

WEBBER WENTZEL

in alliance with > **Linklaters**



Taaj Viljoen
Partner

Q *What led you to pursue a career in M&A?*

A It is invigorating to be involved in a space that has real-world impact. I enjoy working on a transaction and witnessing the deal play out in the real world. M&A lawyers, alongside clients and other transaction advisers, are in the business of building things – building businesses, companies, brands, and the economy. This aligns with my life’s mission, which is to make an impact in some way.

I grew up in challenging socioeconomic circumstances – a product of a system that was historically designed to exclude women of colour. That makes being a part of this industry all the more worthwhile.

Q *What, in your opinion, is the hardest part of an M&A deal?*

A As lawyers on M&A deals, we are not simply drafting agreements and negotiating terms - often we are navigating people and personalities. Factoring the human component into getting the deal over the line means every deal is different. There is an art to ensuring we place our clients in the best possible position, having regard to all the

variables. Also, typically M&A lawyers play a big project management role. Externally, that means focusing the various parties and ensuring the deal runs smoothly and concludes successfully. Internally, that means assembling our specialists within the firm to deliver a seamless client experience. This requires a keen ability to draw people together and multitask.

Q *What is your favourite sector to do a deal in and why?*

A I have experience in local and cross-border M&A deals, in several sectors including consumer goods, financial services, retail, property, hotel and leisure, and private equity. I enjoy being involved in these sectors, for the same reasons I enjoy being in the M&A space generally.

Q *What piece of advice would you give a young woman working on her first deal | transaction?*

A Building a career in the M&A space, and building any career as a woman, is no easy feat. I have been fortunate to have spent most of my career at Webber Wentzel,

which has strong female leadership. I feel that our managing partner, Sally Hutton, and all the other female leaders within the firm, have reinforced women’s place in the industry. Of course, within the firm and within society, women continue to face barriers. I think it is important for everyone, including newcomers to the industry, to be involved in chipping away at those barriers. That may sound daunting to newcomers, but I believe that at the start of your career, being an active participant in your own career will have an impact. I think it is important to be deliberate about your career path. I live by the motto that small actions over time can have a big impact. Eventually, at the right time, your focus can shift more broadly.

Q *What do you think will accelerate women in the industry?*

A I believe that access and opportunity are the fundamentals of success. There are brilliant women in the industry, who sometimes lack the platform to demonstrate their skills. It is a male-dominated industry generally, and I believe that women should work together, supporting one another and celebrating one another’s successes. 🙌

Our Senior Associates in our Corporate, Commercial and M&A teams share three words that best describe them



SIVENKOSI KETI
Ambitious, hardworking
& optimistic



MARTINE LEUKES
Hard-working, resilient
& loyal



VUYOKAZI XEGWANA
Compassionate, pragmatic
& resolute



JENNIFER EBORALL
Authentic, integrity
& resilient



MBALI NCHABELE
Dynamic, determined
& authentic



LIESL OLIVIER
Determined, optimistic
& practical



MAPASEKA PHALA
Attentive, affable
& driven



MIRREN SHARP
Adaptable, dynamic
& thoughtful



ANNA PARRY
Tenacious, diligent
& intentional