DON'T START YOUR PROJECT WITHOUT READING THIS!

7 DANGEROUS MISTAKES NIGERIANS MAKE BEFORE BUILDING



INTRODUCTION

Every year in Nigeria, thousands of people lose millions of naira not because they didn't have money to build…

…but because they made simple mistakes they didn't even know existed.

And the painful part is that most of these disasters are 100% avoidable.

But nobody tells you the truth at the beginning.

Instead, you hear things like:

- Just buy land and start building.
- Engineer will handle it.
- My brother built his own like that and nothing happened.

That's exactly how people walk straight into costly traps.

Read carefully…

Building a house in Nigeria is not just about money.

It's about **knowledge!**

One wrong step can cost you ₦500,000, ₦2 million, even ₦7 million or more.

That's why I created this guide.

To show you the 7 Dangerous Mistakes Nigerians Make Before Building, so you don't become the next victim.

Because once your building gets to a certain stage… there's no going back!

1.

Buying Land without Proper Verification

This single mistake has destroyed more dreams in Nigeria than lack of money ever will.

Imagine saving for years…

Gathering millions…

And finally buying land…

Only to wake up one morning and see:

“THIS LAND IS UNDER GOVERNMENT ACQUISITION”

Or

“STOP WORK!!!”

Or worse… Strangers showing up claiming the land is theirs!

At that moment, everything changes.

Your money? ***Gone!***

Your peace of mind? ***Gone!***

Your building project? ***Completely stuck!***

And the painful truth is that most people never recover from this particular mistake.

Take Note…

Buying a land in Nigeria is not just a transaction.

It’s an investment in your future.

That piece of land you’re looking at is not just an empty space; it has a history.

Even clean-looking documents can hide problems.

If you don’t uncover it, that history could cost you more than money.

It could cost peace of mind.

So, if you’re planning to buy land in Nigeria, it’s important to be aware of *common mistakes* that can cost you millions in the long run.

One of the most overlooked mistakes is **skipping a land survey.**

While it might seem like a time or money saver, skipping this crucial step can lead to boundary disputes, financial losses, and even legal battles down the road.

Land surveys play a major role in establishing clear ownership.

This small step can make a world of difference for your peace of mind, finances, and future plans.

Specific Checks to be Carried out before Purchasing any Property in Nigeria.

Let's talk about specific checks you should carry out before purchasing any property in Nigeria.

Don't just rely on verbal assurances or promises.

These checks are your first line of defense against fraud and future legal trouble.

Skipping these necessary checks can open the door to a world of legal troubles that could cost you your investment.

In your excitement, it's critical not to overlook due diligence.

The goal is to safeguard your investment and make sure you're not inheriting someone else's problems.

1. Confirm the Seller's Ownership

The first step is to verify that the person selling the land has the legal right to do so.

You should confirm that the seller is the rightful owner of the property.

This can be done by checking the *title deed* and ensuring that it matches the land details at the local government's land registry.

If the land has multiple owners, you'll need to get clearance from all involved parties.

2. Check the Land's Location and Boundaries

It's crucial to confirm the exact boundaries of the land you plan to buy.

Get a surveyor to map out the property and ensure the land is not overlapping with neighboring properties.

If the land's boundaries are unclear or in dispute, it could lead to legal conflicts once you start building or using the land.

3. Verify Government Approvals

Some lands in Nigeria are subject to approval by local government authorities, especially in developing areas.

Check if the land has been officially zoned for residential or commercial purposes, depending on your intended use.

You should also confirm that the land is not under any government acquisition plan.

4. Engage a Lawyer

It's always a good idea to engage a professional lawyer to help you navigate the legal processes.

A lawyer can help you verify documents, check for discrepancies, and ensure everything is in order.

Along with verifying the title deed, make sure that all the necessary documents are in order.

This includes checking the land's survey plan, which shows the exact dimensions and boundaries of the property.

Another essential document to check is the "Certificate of Occupancy (C of O)".

This is an official document that grants the holder the right to occupy the land.

If you decide to skip the due diligence process, you're not just risking your investment.

You're also putting yourself at the mercy of Nigeria's complex legal system.

