

# GENERAL MERCHANDISE BUYER CHECKLIST

Consider the following when reviewing and ordering products during vendor meetings:

## PRODUCT QUALITY

- What materials are included?
- Are there sustainability options?
- Where are products made? Under what conditions?
- Will the fabric shrink or pill under normal wear and tear?
- Will the ink/graphic fade from washing?
- If distressed or muted dyes, does the item come with tags informing the customer?

## MINIMUM ORDER

- What is the minimum for first order?
- Is it different for reorders?

## TURNAROUND TIME

- What is it for each product?
- How long will it take to receive artwork?
- How long will it take to produce the item after art has been approved?
- Are there supply chain issues affecting this product?
- What is the timeline for reorders?

## CUSTOMER SERVICE

- Who is our rep?
- How often should we expect to connect?
- How are order or payment issues resolved?
- What is the best way to contact you?

## RETURNS

- Are they allowed?
- How are damaged items handled?
- Do I send product back or keep it?
- How is shipping handled for returned merchandise?
- How do credits get issued?

## GRAPHICS

- Basics vs Fashion
- Will it translate to your university? It may look different once your brand/mascot is inserted.
- At what point can you split the ink color per order? Is there a higher minimum or additional cost?

## SIZING

- How do samples compare to average sizes?
- Describe cut options: ladies, juniors, unisex, oversized, etc.
- What is most popular selling size for the market segment our store reaches?

## ADDITIONAL COSTS & FACTORS

- Art charge?
- Hanger fee?
- Packaging fee?
- Color fee? (1-color, 2-color, full-color)

## RETAIL MATH REMINDER

Once you decide product, graphic, locations of graphic, etc. and add the margin on top of the final cost...will your customer still purchase the piece for that price?

See *financial management and assessment courses* at [NACS University - Learn.NACS.org](http://NACS University - Learn.NACS.org)

## BUYING RESOURCES (BELOW)

- Buying Tips from Shelly Schrimpf, Lope Shops, Grand Canyon University, AZ
- Buying Tips from Jenny Napier, University of Dayton Retail Operations, OH
- Choosing A Vendor from NACS

# BUYING TIPS

from Shelly Schrimpf, Assistant Director of Campus Retail & Licensing, Lope Shops,  
Grand Canyon University, AZ

## Tips for Vendor Meetings:

### MEETING PREP

- Plan what types/products you need
- Have your pricing strategy ready
- Know how much OTB dollars you can spend, when and in what category
- Know your current inventory with this vendor (is it really selling?)
- Know your current maintained margin (is it really making you money?)
- Prepare a list of other needs, if applicable: marketing, fixtures, any other problems
- Decide who will attend: you, other buyer, assistant, staff, students

### DURING THE MEETING

- Come ready to buy
- Use prepared data to book out as much as possible
- Look at the line and put aside items/art you like
- If you are building a collection, figure it out during the meeting
- Go back through what you've picked and select the ones to buy
- Write your order, making sure to document the following: item/art number, design/graphic drawing, ship date, cancel date, cost with royalty, retail, size run

### AFTER THE MEETING

- Build items in your system: SKU, description, categories
- Keep track of items ordered and when they ship
- Create PO, then print and file in a system that works for you
- When order acknowledgment received from vendor, review to match your PO (double-check UPC, cost, retail, garment, color, sizes, and ship date).
- Review PO files at the beginning and middle of each month
- Stay on top of your PO process: review files at the beginning and middle of each month, and adjust if problems arise with the vendor (shipment delay, color/size changes, cancellation)

*"This is some of the most important work a buyer can do!"*

*For details, contact:* Shelly.Schrimpf@gcu.edu

### CREATE A BASICS APPAREL PROGRAM

Shelly's "Never-Outs" include:

**8** Tackle Twill Hoods

**8** Tackle Twill Crews

**6** Women's Tees

**10** items in Youth collection

**20** Tees (4 graphics each on 5 core colors)

**4** Long sleeve Tees

**48** Hats

# BUYING TIPS

from Jenny Napier, Senior Merchandise Manager, UD Retail Operations,  
University of Dayton, OH

## Jenny's Tips

### GRADE YOUR VENDORS IN AREAS IMPORTANT TO YOUR STORE'S STRATEGY

For our store, we look for good vendor partners that provide:

- Quick turnaround times
- Web images
- Information that allows us to get the merchandise into our POS prior to arrival
- Quality products
- Pricing that helps us be good financial stewards of university funds and have good retail metrics.
- Plus, download Jenny's Markdown Calendar to see how she plans her buying with deliveries, key selling periods, in-season review, hindsight review, and markdowns.

*"Take time to evaluate your product mix and placement. Factor in both brand and price. Do you have good, better, and best in all your key categories?"*

*For details, contact: [JNapier1@udayton.edu](mailto:JNapier1@udayton.edu)*



**TO BROWSE ADDITIONAL TOPICS OR DOWNLOAD RESOURCES,  
VISIT NACS UNIVERSITY**

**LEARN.NACS.ORG**

# CHOOSING A VENDOR

Consider the following criteria and questions when selecting vendors:

## PRODUCT QUALITY & KNOWLEDGE

- What are the features and benefits?
- How do they compare to others in the line?
- Do they align to my geographic location and/or campus culture?
- Where is this product made and under what conditions?

## ADVANTAGEOUS TERMS & POLICIES

- Order minimums, credit terms, returns policy, freight terms?

## RELEVANT, FASHIONABLE ART/GRAFIC OPTIONS

## FULFILLMENT TIMES FOR FIRST ORDER, REORDERS, SEASONAL VARIATIONS?

## ASSISTANCE WITH RESTOCK AND INVENTORY CONTROL

## PRODUCT TRAINING TOOLS AND MARKETING SUPPORT

- Do they provide displays? Co-op advertising? Other marketing tools?

## CUSTOMER SERVICE, ORDER FOLLOW-THROUGH AND PROBLEM RESOLUTION

- Any differences from reps and from corporate?
- How are defective or damaged items handled?
- Do they issue call tags and ship replacements immediately?
- Quick turnaround for reorders?
- Do they call if there are delays?
- Will cancel dates on POs be honored?

## REFERENCES FROM SIMILAR STORES

Buying is a challenging and exciting process. GM buyers must be willing and able to take the initiative to find out about products. Take time to research websites, explore trade shows, and ask colleagues for recommendations. You can increase your chance of success when you invest the time and effort to identify