

Smartylex

Law firm management platform offers an innovative tech tool

By Brian Cox



Guinean attorney Aboubacar Kanté has his eyes on the future of legal practice and is determined to be at the forefront of the evolving integration of law and technology.

When he launched ASK AVOCATS in 2020, Kanté's goal was ambitious: to create a law firm that could extend beyond Guinea's borders and participate in the broader, increasingly interconnected African legal market.

"In the African legal market, we are not used to large law firms with hundreds of lawyers," explains Kanté. "We are reluctant to partnering. My dream was to build a law firm that can go beyond the boundaries of Guinea."

In a short span, that vision began to take shape. The firm grew quickly, earned recognition among leading firms in Francophone Africa, and developed a cross-border practice rooted in business and mining law.

As the firm expanded, Kanté began to confront the challenge of infrastructure.

Across West Africa, much legal practice still depends on fragmented systems: paper files, manual tracking, inconsistent communication, and procedures slowed by geography. In a region where a single supranational court can serve multiple countries, even basic filings can require time-consuming exchanges through traditional courier systems. The inefficiencies shape the pace and accessibility of justice, according to Kanté.

It was with that reality in mind that Kanté began to explore an idea that would ultimately grow into Smartylex, a law firm management platform designed specifically for Francophone African practitioners.

The project did not begin with technical expertise. By his own account, Kanté had no background in coding or software development. Instead, the early stages were defined by research. Kanté and his firm dedicated countless hours to studying available tools, watching tutorials, and trying to understand how existing systems and programs functioned. What he found was a gap. While numerous legal management platforms existed globally, none were built with the legal frameworks, languages, and practical constraints of West African firms in mind.

"There are many applications and tools available, but none of them were designed for Francophone West African law firms," says Kanté, "Now we have launched the first application and solution to help lawyers here."

Kanté assembled a team of developers and paired them with practicing lawyers. The approach was collaborative from the outset. Lawyers articulated the needs and friction points of daily practice, while developers translated those realities into functional design. The process was iterative, shaped as much by trial and error as by long-term vision.

Development stretched over six years. Rather than building in abstraction, Kanté used his own firm as a testing ground, integrating early versions of the software into ASK AVOCATS' internal operations. He wanted to ensure that the software could handle the demands, unpredictability, and nuances of an active legal practice.

By late 2024, Smartylex was ready for public launch.

The platform consolidates core elements of law firm management: case tracking, document storage, scheduling, and access to legal materials such as judicial decisions and calendars across multiple jurisdictions. Its design reflects the realities of regional practice, including cross-border litigation and the need for centralized information in environments where resources are often dispersed.

Importantly, Smartylex is not intended solely for internal use by Kanté's law firm. From the beginning, Kanté envisioned it as a tool for other firms across the region.

The software offers attorneys the ability to manage their practice efficiently, while fostering interactive communication with colleagues and staff, explains Kanté. Lawyers can access documents with a single click, from anywhere in the world, via their phone, computer, or tablet.

Following its launch in Guinea, efforts have already begun to expand into neighboring markets, including Côte d'Ivoire, where Kanté has recently traveled as part of the rollout.

As legal systems across Africa continue to evolve – particularly under frameworks such as the Organization for the Harmonization

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of Business Law in Africa (OHADA) – there is increasing demand for tools that can support efficiency, consistency, and access to information. Technology, in this sense, has become less a luxury and more a necessity.

Kanté does not see this shift as a departure from traditional legal practice, but as its natural extension. The integration of digital tools, including emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, is viewed as a means to improve output, reduce costs, and better serve clients. For lawyers operating in fast-changing markets, the ability to adapt may prove decisive.

“We need to take into account how artificial intelligence can facilitate and help us deliver the best output for our clients in a very cost-efficient way,” he says.

Kanté’s ambition to create a law firm that moves beyond national boundaries has found a parallel in software designed to function across jurisdictions, languages, and legal traditions.

Kanté’s professional path, from his early legal education in Dakar and Paris, to his advanced studies in the United States and his work in international practice, has benefited from his willingness to embrace adaptability and connection. Last year, he was ranked among the 100 most influential business lawyers in Francophone Africa by Africa Business+ and Jeune Afrique, a French-language pan-African weekly news magazine.

The timing of Smartylex’s release also is significant. As African economies continue to attract investment and legal markets grow more sophisticated, the demand for modernized legal services is increasing. Efficient systems are no longer ancillary; they are integral to competitiveness and client trust.

For Kanté, the work remains ongoing. The launch of Smartylex marks a milestone, but not a conclusion.

Smartylex is just one piece of a larger ecosystem of programs. Judicalex, provides a digital portal that facilitates access to legal texts, case law, and RCCM (company registration office) procedures, while offering a follow-up of judicial news and a directory of legal professionals. Jugalex completes this approach by offering an international legal research platform, allowing practitioners and researchers to access a comparative and academic documentary base, essential for lawyers working in cross-border contexts. Finally, SmartyPay introduces a financial dimension by offering a secure digital payment solution for legal and administrative departments. Thanks to this platform, lawyers and citizens can

pay online for pleading fees, RCCM fees, tax stamps, or business creation, while benefiting from instant electronic receipts and advantageous subscription plans for Smartylex.

By bringing together Smartylex, Judicalex, Jugalex, and SmartyPay, Kanté is building a digital portfolio that covers the entire legal value chain: the internal management of firms, public access to legal information, academic and comparative research, as well as the dematerialization of payments. This integrated vision meets the needs of practitioners, citizens, and institutions, while being part of regional frameworks such as OHADA. It reflects Kanté’s strong conviction that the future of law in Africa depends on innovation, efficiency, and transparency.

“We’re in a very changing world based on technology and artificial intelligence, and lawyers have to use these tools to be up-to-date,” says Kanté. “This is the future.”

