

19 August 2024

**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT OF THE LAW SOCIETY OF SINGAPORE,
LISA SAM, AT MASS CALL 2024**

1. May it please Your Honour, on behalf of the Law Society, I seek Your Honour's leave to address the newest members of the Singapore Bar on this auspicious occasion.
2. My warmest congratulations on your admission as advocates and solicitors of the Supreme Court. This moment marks the culmination of years of rigorous study about the law and its role in contributing to society's stability, development and proper functioning.
3. Now, it is time to put your knowledge into practice as you begin your noble journey in law as an officer of the Court. Today is the start of your Post-Qualification Experience, also known as "PQE".
4. It is a great privilege to practise law. You have been given special rights of audience where your voice is a powerful tool for change. Use that voice wisely to advocate and serve justice, uphold the rule of law, and positively impact society. Uphold the highest ethical standards, for your actions reflect upon yourselves and the entire legal community.

5. I would like to share a few nuggets of practice wisdom. Do take some time to reflect on how you want to define or redefine success for yourself.

Point One: Pursuing Your Passions

6. Pursue your gifts, passions, hobbies, and talents while discharging your professional duties, roles and responsibilities. Each of you brings different gifts, talents and creativity to the table. Make time, serve the wider community, involving people with similar interests while still fulfilling your professional duties. This alignment will enrich your life and broaden your perspectives.
7. Practising law and engaging in meaningful community work in tandem, gives life greater purpose. It will inspire you to become a better lawyer. Your sense of justice will be shaped by your experiences on the ground, fuelling your mission to create positive change.
8. Exposure to various facets of society and the good work of others will expand your outlook on legal practice. Meeting real people with diverse backgrounds and experiencing first-hand situations will humble you. You will gain a deeper understanding of the world and the impact of your work.
9. The public places its trust in the legal profession and lawyers are expected to lead with integrity and serve as role models for society. Be prepared to serve and take on leadership roles in your

community. People will look to you for guidance, solutions and inspiration to make a positive difference.

10. So use your voice wisely, as it can inspire and make a lasting impact. Your legal training, voice, and profession – all rolled into one – transcend the individual accomplishments you might receive. You have a powerful voice and a higher responsibility to use it for the greater good.

Point Two: Revaluing Your Achievements

11. Measure your success not only by your personal or professional accolades but also by the positive impact and lasting footprint you can make as a lawyer. True success lies in embracing a spirit of excellence and continuous improvement.
12. Be a transformative force. Be courageous and take the first proactive steps to create a fair and just society.
13. After years of dedicated service to the community and society while still in active practice, your peers and clients will regard you as an accomplished lawyer.
14. You might ask, what is an accomplished lawyer?
15. An accomplished lawyer possesses diverse qualities and abilities that enable them to excel in their profession and beyond. They have balanced personal and professional goals, built strong relationships, and cultivated diverse interests that enrich their lives.

16. Being an accomplished lawyer goes beyond knowledge and skills; it requires a growth mindset and a desire to learn, adapt, and evolve continuously. It involves embracing diverse experiences and skill-sets that broaden one's perspective, enhance understanding, and foster personal growth and development.
17. As our late Past President, Mr Adrian Tan, aptly explained:
 - **A lawyer** understands the law and can use that knowledge to answer questions for his client and help the client.
 - **A good lawyer** understands the law and can use that to help the client and explain to the client what the next step is.
 - **A great lawyer** understands not just the law but also the client, society, the bigger picture, and the courts, and he or she even understands where everything fits.
 - This means that a great lawyer must know much more than what is in the law books.

Point Three: Avoiding the Trap of Liabilities

18. Your financial decisions have a profound impact on your professional trajectory. Living within your means is crucial, shaping the kind of lawyer you will become.
19. Be mindful and disciplined in your spending habits. Distinguish between the needs and the wants. Resist the fleeting allure of hype. Remember, when the hype fades, you are left with the burden of your financial commitments. As you make decisions, keep your eyes on the horizon—focused on the lawyer you aspire to be and the future you are building. Buffer yourselves against life's uncertainties.

20. By avoiding the trap of liabilities, you will be free to say “no” to clients who ask you to compromise your values for short-term financial gain. You can practise with integrity, professionalism, and peace of mind.

Point Four: Practising Safely and Professionally

21. The legal profession is built on integrity, professionalism, and justice. Remember that your duty to advocate for your client is subject to your paramount duty to the Court. As a member of an honourable profession, you also have a duty to behave towards third parties in a manner befitting your professional standing. In addition, tried-and-tested good practices, such as diligently taking contemporaneous attendance notes, can help you to avoid basic practice pitfalls. The Law Society has an **Ethics Resources page** on its website where you can easily find the help and guidance you need on ethics matters.
22. Remember that the Law Society is always here to support you. Our profession is not just about individual excellence, but is also about community and support. Rooted in a culture of care, our legal profession fosters a supportive ecosystem to ensure the well-being and success of its members. Many senior lawyers are invested in our younger counterparts, and I encourage you to reach out and build relationships with them. With more than 6,500 of us in the Bar, I am sure you will be able to find a mentor or buddy whom you can relate to.

