



DealMakers®
WOMEN 2024

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



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

Marylou Greig

Editor

In the 25 years that **DealMakers** has been tracking the transactions and advisers of the South African mergers and acquisitions industry, we have seen notable progress in the advancement of women in the workplace, particularly in the last ten years. This has been driven by a combination of legislative measures, corporate initiatives, and advocacy efforts. But it has also had much to do with the great strides that women have made in showing up for themselves, knowing their worth, and claiming their seat at the table.

National Women's Day, celebrated on the 9th of August each year, and first celebrated in 1995, provides an opportunity to pay tribute to the generations of women whose struggles laid the foundations for the progress made in empowering women and achieving gender equality to date. It is another chance for women to get motivated, inspired and to unlock their own strength and determination to make a positive change.

As a country, we have much to be proud of, and the day offers an opportunity to salute the gains attained for women, and to recognise their achievements in politics, sport, in the economy, and in academia. These women serve as positive and powerful role models that inspire young girls and defy outdated stereotypes of women's capabilities.

Ongoing efforts are needed to address persistent challenges, such as the gender pay gap, representation in specific sectors, workplace culture, and work-life balance. By fostering a more inclusive and equitable

work environment, South Africa can harness the potential of its female workforce, and drive sustainable economic growth and development.

The profiles which decorate the pages of this 4th edition of the magazine offer women words of courage and inspiration. Each woman featured has a unique story to tell and important advice to impart. Women are strongly encouraged to learn from other women who have worked hard, overcome obstacles, and gone on to achieve their goals. What is clear is that the growing matrix of experience of the women in this industry is a powerful force, one that is succeeding in uplifting those women with less experience as they themselves rise and shatter the proverbial glass ceiling.

The feature will be released at the second **DealMakers** Women's Day networking event, which builds on last year's success and will, once again, include a panel discussion. This year's panel members are Lydia Shadrach-Razzino, a Partner at Baker McKenzie; Taskeen Ismail, Chief Financial Officer at Sanlam Investment Management; Mandy Ramsden, a Director at Questco Corporate Advisory; Sindi Mabaso-Koyana, Managing Partner at AIH Capital; and Lynette Finlay, Chief Executive Officer at Amabutho Investment Managers.

My grateful thanks go to all in the industry who continue to support and participate in this feature and, in particular, to my colleague Vanessa Aitken who has spent many days and nights ensuring that it grows and evolves each year. 🙌

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www.dealmakerssouthafrica.com/dm-q2-2024-womens-feature

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Hafiesa Samsodien
Partner | Corporate

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A word of advice to my younger self, Hafiesa Samsodien

Dear Hafiesa,

It must be odd hearing from your older self, since while I am you (a wiser one, I would hope!), we are also different – I've been shaped by the journey you are about to go on. At the outset, be prepared to take a divergent path and be open to new experiences. You have quite a few challenges coming your way, some of which were not of your choosing! What may surprise you is that, sometimes, those around you have a unique perspective of your strengths, and of who you are.

I'm sure, by now, this sounds all so cryptic, and as a cautious person by nature, you must have some doubts, so please let me explain.

You've always wanted to be a fashion designer. You have the touch and care to do delicate work like sewing, knitting and embroidery. Those wedding dresses didn't make themselves. I'm happy to tell you that you did go to design school, but for one year only (many years after you finished matric), and then had to drop out when your first son arrived. Yes, you are married, and a mom to three wonderful boys.

What happened, you may ask? Well, you have always flown under the radar, but did quite well at school. Remember Mr. Matthews, your principal? You are going to need his help in certifying your school results for your application to design school. He will say something along the lines of, "Sure, leave this with me", and help with your application.

What he doesn't tell you is that he has no intention of sending your application to design school, and he is not alone. Your family are in on it and, between them all, they decide that you should, in fact, study law.

