

George Etomi & Partners¹

'How our Law Firm has Adapted to the Pandemic'

In Nigeria the pandemic lockdown has slowly been eased since 4 May. However, many businesses, including law firms, have continued their remote working protocols pending positive indications towards the virus's successful containment in Nigeria. The uncertain nature of Covid-19 and the global economic downturn has forced the world's corporate sector to re-evaluate its traditional mode of operations and business continuity measures.

Law firms are evolving to ensure they stay in business. Many law firms have experienced increased demand for legal advice around employment law and contractual compliance-related issues, and other urgent pandemic-related enquiries. Nigerian law firms realised the importance of digital technology in delivering legal services remotely and to keep up with global technological advances. Consequently, George Etomi & Partners have continued to render legal advisory and company secretarial services to clients through unconventional, but modern, means.

George Etomi & Partners is a full-service commercial law firm in Lagos, Nigeria. We realised the need to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 by protecting our workforce while preserving our ability to serve clients. Our remote working protocol relies heavily on digital communication channels and video conferencing between employees and management. We have continued our company secretarial duties to clients who hold virtual board of directors meetings and management meetings. Furthermore, some of our key clients including multinational companies migrated us to their own digital technology platform. This way we could resume ongoing legal services, contractual engagements and effective communication to ensure continuity of business.

Temporary measures to increase our future efficiency

Our firm has integrated modern technology solutions with the traditional brick-and-mortar model of legal service provision. This included utilising cloud-based management, to ensure that all client business is handled remotely during the pandemic, but also to increase efficiency in future. Another technological innovation was the digitisation of all legal documentation for easy access, retrieval and circulation. Staff at different levels were given appropriate degrees of access to ensure confidentiality. Additionally, our website was transformed to enable potential clients to view the services we offer, our practice areas and competent team of lawyers. This also reduced the need for physical interaction.

We also set up a comprehensive Covid-19 resource centre to benefit our clients, businesses and the general public. It was created to provide easy access to reliable information on the legal, regulatory and commercial changes across different sectors in Nigeria and its impact on businesses. We updated our business focus reports and new information is continuously published on our website and promptly circulated to clients through our mailing list.

Above all, the importance of technology cannot be understated in both the ongoing crisis and the post-pandemic world. Every business and policymaker must embrace this opportunity to modernise their operations and stay well-equipped to manage similar crises in the future.

¹ George Etomi & Partners can be found online at www.geplaw.com.