

The SME Bulletin

July 2025 Edition



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- Manufacturing: Driving cross-border growth with AfCFTA
- Weathering economic uncertainty: practical cash flow tips for SMEs
- Building credibility online: Why social media marketing is a game changer for your business

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Welcome Note

Dear Business Owner,

Welcome to July!

Can you believe we are already halfway through the year? As a small business owner, it might feel like a mix of unachieved dreams, tight margins, unexpected wins and hard decisions. But if you are reading this, it means you still have so many shots at fulfilling your goals. Running a business in Nigeria right now takes guts, clarity, creativity and a whole lot of courage. We see the effort you are putting in to stay afloat, to grow, to adapt and we will always cheer you on!

Get ready for an amazing read in our July bulletin edition. We will be sharing with you tips on how to thrive in uncertain times, how to take advantage of AfCFTA to explore cross-border opportunities, practical tips on building credibility online, managing your cash flow and so much more! We will also be sharing updates from our SME community, upcoming events and a few exciting things you won't want to miss.

Finally, this edition is your gentle reminder that it is okay to pause, realign and start again. The second half of the year is yours to shape and we are here to walk that journey with you.

Abiodun Olubitan

*Group Head, SME Banking,
Access Bank PLC*

A large container ship is docked at a port, with a crane visible on the left side. The ship's hull is white, and the word "MOL" is visible on the side. In the foreground, there are several stacks of shipping containers in various colors, including blue, red, and white. The sky is a deep blue with some clouds. The overall scene is industrial and suggests global trade and manufacturing.

MANUFACTURING: DRIVING CROSS-BORDER GROWTH WITH AfCFTA

The implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is fast becoming a game changer for medium-sized manufacturers in Nigeria. AfCFTA vision of creating a single market for goods and services across the continent offers manufacturers an unprecedented opportunity to scale operations beyond borders, reduce trade costs, and increase export revenue.

Why AfCFTA Is a Big Deal for Manufacturers

AfCFTA connects 54 African countries with a combined GDP of over \$3.4 trillion and a population of 1.3 billion, positioning it as the largest free trade area in the world. For Nigerian manufacturers, this means easier access to nearby African markets where demand for industrial, household, and agro-processed goods are rising.

The agreement eliminates tariffs on up to 90% of goods traded within Africa, removes non-tariff barriers, and simplifies customs procedures making it more affordable and faster to get Nigerian-made products into markets like Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Rwanda, and Kenya.

Growth Sectors with Regional Potential

Certain Nigerian-manufactured products are already well positioned for cross-border growth such as:

- **Processed foods and packaged consumer goods:** Growing urban populations in Africa are creating new demand for affordable FMCG items.
- **Construction materials:** Cement, paints, and tiles have significant potential, especially in East and Central Africa where infrastructure projects are expanding.
- **Light machinery and spare parts:** With industrialization efforts underway in countries like Ethiopia and Uganda, Nigerian-made equipment can fill regional supply gaps.
- **Textiles and fashion:** Locally produced garments and fabrics are gaining appeal as intra-African fashion trade grows.



Practical Steps to take as a Nigerian Manufacturer

To take advantage of AfCFTA's benefits, manufacturers should:

- **Understand Rules of Origin:** Ensure your products meet AfCFTA's origin criteria so they qualify for tariff reductions. For example, a product must be substantially produced or value-added in Nigeria.
- **Register with Export Agencies:** Enrol with the Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC) and obtain necessary certifications like the AfCFTA Certificate of Origin.
- **Ensure to Study New Markets:** Conduct market research on product demand, pricing, cultural preferences, and competition in your target countries.
- **Upgrade Logistics Strategy:** Use regional logistics networks and identify freight partners experienced in intra-African trade.
- **Comply with Standards:** Understand sanitary, safety, and packaging regulations in your export destinations to avoid border delays or rejections.

MSMEs who build the right capacity, partnerships, and compliance systems stand a chance to benefit significantly as AfCFTA deepens over the next few years.

Final Words

AfCFTA is no longer a policy on paper, it's a practical framework that Nigerian manufacturers can use to scale operations, diversify revenue, and build continental brands. The opportunity to grow from a local factory into a regional supplier has never been more within reach.



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WEATHERING ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY: PRACTICAL CASH FLOW TIPS FOR SMEs

That one sentence shattered Chidi's excitement. He had just secured a ₦2,000,000 deal to supply packaging materials. As a business owner, you know this is a solid win! The invoice was out, profit looked promising, and it all felt like progress finally. But just days before delivery, his supplier demanded full payment upfront and his own client hadn't paid yet. By the weekend, Chidi's cash was locked up, his operations stalled, and the deal that once looked golden now felt like a dead end.