"Law?", you say. *It was never a career you considered, but Hafiesa, over the next 25 years, you are going to travel the world, spend most of your career at a single law firm, Webber Wentzel, and work with some wonderful people. Arthur James will interview you, and those 10 minutes will set you on your way.*

He will also speak a lot about shipping. I know it sounds... quite different, but a day will come when Arthur sends you to arrest a ship. Word of advice: if you are going to arrest a ship and need to climb what feels like 10 flights up to the deck on a pilot ladder, don't wear high heels. In fact, it may surprise you how interesting the world of shipping is. Whilst, at some point, you believe you will be a shipping lawyer, you will, in fact, become a corporate lawyer.

You will also spend two years working overseas in London, feeding your desire to travel. The best part is that this two-year break will be sanctioned by the law firm you still work for (they will grant you two years unpaid leave to do this). Compared to where you were before you left South Africa, prepare to be surprised.

You've spent your life in a cocoon, and always had a lot of family and friends around you. Their support has been ever-present for you, even through university and as you embarked on your career in law. But your move to London will take you out of your comfort zone, and will be a shock to the system. It will be the first time you ever live on your own, or do your own washing! And the law firm you work for in London is massive. I mean, huge.

It will be scary at times, and anxiety-inducing, but Hafiesa, you will learn and grow so much. You will persevere and knuckle down, telling yourself: "I need to get used to this change, everything will be fine. It will all work out." And you know what? It all worked out.

You are always worried about showing the people you work with that you don't know the answers to some questions, or that you don't know how to do something. It makes you unsure of yourself. Please, don't be. If I can give you some advice, it is to never be afraid to say, "I don't know, I'll look into it". Ask questions, or ask for help from those around you.

Actually, the partners you will work with see it as their responsibility to help you learn. They know you are finding your way, and will play an important role in shaping you as a legal professional.

To leave you with a final thought, it's as much about the journey as it is about the destination. That journey will shape you into a person that understands the value of teamwork and working with excellent people (you will be heavily involved in a project between Sanlam [yes that one!] and a company called Allianz. It will cover 29 countries and lead to the creation of one of the largest pan-African non-banking financial services companies to operate across Africa).

There is a lot more I can tell you, but by the time you reach the point I am at now, your life will be filled with richness, joy, and compelling work, plus maybe a cat. Also, your passion for the intricacies of fashion will not fade. I'm still working on finding time to go back to design school.

Hafiesa Samsodien

MEET SOME OF THE PARTNERS IN OUR CORPORATE, COMMERCIAL AND M&A TEAMS



SALLY HUTTON



NOMSA MBERE



MEGAN JARVIS



ASHLEIGH BLAIR



NEERASHA SINGH



CARINE MURPHY



CHRISNA NÖTHLING



RITA SPALDING



HAFESA SAMSODIEN



JACQUI HARVEY



LEIGH LAMBRECHT



LÍLIA FRANÇA



TAAJ VILJOEN



MADELEIN VAN DER WALT



HUNEIZA GOOLAM



ANNABEL PARRY



CANDICE MEYER



MANDY CLAASSENS



GIADA MASINA



SAFIYYA PATEL



ALISON MILLS



SHELAGH RULE



MAPASEKA PHALA



AMY-LEIGH MUIR

At Webber Wentzel, women make up

49%

of our total partnership

53%

of our senior leadership team

53%

of our market leading legal and tax teams

59%

of the total firm

Also, **29%** of all South African women lawyers that were profiled in Chambers South Africa for 2024 are from Webber Wentzel.

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Neerasha Singh
Partner | Corporate

WEBBER WENTZEL

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A word of advice to my younger self, Neerasha Singh

To Neerasha,

A lot has already happened to you at such a young age. Mum left you too soon, and as you look to the future, you must be wondering what it may hold.

While you are still young and that loss is fresh, that larger-than-life personality that filled your life, and that of your four siblings, with love will remain with you as you become older. The happy childhood you experienced before will continue in its simplicity and joy. You will have everything you need, and while you will forever miss her, that self-confidence and strong personality that defined her has been passed onto you, and it will shape your future. Also, your Dad will step up in the most amazing ways and perform the role of two parents in one, with the community around you there to support you as you grow.

