



Verushca Pillay

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Verushca Pillay is a partner in Baker McKenzie's Corporate M&A Practice Group in Johannesburg. She has extensive experience in domestic and cross-border mergers and acquisitions, private equity and general corporate and commercial matters.

Verushca also has experience advising on all aspects of broad-based black economic empowerment (B-BBEE), including transactional structuring and compliance.

She holds a BA (1997), BA Honours (1998) and an LLB (2000) from the University of KwaZulu-Natal; an LLM in Corporate Law (2004) from the University of Johannesburg; and an LLM in Tax (2007) from the University of the Witwatersrand.

Verushca works across a number of sectors, including education, gaming and renewable energy.

She has advised:

- PAPE Fund Managers, a boutique private equity fund manager, on the acquisition of a controlling interest in Scamont Holdings*.
- Séché Holdings SA on its acquisition of the Spill Tech group*.
- Denham Capital and BioTherm Energy on the disposal of their Round 4 REIPPPP investments and their African renewable energy platform to Actis*.
- ADvTECH Limited on the acquisition of Monash South Africa*.
- Vodacom Group Limited on the establishment of a new Vodacom employee share scheme, and on all BEE aspects relating to Vodacom Group Limited's 2018 BEE deal*.

* Experience obtained prior to joining Baker McKenzie.

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

A There are so many difficult and challenging parts to an M&A deal, including the pace and long hours. Along with time demands, we're also expected to have excellent technical knowledge. But in my view, the hardest part is understanding what your client wishes to achieve from the deal and how to work together to negotiate the best possible outcome. It often means that you must quickly get to know the people on both sides of the deal, what the pressure points are, and how you should approach things; the hardest part is generally not the law! I believe that our clients appreciate us developing a deep knowledge of their business and approach – it's also what builds and sustains client relationships.

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

A I wish I could've been more confident sooner. I am a self-doubting introvert – a terrible combination – and I'm certain that it hindered my career development. If I'd had more courage to offer my views and ask questions as a young lawyer, I think I would have benefited hugely. But I've learned from my experiences, and while I'm still a self-doubting introvert, I can identify when these traits rear their heads and tackle them (most of the time – I'm human and still a work in progress!)

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

A Following from the previous question, understand your capabilities and have trust and confidence in yourself. It can be daunting, but if you understand that you have the ability to work on the transaction and contribute to its success, this will carry you through. Identify the things that you are good at, and play to those strengths. If you are assisting a senior lawyer on a matter, proactively develop an understanding of what the target business is and how the transaction

will be implemented from a legal perspective. Be curious and ask questions. There is so much expertise around you, take advantage of it. It's OK to struggle; no-one became an expert M&A lawyer overnight.

Q What do you do to unwind?

A I am fortunate to have an amazing family, and spending time with them is the best way for me to unwind. It could be as simple as having a conversation or a good meal with them, but usually the best is when these occur together! I also enjoy a road trip with them, generally to the Kruger Park, the Kgalagadi, or the beach. I love reading and, since lockdown, I've also started exercising regularly.

FUN FACTS

Current book on your nightstand: I've got a stack. To name a few - I've just finished Richard Osman's *The Bullet that Missed*, and I'm a third of the way through Ocean Vuong's *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*. I read Thomas Piketty's *Brief History of Equality* in between, and I also have Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Joanne Joseph's *Children of Sugarcane*.

Items ticked off your bucket list: I've been lucky enough to see the Great Pyramids, the Valley of the Kings and other ancient Egyptian monuments.

Items not yet completed on your bucket list: Seeing the Migration, and seeing a gorilla, tiger and/or snow leopard in the wild; going to Angkor Wat; climbing Machu Picchu.it's a long list.

Preferred holiday destination: The Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park in the Northern Cape.

Your worst trait: I prefer to avoid difficult or conflicting situations and would rather not engage in them, which is never a good way to deal with things. 🐾