

From KZN to the hustle and bustle of Sandton with flare, and leading ground-breaking financing deals in South Africa.



BRIDGETT MAJOLA - DIRECTOR | BANKING & FINANCE | CMS

Bridgett Majola is one of the lead banking and finance lawyers that facilitated the equity financing of the ground-breaking two 100 MW solar private power purchase deal announced earlier this year. She was raised in Pinetown, KwaZulu-Natal and grew up surrounded by a dedicated support system made up of her immediate family, teachers, and friends. “To my mind, it was these people that were my very first mentors. My teachers spent a lot of time on my development. I can say that confidently! They would spend time after school assisting me with debating, public speaking, mathematics, science, or whatever discipline I needed support in”, says Majola, adding that it was in fact a family member that inspired her initial career desire, which was to become a maritime lawyer.

“I wanted to do something that kept me close to the ocean from a career perspective, something that would keep me close to home but also something that I thought would have a real impact.”

After she graduated from the University of KwaZulu-Natal in 2006 where she also held various leadership roles, Majola began a career as a corporate mergers and acquisitions lawyer, and competition lawyer, for six years. Backed by the strong belief that one must confidently go in the direction of one’s dreams, she set out on a path to chase opportunities of growth and self-fulfilment and that is when she took the leap to become a banking and finance lawyer.

“Today, I am a director at CMS South Africa with my practice focusing on various forms of debt finance. Now I have business mentors and life coaches, while some of my colleagues and in some rare instances,

some of my clients are my mentors. I am always trying to learn, grow, introspect, teach, and adapt to our ever-changing environment. I see our careers as things that need to keep evolving and growing. We need to keep refining our skills and trying to find more efficient ways to give our clients the best, affordable, and efficient service. This also requires an honest conversation, constant reflection, constant learning and changing the culture slowly”, she says.

NOTABLE CAREER MOMENTS

Majola’s career comprises numerous highlights, and she remains buoyantly working on achieving more. A most notable career highlight has to be her very first instruction from a leading bank to act as lenders counsel – it was a small transaction (in the context of the transactions that she now deals with) that opened a plethora of opportunities for her. Thereafter, her practice has continued to grow with the most recent highlight being an advisor to one of the leading development financing institutions in Southern Africa as an equity financier into a first of its kind, non-Eskom offtake energy deal in South Africa.

“I am a firm believer in development and growth, I am proud to have honed my skills and received legal awards, however these accolades do not define the complex transactional work I have done for my clients

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nor my commitment to the industry and growing young Black talent at the same time”, adds Majola.

On the participation of women in the energy sector as the country fights the power crisis and as it transitions to renewables, Majola says “It’s such a complicated topic because I think the same could be said for Black people, LGBTQ2+ individuals as well as any other marginalised minorities.

I am not sure that there is a simple way to speak about this”, says Majola, adding that there have been some reforms making efforts to promote gender diversity in this sector and that there has been an increase in the number of female legal counsel (albeit more junior). Majola also mentions that some of the industry bodies have recently appointed women as leaders and are diversifying the constitution of some of their boards to be reflective of this. “This is good!”

Whilst these reforms are helpful, it remains difficult to meet the minimum threshold for many companies and organisations, and of course others simply end up fronting transformation. “For these reasons I therefore do not see it realistically possible right now for this to be achieved as effectively as we wish. However, I do believe that women themselves, especially those who are industry leaders or part of committees, may have opportunities to bring other women along, to pull up other women and share those spaces with them. For men in the industry there exists the opportunity to become allies through training, teaching, and uplifting other women on how to navigate through this field and gain expertise and be mentors, and be ‘women sponsors’ in rooms and conversations where women aren’t present”, she says.

“We must be dynamic at problem solving and harness our diversity and creativity to our advantage. The leaders of today must play their role in carving out

and shaping the leaders of tomorrow.”

On the recent Tronox deal and as a senior lawyer that helped the process, Majola says that she is proud to have had the opportunity to assist her client with getting a deal of this nature across the line, being the first of its kind, involving multiple parties and substantial amounts: “In this deal in particular,

it was exciting to be surrounded by a group of young and resilient transactional lawyers who are enthusiastic about their work and who in fact were mostly female on the sponsor and equity side at least.”

“I am immensely proud to have assisted, alongside my team, in this landmark transaction and look forward to working on more dynamic and ground-breaking deals in the energy sector”, Majola adds.

Majola is indeed one of the inspiring leaders in this country and one that many girls can look up to. She also invited us into her personal space, sharing with us some of the things that complete her. Majola appreciates a balanced and healthy lifestyle. She believes that this is important for self-growth and for one’s mental health.

“I think as a female leader in my business inspiring young future leaders, it is important that they see me live what I preach. There is a way to find some kind of balance as a busy transactional lawyer. If the working environment that one is in doesn’t allow that, then I don’t think that environment is one that will sustain good growing lawyers who are aspirational and curious about life and their careers, locally and globally”, she said, in closing.

Majola does boxing as one of her healthy hobbies. She is a gym fanatic, spending a few days a week at the gym in the mornings. And on weekends, she walks and spends her time outdoors, and this includes doing a bit of gardening too. ♻️

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