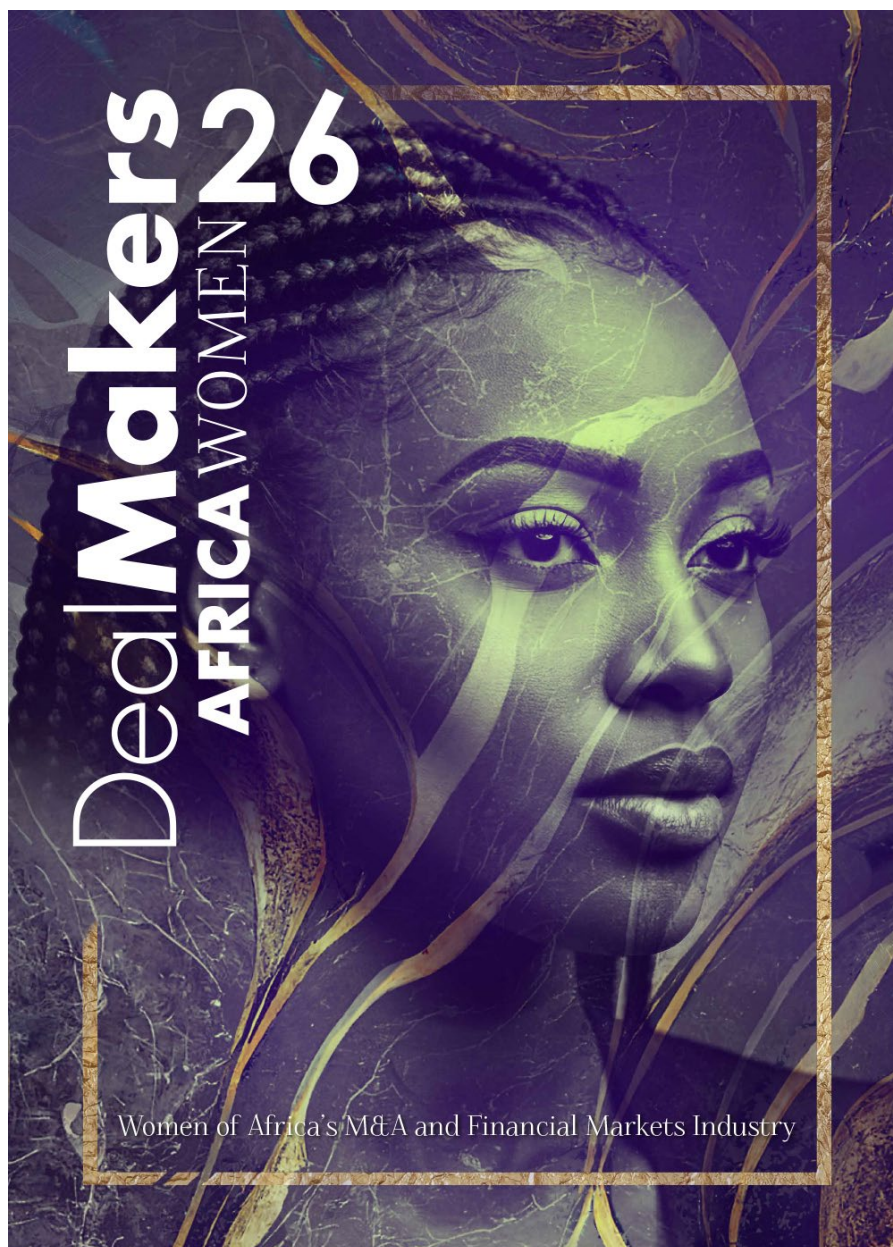


August 2026

Deal**Makers****AFRICA**

WOMEN 2026

Women of Africa's M&A and Financial Markets Industry



Special Feature

ABOUT THE FEATURE

Since launching in 2021 with the profiles of 67 incredible women in South Africa's M&A industry, the Deal**Makers** Women's feature has grown into a highly anticipated annual tradition.

The extraordinary journeys, insights, and expertise shared by these leaders inspired us to expand our reach each year.

In 2022, we proudly introduced the features: Catalyst Women of SA's Private Equity and Venture Capital Markets alongside the Deal**Makers AFRICA** Women in M&A and Capital Markets.