This is the reality many entrepreneurs face: profit isn't the problem but cash flow is. In today's economy, even profitable SMEs are struggling to stay liquid. Customers delay payments, costs keep rising and the market conditions shift without warning. It's no longer enough to make sales, you need to manage cash smartly to build a sustainable business.

Let's talk about cash flow tips, tested by real entrepreneurs and tailored for today's realities.

Track Your Daily Cash Flow

If you don't know your numbers, your business is flying blind. Make it a daily habit to record what came in, what went out, and what is left. This small but consistent act of tracking will give you clarity. It helps you spot red flags early, make smarter decisions and stay calm in cases of emergency.

Cut "Nice-To-Haves" and Focus on What Keeps You Afloat

Take a critical look at your current expenses and ask: Is this generating revenue? Can I do this cheaper, smarter, or later? If the answer is no, it might be time to pause or eliminate that cost. You can also explore cost-sharing opportunities with other SMEs such as delivery logistics, workspace, or marketing efforts. In tight seasons, reviewing your costs doesn't mean shrinking your dreams, it means keeping your lights on and your team paid.



"Oga, the goods are ready, but we no dey do credit again."

Encourage Upfront Payments and Make It Attractive

Don't feel weird about asking for full or part payment before you deliver. It is not desperation, but rather, a good business sense. Package your product well, offer a small discount for early payments, or introduce loyalty bundles that reward clients who pay in advance. Make the payment process easy using POS terminals or Access Bank's digital payment tools. Prepayment improves your cash position, reduces debt stress and helps you plan better. Clients who value your service will understand.

Renegotiate Everything

Now is the time to use your voice and your leverage. Renegotiating with your landlord, supplier, or logistics partner, can open up room to breathe. Ask if payments can be split into phases, deadlines extended, or discounts offered for bulk purchases. Most partners are open to this conversation especially if you are transparent and proactive. Managing risk is part of the job, and your ability to negotiate is one of your greatest tools.

Running a business in Nigeria is no small feat and we see how much heart and hard work you put into it every day. At Access Bank, we've supported thousands of entrepreneurs through tough seasons and we're committed to supporting you too.

BUILDING CREDIBILITY ONLINE:

WHY SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING IS A GAME CHANGER FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Our world is now dominated by the media where you can build trust, relevance and value. If your business is not visible online, you are leaving money on the table.

Before someone decides to buy from you, they will likely check you out on Instagram, Google, or LinkedIn. If they can't find you or what they see doesn't look serious, they will move on to someone else.

People now make buying decisions based on what they see online. That's why showing up consistently and professionally on social media is not just nice to have, it is a necessity. Social media is no longer just for entertainment; it's where trust is built, reputations are formed, and businesses grow.

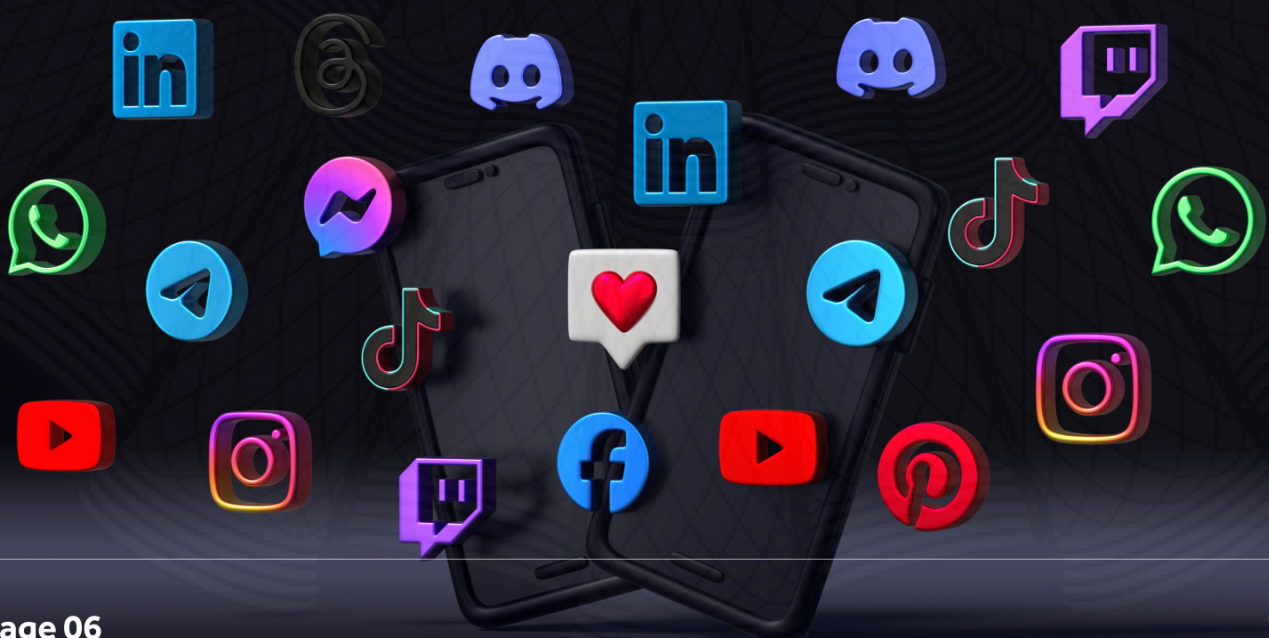
If you want customers to take you seriously, you need to take your online presence seriously. Let's talk about how to do that.

