and attendance, submissions to ranking agencies, and access to secondments with clients and our relationship firms, including global secondments with Linklaters.

We also invest in networks like the 30% Club, which provides extensive opportunities for women to share learnings and build their professional relationships.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

We regularly review our firm's policies to eliminate any biases, and actively make changes to build a more inclusive and gender equitable working environment. We recently adopted a new Harassment Policy, which is intended to foster a culture of mutual respect and a "start by believing" approach to reports of harassment. Other policies aimed at addressing issues related to gender equity include our Gender Inclusion Policy and our Domestic and Gender-Based Violence Policy. Our Gender Inclusion Policy provides guidance on the use of non-sexist, gender-inclusive and gender-neutral language, and to communicate the support that the firm will provide to anyone who undergoes a process of gender transitioning. We have also finished converting some of our bathrooms to gender-neutral spaces that can be used by any person, regardless of gender identity or expression. Although the demographic directly affected by this initiative is probably quite small, it is a symbol of our commitment to inclusivity and has been well received by all. Our Domestic and Gender-Based Violence Policy aims to ensure that our people feel confident about initiating open and supportive discussions if they are, or have been, affected by violence, or

if they suspect that someone else has. It also provides access to specific support (such as emergency accommodation, special leave and security) for survivors.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND CULTURE

We frequently assess the effectiveness of our initiatives through employee feedback, surveys and other data, to make ongoing improvements and adaptations to adopt an inclusive culture. We also developed a Webber Wentzel Wellness Programme which focuses holistically on our people's physical, financial, emotional and social well-being, and provides access to a range of onsite services and information. This also encourages a more compassionate and supportive environment.

ELIMINATING GENDER STEREOTYPING AND UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

We conduct unconscious bias awareness sessions and recently published our Gender Inclusive Language Guidelines, which are aimed at avoiding or reducing the use of gender-specific terms while drafting.

We also regularly showcase the stories and successes of senior women across all sectors to all our staff (men and women) through the Webber Wentzel Women's Internal Network. By amplifying these stories, we aim to dispel gender stereotypes by changing views on what leadership looks like.

Although we are very nearly at our target of achieving a 50/50 gender split across our full partnership by 2025, our efforts cannot stop. Until the playing field is level, we will need to continue to take active steps in multiple areas to advance and retain women in our senior ranks. 



Safiyya Patel
Partner

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People, purpose and passion in law

by Lerato Ramango

For Safiyya Patel, the law is about people, purpose and passion. During her 25 years in the South African legal profession, she has gradually pivoted her focus from public interest/human rights to transformative dealmaking, and Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) and Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) issues in the corporate sector.

She was inspired by the power of law to redress the wrongs she had seen and experienced in apartheid South Africa, but her path to a legal career was not an easy one. She was born in Vrededorp, which was declared a “white area” in 1962. When she was three years old, her Indian family was forcibly removed from their home, and she has vivid memories of that time. Her father’s family was active in struggle politics. After he died when she was nine, she saw how her mother, who had no education, had to bring up four children single-handedly.

“I made a decision at a young age that I would study, be socially impactful, and be financially independent,” she says.

But law wasn’t her conservative family’s choice for her. She began by studying dentistry, but after two weeks, realised that she could not become a dentist to make everyone else happy and moved to the law faculty.

Corporate law “happened by accident, but it was a good accident”, she says. She was a young associate in the late 1990s, when the new government was seeking advice on new legislation, and she assisted political activists and unions during their adjustment to the new democracy. In this era, her clients gradually started to need more advice on entering

the corporate world, setting up sustainable investment companies, and this ushered Safiyya into the corporate sector.

“I still have my roots in transformation and social impact, which is why I am still looking at ESG and transformation matters, where there is a greater purpose than a regular transaction,” she says.

Two major transactions in her career stand out for her. One was the groundbreaking Sasol Inzalo R26 billion Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) transaction in 2008, the largest to date. This was an innovative and landmark structure deal at the time, as it gave millions of ordinary South Africans the opportunity to own a part of Sasol and benefit from its success, and to create a legacy through major investment in skills development. Significantly, it was being put together shortly after the B-BEE Codes were published in 2007, so there was little practice or knowledge about how that legislation would apply to transactions. The teams working on the deal had to understand the legislation, interpret it, and create a structure that would achieve its purpose.

