

# **BUILDING A REPEAT-CLIENT ECOSYSTEM: FROM ONE-OFF BRIEFS TO LIFETIME RETAINERS- A LEGAL APPRAISAL**

**By**

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## **Abstract**

*The legal profession is a noble profession requiring a unique way of attracting clients. A good lawyer must not only be knowledgeable in law but must intentionally focus on building his clientele and ensuring that they are sustainably retained where necessary. The aim of this article is to appraise how to build a repeat-client ecosystem, from one-off briefs to lifetime retainers. The research methodology adopted is the doctrinal research methodology, using primary and secondary sources of law. The primary sources include: the Constitution, the Legal Practitioners Act 1975 and the Rules of Professional Conduct for Legal Practitioners 2023 and juridical authorities, to mention but a few. It was found amongst other things that joining a law firm for a start, joining an active and responsible community, displaying a signpost, creating an informed online visibility, performing your legal task with utmost competence and continuous development are some of the ways lawyers can build a repeat-client ecosystem. It is the recommendation of this article inter alia that to sustainably retain a client, the focus should shift from making profit to clients' creation and satisfaction. This is because if clients are created and satisfied, they will be retained and if they are retained profit will definitely follow.*

**Keywords:** *Building, Client, Briefs, Lawyer, Legal, Practitioner, Retainer*

## 1. Introduction

Clients are to legal practitioners what customers are to businessmen. A legal practitioner without a client or sustainable clients has no sustainable future in private legal practice and would hardly be able to make ends meet, not to talk of being successful. The implication of this is that a good lawyer must not only be knowledgeable in law but must intentionally focus on building his clientele and ensuring that they are sustainably retained where necessary.

The problem for a legal practitioner in private legal practice, especially for new wigs is how to attract clients and maintain sustainable clientele, whether in retainer-ship capacity or one-off brief. This article seeks to equip legal practitioners in private practice with the knowledge required to build a repeat-client ecosystem: from one-off briefs to lifetime retainer-ship. The objectives of this paper are to know the extent of the provisions of the Rules of Professional Conduct for Legal Practitioners 2023 (RPCL 2023) in respect of attracting client, to equip legal practitioners on the skills necessary to attract clients and retain them without acting unethically and the qualities needed to sustain the clientele.

The scope of this article is on legal practitioners in private legal practice, methods of attracting clients and retainer-ship, the provisions of the RPCL 2023 on dealings with clients especially in relation to competence, advertising<sup>1</sup> and soliciting<sup>2</sup> and the qualities needed to build a repeat-client ecosystem and lifetime retainerships. This article is relevant to legal practitioner in all federating states in

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<sup>1</sup> RPCL 2023, s 39 (2).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, s 39 (3).

Nigeria. Before we delve into the main discussion, it is very germane to make some conceptual clarifications.

## 2. Conceptual Framework

Conceptual framework deals with the common concepts or languages that are used to describe the subject area of this article and the presumed connection among them.<sup>3</sup> These common concepts are limited to the words in the topic of this article, including: Building, Repeat, Client, Ecosystem, One-Off, Briefs, Lifetime and Retainers.

Building is “the act or business of assembling materials into a structure.”<sup>4</sup> That is the action of erecting or constructing something. Repeat is something that occurs or is done again.<sup>5</sup> Client is “a person or entity that employs a professional for advice or help in that professional’s line of work.”<sup>6</sup> Client is a natural or artificial person who pays for the services of a lawyer or other professional person or company in order to be represented by the lawyer or professional, except in *pro bono* cases where fee is usually waved. Ecosystem is a biological community of relating species and their physical environment.<sup>7</sup> One-off means something done, made, or happening only once.<sup>8</sup> Brief within the context of this article means the documented instructions from a solicitor to a barrister, containing all necessary information to handle a case in court in the English

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<sup>3</sup> M B Miles and A M Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (Sage 1994) 18.

<sup>4</sup> Merriam-Webster, Building Definition and Meaning <<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/building>> accessed 10 April 2026.

