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Adepetun Caxton-Martins Agbor & Segun, a leading oil and gas and corporate commercial law firm, employs 25 attorneys, 18 support staff, and operates from three major cities in Nigeria. Joy started her career nine years ago with a major law firm in Nigeria, Olaniwun Ajayi & Co. She has been at her present position for six years and joined ALA in 2004. She holds an MBA and is a member of the Nigerian Institute for Management (NIM). She has been married for 12 years to Tola Harrison-Abiola, an attorney, and they have a set of 10-year-old twins, Oluwatomisin(tomi) Jemima and Oluwatobiloba(tobi) Joshua.

Q. What are the major issues you face as a legal administrator in your country?

A. Professional recognition. In my country, legal administrators are saddled with a variety of job responsibilities vital to the success of any law firm from financial, HR to secretarial, and yet struggle to be recognized as a professional. Closely linked to this is the problem of plenty of responsibilities without sufficient authority. Also, poor Automation/ Software support to carry out duties. In my country very little is known about practice management software, time management/ billing software etc. It is pretty difficult doing a lot of work manually, very cumbersome. At the ALA conferences, I check out some of the vendors' practice management software but they often report in dollars (foreign currency). In my country there is inadequate training and development for the profession. There is very little continuous education or professional development opportunities – little or no research, the service industry is not quite organized. Lastly, generally remuneration is quite poor for legal administrators in my country when compared to other administrators with whom I have interacted.

Q. Where do you see legal administration headed in your country?

A. The growth of law practices in my country (many law firms are handling multi-million dollar transactions) and globalization in general is forcing law firms to take the business aspect of law more seriously, and I guess by extension that will mean taking legal administrators or legal managers more seriously if they are rightly positioned. More and more legal managers are getting more exposed and demanding better treatment and more recognition. I guess we will not have to fight too hard if we let our good works speak for us.

Finish this sentence: By participating in PLMW, I hope to personally take the time to focus on myself as a legal administrator, try and define, redefine, or reinvent myself. I hope to bring some focus to my country. Leverage with other managers, try to focus on

what others are doing. Get more insight into PLMW programs that I can adopt. Already am thinking of joining one or two of the affiliate PLMW associations.

Q. What initiatives have you taken or do you plan to take to promote the awareness of legal administration (one of the goals of PLMW)?

A. Leverage with other legal administrators/ managers locally to share experiences and possibly resources more. In Nigeria, we have no chapters and we definitely need increased collaboration. Legal administrators are busy doing their own thing with little or no interactions. I have approached the leading business school in Lagos(LBS) told them about the profession and there are ongoing discussions to put together a legal management curriculum with ALA. I have been discussing with some managing partners about meeting with the Business Section of the Nigerian Bar Association to expatiate on the profession.

Q. Why is legal administration important to people in your country?

A. Nigeria has a population of well over 125 million people and more than 50,000 practicing lawyers. We have over 30 law faculties in the various Nigerian universities, the Nigerian law school produces over 3,500 lawyers every year with little or no business knowledge. We have over 4000 law firms in Nigeria, in my view less than 2 percent are properly run as per international standard. Many law firms are struggling to remain in business, others are folding up because they lack basic business knowledge.

Finish this sentence: A career in legal administration has given me great exposure to several disciplines and competences. Versatility is probably another word for legal administration.

Q. How do lawyers in your country view the legal management profession?

A. Am afraid 90 percent of them, due to no fault of theirs probably do not have a clue.

Q. What types of programs would you like to see implemented in your country to advance this profession?

A. Several. Like having the annual conference in Nigeria for instance, that will be a booster. Having the President or Directors stop by here some time. Developing the legal management curriculum with some reputable institutions. Many legal administrators would like to join the professional associations but subscriptions and material may not be with their budget. This professional association can take a leaf from some organizations where subscriptions, resources, conference fees for other member countries are reduced to accommodate them.

Q. How has legal administration evolved since you entered the field?

A. There has definitely been some progress. At least the word legal administration is not strange anymore. Few years ago we did not know that word existed; you were an accountant, personnel manager, or admin manager in a law firm.

Q. What does PLMW mean to you?

A. Professionalism, the ability to communicate properly what you do, giving you visibility and recognition, and networking.

Q. How would you like to celebrate PLMW 2007?

A. Reflecting. Strategizing. Speaking with some administrators in Nigeria, maybe laughing at ourselves, our lawyer colleagues, planning for the future.

Q. What advice would you give to someone who wants to increase awareness in legal administration?

A. First sit down and answer the question, 'What do you do for a living? How do you add value?' Once you can assimilate and articulate that, you are a walking advert for the profession.

Q. In what ways can legal administrators increase the awareness of the legal profession among students?

A. Writing articles in student journals, newsletters, magazines. Being a part of their law or student week. Community Challenge like you have it in the West.

Finish this sentence: When it comes to legal administration, I would be happy if I do not have to struggle too hard to create awareness or gain recognition – if there is some kind of a pathway to partnership.

Q. What advice would you give to someone in your country interested in entering the legal administration profession?

A. Join ALA, or any other legal professional association. Study, study, study. Be resourceful because you are expected to know a lot about a lot of things, from financial management to interpersonal relations, to negotiation skills etc. Be flexible, willing and quick to learn, get a mentor.