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## TIPS: ON-THE-GROUND MARKET RESEARCH

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**During our GHD project, we were responsible for doing a comprehensive market research project for the CD4 diagnostics market in Uganda for Daktari Diagnostics. We used several tactics in order to get the information needed for our project. As a result of our experiences, we developed the following key steps and tips for performing market research in developing countries:**

### **1. Pre-trip Research**

It is very important to gather as much information as possible before doing any on-the-ground research. This will create a base for your research and allow you to develop substantial questions for your interviews. We used the following tools before we left for our trip:

- a. Online Research- There is an overwhelming amount of research you can pull up via the web. Many key organizations in global health, such as WHO, CHAI, CDC have a fair amount of information on their websites. Specifically, finding regulatory guidelines online is really useful for any research. However, it is important to note that the guidelines often need to be confirmed in the country, since there is often a substantial discrepancy on what “should” be done and what is actually done. This early research provides a good basis for your questions when you interview members of these organizations. Additionally, websites are a great tool for getting contact information for key members in those organizations.
  
- b. Interviews – Finding specialists in the field domestically is also very important for research. Not only do they provide key information, they also provide a lot of guidance on dealing with political tensions, culture and bureaucracy within that country.

- c. Outlining the Market-Begin to outline the market based on the research that has been done. Although, the majority of your outline may be incorrect, it really helps you understand the key organizations and players in the market.

## 2. **Cold Emailing**

Finding email addresses through basic online research or through contacts can be useful as a first point of contact with organizations. Since the response to email is generally slower in many developing countries, it is advisable to email in advance of arriving or very early on in your trip. This is also not the most dependable form of communication, but it could be an effective way of setting up meetings in advance of your travels. Below we have attached a sample cold email to an organization:

### **Sample email:**

Dear Dr.X,

I am part of a team of graduate students from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) .We are working on a project with Company X, which is working on [give brief description of company]. As part of our research, we are trying to learn more about your company and the role it plays in this process.

We will be in Uganda from next Monday (March 14th) until the following Friday (March 25th), to do some research on the market there. We would very much like to speak to someone at your company about this process.

It would be wonderful if we could arrange a meeting with you and/or anyone else at Company X who you think might be relevant for our project when we are in Uganda.

Many thanks.

Best wishes,

### **3. Cold Calling**

In our experience, cold-calling proved to be the most effective technique for getting a meeting. We pulled up general numbers from organization websites and cold called them when we were on the ground. It is advisable to only do this when you are already in your market, as many organizations wanted to meet same day and were very responsive once they knew we were in the country.

They key tips for cold calling are:

- Make sure to introduce yourself quickly but give sufficient details about who are you are, where you came form and what you want from them.
- Always let them know that you are in the country for a limited amount of time
- Do not be afraid to ask for a senior person. Most organizations generally want you to get the information you need form the right person
- Make sure to set up an exact meeting day and time during your first phone call with the contact.
- Let your research contact pick a location as they are more familiar with the area
- Be open to any time or location if possible
- Be respectful of the contact's time on the phone and during the meeting
- Always follow up the day before your meeting to confirm the time and location
- Do not hesitate to ask your contact for their counterpart at a similar organization in order to further develop your research

### **4. Just show up!**

If emailing and calling does not work, do not hesitate to show up at the office without a previously schedule meeting. Although this may seem rude and unconventional, you will most likely be met by a receptionist who will either set up a meeting for you that same day or schedule a follow up appointment.

## 5. Other Tips

- Do not depend on email only.
- Make sure to get business cards from each contact in case you have follow-up questions
- Bring a hardcopy of any available information you have about the project or organization you are working with
- Be prepared with appropriate prioritized questions for each contact. Occasionally contacts can only meet for 10 or 15 minutes.
- Write meeting notes directly after the meeting in order not to forget key details
- Avoid scheduling several meetings within a tight timeframe. It is difficult to estimate the length of any given meeting.
- Send a thank you letter to each contact in order to maintain the relationship