Legal battles over land can be long, costly, and unpredictable.

2.

Ignoring Building Plan Approval

Building in Nigeria without an approved plan is not just a shortcut.

It is a calculated risk that can cost you everything.

Yet, every day, people still go ahead to build without approval.

Building plan approval is a mandatory procedure before starting any construction project.

It ensures that the proposed structure complies with local building codes, zoning laws, and other regulations.

This step is essential to guarantee safety, sustainability, and legal adherence throughout the construction process.

Why Many Nigerians Skip Building Plan Approval

It’s not always ignorance or desire to do the wrong thing.

Sometimes, it’s a mix of wrong beliefs and pressure such as:

1. **Approval takes too long**

Many people believe the process is too slow and stressful, so they decide to start first and sort it out later.

2. **I want to save money**

They see building plan, survey plan and approval fees as an unnecessary expense, not realizing it’s cheaper than the consequences.

3. **“Nothing will happen” mentality**

They’ve seen buildings standing without building plans and permit and assume it should be a custom.

4. Wrong advice from quacks

Some people usually tell clients “Just build, nobody will disturb you.”

They go as far as telling them that if anyone comes, they can just settle them with a token.

This has proven to be false in my 8 years of professional practice especially now that we are experiencing rapid development in Nigeria.

5. Urgency to start building

Excitement & pressure usually make people rush into construction without proper documentation.

But your building project should not be based on emotions but proper information.

Importance of Building Plan Approval

It ensures that your project meets all legal requirements, thereby preventing you from potential fines and legal disputes.

A building permit confirms that your building design is structurally safe.

Italso ensures that the building is appropriate for its intended use and location;that is to say that your project is fit for that location.

Without this approval…

Your building legally does not exist.

Beyond fines and demolition, there are deeper problems that quietly destroy projects when you do not have a building plan or permit.

And one of such silent problems is this:

“You cannot accurately budget for what is not properly defined.”

Without approved drawings:

- You won’t know the exact quantity of materials you need for your building project.

- You will be unable to plan construction phases properly

- Costs will keep changing as work progresses

Before you know it…

Your ₦15 million project becomes ₦23 million.

And will still not be completed.

Skipping building plan drawings and approval may look like a smart shortcut…

But in reality, it is a delayed problem waiting to explode.

Key Requirements & Steps to Approval

1. **Land Documentation Verification:**

You have topresent a valid land title documents, such as a Certificate of Occupancy (C of O), Letter of

Allocation, or Deed of Assignment, to prove your ownership.

2. **Professional Document Preparation:**

Here, you have to hire registered professionals to prepare mandatory documents suchComplete Building Plan Drawings and Survey Plan.

3. **Submission:**

Submit the documents to the relevant State Ministry of Physical Planning or Local Planning Authority (e.g., LASPPPA office, GADA office).

4. **Inspection and Approval:**

Now, it is time for the authorities to visit the site to check for conformity.

Once satisfied and fees are paid, the approval is issued.

Understanding Building Drawings

(This Is Where Many Get It Wrong)

Most people think a building drawing is just a simple house sketch or a 3D architectural drawing alone.

That's a public misunderstanding.

A proper building drawing has four major components:

1. Architectural Drawings
2. Structural Drawings
3. Mechanical Drawings and
4. Electrical Drawings

Who Is Responsible for These Drawings?

Each of these drawings is not just prepared randomly by quacks or students.

They are handled and endorsed by professionals:

- An Architect handles the architectural design

- A Structural Engineer takes responsibility for structural safety

- A Mechanical Engineer oversees plumbing and related systems

- An Electrical Engineer designs the electrical layout

When these professionals sign and stamp the drawings, they are taking responsibility for their work.

That accountability is very important.

I clearly explained this because, 85% of submissions get rejected because of an incomplete or unprofessional building plan.

And this is exactly where I'd like to help you!

If you don't want to:

- Waste money on rejected drawings
- Go back and forth with Town Planning Authorities
- Experience unnecessary delays or

- Start building only to be stopped later

I can help you get it right from the beginning.

As a professional in the building space, I've helped over **450 Clients** including Builders and Engineers, design standard, approval-ready building drawings.

