INSIGHT GUIDE

Selecting the Right Distributor in Africa

Criteria and process for partner selection that manufacturers consistently get wrong.

A distributor relationship is difficult to unwind once signed — exclusive territory agreements, existing customer relationships, and reputational ties make switching costly. Selection deserves the same rigor as hiring a senior executive.

Core Selection Criteria

- **Technical capability** — can they install, configure, and support your product, or only resell it?
- **Financial capacity** — can they carry inventory and extend credit terms without cash-flow strain?
- **Existing customer relationships** — do they already sell into your target buyer segment (fleet, government, industrial)?
- **Geographic coverage** — realistic reach versus claimed reach; verify through reference checks, not brochures.
- **Service and after-sales infrastructure** — trained technicians, spare parts access, response time commitments.
- **Cultural and commercial alignment** — willingness to invest in training and co-marketing, not just margin.

Red Flags to Watch For

- Distributor represents multiple competing product lines with no clear prioritization of yours
- Reluctance to share existing customer references or site visits
- Requests for exclusivity before any performance track record exists
- No dedicated technical staff, only sales personnel

Recommended Process

- Shortlist 3–5 candidates through direct market research, not inbound applications alone
- Conduct technical capability assessment, including a site visit where possible
- Start with a non-exclusive, time-bound trial period with clear performance milestones
- Formalize exclusivity only after milestones are demonstrably met

Next step: SRMPL Advisory runs distributor identification, qualification, and onboarding as part of our Channel Development service — drawing on established regional relationships built over 16 years.