<sup>5</sup> Merriam-Webster, Building Definition and Meaning <<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/repeat>> accessed 10 April 2026.

<sup>6</sup> B A Garner (ed), *Black’s Law Dictionary* (9 edn, Thomson Reuters 2009) 289.

<sup>7</sup> Merriam-Webster, Building Definition and Meaning <<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ecosystem>> accessed 10 April 2026.

<sup>8</sup> Merriam-Webster, Building Definition and Meaning <<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/one-off>> accessed 10 April 2026.

legal system.<sup>9</sup> Lifetime means the entire duration of a person's existence, from birth to death, or the period during which something is functional or exists.<sup>10</sup> It can also describe something that is sustainable and of long duration. Retainer within the context of this article means retainership, which is a contractual arrangement where a client pays a retainer fee to a professional or service provider in advance for ongoing access to their services over a period of time. This ensures the client has a professional on standby, much like a deposit for future work, fostering a long-term partnership rather than a one-off project. The fee paid in advance to something, especially a lawyer in order to secure their services for use when required is also called retainer.<sup>11</sup>

In view of the foregoing, building a repeat-client ecosystem, from one off briefs to lifetime retainers simply means the act of constructing a legal environment beyond the initial instructions to sustainable clientele, whether under an assured continuous consultation or under an advance fee for ongoing access to legal services arrangement.

### **3. Legal Framework**

The legal frameworks examined are the Legal Practitioners Act 1975 and the Rules of Professional Conduct for Legal Practitioners 2023.

#### **3.1 Legal Practitioners Act 1975**

The Legal Practitioners Act 1975 (LPA 1975)<sup>12</sup> provides for penalties for unprofessional conduct, which ranges from

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<sup>9</sup> Merriam-Webster, Building Definition and Meaning <<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/brief>> accessed 10 April 2026.

<sup>10</sup> Merriam-Webster, Building Definition and Meaning <<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/lifetime>> accessed 10 April 2026.

<sup>11</sup> Merriam-Webster, Building Definition and Meaning <<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/retainer>> accessed 10 April 2026.

<sup>12</sup> Cap L11 LFN 2004.

admonition, to suspension from legal practice for a period of time and striking off of name from the role of legal practitioners domiciled at the office of the Registrar of the Supreme Court of Nigeria.<sup>13</sup> It establishes the Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Committee (LPDC)<sup>14</sup> and the Appeal Committee of the Body of Benchers.<sup>15</sup> It stipulates the qualifications of legal practitioners in Nigeria and the procedure for enrolment.<sup>16</sup> It creates the General Council of the Bar<sup>17</sup> and empowers it to generally manage the affairs of the Nigerian Bar Association, subject to the Constitution of the Association.<sup>18</sup> The Bar Council in practice makes the Rules of Professional Conducts for Legal Practitioners.<sup>19</sup>

### **3.2 Rules of Professional Conduct for Legal Practitioners 2023**

The Rules of Professional Conduct for Legal Practitioners 2023 (RPCL 2023), which revoked the Rules of Professional Conduct for Legal Practitioners 2007<sup>20</sup> became operative on the first day of January, 2024.<sup>21</sup> It was made by the General Council of the Bar pursuant to *section* 1 (1) (4) of the Legal Practitioners Act 1975. The RPCL 2023 prohibits a lawyer from specified advertising<sup>22</sup> and from handling a legal matter that he knows he is not competent, prepared or would neglect to handle except in association with other competent lawyers unless the client objects.<sup>23</sup>

A lawyer may engage in any advertising or promotion in connection with his Legal practice to the extent that it is fair and proper in all

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<sup>13</sup> LPA 1975, s 11.

<sup>14</sup> LPA 1975, s 10.

<sup>15</sup> LPA 1975, s 12.

<sup>16</sup> LPA 1975, ss 2, 4, 7.

<sup>17</sup> The Bar Council.

<sup>18</sup> LPA 1975, s 1.

