

PROFILE

Vanessa van Coppenhagen Corporate Commercial | Executive - ENSafrica

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Vanessa van Coppenhagen is a director at ENSafrica in the Corporate Commercial department. She joined the firm as a director in 2006.

Vanessa specialises in corporate transactional work (M&A); commercial intellectual property; and work in the not for profit sector. She has a strong commercial legal acumen, bringing a solid track record of working on and executing various mergers and acquisitions transactions; commercial IP and media transactions; and other commercially driven legal projects, acting for a number of private and public (listed) companies, both locally and offshore, including many large corporations in the mining sector, as well as for public not for profit / public foundation clients. Vanessa is known for her technical and creative skills, her client-centred approach and her ability to lead large transactions that require collaboration across various business units.

Vanessa has also been privileged to serve as long-standing external counsel to the Nelson Mandela Foundation (a not for profit educational and legacy centre founded by the late Mr Nelson Mandela). As external counsel, Vanessa has, for over a decade, acted for and advised the Nelson Mandela Foundation on a variety of legal transactions, including the development of Nelson Mandela's post presidential residence into a fellowship centre / five star graded boutique hotel and publishing, film and exhibition/ art-work licensing and distribution arrangements.

Vanessa is recognised as a leading/ recommended lawyer by Best Lawyers® 2019 and 2020 (Mergers and Acquisitions Law), South Africa.

Vanessa is also an associate member of the South African Institute of Intellectual Property Lawyers (SAIPL) and has

lectured on intellectual property at the University of the Witwatersrand, the University of Johannesburg and at the South African School of Motion Picture Medium and Live Performance (AFDA).

Vanessa has co-authored South Africa's contribution to the UN's and Harvard University Corporate Law Tools Project with Professor Michael Katz, which deals with the Mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) on the issue of Human Rights and Transnational Corporations and other Business Enterprises.

Vanessa has also contributed to the South African chapter of a book relating to corporate law, together with Professor Michael Katz. She has also contributed a chapter on entertainment law in *The Law of South Africa*. Vanessa has written articles on Copyright Valuation (published in *The South African Mercantile Law Journal*); Multimedia Works as Cinematograph Films (published in *The South African Law Journal*); and on Copyright and the WIPO Copyright Treaty, with specific reference to the rights applicable in a digital environment and the protection of technological measures (published in *The South African Law Journal*).

Q *What is your advice to young women looking to get into the M&A field?*

A Make something out of what you have, even if you are not where you want to be right now. Be resourceful, be persistent, immerse yourself in knowledge and keep learning, stay focused, be bold when an opportunity is within reach, don't take anything for granted, do your best work, and nurture your clients with the utmost care. Vincent Van Gogh said that great things are done by a series of small

things brought together. Keep putting one foot forward. Finally, regard the notions of "being behind", "not being allowed in" and "obstacles that are insurmountable" with circumspection, lest, in the words of Nelson Mandela, "that melts whatever traces of steel are inside you".

Q *What have been the highlights of your career?*

A My practice is diverse and what I love about law is the immersion in each matter into a different world – being an observer in the Gatsby sense. I have acted for large multinationals with large multinational counterparties and have acted for human rights icons and activists. Along the way I have encountered extraordinary people and that has been the highlight – Nelson Mandela who glowed when he spoke; Michael Katz who mentored me for a golden time; the late great Fanie Cilliers SC who taught me to look for the clues in the cases and said to me "if you want a simple answer, give me a simple question"; and "I know this because I've seen it before"; Frank Magwegwe, an actuary, CEO, Harvard Business School graduate, lecturer, financial services leader and a "Here, take my hand, life is slippery" kind of person whose starting block was poverty, homelessness and invisibility; Richard Branson who arrived, bouncing with energy, at Rand Airport in a red flight suit for the launch of Virgin Money; the late George Bizos SC who vehemently rejected the slippery slope of misguided notions of obtaining unnecessary approvals from regulators; the philanthropist billionaire who funds causes instead of having a "family office"; and most especially, in these times, those of my colleagues, who, like me, are both mothers and lawyers and who keep putting one foot forward. 🙌