A second significant deal was the recent acquisition and delisting of IT group Alviva Holdings, where Safiyya was part of the team that advised the acquirers. This deal resulted in the creation of one of the biggest non-listed, black-owned IT groups in South Africa.

She says that the deal had been in preparation for several years, but the acquiring consortium, headed by Fannie Mahlangu and Puvén Ramasamy, had taken time to find appropriate funding for it.

“Fannie had been a client (and wonderful friend) of mine for about 12 years, and this deal was very close to his heart. Unfortunately, in 2022, he was diagnosed with cancer and passed


away in December. We managed to conclude the transaction in early 2023, always with Fannie on our minds. He was a phenomenal person, who I think epitomises what BEE is about. He was one of the first black computer scientists to graduate from Wits in the early 1990s, and was always someone who worked hard, found opportunities, and flourished with them.”

Safiyya has managed to juggle both motherhood and a demanding professional career. She was helped by her family and friends, as well as colleagues at work and a supportive environment in the firm.

She appreciates the effort made by Webber Wentzel’s Gender Strategy Working Group, on which managing partner Sally Hutton sits, to make life easier for female lawyers by introducing policies such as flexible working hours. The firm has also made a significant effort to put more women in leadership roles, and they now constitute almost half of all partners.

“That is a noteworthy achievement, and it provides role modelling for our younger lawyers,” Safiyya says. “It sets the tone and environment for younger lawyers, and also for our clients who are women working in the corporate sector.”

When the opportunity to take on a leadership role at Webber Wentzel came up, Safiyya seized it. She says that it is a privilege to be offered the opportunity for personal growth, and although the role has its challenges, it can be fulfilling too. Being a leader demands resilience and tenacity, but becomes easier with the support of other women.

Over time, she hopes that this role will enable her to make a greater impact in South Africa for people with fewer advantages. “That is my North Star.” 

Huneiza Goolam
Partner



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Many paths lead back to Webber Wentzel

by Lerato Ramango

A turning point in Huneiza Goolam's career was coming back to Webber Wentzel after a long break, having worked in other firms and sampled other careers.

"This long journey has made me realise that I want to be fully immersed in private practice," she says. "Working for a top firm like Webber Wentzel is where I want to end my career."

Huneiza entered law from several different directions, as it were. As a multi-talented individual, she found it difficult to choose a career out of school, and began by studying for an architectural degree. She moved onto a BCom in accounts, law and finance, and then decided on an LLB. The combination of a BCom and an LLB, and her fascination with the commercial world, have made her eminently qualified to be a corporate lawyer. Along the way, she has worked as a corporate financier and in-house lawyer, and also earned a qualification as a pastry chef from Le Cordon Bleu, a cooking school in Paris, France. But she missed the variety of deals that regularly come across the desk of a lawyer in private practice in a large firm.

Some of the most interesting transactions she's been involved in over the course of her 22-year career include the audacious attempted

hostile takeover of Energy Africa by its parent company during the early days of her career; and more recently, the acquisition of the Mintails dumps by Pan African Resources plc, which is set to change the landscape of the Western area of Johannesburg once in operation.

In Huneiza's experience, large South African legal firms tend to have a better representation of women and people of colour, both as lawyers and as partners, than the smaller firms. She says that across the South African legal profession, there is a clear determination to be more diverse, probably because of the country's history, but the smaller firms sometimes struggle to attract a wide field of candidates.


For most of Huneiza's career, she has operated in a male-dominated world, where she felt pressured to keep the same long hours as her male colleagues. Webber Wentzel's leadership, though, understands that women often have more family responsibilities than men, and encourages women to stay in the firm by offering them greater flexibility in their working hours.

Before she rejoined Webber Wentzel, Huneiza says, she was impressed when one of the other

female lawyers in a transaction, who came from Webber Wentzel and had a small child to look after, was clearly comfortable with expressing to her clients and peer group that she was unavailable at certain times. That comfort comes from knowing that the firm will support you.

One of the other features that make Webber Wentzel an attractive working environment for women is that it has made a big effort to attract and promote women into leadership positions.

Huneiza says that a good female leader is strong but empathetic, and understands that women have many talents. Women should not be limited to practising what some regard as the "soft" areas of law. It is also imperative to have women mentoring other women, she says, having had excellent female mentors, and mentoring other junior attorneys herself. She was impressed by two female clients, one of whom was a CEO of a listed company and the other a General Counsel for a telecoms company, who were tough, but also mothers, juggling both spheres of their lives effectively.

