

# The Implementation of Internet/Web Presence for Law Firms in Nigeria

## A White Paper

Proven Methodology for Creating Professional CMS Websites for Law Firms

By

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### 1.0 Introduction

"We don't need a website, all our work comes from word of mouth." "We already have more clients than

we can comfortably manage". "A website would be nice to have, but I do not have time to organize it." "Who would write the content?"

These are common, compelling reasons why many barristers, sole practitioners, and small and medium

size firms either do not have a website or have one that is basic at best and amateurish at worst.

However,

a great website is a 24/7 shop window that can showcase your firm's expertise, people and specialist knowledge.

Internet World Stats reports that an estimated population of 45 million Nigerians has access to the Internet

as at May 2013.

With the prolific growth of the World Wide Web, it has become a necessity for businesses to have a professional Website in order to maintain their competitive edge. The design and maintenance of a professional Website poses several challenges. This document provides an insight into the different types

of Websites, the existing methodologies for design and deployment of Websites, and the Website Design

Methodology followed by Webclick.

Webclick has extensive experience in designing and maintaining enterprise-level Websites. Using our three key strengths, Web solutions, Internet Marketing Consulting, and Hosting, Webclick designs innovative and robust web presence solutions.

We put powerful and proven technology to work for our clients. That means they work smarter, more efficiently and that means success - from day one.

This document is structured as follows:

- **Section 1** (Introduction)

describes the purpose of this document and provides an introduction to our company.

- **Section 2** (Why a websites?)

List Nine Reasons Why Law Firm Needs Website

- **Section 3** (Types of Websites)

documents the different types of Websites that exist on the Internet.

- **Section 4** (Web Authoring Tools)

lists the different tools and approaches that are being used to design Websites.

- **Section 5** (Webclick. - Joomla Content Management System)

introduces Joomla Content Management System. It also highlights the different types of Interactive Websites.

- **Section 6** (Webclick Website Design Methodology)

outlines the process that is followed by Webclick to complete a Website design project for our customers.

- **Section 7** (Benefits)

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lists the advantages of using Joomla and following Webclick Website Design Methodology.

- **Section 8** (Law Firm Website Design Best Practices)

outlines eight essential list of law firm website design best practices.

- **Section 9** (Law Firm Must Have Web Pages)

lists the 7 Pages Every Law Firm Website Should Have

## **Section 2 - Nine Reasons Why Law Firm Needs Website**

Here are nine reasons why it is worth investing in a great website with regularly updated, authoritative content.

### **1. The internet is the first place potential new clients will look for a lawyer.**

The recent recession has forced many barristers and solicitors to face the reality that during hard times you have to be prepared to market your business and attract new clients. The internet is now the first port

of call when someone is looking for a professional service. Even if a particular solicitor or firm has been

recommended to them people will often Google the name to find out further information. Foreign investor's often depend on the internet to search for lawyers who understand local laws.

If you have no website or your website is poorly written with little information potential clients may decide to keep researching and choose another firm.

### **2. Strong content can demonstrate your knowledge of specialist practice areas.**

Regular news or blog pages can demonstrate your firm's expertise in certain practice areas. They can be

tailored to suit the style of the reader; formal for banking and securities law, more casual for rural property and construction. Blogs are an excellent way to add value for your existing clients by keeping

them up to date with changes in legislation, developments in case law, and industry trends.

### **3. Relevant, updated content will improve your SEO (search engine optimization).**

If I type the words "property, lawyer, Christchurch, New Zealand" into Google it returns 117,000 results. Research shows most people only look at the top five or so results and very few people continue

past the first page. Does your firm show up on the first page of results?

One of the best ways to boost your SEO is to create a well written website and update it regularly with relevant, authoritative content. Think about it, Google has an obligation to its customers to produce the

most relevant results pertaining to their particular search.

First class content will generate back links to your site and help boost your firm's search ranking.

### **4. It helps make people "like" you.**

The number one rule of sales is people buy products and services from people they like.

Now let's be honest, the reputation of the law profession can rival that of car salesman and politicians when it comes to perceived honesty and likability. Just look at some of the jokes:

"Yesterday it was so cold I saw a lawyer with his hands in his own pockets!"