It is that community that will help you discover your passion for public speaking, debating and writing, leading to you submitting work for the Alan Paton Prize. You become a person who has a strong sense of self, and I'm happy to share with you that you will have options at the end of high school; quite a few, in fact. What will grab your eye is law, since it appeals to your strengths, with a helping hand from TV shows such as LA Law, which will open your eyes to topics that are not discussed openly around you.

You will go to university, and throw yourself into your work. A place that will leave an indelible impression on your view of the world, and your place in it, will be the campus law clinic, where you will spend a lot of time as a member of the juvenile justice unit. Your work as part of the unit will take you into places such as prisons, where you will speak to prisoners whose destiny was shaped as much by circumstance and survival as anything else. A lesson you will take away from this period in your life, and which will stay with you, is gratitude. You will become very aware that you are fortunate to have what you have, including that love and support you received earlier in your life. Many people are not so fortunate. You will not forget.

It's at the Legal Resources Centre (LRC) where you will first cut your teeth in the legal environment. You will apply to do your articles at their Johannesburg office, and will get in. The next couple of years will be fascinating for you and, at times, difficult. Your rotations will expose you to subjects at the heart of socio-economic rights, including housing, children and women, and environmental justice, leaving a mark on your soul that you will never quite shake.

Even today, when I think back to that time, I struggle to put into words the emotions that the people you will meet at the LRC leave on your emotional doorstep. However, what it will do is broaden your horizons as you land a coveted role at the Constitutional Court.

There, you will rub shoulders with literal giants of South African law, working on precedent setting cases in corporate law, and some that trace their origins to the worst of apartheid. It will be the most amazing place to learn, and really hone your ability to pivot and adapt under pressure.

It's after the Constitutional Court that you will find your true professional home, joining Webber Wentzel in Johannesburg. At the time of joining, the firm filled one building in Illovo, but as I write to you today, we now occupy one of the most prestigious offices in Sandton, having grown at a marked rate as our reputation for outstanding work grew within South Africa's legal circles.

There, you will work on a wide range of subjects, including mergers and acquisitions, commercial aviation, aviation finance, and insolvency. One transaction that you will be especially proud of is helping South Africans return home from Indonesia and Brazil during a global pandemic, with your work leading to a change in legislation. But that's a story for another day.

Also, you will never be bored. You will work hard, but in every office and hallway, you will work with and encounter interesting, motivated, and smart people who love to debate and share their point of view. That self-confidence that you carry with you will serve you well because you will not be afraid to ask questions, nor admit that you do not know the answer to a question, nor shirk from expressing your opinion.

It will shape the way you interact with your peers and those that eventually work for you, helping you to make decisions quickly and effectively in the best interests of your clients, and the firm at large. You will enjoy what you do. You will be inspired and challenged to give your best every day.

Your life journey will teach you to lead with passion and compassion, and lots of love and laughter.

When I began writing this letter, I had the intention of sharing different pieces of advice. While some may sound trite, such as perseverance and hard work, the journey you are embarking on will be shaped and driven by you, and you alone.

All I can urge you to do is continue believing in yourself, your talents, your will to succeed, the tireless curiosity that keeps your mind spinning at all times, and the opportunities hard work creates.

Don't sweat the small stuff. Keep your heart strong. Allow your spirit to soar. Be kind to yourself. You have enough love to carry you through all that will be. You will be OK.

Neerasha Singh

Mapaseka Phala

Partner | Corporate



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Q *What is your experience/knowledge?*

A I specialise in M&A, as well as general corporate and commercial law. I have experience in acquisitions and disposals (in the private and public spheres), and corporate restructuring. I have worked on transactions in various sectors, including energy, mining, telecommunications, financial and insurance services. I have also worked extensively on cross-border transactions, involving Benin, Botswana, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Egypt, England, Eswatini, France, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Guinea Conakry, Liberia, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sudan, South Sudan, Uganda and Zambia.

