

South Africa's most powerful M&A law firm created

Werksmans and Jan S. de Villiers Merge

South Africa's most powerful corporate and commercial law firm specialising in mergers and acquisitions (M&As) has been created with the merging of two of South Africa's leading legal powerhouses, Gauteng-based Werksmans and Cape-based Jan S. de Villiers.

Werksmans, a major player in M&As was recognised by both DealMakers and Ernst & Young as the leading corporate law firm by deal flow in 2006 and 2007, as well as in overall volume from 2000 to 2007. Werksmans significantly outperformed other corporate law firms by announcing 46 deals in 2007 alone, almost 50% better than the total recorded by the runner up.

The merger, which will result in a combined force of more than 150 lawyers, becomes effective on 1 January 2009.

The two firms, two of the largest and oldest in their respective regions, collectively boast nearly 200 years experience practicing top-end corporate and commercial law in South Africa. Werksmans is 91 years old and Jan S. de Villiers is 108.

According to Des Williams, Chairman of Werksmans, the merger between Werksmans and Jan S. de Villiers makes good business sense for many reasons. "It is particularly timeous in light of heightened activity in the legal sector, client demands becoming more sophisticated and the regulatory environment more challenging," he says. "We have experienced significant growth in recent years with greater demand for our services, particularly in M&A, commercial litigation and banking & finance, our key practice areas. This merger will support the combined entity to stay one step ahead of our clients' needs."

Pierre le Roux, Managing Partner of Jan S. de Villiers and future Deputy Chairman of the merged firm, is excited about the deal. "We are seeing increasing commercial activity in Cape Town and so this deal will significantly benefit our clients. We will now be able to offer them greater depth in the firm's chosen areas of specialisation," he says. Le Roux says Jan S. de Villiers offers highly skilled professional expertise in its focused practice areas and is confident that the merger will make it possible for the firm to offer an even better service to its growing corporate and commercial client base. "We expect the well-established presence of the two firms in Gauteng and the Cape to benefit existing as well as new clients," he says.

Williams assures clients that the service ethos of both firms - rendering outstanding service through lean but highly skilled teams - will remain the same. "Our two firms share a focused work approach and our strategic vision - to stay lean and mean - is aligned," he says.

"We will also extend to Jan S. de Villiers and their client base our exceptional relations with a myriad of international law firms and access to our well established African network, Lex Africa. The network of leading law firms in 27 African countries

has been one of Werksmans' major market advantages since it was founded in 1993," concludes Williams.

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