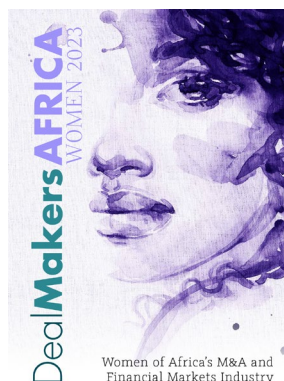
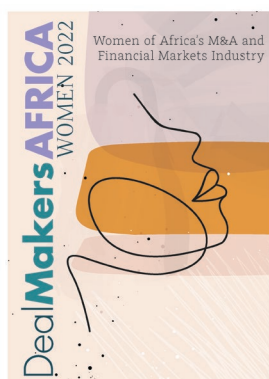
Building on this momentum, 2023 marked the launch of our inaugural event: Women in M&A and a premium hardcopy book combining all three prestigious features.

Take a look at the previous issues:

SA Women of M&A [2021](#) | [2022](#) | [2023](#) | [2024](#) | [2025](#)

Catalyst Women in Private Equity [2022](#) | [2023](#) | [2024](#) | [2025](#)

Africa Women of M&A [2022](#) | [2023](#) | [2024](#) | [2025](#)



HOW TO BE INCLUDED IN THE 2026 FEATURE

The feature is open to all M&A and financial markets participants, including advisory firms, in-house practitioners and other contributors across Africa.

Listings are laid out by country and then in alphabetical order (by firm)

Listing options in the magazine

- Q&A
- Insights article
- Profile article

All magazine listing info must be supplied by no later than: [Thursday 30 July 2026](#)

Once the listings have been sent to layout, they will be sent back for sign off.

All listings need to be signed off by no later than **Monday 11 August 2026**

LISTING OPTIONS



Q&A

Question and answer profile covering work experience, education, some personal information, some fun facts and advice to others looking to enter this field.



Insights or Profile article

Article with a specific theme [eg the role of a mentor] written by the executive from a personal point of view
or an article style profile on the executive covering work experience, education, interesting facts etc.

Info blocks



A standard set of information, displayed as info blocks on the page.

These could include:

- Education and qualification
 - Biggest / most complex deal worked on
 - Fun fact
 - Etc etc
- 

Letter

Looking back on your journey, what advice would you give yourself; what to look out for; how to handle possible obstacles and how to stay true to yourself.

LIST OF TOPICS (examples)

Q&A

NIGERIA



Michelle Chikezie
Partner
G Elias

LETTER TO MY YOUNGER SELF

Dear 22-year-old Michelle,

You don't realize yet how your fearless curiosity, your highly active mind, your pursuit of excellence in every task, your enthusiasm for completing work, your refusal to accept limits or inadequacy, and your interest in corporate law from the very first experience will all shape you into the lawyer you aspire to become.

Right now, you are worried about securing the right law firm. You are eager to learn, to gain experience, to become proficient, and to be a superstar. Yet, you worry that you may not be good enough or that you don't belong in this world of high-stakes negotiations and corporate battles. But let me reassure you that you will find the right law firm, one that provides the perfect start for the work you love, and that your tenacity, empathy and collegiality will help you succeed.

It won't happen overnight. You will feel immense pressure, there will be moments of doubt, moments when you feel like giving up. But in this very first, you will develop not only your skills and experiences, but also your character, understanding of the market, clarity, and resilience. There are crucial, embrace every experience, the good and the bad, ensuring they always lead to positive outcomes. Absorb the lessons, become who you are destined to be, and discard what holds you back.

You will learn that the best MBA lawyers aren't necessarily loud or confrontational; they are those who listen more than they speak. They seek to understand and resolve problems, are responsive, think creatively, read between the lines, catch the nuances, and add value everywhere through the room. You will get there not by pretending to know everything, but by listening to those more fortunate in your quest for understanding and clarity.

Expect many late nights—perhaps tears—and deals that feel through after you've invested so much effort. Some clients will test your patience, but the victories will far outweigh the challenges. There will be small successes, where your strategy solves an issue or even wins a case. You'll have stellar decisions that shape economies and livelihoods. You will come to appreciate a profession that is both awe-inspiring and rewarding.

So, today, take the right questions, dig deeper, and choose lifelong learning, build yourself to a high standard, especially when no one is watching. Be passionate. You are already on your way there. Though I must warn you: nothing is perfect. Your perfectionist mindset is good when you're working on that draft, and you must make it as airtight as possible, but don't let it cripple you. Perfection is largely a myth. Success does not come from being flawless. The best MBA lawyers are not the ones who never make mistakes; they

are the ones who learn faster, stay humble, and recover stronger. You will make mistakes. You might misread the tone of a negotiation or misunderstand what the client wants, or underestimate how much detail a client expects. You may feel like quitting once or twice. But each mistake will sharpen you, and every difficult conversation will teach you something you never learn in the classroom.

