



Q&A

Natasha Fletcher

Counsel | Real Estate

CDH South Africa

What did your path into this field look like – was it intentional, or did you discover it along the way?

Law had always been of interest to me, and various aptitude tests indicated a leaning towards law. However, I wasn't sure if law was my path, so I enrolled for a Bachelor of Arts degree with a view to changing course once I was certain. Just before I was due to start the semester, I decided that I didn't want to go to university. Looking back now, I'm sure it was fear of the unknown, and that I still wasn't sure what I wanted to study. So, instead, I enrolled at a secretarial college for a year's course to learn typing, shorthand, bookkeeping and other secretarial functions, some subjects included legal documents and aspects of conveyancing.

After college, I was employed in the conveyancing department at a law firm, where my passion for conveyancing was ignited. After a few years, I enrolled to do my LLB through UNISA while still working. It was hard going and, if anything, taught me perseverance and the value of time. It was a long journey, with a few bumps and detours along the way, but I eventually graduated and later secured articles.

Although I was exposed to other aspects of law in my rotations as a candidate attorney, I still gravitated to conveyancing. I wrote and passed the four Board Exams, the Notaries Exam and the Conveyancing Exam while serving articles, and one of my proudest moments was the day I was admitted as an attorney, notary and conveyancer.

Can you share a defining moment or turning point in your career so far?

I had been practicing as a conveyancer for a few years already when, one day at the Pretoria Deeds Office – while dashing from discussing a difficult matter with an examiner to the execution room to start executing deeds for registration – I realised that yes, I am a conveyancer and yes, I am doing this. It was the weirdest, most wonderful sensation.

Until that point, it had seemed somewhat surreal for me, and perhaps what I'd been experiencing was "imposter syndrome". But having been a conveyancing secretary for so many years, doing the work but not prepping and executing, it suddenly dawned on me that I was now prepping and executing, as well as also doing the work. And, more to the point, I was more than capable. It was a revelation.

What does self-care look like for you, and how do you prevent burnout?

Burnout is a real thing, and I am guilty of not ensuring that I get enough beneficial rest; so by the time I do take a proper break, I am burnt out. I recently went on leave and was offline and not contactable the whole time. It was an absolute treat, and I realised the benefit of the "switch off". I am now trying to make sure that I do not fill all my weekends with activities, and that I do have "lazy" weekends.

A road trip into the countryside, even if just for a day, helps ease my tension and allows me to breathe again. There is nothing quite like a sunrise start, breakfast on the road somewhere, and nothing but wide-open spaces. We have a beautiful country that begs to be explored, even with short trips.

Did you have any mentors or role models? How did they influence your journey?

My late maternal grandparents were hardworking, loving, humble people who did not have much but were generous to a fault. Even when they went through tough times, they carried on, they showed up.

I am in a much better position than my grandparents ever were, but I strive to continue their legacy of hard work, humility and generosity, and to show up even when times are rough.

What advice would you give to your younger self starting out in this field?

Trust in your abilities and your instincts. Take it day by day. Matters don't always go according to plan. You are human; you will make mistakes. Learn from your mistakes, don't repeat them. Be honest with yourself. Be honest with your client, even when they may not be happy with what you have to say. You will not always be rewarded for hard work, but keep going. Keep learning, keep growing. Have courage. Stay true to yourself.

What keeps you motivated on tough days?

Hope. 