

PROFILE

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Where did your journey begin and how did you end up where you are today?

My journey in law started at TWB Attorneys in 2013 where I began my articles in the corporate commercial department. As a candidate attorney straight out of university, I was incredibly eager and excited to learn and experience this world, and my passion for law increased with every little bit of work I got the chance to work on. I was also an incredibly naïve candidate attorney. I walked into a female-dominated firm, and when I say dominated, I am talking partners at the top level, not quite realising the impact it would have on me as a female in this industry. I use the term naïve because at this point in my career, I had met so many women practitioners that it never quite came across to me that this industry had an innate perception, where once in time it was heavily male-dominated or that women were considered undervalued in this game. Yes, I walked into this career excited but as you can imagine carrying a whole lot of fear, anxiety and struggles but being female, not one of them. I would say that the aspect of being a female in this industry was something I was confident about and I did not feel it would place any barrier on my ability to succeed.

In 2016, I jumped at the opportunity to join ENSafrica where I was welcomed into the fast-paced, exhilarating and challenging world of PE. The first few years were a blur but it was magic to an aspiring female practitioner. I was given the incredible opportunity to focus my passion, develop my skills and gain experience in the PE field. The beauty of coming to work every day, being challenged, breaking boundaries and learning new things, I know many will never understand it but it is something that resonates with all lawyers. The creativity of the drafting of documents and the problem-solving of transactions, it is like a dance waiting to be choreographed. The crazy adventures of 3am loadshedding trying to sign a transaction with 1% laptop battery, its exhilarating (albeit in small doses!).

The team I joined at the time was evenly split by gender and co-led by a dynamic duo and partnership of a female and male. I never once got the impression, the feeling nor the sense that my ability to be a lawyer was measured as a female but rather solely based on my performance and what I brought to the table on a transaction. In a sense, I have truly been fortunate to have been partly shielded in my career from efforts made by females before me in this industry. But, it was also during my time at ENSafrica where I started learning that my journey as a female attorney in the PE world needed to take on another layer and the important role I would need to play as a women in this industry. My boss at the time who later become my colleague, my friend and mentor shared with me her experiences and it was there that we connected and where I realised the difference that I, one person, could make in this industry. I also realised that in my fight to succeed in this industry, my misplaced confidence in being a female in this industry, I closed my eyes, my ears and my heart for a time in my career.

As a junior in the industry, I recognised that as a female I had a place. Women before me created that space. But, without even thinking and based on inherent impressions that people had created in this industry that I grew up watching and working with, I understood on a subconscious level that to succeed in this industry, as a female, you needed to work harder and you needed to perform harder. So on this journey to success where you place your body and mind at the utmost of extremes, we as females then go ahead and create additional barriers based on these impressions. You accept that it is not acceptable for females to cry or complain. As a female you cannot be overly emotional despite the workload and pressure as you will be judged. In addition, you need to balance everything as this is a perception that every person has of a female and you need to apologise for everything.

I slowly began to realise that in an industry that welcomed women, it was still not

completely acceptable to be female. This journey I once took for granted as a female was not so easy after all and a mountain of pressure grew within me pushing me to extreme limits, holding in an abundance of emotion, refusing to show signs of weakness and feeling completely overwhelmed. Until, a few years later, after the madness that I allowed myself to go through for the better part of my junior career, and an overwhelming amount of support flowed through. That “open door” was another female practitioner who allowed me to be female for a moment in my career, who accepted me as a female in this career and who encouraged me to be female in this career, and I have never looked back. These female impressions in this industry will be there if we as females follow them and allow them to exist. The best thing I ever learnt in my career is that asking for help is a strength and not weakness, and it is something I teach everyday. We, as females, are not designed to do it all and we are not designed to have the perception that we should do it all. We are designed to make mistakes and success will follow one day and we will miserably fail other days. I learnt that it was ok to be overwhelmed, it was ok to cry and it was ok to be emotional. These are not female traits but traits of human beings.

So after this breakthrough in my career, and which ultimately helped me in achieving my goal of partnership at ENSafrica in 2022, I realised that I too had the power to pay it forward, to make the space even bigger for other women to come through and to allow this space to be warm, open and supportive, and to allow females to be females in this world. I am witnessing a new generation of juniors entering our industry. Expressing feelings that I would dare not have expressed as a junior for fear of being seen as a female. These impressions that I allowed to follow me for the better part of my career are starting to be broken and the space being created for the new generation to come. It is beautiful to see the efforts we as females have made and the fights we have fought to allow a new generation to emerge. 🙌