MBA is not just about law; it's about business, strategy and people. You won't just be reviewing contracts with a narrow view, but handling legal risks into commercial insight. You will get to financial jargon, grow to read financial statements and understand EBITDA margins. You may be late the first few times, but you'll soon become fluent and start simplifying complexity for others. You will learn how business works in practice, not just how they are structured on paper. You'll understand market share, competition, capital structure, operational risks and culture. You will build legal expertise with an understanding of business. That's what makes you indispensable, because you understand your clients and you know what they don't.

Michele, character matters a lot. Deals are not concluded solely on brilliance. They rely on preparation, emotional control and trust. Be the calm when tensions rise, open face, and firmness. Speak clearly. Again, there will be times when you might want to cut corners, but don't. Your integrity is not a tactic; it's your brand. It is who you are. You must be trustworthy. Tell the truth when it is inconvenient and when it is not, whether the stakes are high or low. You will face pressure to compromise, but hold your ground, respectfully and calmly. Be a fierce but fair negotiator. The minds must meet somewhere; that's the place to be.

When you start out, you're not going to be the one leading; instead, you'll take notes on deals and conversations throughout the night, and work hard to understand what the deal truly means. These times may seem like you're in the background, but they're not wasted. Seek mentorship from accomplished lawyers both within and outside your organization. Their experiences are formal courses you will learn in. Be intentional in observing and asking questions. They will help you build your knowledge and instincts. When you begin leading, only you will set the tone and anticipate problems before they arise. You'll present deals from being open and help others out. Before I forget, make time for the people and activities you love outside of work. Being good at your job isn't enough if you're constantly burnt out, isolated, or disconnected from who you are. Attend church regularly, join fellowship meetings, volunteer at outreach events, occasionally hang out with friends, call your family, take proper rest, and create wonderful memories. Finally, Michelle, you will get there, though it won't be a straight line. You will adapt, grow, and support others on their journey too. With love and pride.

Your future self

Michelle Chikezie

G ELIAS

NIGERIA



Oyekemi Ajayi
Manager | Deals
PwC Nigeria

Tell us about your career journey—how did you find your way into MBA?

My MBA journey began shortly after university when I joined a boutique investment bank as an intern and later became an analyst. This role gave me hands-on exposure to deal structuring, stakeholder engagement, and financial advisory, as well as experience preparing transaction documents and participating in key deal milestones.

Driven by a growing interest in complex transactions, I transitioned to one of the Big Four firms to broaden my exposure. There, I worked on financial due diligence and sell-side advisory projects, building on my investment banking foundation and deepening my understanding of deal dynamics and strategy.

To gain a broader perspective on business operations, I transitioned into the FMCG sector as a Corporate Finance Manager, where I deepened my understanding of corporate finance, strategic planning, and day-to-day operations beyond deal execution.

I returned to the Big Four with a sharper focus on unlocking value through strategic transactions. I advised on diverse deals, ranging from due diligence and valuations to corporate finance and financial modeling.

Over time, I've gravitated toward high-impact MBA roles that blend strategy with execution. What drives me is helping businesses grow, transform, and create lasting value through insight-driven deals.

What leadership values or philosophies guide your decision-making?

At the core of my leadership is a commitment to purpose, discipline, and groundedness. I believe leadership means taking responsibility, inspiring others, and driving meaningful impact. My decisions are guided by values based on:

Integrity: Integrity is my compass. I strive to lead with honesty and consistency. I believe that trust is earned through actions, not words, and I hold myself accountable to the same standards I expect from others.

I lead with empathy: I truly listen to understand the people I work with, whether I'm mentoring a colleague or leading the team. This helps me to make more effective decisions that are compassionate and inclusive.

I lead with purpose: Every decision I make is guided by a clear sense of "why." I ask myself: Does this align with my values? Will this move us closer to our goal? Does it leave people better than I found them? That clarity helps me stay focused.

I embrace growth and adaptability: I'm constantly learning through feedback. I welcome change and challenges because they push me to evolve and lead more effectively.

Collaboration is my strength: I believe in the power of collective

intelligence. I make space for diverse voices and ideas, and I value shared success over individual recognition. When people feel seen and heard, they bring their best—and that's where real progress happens.

How would you describe the current MBA landscape in Africa—opportunities, trends, or challenges?

