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**Q** *What motivated you to pursue a career as a lawyer?*

**A** While studying towards my first degree, a BCom, I took a number of law subjects and thoroughly enjoyed them. I liked the analytical aspect and the ability to be creative, and how law ultimately reflects society's value system of what is right and what is wrong, what is permitted and what is not. That fascinated me, so after I finished the commerce degree, I did an LLB.

I ultimately ended up working in the corporate finance space, which was not a foregone conclusion initially as I had been equally fascinated by subjects such as constitutional law, legal philosophy and public law on the one hand, and contract law and commercial law on the other. In their own way, both can make a difference to society.

**Q** *What are some of the common challenges that women face in the legal marketplace?*

**A** Women are not a single homogenous group with the same thinking and experiences, and I think the challenges vary from woman to woman, often depending on their personal circumstances. That said, law is a demanding profession and one of the common challenges faced by many women is trying to balance their commitment to the profession with the demands of raising a family. Perhaps these demands are less pronounced in more equal societies than South Africa, which is still quite conservative in terms of gender roles. Having the right life partner that supports you in your career is key to becoming successful and achieving your potential.

Another challenge is that in many areas of our work, women are in the minority – meaning that there are few other women, if any, in a boardroom or discussion. For

me, this initially required some getting used to, but knowing what value I had to add to the conversation and being confident about my views and contributions helped me navigate this challenge. Fortunately, in South Africa, we have made great strides in this area and I have had the privilege of working with some all-female teams (on both sides of the deal).

Business development can also be more difficult to do as a woman for a whole host of reasons – whether it be social engagements at times when parenting duties are calling or not being invited to the next rugby or cricket game. It is important that we consciously focus on creating business development opportunities that are inclusive and allow all team members to succeed, irrespective of their race, gender, religion or cultural background..

**Q** *What are some important first steps to set yourself up for a successful career?*

**A** Be passionate about what you do. Law is demanding and if you are not passionate about what you do, you may not last.

If you have a strong work ethic, are committed and passionate and bring focus to the table, you will have the makings of a good career.

Resilience is an essential survival skill, meaning the ability to learn from criticism and failure and to get up again. There are going to be deals that you will lose and negotiations that will not go as well as hoped; the important thing is to get up again, learn from these experiences and move forward.

Another key trait is curiosity. Be curious about who you are dealing with, their challenges and the sector they operate in and the impact the country's political and economic climate has on them. Legal

advice is never given in a vacuum. Being interested in the wider world around you, and doing your preparation, will make you a much better lawyer. .

**Q** *What changes are you seeing in the legal industry?*

**A** Undoubtedly legal technology and artificial intelligence have had and will continue to have a profound impact on the legal profession. With legaltech substituting lawyers in certain areas of work (e.g. due diligence) and the commoditisation of other areas of practice, lawyers need to be nimble and continue to innovate in order to remain relevant. Clients will be looking for external counsel support on strategic matters that are not commoditised and which require judgement and experience.

With clients' problems becoming more complex in an increasingly complex and inter-connected world, collaboration amongst different sector and specialist areas will be critical to ensure that the client receives the best advice. One challenge will be to create the right environment for this to happen, in particular with many lawyers working remotely more often than before.

For the immediate future, I see the major challenge, as getting people back to the workplace so that the benefits of interacting as teams, as colleagues and as law firms will not be lost. In the legal industry, so much learning takes place by listening to and observing what more senior lawyers are doing. It is difficult to retain a strong firm culture without engaging in some person-to-person interaction and the conversations that develop at a workplace. We all embraced remote working when the pandemic broke out and the world of work is never going to go back to where it was before, but it is important to find the right balance. 📌