<sup>19</sup> LPA 1975, s (1) (4); See also the Enacting Formula of the RPCLP 2023.

<sup>20</sup> RPCL 2023, s 75.

<sup>21</sup> RPCL 2023, s 76.

<sup>22</sup> RPCL 2023, s 39.

<sup>23</sup> RPCL 2023, s 16.

the circumstances; and complies with the provisions of the RPCL 2023.<sup>24</sup> The RPCL 2023 prohibits advertising and promotion of a legal practice that is inaccurate or likely to mislead; is likely to diminish public confidence in the legal profession, or the administration of justice, or otherwise bring the legal profession into disrepute; makes comparison with or criticizes other lawyers or other professions or professionals; includes any statement about the quality of the lawyer's work, the size or success of his practice or his success rate; or is so frequent or obstructive as to cause annoyance to those to whom it is directed.<sup>25</sup>

The RPCL 2023 also generally prohibits direct and indirect soliciting of professional employment by issuance or production of circulars, handbills, advertisement, through touts or by personal communication or interview; furnishing, permitting or inspiring newspaper, radio or television comments in relation to his practice of the law; procuring his photograph to be published in connection with matter in which he has been or is engaged, or concerning the manner of their conduct, the magnitude of the interest involved or the importance of the lawyers position; permitting or inspiring sound recording in relation to his practice of law; or such similar self-aggrandisement.<sup>26</sup> A lawyer may however publish in a reputable law list or Law Directory, a brief biographical or informative data of himself, including his name or names of his professional association; his address, telephone number, telex number, e-mail address, website,<sup>27</sup> the school, colleges, or other institutions attended with dates of graduation, degree and other educational or academic qualifications or distinctions; date and place of birth and admission to practice law; any public or quasi-public office, post of

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<sup>24</sup> RPCL 2023, s 39 (1) (a) (b).

<sup>25</sup> RPCL 2023, s 39 (2) (a) – (e).

<sup>26</sup> RPCL 2023, s 39 (3) (a) – (e).

<sup>27</sup> Addition of website mine. This may also include his social media handles like Facebook, X, Instagram TikTok. WhatsApp Story, WhatsApp Group, Telegram Channel, and other social media handles.

honour, legal authority; any legal teaching position; any national Honours; any membership and office in the Bar Association and duties thereon ; and any position held in legal scientific societies.<sup>28</sup>

A lawyer may also cause to be printed on his note-paper, envelopes and visiting card his name and address; his academic and professional qualifications and title including the words “Barrister-at-Law”, “Barrister and Solicitor” Solicitor and Advocate” “Legal Practitioner” “ Attorney-at-Law”, and any National Honours.<sup>29</sup> A lawyer or a firm may display at the entrance of, or outside, any building or office in which he or it carries on practice, a sign or notice of reasonable size and sober design containing his or its name and professional qualifications.<sup>30</sup>

Where a lawyer writes a book or an article for publication in which he gives information on the law, he may add his professional qualification after his name.<sup>31</sup> On a change of address, telephone number or other circumstances relating to his practice, a lawyer may send to his clients’ notice of the change and may insert an advertisement of such change in a newspaper or journal.<sup>32</sup> Where a lawyer is available to act as an associate of other lawyers either generally or in a particular branch of the law or legal service, he may send to lawyers in his locality only and publish in his local journal, if any, a brief and dignified announcement of his availability to serve other lawyers in that connection as long as the announcement is not designed to attract improperly.<sup>33</sup>

If a lawyer acts in contravention of any of the provisions in the RPCL 2023 or fails to perform any of the duties imposed therein, he shall be guilty of a professional misconduct and liable to punishment

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<sup>28</sup> RPCL 2023, s 39 (4) (a) – (i).

<sup>29</sup> RPCL 2023, s 40 (a) – (c).

<sup>30</sup> RPCL 2023, s 41.

<sup>31</sup> RPCL 2023, s 42.

<sup>32</sup> RPCL 2023, s 43.