Africa's MBA landscape is dynamic and evolving, driven by opportunities in digital technology, energy, healthcare, and fintech. Advanced markets in Africa are reshaping how deals are sourced, assessed, and executed, making transactions more efficient. Recent trends show a shift toward high-value, strategic deals, with growing interest in sectors like telecoms, agribusiness, renewable energy, and healthcare, especially in Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa. It's also enhancing due diligence, target identification and integration planning, streamlining the entire MBA process.

Africa's MBA market is well-positioned for sustained growth, fueled by a rising generation of young, tech-savvy individuals, a rapidly expanding middle class, and growing investor confidence in high-impact sectors such as fintech, healthcare, and green energy.

The focus is shifting toward strategic, long-term value creation rather than sheer volume, making Africa an increasingly attractive destination for discerning investors.

What advice would you give young women entering the world of finance and MBA today?

To young women entering the world of finance and MBA, my advice would be centered around professional development, building strong and valuable relationships.

Invest in Your Professional Development: Success in finance and MBA begins with mastering the fundamentals. It is essential to learn and understand the language of the industry particularly in financial modeling, valuation, accounting, and deal structuring. Stay curious, stay current, and never stop sharpening your edge. Build your network: Surround yourself with a diverse support system, including mentors and colleagues. Communication, MBA is about negotiation, negotiation, and storytelling; so make sure your voice is clear, confident, and compelling.

Build and Nurture Meaningful Relationships: Relationships are the currency of finance. Build your network early, connect with peers, seek mentors, and find allies who will champion you. Surround yourself with a diverse support system, including mentors and colleagues. Collaboration over competition: competition creates lasting impact. And as you rise, lift others with you.

Own Your Voice and Your Value: You belong in the room, so own it. Speak up, ask the right questions, and embrace challenges as growth opportunities. Bias may exist, but don't let it define you. Set boundaries, advocate for yourself, and align your goals with the value you bring.

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DeoMakersAFRICA

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TANZANIA



Amalia Lui
Partner
Clyde & Co

How would you describe the current MBA landscape in Africa—opportunities, trends, or challenges?

The MBA landscape in Africa is fast-evolving, which is fascinating and exciting for the players in this MBA space. Personally, I see the trend shifting to digitalization. For example, equity funds, venture capital and corporate social funds, which have different perspectives and a focus on impact, which is critical to investment initiatives and building value, as opposed to just capital-based investment. I believe African governments are doing far-reaching and deeper investments, which will help create the greatest challenge for Africa, as the US2020 initiative in this regard and its implementation is key.

How do regulatory environments across African markets affect deal structuring and execution?

The regulatory framework across the African continent is complex and often inconsistent, and this presents a significant challenge for investors and dealmakers. The regulatory environment is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it provides a framework for investment and deal-making, but on the other hand, it can be a barrier to entry for foreign investors. The regulatory environment is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it provides a framework for investment and deal-making, but on the other hand, it can be a barrier to entry for foreign investors.

Where do you see the biggest untapped potential for transformative deals in Africa over the next 5–10 years?

In my opinion, the biggest untapped potential for transformative deals in Africa is in the renewable energy sector. Africa has a wealth of natural resources, including solar, wind, and hydro, which are being harnessed to generate clean energy. This sector is expected to grow rapidly in the coming years, and it offers a wealth of opportunities for investment and deal-making. The renewable energy sector is expected to grow rapidly in the coming years, and it offers a wealth of opportunities for investment and deal-making.

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what African markets, but this has not yet reached capacity. I believe it's a trend that will continue to grow, and it offers a wealth of opportunities for investment and deal-making.

What's your personal take on what's keeping you grounded?

I would say, it's my family and my values. I have a strong family and I value my family. I have a strong family and I value my family. I have a strong family and I value my family. I have a strong family and I value my family.

Clyde & Co

With over 100 years of experience, Clyde & Co is a leading law firm in the United States. We have a strong reputation for providing high-quality legal services to our clients. We have a strong reputation for providing high-quality legal services to our clients.

Work as one—this is a public company, and we are a public company. We are a public company, and we are a public company. We are a public company, and we are a public company.

Our clients are our priority. We are committed to providing high-quality legal services to our clients. We are committed to providing high-quality legal services to our clients.

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TANZANIA



Njeri Wagacha
Partner | Corporate & Commercial Partner
CDH Kenya

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KENYA



Njeri Wagacha
Partner | Corporate & Commercial Partner
CDH Kenya

DEAL LEADERSHIP THROUGH THE FEMALE LENS

We were nearly at the finish line. The Share Purchase Agreement (SPA) was in final form, and an all-party call was scheduled to close outstanding points before signing. Our client, seeking the Kenyan market, acquiring a majority stake in a Kenyan business, and material us as legal counsel to steer them through the acquisition. The deal had dragged on for much longer than anticipated, and with all parties eager to sign, it was a significant discussion for everyone.

