



# THE BEGINNERS' GUIDE

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NBA- YLF  
PUBLICATION

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# Message from the Governing Council

Dear New Wig,

Welcome to the Bar.

On behalf of the Governing Council of the NBA-Young Lawyers Forum, it gives us great pride to present The Beginners' Guide – a heartfelt publication curated just for you.

This guide is a collection of stories. It is a mirror of our shared journey, a map drawn by those who have walked the path before you. Within these pages, you will find the voices of young lawyers who once stood where you now stand – filled with questions, dreams, and an unshakable will to succeed. They now share lessons forged in courtrooms, boardrooms, and moments of quiet growth.

You will read about the early stumbles, the unexpected breakthroughs, and the daily courage it takes to find your footing in this noble profession. From litigation to corporate, from saving to networking, from working with senior colleagues to finding your voice – these stories are the ladders we hope you'll climb.

As a Forum, we believe in learning through community, and in rising by lifting others. Let this guide be your companion as you navigate your first steps – and may it remind you that you are never alone in this journey.

This is the beginning of your story. Make it count.

**Timothy Clement**  
Chairman

**Etaba Agbor**  
Secretary





# Message from the Committee on Policies, Programs and Projects

Dear New Wig,

At the heart of progress is purpose. The Beginner's Guide was born from that purpose.

As the Committee on Policies, Programs, and Projects of the NBA-Young Lawyers Forum, we envisioned a tool that would go beyond abstract advice – something grounded, relatable, and reflective of the real experiences of young lawyers who have walked this path before you. This guide is that tool.

It was crafted to be your first compass as you step into the legal profession – not with fear, but with foresight. It brings together stories of resilience, missteps turned into lessons, and bold beginnings that led to inspiring growth across different practice areas – litigation, corporate, in-house, public interest, and beyond.

This publication is not just informative – it's intentional. Each page reflects our belief that the future of the Bar depends on how well we prepare its newest entrants. And so, we didn't just write this for you; we wrote this with you in mind.

As you turn each page, may you find more than advice. May you find reassurance, direction, and a spark to lead your journey with clarity and courage.

Welcome to the fold. Now, let's build the future – together.

**Umoh Edet**  
Chairman

**Charles Ajagba**  
Secretary



# Forward to the Beginners' Guide

Congratulations on being called to the largest Bar in Africa!

It really gives me great joy to write the forward of this Guide. First and foremost, this Beginners' Guide is a brainchild of the Nigerian Bar Association-Young Lawyers' Forum (NBA-YLF), specifically under the auspices of the Committee on Policies, Programs and Projects (CPPP).

My excitement stems from the fact that our "new wigs" will not have to make some mistakes or pass through a lot as they commence their career journey. I wish to be modest, but it is indeed an epoch moment in our history, as this is the very first time we will have such a Guide to help younger generation of lawyers to navigate their way – through the lens of members of the NBA-YLF.

The Beginners' Guide interrogates several topical yet, essential areas that affect the "new wigs" upon commencement of their career journey. The Guide explores practical ways on how to be productive in the midst of several instructions from your seniors. It also gives you the benefit of the doubt as to what you are to expect should you commence your journey as an in-house lawyer or as a litigator. Clearly, we cannot displace prioritizing your mental health even as you strive to be at your very best in your chosen field. We believe that the best you can ever be, is interwoven in the instructions you are given at work and your undiluted resolve to take your career and personal development to another level. In all of these, you will need to know how to relate with your senior colleagues and clients. I would love to call it an "all-rounder" Guide for a new wig.

All these are meant to guide you because we understand that young lawyers are the burden bearers of any law firm. As much as we bear the burden of doing the groundwork, we





must be furnished to be at our best – as we expect our groundwork to complement the refined experience and expertise of our seniors. I really hope you find this Guide instructive and engaging when you go through it.

We had the very best of our young lawyers who contributed to this Guide. They did not spare any experience in their contribution as they drew immensely from their personal experiences. In no particular order, I thank the following contributors to the Guide: Markanthony, Great, Mariah, Isaac and Owen who responded as soon as we reached out to them. I must salute the Chairman of the CPPP, NBA-YLF, Mr Umoh Edet who came up with this idea of having a Guide to help the “new wigs” as they commence their journey. Of course, we thank the NBA-YLF Governing Council led by Mr Timothy for reposing his confidence in the Committee in making this happen.

I never intended this to be too long as there are valuable insights that await you as you scroll through this page; I cannot afford to deny you that. Again, know that we are rooting for you and cannot wait to celebrate your wins in the profession.

Once again, congratulations and welcome to the largest Bar in Africa!

**Ekeoma Ogbu,**





# Being Productive in the midst of several Instructions

Ekeoma Ogbu

## Introduction

In retrospect, I can remember the very first set of tasks I did as a Graduate Intern of my firm. Mind you, I had been offered a role as a Trainee Associate prior our call to the bar. I can remember doing quite a lot of work and slightly overwhelmed with some of the instructions - which were mostly research work. Then, I was called to the bar after our result was released. With joy and excitement, I resumed at the law firm as a Trainee Associate with starry eyes and various rhetorical questions that weighed my mind. In all honesty, I was really pumped to the fullest of starting this new journey and with the goal of being a very refined and dependable lawyer.

I remember the first instruction from my senior

was to draft a final written address in respect of a matter at the National Industrial Court. I had thoughts and questions that ran through my mind like "What a privilege it is to be honoured with such task! "Where do I start from?" How do I get to impress these seniors?" And then, I commenced the work. I had not even gone far with reviewing the file, I got a call from a Senior Associate who needed my attention. This senior needs me to review an agreement and it was really urgent. Of course, I would not want to look like one who is shying away from work, I accepted to do that immediately. As I returned, I got an information that a Partner wants me to call her in respect of a draft she wants me to develop. At that point, I understood that I had been called to the bar





as a Barrister and Solicitor of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

I clearly understand that some of you currently have a seat on this my "table of busyness" even before your call to the bar. Just as you are overwhelmed now, so was I. And in all honesty, I did not seek guidance as to how to navigate the whole scheduling and seemingly "urgent" instructions I had to work on. Do not fret, be of good cheers for you are in the right hands, my good people. I will share my experience with you and some guidance on how I was able to navigate this hard terrain while I was also productive. Was it an enjoyable process of self-guidance? Depending on how you see it. It was indeed tough as I learnt the hard way – a process I would not want you to learn from.

For the avoidance of doubt, I have work in a law firm and this forms the bulk of my legal experience. So, my bias will be on law practice from the lens of a law firm, kindly bear with me (especially, my in-house brethren).

Let's roll.

### The Problem

One of the problems I had was "I've got this" syndrome. More often than not, this is one of the issues young lawyers face at the early stage of their career. I will not cast aspersions as this is a mindset that has its root from our educational system – I mean, who goes through the Nigerian Law School and not have that uptight belief in oneself? And this gets to form a very big faux belief that one can navigate through their legal career without much help – with a heavy reliance on a "I will get it







done” approach. Unfortunately, many “new wigs” navigate the early stage of their career without seeking the necessary guidance and help.

The practice of law is more or less a social engineering where we service the society. A law firm has several clients from all walks of life. Each client has their peculiar issues and problems that needs to be solved – more often than not, urgently. So, we see the pressure on the Partners who shift these burdens on the younger generation of lawyers who do the same till it gets to your (our) table for the first drafts. So, what to do? How can one get better at handling several instructions just like I did when I resumed as a Trainee Associate and being productive?

