



Simone Dickson

Consultant



INCORPORATING
KIETI LAW LLP, KENYA

Simone Dickson is a Consultant in our Corporate & Commercial practice. Specialising in IT law and data privacy, Simone assists and advises clients on technology, communications, and e-commerce law, including intellectual property, data protection, outsourcing and cybersecurity issues. Prior to joining Cliffe Dekker (now Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr) as an Associate in 2008, Simone practiced mainly in dispute resolution, in relation to trademark and copyright infringement, counterfeit goods, personal injury and insurance related matters. Simone was promoted to Senior Associate in 2010, and became a Director in 2011. She established her own independent consultancy in 2020, and re-joined Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr as a Consultant in 2023.

Q Did you always want to practice law – how did your legal journey begin?

A Not really. Ideally, I wanted to study drama or journalism, but eventually chose to study law as it seemed to be a good base starting point. But I certainly didn't know what I was getting myself into; even my articles didn't really settle me into practice. I started out at a small firm, doing a bit of everything (even picking up laundry and post for senior partners!) although I think that it was good experience for me and was quite grounding. Initially, I was mainly involved in dispute resolution matters and fell into a technology specialisation at CDH, which was the turning point – I found my sweet spot in commercial law and haven't looked back. I think that the main lesson for young lawyers, particularly in smaller firms, is that there are so many avenues that practice can offer – you just need to find your fit.

Q Did you have a mentor and if so, tell us about that person and include the most valuable thing you learnt from them?

A There have been many in my career to date, although two come to mind. Sean van der Merwe was a senior associate when I started my articles, and he took the time to teach me and helped me when I was a fish out of water and then Preeta Bhagattjee, who welcomed me into the technology team at CDH and helped me to develop my passion for this area of law. I always respected her calm approach to negotiations; she was never aggressive, which was a breath of fresh air and showed me that women don't need to model aggressive behaviour in the boardroom – you can simply be yourself and still succeed.

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

A Retail (I am a serious shopper, but I also enjoy the practical operational nature of the retail sector) and the ICT sector, as this is my field of expertise and my sweet spot.

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

A Not to take myself so seriously, and not to be intimidated by others simply due to their seniority – provided respect is essential at all times – and that all comes in good time. Patience and learning are key.

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

A Don't be afraid to ask questions, there really is no such thing as a stupid question! Value all the learnings. Every transaction has its own nuances, and working on M&A deals provides invaluable insight and also exposure to other subject matter experts. Try to get some sleep inbetween!

Q What do you do to celebrate the closing of a big deal?

A Sleep!

Q What is one goal you have set yourself for 2023 and are you on track to reach it?

A From a professional perspective, I would say continuing to learn more every day. Being in the technology field means that nothing is ever stagnant; there are always new developments to familiarise yourself with, and which allow you to sharpen your pencil. Personally, I am striving for more balance and to reduce stress. Being an A-type, full time working mother to two young children, wife, daughter, sister and friend is challenging, and I need to learn how to balance my time more effectively so that I can fulfil all the areas in my life without breaking myself! I also have a goal to run a marathon (although from a time balancing perspective, I may need to settle for a 21km!).

Q If you could invite any three women (past or present) to dinner, who would they be and why?

A It is virtually impossible to choose only three! Gerda Steyn – her achievements and ability to smile through it all is astounding; she is so inspirational! Lady Gaga – I still have dreams of being on a stage, and she is the epitome of grit. Her voice has the ability to put a spring in my step; and lastly, I would say my mother, who is the grounding force in my life and has an inherent strength and ability to overcome life's greatest hurdles with grace.

FUN FACTS

Favourite Colour: Yellow.

Dog or cat person: Dog.

Item ticked off your bucket list: Shopping in NYC!

Preferred holiday destination: Beach or mountains.

Your worst trait: Always late. 🐢