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## OUR TOWN — SOURCING PRODUCTS LOCALLY

### Get Creative with Community Resources

If you've ever picked up a trinket for \$4 at a yard sale and sold it for \$65 on eBay, you know how exciting translating your treasure hunts into cash can be. But yard sales are not your only local source of goodies. Dennis Hester of <http://MillionDollarDeals.com> has built a successful online business using local providers almost exclusively. Flea markets, antique stores, auction sales, craft shops, Hester attends them all.

One particularly useful—and unusual—avenue he urges eBiz retailers to try is calling trucking companies. “Ask them where they get rid of their OSD (over, short, and damaged) merchandise.” Hester explains, “The trucking compan[ies] get caught with a lot of merchandise sometimes. So they send it to a central area to auction...or they have their own outlets where they have auctions and retail stores.” Often these auction sales are open for the public to buy wholesale.

### Tips for Networking

The people you meet in these places—the junkyards, the pawn shops, the estate sales—they're all in the resale business. So talk to them. Ask questions: How did they get started? Who are their sources? Where did they get their products? Hester has built up an impressive list of suppliers with this simple method and he offers the following insights:

- “[Be] friendly and polite in dealing with people...Don't try to be too nosy...Ask a lot of questions in a friendly way...People don't like to do business with jerks—people that are obnoxious, people that are demanding.”
- Be persistent. Not everyone will want to share their sources with you. Some will even be rude about it. But you just have to keep asking and trying because there are people out there who are willing to share their knowledge and experience.
- Be open. Don't just ask questions. Listen to what they have to say—they're the ones with the expertise. And listen to discern their needs as well; it can be a mutually beneficial relationship.

### Why Shop Local?

There are a lot of good reasons to find product suppliers in your own community. You get to know your sources personally and build relationships and trust with them. Also, you can physically view and examine the items you're purchasing ahead of time.

Finally, doing anything locally is going to be easier on your budget. You save on the cost of drop shipping or having merchandise shipped to you. And you save on travel expenses—the price of gas alone makes that a point worth considering.

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