

WORKSHOP KIT • 90 MINUTES

Communicating with Partners in Nigeria

Facilitator guide

For SBDC advisors, District Export Councils, state trade offices, trade associations, chambers and educators.

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This guide teaches communication habits. It describes common tendencies, not rules about individuals. It is not legal, tax or compliance advice.

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How to use this guide

Read this guide once end to end, then use the segment pages as your script. The talking points are prompts, not a speech. Use your own words and your own client stories. You do not need to be an expert on Nigeria to run this session.

Kit contents

File	What it is
00_Start_Here	This page: what is in the kit, the agenda, the license and how to report your session.
01_Facilitator_Guide	Preparation checklist, room setup, the full session script, tough questions, answer keys and the slide guide.
02_Slides	About 30 slides in the DealDialect brand, with speaker notes. Space on slides 1 and 30 for your logo.
03_Participant_Handout	Two pages, black-and-white friendly: key ideas, rewrite exercise, scenarios, digital trust checklist, resources.
04_Scenario_Cards	Scenarios S1 and S2 as cut-out cards, plus a separate facilitator feedback sheet.
05_Pair_Exercise	The cold email to rewrite, instructions and a facilitator copy with the model answer.
06_Nigeria_Quick_Card	The two-page quick card from the Nigeria Market Communication Guide.
07_Survey_Paper	The 8-question post-session survey on paper, plus optional arrival cards.
08_Attendance_Sheet	Sign-in sheet with a consent column. It stays with your organization.
09_Certificate_Template	Certificate of attendance with fields for name, date, host and facilitator.
10_License	The CC BY 4.0 license notice and attribution wording.

License: Free to use, adapt and share under CC BY 4.0, including in paid training. Keep the line "From DealDialect (dealdialect.com) by Ayomide Adeyeye, licensed CC BY 4.0." on slides, handouts and certificates. If you change the materials, add "Adapted by" followed by the name of your organization.

Preparation checklist

Two weeks before

- ☐ Confirm date, room or video platform, and host organization.
- ☐ Download the kit and read this guide and the slides with notes.
- ☐ Read Chapters 2, 4, 5 and 10 of the Nigeria Market Communication Guide (dealdialect.com/markets/nigeria).
- ☐ Take the Readiness Assessment yourself and play simulator scenarios S1 to S3.
- ☐ Add your logo to slides 1 and 30. Keep the attribution line.
- ☐ Send the invitation and open registration. Ask registrants which markets they sell to or plan to.
- ☐ Find one real (anonymized) client story you can tell in two minutes, or use the story on slide 4.

One week before

- ☐ Print handouts (03), scenario cards (04, one set per group of 3 or 4), pair exercise sheets (05), quick cards (06), surveys (07) and the attendance sheet (08). Print spares.
- ☐ Generate and test the survey QR code and short link. Put them on slide 30 and on the paper survey.
- ☐ Prepare certificates (09) if your organization offers them.
- ☐ Send a reminder. Optional pre-work: "Take the free Readiness Assessment at dealdialect.com/tools/readiness."
- ☐ Set up your poll (show of hands, sticky notes or a polling tool).

- ☐ Do a timed run-through of segments 3 and 4. They carry most of the activity.

On the day

- ☐ Arrive early. Set tables for groups of 3 or 4.
- ☐ Test projector, audio, clicker and Wi-Fi. Open the slides and the survey link.
- ☐ Put the attendance sheet and arrival cards at the door with pens.
- ☐ Place a handout, a quick card and a pair exercise sheet at every seat. Keep scenario cards with you.
- ☐ Write the agenda and survey short link on a flip chart or whiteboard.
- ☐ Set a visible timer.

Room and tech setup

- **In person:** small tables work best, because participants work in pairs and groups of 3 or 4. Leave space to walk between tables.
- **Equipment:** projector and screen, laptop with slides, clicker, flip chart or whiteboard, markers, timer, pens and sticky notes.
- **Online:** use a platform with breakout rooms and chat. Share the handout in the chat at the start. Paste scenario text into each breakout room. Drop the survey link in the chat at the end.
- **Accessibility:** ask about access needs at registration. Use a microphone even in small rooms. Read slide text aloud. Offer large-print handouts. Turn on captions online.
- **Group size:** works for a few firms up to a full classroom. With a large group, recruit a co-facilitator to time activities and collect surveys.

Good practice: If participants of Nigerian heritage attend, welcome their insight, but do not put them on the spot as a spokesperson for a whole country. Invite, never assign: "Anyone who has worked in the market is welcome to add their experience."