<sup>33</sup> RPCL 2023, s 44.

as provided in *section* 11 of the Legal Practitioners Act 1975.<sup>34</sup> It is the duty of every lawyer to report any breach of any of the rules of professional conduct that comes to his knowledge to the appropriate authorities for necessary disciplinary action.<sup>35</sup> By virtue of *section* 74 (1) of the RPCL 2023, failure to report a breach of the RPCL by a legal practitioner as provided in *section* 74 (2) of the RPCL 2023 is itself a professional misconduct. It is imperative to stress at this point that the Rules made pursuant to the Legal Practitioners Act 1975 partake of the nature of Subsidiary Legislations by virtue of *section* 18 (1) of the Interpretation Act 1964<sup>36</sup> and therefore have the force of Law. This was the position of the Supreme Court of Nigeria in the case of *Adeniran v Olusokun II*.<sup>37</sup>

#### 4. RPCL 2023 and Attracting Client

The RPCL 2023 only prohibits attracting clients by way of formal advertising, including paid or induced informal advertising that is unfair and improper.<sup>38</sup> The RPCL 2023 also prohibits the direct, indirect and permitted soliciting of professional employment through all forms of mass media and promotion.<sup>39</sup> It is germane to note that the RPCL does not prohibit the attraction of clients through competent execution of legal instruction in chambers and the courtroom, unsolicited recommendation or referrals by clients, friends and community, independent third party promotion due to previous legal service satisfaction and publication of researched works in various fields of legal endeavour; either in the social media or other information and communication technology media in so far as it does not directly calls for patronage, the display of notice or

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<sup>34</sup> RPCL 2023, s 74 (1).

<sup>35</sup> RPCL 2023, s 74 (2).

<sup>36</sup> Cap I 23 LFN 2004.

<sup>37</sup> [2019] 8 NWLR (Pt 1673) 98 Ratio 13, 114 Paras A-G, Per Mary Peter-Odili JSC.

<sup>38</sup> RPCL 2023, s 39 (2) (3).

<sup>39</sup> RPCL 2023, s 39 (3).

design in the entrance of a law firm provided that it is of reasonable size and sober design, to mention but a few.

## **5. Building a Repeat-Client Ecosystem: From One-off Briefs to Lifetime Retainers**

This is a question of what is needed by a lawyer to ethically attract and retain clients and briefs. It is one thing to be called to the Bar as a Barrister and Solicitor of the Supreme Court of Nigeria; it is another thing to be effective in creating and retaining clients. Since the legal profession is a regulated one, its nature of building clientele is definitely different from that of other professionals and businesses. The question is, what should a lawyer do to effectively and ethically attract clients and retain them for a lifetime? In order to effectively attract and retain your clientele from one time brief to lifetime retainers, it is germane to do the following and/or leverage on the qualities stated hereunder.

### **5.1 Be Proactive from the Faculty of Law and Law School by being Studios**

It was difficult including this point, given the fact that this article is to be submitted to the Bar Journal. However, the overwhelming importance of competence and performance in building and retaining a repeat-client ecosystem and the fact that this article may be consulted by aspiring lawyers made the inclusion most necessary. Acquisition of necessary skills to attract and retain clients starts from the Faculty of Law in the University. No matter how “clients-attractive” you are, if you fail to be studios from your formative years as a lawyer, it means that you are lacking in some essentials and there is need for you to upgrade. So, for persons who know that they did not study well in the University despite your grade, you must sit up now that you are a lawyer and see how you can cover lost grounds. This does not only apply to those who made poor grades, it also applies to those who made first class. It is not by passing the University and law School alone. For those that have

practice experience, you would have had encounters in court where you wondered whether the counsel on the opposing side actually attended law school. For example, a lawyer who made First Class in the University admitted in an interview that she never visited the research library to report a case throughout her undergraduate studies. This is an indication that such a lawyer despite her grade must do more to build her competence.

