



## Benchmark International's all-women sell-side advisory team: pushing the boundaries of success



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In the detailed and pressured world of mergers and acquisitions, skills diversity within teams is not just desired, but required. On occasion, the distinctive array of necessary skills happens to fuse within a team that is exclusively female. This is the remarkable story of one such team at Benchmark, where the team's collective expertise sets them apart in the industry.

As a global sell-side advisory firm, Benchmark International prides itself on its deftness in guiding clients through the intricate processes of selling a business to the right acquirer. To do this, a multitude of diverse skills come into play that extends beyond technical proficiency; the process also demands a blend of elevated emotional intelligence and refined soft skills.

It's unusual to find an all-female transaction team within the finance sector, primarily originating from a scarcity of women at this level, in this professional arena. There are considerable challenges faced by women, both practical and societal, that often mediate their career progression. This group of women has each mindfully planned and navigated their own career path while still managing to look after families and enjoy personal interests. In the workplace, they merge their collective talents seamlessly as they prepare opportunities for market. With their expertise, the team ably guides clients towards achieving their transaction goals by researching suitable acquirers or investors, engaging decision makers, negotiating transactions, facilitating the due diligence process, and ultimately, executing successful deals.

Leading this team is Zelda de Kock, the steadfast Transaction Leader. With a decade of experience in property development related transactions, Zelda leverages her extensive background as a qualified attorney and conveyancer to steer through the oft-tumultuous seas of transactions with incisive foresight. Zelda's recent joining brings a fresh perspective that aligns perfectly with our unwavering dedication to providing exceptional

client service. With her meticulous guidance, we ensure that our clients are supported every step of the way through the sales process.

In the crucial role of Project Manager, Maritza Sander stands out as an exceptional multi-tasker. Her distinct skillset, cultivated over 13 years in the sector, affords her a deep industry understanding and the ability to adeptly manage complex tasks and resources. Maritza's extensive M&A experience shines through in her precise and effective approach to project management. She handles project complexities with unmatched ease, ensuring all elements align flawlessly in our ambitious ventures.

Mialise Tolmie is our Financial Analyst, and uses her keen understanding of financial intricacies to skilfully shape each transaction to maximise its potential. Furthermore, she is instrumental in facilitating the extensive and often exhausting due diligence process, allowing our clients to stay focused on their business and core operations.

Debbie van Ballegooyen leads the dynamic outreach department. Her background in teaching and more than 20 years of working as an executive assistant means that her communication and organisational skills are excellent, and she has a deep understanding of executive-level operations. Sheridan Rademeyer's experience in a similar outreach role complements Debbie's expertise and, together, they are a formidable duo. Their unique perspectives and market engagement skills facilitate the forging of meaningful connections with potential acquirers and the gathering of valuable feedback, which aid in identifying exciting opportunities.

Naraileen Corker and Tiffany Geoghegan complete the team as Transaction Executives, providing comprehensive transaction support, seamlessly supporting clients, and nurturing buyer relationships for the multiple opportunities on the go at any given time. Tiffany was previously a Client Administrator at a prominent wealth management firm, and her

technical expertise from her BCom Investment Management degree is complemented by her natural charisma with clients. She effortlessly builds strong relationships while providing exceptional transaction support.

Naraileen has been with Benchmark International since its inception in South Africa, and has recently transitioned from our research department to the transaction team. She has swiftly excelled in her new role, demonstrating remarkable adaptability and prowess. Her inherent care-giving personality makes her an instinctive fit in supporting the team, clients and potential buyers, all of whom respond easily to her genuine kindness.

In this industry, no one person can do everything; success lies in how well a team complements each other. The Benchmark all-female team represents this concept perfectly. Their diverse talents blend harmoniously to navigate the complex waters of mid-market M&A, and while the gender of the team is one aspect of their success, it is not the defining factor. That is their exceptional ability to deliver the results that our clients seek.

This team's narrative of success aligns with Benchmark International's mission: to build competent teams of professionals, regardless of gender. The company acknowledges the challenges that women face in the industry, without letting those challenges define the story. Our focus remains on the competence, professionalism and unique skills that each person brings to the table.

This accomplishment serves as a testament – not to the transformation of the financial sector, but to the potential of skilled professionals to carve their own niche and form successful, collaborative relationships. Benchmark International celebrates the triumph of these formidable women as a shining example of the exceptional outcomes that result from combining diverse skills and the resulting team synergy that pushes the boundaries of success in the mid-market sell-side advisory space. 