



21 August 2023

**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT OF THE LAW SOCIETY OF SINGAPORE,  
JASON CHAN TAI-HUI SC, AT MASS CALL 2023**

1. May it please the Court. I seek Your Honour's leave to speak on behalf of the Law Society of Singapore, to address and welcome the newest members of our Bar.
2. Congratulations to all of you on your admission as advocates and solicitors of the Supreme Court.
3. I would like to take this opportunity to speak about two things which you should be familiar with after spending many (hopefully enjoyable) years as law students: Questions and Answers.
4. As a lawyer, you will be asked many questions. One of the most important questions that you will be asked is: "Am I allowed to do that?"
5. As long as the answer is found in the laws of Singapore, you are now one of the few people who can give an authoritative answer to that question. Anyone can look at the text of a statute, case, or textbook, and repeat what it says. We have seen that generative AI may even hallucinate cases in response to such a question.

6. That is not your role as a lawyer. You should not simply answer the question that was asked. You are not called to the Bar to act as a chatbot. It is now your responsibility to listen closely to the question and, before giving your views, assess why the question was asked in the first place.

7. In other words, you must do more than quote the contents of a statute, a case or a textbook when answering questions. Instead, apply your training and experience to find solutions to the problem at hand. Provide advice that will help to further or achieve the goal that lies at the heart of the question.

8. Rather than legal knowledge alone, it is innovative solutions that will be the hallmark of legal practice for your generation of lawyers. I hope that you will embrace a mindset of creativity, curiosity and constant learning from the very beginning of your careers.

9. Mentorship plays an important part in shaping our young lawyers and inculcating the traditions and values of the Bar. I am pleased to announce that the Law Society has launched a structured mentorship programme which consolidates and streamlines the Society's existing ad-hoc mentorship schemes. Please do look out for more details on this newly launched scheme.

10. After today, you will find yourselves being asked questions in many different rooms. Your views will be heard in courtrooms, board rooms, meeting rooms, interview rooms, and more. For some of you, your path may even lead you back to a classroom.

11. In every room, always remember that you are an Officer of the Court. That is your status even when you are not in fact standing in a courtroom.

12. You remain an Officer of the Court, regardless of your practice. It does not matter whether you are a disputes or transactional lawyer, or whether you are advising persons, organisations or even governments.

13. You were not called to the Bar merely because you passed your examinations. You are entitled to be called an Officer of the Court because of your ability, perseverance and crucially, your character.

14. That is why the Bar's standards of ethical conduct and professional responsibility apply to you. Always remember to uphold those standards in everything that you do. Those standards are the foundation upon which lawyers are trusted to guard the deepest secrets, advise on extremely difficult problems, and guide the decisions that need to be made on the most important issues of the day.

15. Your answers will thus have immense value. They will shape the legal rights and obligations of persons, businesses, families and even States. Huge sums of money may be involved. In some cases, nothing less than life and liberty will be at stake.

16. These are often stressful circumstances, where it is crucial for the people involved to know what to do and to put forward their best possible case. That is precisely why people engage lawyers to seek proper advice and representation if necessary.

17. Even so, I hope that each of you will find it within yourself to devote your unique skills and some of your precious time to help those who are genuinely unable to afford legal assistance or representation when they need it most. The pro bono spirit is one of the Bar's finest traditions.

18. I wish to close my address by citing two recent precedents. First, always remember what the Honourable the Chief Justice said at the opening of this legal year: Lawyers are called to be ministers in the temple of justice. Each of you is thus a servant of justice. That is the standard that you should live up to in all that you do as an Officer of the Court.

19. As for how you should answer the questions that will be asked in the rooms that you will find yourselves in, I can say it no better than the address delivered by the late President Adrian Tan at last year's Mass Call: Speak louder and clearer, and by doing so, raise our world closer to justice.

20. Adrian was a truly special person. We miss him dearly.

21. I congratulate you all once again on your admission as advocates and solicitors of the Supreme Court. It is my privilege to call each and every one of you a fellow member of an honourable profession.

22. May it please the Court.

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