### **Here is how:**

#### **1. Listen attentively**

I do not think anyone appreciates someone who keeps coming back to get clarity on some instructions that have been given. For starters, it shows two things – you never paid attention and secondly, it depicts being slow or dull. That should not be an impression you should give as you start your career as a lawyer. To deal with this, make sure you have your think pad with you whenever you are to be given an instruction. It helps you to document the exact instructions and gain clarity. In this time and age, technology has come to our aid, so, you may even try and record the instructions (with the permission of your senior) so as to play it as much as you can to get the meat of the instruction.

This actually helped me when I started.

I do not need a think pad now to process the instruction because, with time, as I work on some files, I get more insight and may understand the next line of action. Definitely, you will not know about the clients and their needs as you start off your career; hence, the need to carry that think pad or record the instruction(s) as they come.

#### **2. Create a to-do list**

You must have heard this time and time again. The shortest pen will always be better than the longest memory. When you have several instructions (as you would always get), try as much as possible to compartmentalize them into a to-do. What this does is to help your mind in assessing the magnitude of work you have and what it will take to do them. More importantly, the to-do list also gives you the grace to attach a timeline to the several instructions you have.

Imagine working on another Partner’s work and another strolls in and asks you of his work and you have done nothing in respect of the instruction. Imagine again receiving a knock on the head (figuratively) for abandoning the work because you forgot the instruction on the ground of being busy with other work. Not only will it be embarrassing, it would also tell of your tardiness to work and inability to keep your house in order and being productive. Create that to-do list weekly and then, try to divide them daily to help you become so productive. Not only will you be productive, it helps you measure your work and easily quantify them – should you need them for an appraisal in your office. Again, capitalists do not care so much about your workload, rather, they are after their deliverables – so sit up and deliv-



er like the Hebrew women.

### **3. Know your Firm's organogram**

This should be at the back of your mind as you work on the instructions you have been given. This is where you need to ascertain whose work should have priority over the other. Close your eyes now, imagine a very Senior Partner in your firm or organization summon you for her work and you informed her that you were working on a Senior Associate's instruction. What do you think will happen at that point? Exactly. So, you must take cognizance of your firm/organization's organogram when you have several instructions at the same time. Here, you need to ask questions.

There are several instructions given for you to keep in view. While others are meant to be done immediately. You will have to be wise and to be wise, you need to ask the right question(s) to know what is important and urgent and those that are important and not urgent. I remember working on an instruction that was given and the review came in a year later - mind you, the instruction was given by a very Senior Partner. Was it important? Of course, it was. Urgent? Obviously, not.

When you have been able to ascertain the seniority and priority of the instruction, it helps you become more articulate in creating your to-do list and attaching a workable timeline to the said to-do list. As always, the goal is to be productive and also to deliver as soon as practicable.

### **4. Be fast but thorough**

Now you have created a to-do list for

all the instructions you have. You must have also allotted the timeframe for each instruction and known which work comes first, you need to move as fast as possible. Seniors love juniors that are very fast with their work; and guess what ranks ahead of that - a thorough work. Honestly, no one is impressed seeing you took your time to do a very good job. I mean, of what use is your thoroughness when it is no longer needed? Inasmuch as your speed is essential in the marathon race, flouting the rules may lead to a disqualification. Hence, the need to always be fast but very thorough in your approach.

Funny enough, no senior wants to redo a job you have sent to them. It is of no use if they can as well do the work themselves than receiving a tardy delivery from you. I do not take away the place of learning in the job, but there is an extent to which grace can be extended by a senior. So, to be fast, the trick is to ask for precedents.

Seek further clarity from those who had gone ahead of you. I remember having to ask my immediate seniors for precedents and also gained a little orientation on how to deliver the work in question. You also get the opportunity to learn about each Partner and their reaction to deliverables and how to impress them. Honestly, this will make your work easier and also make you impressionable before the senior who gave you the instruction.

### **5. Start from the simple instructions**

From my experience, starting from the simple instructions will help you



so much. How? There are simple instructions like sending out emails, following up on clients on some issues or their instructions, following up a litigation clerk for some filings at the court, hoping on a call with a client etc. While there are more tedious works like drafting some documents or reviewing large documents, drafting court processes and so forth.

When you start from the simplest, it gives room for total concentration on the seemingly hard tasks. I can imagine trying to review a 100-page agreement/document and you remember an email you need to send out or a call you need to make. Not that these do not come in-between and alter your work, but, to be more productive and to avoid losing your train of thought, it is advisable to avoid jumbling the simple tasks with the harder ones.

Before I wrap up this part, make sure you ask when the senior needs the instruction to be delivered. This will help you become more aware of the timeline you need to allot to each work. This will help you not to worked yourself up so much in delivering an “urgent” work to receive a review of that work some weeks after – honestly, the feeling is always a mixed one (because you feel happy to be relieved and sad, that you would have done something else). Either ways, make sure you ask question to ascertain how urgent the work is.

### **Conclusion**

As you start your career, there are mistakes you will honestly make – those may not be your fault. However, make sure you learn from them and

vow not to repeat them. It becomes a problem when these mistakes are recurrent. In case you do not know, many people are really paying attention to these little details and mistakes that are recurrent. There are times you may forget an instruction because of how busy you have been in working on another. Or, even be carried away by a simpler instruction and leaving the important ones. But, make sure you are not always on that mistake loop. It is better the seniors are under the impression that you missed out the instruction than to expect such behavior from you. I bet you, the former is better than the latter.

As much as you want to deliver excellent jobs, do not forget the place of healthy collaborations with your mates and senior colleagues. Also, do not forget to prioritise your personal and career development as a young lawyer, bearing in mind that you will not be a young lawyer for the longest time. Make sure your health is not in jeopardy as you put yourself out there to work.

I tried to share my experience with you on how I worked (and still work) and try not to be overwhelmed with work. Follow these step-by-step approach and I promise that your work will be less hard – not that it will not be hard, but lesser.

I wish you the very best as you commence your career journey. It should be a good time to welcome you to the Bar, my learned colleague.





# Finding Your Feet: A Beginner's Guide to Thriving in an In-House Legal Role

Great Madudi

## Introduction

It will be very helpful to not begin this guide with an assumption that everyone, more particularly, young wigs understand what it means for a Lawyer to be engaged in an inhouse role of the practice of Law. Perhaps you will share a bit more in my scrupulousness when further in this piece you glean from the costly lessons I have learnt about avoiding assumptions and interrogating everything. So here it is; Cornell Law School's Legal Information Institute (LII) defines an in-house counsel as:

"An attorney who is employed by a company and handles its in-house legal affairs."

This definition as simple and accurate, does captures two major intricacies which must inform the way and manner an in-house lawyer must approach his job - His employ-

er and his role. These two factors also mark an important distinction between law practice in a typical law firm and one practiced inhouse. These two focal points will be more exhaustively explored late in this piece, but it is convenient at this introduction to point out that a lawyer plying his trade in inhouse role requires a fundamental understanding of the fact that the scope of the role of an understanding of the implication of serving a Company as an employee differs from doing so as an external service provider.

A better way to understand this distinction is in the aphorism "You are an employee first, then a lawyer". This statement captures a critical mindset shift required for an in-house counsel. Unlike external lawyers whose primary duty is to the client's legal interests, the in-house lawyer must also function as a corporate citizen. This means







aligning legal advice with the company's commercial strategy, operational realities, and internal dynamics. It also means navigating the balance between legal soundness and business pragmatism.

Being an employee first implies participation in the company's culture, understanding its business model, and building trust across departments. It means sometimes advising not just on what is legally permissible, but on what is reputable or commercially sustainable. It also comes with internal accountability as delays, unresponsiveness, or rigid legalism may frustrate business units and undermine the lawyer's effectiveness.