Session at a glance

Time	Segment	Method	Slides
0 to 10 min	Welcome and the cost of a misread message	Story and quick poll	1 to 7
10 to 25 min	Same language, different rules	Short talk and "Guess the meaning"	8 to 12
25 to 45 min	Greetings, titles and relationships	Pairs rewrite a cold email	13 to 18
45 to 65 min	Reading indirect signals	Scenarios S1 and S2 in small groups	19 to 23
65 to 80 min	Digital trust and payments	Checklist walk-through	24 to 27
80 to 90 min	Action plan and evaluation	One next step per firm; survey	28 to 30

Session script

0 to 10 min: Welcome and the cost of a misread message

Slides 1 to 7

Goal: Participants see that communication habits, not just price or product, can decide whether a deal moves forward. They feel safe to share their own experience.

Key points to make

- Welcome everyone, cover housekeeping and introduce yourself and the host organization in under a minute.
- Tell the story on slide 4 (an illustrative example): an Iowa farm equipment maker sends a quote to a distributor in Kano. Two weeks of silence. The owner sends "Please confirm by Friday or we will offer the territory to others." The distributor, who was waiting for a senior partner to return from travel, never replies again.
- Ask: "What do you think the distributor heard?" Take two or three answers.
- Make the point: the email was efficient by many U.S. standards. To the reader it may have sounded like an ultimatum from a stranger. Nobody did anything dishonest. The two sides were using different rules.
- Why Nigeria, why now (slide 7): U.S. goods exports to Nigeria were \$6.8 billion in 2025, up 56.3% from 2024 (USTR). SMEs were 97.1% of identified U.S. exporters in 2024 (U.S. Census Bureau). Small firms are the ones most likely to lack in-house help on this.
- Set expectations: "Today is about tendencies you will often meet, not rules about every person. You will leave with one message you can send this week."

Activity

Quick poll (slide 5). Ask for a show of hands or use a polling tool: "Have you ever had a message to an overseas partner go unanswered and not known why?" Then: "Who sells to, or plans to sell to, Nigeria or West Africa?" Note the answers. You will refer back to them.

Timing tip: Keep housekeeping to one minute. With a large group, ask people to introduce themselves to their table instead of the room.

If you are running late: Skip slide 6 and fold the figures on slide 7 into one sentence. Never skip the story; it anchors the rest of the session.

10 to 25 min: Same language, different rules

Slides 8 to 12

Goal: Participants understand that sharing English does not mean sharing communication norms, and they can decode common Nigerian English expressions.

Key points to make

- High-context and low-context (slide 9): in a low-context style, the words carry most of the meaning. In a high-context style, relationship, tone and setting carry more of it. Much U.S. business communication sits toward the low-context end. Many Nigerian business settings sit further toward the high-context end. Neither is better.
- Nigerian English is a full variety of English with its own vocabulary and usage, as British and American English are. It is not "broken" English. Some expressions mean something different from what a U.S. reader expects.
- Walk through the expressions: "I'm coming" (I will be right back, please wait). "Well done" (a greeting to someone at work). "Flash me" (give me a missed call). "Next tomorrow" (the day after tomorrow). "How far?" (informal: how are you, or what is the status). "Sorry" (sympathy, not an admission of fault). "Go-slow" (traffic jam). "Dash" (a gift or tip).
- Why it matters: each misreading is small, but they add up. A partner who says "sorry" about your delayed shipment is offering sympathy, not accepting blame.

- Variation (slide 12): Nigeria is a large country with more than 500 languages, regional differences between north and south, and many business people who have studied or worked abroad. Treat what you learn as a starting point, then watch and adjust to the person in front of you.

Activity

"Guess the meaning" (slides 10 and 11). Show four expressions. Tables have 60 seconds to agree on a meaning for each, then reveal the answers. Ask: "Which one would have tripped you up?"

Timing tip: The guessing game can run long because people enjoy it. Reveal answers at the 60-second mark even if tables are still talking.

If you are running late: Cut the game to two expressions ("I'm coming" and "Sorry") and show the rest on the slide. Keep the variation point; it prevents stereotyping later.

25 to 45 min: Greetings, titles and relationships

Slides 13 to 18

Goal: Participants can write a first-contact message that opens with a greeting, uses the right title and builds the relationship before the transaction.

