

ADVICE FROM GREEN RETAILERS

What other factors do you consider important when choosing handmade green items?

It is very important that a product be considered eco-friendly but since that can mean different things for different materials, we can't require that a single product be made of recycled, organic materials and have carbon neutral shipping and green certification. Instead we take each item on a case by case basis and look at the total package.

Carbon footprint created in manufacture and transport; durability as it impacts life-cycle costs

Who makes it- Fair Trade / good company/ like-minded individuals

the quality of the craftsmanship

It gets complicated. I carry jewelry. Let's say I have a choice between a Colorado jewelry maker, and a company that distributes jewelry made in India. The greener choice is the CO jewelry, even though neither one might technically be a green product. I have many real life situations where I analyze various aspects of products besides whether something is made with "reclaimed materials". Then of course, the greenest choice would be an Oregon company.

Domestically produced items, both from environmental considerations, as well as for economic reasons, in supporting other small independent businesses.

How easy it is to find for sale on other websites and how widely available it is. If it's a product for sale on lots of other websites, that makes it tougher for me to sell and I have to compete on price.

If supplier is easy to work with, ships in a timely manner. Also for high ticket items, if supplier is willing to drop ship.

What would you say is the most important factor that you consider when choosing green products to carry?

First, that the product is green. Second, that it is aesthetically pleasing.

Uniqueness

will it sell- will people buy it.

If the aesthetic works with my store, if it is unique. Then I look at who makes it and how...is it handmade locally, made of recycled materials and/or natural materials?

what materials are used

Is it really authentically "green" and does the store/world really need it? This can be as true for jewelry as it is for a baby blanket made of reclaimed wool. And of course, can the artist get paid enough when a margin for the store is added on, and will it all wind up at a price that our customers will buy it at?

The most important would be that the product is as 'green' as possible as well as being domestically produced.

Where it is made and by whom. Many companies carry green products but they can't guarantee that the products are made by people earning a fair wage and working in a safe environment (if green products are not made in North America, then I want them to be fair trade; all of our products are "sweatshop-free").

use of materials, quality of item, price

What advice would you give to artisans about how to get a green retailer's attention for their products?

Have a unique product that doesn't look homemade. Spend time figuring out your pricing structure and make sure the retail price is at least keystone from wholesale. Take good photos. Make it easy for a retailer to order from you (have an excel spreadsheet with formulas for pricing, as an example).

Be patient, be informative, and conduct advance research on the retailer's specialty or niche

be honest- walk the walk. I can tell who is green minded and who is green washing.

Get a website started or use Etsy as an avenue to get some exposure and a way for us to find you. Then feel free to contact the stores individually with your product information. Good luck!

good presentation, branding and quality

- Make an appointment if you want to present your work at a local store; don't just drop in.
- Have some sort of tag that identifies the product, the artist, materials, and where it is made.
- If you make greeting cards, use recycled paper stock (as high a percentage as possible) and mention that on the card.
- Whatever you make, if you're in Portland, say "Made in Portland." This is probably true elsewhere but in Portland for sure, people love things made here.
- Assuming a web presence, list the stores where your products are carried at.
- Consider consignment. It gives a retailer a chance to try something that might not be possible otherwise.

Clear initial presentation of product in inquiry; clarity about wholesale prices and/or consignment terms; not having initial email sound like a form email that is being blanketed to 'dear sir/madam'; showing familiarity with store.

Firstly, I would say: actually respond to a retailer's email inquiring about wholesale information. I have especially noticed this being a problem with some companies in the United States - including some that handcraft products. I am not going to do business with anyone who doesn't reply to an email. Second, is to let me know what products you sell (with photos) and send me a sample if I request one. Companies can also follow us on Twitter; I always look at the websites of our followers (and will do so for Facebook once I have a company Facebook page).

Have great photos and good product descriptions so it's easy for online retailers to load your product

information. Also, for online sales, the photo is key for the customer's sales decision. And, great product photos on a neutral or white background is helpful.

Please describe the best way for an artisan to submit products to you.

Prefer email introduction with description, photo attachments and link to website (if applicable).

Email introduction with the product line's name in the subject line. Line sheet including retail and wholesale pricing. Photos. Stating whether you also sell direct to the consumer on-line.

telephone & voice message

I like an email followed up by an introductory phone call if I respond to the email. I find I am often busy and telephone calls can catch me at a bad time, and printed materials are wasteful to me- unless specifically requested.

I would prefer an e-mail with attached images of their work for review and details of their consignment/wholesale terms.

Sending an introduction email and then sending or bringing in physical samples.

Best arrangement for me is for someone to call and set up an appointment and then bring by examples of their work.

Because we are an online store, the best way to introduce oneself is through an email introduction complete with information, including pictures and descriptions.

Email

Via email.

Email with photos or personal presentation if local

I prefer receiving an email with attachments for me to view the products. Having a physical sample sent is even better, although I find very few companies take the initiative in doing that.

Email link with product detail and great photos