It is worth mentioning that the outlook of an in-house legal role is deeply shaped by the nature of the employer. For instance, a lawyer working within a multinational corporation is likely to engage with cross-border regulatory issues, sophisticated internal compliance protocols, and multi-layered transaction reviews. These organisations often have a low tolerance for risk, backed by extensive legal budgets and access to leading external counsel. In contrast, in-house counsel in a small or medium-sized local business must often function as a legal generalist—juggling a wide array of responsibilities, from employment matters to contract drafting and regulatory compliance, often with minimal resources and limited institutional structure.

A startup, particularly in the tech space, presents yet another dynamic. Here, the lawyer must be agile and commercially minded, advising on issues like data privacy, intellectual property, and fundraising—often in real time and without the luxury of a robust legal budget. Though resources may be constrained, the lawyer's voice is often integral to core decision-making. On the other hand, in finan-

cial institutions, legal and compliance functions are usually more developed, with clearly defined roles and a heavy emphasis on regulatory oversight. The risk appetite is notably conservative, and legal processes tend to be more formalized and documentation-intensive.

Ultimately, the structure, sector, and maturity of the employer guides not only the day-to-day responsibilities of in-house counsel but also their level of influence, the expectations placed on them, and the tools at their disposal to manage legal risk. Starting out in an in-house legal role is both exciting and overwhelming. You transition from academic understanding or private practice mindsets into a business-driven environment where your success is measured not just by the quality of your legal analysis, but by your ability to enable business goals while managing risks. This guide draws from real, practical experiences to help you navigate the early stages of your in-house journey with confidence.

### **Legal Background for In-house Law Practice in Nigeria.**

In-house legal practice in Nigeria is governed primarily by the Legal Practitioners Act (Cap L11, LFN 2004) and the Rules of Professional Conduct for Legal Practitioners 2023. The Legal Practitioners Act makes no distinction between a Lawyer who works in a Law Firm, and those engaged in-house. In Section 24 of the Legal Practitioners Act, a Legal Practitioner is defined as one who is entitled to practice as a Barrister or as a Barrister and a Solicitor. To qualify as a Legal Practitioner, a person must be called to the Nigerian Bar and have their name on the Roll of Legal Practitioners maintained by the Supreme Court. This requirement of



course applies to all Lawyers in Nigeria, whether in a Law Firm or those engaged in a salaried employment role.

Under the Rules of Professional Conduct, 2023, the General Council of the Bar retained the previous restrictive provisions of the previous Rules (2007). Specifically, 8(2) of the RPC prohibits lawyers in private salaried employment from appearing in court or before tribunals on behalf of their employers, except where employed by a government department. Similarly, Rule 8(2) prohibits Lawyers from private salaried employment from preparing Legal Documents, Pleadings and Instruments for their employer.

These restrictions nonetheless, the in-house practice of Law presents an opportunity to deepen one's strategic legal acumen. It elevates the shifts the lawyer's role from reactive litigation to proactive legal stewardship by advising on transactions, shaping business decisions, managing regulatory interfaces, and guiding corporate governance. Importantly, in-house counsel remains essential actors in litigation: the in-house counsel's role in litigation remains pivotal. This involves meticulously preparing briefs for external counsel, identifying and preparing witnesses, gathering

crucial evidence, managing discovery processes, and continuously aligning litigation strategy with the company's commercial objectives and risk tolerance. Your deep understanding of the business makes you an indispensable part of the litigation team. Of course, attaining this objective requires commitment to a journey of learning and applying very quickly. Some tips stand out and come in really handy in making this process efficient:

### **1. Understand Your Primary Role: A Business Partner, Not Just a Lawyer**

In-house legal practice demands a mindset shift: you are no longer an advisor at arm's length, but an integral partner to the business. Your role is not to list risks and walk away, but to collaborate with different departments to find legally sound paths to achieving business objectives. Beyond attending meetings, make an effort to understand the company's products/services, its market position, competitors, revenue streams, and strategic priorities. Spend time with colleagues from sales, marketing, operations, and finance. The more you understand the 'why' behind their requests, the more targeted and valuable your legal ad-



vice will be. For instance, how do you advise Business where a 3rd Party, maybe a vendor has breached delivery timelines for products and proposes to refund the contract sum or to reassign a product belonging to another vendor in its disposal to your Company. It is not enough to outline the risks involved in choosing any of the options, it behoves on you as a commercially aware lawyer to guide Business into suitable commercial situations.

Again, the in-house lawyer must make effort to understand and speak the language of the industry. Every industry and company has its own acronyms, jargon, and preferred communication styles. Pay attention, ask questions, and start incorporating this language where appropriate into your own communication. This builds rapport and shows you're engaged.

## **2. Master the Art of Contract Reviews: Look Beyond the Words**

Contract review is more than a technical exercise. It is a critical risk management tool. Contract drafting and review sits at the core of an in-house Lawyer's primary obligation to his employer. Of course, this portends that requesting departments and in the case of high-level contracts, executive management do not bother to go over the reviewed or drafted Agreement before appending their signature. Whatever mishap that rises from the carrying out of the Agreement, is quickly and unreservedly traced to the Legal Department. In the light of this, it cannot be overstated how indispensable it is to go over reviews and drafts for as many times as possible, to ensure that your employer is adequately insulated from taking on more risks and responsibilities than is necessary.

This call to vigilance endures even after a draft has been shared with a Counterparty – and especially so, for in my experience

it is not uncommon for clever lawyers on the opposing team to surreptitiously reintroduce clauses for which concessions have been made for their ouster at the point of negotiation. While reviewing, you must look beyond obvious errors. Pay special attention to e-numbered Clauses as counterparties might make stealth changes and







renumber clauses to conceal significant alterations. Definitions are curious points that should not escape the suspicion of a contract review process. A slight tweak in a definition can shift an entire risk landscape. Always compare each draft line-by-line against the last version. Use document comparison software if available. Develop a checklist of key clauses and commercial points to verify before every review.

Earlier in this Guide, I had made the point against embarking on assumptions. In the world of contracting, I have observed one too many times that uninitiated lawyers throw the weights of assumptions around Boiler-Plate Clauses. Boiler-Plate Clauses are standard provisions typically found at the end of agreements. They may not relate directly to the commercial substance of the contract but are crucial for governing how the contract operates, especially in the event of a dispute or unforeseen event. Examples of Boiler-Plate Clauses include “Governing Law and Jurisdiction”, “Entire Agreement”, “Force Majeure” etc. As a rule of thumb, be sure to subject these clauses with the same degree of scrutiny as the operative clauses. It is not uncommon to see Simple Agreements having the Dispute Resolution Clause as to be undertaken by Arbitration, where a simple Negotiation would have sufficed. This is evidence of not paying diligent attention to general clauses. Be sure to not be caught in that trap.

### 3. Strategic Engagement and Management of External Counsel

In-house lawyers must recognize the limits of internal capacity and expertise. Engaging external counsel is prudent when dealing with high-stakes litigation, unfamiliar jurisdictions, regulatory investigations, or complex transactions requiring

specialist input (e.g., tax structuring, cross-border M&A, or IP prosecution). It is also advisable when the matter may involve reputational risk, regulatory exposure, or conflict of interest within the organization. However, instructing external lawyers should be strategic. Prioritize matters where the value or risk justifies the cost. Ensure that the scope of work is clearly defined, avoid open-ended briefs, and agree on a fee structure upfront—whether hourly, capped, or fixed fee. Regular updates and clear deliverables should be built into the engagement. Where possible, handle routine or lower-risk matters in-house, reserving external resources for issues where their added value is clear.

