PLANNING WORKBOOK / FREE STARTER GUIDE

Your First African Market Brief

Turn a broad business idea into a focused question, a source list and a practical next step.

Allow 25 minutes for reading and practice. No account required.



Illustrative African business or field scene, created with AI. Not an actual engagement.

Start with one decision

A useful brief begins with the decision you need to make. ‘I want to do business in Africa’ is too broad to research. ‘I want to understand whether our packaging service could serve a defined customer group in Conakry’ gives the research a purpose. Name the product or service, the likely customer, your relevant capability and the country you are considering. Keep the first version to one page. You are preparing to learn, not trying to prove the idea is already right.

Separate evidence from assumptions

Create three columns: what you know, what you believe and what you still need to establish. Record where each piece of information came from and its date. An official country briefing, a potential customer’s comment and a supplier’s promotional claim answer different questions. If two sources disagree, preserve the disagreement and decide how to check it. A recent conversation may reveal a useful lead, but it does not automatically confirm a market-wide fact.

UNDERSTAND THE LIMITS / TEST YOUR REASONING

Make the first visit purposeful

Choose meetings that can answer the open questions. A customer interview might test demand; a distributor meeting might clarify coverage; a professional adviser can explain which current requirements need checking. Ask for appointments before building the itinerary. Leave time between meetings and record what each meeting actually established. Guinea and Sierra Leone can be compared using the country briefings on this site, but the choice should follow your objective rather than an assumption that neighbouring markets work identically.

A fictional practice scenario

A fictional packaging SME is considering Guinea and Sierra Leone. A friend offers an introduction in one market, but the team has not spoken with any potential customers in either country.

Which next step would create the most useful first evidence?

A. Choose the market where the introduction is easiest.

B. Write the target customer and decision criteria, then arrange comparable customer conversations.

C. Register a company in both countries immediately.

Worked response

The strongest response is B. Comparable customer conversations test the business question. The introduction can help arrange a meeting, but it is not evidence of demand or a reason to commit to registration.

Reading and context

Capital Africa: Guinea market briefing

Capital Africa: Sierra Leone market briefing

The explanations and worksheet are original Capital Africa material. Follow the linked publishers for their own guidance. Educational material does not replace legal, financial, tax or engineering advice, laboratory testing, or current guidance from relevant authorities.

YOUR WORKING DOCUMENT

Make the learning practical.

Work through a fictional example first. Use these prompts to organise your notes; keep confidential information out of shared learning discussions.

1. What product or service are we considering, and for whom?

2. What relevant capability can we demonstrate?

3. Which two or three criteria will decide the market choice?

4. What is confirmed, assumed or still unknown?

5. Which sources or meetings could resolve each unknown?

6. What is the smallest useful next step, its owner and its review date?

Next action / owner / review date: