

TolaData

# India Sales Leader

Candidate Pre-Interview Assignment

Estimated time: 3-4 hours | Format: Written (optional slides for Task 1) | Due: as agreed

## Purpose of this Assignment

This assignment gives us a clear, real-world signal of how you think, how you sell, and who you are as a professional. There are no trick questions and no single correct answer. We are looking for clarity of thought, commercial sharpness, and genuine engagement with the social impact space we operate in.

Please treat this as if you were preparing materials for your first 90 days in the role.

We value quality of thinking over volume. A concise, sharp response will always outperform a long, generic one.

Do not submit generic market research or copy-pasted frameworks. Show us your judgement.

You are welcome to reference your own past experience where relevant.

## About TolaData

TolaData ([www.toladata.com](http://www.toladata.com)) is a global SaaS platform built for the social impact sector - NGOs, PSUs, foundations, bilateral agencies, and government bodies - to manage programs, track performance, and demonstrate measurable impact. We have 110+ clients across all continents. India is our next major market entry, and you will be the person who builds it.

Our buyers are typically programme directors, M&E leads, CSR heads, and institutional heads. They are mission-driven, process-aware, and often operating in long procurement cycles with multiple stakeholders. They are not typical SaaS buyers.

## The Tasks

### Task 1 India Market Entry - Where Would You Start?

Suggested time: 60-75 minutes

#### What to do

You have just joined TolaData as India Sales Leader. You have 90 days to establish the first revenue beachhead.

Write a concise market entry brief (max 2 pages or 10 slides) covering:

- Your top 3 priority client segments and why - rank by ease of entry, deal size, and strategic value.
- For your #1 segment: name 5 specific organisations to target in the first 90 days. For each, state the likely buyer persona, the entry point (warm intro, event, cold outreach), and one reason TolaData is relevant to them right now.

#### We will assess

- ▶ India market and ecosystem knowledge
- ▶ Prioritisation under constraints
- ▶ Commercial instinct vs social sector empathy
- ▶ Network signals and ecosystem familiarity
- ▶ Honesty about the hard parts

c) Identify the single biggest obstacle to closing your first deal in India and how you would address it.

#### Deliverables

- 1-2 page written brief OR an 8-10 slide deck
- Segment prioritisation with rationale
- Named target organisations with entry logic
- Honest assessment of the key obstacle

## Task 2 Cold Outreach - An Email That Actually Gets a Reply

*Suggested time: 30-40 minutes*

#### What to do

You are reaching out cold to one of the following buyers (pick one):

Option A - CSR Head, a large Indian conglomerate (e.g. Tata, Mahindra, Bajaj)

Option B - Programme Director, a bilateral agency in India (e.g. GIZ, USAID, FCDO)

Option C - Director, a large Indian foundation (e.g. Azim Premji Foundation, Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies)

Write the outreach email you would actually send. Not a template. The real email that earns a 30-minute call.

Then in 3-5 bullet points, explain the strategic choices you made in writing it.

#### Deliverables

- One cold outreach email (max 200 words)
- 3-5 bullet strategic rationale
- State which persona you chose and why

#### We will assess

- ▶ *Ability to write for a mission-driven buyer*
- ▶ *Understanding of what these buyers care about*
- ▶ *Conciseness and hook quality*
- ▶ *Self-awareness about sales approach*
- ▶ *Integrity - does it over-promise?*

## Task 3 Deal Scenario - Navigating a Complex, Multi-Stakeholder Sale

*Suggested time: 45-60 minutes*

#### What to do

You are 4 months into a deal with a State Government department (e.g. Social Welfare Department). The M&E team loves the platform, but procurement is stalled. A consultant's report has flagged a competing solution that is 'cheaper and locally built.' The DG has asked for a meeting.

a) How do you prepare for this meeting? What do you want to walk out with?

b) The DG asks: 'Why should we pay more for a foreign platform when an Indian company can build something similar?' Write your response - as you would actually say it in the room.

c) What is your deal recovery plan if the meeting does not go as planned?

#### We will assess

- ▶ *Complex deal navigation*
- ▶ *Objection handling without aggression*
- ▶ *Competitive positioning ability*
- ▶ *Patience with long government cycles*
- ▶ *Composure and strategic thinking under pressure*

<p><b>Deliverables</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting prep note (max 1 page)</li> <li>• Verbatim response to the DG's objection</li> <li>• Deal recovery plan (max half page)</li> </ul>	
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**Task 4 Culture & Values - The Question We Most Want Answered**  
*Suggested time: 30-40 minutes*

<p><b>What to do</b></p> <p>TolaData is a mission-driven organisation. Our culture prizes smarts, integrity, and genuine passion for impact. We want to understand who you are, not just what you have done.</p> <p>Answer one of the following (your choice):</p> <p>Option A - Describe a time you chose the harder, more honest path in a sales situation - even when it cost you something. What happened and what did it teach you?</p> <p>Option B - What does 'selling for impact' mean to you? Use a specific moment from your career to explain.</p> <p>Option C - You are the first employee on the ground in a new market, no playbook, no team, no inbound leads. Walk us through your first 30 days - and how you keep yourself honest and motivated when there is no momentum yet.</p> <p><b>Deliverables</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written response, 300-500 words</li> <li>• State which option you chose</li> <li>• First-person, specific, honest</li> </ul>	<p><b>We will assess</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <i>Integrity and self-awareness</i></li> <li>▶ <i>Genuine connection to impact vs quota framing</i></li> <li>▶ <i>Builder mindset and autonomy</i></li> <li>▶ <i>Communication quality and authenticity</i></li> <li>▶ <i>Are they someone we want to trust with our brand?</i></li> </ul>
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### Submission & Format

Format: Submit as a single PDF, or PDF + slide deck if you chose the slide option for Task 1.  
 Length: Total written content should not exceed 6-8 pages. Quality over quantity.  
 No templates: We can tell. Original thinking only.  
 Deadline: As discussed between you and the hiring contact.

If you have questions about the brief, please email your hiring contact. Clarifying questions are welcome.

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**INTERNAL USE ONLY | Evaluation Rubric***Do not share with candidates*

Score each dimension 1-5 using the descriptors below. Aggregate across all four tasks. A total score of 28+ is a strong hire signal; 20-27 warrants a deeper conversation; below 20 is typically not a fit.

Dimension	Developing (1-2)	Proficient (3)	Exceptional (4-5)
<b>Market Intelligence &amp; Opportunity Framing</b>	Surface-level awareness	Accurate segmentation, some insight	Sharp prioritisation, novel angles, strong ICP logic
<b>Sales Strategy &amp; Pipeline Thinking</b>	Generic, no India nuance	Structured but lacks depth	Detailed, realistic, shows 6-18 month deal patience
<b>Social Impact Context</b>	Little sector empathy	Competent but transactional	Mission genuinely integrated into sales narrative
<b>Stakeholder Mapping &amp; Relationships</b>	No concrete network	Identifies personas, vague entry	Named relationships or precise entry strategy
<b>Communication &amp; Executive Presence</b>	Unclear, jargon-heavy	Clear but conventional	Crisp, confident, well-structured
<b>Agility &amp; Builder Mindset</b>	Needs structure to operate	Can execute given a playbook	Comfortable with ambiguity; shows initiative
<b>Integrity &amp; Culture Fit</b>	Quota-first framing	Mixed signals on values	Mission-first; honest about trade-offs and gaps

**Red Flags to Watch For**

- Uses the word 'impact' extensively but cannot explain what M&E or programme monitoring means
- Target list is entirely IT/SaaS buyers - shows no pivot to the social sector mindset
- Outreach email sounds like a product brochure or SDR script
- Culture response is vague, generic, or framed entirely around personal achievement
- Cannot name a single government/foundation contact, framework (FCRA, NITI Aayog), or procurement mechanism
- Over-promises on deal timelines - does not show patience with 6-18 month cycles

**Green Flags**

- Names specific contacts, events, or forums (India Impact Summit, FICCI CSR, DevEx India) without prompting
- Acknowledges the mission-first culture authentically - does not just mirror it back
- Demonstrates comfort with ambiguity and zero-to-one thinking, especially in Task 4
- Objection handling (Task 3) is calm, honest, and not aggressive - shows relationship-first instinct
- Highlights realistic obstacles rather than painting an overly optimistic picture