Her advice to a young female lawyer? "Never give up. Life can take many twists and turns, but always believe in yourself." 



Ziningi Hlophe
Partner

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Women helping each other

by Masetuka Ntsoereng

Determined and outspoken, Ziningi Hlophe has taken responsibility for helping other young lawyers (and not always women) navigate the profession's complexities.

She had her “aha” moment about six years ago – five years into her career.

“I never set out to be exceptional. I just wanted to be a good lawyer, from a technical point of view, and do my job well,” she says. “But once you look around you at how the world works and understand the special role you can play, it changes your whole outlook. I realised I was selling myself short by not contributing everything I could. It transformed how I approach my work and gave me a greater sense of responsibility for the influence and impact I can have in the workplace.”

Ziningi is a partner in the corporate department, who has worked in sub-Saharan Africa and focuses on private equity transactions and general mergers and acquisitions. She grew up in KwaZulu-Natal, and studied there. She later moved to Johannesburg to start her career at Webber Wentzel because of the greater opportunities that the “big city” offered to practise commercial law.

She never considered any other career but law. “I like that I am part of something that makes a fundamental contribution to the economy,” she says. “It is great when you can see that a transaction that you’ve worked on has made a difference. I had the chance to visit a retail mall in Nigeria where we had been advisers on the investment and funding phase. I was proud that we were involved in something that had made a tangible difference to the economy, and people’s daily lives.”

She has enjoyed two secondments in the past

eight years, one to MultiChoice in 2015, and another to Anglo American in 2020, where she was part of the team that advised on the separation and listing of Anglo’s domestic coal mining business, Thungela Resources. Both experiences deepened her understanding of what corporate clients expect from their external advisers, and how to deliver a service that is fit for purpose. They also gave her greater insights into those sectors, which she has been able to contribute to other deals.

Ziningi participates in the transformation initiatives at Webber Wentzel. It is widely known that she is always willing to assist her junior colleagues, and mentors a number of juniors. In 2018, she was nominated for Attorney of the Year: Junior Professional in the African Legal Awards, listed as one of News24’s 2018 100 young Mandelas of the Future (under the leadership category), and was one of the top five finalists in the Professional Services category of the 2018 Standard Bank Rising Star Awards Programme.

Her advice to other female lawyers is: “don’t undersell yourselves”. Women often underestimate their contributions in the workplace.

“It is the biggest disservice we can do to ourselves, because our contribution is so vital, and we bring a different and invaluable view and approach. I don’t think an organisation can be successful without diverse views.”

She admits that she still experiences imposter syndrome at times, and in spaces where she presents as the minority, but has learnt that “even when I am scared, I still do what I have to do”. Doing it scared has allowed Ziningi to show up in spaces that challenge her and ensure that her voice and perspectives are heard.

She believes that the workplace environment still presents challenges for women. The first thing that needs to change is the perception that putting women in leadership roles automatically makes the lived experience of other women easier, because the truth is more nuanced. More work needs to be done to ensure that the realities change for women who are junior lawyers or in business-related roles; having senior female leadership is just the beginning and not the end. Secondly, even though there are more women in senior positions in legal firms, the profession is still losing a lot of female talent.

“I don’t know what the answers are,” she admits. “Perhaps there needs to be more introspection and a closer look at the reality of what women go through in the workplace.”

One of the benefits that Webber Wentzel offers its professional staff is remote working. When Ziningi has family responsibilities, she is able to attend to them during the day and reorganise her work hours around these, while still ensuring that she manages her workload. Another benefit that the firm offers all its employees is a maternity mentorship programme, which helps new mothers to reintegrate into the workplace after maternity leave.