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A well written "About" page can humanize your firm and its authors. The right combination of

authoritative and friendliness in a blog can make your business more accessible thereby attracting new clients.

#### **5. It boosts your credibility.**

A well-written, well-designed website shows your existing and potential clients that you are a professional organization that maintains high standards. Remember, your website is your 24/7 shop window so you want it to create the right impression of your firm. Strong, sharp, snappy content is the first step in ensuring that visitors to your website immediately form a great first impression of your business.

#### **6. First impressions matter**

A Web presence also allows your firm to make a first impression on that 60 percent of people who use the

Web for local searches — and on the people who get referred to you. Even the most basic website — one

with details on your practice area(s), attorney bios and contact information — can quickly make a case for

your firm. Augment it with, say, a blog, articles and other types of resources, and you'll reinforce that first impression.

#### **7. It will serve as the foundation for your marketing efforts**

While referrals will continue to be valuable, law firms need to market themselves in today's business environment. A website can't and shouldn't be your only marketing tool. But given the digital-focused

nature of modern-day consumers, it can serve as a key building block for your overall marketing strategy.

#### **8. Your competitors are probably online**

If so, they're visible to potential clients 24/7/365. They've added a relatively inexpensive marketing tool

to their arsenal. And, if their sites are well designed and user friendly, they've established credibility by

offering what is a must-have for most of today's consumers.

#### **9. Social Media Is Fueled By Content**

If you plan on generating business for your law firm through the web, you can't ignore social media. The

reasons are abundant, but that's for another article. The reason you need a blog to fuel your social media

strategy is so that you actually have your own information to share on those different channels. Using social media to build thought leadership and credibility with your peers and prospects can leverage content curation to a great degree, but you will still need your own articles to share and drive traffic back

to your own website for the chance to get those prospects to become leads. This is considered having the

right message for the right person at the right time in the right place. The perfect equation for getting a new client.

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These nine points are only the start, and you could easily add a dozen more to the list. In fact, it's hard to

think of good reasons why a law firm shouldn't have a website in today's economy.

## **Section 3 - Types of Websites**

It is possible to categorize most Websites into the following types:

### **Simple Intro Page**

In this case, the Website is just a glorified business card. It is a static, one page site, which provides a little introduction about the business and the contact information.

### **Electronic Brochure**

This type of Website provides more information about the company and the products or services.

However, it resembles an electronic brochure in that the content never really changes. Statistics show that majority of Websites fall under this category.

### **Keeps Fresh Content**

This type of Website is a step above the Electronic Brochure website in that the site owners take some effort to change the content on a periodic basis. Majority of such sites have a News or Events section that

provides the latest happenings at the organization. The more elaborate sites will have frequent facelifts

for the site to keep a fresh look and feel.

However, these sites are still considered static in that they do not allow the Web visitors to interact with

the organization in any way. The most they allow would be a contact form or request for more information etc.

### **Allows Interaction**

This type of Website is considered dynamic in the sense that it allows its Web members to perform Online Services. The Web visitors are encouraged to become Web members in order to gain access to the

members only areas of the website. The login section and other services are database driven and provide

the Web users with predefined services that are common to all Members.

### **Integrated with Business Processes**

This type of Website provides the most functionality because the front-end services are integrated with

the back-end databases. In this case, when a Web member logs-in, the Website provides them with a menu of services that are specific for them. The site recognizes the user who has logged in and then customizes the Online Services that the user can perform.

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## **Section 4 - Web Authoring Tools**

All Websites are designed using Hyper Text Markup Language (HTML). HTML allows users to specify

the content of the Website and the layout commands which control how the content is displayed. Over the

years, webmasters have used the following methods to create Websites:

### **Direct HTML coding**

In the early days, webmasters used to create website primarily by programming HTML layout commands

directly with the content of the website. This made the process very cryptic and creating websites required a thorough understanding of HTML and its options.

### **Website Editors**

The next generation of Websites got created using Website Editors like Microsoft FrontPage® or DreamWeaver®.

They allowed users to create Web pages using WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) editors. Now users could focus on adding content and format it using tools that resemble word processing tools.

The Editor would then create all the HTML Layout commands to format the content for the Web.

