

Pair exercise: rewrite the cold email

Communicating with Partners in Nigeria

The situation (fictional). Sarah Miller is export manager at Prairie Flow Pumps, an irrigation pump maker in Kansas. She found Okafor Agro Supplies, a distributor in Lagos, through an online directory. The managing director is Engr. Chinedu Okafor. Sarah has never been in touch with him. This is her first email.

Subject: Pumps!!

Hi Chinedu,

I'm Sarah, VP of export sales at Prairie Flow Pumps. We make best-in-class irrigation pumps and want to hit the ground running in Nigeria ASAP.

Ballpark pricing is attached. Let me know by Friday if you're in. Otherwise we'll circle back with other distributors in Lagos.

Can you do a call 03/04 at 10am?

Thanks,
Sarah

Your task (10 minutes)

1. Read the email aloud once. Each of you names one thing that might land badly with Engr. Okafor, and why.
2. Rewrite the email together. Use the "Introduction to a new distributor" template as a guide (dealdialect.com/tools/templates).
3. Check your draft: Does it greet before business? Use his title and surname? Build the relationship before price? Avoid idioms, abbreviations and ultimatums? Give a clear date and time zone, or let him choose?
4. Finished early? Write a three-line WhatsApp version to send after the email.

Our rewrite

Model answer

Facilitator copy · Reveal after volunteers have read their versions

Subject: Introduction from Prairie Flow Pumps, Kansas, USA

Good morning, Engr. Okafor,

I hope this message finds you and your family well.

My name is Sarah Miller, and I am the Export Manager at Prairie Flow Pumps, a family-owned maker of irrigation pumps in Kansas, in the United States. I learned about Okafor Agro Supplies through an online directory of agricultural distributors and was impressed by your network serving farmers across the southwest.

We are looking for a long-term distribution partner in Nigeria. I would value the opportunity to learn about your business and to explore whether our pumps could be useful to your customers.

Would you be open to a short introductory call? Please suggest a day and time, in West Africa Time, that suits you. I am glad to adjust to your schedule.

I have attached a short company profile for your reference. We can share pricing once we understand your needs.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to hearing from you.

Warm regards,
Sarah Miller
Export Manager, Prairie Flow Pumps
Phone and WhatsApp: +1 620 555 0147

What changed and why

Change	Reason
"Hi Chinedu" became "Good morning, Engr. Okafor" plus a courtesy line	A greeting, title and surname show respect to a new, senior contact.
Full name and role, plus a reason for writing to him in particular	Shows the message is personal, not a mass email, and starts the relationship.
"Best-in-class," "hit the ground running," "ballpark," "circle back" and "ASAP" removed	Idioms and abbreviations can be unclear and sound like a sales script.
"Let me know by Friday... otherwise" removed	An ultimatum from a stranger can end the conversation before it starts.
Pricing moved to a later step	Relationship before transaction: price follows understanding his needs.
"03/04 at 10am" replaced by an invitation to choose a time in West Africa Time	Avoids an ambiguous date and a U.S.-only time, and gives him control.
"Pumps!!" became a clear subject line	Plain subject, no exclamation marks, easy to find later.

Say it this way: "Good morning, Engr. Okafor. I hope this message finds you and your family well." One line like this often does more for a reply than a stronger sales pitch.