

Founder of Cameroon law firm has a tech vision for its future



By Brian Cox

At the core of Neneng Yannick's strategy for growing the Cameroon business law firm he founded in 2022 is this understanding: Technology is at the forefront of globalization and is impacting international legal practices.

When he opened Neneng Law Office in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, Yannick knew he would need to think "outside of the box" to position the fledgling firm as one of the most technologically advanced firms in Cameroon.

His long-term designs for the firm revolve around attaining a book of business and a range of influence that extend well beyond the country's borders, and he sees technology as one of the primary tools to help him reach that goal.

"The legal profession is a liberal sphere all around the world. My motivation to start the firm was that I could do my own practice on my own terms but still be guided by the rules of professional conduct," says Yannick.

Located in the commercial district of Akwa in Cameroon's largest city of Douala, Neneng Law Office is situated in the country's economic capital. The city handles most of the country's major commercial and corporate transactions, manufacturing,



Upon graduating from law school in 2018, Neneng Yannick shared the proud moment with his aunt and mother in a treasured family photo.

and exports, such as oil, cocoa, and coffee. The country proclaims itself as the gateway to Central Africa and is the economic hub of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC), which consists of five other countries, including Gabon, Chad, the Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, and the Central African Republic.

The boutique law office focuses on all aspects of business, corporate, finance, and investment law in the CEMAC region. Yannick is particularly interested in deepening the firm's involvement in the field of financial technology.

"Financial technology is a new concept gradually coming into the region," says Yannick, who has advised several fintech companies on compliance and regulation. "Financial technology is gradually overriding traditional banking – not just in Cameroon, but across the world. A lot of foreign companies are coming in to invest in this sector of our economy."

Other business opportunities in Cameroon can be found in the agriculture, gas and oil, energy, entertainment, forest exploitation, health, manufacturing, mining, telecommunication, tourism, and transportation sectors, according to Yannick, who adds that it is critical for business interests to enlist the services of a local attorney or firm intimately familiar with the business climate.

"When it comes to the sector of mining, for example, a lot of companies and individuals have been victims of cybercrime and fraud because they are not able to get through to the right channels that can assist them in getting mining permits to engage in activities in Cameroon," says Yannick, who is well versed in the intricacies of the bureaucracy and has advised on diverse mining operations in Cameroon.

Yannick's path to becoming a lawyer has its origins in his desire to pursue a career where he had the independence to innovate and follow his instincts.

Born in the capital city of Yaoundé, Yannick's family moved to the country's English-speaking Northwest Region when he was 3. His father was a communications officer with the Gendarmerie, a paramilitary force that performs both law enforcement and national security responsibilities across the country. His mother taught secondary school computer classes.

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The eldest son of six children, Yannick attended Saint Aloysius Minor Seminary, an all-boys' school with the aim of fostering future priests.

"Although at the end of the day, I did not end up becoming a Catholic priest, my education and formation through the minor seminary have impacted my life in a very positive way," says Yannick, who remains active with the school's alumni association. "My faith has been guiding me all along."

Initially interested in becoming a professional musician or a basketball player, Yannick says his attention was turned to law at the encouragement of his cousin, Ghun Felix Mburi, who is a practicing attorney and a member of the Cameroon Bar Association.

"It was through his mentorship and motivation that I became a lawyer," says Yannick. "I have a great admiration for him."

After earning an undergraduate degree from the University of Buea's Department of Law in Cameroon, Yannick landed his first job as a clerk with a bailiff's firm where he helped in the preparation and service of summonses and assisted in the execution of court judgments. He came into regular one-on-one contact with attorneys and the interaction inspired him to pursue a law degree.

There is no law school in Cameroon and the process for joining the Cameroon Bar Association is complex and can take years. The best way for Yannick to make it into the Cameroon Bar Association was to first become a member of a foreign bar. So, Yannick moved to Nigeria to attend Nigerian Law School in Abuja.

After graduating law school and being admitted to the Nigerian Bar Association, Yannick returned to Cameroon to join a prominent litigation and corporate law firm. He was with the firm less than two years before venturing out on his own.

He quickly leveraged his familiarity with technology to establish an online presence for the new firm and to initiate a concentrated marketing effort to raise the profile of the bilingual firm's cross-border and international legal practice.



Cameroon attorney Neneng Yannick began his legal career as a paralegal in a corporate law firm before attending law school in Nigeria en route to forming his own firm in 2022.

As he sought out opportunities to network with other lawyers and law firms from different parts of the world, Yannick came across Primerus and recognized the benefits it offered his growing firm. In February 2023, Neneng Law Office became the first Cameroon firm to be invited to join Primerus.

"My main objective has been to market the law firm and myself, network with other lawyers and law firms, and enhance my practice through continuous legal education, which I have been able to do through Primerus," says Yannick. "I'm gradually achieving some of my objectives."

He has attended several Coffee and Conversations, participated in online webinars, and published a collection of articles on business opportunities in Cameroon and the CEMAC region.

It is not easy at times venturing out to new frontiers, admits Yannick. Forging a next-generation law firm in Cameroon has its difficulties. But he also knows his vision is worth the investment of time and sweat.

"It's challenging, but – like the common proverb – difficult roads often lead to beautiful destinations," says Yannick.