We opened the call with a practical and time-sensitive question when we could be expected to provide the specific disclosures. From the sellers, which they had committed to providing weeks earlier. For context, the deal included a disclosure process, and the disclosure letter would be signed together with the SPA and was, therefore, a critical element of this stage. Instead of addressing the question, the sellers deflected. They claimed the reason for the delay was because we were late on delivering key documents, which wasn't just factually incorrect—as the documents they referred to were conditions precedent in the SPA and would only be relevant once the SPA was signed—but also appeared to be a calculated attempt to shift blame and cast us as being disorganized and unprepared.

In that moment, I made a decision. We would not proceed with the call.

Negotiation strategy

The opposing team was predominantly male-led and adopted a firm approach from the outset. There were moments where the conversation became challenging with our perspective on certain matters met with notable resistance. In classic professional negotiations, such dynamics are not unusual and require steady deliberate management. As deal counsel, I chose to maintain an approach grounded in facts, clarity, and respect. We pushed back where necessary, but always in a measured and constructive manner. As a woman in a space that remains, in many respects, traditionally male-dominated, there were moments when I felt my voice was questioned more readily than would have been of my male counterparts or met with a level of challenge that felt disproportionate. These moments, however, became a source of strength and clarity, reinforcing my resolve to speak up as much as necessary, grounding each argument in fact, and ensuring that every position we took was backed by sound rationale.

Deciding to call off the call was more than a negotiation tactic; it was a leadership choice. It would have been easy to push through the conversation, hoping the tension would ease. But allowing the sellers to dictate tone and narrative, especially when their

obligations were unclear, would have set our precedent and given them the upper hand for the rest of the negotiation. I calmly explained our strategy to the client in the room and then the client that we would not be proceeding with the call, and would instead revert with our comments on the document. I framed the issue clearly: the tone was unconstructive, and our client, who had engaged in this process in good faith, deserved a more respectful forum. The sellers immediately softened their stance and asked to proceed. The deal, which had been a source of frustration, was not without friction—but with a sense of mutual respect and structure. Sometimes the most powerful move is to pause, not as a surrender but as a recalibration.

Reflections on being the female lawyer in the room

Being a female commercial lawyer in Africa often means you are implicitly expected to prove your competence, even when it should be presumed. You're questioned more. Your judgment is second-guessed. Your opinions are questioned more readily. But I have learnt that being calm is not being passive. It is being strategic; being respectful is not being submissive. It is being professional and showing a woman's grace while being no less capable—it often makes you more prepared.

The temptation to match tone is strong, but it's always important to remain grounded, keeping your eyes on the result and not on the noise. Clients, even well-meaning ones, can sometimes be swayed by louder voices or more "bellowed-out" arguments, but what remains long-term trust is consistent delivery and solid reasoning. Despite the attempts to shake confidence or imply fault, our client remained steadfastly aligned with our team and that trust was earned.

To young women entering the field, you don't need to be the loudest voice to be the strongest. Instead, be informed, clear, and remain calm. Learn the deal structure, understand your client's commercial motivations, be known to be a team player, and always be ready to insist on applying your position, when in the face of interruption. Don't be afraid to pause the conversation when it's going nowhere, walking away is a sign of confidence. It can be a calculated reset that brings the discussion back to where it needs to be. Finally, let your work speak. Your client will notice when you hold the line for them, defend their interests without theatrics, and stand for them. That's where real credibility is built.

As for me, this deal was not just about commercial outcomes. It was a powerful reminder that as a woman in a male-dominated transaction knowledge space, preparation and quiet confidence wins the day. There's how you lead, not just what you say.

CDH

LISTING OPTIONS (experiences)

O&A

KENYA



Felista Mutahi-Kiruthi
Senior Manager | M&A Transaction Services
Consulting Services | Deloitte Africa

What was your first deal or transaction like, and what did you take away from it?

I could write a book about the transactions I have had the privilege to work on, but I choose to reflect on my first public transaction because it shaped me immensely. I'll never forget.

It was an intense and eye-opening experience, marked by several rigorous demands from both the client and potential investors. It pushed me to my limits by testing my resilience, attention to detail, and my ability to perform under pressure.

Through it all, I gained invaluable insights – not only into the technical aspects of the deal, but also with respect to the importance of collaboration.