I also ensure all designs meet regulatory requirements as well as assist in handling the building plan approval process from start to finish.

My goal is simple:

To make sure your project moves forward smoothly.

Click here to connect with me on WhatsApp.

3.

Hiring Quacks

There are constant reports of building collapses, especially in Lagos and in Nigeria at large.

A building can collapse for so many reasons, but I will just mention a few.

One is the entrance of quacks into the construction industry.

Who is a Quack?

In simple terms, a quack is anyone who takes on responsibilities they are not licensed to handle.

They may sound confident.

They may even show you previous works.

But confidence is not competence.

Such a person is fake and has no integrity to deliver the expected standard or quality on any project or job given to him.

To be a licensed or a registered engineer, you must have gone through the mandatory four years of training after graduating from a five-year course in the university.

So, it takes a minimum of nine years for anyone to become a licensed/registered engineer.

Therefore, no licensed engineer would want to be associated with any substandard job that would cost his hard-earned license.

Why Quacks Often Do Poor Jobs?

A quack can easily do a substandard construction work for immediate gains because he has little or nothing to lose…

And most times, no professional body can sanction him as he is not a registered member.

So, Why Do People Still Hire Quacks?

People do not always hirequacks intentionally.

Most times, it comes from:

1. **Trying to reduce cost**

People go for the cheapest option available, without asking what they are sacrificing.

2. **Referrals without verification**

“He built a project for my friend” becomes enough reason, without checking credentials.

When you hire the wrong person, the problem is not immediate.

Take note, construction is not about how it looks…

It is about how it performs over time and its financial Impact

Hiring a quack may look cheaper at first.

But in reality, you may end up paying for corrections, repairs, additional materials and delays and extended labour.

So what you “saved” initially…You pay back in multiples.

There are certain things in construction that are not based on experience alone or “what people have been doing.”

They require proper trainings, calculations, and responsibility.

A real structure is not built by assumption.

Before any foundation is laid, a structural professional considers:

- The total load of the building and
- How load transfers to the ground

And this is where quacks fall short every single time.

Quacks cannot perform structural calculations.

A quack does not calculate instead he estimates and guesses.

He repeats what worked somewhere else.

But all buildings are not thesame.

4.

Skipping Soil Test

Every durable structure begins with a strong foundation and that foundation depends on understanding the ground beneath it.

Unfortunately, many Nigerians underestimate the importance of a soil test, considering it unnecessary or time-consuming.

This simple mistake can lead to costly damage, foundation failure, and long-term safety issues.

What is a Soil Test?

A soil test (or soil investigation) is the process of examining the ground where your building will stand.

It helps answer questions like:

- Can this soil carry the weight of my building?
- What type of foundation is suitable here?
- How deep should the foundation go?

Without these information…

You are building on assumptions and in engineering, **assumption is costly.**

Why Do People Skip Soil Test?

Just like other mistakes, it often comes from:

1. Trying to reduce cost: Many people see it as an "extra expense."
2. Lack of awareness: They don't fully understand its importance.

3. “Others didn’t do it” mindset: They rely on what others did successfully without knowing the full story.

4. Overconfidence in artisans: Someone says, “This soil is fine, we’ve built here before,” and that becomes enough.

But one thing many people don’t realize is that soil is not the same everywhere even on the same street.

So copying what someone else did on another land can be a costly mistake.

What a Soil Test Helps You Achieve

When properly done, a soil test gives you:

- Clear understanding of your ground condition

- The right foundation design for your building

- Confidence that your structure is properly supported

- Better long-term performance of your building

5.

Starting Without a Clear Budget Plan

Starting your building project without a clear and a comprehensive budget plan is one of the most common and damaging mistakes in construction.

This will lead to abandoned project coupled with severe financial stress on you, and compromised structural quality.

What Does a Budget Plan Really Mean?

A proper budget is not just a number.

It is a complete ***financial picture*** of your building project. It gives you clarity before commitment.

It answers questions like:

- How much will the foundation cost?

- What is required for each stage?
- What materials are needed and in what quantity?
- How much is labour?
- What is the total expected cost from start to finish?