Law is a demanding profession, both in hours and its emotional toll. Ziningi says that she strives to achieve a 50:50 balance between her work and private life, but there are obviously going to be times when work takes over. Over time, she has become better at managing both spheres of her life, but simultaneously maintaining personal relationships takes conscious effort. It helps to have a good support structure, and a loyal and understanding family, partner and friends. 📌

MEET SOME OF THE PARTNERS IN OUR CORPORATE, COMMERCIAL AND M&A TEAMS



ALISON MILLS



NOMSA MBERE



MEGAN JARVIS



ASHLEIGH BLAIR



NEERASHA SINGH



CARINE MURPHY



CHRISNA NÖTHLING



RITA SPALDING



HAFESA SAMSODIEN



JACQUI HARVEY



LEIGH LAMBRECHT



LÍLIA FRANÇA



TAAJ VILJOEN



MADELEIN VAN DER WALT



HUNEIZA GOOLAM



ANNABEL PARRY



CANDICE MEYER



MANDY CLAASSENS



GIADA MASINA



SAFIYYA PATEL



SALLY HUTTON



SHELAGH RULE



ZININGI HLOPHE



AMY-LEIGH MUIR

At Webber Wentzel, women make up

47%

of our total partnership

44%

of our senior leadership team

54%

of our market leading legal and tax teams

59%

of the total firm

Also, **33%** of all South African women lawyers that were profiled in Chambers South Africa for 2023 are from Webber Wentzel.

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Amy-Leigh Muir
Partner

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Leigh Lambrechts
Partner

Q *What led you to pursue a career in M&A?*

A Throughout my studies, I had a strong preference for corporate law and related subjects. When I joined Webber Wentzel as a candidate attorney, I rotated within the M&A (Private Equity) team and was excited by the opportunity to work on complex transactions that shape the business landscape and foster economic growth and job creation in South Africa. Additionally, the fast-paced and challenging environment of M&A appealed to me, as it allows for continuous growth. I also really enjoy the collaborative nature of M&A transactions, involving multiple stakeholders and interdisciplinary teams working together towards a common goal.

Q *What is your favourite sector to do a deal in and why?*

A My favourite aspect of working in M&A is that it allows me to work across, and learn about, multiple sectors and industries. This makes each M&A deal unique and intellectually stimulating. At the moment, I am doing quite a lot of work in the FinTech sector, which is a very exciting and impactful space. The sector offers opportunities for investments in cutting-edge companies with high growth potential that can drive innovation and shape the future of industries across Africa and other emerging markets.

Q *The M&A industry worldwide has been a rollercoaster for the last few years – where do you think M&A in South Africa is headed, given our current political, economic and social climate?*

A Given the current political, economic, and social climate in South Africa, I believe that our M&A industry will continue to face challenges, particularly in relation to foreign investment. Political stability and regulatory reforms are essential factors that are required to positively influence the M&A landscape. Despite our challenges, I remain optimistic about the future of M&A in South Africa. With our vibrant entrepreneurial spirit, the country continues to offer significant opportunities for growth and investment, particularly in the energy and technology sectors. We will need ongoing regulatory improvements, such as the various steps taken to counter our recent greylisting, to improve and sustain investor confidence and solidify our position as an attractive jurisdiction for foreign investment.

Q *If you could change one thing on your career path to date, what would it be and why?*

A If I could change one thing it would be to have done a commerce undergraduate degree as part of my studies. While my LLB degree provided a strong foundation for the legal aspects of M&A deals, being able to understand financial statements, valuation methodologies and modelling allows you to better appreciate the dynamics of a deal, and your client's objectives. I have gained an understanding of the various financial concepts at play in M&A transactions through practice, but I think that having done a commerce undergraduate degree would have been a useful foundation. 📌

Q *What led you to pursue a career in M&A?*

A While studying, I had thought that I would become an animal or environmental lawyer, but I quickly realised that what I imagined this to entail was not the case. A combination of factors ultimately led me to M&A. After completing my studies, I started my legal career at Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr, where I was exposed to several different areas of law during the two years of articles, including public administration law, litigation, corporate and M&A. I was fortunate enough to have two rotations in M&A and was immediately drawn to it. Every deal has different challenges, and I was able to work with many different teams, sectors and practice areas, presenting me with opportunities to develop and grow. M&A is ever evolving to be more efficient and effective. Working on transactions allowed me to see how deals are structured and the work that goes into them, as well as coordinating across the teams involved, bringing various elements and practices together. Collaborating and working with different teams to identify and resolve issues is the best part, both exhilarating and challenging. Every deal is different, offering an opportunity to learn, improve and hone skills and knowledge.