Q *What was the toughest deal you have worked on, and why?*

A In 2021, I was part of the team advising Vodafone International Holdings B.V. and Vodafone Europe B.V. in the selling of their shareholding in Vodafone Egypt Telecommunications SAE. This deal was awarded "2021 Deal of the Year" by DealMakers.

The deal was challenging from a technical perspective, and involved navigating the complexities of highly regulated companies in different jurisdictions. Furthermore, from a personal perspective, this deal stands out due to the steep learning curve I experienced from a technical, drafting and deal management point of view.

Q *What advice would you give a young woman working on her first deal?*

A You may be tempted to immediately start working on the transaction; however, it is important to understand (i) the deal and the parties to the deal; (ii) the key commercial drivers applicable to the deal; and (iii) the regulatory framework applicable to the deal.

Furthermore, understand your role in the transaction team, and provide the necessary support and input (with the utmost diligence and attention to detail).

Lastly, ask questions, don't give up, and learn as much as you can.

Q *Did you have a mentor and, if so, what was the most important thing you learnt from them?*

A In my career, I have had several mentors (some from structured programmes and others from organic relationships). I am so grateful for the wonderful mentors who have assisted and guided me in my career. The main lessons I have learnt from them are:

- Be authentic, be brave, and back yourself.
- Be kind to yourself.
- As you grow in your career, make sure you that you lift and empower those around you.
- Do not compare your career journey to that of anyone else.

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

A I am big on family, and I enjoy spending time with them and making food together. I have also started swimming lessons, and this has helped me to unwind and keep fit. I also enjoy drawing and painting – my favourite medium is charcoal on paper. I hope to one day unwind by taking a road trip around our continent, having an authentic experience of the food, culture, music and art.

Q *What is one thing that makes your life easier and that you really wouldn't want to do without?*

A A daily detailed to-do list.

FUN FACTS

Favourite Colour:
Yellow.

Current book on your nightstand:
The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives.

Favourite restaurant:
Marble in Joburg and The Fat Cactus in Cape Town.

Three words your colleagues would use to describe you:

Attentive, affable and driven. 🧡



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Dudu Mogapi
Partner | Competition

Q *When things go wrong, what advice would you give about moving on?*

A Recognise and acknowledge that things have gone wrong. It is important not to panic, take the blame or blame others when things go wrong. Take a step back to gain perspective, and identify what is immediately required to remedy the issue. Going forward, introspect, and take stock of what happened and the lessons learned. Learn to forgive yourself if mistakes are made, and shake it off. It is crucial not to carry over what went wrong into the next transaction.

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

A Be a sponge! Take in all the learnings – from the content of the deal to the conduct of the people you are working with

on the deal. Be curious, and ask questions. Convert that hunger for knowledge and information into hard work and initiative. That will make you stand out in the next deal you work on.

It is usually the first deal that can inform your perspective and influence your longevity in this field of law.

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

A It is certainly difficult, at times, to get away from the stress of work, considering the demands and high pressure of this career. However, in unwinding and de-stressing, I will unplug from social media (and try my best to not check my work emails), do yoga, travel, and try new experiences such as wine and food tasting.

FUN FACTS

Favourite Colour: Pink.

Current book on your nightstand: *Snakes in Suits* - Understanding and Surviving the Psychopaths in Your Office.

Favourite restaurant: Homespun by Matt.

Three words your colleagues would use to describe you:

Driven, meticulous and expert. 🍷

Our **Senior Associates** in Corporate, Commercial, and M&A credit remarkable women who provided mentorship, guidance, and invaluable advice in shaping their legal careers.



VUYOKAZI XEGWANA

My female role model is Ziyanda Ntshona



MARTINE LEUKES

My female role model is Sally Hutton



JENNIFER EBORALL

My female role model is Michelle Obama



MAANDA MASHEGO

My female role model is Thabiso Mpholoane



LIESL OLIVIER

My female role model is Annabel Parry



KAYLA DODO

My female role model is Shafeeka Hartley



MIRREN SHARP

My female role model is Hafesa Samsodien



ANNA PARRY

My female role model is Hafesa Samsodien