

|                       |                      |                       |
|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1<br>Completed orders | 52<br>Pending orders | 1<br>Cancelled orders |
|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|

Recent Orders

| Order No. | Product | Suggested Name | Date | Status |
|-----------|---------|----------------|------|--------|
|-----------|---------|----------------|------|--------|

THE CASE OF

# DIYLaw

## USER-FRIENDLY CONTRACTS

March 2022

### Key facts and figures

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>Year of establishment</p> <p><b>2015</b></p>   | <p>Geographical scope</p> <p><b>West Africa, Canada, USA, UK</b></p>                |
| <p>Scope of service</p> <p><b>Privacy Policy, Non-Disclosure Agreements, Employment Contracts, Tenancy Agreement, Board resolutions</b></p> | <p>Type of justice problems addressed</p> <p><b>Employment and business</b></p>     |
| <p>Legal entity</p> <p><b>Private company</b></p>   | <p>Relationship with the government</p> <p><b>Independent of the government</b></p> |
|   | <p>Number of staff members</p> <p><b>19</b></p>                                     |



Number of contracts sold

**<700**



Customer satisfaction score

**4 out of 5 stars  
(based on cumulative reviews from surveys)**



Costs of services for citizens

**\$4 to \$10**



Average processing time (time it takes for a customer to receive the final contract)

**Instantly**

## Initial Vision

Lawyers in Nigeria usually prefer to represent and consult for big conglomerates rather than counselling cash-strapped entrepreneurs who were just starting off. Funkola Odeleye and Odunulowa Longe saw this as an opportunity and started a firm called TLP Advisory in 2014 that offered legal advice to startups and entrepreneurs at low rates and to give flexible payment options to entrepreneurs.

This approach was appreciated by entrepreneurs, but was not sustainable. The demand for the services was very high which made it difficult for the founders to keep up. To ease this problem, the founders decided to automate their services with the help of technology and they launched DIYLaw in 2015. To assist with the technological aspects, the two founders brought on board a software developer- Bola Olonisakin who became their third co-founder. DIYLaw then began offering automated contracts to startups in Nigeria.

What sets DIYLaw apart from its counterparts who also offer automated documents is its use of plain language. The contracts that DIYLaw provides are stripped of the legalese. They are simple to understand and easy to use. The platform also allows people to get in touch with lawyers through DIYLaw, in case they feel it is needed.

## Approach towards developing a contract

DIYLaw tries to design products according to the needs of the people. The team regularly interacts with the customers to understand their legal needs based on which the services are updated. Design and content of contracts is also modified based on feedback received from customers.

The product manager surveys with an existing group of customers to get their views on a list of new products/features that the company wishes to launch. Based on the preferences of the customers, the company develops a contract template. To test the effectiveness of the template, the company conducts another survey with the customers. In this way, the product manager elicits feedback from the customers and works with the legal and technical team to deliver the final contract to people. Founder Funkola Odeleye says,

*“We try to make sure that we develop products that customers want and not what we think the customers want.”*

DIY Law also monitors data analytics of blogs that the company publishes. Based on that, the team deduces the legal problems and services that businesses most need help with and accordingly delivers services.

To measure the satisfaction level of customers with the process of drawing a contract, the technological platform and customer service, DIYLaw sends a survey to a customer two weeks after a customer purchases a service. This feedback of customers is aggregated into a quarterly report.

The company also tries to assess the effectiveness of the contract that the customer purchased. For example, every six months it asks if the employment contract was useful to them in successfully onboarding employees. One obstacle in assessing the outcome or impact of the contracts is that it is difficult to identify the parameters that can be used to monitor the outcomes. This has been the experience of other online contract providers as well [1].

## Marketing strategy of the company

When DIYLaw had just been launched, the company invested in a few paid social media advertisements. However, funding constraints did not permit the company to market their services aggressively. Instead, the company relied on word of mouth publicity, social media engagement and strategic partnerships to generate users.

