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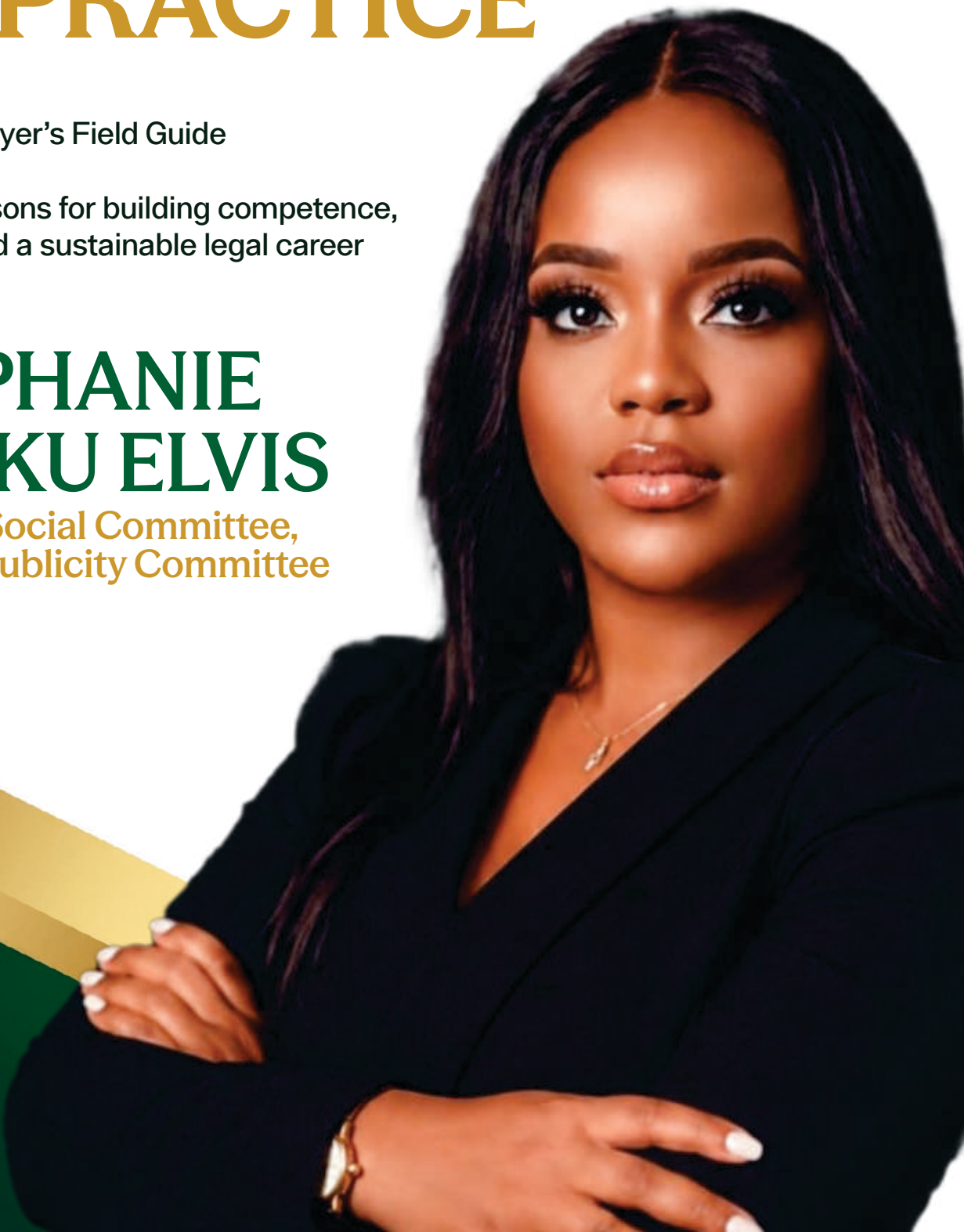
WELCOME TO PRACTICE

A Young Lawyer's Field Guide

Practical lessons for building competence,
character and a sustainable legal career

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A WORD FROM EXPERIENCE

As a lawyer with over seven years of post call experience, I have learnt that the journey after Call to Bar is not simply about knowing the law. It is about learning how to practise it, learning how to work with people, learning how to think like a lawyer and learning how to build a reputation that will serve you for years.

There will be days when you feel you know nothing. There will also be days when you realise just how much you have learnt. Both are part of the journey. Be teachable, stay curious and take your practice seriously.

1. LEARN THE LAW, BUT LEARN THE PRACTICE EVEN MORE

Knowing the law is important. Knowing how to apply it to a real client's problem is what makes you useful.

- Draft properly and learn how to prepare clear, precise and well structured legal documents.
- Conduct legal research and verify the law before giving advice.
- Write opinions by identifying the issue, stating the law, analysing the facts and giving practical advice.
- Draft pleadings and applications and understand the purpose of each process.
- Address the Court with confidence, preparation, respect and proper courtroom etiquette.
- Handle clients by listening carefully, managing expectations and communicating professionally.
- Negotiate and understand that not every dispute needs to become a fight.
- Read contracts with a commercial eye and identify the risks, obligations and opportunities.
- Spot legal issues behind the client's story.
- Meet deadlines because reliability builds trust.
- Keep proper records because good file management protects both you and your client.