Your Online Presence Is Your First Impression

Think of your Instagram, Facebook, or LinkedIn page as your digital storefront. The way your business shows up online shapes how people perceive you. Is your brand easy to understand? Do your posts reflect quality and professionalism? Is it clear what you offer?

Having an active, well-curated social media presence makes your business feel real, reliable, and ready to serve. People may not say it, but they are checking before they call, click, or commit.

Visibility creates credibility. If you are not showing up online, you may be losing opportunities before you even know they exist.





Social Media Marketing Builds Connection and Trust

Good social media marketing goes beyond selling. It's about storytelling, education, and creating value that meets your audience's needs. When people see consistent content that reflects your expertise, your passion, and your customer care, they begin to trust you. Share your story, teach something and engage consistently.

People buy from brands they connect with. Social media gives you the space to be seen, heard, and believed. When people see real value and consistency, they begin to trust you. And trust leads to sales, loyalty, and referrals.

Customer Reviews Are Digital Gold

Customer reviews and testimonials are one of the most powerful tools for building online credibility. A good review can do more for your business than a paid ad because it comes from someone who has seen the results.

Ask satisfied customers to share their experiences. Then feature those stories on your platforms through video testimonials, WhatsApp screenshots, or direct quotes. When others see that you deliver, they are more likely to believe you can deliver for them too.

Consistency Builds Authority

Credibility is built over time. And that's why consistency on social media is key. Regular, high-quality content shows that you're not just a one-hit wonder but a brand with staying power.

Create a rhythm. Post helpful tips, showcase behind-the-scenes moments, answer common questions, and highlight wins. The more your audience sees you showing up, the more they start to see you as a go-to authority in your space.

Digital Marketing

When you combine authentic content, social proof, and consistent engagement with digital marketing, you unlock even greater results. Digital marketing helps you target the right audience, track what's working, and reach more people beyond your immediate circle. It works hand in hand with social media to boost your visibility, build trust faster, and drive real business growth.

In conclusion, social media marketing gives you the power to tell your story, build your brand, and amplify your impact. Pair that with authentic customer reviews, digital marketing and intentional consistency, and your business will just be visible and profitable.

The way your business shows up online is just as important as what you sell. People don't just buy products, they buy trust and this trust is built through consistent content, real connection and credibility.

So, how are you showing up online today?



CAC REGISTRATION PRICES SET TO INCREASE FROM 1ST AUGUST, 2025

If you are thinking of registering your business, now is the time to act.

The Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) has announced that registration fees will increase starting August 1, 2025. While the exact new pricing hasn't been officially released, early signs suggest a significant upward review.

To help you stay ahead, we are offering a discounted CAC registration support. Don't wait until the prices go up.

Send an email to welovesmes@accessbankplc.com to get started and lock in the current rate.



Upcoming Events

SME Digest radio show comes up on classic FM 97.3 by 7:30p.m every Tuesday. Ensure you tune in to get all the juicy information we have packed for you

Are you sitting on valuable business data but not sure how to use it?

Join us for this powerful session of **Access Business webinar** where experts will show you how to transform customer insights, sales trends, and digital footprints into actionable strategies and profits. Whether you are in retail, manufacturing, healthcare, or services, this session will help you unlock the Naira value in your numbers.

