



Client Building and Networking: The Oxygen of Successful Law Firms

To turn contacts into clients, the progressive legal practitioner must learn to move out of his comfort zone and reach beyond the ordinary. ADEPEJU MABADEJE explains

The importance of maintaining a client base is no doubt vital to the survival of any business. This is because clients are needed to move a business forward and generate revenue to support the continued existence of the firm. Taking into cognisance the restriction on advertising and the prohibition of ambulance chasing in the legal profession, a legal practitioner must be able to tactfully and diplomatically turn his contact into a client.

It is perhaps this realisation that caused the Section on Business Law to have a practice development session which centred on major issues in practice development at its conference last week in Abuja. Speaking at the session, Mrs. Pippa Blakemore, a business development consultant and strategic business partner of the PEP partnership LLP, UK, outlined five steps for turning contacts into clients. According to her, it is imperative that lawyers seeking to move their business forward must learn to build relationships, follow up on such relationships

personally, call to meet contacts who have become potential clients, discuss fees without embarrassment and ask for and win businesses.

In order to turn contacts to clients, the networking skills of a legal practitioner would go a long way in assisting him to build up his client base. The progressive legal practitioner must learn to move out of his comfort zone and reach beyond the ordinary. He must be able to follow up on emails and make the most of networking events.

Without doubt, the most difficult aspect of client building and retention for a legal practitioner is the issue of charges and billing. Here, it is essential that the modern lawyer be proud of what he offers, be aware of key elements which make up the fee, know what is of value to the client and not give anything away for nothing.

Possibly, if these simple rules are followed, the modern day lawyer would not only be able to turn his contacts into clients, but will also be able to turn competitors into interns.



•Mrs. Pippa Blakemore