While the Website Editors make it simple for many people to author their own Websites, they are focused on Page-by-Page Layout and publishing. That meant that anytime a new page was added to the site, the designers would have to manually specify the layout and formatting of the page.

This led to several inconsistencies on the Website. The most prevalent problem was that of Inconsistent

Navigation. When new sections or pages were added to the Website, the navigation on some pages did

not get updated to reflect those changes. Other problems included different look and feel for different pages for the Website, use of different colors on different pages, use of different fonts and type sizes for different pages, etc.

All these issues defeated the marketing and branding efforts of the organization!

### **Content Management Systems**

The problems posed by the Page-by-Page authoring systems led to the creation of Content Management Systems (CMS). These systems allow Webmasters to program the layout of the Website into the CMS and then allow users to add content by filling the content into appropriate fields of a form.

All content gets stored in a database and the web pages are created using the CMS.

The CMS provides several benefits:

```
<html>
<head>
<title>Home Page</title>
</head>
<body>
<div align="center">
<table border="0" cellpadding="0" width="100%">
<tr><td width="100%">
<h1 align="center"><font color="#800000">P C Solutions (www.pcsomaha.net)</font></h1>
</td></tr>
</table>
</div>
</body>
</html>
```

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### **--Separate "Content" from "Layout"**

Once the CMS has been setup, the users do not have to worry about specifying the layout options for each page. They create a content item and assign it to the appropriate category and subcategory (if applicable).

### **--Automatically generate the Formatting and Navigation Menus**

Once the content has been added, the CMS formats the content based on the colors, styles, classes etc. that are programmed into the CMS for that Website during the initial setup. It organizes the content with a consistent layout. This ensures that all content looks and feels the same through the entire Website. In addition, the CMS creates the navigation menus dynamically as new categories, subcategories, and content articles are added.

### **--Provide Enhanced Services**

Powerful CMS systems allow users to easily add enhanced services that would normally require some programming by Web designers. Some examples of such services are:

- **Contact Us Form**
- **Site Search Form**
- **Online Ordering**
- **Email Subscription**

## **Section 5 - Joomla – Webclick's Content Management System**

Webclick use the feature rich CMS called Joomla. We use this product extensively to create sophisticated

Websites that provide seamless integration with our other Web Application offerings. Users of Joomla love its Windows Explorer® type design which breaks the navigation into context-sensitive horizontal and vertical menus.

Joomla websites are the best option for professionals. They are simple, reliable and high in quality. Joomla content management system makes it easy for you to manage and control your website, but customizing Joomla CMS to your specific business needs is a must in order to stand out from competitors, and Webclick's Joomla package aims at delivering you completely customized Joomla websites along with additional tools for identity establishment.

### **Features of Our Law Firm Web Design**

- **A True Custom Site**

Your company is unique. Your website should be, too. We build websites for lawyers and business.

- **Unlimited Design**

We keep designing until you're happy.

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- **Unlimited Pages**

With our content management system, your site has an unlimited amount of pages. Test our system; you can have 10, 100, 1,000 or 10,000 pages.

- **Search Engine Optimization**

We include keyword research, on-page optimization, content planning, and analytics with all our web design projects. We will optimize for all the major search engines (Google, Bing and Yahoo). If you need higher rankings, then sign up for our search engine optimization proposal to include more research, content, analysis, consulting and, most importantly, link building.

- **Ownership of Copyright**

You paid for it, so you will own the design of the site. Your law firm web site design is owned by your law firm.

- **Great Technology**

We create dynamic menus, news flashes, CSS styles, printer-friendly pages, calendars, W3C compliancy, search reports, social media widgets, blog integration and more.

- **Contact, Survey & Inquiry Forms**

We create easy forms so that you can receive inquiries and generate business. Your legal web site design comes with everything you need.

- **Same-Day Edits**

Same-day edits during business hours. We keep your website up to date with the latest information. Period.

- **Web Hosting**

No headaches, no fuss. Just 99.99% uptime for your website and email. We have been providing great web sites for law firms since 2007.

- **Blog Included**

We include a blog with any of our designs. Your law firm web site has a blog.

