



Deal Makers

WOMEN 2023

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



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Marylou Greig
Editor

Women's Month in South Africa holds important significance as we continue to work together to empower women in all spheres of life. August is the time to reflect on the many achievements of the brave women of our past who fought against gender, race and class oppression, and to remember them as those who laid the foundation for the gender equitable society we work towards in South Africa.

Although the status of women in this country has improved in recent decades, gender inequalities persist, and the fact remains that women are still largely underrepresented in leadership positions. Education is one of the most important aspects of human development, and eliminating gender disparity starts by building a foundation with education in the early years, on which to increase the status and capabilities of women as they take their rightful place in teams and in corporate South Africa's boardrooms.

This, the third edition of the DealMakers Women of SA's M&A and Financial

Markets Industry, seeks not only to highlight the incredible women in this space, but also to offer inspiration to young women, and to give them courage where needed, as well as the realisation that they are not alone. Reading these profiles and thought articles, the clear takeaway is that feminine traits bring a different dimension to leadership – one that is more collaborative, empathetic and focused on relationship-building; essential elements necessary to complete a well-rounded team servicing an industry which navigates people dynamics.

This year, this feature will be released at the inaugural Women's Day platinum networking event. The panel facilitator is Lydia Shadrach-Razzino, a partner at Baker McKenzie and a previous winner of the DealMaker of the Year award. She is joined by Janice Johnston, CEO of Edge Growth Ventures, Fawzia Suliman, CFO of the JSE, and Ego Iwegbu, co-founder and CEO of The Good Mineral, MSLONDON Cosmetics and Miss Salon London. 

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Yonela Diko

Associate

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Q *What led you to pursue a career in M&A | the Financial Markets?*

A At the beginning of my career journey within the legal profession I was afforded the opportunity to work in a variety of practice areas ranging from dispute resolution to employment and labour law, however, it is within the M&A space that I thrived and chose to settle.

My choice was heavily influenced by the practice's capacity to extend and engage with other practice areas such as regulatory compliance and financial markets. M&A is intellectually stimulating and challenging, it provides opportunities to work on complex transactions and solve intricate corporate problems. In essence, M&A offers a front-row seat to decisions which have substantial implications on actual people and the directions taken by corporate entities.

The demanding nature of M&A necessitates that one keeps abreast of market dynamics, industry trends and regulatory developments. Most importantly, it offers clear career paths and growth which makes it a fulfilling career path.

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

A The Healthcare sector. Given the crucial role that the healthcare sector plays in people's lives, M&A transactions may have a significant impact on the patients and the community and their experience in the system. Being a part of such important work is satisfying and allows one to contribute to shaping a better healthcare system designed to benefit South Africa.

Typically, involvement in the healthcare industry involves complex legal and regulatory issues. This particular juncture provides intellectual stimulation to any attorney who relishes solving intricate challenges. So, one could say I was created for this practice area.

Healthcare is in a state of constant evolution due to technological advancements, regulatory shifts, and market dynamics. Engaging in healthcare M&As gives attorneys, such as myself, a vibrant and ever-progressing professional environment for those who thrive on staying ahead of these trends.

Q *What are some common misconceptions about M&A law that you often come across, and how do you address them?*

A I often come across some common misconceptions about M&A law, one in particular being that M&A work is solely about numbers and financial transactions. There is considerably more to the work than just financial research and transaction structure, though these are obviously essential components.

M&A law is a complex area that necessitates a thorough grasp of corporate transactions' legal, regulatory, and strategic components in addition to their financial features. As lawyers, we have a critical responsibility in helping our clients navigate intricate legal frameworks, detect potential risks, and provide pragmatic solutions to help them accomplish their strategic goals.

Additionally, there is a notion that the area of M&A law is predominately one controlled by men. While it's true that the legal profession, in general, has historically been male-dominated, there is an increasing number of talented and accomplished female attorneys in the M&A sector. As a young female M&A attorney, I am proud to be part of this growing representation of women in the field, and I am dedicated to breaking down barriers and inspiring the next generation of female leaders in M&A law.

Q *If you could change one thing on your career path to date, what would it be and why?*

A Nothing. I do not regret the years I spent in other practice areas, they have contributed to my overall development and I have gained an appreciation of the work my colleagues in other departments do.

It has been an incredible journey, I have had the opportunity to work and interact with knowledgeable women in the M&A practice, not only from within our firm, but other firms and the industry in general, all of whom I find to be exceptionally inspirational.

It is worth noting that a vast majority of people discover and settle on their true passions and strengths later in life and successfully transition to more fulfilling careers. I encourage seeking guidance from career counsellors, mentors, or trusted advisors in making informed decisions about career choices and finding a path that aligns with one's values and aspirations.

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

A Prepare yourself for an immense amount of paperwork, familiarise yourself with the Companies Act and the King Code, establish professional working connections with other M&A professionals and firms and keep the passion for learning and growing burning.

FUN FACTS

Favourite colour: Dark blue, I like how it compliments my skin.

Unusual hobbies: I am such a good oil painter and, when I get the chance, I pour myself some good red wine, gather my painting material and get busy.

Preferred holiday destination: Ghent in Belgium. It is rich with history, a perfect country because it is small but has everything that a big European country can offer. 🇧🇪