Key points to make

- Greet before business (slide 13). In many Nigerian business settings, opening with business can read as cold or rushed. A short greeting and a courtesy line signal respect. Say it this way: "Good morning, Engr. Okafor. I trust you and your family are well."
- Titles and surnames (slide 14). Use titles such as Dr., Engr., Barr., Arc., Chief, Alhaji or Alhaja with the surname until you are invited to use a first name. Professional titles reflect real achievement and are often used in everyday business.
- Relationship before transaction (slide 15). Trust is often personal and built over time. Expect more than one conversation before price. A call or video meeting carries weight that email alone does not.
- This is not about flattery. It is about showing you see the person, which makes the business conversation easier.

Activity

Pair rewrite (slides 16 to 18). Hand out the pair exercise sheet (05). Pairs have 10 minutes to rewrite the cold email using the "Introduction to a new distributor" template as a guide. Walk the room and listen for good lines to quote. Take two volunteers to read their openings aloud, then show the model answer on slide 18.

Timing tip: Give a 2-minute warning. If a pair finishes early, ask them to also write a WhatsApp version in three lines.

If you are running late: Shorten the rewrite to 7 minutes and ask pairs to rewrite only the opening and the closing. Show the full model answer and the "What changed" table.

45 to 65 min: Reading indirect signals

Slides 19 to 23

Goal: Participants recognize when "yes," "we will see" or silence may not mean agreement, and they practice open questions that make an honest answer easy.

Key points to make

- When yes means maybe (slide 19). In much of U.S. business, a clear "no" is seen as efficient. In many West African business settings, a flat refusal can feel harsh, especially toward a guest or new partner. So reluctance is often signaled gently: "We will look into it." "No problem, we will see." Or a reply that never comes.
- None of this is dishonest. It is a different way of protecting the relationship. The risk is hearing agreement where none was given.
- Open questions (slide 20): "What would need to change for this to work for you?" "Which part of the proposal would you like us to revisit?" "Who else should we include as you consider this?"

- Silence is often information: the quote may be under internal review, waiting for a senior decision maker, or affected by holidays, travel or connectivity. It is not automatically a rejection.

Activity

Small groups of 3 or 4. Give half the groups card S1 and half card S2 (04). Groups have 8 minutes to pick A, B or C, agree on why, and write the exact words they would use. Then reveal feedback and scores on slides 21 and 22 (see the answer key in this guide) and debrief on slide 23. Ask groups that chose differently to explain their reasoning.

Timing tip: Hand out cards before you explain the task so groups can start reading. Call time firmly at 8 minutes. Debrief S1 first, because S2 builds on it.

If you are running late: Give every group S1 only. Show S2 on the slide and talk it through together in 3 minutes.

65 to 80 min: Digital trust and payments

Slides 24 to 27

Goal: Participants leave with a verification routine they will use for every new partner, and the words to explain it without signaling distrust.

Key points to make

- Start with respect (slide 24). Most Nigerian businesses are legitimate, and they guard against fraud too. Business email compromise hits companies everywhere, including in the United States. Verification is standard practice on both sides.
- Walk through the checklist (slide 25), item by item, with the reason for each.
- Bank detail changes (slide 26): never act on a change of bank details sent only by email. Call a number you already have, not one in the message.
- Say it this way (slide 27): "We verify all new partners, and we are happy to share our own registration details."
- This is not legal or financial advice. For payment structures, letters of credit and compliance, talk to your bank, a trade finance advisor or qualified counsel.

Activity

Participants tick each item on the handout checklist that their firm already does. Ask: "Which one item will you add?" Take two or three answers. If time allows, show the Corporate Affairs Commission public search page.

Timing tip: This segment can attract long personal stories about scams. Acknowledge them in one sentence and bring the room back to the checklist.

If you are running late: Cover the checklist and the bank-details rule only. Point to the template on the handout and the Template Library.

80 to 90 min: Action plan and evaluation

Slides 28 to 30

Goal: Every firm commits to one concrete next step, and you collect the evaluation data that shows the session worked.

Key points to make

- Recap the three ideas: greet and use titles; ask open questions and confirm in writing; verify every new partner the same way.
- "Your next step should be something you can do this week, with a real partner or prospect."
- Point to the free tools: Readiness Assessment, Message Check, the Template Library and the simulator, all at dealdialect.com.
- Thank participants and ask them to complete the survey before they leave. It takes about 3 minutes; the follow-up question is optional.

Activity

Action plan (slide 28). Each firm writes one next step using the frame on the handout: "This week I will _____ with _____ by _____." Ask two volunteers to share. Then show the survey QR code (slide 30) and hand out paper surveys to anyone who prefers paper.

