

TOP TIPS

How to stand out for all the right reasons and make the most of top drawer!

FROM OUR RETAILERS:

“Make sure you know your stuff – I need to feel confident about placing an order with you. If you’ve got a big range and don’t know every single price, make sure you have the price list to hand.”

“It’s handy to know what your best-sellers are. If you’re new to wholesale, gather your retail stats so customers can have confidence in what should sell well and what to try.”

“Please be able to supply good quality, high resolution images of the products we order.”

“Know what your ‘carriage paid’ amount is.”

“Be organised with everything so you don’t get flustered!”

“I’ll want to know what your lead times are for what I’m ordering.”

“It’s important to know if you already supply to a shop near me – the last thing I want is to place an order with you, only to find it cancelled later in the week because you’ve realised you’re already stocked by someone else nearby!”

“Don’t be too aggressive in trying to get me onto your stand – I know you’ve invested your time and money to be here, but we’re not on The Apprentice! Not every single thing at the show will be a good fit for my shop, but if I like the look of your stand, I’ll stop and talk.”

“I’ll want to see product examples out of their boxes, but please still have your display boxes out to show me, as it’s important to see the packaging too.”

“Have a 1 page simple line sheet that I can take away with pricing and all the terms. Minimum order, free shipping min order, min quantities to order in, turnaround time, how payment is made, email address, website, how to order - website/by email.”

“Make sure you have codes or a clear name for products, I don’t want to be writing down product descriptions and hoping you’ll know which one I mean!”

FROM YOUR FELLOW EXHIBITORS:

“Does your pricing work with a retailer’s mark-up? The margin they expect will vary with the type of product, but also on the size of the order – a key national account like John Lewis will expect a better price than an independent on your local high street! Make sure you know what you can and can’t do. If someone wants something that’s not commercially viable for you, then stick to your guns!”

“Make notes! I find it hard to remember details after a series of similar conversations, so after each one I try and put it all down onto one of my enquiry sheets – who they were (just staple a business card to it if you have to), what they were looking at, when they were looking to receive the order, etc. – basically anything that will help me follow up with them afterwards!”

“Come prepared: Business cards, press packs, retailer info (min order, delivery, pricing/mark-ups, brochures), promo materials like your business cards and price lists - small thumbnail images will remind buyers of who you are after the show.”

“Have enough order/enquiry forms - make sure you bring plenty! And also make sure that your order forms state your contact details clearly.”

“If you only do one thing, remember to follow up with each and every lead over the next week – if you leave it too long they’ll have placed their orders with someone else! It’s not about being pushy, just making sure they remember you and your brand – send them a nice email with a link to your catalogue, etc.”

“Chat to your neighbouring stands at the show – Top Drawer is very unique, in that there’s a real spirit of entrepreneurship that you don’t see at other fairs. I ended up collaborating with the owner of the brand next door to me for a couple of ranges. Plus it’s always handy to have a friendly neighbour to keep an eye on your stand for you while you pop to the loo!

“The first time I exhibited I had visions of getting all the orders during the show itself – but it was actually more like 30% of them there, and the rest coming in over the following month. That’s slightly levelled out now that I’ve done a few seasons [of Top Drawer] in a row, but generally if you’re new, a lot of shops will want to go back and check you out online, etc. before placing an order.”

“Make your stand stand-out! Put some real thought into how you’re going to display everything, Top Drawer isn’t a show where you can just dump things on a table haphazardly! If you’re not sure, ask the organisers if they can send you through some stand photos (they did for me), or look back on their Instagram account to the last show and get some ideas.”

“Have one A4 notebook/folder to hold ALL the info - opening times, stand reference, dimensions, parking, contact telephone numbers, any other measurements for the stand, display sketches, packing list, customer open questions, lists and more lists!”

FROM THE ORGANISERS:

“Start promoting your brand prior to the show. Tell any stockists or shops you’ve been speaking to that you’ll be here, what your stand number is, etc. For social media use the #topdrawer hashtag - buyers use this on Instagram. Always include your stand number, or any additional reference to where you are (next door to XYZ or by the cafe) to make it as easy as possible to find you.”

“Look out for emails from the Top Drawer team requesting information, images... etc. if you don’t send them to us, we can’t include you in anything!”

“Be confident on the stand – demeanour counts! If you can be stand then do - don’t be that person who sits in the corner on your phone / laptop, missing every potential customer hovering outside the stand trying to catch your eye!”

“Good, clear communication is key. Try to ask open-ended questions about their businesses, etc. and enthuse about your product and how it fits with buyers’ store. Ask what other products they have seen/bought today. At the end of the conversation, don’t forget to thank them for their interest!”

“Dress to impress; don’t look corporate, but be sure to put in some effort”