I learnt that nothing compares with the power of a strong team; that experience is irreplaceable, and that no matter how challenging a transaction may be, it will eventually come to an end. And when it does, nothing beats the feeling of knowing your transaction has gone through and has been officially announced. It is a moment of pride, accomplishment, and relief.

Have you faced any gender-based challenges or biases in your career? If so, how did you navigate them?

Contrary to most people's expectations, some of my biggest challenges in the M&A space have been men who have only achieved remarkable success in their own careers, but who have also broken glass ceilings in their own respect.

They have played an instrumental role in my career trajectory by offering guidance, affording me exposure into high-impact and career-defining transactions, and actively speaking up for my contributions. They have also provided me with direct and constructive feedback, which has helped me achieve my long-term success. I remain indebted to them for the incredible trust and mentorship they continue to extend to me.

This experience has reinforced the importance of paying it forward. As a result, I have become internally about actively identifying potential within my own teams, and creating opportunities for them to contribute meaningfully and grow.

What's the hardest lesson you've learnt, and how did it shape you?

One of the hardest lessons I've learnt in my career is that not every client wants to hear the details or red flags of a transaction. As advisors, it is not enough to simply identify issues, we must also be attuned to how we communicate them.

Reading the room, understanding the client's perspective, and presenting the findings in a thoughtful, and solution-oriented manner is critical. Not only must we highlight the risks, we must also propose viable paths forward.

This key learning has shaped the way I apply myself on projects and navigate complex situations. It has also taught me how to lead with insight and tact while being intentional about how I engage with my clients and guide difficult conversations.

Have your views on work-life balance changed over time?

At the start of my career, I was focused on achieving the elusive work-life balance. But, as I mark a decade in my professional journey, experience has taught me that life is less about balance and more about integration and acceptance. There are times that work will follow me home, and times when family becomes part of my workplace, and that is okay.

Embracing this perception has also allowed me to lead with greater empathy and extend grace in everyday interactions by recognizing that we all navigate complex personal and professional realities.

How do you mentor or support other women entering the field?

I am intentional about cultivating individual, unique, and meaningful connections with women breaking through the M&A space. I also share experiences from my own journey (both wins and setbacks) in a way that is relevant to them, so that they can learn, grow, and draw strength from those experiences.

I also advocate for them to create systems and processes that support their long-term success. In addition, I often remind them that tough times don't last, and no challenge should ever be wasted.

Further, I make it a point to be available to them as a trusted sounding board, offering them support as they navigate key decisions and opportunities.

What keeps you motivated on tough days?

As a mother, I strive to set a strong example for my daughter, so that she grows up believing in her ability to overcome challenges. The nature of M&A work can be extremely demanding, but appreciating the significance of the opportunity to serve world-class clients, and the fact that my work plays a pivotal role in protecting shareholders' interests and driving sustainable value – whether through job creation, wealth management or bringing social goods – keeps me going.

Deloitte.

DealMakers AFRICA
WOMEN 2023

MAURITIUS



Ayesha Rambajun
Senior Associate
ENS

A LETTER TO MY YOUNGER SELF

Dear younger me,

You are 21, wide-eyed, and convinced that the world of law is linear: that once you have chosen a path, you must remain on it. You have just completed your first internship while studying law at university, and you are slightly bewildered by the theatrics of the courtroom. The litigation side of law feels performative, almost alien. But you have discovered something else: the quiet satisfaction of working behind the scenes, reviewing contracts, and observing the mechanics of corporate transactions. Do not ignore that instinct. It is pointing you to where you truly belong.

Allow me to say this early on: your journey will not follow the conventional path. You will not begin your career at a prestigious law firm. In fact, you will spend more than a decade in-house, an experience that, at times, will feel like a detour, and you will occasionally wonder whether you made a mistake. You have not. That chapter will offer you a perspective that few possess, with commercial acumen, a deep understanding of operations, and empathy for the internal clients who will one day advise externally. Those years will teach you how business decisions are made in real-time, and will shape your ability to translate legal risks into practical outcomes. You will be stretched (sometimes uncomfortably so), but in the process, you will sharpen your instincts and develop a business-first mindset. That will be your edge.

