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## WHAT A WHOLESALE SUPPLIER EXPECTS FROM YOU - HOW TO ASK FOR DISTRIBUTOR ACCOUNTS

You wouldn't think of going to a job interview unprepared—you'd never get called back. Yet many eBiz owners approach wholesalers and manufacturers without any preparation at all. You need to realize it costs a manufacturer time and money to set up an account. If you seem like you won't be a profitable distributor, they'll probably turn you down. Says manufacturer Charlie Hall, owner of Charlie's Woodshop, "I spend a lot of time helping [online retailers] get going with my product, but they may not go anywhere [if] they're not doing the follow-up work."

Giving the right impression can be the difference between getting a flat out "No" and beginning a healthy business relationship. What's the right way to ask a wholesaler for an account?

Be Professional

They want to see how you're going to represent their products.

1. Check your presentation—your grammar, your punctuation, your capitalization. Almost any writing program comes with a spellchecker—use it. If your email looks like it was written by a first-grader, a wholesaler will think you're either lazy or incompetent. Says Hall, "These are little areas that tell me whether or not I want to do business with [a retailer]... [If] they're not doing all the work ... they're last on the list."

2. Give them all relevant information:

- Include your full name, business name, business street and mailing address, and contact information.
- Include your tax IDs: without these numbers, no legitimate wholesaler will give you any kind of information. They need these numbers to verify you're a legal business and they can legally sell to you without charging you taxes. In-state manufacturers need your state tax ID, and out-of-state manufacturers need your federal tax ID.

Be Prepared

1. Do your research first.

Only approach companies you have studied and feel you'd like to work with. Don't send out mass emails looking for information and accounts. Even if you use an email template, send each one individually. If a wholesaler sees multiple addresses in your email, they'll assume you're fishing and may not even bother responding.

Read up on a company before you request any info from them. Look at their websites and policies. Asking questions in your emails that could be answered by reading their FAQ's page sends a message that you aren't a serious professional.

2. Understand what to expect out of your relationship.

A wholesaler is your supplier, not your business coach. They have limited time and manpower, so don't expect them to hold your hand and advise you on how best to run your eBiz, optimize your site, or improve your traffic. They aren't there to answer questions you ought to be researching on your own time.

Not every wholesaler will be taking new accounts, and not every supplier will be willing to work with home-based businesses. But many are, and by being professional and prepared, you can greatly increase your success with them.

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