

Communicating with Partners in Nigeria

Participant handout

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Six key ideas

1. **Same language, different rules.** English is Nigeria's official language, but norms for greeting, refusing and deciding often differ from U.S. habits.
2. **Greet before business.** Open with a greeting and a courtesy line. Opening with business can read as cold or rushed.
3. **Use titles and surnames** (Dr., Engr., Barr., Arc., Chief, Alhaji, Alhaja) until you are invited to use first names.
4. **Relationship before transaction.** Expect more than one conversation before price. Calls and video carry weight that email alone does not.
5. **Read indirect signals.** "We will see" or silence may mean "not yet." Ask open questions and confirm agreements in writing.
6. **Verify every new partner the same way,** and explain why. Most businesses are legitimate, and both sides verify.

These are tendencies, not rules. Individuals and regions vary. Follow your partner's lead.

Nigerian English: eight expressions

Expression	Usually means	Expression	Usually means
"I'm coming"	Please wait, I will be right back	"How far?"	How are you? What is the status? (informal)
"Well done"	A greeting to someone at work	"Sorry"	Sympathy, not an admission of fault
"Flash me"	Give me a missed call	"Go-slow"	Traffic jam
"Next tomorrow"	The day after tomorrow	"Dash"	A gift or tip

Rewrite exercise: five phrases

Rewrite each line for a new or senior Nigerian business contact.

1. "Hi Tunde, quick question."

2. "Please confirm by EOD or we'll move on."

3. "Can we touch base on 03/04 at 10am?"

4. "So we have a deal, yes?"

5. "As I already said in my last email, the price is final!!"

Scenario S1: The quiet distributor

You sent a quote to a Lagos distributor two weeks ago. No reply. What do you do?

- A. Email: "Following up again. Please confirm by Friday or we will offer the territory to others."
- B. Call or send a WhatsApp message, ask after them, then ask whether any part of the quote needs discussion.
- C. Wait another month.

Our choice: _____ Why: _____

Our exact words: _____

Scenario S2: "We will see about the price"

On a video call, the managing director says, "No problem, we will see about the price." What do you say?

- A. "Great, so we have a deal?"
- B. "Thank you. Which part of the pricing would you like us to look at together?"
- C. Offer an immediate 10% discount.

Our choice: _____ Why: _____

Our exact words: _____

Digital trust checklist

Tick what your firm already does. Circle one to add.

- ☐ Verify the company in the official registry (in Nigeria, the Corporate Affairs Commission public search).
- ☐ Meet on video before the first transaction.
- ☐ Check email domains carefully for look-alike spellings.
- ☐ Never act on a change of bank details sent only by email; call a number you already have.
- ☐ Use letters of credit, escrow or staged payments for first deals.
- ☐ Keep records of all agreements and payment instructions.
- ☐ Report suspected internet fraud to the FBI Internet Crime Complaint Center (ic3.gov).
- ☐ Explain it: "We verify all new partners, and we are happy to share our own registration details."

Free resources

- Nigeria guide and quick card: dealdialect.com/markets/nigeria
- Readiness Assessment, Message Check, Template Library and simulator: dealdialect.com
- Questions and corrections: Ayomide Adeyeye, founder of DealDialect, adeyeyeayomide97@gmail.com

My next step: This week I will _____ with _____ by _____.