Notwithstanding the above, a lawyer known to have done well as shown by his or her grade in the University and shows competence by giving spot-on counsel when informally consulted by friends and relatives has a higher chance of attracting client upon graduation than those that did not build competence from the training period. Friends from the University aware of your brilliance are more likely to recommend you to clients when the need arises.

## **5.2 Join a Law Firm for a Start**

Joining an established law firm is the basic law of professional networking for a lawyer. Although, there are no professional restrictions on starting your law firm after you have been called to the Bar, however, it is better to start your legal practice in an established law firm where your encounters with client may enable you to be recommended in the future to other clients when you start your own law firm or partnership. This does not necessarily mean that you have to take the clients of your principal; it means that the clients of your principal may recommend you and/or add you to their options in the future.

The Law of networking in the basic form starts from joining a law firm. Form partnerships and collaborate with complementary firms if the circumstance permits to reach new client bases and create mutually beneficial relationships. Joining an existing law firm or partnership with an existing firm and serving the forerunners (seniors) in the profession, by ensuring faithfulness in that which is another man's sets you up for future recommendation and enables

you to showcase (advertise) yourself. Begin your legal practice in a firm bearing in mind that your future clients and recommenders are watching.

### **5.3 Join an Active and Responsible Community**

Your network determines your net worth. You can attract clients by networking and building relationships outside the larger legal community. Network actively by attending relevant events and connect with people in your industry and community like faith-based organisations, social clubs, and so on. Networking is an indirect means of asking for referrals from friends, family, and colleagues as there is a likelihood that you are the first person they will call if the legal need arises.

### **5.4 Perform Your Solicitor Tasks Bearing in Mind Your Future Clients**

Build a portfolio and create a strong collection of your work, even if it is from personal drafts, to demonstrate your capabilities to potential clients. Offer value by making sure your services clearly address the needs and problems of your target client, providing a tangible solution. Instead of saying “I cannot” or “I don’t know,” why not say, “I will check it out!” This principle of ensuring performance at every given legal task in chambers has greatly set up a lot of lawyers to attract and retain clients, including the opposing recipients of their drafts.

### **5.5 Master the Law and Perform Your Barrister Task in Court with Utmost Competence**

Always be prepared whenever you have matters in court bearing in mind that your future clients are watching. Almost every lawyer with a large clientele would have attracted some of those clients from court. The implication of this is that lawyers have also lost clients due to their poor performance in court. There is this client who was recommended to a lawyer, but because they could not agree

on a fee, the client consulted another lawyer who accepted a lower fee. Coincidentally, the first lawyer appeared in the same court for another client, when the client who initially consulted him saw his performance, the client came to the office of the first lawyer later that evening to hire him to lead the legal team.

This is the law of diligence. According to the Holy Book, “Seeth thou a man diligent in his business, he shall stand before kings and not before mean men.”<sup>40</sup> To stand with your client presupposes that you would have had a very long relationship. You may attract a “servant client” through mediocrity but to attract and retain “kingly clients” and to retain “servant clients” requires mastery, competence and performance. It is said that a good lawyer is not one who knows all the law but the one who knows where to find the law. How do you know where to find the law without adequate reading? There is no other way.

## **5.6 Be visible by Creating an Informed Online Presence**

You can do this by leveraging on information and communication technology such as: websites, online article publication platforms and social media platforms by offering legal tips to your followers. Creating a well-designed professional website with your services, portfolio, and contact information helps you seem credible and serious and essay to contact. Leverage social media by engaging with your audience and potential clients on platforms where they spend time. You may produce valuable content by starting a blog or creating videos that answer questions your potential clients are searching for, thereby attracting them to your expertise.

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<sup>40</sup>E D Radmacher and Others, *NKJV Study Bible* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Thomas Nelson 2007) 990, Proverbs 22:29.

## **5.7 Printing on Note-Paper, Envelopes, Visiting Card and Display of Signpost**

As earlier stated, a lawyer may also cause to be printed on his note-paper, envelopes and visiting card his name and address; his academic and professional qualifications and title including the words “Barrister-at-Law”, “Barrister and Solicitor” Solicitor and Advocate” “Legal Practitioner” “Attorney-at-Law,” and any National Honours.<sup>41</sup> These are advertising channels and a client may contact you after sighting any note-paper, envelope and visiting card containing your name and address; your academic and professional qualifications and title.