You will learn that corporate finance is not just about numbers or terminology. It is about people, about relationships forged through trust, about understanding what keeps decision-makers awake at night, and about how legal frameworks underpin transformative decisions. In those early years, you will not be the one calling the shots, but you will listen attentively, observe carefully, and begin to understand how the pieces fit together. That quiet curiosity will become your greatest strength. Later, you will realise that the boardroom, too, is an emotionally charged environment, just more subdued than the courtroom and a tad less dramatic. Eventually, you will join a law firm, much later than most. You will feel like an outsider, convinced that others are ahead of you, with fatter footings and more traditional experience. You are not behind. In fact, you will surprise yourself by how quickly you adapt. The rigour, the structure and the speed will sharpen your skills. But what will set you apart will not be your technical knowledge. It will be your calmness under pressure and your ability to connect the dots that others might not see because you have sat on both sides of the table. You will come to understand that your perspective is not only different, but valuable. Without striding on the fence, you will know how to deliver advice that is not only legally sound but commercially anchored. And your clients and colleagues will come to value that clarity, especially when the stakes are high.

There will be moments of doubt, significant ones. Times when the pressure feels overwhelming and you question whether you are doing enough or being enough. In those moments, remember growth will not always be visible. Sometimes it is the resilience built while reading the same agreement for the fifth time at midnight, or the courage it takes to speak up in a room full of experts. Those moments are shaping you. If I could whisper something to you during those long nights, overlooking every decision, it would be this: confidence is not the absence of uncertainty; it is the commitment to show up, even when you are unsure. Ask questions. Challenge respectfully. Share your thoughts. Do not wait to be "senior enough" to contribute. Your voice matters now.

You will also learn that your career does not need to consume your identity. You will find joy in catching snippets, in curating music playlists that calm the mind, and in the laughter shared with close friends. There will be difficult days, ones that test your resolve, but you will endure. You will learn to pause when necessary, to protect your time, and to nourish yourself, because you cannot serve others from an empty cup.

To the young woman working on her first deal, I see you. It is overwhelming, but you do not need to know everything; you simply need to stay curious. There will be moments you feel like you do not belong. Persist anyway. You will find your voice, not by mimicking others, but by trusting your instincts, doing the work, and letting integrity guide your decisions. You are more capable than you believe.

The landscape of corporate law is evolving. There is now space, more than ever, for empathy, nuance and balance. For women to lead, not by assimilation, but by authenticity. And, increasingly, for legal professionals to be agile in a world shaped by technological shifts. Artificial intelligence will reshape how we work, but not why we work. It will bring speed, automation and data at scale. Yet the human touch, judgment, ethical strategic counsel, will remain irreplaceable. Embrace the change. Learn the tools. But never lose sight of the values that make you a trusted advisor.

I will not tell you to rush less or worry less; that would not help you. You will not always have it figured out. But you will keep growing, and that is more than enough. When it all comes together, you will look back, just as I do now, and be proud. Not only of who you have achieved, but of how you have come.

With pride and perspective,
Ayesha

What's the most complex or memorable deal you've worked on, and what did you learn from it?

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KENYA



Wairimu Karungu
Vice President | M&A Advisory
Stanbic Bank Group

How do you now lead to a professional role? How did it shape your journey?

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Ayesha Rambajun
Senior Associate
ENS

A LETTER TO MY YOUNGER SELF

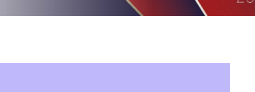
Dear younger me,

You are 21, wide-eyed, and convinced that the world of law is linear: that once you have chosen a path, you must remain on it. You have just completed your first internship while studying law at university, and you are slightly bewildered by the theatrics of the courtroom. The litigation side of law feels performative, almost alien. But you have discovered something else: the quiet satisfaction of working behind the scenes, reviewing contracts, and observing the mechanics of corporate transactions. Do not ignore that instinct. It is pointing you to where you truly belong.

Allow me to say this early on: your journey will not follow the conventional path. You will not begin your career at a prestigious law firm. In fact, you will spend more than a decade in-house, an experience that, at times, will feel like a detour, and you will occasionally wonder whether you made a mistake. You have not. That chapter will offer you a perspective that few possess, with commercial acumen, a deep understanding of operations, and empathy for the internal clients who will one day advise externally. Those years will teach you how business decisions are made in real-time, and will shape your ability to translate legal risks into practical outcomes. You will be stretched (sometimes uncomfortably so), but in the process, you will sharpen your instincts and develop a business-first mindset. That will be your edge.