Timing tip: Start the survey with at least 4 minutes left. Surveys left for "later" rarely come back.

If you are running late: Never cut the survey. If needed, skip the volunteer shares and ask everyone to read their next step to a neighbor instead.

Handling tough questions

Questions like these are a good sign: participants are taking the content seriously. Thank the person, answer briefly and move on. If you do not know an answer, say so and offer to follow up.

Question	Suggested answer
"Isn't this stereotyping?"	"Good question, and the right one to ask. A stereotype is a fixed conclusion about every person in a group. We are doing the opposite: learning tendencies you will often meet, then watching the individual and adjusting. Many Nigerian business people have worked internationally and may communicate very directly. The guide is reviewed by practitioners in the market, and it tells you to follow your partner's lead."
"We only use email."	"Email is right for formal documents and your written recap. But in many Nigerian business settings, phone calls and WhatsApp, including voice notes, are where relationships are built. Add one call or video meeting at key moments: first contact, after a quote, before a decision. Then confirm in writing. Follow your company's rules on messaging apps and record keeping."
"What about fraud? Isn't Nigeria risky?"	"Fraud happens in every market, including ours, and business email compromise targets U.S. firms every day. Most Nigerian businesses are legitimate, and they verify U.S. partners too. The answer is the same routine for every new partner anywhere: check the company registry (in Nigeria, the Corporate Affairs Commission public search), meet on video, confirm bank details by phone, use secure payment for first deals, and report suspected internet fraud to ic3.gov."
"We are the seller. Why should we adapt?"	"Because adapting is part of selling. You would localize a product label for a new market; this is localizing how you communicate. It costs little and makes it easier for a buyer to say yes. Respect is remembered."
"Does this apply in Lagos and in Kano?"	"Partly. There are real regional differences between north and south in language, religion and business style, and Lagos has its own fast pace. Plan around Friday prayers in the north and Ramadan, for example. Use today as a starting point and ask your partner what works for them."
"Should I use Nigerian Pidgin to build rapport?"	"Unless you speak it well, no. Pidgin is widely used and valued, but from a newcomer it can sound like imitation. Clear, warm English, correct titles and a sincere greeting do more. Learning to pronounce your partner's name correctly is a better investment."
"My partner gave me a gift. Is that a problem?"	"Small gifts and hospitality are common and usually generous. Follow your company's gifts policy. If anyone is a government official, U.S. anti-bribery law, the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, applies. That is a compliance question, so check with qualified counsel."
"My contact uses my first name and is very direct. Did I get this wrong?"	"No. Individuals vary, and many people adjust their style for U.S. partners. Mirror your partner. When they invite first names, use them. The guide gives you a respectful default, not a script."

Answer keys

Scenario cards (reveal after groups decide)

S1. The quiet distributor

Choice	Points	Feedback
A. Email: "Following up again. Please confirm by Friday or we will offer the territory to others."	0	An ultimatum risks ending the relationship. Silence often means the quote is still being discussed internally.
B. Call or send a WhatsApp message, ask after them, then ask whether any part of the quote needs discussion.	3	A personal channel and an open question make an honest answer easy.
C. Wait another month.	1	Patience is good, but total silence can read as lost interest.

S2. "We will see about the price"

Choice	Points	Feedback
A. "Great, so we have a deal?"	0	This pushes for a yes that was not given.
B. "Thank you. Which part of the pricing would you like us to look at together?"	3	It invites the real concern.
C. Offer an immediate 10% discount.	1	It may solve the wrong problem and sets a pattern.

Debrief (slide 23): use a personal channel; ask open questions; avoid ultimatums; do not discount before you know the concern.

Five-phrase rewrite on the handout

Original	One better version	Why
"Hi Tunde, quick question."	"Good morning, Mr. Adebayo. I hope you are well. May I ask a quick question about the order?"	Greeting, courtesy line, title and surname for a new or senior contact.
"Please confirm by EOD or we'll move on."	"When convenient, could you let me know where things stand? I am happy to discuss on a call."	Removes an ultimatum and unclear jargon; invites discussion.
"Can we touch base on 03/04 at 10am?"	"Could we speak on 4 March at 3:00 p.m. West Africa Time?" (Use your real date and time.)	Plain words instead of an idiom; month in words; time zone stated.
"So we have a deal, yes?"	"Is there anything you would like us to adjust before we move forward?"	An open question makes an honest answer easy.
"As I already said in my last email, the price is final!!"	"Thank you for your question. Our price for this order is US\$12,400. I would be glad to explain how we arrived at it, or to suggest options."	Removes blame and exclamation marks; gives a reason and an alternative.