Point Five: Staying Resilient

23. The legal profession has a reputation for being a tough working environment, but do not be deterred. The challenging landscape is part of the training that forges the steel in you. If you can navigate it, you will find your place in the profession. Be a wiser, stronger and better lawyer. Practice can be turbulent at times, but this is where you will discover your true mettle and make a meaningful impact.

24. Remember that growth and development are not linear paths. Setbacks and mistakes are inevitable in the journey, but how you respond to them defines your success. By learning from your mistakes and persevering through challenges, you will build the resilience and determination to serve you well in your legal career.

Law Society's support schemes

25. As you embark on your legal career, remember that the Law Society is here to support you through every step. We have created various opportunities for you to connect with senior members of the Bar, to seek guidance and to grow as a lawyer. Let me highlight a few examples.
 - 25.1. Our **Law Society Mentorship Scheme**, which opens for applications today, pairs you with experienced practitioners or buddies who can offer guidance and insights. Additionally, we encourage reverse mentoring, where you can share fresh perspectives and knowledge with your mentors, creating a collaborative learning experience.

- 25.2. If you have ethics questions, we provide two support avenues. You can call our newly launched **Ethics Assist Helpline** for immediate confidential guidance from experienced senior lawyers. Alternatively, you can write to the **Advisory Committee** for detailed written guidance on ethical obligations. Both options provide you with a comprehensive support to navigate ethical concerns.
- 25.3. For conveyancing practitioners, our **Conveyancing Practice Committee** offers guidance and directions and, in certain cases, rulings to help practitioners settle disputes in conveyancing transactions without court intervention.
- 25.4. If you can't recall any of these Law Society support scheme, remember this one: our **Members Assistance & Care Hotline, MACH**. It is a confidential helpline that you can tap into to seek assistance and guidance for any professional challenges you encounter regarding ethics, practice, or well-being. We will connect you with senior members of the Bar or direct you to our practice resources so that you are never alone in your journey.
26. And remember, you are part of a larger community. Do not hesitate to seek guidance. Most importantly, be active in our legal community – network widely, engage with your peers, and thrive together.
27. Participate in the Law Society's diverse activities. We have luncheons, networking events, the Bench and Bar Games, social activities, and committee work. These are opportunities to connect

you with fellow practitioners and stay updated on industry developments.

Past President's Adrian Tan's legacy

28. I want to share a special message from our beloved late Past President, Mr Adrian Tan. Just before he passed on, he took the time to write these words of wisdom specifically for newly qualified lawyers, a testament to his dedication and investment in the next generation of lawyers. Though he could not share them in person, his message remains a legacy. Let us honour his memory by heeding his advice, and may his words inspire and guide you as you begin your noble journey.

[Quote]

"My fellow lawyers, congratulations on being called to the Bar!

You may be young, but you are the equal of every other advocate and solicitor, in terms of hearing rights.

Now, you need three things.

First, hard work.

The bad news is that we can't avoid hard work. The good news is that while you must work hard at the beginning, as you get older, the job becomes, if not easier, then more logical.

Second, a willingness to learn.

You may wonder: haven't I learnt enough in the past years? I've studied countless cases, passed numerous exams, and trained under senior lawyers. You're right, of course. You have accumulated knowledge. That's a crucial first step in becoming a competent legal professional.

But lawyering is, ultimately, not a knowledge game. It is a skill game. It is something that you can improve only by doing. It is just like swimming: you can read books and watch videos of the best Olympics swimmers, but the only way you will swim better is if you keep doing it every day.

So, as a young lawyer, jump into the water with both feet. I promise you that you will struggle, just as I did. I guarantee you that you will sink, just as I did. I'm sure that you will feel overwhelmed, just as I did. Stay calm, be confident, and swim. Many have done what you will do, and you can do it too.

The third and final quality you will need is empathy.

You are a lawyer. Your role is to serve your client. To do so, you must understand who your client is, where your client comes from, and what your client wants. Whether your client is a tech billionaire, or an impoverished orphan accused of serious crimes, you must try

to find the humanity in your client, so that you can become your client's advocate. Even if your client is a large multinational, you should locate its corporate values, read its history and study its business. Only then will you be able to contribute practical solutions to serve your client's needs.

My fellow lawyers, work hard, be hungry to learn and develop your sense of empathy. You will become great lawyers."

[End of quote]

29. In conclusion, congratulations once again, and we welcome you to our profession. We look forward to witnessing your achievements and contributions to the legal profession and the community.

36. May it please the Court.

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