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Q Where did your M&A journey begin and how did you end up where you are today?

A I obtained my LLB degree from UNISA in my early thirties and did my articles at a relatively small firm (circa 16 partners), Moss Morris Inc. My principal was a commercial attorney whose practice was also focused on what was then the nascent practice area of competition law. He also had quite a few clients in the pharmaceutical sector. So some of my earliest M&A experience was in the healthcare sector and at the convergence point between M&A and competition law. We then moved to what became Routledge Modise Moss Morris Inc. and thereafter to Sonnenberg Hoffman Galombik Inc. Sonnenbergs ultimately merged with Edward Nathan Inc. and I've been there ever since. My team and I run our own M&A matters, mainly in the healthcare sector and in the unlisted environment, as well as supporting other corporate commercial colleagues with the healthcare regulatory aspects of their M&A transactions.

Q Did you have a mentor at some point in your career, and if so, who were they and what did you learn from them?

A My principal was my mentor. In addition to the technical skills he imparted, he also led by example in relation to the so-called "soft skills" of client management, mediation and negotiation, business development, and development of new practice area

opportunities. I'm actually very reluctant to call these "soft" skills, as that downplays their importance over the long haul of a career. You need to nurture and expand your client and colleague relationships and continue to educate yourself in your areas of expertise over the lifetime of your practice.

Q What, if any, hurdles did you have to cross in an industry that has traditionally been male dominated?

A At the beginning of my career in the early 2000s, there were still a few clients around with outdated attitudes towards women in the profession, but I'm happy to say that I don't really come across this anymore. In my experience, all of the firms that I've worked at over the course of my career have been very supportive of female professionals and their development. I have never felt the presence of any glass ceiling and female professionals have (almost) always been visible and present in positions of authority. This having been said, I don't have any children, so other women will have had different experiences.

Q What advice would you give to young women looking to enter the legal field?

A Being an attorney can be very rewarding, but it is not easy, particularly at associate and senior associate level. It can be all-consuming at times and you can feel like your life is not under your own control. Ultimately, this will improve if you stick with the

profession and move up the ranks, but there will be friends and partners in your personal life that don't understand or respect the time and energy that you are committing to your profession. In my view, this is more acutely so for young female professionals – somehow it is much more socially acceptable for young male attorneys to throw themselves single-mindedly into the achievement of their professional goals.

So, my advice is two-fold. Firstly, find a time in your diary every week to do things that give some of your control back. This could be going to gym, cooking, hiking, reading a book or anything that focuses your mind on something other than work for a period of time. Secondly, surround yourself with people who respect your choices and your commitment to achieve and succeed. Be prepared for the fact that, almost invariably, there will be a few friends and partners who won't show you this respect that you will lose along the way.

Q What is the best piece of career advice you have received?

A People will often tell you, particularly at the beginning of your career, something along the lines of "Do what you'll love, and you'll never work another day in your life". Unfortunately, this advice may be well-meaning, but it's untrue! The best advice I've received is that you can love your job (which I do), but there will still be times that it feels like (and is) hard work. No job is perfect and work is not play. 🙌