

“When things go well”

Opening speech, 4th Edition Legal Awards, Laurent Marliere, President

Ladies & Gentlemen,

“When the economy goes well, things go well for lawyers. When the economy goes bad,... things go even better for lawyers”. This statement I read in an American newspaper is certainly true for some firms but unfortunately not for all.

Law firms are experiencing times of changes and thus it is a time with opportunities. The standards to manage and market a law firm are changing as clients expectations are changing as well. Innovation is paramount in these shaky times.

For many firms, it is time to think about their internal organization. A challenge like the Legal Awards oblige firms to go through this healthy process of self-assessment.

Over the years, the Legal Awards have been integrated in the marketing strategy of the law firms and the in-house legal departments.

Every year, this painful question comes back on the table of the partnership : are we going to participate or not ?

Well, one could think that if a firm does not participate, this could mean that things have not been going well with this firm. On the contrary, if a firm participates this would mean that it has something to show to the market.

There is another interesting issue brought by the BLA. I need to be cautious on that one. OK, the President of the Bar is not present tonight. Well, the Vice-President is there but he won an award last year, so that should be all right. The issue is relates to publicity!

A member of the jury actually reported to me that he had appointed for client work a firm he had assessed via the jury process of the Legal Awards, as he was particularly impressed by their achievements. A bon entendeur,...

Let me briefly recap the proceedings that lead to the nomination and decision process.

1. A vast survey is carried out to identify the key players and achievements in every category

2. Nominees are only confirmed if they remit a written memo
3. An independent jury composed of some 100 top personalities assess the memos
4. The jury changes every year in order to avoid recurrent assessment
5. The jury members motivate in writing their decision
6. Their votes are sent to a Huissier de Justice/gerechtsdeurwaarder
7. A novelty has been brought this year for the most prominent prize “Belgian Law Firm of the Year”.

A hearing was organized between the jury and the nominated firms at the headquarters of the FEB – VBO. The jury is chaired by Philippe Lambrecht, from the FEB-VBO and composed of Michel Vermaerke of Febelfin, Guy Keutgen Cepani-Cepina, Anne De Wolf & Jean Cattaruzza Director and President of the Institute for Company Lawyers.

8. A debriefing will take place between the nominated firms and the jury after the event so that firms can get a feed back on their entry.

This is just a small reminder to inform you that every year we try to improve the organization of the event.

The best business lawyers are in this room. We wish you an excellent evening and an excellent networking.

Thank you

Laurent Marliere, President