2. MASTER THE BASICS BEFORE CHASING THE GLAMOUR

- Learn how your chambers or organisation operates.
- Understand filing processes, procedural requirements and office systems.
- Learn how to prepare professional correspondence and emails.
- Understand basic file management and document control.
- Prepare properly for meetings, hearings and client consultations.
- Ask why a task is being done, not only how it is being done

3. FIND MENTORS, NOT JUST CONNECTIONS

You do not need to know everybody. You need to know people who are willing to teach you, correct you and expose you to better possibilities.

- Observe senior lawyers who practise with integrity.
- Ask thoughtful questions.
- Accept correction without becoming defensive.
- Stay in touch with people who have genuinely invested in your growth.
- Build relationships before you need favours.
- Respect your peers and juniors because today's colleague may become tomorrow's mentor, client, partner or collaborator.

4. BUILD A REPUTATION BEFORE YOU NEED ONE

Be the lawyer who can be trusted with a deadline.

Protect confidential information.

Do not promise what you cannot deliver.

Return calls and messages within a reasonable time.



- Own your mistakes and correct them quickly.
- Treat everyone you work with professionally and respectfully.
- Remember that competence may get you noticed, but character determines whether people remember you well.

5. COMMUNICATE LIKE A PROFESSIONAL

- Write clearly and avoid unnecessary legal jargon.
- Proofread every document before sending it.
- Use professional email etiquette.
- Know when to call, when to send an email and when a meeting is necessary.
- When giving advice, explain the practical consequence, not only the legal position.
- Listen more carefully than you speak.

6. DEVELOP COMMERCIAL AWARENESS

Clients are not hiring legal knowledge alone. They are hiring someone to help them solve a problem.

- Understand your client's objective.
- Think about cost, time, risk and commercial impact.
- Learn the industry relevant to your practice.
- Develop basic financial and business awareness.
- Ask yourself what outcome the client actually needs.

7. TAKE YOUR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SERIOUSLY

- Read recent cases, legislation and regulatory developments.
- Attend conferences, seminars and professional programmes where you can learn.
- Develop a useful area of specialisation over time.



- Improve your technology and digital skills.
- Learn tools that make research, drafting, document management and communication more efficient.
- Keep a record of matters and skills you have worked on so you can measure your growth.

8. THE DO'S AND DON'TS OF EARLY PRACTICE

DO

- Be punctual.
- Prepare before every assignment.
- Read documents before asking questions about them.
- Keep learning.
- Protect client confidentiality.
- Ask for clarification when instructions are unclear.
- Keep proper records of important work.

DONOT

- Pretend to know what you do not know.
- Send documents without proofreading them.
- Ignore deadlines because you are overwhelmed.
- Discuss client matters carelessly.
- Allow social media to damage your professional reputation.
- Measure your career against someone else's timeline.
- Think that asking for help makes you less of a lawyer.



9. BUILD YOUR SOCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL CAPITAL

The legal profession is built on relationships as much as it is built on knowledge. Attend professional and social gatherings. Introduce yourself. Sit with someone you do not know. Follow up after meeting people. Be useful. Be memorable for the right reasons.

- Participate in professional communities and branch activities.
- Build relationships across different generations of lawyers.
- Learn from people outside your immediate practice area.
- Network consistently, not only when you need a job, referral or favour.

10. TAKE CARE OF THE LAWYER YOU ARE BECOMING

- Rest when you can.
- Have meaningful relationships and interests outside work.
- Learn how to manage pressure.
- Do not make every mistake a crisis.
- Celebrate your small wins.
- Remember that career growth is a marathon, not a race

YOUR YOUNG LAWYER CHECKLIST

- Can I draft a clear professional letter without constant supervision?
- Can I conduct legal research and identify reliable authorities?
- Can I explain a legal issue in simple language to a client?
- Do I understand the deadlines on my matters?
- Do I keep proper records of my work?
- Do I know who to ask when I do not know the answer?
- Am I building relationships with integrity?
- Am I learning something useful every month?
- Am I becoming more confident without becoming careless?
- Would the people I work with describe me as reliable?



A FINAL WORD

Your first few years of practice are for building. Build your knowledge. Build your skills. Build your confidence. Build your network. Build your name. Most importantly, build your character.

Do not be discouraged by how much you still have to learn. Every senior lawyer was once the young lawyer asking questions, making mistakes and figuring things out.





Goodwill Message

TO OUR NEWLY CALLED LAWYERS

Congratulations, Counsels, and welcome to this beautiful and demanding profession.

As you begin this new chapter, may your journey be filled with knowledge, meaningful opportunities, great mentors, good colleagues and clients who value your work. May you have the courage to learn, the humility to ask questions, the wisdom to seek guidance and the discipline to keep improving.

The Bar is bigger than a title. It is a community, a network and a platform for impact. Show up. Participate. Connect.

Learn from others and, in time, become someone who helps the next person coming behind you.

Welcome to the profession. Welcome to the journey. Welcome to the Bar.

Stephanie Adaku Elvis

Member, Social Committee | 2025 to 2027

Member, Publicity Committee | 2025 to 2027

...Elevating Experiences