The company publishes tips and articles on social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. These articles provide basic legal information to people for free. This attracts people to the company's social media profiles and creates awareness about its services among the public. A few popular people who work in the creative sector have also used social media to promote DIYLaw among their followers.

Another way in which the company tries to attract customers and market their products is by forming partnerships with financial institutions and entrepreneurial support organisations. These financial institutions and organisations obtain the documents such as registration of business, memorandum and articles of association of the business and documents related to corporate governance for their customers from DIYLaw. They also advertise DIYLaw to their own customers via newsletters.

## Financial strategy of the company

DIYLaw was awarded two grants which became the main source of funding for the company. In 2015, DIYLaw won the SME empowerment challenge conducted by HiiL. That opened doors for the company. Investors became interested in funding the company. But DIYLaw did not take advantage of these opportunities because there was no alignment between the company and prospective investors.

Of those who were willing to invest in the company, some wanted DIYLaw to drastically increase their prices in order to scale the business. The founders were averse to taking such a step given that their target market - start ups in Nigeria - would not be able to afford their services. As a result, the founders did not take advantage of funding from investors and bootstrapped themselves to run the company. As Funkola Odelye says,

*“We wanted to create more impact and not just earn more money.”*

In 2020, Cartier Women’s Initiative awarded DIY Law a grant. Over a period of time, the company attracted customers and generated revenues. Today, the main source of income for DIYLaw is registration of businesses, trademarks, IP, tax numbers. Customers can purchase each of these services or products for a fixed fee. In future, DIYLaw plans on switching to a subscription model where customers can access contracts for a yearly fee. These contracts will be updated to reflect any changes that may take place in the law. As of now, the company informs customers of changes in the law via email.

## Role of enabling environment in the growth of the company

The founders of DIYLaw anticipated resistance from the regulators, lawyers and bar association in Nigeria when they launched DIYLaw in the country, based on their counterpart LegalZoom’s experience in the USA. LegalZoom, a company in the USA that offers automated contracts was taken to court several times by lawyers because in the USA, only lawyers are permitted to provide legal services. The company also faced a long drawn battle with the Bar Association of South Carolina regarding the same [2].

So the founders were pleasantly surprised when the bar association, attorney generals and lawyers in Nigeria were welcoming of the services provided by DIYLaw. A few lawyers have even used DIYLaw to draft contracts for their clients. They have also shown interest in providing legal advice to customers via the DIYLaw online platform. This willingness of lawyers to embrace DIYLaw as a tool that supports their own work, and not perceive it as a competitor is a welcome change and a step in the right direction.

DIYLaw has also collaborated with the regulatory bodies in the country. It participates in the conferences on legal technology organised by the Bar Association. Law schools in Nigeria also use the company as a successful case study on legal technology.

Even so, the founders have taken efforts to abide by rules and regulations set out by regulators to providers of legal services. For example, the company has added a disclaimer on their website that the services provided by DIYLaw do not constitute legal advice.

All in all, DIYLaw has witnessed a rather supportive environment from lawyers, judges, the bar association, despite its earlier reservations.

## Lessons learnt

Lessons that can be taken from the experience of setting up DIYLaw are:

- DIY Law missed an opportunity to take advantage of investor funds when it could not find alignment with proposed investors.
- It is difficult to keep products and services affordable for everyday people and still attract funds from investors — who more often than not want to increase the price of the products.

## Critical Success Factors

Factors critical to the success of DIY Law are as follows:

- Understanding needs and requirements of customers through surveys and face to face interactions helped DIYLaw in tailoring its products and making them commercially viable.
- Strategic partnerships and social media platforms helped the company in expanding its customer base.

## Source

[1] HiiL, (2021). [Case study on 'LegalZoom' in Trend Report Delivering Justice, Rigorously.](#)

[2] Ibid.

Author: Manasi Nikam.

This exploratory piece is based on an interview with Funkola Odeleye, October 25, 2021.

To learn more, read the [policy brief on User-Friendly Contracts](#) or visit [www.hiil.org](http://www.hiil.org) and [dashboard.hiil.org](http://dashboard.hiil.org).