The pair exercise model answer and "What changed" table are on the facilitator copy of 05_Pair_Exercise.

After the session

- **Surveys:** enter each paper survey at the session short link within one week, one entry per form. Store forms securely and destroy them once entered. Never enter an email unless the participant ticked "Yes" on question 8.
- **Arrival cards (optional):** if you used them, enter each card with its matching survey for a true before-and-after measure.
- **Report your session (about two minutes):** go to dealdialect.com/counselors and choose "Tell us you ran it." Enter your organization, type, U.S. state, date, number of attendees and firms, and the kit. Add comments on what worked or what you changed. Choose whether we may list your organization as a partner.
- **Privacy:** do not upload the attendance sheet or participant names. We only need counts.

Appendix: slide guide

Every slide footer carries the attribution line. The slide file has full speaker notes; this table is a summary for planning.

#	Title	On the slide	Notes
1	Communicating with Partners in Nigeria	Title, host logo space, date, facilitator, DealDialect logo	Welcome people as they arrive. Start on time.
2	Welcome	Housekeeping icons; "Ask questions any time"	One minute. Introduce yourself and the host. Mention the survey at the end.
3	Today in 90 minutes	The six segments with times	Name the promise: one message you can send this week.
4	The quote that went quiet	Quote email, two weeks crossed out, deadline email	Tell the illustrative Kano story. Ask: "What did the distributor hear?"
5	Quick poll	"Has a message to an overseas partner gone unanswered, and you did not know why?"	Second question: who sells, or plans to sell, to Nigeria or West Africa?
6	What a misread message costs	Lost replies · stalled quotes · damaged trust · deals lost to competitors	Connect to the poll answers. Use their stories, not figures.
7	Why Nigeria, why now	\$6.8 billion in U.S. goods exports to Nigeria in 2025, up 56.3% (USTR); SMEs 97.1% of identified U.S. exporters in 2024 (Census)	Small firms rarely have in-house cultural support.
8	Same language, different rules	"Same official language. Different rules of the conversation."	Norms for greeting, refusing and deciding differ.
9	Saying it or implying it	Scale from low-context to high-context	Neither end is better. Tendencies, not rules.
10	Guess the meaning	"I'm coming" · "Flash me" · "Next tomorrow" · "Sorry"	Tables agree in 60 seconds.
11	Nigerian English: answer key	All eight expressions with meanings	A full variety of English, not an error.
12	Tendencies, not rules	Map outline; 500+ languages; north and south; individual variation	Starting point, then watch and adjust.
13	Greet before business	Before and after of a one-line request	Opening with business can read as cold or rushed.
14	Titles and surnames	Dr. · Engr. · Barr. · Arc. · Chief · Alhaji · Alhaja	Use until invited to use first names.
15	Relationship before transaction	Call or video first · more than one conversation before price	Trust is often personal and built over time.
16	The cold email	The full cold email	"How would this land with a senior distributor in Lagos?"
17	Your turn: rewrite it	Instructions, 10-minute timer, template name	Walk the room. Collect good lines.
18	One way to write it	Model answer with changes highlighted	Link each change to a reason.
19	When yes means maybe	"We will look into it." · "No problem, we will see." · Silence	The risk is hearing agreement where none was given.
20	Questions that get honest answers	Three open questions	Ask the room for one more.
21	Scenario S1: The quiet distributor	Setup and choices A, B, C	Reveal: B = 3, C = 1, A = 0.
22	Scenario S2: "We will see about the price"	Setup and choices A, B, C	Reveal: B = 3, C = 1, A = 0. Why does C earn only 1?
23	What the scenarios teach	Personal channel · open questions · no ultimatums · no early discounts	Link back to the slide 4 story.
24	Verification is standard practice	"Most businesses are legitimate. Both sides verify."	Respectful framing first.
25	The digital trust checklist	The eight checklist items	Tick what you do; choose one to add.
26	Bank details changed? Pick up the phone.	Never act on an email alone.	The single most important habit here.
27	Say it this way	Secure payment template text	Not legal advice; consult your bank or counsel.

#	Title	On the slide	Notes
28	Your next step	"This week I will _____ with _____ by _____."	Every firm writes one. Two share.
29	Keep going: free tools	Assessment · guide and quick card · Message Check · templates · simulator	All free at dealdialect.com.
30	Thank you	Survey QR code, short link, host logo, attribution	Give time to finish the survey.