

IP Lawyers Speakers Series: Interview with Intellectual Property Lawyer, Angela Adebayo

TOPICS: Interview With Angela M. Adebayo

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We recently launched our IP Lawyers Speakers Series, where we talk with lawyers practicing various aspects of Intellectual Property Law, Entertainment Law and much more. Recently, we sat down with IP lawyer, Angela Adebayo to find out more about her practice and new partnership.



Q: Tell us about yourself and your educational background?

I finished my undergraduate at Sussex University and Law school at Inns of Court School of Law and I decided to move back to Nigeria for Law school. I never really intended to stay here but decided to get some experience working in Lagos so I got a job at Aluko and Oyebode. The way the graduate job programme worked saw me moving from one department to another to get the widest possible breadth of experience. I ended up in the IP department and loved it so I decided that would be my specialisation. I worked there for eighteen months and returned to the UK to get my masters in IP law. After my masters I decided to move back to Lagos for good because the firm of Bentley Edu and Co hired

me to run their IP department. After eighteen months I decided to open my own firm and I named it Silvax Legal. The firm will be three years old this month and it is going from strength to strength.

Q: Your Firm recently joined Inventa International, tell us more about this partnership and the type of services you offer?

Silvax Legal has recently entered into a partnership with the well-known and internationally renowned firm called Inventa International. Thus all IP services we perform will now be

under the purview of the company - Inventa International Nigeria. Inventa International is a full service Intellectual Property (IP) company, specialised in all matters concerning IP protection, such as registration and enforcement of Trademarks, Patents, Industrial Designs, Copyright and Domain Names. The company has over 45 Years of Experience in IP field and has been providing services for thousands of clients from different working fields, including food and beverages companies, communications, IT companies, laboratories, manufacturers, oil & gas companies, financial institutions, business services companies, etc. This partnership will bring together a fusion of international expertise and local knowledge either in Nigeria, in Africa and in other continents and is designed to serve better both existing Inventa International as well as Silvax Legal clients.

Q: In your opinion what are three important things individuals and businesses can do to protect their intellectual property in Nigeria?

This really depends on the type of business a company or individual is carrying out or indeed the type of intellectual property they possess. I think knowledge of your asset is the most important thing and furthermore actually viewing your IP as an asset will get you the furthest. Having said that at the most basic level I would say the fundamental three are—

1. Register your trademark— this can be the names and logos of your products and services and also the name and logo of your company.
2. Lodge your copyright— This expands to literary, music or artistic works which means it can also encompass your company logo. It is not mandatory to carry out this lodgement as copyright is inherent but I would still rate it in third place because of the evidentiary protection that it provides.
3. Register your patent— If you have an idea for an invention the first thing you should do is register it. This is particularly difficult for some individuals because they don't know what it is meant to look like and in Nigeria drafting your patent is rarely offered as a service. This is another reason why Inventa is so good, we have highly efficient draftsmen who can help with this.

Q: What advice would you offer to individuals or businesses who have had their IP infringed?

Seek legal help as soon as possible, it is so easy to not address a minor infringement because one doesn't want the stress but it is so important to seek help from a legal practitioner because minor problems become major problems so quickly. It is then that much harder to do anything and the entire brand image may then become tarnished. Also I think that companies and stakeholders who have IP worth protecting really need to get

involved in associations and organisations who aim to stamp out counterfeiting and infringing in this country. Some of these organisations go such a long way to influencing policy decisions.

Q: What do you think is the biggest problem in the legal framework of Nigeria's Intellectual Property System right now? How would you like to see it fixed?

IP is not seen as a priority here by the regulatory authorities, it is easy to see why as it isn't a hot button issue and it doesn't directly affect the masses, registration isn't even a mandatory action. This is the major issue in my opinion, people are not making it a priority therefore the laws and legal framework gets left behind. Information technology and intellectual property are so closely linked but unfortunately the reality of the situation is that the IT is moving faster than the laws can keep up and this is a problem. To fix it begins with each of us. We, as stakeholders have a responsibility to demand that policy is adequate to aid us in protecting our rights and in order to do that we must first ourselves appreciate the importance of IP rights.

Q: How has the intellectual property law sector in Nigeria grown over the years? Have you seen an increase in the number of trademarks, patents and designs filed or general awareness about IP Rights?

It is such a different climate and a different avenue to when I began practice eight years ago. And as the years go by more people are becoming aware of how valuable their IP rights are and are ever more insistent on trying to protect them.

The main growth in the IP sector is caused by multinational companies and "big business", usually from the overseas who want to expand into Nigeria. The problem here in my opinion is the lack of awareness of the importance of IP registrations by smaller business owners and national stakeholders. This is the biggest reason why I wanted to work with Inventa, our focus is mostly Nigerian national clients. We want to work to open up an avenue for every person who has a business to be able to register their IP and to be able to protect their rights and most importantly we want it to be inexpensive.

Q: Any advice for students who want to practice Intellectual Property Law after graduation?

My advice is to just go for it. Get experience. Join organisations. Join us.

Thank you for taking time to talk to us.