- **Content Writing Available**

We have talented writers on staff, experienced in writing unique copy for law firms and Search Engine Optimization. Contact us for a quote.

- **Great Process & Checklist**

We can produce any type of website. We start with meticulous research and planning. Then we produce a professional concept. We have a 80+ step attorney web site design checklist before we launch a website. We ensure everything is perfect before a site goes live.

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## **Section 6 - Webclick Website Design Methodology**

There are several reasons why majority of the Websites are at the Electronic Brochure level:

- **Lack of Time • Lack of Vision**
- **Lack of Expertise • Lack of Motivation**
- **Lack of Funding**

Moving to higher levels requires planning, thought, and a proven process. At Webclick, we implement the

following process to produce professional Websites for all our customers.

### **Define Implementation Teams**

Once the project proposal is approved, Webclick begins the process by identifying the project implementation teams. In this phase, all team members and their roles (on Webclick side and client.s side) are identified and documented. If client already has a previous relationship with a Design Company,

we are happy to work with them.

### **Create Site Plan**

A Site Plan outlines the layout of the Website. It identifies all the stakeholders, outlines the main navigation tabs for the web pages, identifies different categories (and subcategories, if applicable) to which the different content articles are assigned. The site plan dictates the navigation of the Website and

the representation of the business.

This is the most critical phase of the Website design. For a complex Website, it is advised that the executive, operations, IT, and marketing departments get involved at this stage to agree on a common site plan.

### **Create Layout Plan**

Once the Site Plan is created, Webclick works with the Design Company to come up with the Layout Plan. The Layout Plan specifies the placement of logos and the style of buttons, headers, text etc. The Layout Plan ensures that the look and feel of the Website is consistent with client's other marketing materials, thereby reinforcing the brand.

### **Content Gathering or Creation**

This phase includes the development of the content that will be put on the Website. The content can either be provided by Client or can be created by copywriters or marketing agencies.

Once the above steps are completed, Webclick populates the site plan into Joomla. It also customizes its

other Web Applications as needed by client or programs new features as required. Finally clients can either populate the content themselves or have Webclick populate the content for them.

## **Section 7 - Benefits**

There are several benefits in following this methodology:

### **Status tracking**

The Website is designed in a methodological manner whereby it is very easy for client to track the status

of the site at any point. This also ensures that client is able to provide feedback at any stage of the design, which eliminates any surprises at the end.

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### **Content Population by Client**

By using a CMS, Webclick can offer clients option to populate content themselves, thereby providing an

option to reduce the overall project cost. Clients can also choose to maintain the content themselves by

purchasing a license, or contract with Webclick to maintain the Website.

### **Enforces Branding**

This methodology ensures that the function of the Website matches the design. Joomla works directly with client's Site Plan. Once Webclick populates the Site Plan into Joomla, it automatically creates the

site navigation and ensures that all content adheres to the branding standards. Any content changes are formatted to match the site brand.

### **Easy Re-design**

Since the content is separated from the layout, it makes it real easy for client to facelift or redesign their website. If the client wants to change the look and feel of their Website, then all they have to do is come up with a new Layout Plan and get it programmed into Joomla. Once that is done, all content articles will be automatically formatted with the new layout.

## **Section 8 - The Essential List of Law Firm Website Design Best Practices**

### **1. Be true to your firm's culture and personality**

Too many law firm websites try to portray a firm incorrectly; as a big firm when they are not big, for instance, or as a tech-savvy firm when they get things accomplished the old-fashioned way. If you are honest with your firm's self-portrayal, you will attract the right clients for you; the ones who want a firm



like yours, and will stay with you long-term. Make sure your site is an accurate reflection of who you are as a firm.

## **2. Highlight your firm's strengths on ALL pages**

Whether the website visitor is a potential client, a referral, or a casual viewer, you don't want them to have to dig too deeply within your site's structure to find what your firm is good at. Tell them what your strengths are on the home page, on the about page, on the practice pages, and on the attorney bio pages.

Your visitor will only occasionally land on your website starting with your home page, so why limit your strengths to that page alone?

## **3. Link relevant information, and make the attorney biography the center of the website's universe**

Descriptions of practice areas should always be linked back to the attorneys who practice in those fields.

News items should link back to the attorney(s) who are responsible for that article of news release.