Ultimately, the goal is to strike a balance: leveraging external expertise when necessary while maintaining cost discipline and aligning legal support with the company’s commercial objectives. While external counsel brings expertise, you bring deep knowledge of the business context, risk appetite, and internal stakeholders. Ensure their advice is tailored to these realities.

Always ask yourself, “Can the business act immediately on this advice?” If not, request clarification or practical recommendations.

### 4. The indispensability of proper documentation.

In in-house legal practice, documentation is not a clerical chore it is a shield. It protects you, the company, and the integrity of decisions taken. Whether you’re reviewing contracts, providing advice, joining strategic discussions, or addressing compliance risks, the record you create can become invaluable. Every decision taken, waiver granted, concern





raised, or instruction given should be documented. A clear email following a call, a dated memo-to-file, or a properly captured minutes of a meeting can become the most credible evidence of what was said, agreed, or advised. In regulatory inquiries, internal audits, or disputes, contemporaneous documentation often becomes the difference between vindication and vulnerability.

As a corollary to the above, a core habit every in-house lawyer must develop is confirming all material instructions, approvals, or requests via email. This ensures there is a traceable and time-stamped record of what was asked, what was advised, and what was agreed. It is not distrust—it is discipline. At the conclusion of a meeting, it is prudent to send a follow-up summary. Phone calls or oral discussions should also be reiterated by email. A simple “As discussed...” email can save hours of argument later.

In audits, disputes, or investigations, contemporaneous documentation often holds the most weight. It also helps preserve institutional memory—so when teams change, or time has passed, decisions can be understood in their proper context.

But documentation must be strategic. Avoid unnecessary detail, editorial commentary, or speculative language. Be professional, accurate, and succinct. Mark documents appropriately as confidential or privileged where needed.

## **5. Celebrate the Quiet Wins**

In the fast-paced world of in-house

legal practice, success often goes unnoticed when it doesn't arrive with fanfare. Unlike courtroom victories or headline-making deals, the quiet wins—risk averted, ambiguity clarified, compliance upheld—can feel routine or invisible. But they are not. These are the building blocks of a resilient organisation.

A well-drafted clause that prevents a costly dispute, a regulatory filing submitted ahead of deadline, a policy that helps the company avoid a sanction, or even timely legal advice that subtly shifts a decision in the right direction—each of these reflects skill, foresight, and professionalism. They deserve recognition. Celebrating these wins isn't about self-praise; it's about reinforcing the value the legal function brings to the business. It fosters morale within the legal team, builds confidence with stakeholders, and reminds the organisation that legal excellence often shows in what didn't go wrong.

Make it a habit to document your quiet wins. Share them in end-of-month reports. Let me tell you; as an entry level lawyer in a Legal Department, you are more likely to be deployed to handle documentations and notices. You must explore the opportunity to capture your thoughts and contributions in the relevant reports you are preparing. Mention them in cross-functional meetings. Let business units see how legal is not just a gatekeeper but a strategic enabler, solving problems before they escalate and guiding the company through unseen minefields with calm expertise. In-house lawyers don't always win in court, but they win every time the business runs smoothly because the legal groundwork was solid. That, too, is worth celebrating.

## **6. Key Skills You Must Develop Early**

- Commercial Thinking: Understand



your company's specific risk appetite. Not all risks are equal, and the business may be willing to accept certain risks for strategic reasons. Your role is to ensure they understand these risks.

- **Clear Communication:** Building relationships is proactive. Schedule informal catch-ups with key contacts in other departments. Understand their objectives, challenges, and how legal can support them. Be approachable and responsive
- **Project Management:** "Many legal tasks, from due diligence to policy rollouts, are effectively projects. Learn basic project management skills: define scope, set timelines, identify stakeholders, manage resources, and track progress."
- **Tech Savviness:** "Familiarize yourself with legal tech tools your company uses or might benefit from (e.g., contract management systems, e-discovery platforms, compliance software, document automation). Basic proficiency in standard office software is essential."
- **Time Management & Prioritization:** "You'll often face multiple urgent requests. Develop systems to track your work, prioritize tasks based on urgency and importance, manage deadlines, and communicate proactively if you're facing bandwidth issues."
- **Negotiation Skills:** "Negotiation isn't just for big contracts. You'll negotiate internally for resources, timelines, and stakeholder buy-in. Practice principled negotiation: focus on interests, not positions; generate options for mutual gain."
- **Effective Research Skills:** "Beyond traditional legal research, you'll need to research industry best practices, regulatory updates from various

bodies, and understand business information relevant to your company's sector."

### **Closing Note**

In-house legal practice in Nigeria is often depicted as unglamorous, especially for Lawyers who want some 'action', but the role is deeply tasking and undeniably consequential. The diverse exposure it affords in crisscrossing contracts and transactions from variegated business units, often cutting across various commercial contemplations, provides the in-house Lawyer with something similar to what a Lawyer in a full-service Law Firm enjoys - useful experience and exposure. Every clause you tighten, every risk you flag, every email you document, and every advisory you provide contributes to the fabric of the business.

This guide has touched on the fundamentals that distinguish the in-house legal role: the need to document thoroughly, to know when to escalate, to celebrate small victories, and to adapt legal thinking to the realities of business. Perhaps most importantly, it has been highlighted that as an in-house lawyer, you are an employee first, then a lawyer. This means understanding the commercial landscape, working across functions, managing cost and efficiency, and always maintaining your professional integrity even in the face of internal pressure.

So, build relationships. Learn the business. Write things down. Be timely. Be clear. No one steps into an in-house role fully formed. Mistakes will happen, and that's part of the journey. The true mark of success is learning fast and maintaining humility.

Welcome to the exciting world of in-house practice!



# How to Become a Better Young Litigator

Oluwatofunmi Isaac Aduloju Esq.

## Introduction

As a young lawyer entering the legal profession, choosing to pursue a career in litigation is both noble and demanding. It places you at the heart of judicial proceedings and tasks you with the responsibility of advocating for your client's rights within the bounds of the law. However, you must recognise that the transition from law school into practice, particularly litigation, is often jarring. Despite rigorous academic training, many young lawyers find themselves unprepared for the practical realities of the courtroom: navigating procedural hurdles, managing client expectations, and maintaining composure under judicial scrutiny.

Yet, within these challenges lie numerous opportunities. The early years offer a steep but rewarding learning curve. Young litigators can cultivate their analytical, advocacy, and writing skills while building a professional reputation grounded in diligence and integrity. The litigation field is also one where

consistent effort often translates into visible progress—each court appearance, written submission, and judgment contributes to one's professional development.

**A Word of Encouragement:** Every experienced litigator was once a young lawyer unsure of how to properly announce their appearance or draft a motion *ex parte*. What makes the difference is consistent effort, humility, and a desire to grow.

This guide presents actionable steps for becoming a competent and confident litigator in the early years of practice.

1. **Start with a Strong Foundation:** Understanding the fundamentals of litigation is non-negotiable. Familiarize yourself with court rules, procedures, and key statutory provisions. The Evidence Act, Rules of Professional Conduct, and the rules of the particular court you appear in should be your companions. Read judgments. Start with recent decisions from appellate courts. This develops your an-







alytical skills and exposes you to judicial reasoning, style, and evolving legal standards.

2. **Learn by Observation:** Spend time in courtrooms even when you are not appearing. Observe seasoned litigators. Watch how they examine witnesses, present arguments, and respond to the Bench. Notice their composure, strategy, and respect for court decorum. Make notes and reflect on what works and what does not. Observation sharpens your instincts and helps you understand unspoken courtroom dynamics.