Q *What was the toughest deal | listing | issue worked on and why?*

A In the past few years, I have become more involved in distressed restructuring M&A | Business Rescue M&A, particularly since 2020, with the pandemic adding pressure to many industries and businesses. Timing is more important and critical than with normal M&A, where funding is often scarce or non-existent, making timing and efficiency key to a successful transaction. Often, the Competition Commission can make or break such a deal, putting closings at risk with delays, and processes being administratively intensive and slow. While fast-tracking in distressed M&A deals exists in theory; in practice, the Competition Commission does not, in my opinion, adapt sufficiently to cater for these situations. This puts deals at risk with delays and questions that are not practical or realistic, frustrating all parties and causing parties to reassess. More adaptability and innovation is needed from authorities, with practical aspects to be more efficient, reduce delays and save time.

Q *What piece of advice would you give a young woman working on her first deal | transaction?*

A Don't be afraid to ask questions and offer your views. Look for opportunities to assist in meaningful ways, and be available to support. The right attitude is everything. Don't worry too much about what you do or don't know; focus on what you can do. Be a sponge and absorb as much as you can. Prepare and work hard. Focus on eliminating unnecessary distractions where you can, and don't let fear keep you from giving your best. Be in problem-solving mode. Focus on the client and what they need, as well as your team. Learn and be part of the team so that you can succeed together. Be teachable. 📌

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Taaj Viljoen
Partner

Q *What led you to pursue a career in M&A?*

A It is invigorating to be involved in a space that has real-world impact. I enjoy working on a transaction and witnessing the deal play out in the real world. M&A lawyers, alongside clients and other transaction advisers, are in the business of building things – building businesses, companies, brands, and the economy. This aligns with my life’s mission, which is to make an impact in some way.

I grew up in challenging socioeconomic circumstances – a product of a system that was historically designed to exclude women of colour. That makes being a part of this industry all the more worthwhile.

Q *What, in your opinion, is the hardest part of an M&A deal?*

A As lawyers on M&A deals, we are not simply drafting agreements and negotiating terms - often we are navigating people and personalities. Factoring the human component into getting the deal over the line means every deal is different. There is an art to ensuring we place our clients in the best possible position, having regard to all the

variables. Also, typically M&A lawyers play a big project management role. Externally, that means focusing the various parties and ensuring the deal runs smoothly and concludes successfully. Internally, that means assembling our specialists within the firm to deliver a seamless client experience. This requires a keen ability to draw people together and multitask.

Q *What is your favourite sector to do a deal in and why?*

A I have experience in local and cross-border M&A deals, in several sectors including consumer goods, financial services, retail, property, hotel and leisure, and private equity. I enjoy being involved in these sectors, for the same reasons I enjoy being in the M&A space generally.

Q *What piece of advice would you give a young woman working on her first deal transaction?*

A Building a career in the M&A space, and building any career as a woman, is no easy feat. I have been fortunate to have spent most of my career at Webber Wentzel,

which has strong female leadership. I feel that our managing partner, Sally Hutton, and all the other female leaders within the firm, have reinforced women’s place in the industry. Of course, within the firm and within society, women continue to face barriers. I think it is important for everyone, including newcomers to the industry, to be involved in chipping away at those barriers. That may sound daunting to newcomers, but I believe that at the start of your career, being an active participant in your own career will have an impact. I think it is important to be deliberate about your career path. I live by the motto that small actions over time can have a big impact. Eventually, at the right time, your focus can shift more broadly.

Q *What do you think will accelerate women in the industry?*

A I believe that access and opportunity are the fundamentals of success. There are brilliant women in the industry, who sometimes lack the platform to demonstrate their skills. It is a male-dominated industry generally, and I believe that women should work together, supporting one another and celebrating one another’s successes. 🙌

Our Senior Associates in our Corporate, Commercial and M&A teams share three words that best describe them



SIVENKOSI KETI
Ambitious, hardworking
& optimistic



MARTINE LEUKES
Hard-working, resilient
& loyal



VUYOKAZI XEGWANA
Compassionate, pragmatic
& resolute



JENNIFER EBORALL
Authentic, integrity
& resilient



MBALI NCHABELE
Dynamic, determined
& authentic



LIESL OLIVIER
Determined, optimistic
& practical



MAPASEKA PHALA
Attentive, affable
& driven



MIRREN SHARP
Adaptable, dynamic
& thoughtful



ANNA PARRY
Tenacious, diligent
& intentional