This

inter-linking (which is easy with a proper content management tool such as Joomla) of information is one

of the most important "best practice" of all, because it allows the website user to seamlessly weave between information and the most suitable practitioners for their needs.

## **4. Make wise decisions for your legal social media**

For every one well-maintained law firm Facebook page I've seen, I've run across ten that look flimsy and

as interesting as a vacant lot. In the old days before law firms took their websites seriously, I'd run into

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clients who had such horrific websites I'd advise them to take the site down until we could complete their

new one. The same goes for Facebook and Twitter; unless you're able to devote a reasonable amount of

time to the types of social media platforms that require constant attention, you're better off with nothing.

There are many other social media sites (such as LinkedIn and third-party news feeds) that allow you to

have a professional presence without having to update the information regularly. If your designer insists

that you HAVE to have a Facebook page for your law firm, find a new designer.

## **5. Resist the temptation to go wild with multimedia and flash**

You're not selling cell phones or video games, after all. You're selling a high-end professional service, which calls for some restraint in the presentation of your firm. Most video and Flash animation cannot be

seen on smart phones and wireless devices anyway, so if you want to grab attention and be different be

creative, and do it with a great presentation of words and testimonials and still imagery.

## **6. Insist on a legal-based content management system for site updates**

Your legal content management system (CMS) should be one that is developed specifically for law firms

(such as Joomla), as law firms have precise needs that are unique to their industry. The CMS should allow

you to easily add and update attorney information (All of it!), as well as practice area text, new and articles, and other textual page content. It should allow you to easily upload photos and PDF files, and



interlink attorney biographies with practice areas, news, and other related pages. It should be usable by people with little or no knowledge of website coding (HTML). You should not pay any licensing fees on this software unless you are being provided with regular upgrades.

### **7. Keep web forms short and simple, and respond quickly to inquiries**

No one likes filling out forms. So making it easier will result in more people responding to your request that they give you their information. Don't make them enter every detail of your case - you'd prefer to do that on the phone anyway. Make sure someone is in charge of responding to them, even if the case is not something your firm handles.

### **8. Pay close attention to the usability and design esthetics of the attorney bio page**

This page is the most frequently visited page by far of all your website's pages. With that in mind, these elements should be given careful consideration. First, your attorney photos need to be done professionally, in a controlled setting so they are consistent. The page layout is also important; try to avoid too much text and old-fashioned case information in the biography, unless it is linked to an outside source. Make sure every bio has a v-card link, a printable page link, and when it is printed no content is lost. Many CMS systems do this automatically, and also include a special print style sheet so printed pages don't display unneeded navigation buttons and other graphics.

## **Section 9 - Seven Pages Every Law Firm Website Should Have**

When you put together your law firm website, there are several pages that you should have no matter what other content you decide to include. But what are the must have web pages for a law firm website?

Ideally, you want the pages you have on your site to be designed to draw in conversions, and to give enough information to clients for them to make an important decision to give your firm a call. This guide

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will help you understand what the must-have basic web pages are for a basic law firm website while also

discussing why these pages are so important.

### **#1: Attorney Biographies**

The single most looked at page on attorney and law firm websites before a client calls the office is the attorney biography. This means that if your attorney bio is just a list of awards and some very generic copy, you may be hurting your own bottom line in a big way. Typically, clients won't just want to see your awards and honors, though they may want to see those, too, so make sure to include them—usually

toward the bottom of the page. Keep in mind that most people who want to see these honors will scroll

through to see whether you have them. Seeing them first can be intimidating for other clients, who may be

more interested in seeing an attorney's personality than their list of proudest moments.

Your attorney biography should generally be conversational and informative. It should feel personal without feeling like oversharing, and should stay free of legal jargon as much as possible. Maintaining a

tone that even a client who has never visited an attorney before can understand, without condescension, is

the best way to generate conversions from your attorney biography.

### **#2: Firm News**

Every law firm should have a news updates page, and this updates page should automatically create headlines on your home page. This gives you a way to showcase new attorneys or staff changes, as well

as to publicize your successes in and out of the courtroom.