3. **Take Initiative in Your Office:** Do not wait to be told everything. Volunteer to draft processes, accompany seniors to court, and handle smaller matters. Initiative signals commitment and earns trust. When you receive a file, study it thoroughly. Research all relevant legal issues. Draft with precision. Senior lawyers appreciate juniors who think critically and offer insightful contributions.

4. **Know Your Case Inside Out:** Master the facts. Know your client's story and the opponent's likely arguments. A strong grasp of the facts allows you to apply the law persuasively. Litigation often turns on facts. Ensure pleadings are accurate and evidence is properly marshalled. Being meticulous at this stage can determine the case's outcome.

5. **Develop Legal Writing Skills:** Litigation is not only oral advocacy. Many cases are won through written addresses, motions, and affidavits. Learn to write clearly, concisely, and persuasively. Read good legal writing. Study how arguments are structured and authorities are cited. Revise your drafts. Clarity and logic are more important than flowery language.

6. **Practice Your Advocacy:** Every court appearance is a performance. Prepare thoroughly. Know your points, anticipate objections, and respect court time. Speak confidently but respectfully. Practice arguing your case aloud. Record yourself. Seek feedback from mentors. Advocacy is a skill refined through repetition.

7. **Be Teachable and Seek Feedback:** Litigation humbles even the best lawyers. Mistakes are inevitable, especially early on. Be open to correction. Learn from seniors, peers, and even judges. Feedback, when received with grace, accelerates your growth. Do not take critique personally. Let each experience build your competence.

8. **Understand Procedure and Strategy:** Litigation is not only about the law; it's about timing, tactics, and sequencing. Understand the strategic use of interlocutory applications, objections, and settlement discussions. Procedural knowledge gives you control. Always know the next step in your case and anticipate the opponent's strategy.

9. **Build Integrity and Reputation:** Your reputation begins from day one. Be punctual, prepared, and respectful. Judges and colleagues remember conduct as much as brilliance. Never mislead the court or fabricate facts. Integrity builds long-term credibility, and credibility wins difficult cases.

10. **Cultivate Patience and Resilience:** Litigation is slow and sometimes frustrating. Hearings get adjourned, rulings delayed, and clients impatient. Maintain professionalism through it all. Resilience is your greatest ally. Growth takes time. Celebrate small wins and learn from every setback.





## CONCLUSION

Litigation is more than a profession—it is a lifelong pursuit of justice, advocacy, and public service. For young lawyers, the early years are crucial for laying a strong foundation. A sustainable career demands clarity of purpose, adaptability, and a commitment to continuous growth.

Start with clear short-, medium-, and long-term goals—from mastering court processes to eventually leading a practice or serving the public. While general experience is vital at the outset, developing a niche—whether in commercial disputes, constitutional law, or public interest litigation—will distinguish you and deepen your expertise.

Excellence in litigation is built on integrity, diligence, and competence. Be known for thorough preparation, ethical conduct, and respect for the court and peers. In today's digital age, also culti-

vate a professional brand—write, speak, mentor, and stay visible for the right reasons.

Relationships matter. Engage with mentors, peers, and professional bodies; collaboration often trumps competition. Go beyond client service—contribute to legal reform, write on legal developments, and support access to justice. These actions not only build credibility but shape the system itself.

Regularly assess your trajectory. Ask: Are my values aligned with my work? Am I growing or stagnating? Don't hesitate to pivot when necessary—your career should reflect both your aspirations and evolving interests.

Ultimately, your impact should outlast your appearances in court. Aim to be remembered for your advocacy, mentorship, scholarship, or systemic contributions. Define your legacy early—and work deliberately toward it.







# Handling Clients and Seniors in the Law Firm as a Beginner

Owen Umeh

No one really tells you how steep the learning curve can be when you first walk into a law firm as a new lawyer. Dressed in your best, the long-awaited offer letter in your hand— it can all feel like a dream come true. But within a few weeks, reality kicks in. The weight of expectations, the intimidating brilliance of colleagues, and the unspoken hierarchy of the legal profession can hit you hard. I know this because I lived it (and still live it). What I am about to share here is not theory — it is the product of my own journey; things I did right, mistakes I made, and hard-learned lessons I picked up along the way. My hope is that it helps you find your footing more quickly, grow more intentionally, and avoid some of the missteps that many of us took without the benefit of proper guidance. One of the first real challenge you are likely to face is learning how to manage your relationship with senior colleagues. This in-

cludes partners, senior associates, and even mid-level lawyers who have more experience than you. It is intimidating at first. You are worried about asking the wrong questions, or worse, not asking at all and getting things wrong. Here is one thing that helped me: I started recording complex instructions (with permission) — whether in meetings or Teams calls — and revisiting them afterwards. This allowed me to process things at my pace and return with better, more focused questions. Even after few years of practice, I still use this method. In working with seniors, remember that trust is built through consistency. You do not need to be the smartest — just be dependable. Be the junior who shows up, who contributes in meetings, who asks the right questions, and who does not disappear when the going gets tough. When added to a matter or transaction, approach the given task as though the client





hired you directly and your work is going straight to them. This mindset will reflect in the quality of your output, and believe me—seniors notice. Attend every meeting, take notes diligently, offer help, and contribute ideas when appropriate – even if they do not appear ‘striking’. Seniors value team members who are reliable, responsive, and who make their lives easier.

Another critical skill in dealing with seniors is communication. You will need to know when to send a mail and when to pick up the phone. Tone is everything. A well-meaning email can sound cold or passive-aggressive if poorly worded. Some misunderstandings escalate unnecessarily because someone sent a message that could have been clarified with a short call. Learn this quickly. Also, take nothing for granted when it comes to office culture. If you are in an environment where people are referred to by their first names, great – but still ask each senior how they would like to be addressed. It may seem minor, but the subtle show of respect often makes a lasting impression.

Now to clients – a subject many juniors are not trained for, but absolutely must learn to navigate. As a junior associate, your interaction with clients may be limited initially, but when the opportunity comes, it is crucial you handle it with professionalism. When you are invited to a client meeting or call, treat it with the seriousness it deserves. Listen more than you speak, take detailed notes, and follow up promptly on any assigned tasks. Respect their time. Never show up late. If you’re joining virtually, log in early, test your audio, and make sure your connection is stable. Most importantly, be mentally present – clients can tell when you’re disengaged, and so can your seniors.

Avoid the temptation to show off your knowledge in front of clients—unless you’re specifically asked to contribute. Always remember: when you’re interacting

with a client, you’re representing the firm. How you speak, act, and even carry yourself reflects directly on its reputation. Represent it well. Prepare thoroughly for any client meeting, whether you are attending with a senior or on your own. That level of readiness will mark you as resourceful and dependable. Also, when you are sending an email, whether in an internal or external email, always double-check grammar, tone, and accuracy. If you are ever unsure how your message might be received, do not hesitate to run it by a supervisor or a peer.

Also, when working on deliverables, never assume you know what the client wants or what the work is about. Always clarify instructions – even if you have to ask your senior to walk you through the objective again. It is better to ask a few ‘basic’ questions up front than to turn in a document that completely misses the mark. No one expects you to be an expert on day one, but people do expect you to be honest, responsible, and willing to learn.

That said, the best way to win seniors is still by doing excellent work. Quality makes you visible. Consistent quality builds trust. People want you on their cases/deals and their teams because you deliver. In fact, if there is one secret I have learned, it is that excellence has a ripple effect – your name comes up in rooms you have never entered simply because someone remembered that you handled your part of a deal well.

Beyond excellence, you must also learn to be likeable. In career progression, likeability is often underrated. You can be brilliant and still find yourself stuck or struggling if you are difficult to work with. Oftentimes, it is about empathy and the ability to make others’ work easier. If people enjoy working with you, they will keep you in the room. If not, they will find someone else. This is not to say that you should not be firm, where necessary; but never be arrogant.





most senior lawyer to the cleaners. I have seen people lose out on real opportunities because they were rude or dismissive.