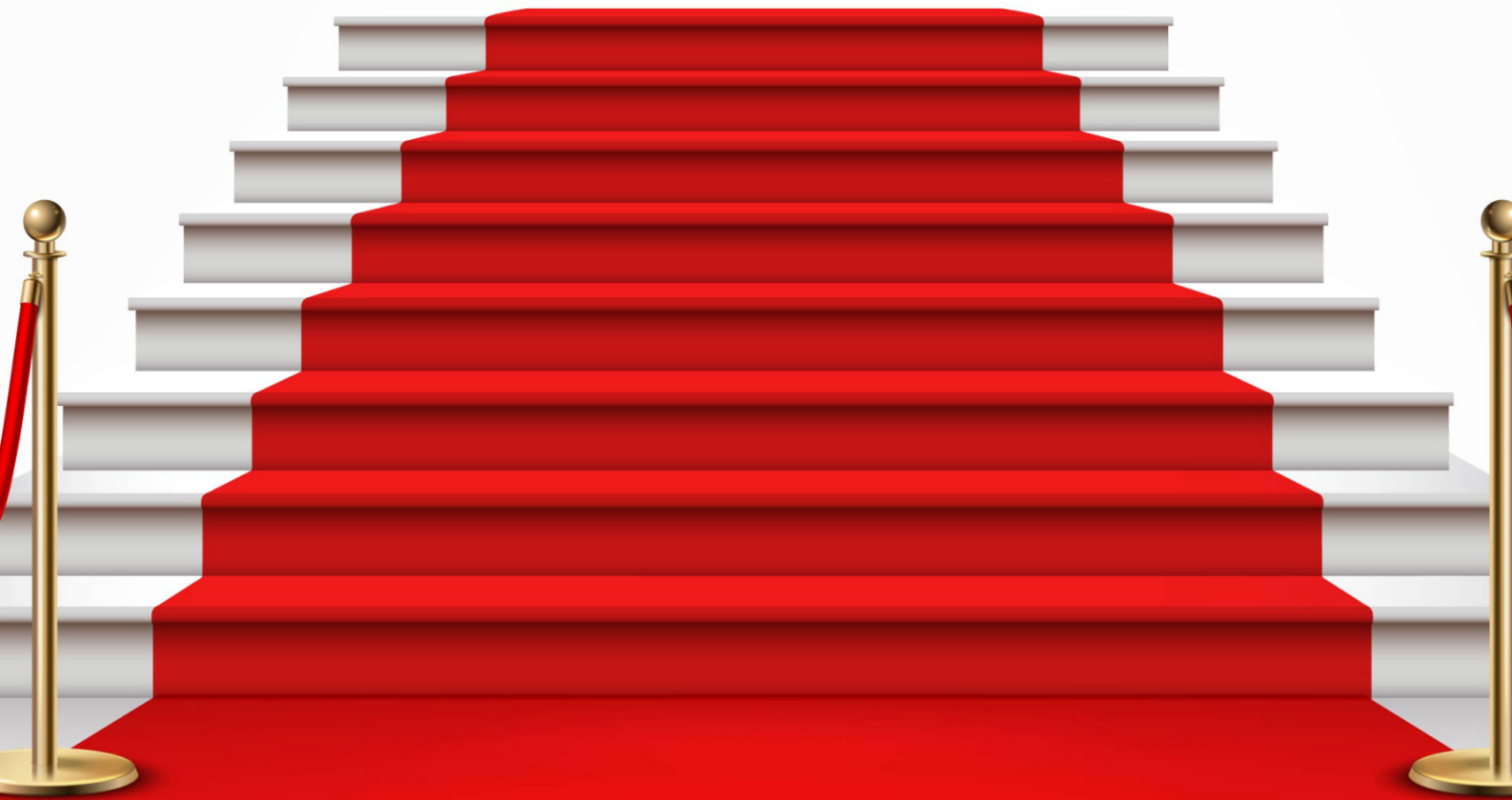
Date: 24th July, 2025



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EVENTS CORNER



**Access Bank at the 5th
Annual MSME & Start-Up
Summit – May 30, 2025**

Access Bank recently partnered with The Economic Forum Series to deliver an impactful 5th Annual MSME & Start-Up Summit, where over 1,000 entrepreneurs and stakeholders were in attendance. Chizoma Okoli, the Deputy Managing Director, Access Bank, delivered a keynote address, reinforcing our commitment to MSME growth. To drive engagement, we hosted a spontaneous **Speed Pitch** session where selected MSMEs presented their business ideas. The **top three MSMEs** were rewarded with cash prizes totaling **₦1,000,000**.



