

Q&A

Virusha Subban

Partner, Head of the Tax Practice, Johannesburg

**Baker
McKenzie.**

Virusha has more than 20 years' experience in tax matters relating to customs, excise and international trade. She runs a niche practice that is focused on customs, excise and international trade. This offering is primarily to large corporates, multinationals and state departments that come to her to solve their most complex cross-border indirect tax and trade concerns. Her expertise extends to export controls, dual-use, cross-border trade matters such as anti-dumping and other trade remedies, and a cradle-to-grave offering on all aspects of customs and excise.

Virusha's expertise includes all customs-related risks in the context of cross-border transactions in Africa. She also conducts customs reviews and health checks, and provides training to companies that wish to avert customs and excise risk.

She also has extensive experience in supply chain movement and trade remedies on the continent, having advised clients on cross-border movement of goods into Nigeria, Angola, Tanzania, Zambia, Mozambique, Eswatini, Namibia, Lesotho and Botswana.

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

A When I think back on the earlier years of my career, I reflect on the many, many times when I was the youngest person in the boardroom and/or the only female in the boardroom. It

was a bit of a deterrence to me at first, but with time I learned that if you are well prepared for a meeting and know your facts and figures, it is easier to find the confidence and the courage to speak up.

Q *What would you say to another woman who was thinking of changing fields because the industry is so male-dominated?*

A Please don't. We need more of us to take up our rightful place at the table. Unfortunately, societal gender stereotypes tend to shape and influence women's progress in male-dominated professions. At Baker McKenzie we aim to turn that stereotype on its head. In 2019, Baker McKenzie was the first global law firm to set gender aspirational targets of 40/40/20 (40% men, 40% women and 20% flexible (women, men or non-binary persons) by 1 July 2025. We strive to be a fair and inclusive environment where all our people can thrive and prosper, and where women in particular can equally achieve their full potential.

Q *What are the biggest changes you have seen in the industry in the course of your career?*

A The biggest and most rewarding change that I have witnessed over the past two decades would be the seismic shift from authoritarian, old-school leadership to servant leadership, and the evolution of kindness, humility and compassion as being qualities that are now recognised as the hallmark of a good leader. I am proud to say with certainty that these are the values that

we espouse at Baker McKenzie. We are The New Lawyers and we are most definitely The New Leaders! This is what sets our amazing firm apart from its competitors.

Q *What is your go-to power song?*

A Unstoppable by Sia

Q *What is your favourite quote?*

A "You must never be fearful about what you are doing when it is right" - Rosa Parks.

Q *What is your most effective time saving tip?*

A At work I try to have an early start to be most productive in the first half of my day. On the home-front my super power is that I speed cook.

Q *What is at the top of your bucket list?*

A To travel to far flung places. I love to travel because it reminds me to appreciate everything that I have, to experience new adventures and make memories with my family, to observe and learn from other cultures and embrace humanity with all its facets and imperfections.

Q *What is your favourite holiday destination?*

A Any island getaway, where my sons and my husband get to snorkel while I relax and catch-up on my reading. 📖