Still on the subject of opportunities; be intentional about building both vertical (seniors) and horizontal (peers) relationships within the firm. Do not isolate yourself. Be part of the team. Check on people. Offer help where you can. The legal profession thrives on networks and trust – and often, it is not the person with the best resume who gets the opportunity, but the one someone is willing to vouch for. Interestingly, most of the connections and referrals I have gotten did not come from senior lawyers, but from peers I had built mutual respect with. Opportunities often come from being recommended – and it is not always the senior lawyer or partner who does the recommending. Sometimes, it is those everyday colleagues I took time to know, assist, and connect with genuinely.

Finally, stay far away from gossip. This cannot be overemphasized. There will always be whispers about certain seniors or partners – who is hard to work with, who plays favourites. My advice? Do not let anyone else shape your perception. Form your own judgments. Some of my best colleagues are people others warned me about. You owe it to yourself – and your growth – to engage with people directly and honestly. If you build a reputation as someone who does not peddle gossip, people will trust you more.

#### **Bonus Advice:**

One of the earliest – and most important – lessons you will need to internalize as a young professional is the concept of advantage. In every workplace, and especially in the legal profession, you will encounter colleagues who seem sharper, quicker, and more articulate than you. You may call it raw talent. Maybe it is exposure, access, or experience. Or maybe, it is just the grace

of good genes. Whatever the reason, you must not let it shake your confidence.

I remember sitting through meetings where others would respond to issues with speed and precision, while I was still trying to fully grasp the problem or case. In those moments, it is easy to shrink – to question your own intelligence, your belonging, or worse, to fall into a silent competition that exists only in your head. Do not go down that road. You will waste precious emotional energy trying to measure up to standards that were never yours to begin with.

Instead, ground yourself in the fundamentals. Show up every day committed to learning. Be curious. Be consistent. Be dependable. Most importantly, do not shy away from the hard stuff. Take on the complex tasks. Say yes to the things others avoid. That's how you build the intellectual stamina and professional muscle this field demands. With time, you will find yourself thriving in your own lane, on your own terms.

#### **Concluding remarks:**

The early years of legal practice are difficult, but they are also incredibly formative. You will make mistakes. You will be overwhelmed. But if you approach each day with humility, intentionality, and a commitment to learn, you will grow. And soon enough, the things that felt overwhelming at first will become second nature.

At the end of the day, you do not need to be the smartest person in the room. You just need to be the one who shows commitment to learning and attempts the hard stuff. That is how you grow in your law career—by bringing the right attitude to every task.





# Career Development and exposure as a Newbie in the Law Practice

Markanthony Ezeoha

## 1.0. Introduction

Starting a career in the legal profession is both an exciting and demanding journey. Congratulations on making it to the largest Bar in Africa! As a new “new wig,” you are stepping into a field that requires dedication, resilience, and continuous learning. This is why I am honoured to share this guide, drawing from my personal experience, to help you navigate the early stages of your legal career.

While some of the principles discussed in this guide are foundational, others may require adaptation to fit your unique career trajectory and goals.

This guide aims to provide some insights into career development and professional exposure as a new lawyer. It is not an exhaustive manual but rather a roadmap to help you set realistic expectations, build

competence, and position yourself for long-term success in law practice.

## 2.0. Starting with the Basics

When I started out post-call, I quickly realised that you must familiarise yourself with the fundamental aspects of your role. Understanding the professional environment, you are stepping into will help you set the right expectations and develop a strategic approach to career growth.

### Here's how you can start:

- **Understand Your Job Description:** Carefully read and comprehend your offer letter, employment contract, and organisational policies. Knowing what is expected of you will help you align your efforts with your employer's needs and prevent misunderstandings.
- **Clarify Job Expectations:** Engage your employer





or supervisor in discussions about performance metrics and assessments. Understanding how your work will be appraised will enable you to set professional targets and track your progress.

- **Set Personal Goals:**

Beyond meeting organisational expectations, establish your personal career goals. Ask yourself: What do I intend to achieve in this job? Which skills do I want to develop? This self-awareness will serve as a compass for your career growth.

### **3.0 The Importance of Asking Questions**

In the legal profession, learning is a continuous process. In addition to the trainings you received from the University and Law School, practical legal work requires constant adaptation. To adapt to a new work environment, one of the most effective ways to accelerate your learning is by asking questions. Therefore, you would need to incorporate the following:

- **Seek Clarity on Work Processes:** Every organisation has unique ways of executing tasks, in-house styles, writing preferences, etc. Asking questions will help you understand the best practices, procedures, and workflows within your firm or legal department.

- **Learn from Precedents:** Many legal matters you will handle may have been dealt with before. Instead of reinventing the wheel, learn from existing case files, legal opinions, and past work done by your seniors. Building on prior work will improve efficiency and effectiveness in handling assignments.

### **4.0 Making Mistakes and Being Confused**

One of the realities of being a new lawyer is that mistakes are inevitable. Accepting this will help you embrace learning opportunities rather than fearing failure.

- **Understand That Mistakes Are Part of Growth:** Confusion is natural in the early stages of your career. What matters is how you respond to mistakes –learning from them rather than being discouraged.

- **Seek Guidance When Needed:** When in doubt, seek clarification from colleagues or mentors. Trying to figure out everything on your own can lead to avoidable errors.

- **Take Responsibility:** Acknowledge mistakes when they happen and make an effort to correct them. Your ability to learn from errors will earn you respect and demonstrate your commitment to improvement.

### **5.0 Building Capacity for Competence**

To thrive as a lawyer, you must actively invest in your professional development. Legal practice demands analytical thinking, strong research skills, and the ability to deliver high-quality work.

- **Develop Strong Research Skills:** Mastering legal research tools and legal analysis is crucial. Learn how to efficiently find and interpret laws, precedents, and regulations relevant to your area of practice. This skill will grow over time as you work on numerous transactions and cases.