Accordingly, a lawyer or a firm may display at the entrance of, or outside, any building or office in which he or it carries on practice, a sign or notice of reasonable size and sober design containing his or its name and professional qualifications.<sup>42</sup> It is submitted that a notice of a reasonable size and sober design is such that does not consist of more than two mild colours and can be seen and read by any good eyesight.

## **5.8 Focus on Client Satisfaction**

Once you have the opportunity to get a client, focus first on satisfying the client instead of making profit, especially for beginners. Client creation and satisfaction should be the major focus of a legal practitioner who wants to build a repeat-client environment; not profit. This is because when clients are built, satisfied and retained, they will keep paying fees which will lead to profit. A satisfied client will trust you more and pay a better fee in the future, having tested and trusted you. Offer promotions and discounts when necessary by waving fees on certain services. Attract new clients by offering special deals within the existing client community or free trials for first-time clients. Existing clients will

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<sup>41</sup> RPCL 2023, s 40 (a) – (c).

<sup>42</sup> RPCL 2023, s 41.

discuss your offer and goodwill without undermining quality legal service delivery with others and this could help you gain more clients. As a general rule, there are services such as drafting of non-litigation affidavit, drafting of letters, that some firms waive professional fees for existing clients.

You may also encourage clients to testify and review your services in order to improve where necessary. The biggest room in the world is the room for improvement. Use positive feedback from current clients to build trust and show potential clients that you are reliable. Work to provide excellent service and support to foster loyalty and future referrals from your clients.

## **5.9 Humility**

The first rule you must know about clients is that most clients are proud. You must be the opposite in order to retain them. Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less. A certain treasured client was about to debrief his lawyer, when she asked him to return her documents. Instead of returning it, the lawyer engaged the client further on what he reasoned could have been the basis of her dissatisfaction without necessarily robbing it on her face. They continued their relationship and have remained so for the past ten years.

In contrast, any client that can afford your services but refuses to adequately pay for it after several trials is not your client. Let such “client” go!

## **5.10 Continuous Development**

If you are not getting better, you are getting worst. There is no such thing as remaining static in life.<sup>43</sup> “An illiterate of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is not one who cannot read and write but one who cannot learn, unlearn

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<sup>43</sup> (n40) Proverbs 4:18.

and relearn.”<sup>44</sup> You may have to learn new things, unlearn old things and relearn what you already know if you must continue to serve your clients better and retain them.

You must also continue to do the right things you did initially to attract your client in order to retain them. Reading for a legal practitioner does not end at law school. It actually starts after law school. Without continuous reading you may have difficulty mastering legal principles. You must continue to study your substantive and procedural law after law school to sustainably retain client and ensure lifetime retainership. This is because if you stop learning, you forget what you already know.<sup>45</sup>

You will have to continue to read the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), Acts, Laws, other Subsidiary Legislation, law text books, logic, fallacies in arguments and law reports. According to Habeeb Adewale Olumuyiwa Abiru, JSC in the case of *Akinsanya v Attorney General of the Federation & Ors*,<sup>46</sup>

A counsel has a duty, once he accepts a brief, to put his client’s case forward in the best possible manner, with a proper understanding of the relevant legal principles, and he should not rely on the good fortune of the knowledge of the Judge or Justices hearing the case... Counsel to all the respondents need to do more, going forward, in protecting the interests of their clients.<sup>47</sup>

The following are the areas a lawyer desiring to sustain his client must develop to build competence in attracting his clients and

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<sup>44</sup> A Toffler, *Future Shock* (Random House 1975) 8.

<sup>45</sup> (n40), Proverbs 19:27 CEV.