TREASURY WRAP

Middle East in Focus

June has been shaken by the unfolding Middle East crisis, triggering a risk-off sentiment across global markets. This raises an important question: how did we get here?

Israel threw the first punch...

The Iran-Israel war, which erupted on June 13, 2025, has become the most direct and destructive confrontation between the two nations to date. Israel launched Operation Rising Lion, targeting Iran's nuclear facilities, missile stockpiles, and key military infrastructure. In retaliation, Iran unleashed a barrage of ballistic missiles and drone attacks on Israeli cities, including a deadly strike on Beersheba's Soroka Hospital. The United States later intervened with coordinated airstrikes on Iranian nuclear sites, further escalating the conflict.

The war sent shockwaves through global markets, with Brent crude prices surging beyond \$80 per barrel, reflecting fears of potential disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz, a critical passage for nearly 20% of global oil supply. Domestically, this led to an increase in the price of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) in June 2025. The new pricing structure, which took effect on Saturday, June 21, 2025, raised the pump price in Lagos from ₦885 to ₦925 per litre.

Trump brokered ceasefire...

A fragile ceasefire was brokered by U.S. President Donald Trump on June 24, 2025, following intense international pressure. This development prompted a retracement in crude oil prices, with Brent crude declining from \$80 per barrel to \$66 per barrel as of June 25, 2025. However, oil prices are expected to remain volatile in the coming weeks amid uncertainty surrounding the durability of the ceasefire and ongoing geopolitical risks.

Outlook

The ongoing Middle East crisis has introduced a fresh layer of geopolitical risk into global markets, reinforcing a risk-off mood across key asset classes. Although the Trump-brokered ceasefire between Iran and Israel has temporarily calmed markets, the situation remains fluid, and any breakdown in talks could reignite tensions. Nevertheless, we should expect a reversal in the prices of PMS if peace talk persists.

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Entrepreneurship
Niche
Goal Directed
Opportunity
Innovative
Team
Goals
Creative
Organized

Economy
Growth
Skills
Labour
Work
Ethics
Morals
Commitment
Reliable
Realistic
Competitive

*July
Tip Jar*

HAVE YOU BEEN TREATING YOUR CUSTOMERS LIKE TRANSACTIONS?

People stay loyal to brands that treat them as more than just buyers. No matter the size of your business, you have the opportunity to build real, lasting relationships and it often starts with the small things that show you care.

- Send a personalised thank-you message after every purchase not just an automated receipt
- Follow up weeks later to ask how they are enjoying your product or service
- Celebrate their birthdays, anniversaries, or business milestones.
- Remember their preferences and surprise them with relevant recommendations.
- Send weekly emails
- Re-engage customers who have been inactive with a "you've been quiet, and we miss doing business with you" message

Your customers have other choices but connection builds loyalty. When people feel seen, they are more likely to keep coming back, recommend you to others and even forgive small mistakes along the way.

A good business goes beyond transactions; it also entails building relationships. Make your customers feel valued, and they will keep choosing you.



Never Have I Ever:

Naija Business Owner Edition

Business in Nigeria will humble you, inspire you, and give you stories for days. Let's play — be honest, how many of these have happened to you?

Never Have I Ever...

- Argued with a dispatch rider who swore they were “almost there”
- Promised delivery without knowing how I'll actually sort it
- Slept with one eye open because customers won't let me rest
- Prayed for customers... then panicked when orders flooded in at once
- Used my business money to flex.
- Done soft marketing in family WhatsApp groups (and muted the group after)
- Told myself “I'm closing by 6” but still working by midnight

See You Next Month, Go-getters!

Thank you for sticking with us through the July edition of the SME Bulletin!

We know how busy running a business can be, so the fact that you took time out to read, reflect, and recharge with us means a lot. We hope the insights in this edition made you pause, think differently, and smile a little because yes, growth is serious business, but it doesn't have to be boring.

Some days will test your patience, others will remind you why you started. But every invoice, late night, tough customer, and small win is shaping your story.

We are rooting for you every step of the way. The second half of the year is yours to shape—and we believe you've got what it takes to finish strong.

Do you have a win you are proud of? Big or small, we want to hear it! **Send your story to welovesmes@accessbankplc.com for a chance to be featured in the Access SME Bulletin and inspire someone along the way.**

Remember, you're not doing business alone. We're here—cheering, supporting, and building with you.

See you in August!

we 
 **Love.**
 **'sMes**