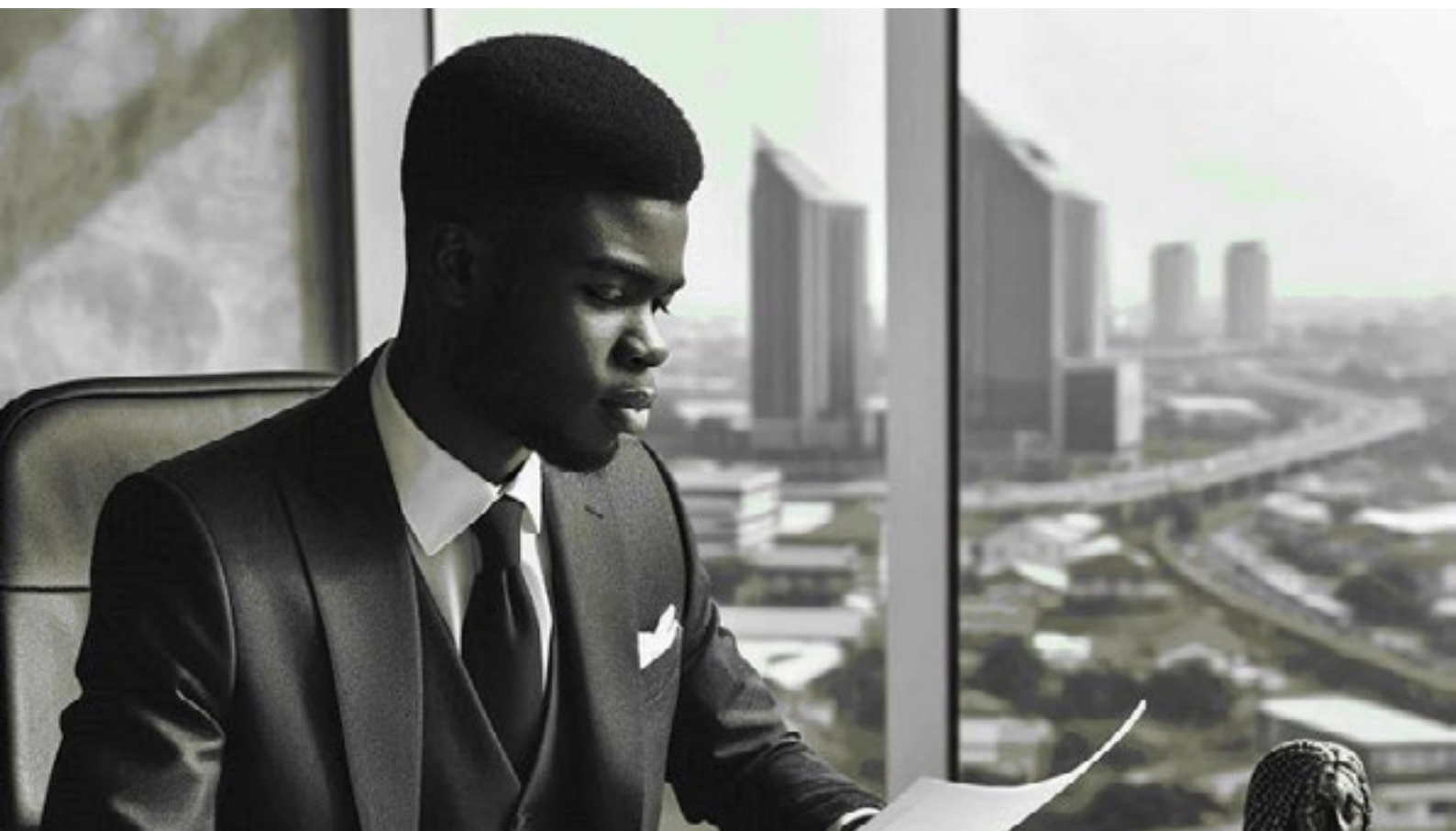


- **Commit to Good Work For Your Level:** Your expertise will not be judged at an advanced level for a new lawyer, but the quality of work you produce must be satisfactory. Paying attention to detail and producing well-researched documents will set you apart. Mastering your basic responsibilities, such as drafting legal documents, reviewing contracts, and attending client meetings, is essential. As you gain experience, strive to handle more complex tasks.
- **Be Proactive:** Take ownership of tasks assigned to you. Show initiative by volunteering for challenging assignments that push you beyond your comfort zone.
- **Invest in Continuous Learning:** Again, beyond on-the-job training, enroll in relevant courses, attend legal

seminars, and study industry materials to deepen your knowledge. While hands-on experience teaches practical skills, formal learning provides foundational understanding.

## **6.0 Seek Feedback and Incorporate Constructive Guidance**

On a final note, feedback is an invaluable tool for growth. Whether positive or critical, it offers insights into how you can improve. Seek constructive criticism from your supervisors, mentors, or peers to refine your skills and enhance your work quality. Instead of viewing feedback as personal criticism, see it as an opportunity for improvement. Implement what you learn. Apply feedback in your subsequent assignments to demonstrate your willingness to grow and improve.







# How to Balance your Work and Life to Maintain your Mental Health as a Young Lawyer

■ Mariah Akagu

## Introduction

Starting out as a young lawyer can feel like being thrown into the deep end of a pool without a life jacket. The deadlines are tight, expectations are high, and the learning curve is steep. The legal profession demands excellence, but often, at the cost of one's peace of mind. Balancing the rigors of legal practice with a healthy personal life isn't just ideal, it's essential for long-term success and sanity.

This is a candid reflection on my personal journey, particularly during the early years of my legal career, when I had my first real encounter with the chaos of legal practice in Lagos. I hope that by sharing what worked for me (and what almost broke me), I can help others navigate this challenging but rewarding path more effective-

ly. I won't pretend to have it all figured out, I am still learning how to strike the right balance between work and life. Some days are smoother than others, and there are still moments when the pressure feels overwhelming. But the practices I have shared here have helped me find a healthier rhythm, even as I continue to learn, unlearn, and relearn how best to manage my time, energy, and well-being, it is an ongoing journey.

I had never lived in Lagos before my National Youth Service year. So, I was not quite prepared for what it meant to live on the Mainland and work on the Island. Every workday, I battled through nearly four hours of traffic, about two hours each way. I would leave the house by 5:00 a.m. every day and return home close to 10:00 p.m.





The little time left between arriving home and waking up again felt like a blur, I barely had time to eat properly, rest, or even think. Work itself was demanding, I was thrown into court filings, legal research, and preparing for meetings without much hand-holding. I felt lost, constantly under pressure, and like I was running on fumes. Within a few months, I began experiencing serious anxiety. I started to question whether I was cut out for law at all. The pace was too fast, the pressure was unrelenting, I was on the verge of giving up.

Thankfully, things didn't stay that way. I had to make some hard decisions and practical changes to regain control of my life and mental health.

### **1. I moved closer to work**

The first major change I made was moving in with a friend in her single room apartment. The place was not glamorous it had its occasional inconveniences but it was closer to my office. That one move cut my commute by over two (2) hours a day. Suddenly, I had time to sleep, eat, and even breathe before and after work. I was no longer perpetually tired, and that alone made me feel more relaxed and more productive during office hours.

### **2. I started eating better**

Previously, I would often skip meals or survive on roadside snacks because of time constraints. But with more time on my hands, I became more intentional about food. I started preparing simple, balanced meals ahead of time and occasionally carried lunch to the office. I also began drinking more water, a small change, but one that helped my energy levels and focus.

### **3. I started observing my lunch**

### **breaks**

Instead of working through every break like a robot, I began to step outside during lunch. I would walk around the office block, sit in a quiet corner, or just eat without looking at a screen. It became a small ritual that helped reset my mind midday. Those few minutes of disconnection made me more energized for the second half of the day.

### **4. Time management**

I started planning my day better. I prioritized to-do list and allocated realistic timelines to tasks. This made my work feel more manageable and helped me avoid the mental clutter that used to overwhelm me. I also committed to a cut-off time each evening. Even if I had to take work home, I made sure to wind down at least an hour before bed.

### **5. I found support in my peers**

Talking to other young lawyers helped more than I expected. We shared experiences, vented, and sometimes even brainstormed together. Just knowing that others felt the same way was comforting. I also reached out to a more experienced lawyer who became a sort of informal mentor, her advice, guidance and encouragement were invaluable.

### **6. Celebrating Small Wins**

On tough days that I feel like I am not doing enough or discouraged, I would write down one thing I did well, maybe a good legal draft, or a successful court appearance. Acknowledging small victories helped build my confidence and reminded me that I was growing, even if slowly.

### **7. I started communicating better**

In the beginning, I believed that the only way to prove my worth was by always saying "yes", yes to last-minute filings,





yes to weekend drafts, yes to staying back late even when I was clearly exhausted. But that approach quickly became unsustainable. Over time, I learned the importance of clear and respectful communication with my seniors. I began to explain my workload honestly and asked for clarification or prioritization where necessary. It's tempting to want to impress, but that mindset can easily lead to underperformance, anxiety, and burnout. I came to understand that I didn't need to prove myself by the number of tasks I took on or by how late I stayed at the office. Instead, I chose to let my diligence, consistency, and quality of work speak for themselves, and that made a far more lasting impression.