<sup>46</sup> [2025] 6 NWLR (Pt 1987) SC 481, 540, Para B-C; See also *Sebastine v State* [2020] LPELR 50319; *Rukuje v Deba* (2018) LPELR 44422

<sup>47</sup> (n46).

continue therein to retain his client to wit: reading of current law reports, current law journal articles and other periodicals. A lawyer desiring to retain his client must also gain mastery of the current Rules of Court, facts of the case, the current Evidence Act, logic and fallacies in argument, Limitation Law, legal technicalities, drafting skills and must be strategic, to mention but a few.<sup>48</sup>

### 5.11 Relate Ethically with Clients

This is one of the most important tools a lawyer desiring to retain his client must possess. The foundation of Ethics in the legal profession in Nigeria is the Rules of Conduct for Legal Practitioners 2023, which contains the basic ethical standard for lawyers. Non compliance with these ethical standards has severe consequences, including but not limited to loss of license to practice law in Nigeria. The question is, if you are suspended as a lawyer or debarred from practicing law in Nigeria, how can you talk about building clients, not to talk of retaining them? Your answer is as good as mine. In the case of *Homan Engr. Co. Ltd. v U.W.S. Ltd.*,<sup>49</sup> Habeeb Adewale Olumuyiwa Abiru, JSC, stated as follows:

The court has refrained from commenting on the unprofessional conduct of the lawyers that assisted the appellant in the disgraceful abuse of the processes of court. Suffice to say that lawyers as operators of the administration of justice system owe a duty; to the society that nurtured them and then what they are, to ensure that they conduct their activities in a manner that edifies and brings honour, respect and belief to the justice system. They should not allow themselves to be used by litigants to bring the justice system into disrepute.

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<sup>48</sup> S O Eli, 'Legal Examination of Secret Tools for Trial Lawyers in Nigeria' [2025] *The Nigerian Bar Association Port Harcourt Journal*; 292-303.

<sup>49</sup> [2025] 6 NWLR (Pt 1987) SC 423, 447 - 448, Paras H-B.

A legal practitioner must be prompt to Court as all courts sit by 9:0am, except otherwise stated. In my formative years, I almost made my principal lose a client by either coming to court late or stepping out to do something before the matter was called. By the time I returned the matter had been called. A legal practitioner must always dress in the prescribed regulation dress code for each court. A legal practitioner must always comply with rules, especially ethical standards in relationship with his client. No client is worth you acting unethical. This is because whenever you are charged and held liable for professional misconduct, they will run to another lawyer.

### **5.12 Discipline**

You must be disciplined to be effectively ethical and retain your clients. You must be disciplined to continue to do the right things you did initially to build your client in order to retain them and gain new ones. You may have to say “no” where your feelings and emotion want you to say “yes”. You may have to wake up from sleep when you feel like sleeping more, to be effective as a legal practitioner and maintain your client, which underscores the principle of discipline. Discipline also includes not mixing business with pleasure because “heartbreak” with a client you are intimate with may also lead to “client-break.”

### **5.13 Health**

If you are not healthy or die due to sickness, your client will consult other lawyers. Therefore, eat healthy foods, fruits, lots of vegetables, exercise regularly, and rest well after working. There are times that all that you need to serve your clients better is to rest. If you do not rest and remain healthy to serve your clients well, they will run away.

## **6. Conclusion**

All that have been stated here is that to effectively build a repeat-client environment from one-off briefs to lifetime retainership, you must be proactive from the Faculty of Law in the University and Law School by being studious, join a law firm for a start, join an active and responsible community, perform your solicitor tasks bearing in mind your future clients, perform your barrister task in court with utmost competence, be visible by creating an informed online presence, advertise by printing on your office note-paper, envelopes, visiting card and display of signpost, practice humility, master the law, continuously develop yourself, relate ethically with clients, be disciplined and healthy.

In order to effectively build a repeat-client and lifetime retainers' ecosystem, the focus of a private legal practitioner at first instance must also shift from making profit to client creation and satisfaction; otherwise, it may be difficult, if not impossible to achieve the appropriate result.