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

A I am what they refer to at Bowmans as a 'Lifer'. My M&A journey began at Bowmans and has, for the most part, always remained there. I spent a year on secondment at the Munich office of magic circle firm, Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer, an experience which has been additive to my career at Bowmans rather than a detour.

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

A I had to learn to navigate the weight of 'only-ness' in my career. Very often I was the only young, black, woman in the room, on the deal and at the negotiation table. Being the 'only' often made me feel like an outsider when all I wanted to do was fit in and feel like I was part of a collective. It also meant that I was an outlier who had fewer role models who looked like me (and came from backgrounds similar to mine). As a result, it was harder for me to visualize being at Bowmans long-term. It took me a long time to learn to also see this state of 'onlyness' as an opportunity to model what inclusion looks like. Now I appreciate the importance of my presence at a firm like Bowmans and how valuable and worthy my perspectives and ideas are.

Study after study shows that companies with greater diversity have better performance and are more productive than those with less diversity. I want to be part of the story that adds to the diversity at Bowmans.

So, while I may not have had many role models who looked like me, I am excited about the opportunity to be a role model for young, black, female excellence in the

work that I do, for other lawyers coming up the ranks.

Q *What are some of the most memorable deals you have worked on in your career?*

A In the gas industry, I was part of the team that advised Messer Group and CVC Capital Partners in respect of their USD 1.7 billion acquisition of assets and entities divested by Linde and Praxair in North and South America as part of their USD 46 billion merger.

In the FMCG industry, I was part of the team that advised PepsiCo on its acquisition of Pioneer Foods, which was subsequently named deal of the year in South Africa for 2020 by DealMakers. Valued at approximately USD 1.7 billion, the acquisition was one of PepsiCo's largest outside the United States.

In the Telco industry, I was part of the team that advised Tata Communications in respect of the ZAR 7 billion disposal of Neotel to the Vodacom Group, and the subsequent sale of Neotel to Liquid Telecommunications and Royal Bafokeng Holdings.

Q *What advice would you give to young women looking to enter into the M&A market?*

A **Be patient and work hard.** The practice of law is a game of experience. You will be the new kid on the block for many years. Be willing to learn, be open to doing mundane work which, at first, may seem beneath you. This work could expose you to new opportunities, help you develop, and link you with people who may help you to advance your career.

Feedback and constructive criticism are gifts. Seek them out and learn from them. When you get feedback that you do not

want to hear, keep your feelings out of it and use it as an opportunity to learn and improve yourself.

Give yourself the licence to call things out: Speak out if you observe any bias, any injustice and any untoward behaviour. Authorise yourself to call this out and start meaningful conversations around correcting anything that does not promote and enhance diversity in the work place. You can be an agency of change.

Q *What changes are you seeing in the legal industry?*

A **Digital transformation is here to stay:** This includes sophisticated tech that promises data mastery, intelligent workflows, increased efficiency and accuracy through AI and the like. Law firms of the future are ones that are mastering the art of tech adoption today to enhance what they can offer to their clients.

Solutions for issues of diversity and inclusiveness are now critical: Gone are the days when these issues are swept under the carpet. Many clients, junior lawyers and other important stakeholders are holding law firms accountable for meaningful transformation. The successful law firms of the future are the ones that will find these solutions and walk the talk.

Clients will follow the 'trusted advisor' over the 'legal only advisor': More and more clients are insisting on value-adding partners to their businesses, especially on matters of strategic importance. They want advice that is not merely academic, but applicable to the 'real world' and in line with their values and strategies. They want proactive advice with important insights from experience to allow them to learn from their peers. The lawyer of the future is one that operates beyond the purely legal and partners with clients for successful results. 📌