Looking back, I am grateful I did not walk away from the profession during those early, difficult months. What felt like the end of the road at the time was really the beginning of me learning how to manage my work, my energy, and my peace. The truth is, the legal profession will always be intense, but intensity does not have to equal imbalance. Your well-being is not negotiable. If you burn out early, your career will never get the chance to flourish. Every young lawyer goes through a phase of adjustment. It is okay to feel overwhelmed. However, never let that become your baseline. Burnout is not a badge of honor. Recognize the signs early, it is important to talk to someone and reassess your routine.

For better time management, invest in time management tools. Start each day with a prioritized to-do list and allocate realistic timelines to tasks. Most importantly, know when to stop working. If your firm allows it, pick a cut-off time and stick to it. Not every email needs to

be answered at 11 p.m.

If you're based in a city like Lagos, the commute alone can drain your energy. If financially possible, consider relocating closer to your workplace. Alternatively, use your commute time productively, listen to podcasts, read, or meditate. If the cost of relocation is high, you can explore temporary weekday lodging arrangements.

It is tempting to want to impress seniors by always being available, but it is important to set healthy boundaries. Communicate your availability clearly and respectfully. Let your performance and output speak.

Treat your mental health as non-negotiable. Take short breaks during the day, step outside, stretch, or simply breathe. Try not to take work home, and if you do, ensure there's time for rest. Seek therapy or counseling if needed. Many law firms now support mental wellness, take advantage of any such programs.

Speak to peers, mentors, and even seniors you admire. Many have walked this path before you and are often willing to help if approached. Knowing that others have survived similar challenges can be deeply reassuring. Eat well, sleep enough, and stay hydrated.

### **Conclusion**

Being a young lawyer is tough, but it doesn't have to be traumatic. The key to thriving lies in self-awareness and intentional planning. Your well-being is not a luxury, it's a necessity. Remember, you cannot pour from an empty cup. Take care of yourself first, your clients, health, family, and career will thank you for it.



# Meet The Contributors



## Great Madudi

Great Madudi is a commercial lawyer with a robust blend of private practice and in-house legal advisory experience. A graduate of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, he began his legal career at Pinheiro LP and later joined Advocaat LP, where he gained extensive grounding in commercial litigation and transactional advisory, before transitioning in-house. He currently serves as an Associate in the Legal Department of Pinnacle Oil and Gas Limited, a key player in Nigeria's Midstream and Downstream Oil and Gas Industry. In this role, he delivers strategic legal support on a wide range of matters, including transactions, litigation management, regulatory compliance, and commercial operations.

Great has facilitated several high-impact, cost-saving negotiations and contributed to the resolution of complex cross-border disputes. He has advised on several transactions across the oil and gas, maritime, and financial services sectors. In addition, he has published well-regarded academic and professional materials particularly on procedural Law. He combines technical competence with strong commercial awareness.



## Owen Umeh

Owen Umeh is an Associate at G Elias, a leading commercial law firm in Nigeria. He is also a member of the Nigerian Bar Association and holds a LL.B. from the University of Nigeria. His practice areas include dispute resolution (litigation and arbitration), finance (banking) and corporate law. Focused on restoring relationships, he is currently involved in several local and international high-profile arbitrations and mediations. He also regularly advises local and international clients on significant and complex finance and corporate transactions. Aside from law, he enjoys basketball and focus group discussions.



## Mariah Akagu

Mariah Akagu is a dynamic legal practitioner who began her career in November 2019, following her call to the Nigerian Bar. She is currently an Associate at CLP Legal, where she provides strategic support on a range of corporate transactions, finance matters, and general legal advisory. With a growing reputation for precision, insight, and a strong work ethic, she is passionate about helping businesses navigate complex legal and regulatory frameworks. As a young professional navigating the evolving legal landscape, she is committed to continuous growth and excellence in practice.



### Markanthy Chukwudi Ezeoha

Markanthy is a Nigerian lawyer working with the Lagos-based law firm of Udo Udoma & Belo-Osagie ("UUBO"). He specializes in the Energy, Finance, & Infrastructure practice areas of UUBO. Markanthy has a rich academic and professional background. He graduated with first-class honours from the Nigerian Law School in 2021 and was awarded several academic laurels. His work and interests focus on the intersection between the law, finance, and climate.

He is involved in projects which include the broad spectrum of solar infrastructure establishment, energy disputes, electricity/energy acquisitions, green financing, and public policy advisory. His expertise covers project development, regulatory compliance, and contract negotiations within the Nigerian energy sector. He is a versatile researcher whose works advocate for decarbonization, fostering ESG commitments, and implementing carbon reduction strategies at corporate and national levels. Being involved in socially impactful, climate-aligned initiatives fosters his direction for the future – one of sustainable energy use.

In 2024, he was nominated for the Future Awards Africa in the Professional Services category. This category recognizes and celebrates young African individuals who have shown exceptional skill and leadership in their respective professional fields. He is presently undergoing an internship with the London law firm of Stephenson Harwood LLP in the United Kingdom.



### Ekeoma Ogbu

Ekeoma Ogbu is a Nigerian lawyer based in the Lagos office of CLP Legal, a leading commercial law firm in Nigeria. A proud alumnus of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, where he earned his LL.B. Ekeoma has focuses on Dispute Resolution, Tax Advisory, and Corporate Law at CLP Legal.

Ekeoma is an active member of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) where he currently serves as the Alternate Secretary of the Government Affairs Committee of the NBA. He also serves as a member of the Committee on Policies, Programs and Project of the Nigerian Bar Association-Young Lawyers' Forum (NBA-YLF) where he contributes immensely towards the advancement and development of young lawyers in Nigeria.

He currently advises high-profile international and local clients on complex corporate and tax matters. Ekeoma regularly represents clients in commercial litigation cases in court and has published several articles on tax reform in Nigeria, advocating for best practices aligned with global standards.

Outside of law, he enjoys playing Scrabble, writing fiction, and engaging in football video games



### **Oluwatofunmi Isaac Aduloju, Esq., ACI Arb (UK), ACTI**

Oluwatofunmi Isaac Aduloju, Esq., ACI Arb (UK), ACTI, is a multifaceted legal practitioner with core expertise in international taxation, financial crime regulation, and policy advisory. He is a Barrister and Solicitor of the Supreme Court of Nigeria, an Associate of the Chartered Institute of Taxation of Nigeria (ACTI), and a Member of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators (UK). With a growing national profile, he is widely recognized for his legal insight, policy research, and strategic involvement in institutional governance.

Oluwatofunmi currently serves as the Executive Assistant to the President of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), where he plays a key role in coordinating legal policy initiatives, stakeholder engagement, and programme implementation. He is also a member of the NBA's National Executive Council (2024-2026), contributing to the Association's policy-making and reform agenda. In addition, he serves as an active member of the NBA Justice Sector Reform Committee.

He is also an active dispute resolution lawyer with a strong interest in issues at the intersection of tax justice, anti-money laundering (AML), and financial transparency. Through a widely circulated LinkedIn series, Oluwatofunmi has educated a broad audience on the stages of money laundering, the operations of shell and shelf companies, terrorist financing, and the roles of regulatory institutions such as the EFCC, NFIU, and FIRS. His work reflects a sustained commitment to regulatory reform, ethical practice, and the strengthening of institutional responses to economic and financial crimes.

Beyond his professional practice, Oluwatofunmi is deeply committed to mentorship, youth empowerment, and civic leadership. Combining professional rigour with public-spirited engagement, he represents a new generation of legal professionals advancing reform, integrity, and innovation within the Nigerian legal system.