



Q&A

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What initially drew you to a career in your sector?

The oil and gas sector remains at the cornerstone of our nation's economic growth and development. I trained as an upstream M&A lawyer and, for the past decade, I have been fortunate to have a fulfilling and fast-paced career in this unique area of law. As a lawyer in the upstream oil and gas sector, I work with frontier energy companies, major and supermajor energy companies, as well as national oil companies and regulators with upstream mandates. An upstream oil and gas skill set is cross-border and translatable, and because of this, I have had the opportunity to work with clients on M&A transactions and oil and gas development projects in over thirteen countries and across four continents.

Within the South African context, the interconnectedness of regional energy goals and infrastructure remains fascinating to me. By necessity, it requires that the oil and gas landscape be viewed through a pan-African lens. Regional integration through shared infrastructure domesticates the use of natural resources, promotes bankability, and changes the value proposition for investors by providing access to a larger market. Coupled with this, success case scenarios in the oil and gas sector wield the potential to significantly reshape a country's GDP and overall economic trajectory. So, while it is a sector driven by volumes and risk capital, it is also a sector created for future generations.

Moving South Africa towards a just energy transition is something I care deeply about, and I believe that law has an important role to play in achieving this. It remains important that the African continent be allowed to pursue energy diversification in order to reduce dependence on any one source of energy, achieve energy security, create access to energy, and address energy poverty on the continent. Africa, and South Africa, requires a combination of

energy sources in order to meet its energy consumption needs. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), Africa accounts for less than 3% of the world's energy-related CO2 emissions to date, and has the lowest emissions per capita of any region. Over 640 million Africans have no access to energy, corresponding to an electricity access rate for African countries at just over 40 percent, the lowest in the world. This energy deficiency will continue to grow as the population growth outpaces access to energy, and access to electricity specifically. It is an immediate and absolute priority for Africa to bring modern and affordable energy to all Africans.

This can only be achieved through utilisation of all available energy resources and through a stable and unwavering legal framework which promotes an energy mix and investment certainty.

What is an important lesson you've learnt that you would want to pass on to women following in your footsteps?

Imposter syndrome is a common experience, and struggling with it does not make you weak. Many successful people, including high achievers, struggle with the feeling of imposter syndrome. While these emotions are valid, it is important to remember that they do not always reflect the full reality of your abilities and accomplishments. Imposter syndrome is real, but so is your talent. Prepare thoroughly. Know your client's business, understand the deal structure, and

anticipate every scenario. Speak up whenever you have meaningful insight – your voice matters.

We cannot want the convenience of change without embracing the discomfort and the inconvenience required for change. Whether you are passionate about a new venture or about bringing about change or growing within your existing business, you must sign up for the inconvenience and discomfort that comes with it. Leap into the discomfort so that you imprint yourself. You must plan to be

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there, work to earn your place there and be prepared to fail, as you leap failure is a pitstop on your journey and never your permanent destination. The greatest lesson I have learnt on my journey is to give myself permission to learn every day, to make mistakes, and to break down new barriers. Give yourself permission to live in the duality of your brilliance and your imperfections.

How do you mentor or support other women entering the field?

Being among the first Black women in a senior legal role within a traditionally male-dominated field is both an honour and a responsibility. I am committed to ensuring the path remains open and widens for those who follow. I carry a deep sense of appreciation for my role, not only as an advocate for change within the profession, but also as a mentor to the next generation of women rising through its ranks.

As a firm, we offer structured and diverse internal mentorship programmes which provide a confidential platform for candid and unbiased advice. As part of this, as a female mentor, I believe I bring a unique perspective, emotional intelligence, and an example-driven leadership style that deeply resonates with my mentees. Through empathy, resilience, active listening and authentic connection, I aim to create a transformative and meaningful mentoring experience.

How has the landscape for women in energy changed since you started?

The professional landscape is continually evolving in an effort to better accommodate and understand younger associates, whose experiences and expectations are markedly different from those of previous generations. In the modern workplace, individuals prioritise different aspects of their careers and lives, many of which were not as emphasised in earlier generations. For example, there is a greater focus on work-life balance than when I was an

associate – and rightly so. There is a growing and necessary focus on mental health, and better understanding and acknowledgment of the realities of how demanding the industry can be.

While there is greater female representation in the workforce, progress at the top has been slow. There were certainly fewer women in C-suite roles when I started, but progress – although evident – has been slow, and women remain under-presented in key roles. There are also investment and entrepreneurship gaps, with female-led startups only attracting a fraction of venture capital funding in comparison to male-led startups.

Are there any industry norms you've challenged or want to see evolve?

It has been over a century since women were first allowed to enter the legal profession in South Africa. While meaningful progress has been made, there is still a great deal of work to do if we are to truly shift the profession toward equality and inclusiveness.

We need to be more intentional and strategic about creating inclusive practices, because a more diverse and equitable legal industry fosters greater innovation and creativity, which ultimately results in delivering better solutions for our clients.

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What advice would you give to a woman starting out in this field?

Advancing a legal career, especially for young women, involves more than mastering law. It requires building strong relationships, developing confidence, navigating complex workplace dynamics, and staying resilient in the face of challenges.

You do not need to have all the answers to move forward. Confidence is built through experience, not through perfection. The legal industry can be demanding, but it's okay to protect your time and well-being. Work-life balance is not a weakness, it's sustainability.

