

Dear Colleagues

The legal profession is a profession of social interest. It is also an indispensable and highly intense personal activity. The role and importance of a lawyer goes beyond the scope of merely defending personal interests, even though the lawyer cannot possibly disregard these.

In fact, there is a demand for a special relationship between a lawyer and his client. That relationship is one of confidentiality, trust, comfort, and proximity. This is the ultimate reason for the existence of this profession noble, ancient and, as you said, *bellissima*.

The lawyer is an independent professional, who uses the enacted legislation and the law in practice as his tools of trade in order to achieve his clients' legitimate and fair claims.

Such activity carries great responsibility.

Responsibility towards the client, the judicial system and society as a whole.

It also demands great dedication and devotion; learning, teaching and training.

Regardless of the difficulty of the case and obstacles or the costs involved in the study and research, preparation and complete monitoring of the proceedings, we do not compromise and we never give up on a cause that is just.

The added value of our services lies mainly within our prompt response and the effectiveness of our defence and our ability to anticipate our clients' problems and needs, as well as our focus on risk prevention, the usefulness of our advice and the quality of our assistance.

In the upcoming years, I forebode a significant shift in the way lawyers work. A new generation of skilled professionals, masters and embracers of new technologies, shall prove the most qualified to tackle the arising challenges of this new century and new millennium.

Every key aspect of the technology familiar to lawyers will radically improve in a small period of time, leading to the conclusion of tasks in a faster, more economical and convenient way.

Technological progress in the realm of the legal world can encompass the employment of digital

management tools, information management systems or even artificial intelligence algorithms.

Furthermore, no professional will be able to work unaccompanied, outside a network, or without establishing contacts.

Denying these trends in an era of specialization can be particularly perilous since it is increasingly difficult to be a true generalist as lawyers once were.

Moreover, contemporary lawyers must be capable of proving not only their technical knowledge, but also of demonstrating an excellent understanding of the personality and the activity of their clients.

In other words, automation can and must make room for empathy and human connection.

Thus, the modern lawyer shall become an active advisor and assume a decisive role, for it is he (or she) who must identify, prevent and suppress risks, while optimizing advantages and contributing to the reduction of damages derived from any situation, action of transaction. Also, with the access to the EU and, most of all, to the single market, and the rise of globalization, the number of pluri-located

cases that lawyers will have to deal with will increase more and more, demanding intense study and cooperation.

This new century will naturally impose proficiency in legal subjects such as International and EU law, which will originate from contracts, matters of organization and activity of multinational companies. It may also reveal the full affirmation of novel and not so novel legal disciplines such as environmental law, data protection law or biomedical law, all of which demand – if not a whole range of new expertise and technical knowledge – at least the capacity to integrate different and sometimes cryptic languages.

Law firms will also face decisive transformations. A high degree of expertise will be required, making new niches of specialization the paradigm place for a lawyer to develop his proficiency. Conversely, those firms that subsist on general knowledge will find it increasingly difficult to thrive and may face a tougher and more uncertain future.

In terms of legal services, to achieve greater levels of efficiency and profitability, standardization and systemization can become widespread attributes.

Still, one must never forget that success often lies with those who pay attention to detail and who manage, nevertheless, to think and act beyond the standard minimums commonly accepted.

Therefore, the most relevant lawyers and firms will become increasingly alike in terms of skill and competence. In turn, for the sake of distinction, this will lead to a greater reliance on presentation and the way one establishes contact. Therefore, corporate information and publicity may become top priorities in the near future.

However, even though we live in a *flash* society, a society obsessed with looks and appearances, a society of the immediate and the ephemeral, a society where economics outshine humanism, the “perceived” elimination of physical barriers between locals and individuals must not prompt a crisis of speech or a crisis of values.

Providing legal services is not a mere provision of services, a commercial or self-interested act. It is more, much more than that. The acts practiced by lawyers are useful and they generate utility that goes far beyond the strictly economic value.

A person's individual right to freedom, to property, to privacy and data protection; the principles of fairness and justice and the values of honour, truth and independence are a permanent concern to us, lawyers.

We must remember the *essence* of our aims. And our special duties namely to defend and promote the rights of vulnerable persons. Migrants, victims, jobless, children, elderly, sick and disabled people...

As I said before, the added value of our services lies within our prompt (ethical) response, (intelligent) anticipation of problems, (prudent) risk prevention and the (usefulness) of our advice as well as the (quality) of our assistance and the (effectiveness) of our defense.

The lack of consideration for the physical and the legal person, as well as the neglect of fundamental ethics, will never contribute to the peaceful development of our society. It will encourage the transformation of human beings into mere objects.

Hence, it is crucial to realize that law is only an instrument, a tool, a remedy, a guide; it should be part of the solution and not part of the problem.

Importantly, the standardization of justice cannot deliver the quality demanded from a lawyer's work, neither can it abolish the respect towards the principles that should guide legal behavior.

All in all, the ethical parameters that indicate how one should – or should not – act.

On the daily life of companies and businesses, deontology is not a concept removed of economic significance. It is a demanded and commendable conduct which immediately reverberates through ones reputation... and results.

Compliance is not merely a legal imposition, but also a business strategy and an improvement of necessary supervision and prudent management.

To conclude, at the end of the day, legality rewards, competence is recognized, education prevents mistakes, control avoids fraud and honesty always compensates.

*Carlos Pinto de Abreu*