You will learn that corporate finance is not just about numbers or terminology. It is about people, about relationships forged through trust, about understanding what keeps decision-makers awake at night, and about how legal frameworks underpin transformative decisions. In those early years, you will not be the one calling the shots, but you will listen attentively, observe carefully, and begin to understand how the pieces fit together. That quiet curiosity will become your greatest strength. Later, you will realise that the boardroom, too, is an emotionally charged environment, just more subdued than the courtroom and a tad less dramatic. Eventually, you will join a law firm, much later than most. You will feel like an outsider, convinced that others are ahead of you, with fatter footings and more traditional experience. You are not behind. In fact, you will surprise yourself by how quickly you adapt. The rigour, the structure and the speed will sharpen your skills. But what will set you apart will not be your technical knowledge. It will be your calmness under pressure and your ability to connect the dots that others might not see because you have sat on both sides of the table. You will come to understand that your perspective is not only different, but valuable. Without striding on the fence, you will know how to deliver advice that is not only legally sound but commercially anchored. And your clients and colleagues will come to value that clarity, especially when the stakes are high.

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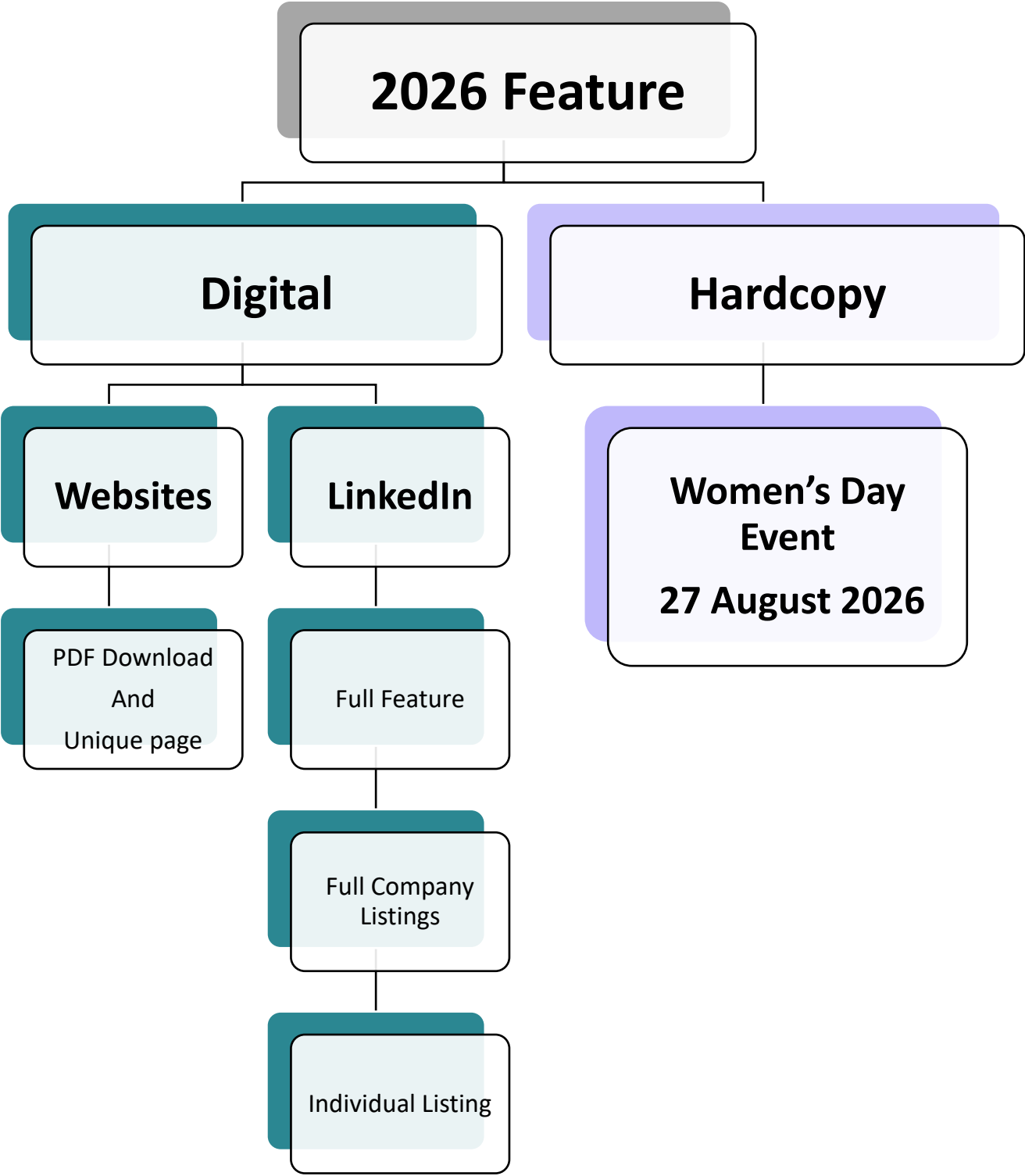
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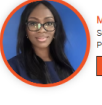


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