



“As long as you can be attentive to your clients’ needs, and communicate effectively with them, competence will result.”

Young Lawyers

BY RYAN J. WORKS, Young Lawyers Chair

WELCOME, NEW LAWYERS (AGAIN)!

This October, the State Bar of Nevada admitted 255 new lawyers to practice in the Silver State. As the chairman of the Young Lawyers Section, according to tradition, I had the privilege of welcoming these lawyers to the bar at the annual investiture ceremony. Amidst hundreds of proud parents, family and friends, Chief Justice Parraguirre called me first to the podium. Given this was an election year, I was ordered to keep it under three minutes. No problem, right? I charged through the speech, and kept it at just about three minutes but, as I returned to my seat, the Chief Justice asked the crowd if my microphone had been working. The answer was no; only the first several rows of the audience had actually heard my message. Because our new lawyers were seated in the first several rows all was not lost and I was relieved that Justice Parraguirre did not recall me to reiterate the high points. However, because I have my own podium each month in *Nevada Lawyer* I will reiterate those points (and expand) below.

Now, more than ever, young lawyers need to provide excellent customer service to their clients. Obviously, there are fewer clients out there to serve in this economy, so competition is fierce. Of the companies that have survived this economy, most have slashed their legal budgets. Tightened budgets mean increased pressure on general counsel to cut back on outsourcing to law firms and lawyers.

To me, providing excellent customer service is simple, it requires good communication and diligence. Most clients merely want a response. This means returning telephone calls and e-mails, adequately responding to questions and concerns and generally making yourself available. Not

surprisingly, communication and diligence appear at the very beginning of the Nevada Rules of Professional Conduct.

Also, at the top of our model rules is competence. Competence, however, comes with experience. So for young lawyers, begin with diligence and communication and competence will follow. As long as you can be attentive to your clients’ needs, and communicate effectively with them, competence will result. This does not mean that young lawyers are not competent, just that young lawyers have a different level of competence and this is something of which we should all be self-aware. Knowing when to punt a question or concern to a mentor, expert or other senior professional involves a different level of competence that all newly minted lawyers should learn. Your clients will appreciate, and understand, your deferring important legal concepts to more experienced practitioners.

Finally, be ethical. Throughout the investiture ceremony, the point was made over and over again by other speakers that you have nothing more valuable to lose than your reputation as a lawyer. There is no faster way to destroy credibility with the courts, judges and your peers than to commit an ethical violation.

Be diligent, ethical and communicate with your clients regularly and you will have satisfied the level of competence expected of you as a new lawyer. Congratulations on your tremendous accomplishment and welcome to the bar! ■

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