Without a clear plan you'll begin to take decisions on the spot and its direct effect is that costs will continue to change.

At this point, you are no longer in control of your project…

Instead, your project will end up controlling you.

Also, when funds run low due to poor planning, you'll tend to resort to cutting corners to keep the project moving…

Thereby opting for cheaper, low-quality materials constant adjustments and compromises.

At some point, funds will not meet demands. This will end up slowing down the work.

How to Avoid This Mistake

1. Engage Professionals Early:
   Work with a Quantity Surveyor (QS) to produce a detailed Bill of Quantities (BOQ) before starting.

2. Include a Contingency Buffer:
   Always set aside an extra 10–20% of the total budget for unexpected expenses.

3. Build in Phases:
   If funds are limited, plan to complete the building in manageable, properly funded stages rather than starting the whole project at once.

4. Freeze Designs Before Starting:
   Avoid making changes during construction, as this is the fastest way to waste money.

6.

Poor Supervision of Workers

Many people believe once they hand over their project to a contractor or engineer, their job is done.

At the early stage, most people focus on buying land, getting drawings, gathering money…

But supervision is hardly discussed.

You may assume that your Engineer or Builder will handle it or that you will just be visiting from time to time…

But supervision is not something you figure out later.

It should be part of your plan from the beginning.

Yes, you're not the one to be on site every day.

That's the job of your builder or engineer.

However, let’s be clear: Many Engineers are not always on site.”

But that is not the actual problem.

No serious project runs with the engineer on site every day.

The real problem is this:

There is no supervision structure in place before the project starts.

And when supervision is not defined early, the site ends up running on its own.

Why this is Dangerous for You

You may not be on site, but it’s your money that is funding the project and your safety on the line.

The Smart Way to Handle This

You don’t need to become a site engineer overnight but you must stay in control.

Here’s how:

1. Hire Competent Professionals
   Don’t go for the lowest price. Go for proven experience and accountability.

2. Ask for Regular Updates
   Daily photos, videos, or short reports.

3. Do Unannounced Site Visits
   Even if it’s once in a while, visit!

At the end of the day, you don’t need to supervise the workers yourself…

But you must supervise the supervision.

That’s how you protect your money, your structure, and your peace of mind.

7.

Choosing Cheap Materials Over Quality

In building, some *“savings”* don’t actually save you anything.

They just shift the cost to later and usually make it worse.

Why This is a Problem

1. It Reduces the Lifespan of the Building

Every material in a building has a job. For instance, cement holds things together, iron carries load, roofing protects against weather and so on.

But when you go for lower-quality options, those materials will still do the job…

But not for long.

So instead of a building that stays strong for many years, you start seeing cracks and wears much earlier than expected.

Not necessarily because the design was bad but because the materials couldn’t hold up.

2. It Increases Maintenance Costs

This is where it starts affecting you regularly.

At first, everything will look fine till little things begin:

- You fix a leak
- You patch a crack
- You replace a fitting

All these won’t look so serious but it will keep on happening.

Before you know it, you will realize you’re already spending money again and again just to keep the building in shape.

And if you calculate it well…

You'll see you've spent more than what the better material would have cost from the beginning.

3. It Compromises Safety

This is the part people don't like to think about.

Some materials are not just about appearance. Instead they affect safety.

For example:

- Weak reinforcement affects structural strength
- Poor-quality blocks can fail under pressure
- Substandard electrical materials can cause hazards

But the irony behind it is that these things don't always fail immediately.

But when they do, the impact is serious.

How to Avoid This Mistake

1. Invest in Quality Where It Matters

Not everything in a building has the same level of importance.

Always focus on getting quality materials for structural elements (foundation, columns, beams), roofing and core systems (electrical, plumbing)

These are not areas to “manage.”

2. Buy From Trusted Sources

Where you buy from matters.

Some materials are fake or below standard while some look original but don’t perform like it

Working with trusted suppliers reduces that risk.

NOTE: Building is not something you do every year.

So it makes sense to do it in a way that won't keep demanding money from you later.

Saving money is important.

But cutting cost in the wrong place creates a bigger expense in the future.

Do you need Professional Guidance for Your Building Project…

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