



PROFILE

Lydia Shadrach-Razzino

Partner | Head Corporate M&A

Baker McKenzie

The art of the deal

In the high-stakes arena of South African mergers and acquisitions, few individuals stand out as distinctly as Lydia Shadrach-Razzino. As the Partner and Head of Baker McKenzie's Corporate M&A Practice Group in Johannesburg, Lydia has etched her name amongst the continent's leading corporate lawyers, renowned for her astute deal-making skills, deep transactional insight, and the calm precision with which she navigates complex negotiations.

A seasoned expert in public and private M&A, private equity, empowerment transactions and corporate finance, Lydia's formidable portfolio spans sectors such as telecommunications, consumer goods, healthcare, financial services and mining. Her client roster is equally impressive, including global heavyweights like The Foschini Group, Massmart, L'Oréal, Google, SPAR, Equinix, Bidvest, Infinite Partners, Royal Bafokeng, RMB Ventures, Helios Towers Plc and Kleoss Capital.

Her reputation for excellence is well-earned. Among her notable successes was advising Vodacom on its groundbreaking acquisition of Vodafone Egypt, a transaction named "Deal of the Year" by DealMakers in 2021. Lydia also skillfully guided Ascendis Health through the disposal of its Animal Health business to Acorn Private Equity, securing the Catalyst Private Equity Deal of the Year Award in the same year.

Her consistent performance and professional impact have not gone unnoticed. In 2021, she broke new ground by becoming the first woman ever to win DealMakers' prestigious Individual Dealmaker of the Year Award, highlighting her exceptional abilities in a highly competitive industry. Her accolades span numerous recognitions, including a consistent listing by Chambers Global, inclusion in the Legal 500 Private Practice Powerlist for Africa, and being named Client Choice M&A Lawyer of the Year in 2022.

For Lydia, the dynamic nature of M&A law is a profound attraction. "No transaction is ever the same," she emphasises, describing her practice as a continually evolving puzzle requiring sophisticated problem-solving abilities. She thrives in complexity, finding equal satisfaction in both smaller, intricate transactions and high-profile, large-value deals. This nuanced understanding allows Lydia to consistently deliver exceptional outcomes, no matter the stakes.

A typical day for Lydia begins with disciplined routine and clarity. The morning alarm rings at 6:10 am, followed by a couple of strategic snoozes, a ritual she jokingly admits is essential to her daily rhythm. Her day starts with a rigorous workout schedule: running, Pilates or strength training, which she meticulously maintains Monday through Friday. Regular exercise and a balanced diet are cornerstones of her personal philosophy, providing the stamina required for her demanding professional role.

Upon returning home after training, Lydia transitions into her professional persona, calmly reviewing overnight emails to pre-

empt any surprises. Her morning coffee, meticulously timed after her workout, sets the tone for a day often brimming with back-to-back meetings. Lydia is adept at juggling multiple demands, frequently managing double and triple bookings. Her strategy for handling this relentless pace is rooted in teamwork, delegating effectively, trusting her highly capable team, and stepping in strategically to ensure transactions progress seamlessly.

The afternoon often intensifies with urgent matters and team members vying for her immediate attention, even while she navigates high-stakes client calls. Lydia humorously recounts managing interruptions, noting her ability to remain composed amidst simultaneous demands. Her transparent glass office, she jokes, occasionally becomes a humorous battleground of attention-seeking colleagues, testing her finely honed skill of graceful multitasking.

Lydia's commitment to excellence often extends into late evenings. Yet, despite a demanding schedule, she prioritises meaningful downtime. An unspoken rule between Lydia and her husband ensures they always pause to enjoy dinner together whenever possible, a cherished time offering respite and connection amidst their busy lives. After dinner, Lydia often resumes work, diligently finalising tasks and preparing for the following day.

A staunch advocate for balance, Lydia recognises the importance of rest, acknowledging it as an area needing improvement in her routine. Reflecting thoughtfully, she emphasises that maintaining a healthy equilibrium of sleep, nutrition and exercise has become a guiding principle for her well-being and professional longevity.

Professionally, Lydia finds inspiration in figures such as Lerisha Naidu, Baker McKenzie's Country Managing Partner, whose innovative leadership approach she deeply admires. She also credits colleagues David Allen and Janan Crozier for their transactional acumen and leadership qualities. Also, career mentors such as Ludwig Smith and Ian Hayes were wonderful sponsors. Outside her immediate professional circle, tennis champion Novak Djokovic serves as a personal inspiration, admired by Lydia for his focus, tenacity and balanced approach to life and career.

Beyond her legal career, Lydia passionately enjoys the culinary arts and wine collecting, hobbies she actively integrates into her social life. Hosting elaborate dinners with carefully selected wines for family and friends is a cherished pastime, reflecting her belief in shared experiences and the importance of community.

Ultimately, Lydia's life reflects her strong belief in Nelson Mandela's words: "Courage is not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it." This philosophy encapsulates her approach not only to law but to life itself, driving her continuous pursuit of professional mastery, personal balance and impactful leadership.



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