



Deal Makers

WOMEN 2023

Women of SA's M&A and
Financial Markets Industry



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Marylou Greig
Editor

Women's Month in South Africa holds important significance as we continue to work together to empower women in all spheres of life. August is the time to reflect on the many achievements of the brave women of our past who fought against gender, race and class oppression, and to remember them as those who laid the foundation for the gender equitable society we work towards in South Africa.

Although the status of women in this country has improved in recent decades, gender inequalities persist, and the fact remains that women are still largely underrepresented in leadership positions. Education is one of the most important aspects of human development, and eliminating gender disparity starts by building a foundation with education in the early years, on which to increase the status and capabilities of women as they take their rightful place in teams and in corporate South Africa's boardrooms.

This, the third edition of the DealMakers Women of SA's M&A and Financial

Markets Industry, seeks not only to highlight the incredible women in this space, but also to offer inspiration to young women, and to give them courage where needed, as well as the realisation that they are not alone. Reading these profiles and thought articles, the clear takeaway is that feminine traits bring a different dimension to leadership – one that is more collaborative, empathetic and focused on relationship-building; essential elements necessary to complete a well-rounded team servicing an industry which navigates people dynamics.

This year, this feature will be released at the inaugural Women's Day platinum networking event. The panel facilitator is Lydia Shadrach-Razzino, a partner at Baker McKenzie and a previous winner of the DealMaker of the Year award. She is joined by Janice Johnston, CEO of Edge Growth Ventures, Fawzia Suliman, CFO of the JSE, and Ego Iwegbu, co-founder and CEO of The Good Mineral, MSLONDON Cosmetics and Miss Salon London. 

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Q What led you to pursue a career in M&A | the Financial Markets?

A While I was studying towards my degree and qualification as a CA(SA), the one thing that always stuck with me was that the mechanics and rules of the financial markets were so diverse. Debits and credits were too routine and methodical, and I wanted the excitement of something more sophisticated and complex to keep my day-to-day engagements exciting and challenging.

Q What was the toughest deal | listing | issue etc. you ever worked on, and why?

A I have worked on a number of listings, all with their own set of challenges. The one that I learnt the most from was a listing of a large corporate where the transaction lead was a very talented dealmaker, but a particularly difficult person to work for. It taught me a great deal from an emotional intelligence perspective. It's easy to learn technical aspects of pretty much any piece of work but, in my opinion, learning intangible lessons and becoming more emotionally intelligent along the way is far more challenging.

Q What, in your opinion, is the hardest part of a M&A deal | financial market transaction?

A The balancing act of managing people's expectations (and sometimes egos). People = Clients, fellow advisors, regulators, investors and, of course, you and your team members.

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

A Consumer Services holds a particular appeal due to its connection to the field of behavioural finance. Consumer behaviour is influenced by a complex interplay of economic factors, market dynamics and psychological motivations. Observing how companies within the Consumer Services sector navigate and adapt to these influences can be fascinating. The sector is also often at the forefront of innovation and disruption, driven by changing consumer demands and advancements in technology.

Q The M&A industry worldwide has been a rollercoaster for the last few years – where do YOU think M&A in South Africa is headed, given our current political, economic and social climate?

A There is a great deal of "going back to the drawing board", so to speak. Companies are rethinking strategies and there is a great deal of restructuring. From what we have seen, the M&A industry is demonstrating these aspects for big and small companies alike.

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

A I would have pursued more international opportunities, tried out different geographies, and not played it so safe.

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

A The only aspect of any job you have control over is how much effort you put into it. It's also the best way to learn and grow. Always make sure you are putting in the most effort, extracting every ounce of knowledge you can, and don't be shy about the fact that you are putting in the effort and are developing all this knowledge.

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

A Have an amazing meal with a great glass of wine.

Q What do you do to unwind | get away from the stress of work?

A I cycle. A lot. I have four bicycles and do every type of cycling you can imagine. Riding bicycles = freedom.

FUN FACTS

Current book on your nightstand:

The World: A Family History of Humanity by Simon Sebag Montefiore (I just finished *Shoe Dog* by Phil Knight – it's a must read).

Favourite restaurant:

The Garden Shack in Swellendam or The Melkbos Kitchen in Melkbos.

Dog or cat person:

Cat person, but I love other people's dogs!

Unusual hobbies:

I love LEGO. 🧱