There's also a search engine optimization reason to have a firm news page. As long as you update the firm

news section of your website relatively frequently, you will be updating your home page as well—and Google and Bing prefer websites that have frequently updated content. If you're using the same stale content for months and months, you'll start to slip in search engine rankings in favor of firms that are updating more regularly. Having a firm news page makes it easy for you to do small updates without having to just do busy work.

### **#3: Firm “About Us” Page**

In addition to your attorney biographies, you should also have an overall firm “about us” section that explains how your firm was formed and the values that drive your partners and associates. This page lets

you express your brand voice clearly and succinctly. Don't make this page too long, and try to make it contain more of the personal than the platitudinous.

### **#4: Specialty Practice Area Pages**

Almost every law firm today is a firm made up of specialists, not generalists. Your firm's specialty areas

are the biggest way that you'll be found by people searching for law firms using Google, Bing, or Yahoo.

If you're not actively marketing these specialty areas with specific web pages or even microsites designed

specifically for addressing the concerns of clients needing services in these legal areas, you're not doing

everything you can to drive conversions.

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If you're an attorney whose practice is consumer oriented, you may want to consider adding your price

structure to the pages outlining your specialty areas. One of the biggest questions today's consumers have

about legal services is how much a lawyer is going to cost. With the economy still limping, understanding

costs can make it easier for people to contact a lawyer while feeling assured of their ability to successfully

pay your fee.

### **#5: Consultation Information Page**

You should also consider having a specific web page that details what a first consultation at your law firm

is like. By helping consumers understand what they're likely to encounter at the consultation, you're helping them to gain the confidence that they need to place what can be a very anxiety-provoking

phone

call. This will also help you to avoid the problem of people calling for a consultation, then no-showing

when it comes time for their actual appointment. By alleviating fears, you make for more informed, more

at ease clients.

Your consultation information page should stay jargon free and tell people what they should bring to their

consultation, in addition to information about how you will decide whether to accept a case and how fees

will be determined.

### **#6: Frequently Asked Questions**

A Frequently Asked Questions, or FAQ, page contains questions that your law firm is asked on a routine basis. Many people will actually look for a FAQ when they have a question about a business, so having one of these pages is crucial for drawing in this market segment and giving them all the information they need in one place.

Your FAQ page can and should link to other pages on your website when those pages are relevant and contain more detailed information than is appropriate for the FAQ. Typically, FAQ answers should be no more than one or two paragraphs long. This is also a good place to dispel any myths that people often come to your office believing—just a few lines on a FAQ may be able to help people understand your profession and the particulars of their case a little bit better.

#### **#7: Contact Form**

Of course, every law firm's website should have a contact form page. If you don't have a contact form and

only allow contact through the phone or an email address, you won't be able to track how new clients moved through your website before deciding to contact you, which means that you lose a significant amount of information about what is and isn't working to drive conversions.

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## About Webclick

WebClick Communications is a service-based company that specializes in provision and promotion of

Mobile, Web and Enterprise solutions. We are geared to becoming one of the world's top specialized

service firms catering to businesses, academic institutions and government agencies seeking to transform their businesses/services through innovative technology.

We focus on developing customer service poised to "Closing the Gap Between our clients and the digital world".

WebClick Communications provides and promotes a range of tailored Mobile, Web and Enterprise solutions services in Nigeria, which range from custom web design & development to full Multimedia

Service, e-Commerce Solution, Graphic Design Work, Shopping Cart Software, Web Promotion Services, Website Redesigning Services.

We have on our team, credible and talented people, sharing a common drive towards achieving excellence in service delivery that are ready and willing to work with you and your team if giving the

opportunity. Our people who are mostly certified professionals together with our local and international partners are our strength. Our responsiveness and professional competence with our friendliness is what has continually given us the edge in our service offerings.

## Our Mission

1. To Be The Leading Provider of Mobile, Web and Enterprise Solutions to Discerning Clients and Companies in the Nigerian and Larger African Market.
2. To Help Small and Medium Scale Entrepreneur's to Take Their Business Online so as to Benefit From the Billions of Dollar Spent Annually on Outsourcing.
3. To Help Nigeria Community to Make Legitimate Income Online Either By Starting a Home Based Business, Freelancing or Taking Their Existing Businesses Online.