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## FASKEN

**Q** *Where did your journey begin and how did you end up where you are today?*

**A** I began as a litigation lawyer, made the transition to corporate work, then became a competition lawyer almost by default, when my firm at the time asked me to start that practice area after the introduction of the then new competition legislation. I found I really loved this area of practice, and being at the forefront of developments in competition law from its infancy in South Africa to where it is today.

You have to gain an understanding of the client's operations in order to advise them from a competition law perspective, and I have been fortunate to have been involved in a number of exciting and challenging transactions, involving many different aspects of competition law. I have loved learning about many diverse industries, from mining to pharmaceuticals, and from agriculture to financial services, to name just a few examples. You also do a mix of work – both litigious on the prohibited practice side, and commercial with respect to merger work. I think my experience in both litigation and commercial work as mentioned above has been extremely helpful from that perspective.

I advise on competition law not only in relation to South Africa but also with respect to other African jurisdictions. Managing multi jurisdiction merger filings is challenging but very interesting. One has to manage the timing, engage with different regulators, all having different imperatives, and understand the dynamics of the various jurisdictions. It is particularly interesting learning how different jurisdictions have different interpretations of the law, despite the

wording being very similar. These are nuances that I enjoy having to navigate.

This area of practice is constantly developing. South Africa was the first jurisdiction to include a public interest test. This was viewed with great scepticism by other, more experienced jurisdictions at the time, but now they too are exploring these possibilities. This is also an aspect that is considered very seriously by other African jurisdictions. Many jurisdictions across the world are looking at digital markets, including South Africa and a number of other African jurisdictions. It is a privilege to be at a firm that is working on cutting edge matters in these areas, enabling me to grapple with and navigate all the new developments.

**Q** *What, if any, hurdles did you have to face in an industry that has traditionally been male-dominated?*

**A** There weren't many women in practice when I started out, and overcoming challenges to become the first woman partner in my then firm was for me quite an achievement. I was lucky to receive excellent training at that firm, where I did my articles, and to have open-minded and supportive partners who enabled me to flourish as one of the few women in the firm at the time. I also managed to not only have a career, but to marry and start a family while there. I am proud that I paved the way for other women in future, and that they are benefitting from the experiences and challenges that my generation faced. I have enjoyed being mentor to a number of women in practice over the years, and hopefully have been a role model to some of them.

I think women add a different dimension to the workplace, bringing our skills

such as our intuition and different way of looking at things to our teams, and I am proud that my firm embraces this diversity, something that is part of our values.

**Q** *Did the COVID-19 pandemic with the various lockdowns, changes in working habits etc. bring about any major changes for you from a work / career perspective?*

**A** COVID-19 had a big impact on me personally. I joined Fasken in late 2020, right in the middle of the pandemic. Although the firm was supportive from the outset, it was very challenging adapting to a new environment while everyone was working remotely. I was very fortunate in having a great team, and that I had considerable experience in my practice area. The work was therefore familiar and I was able to adapt. I focused on overcoming the challenges the pandemic brought and especially embracing the remote working model. Our team didn't shy away from the challenges but instead adapted, ensuring that we continued to guide and support our clients in navigating various regulatory changes and uncertainties.

**Q** *What are the biggest changes you have seen in the industry in the course of your career?*

**A** I have seen technology development explode during the course of my career, and there has been a huge digital shift, particularly in the last three years due to COVID. Most of the changes are for the better, particularly to the benefit of clients. I try to embrace these changes, but I confess that I miss printing out my documents as I pick up errors better on the hard copy. 📄