

FAQ – Sourcing and Procurement

What makes Hickory Flats unique in their sourcing and procurement service?

- *With team members and owners in the countries that we work in, we have direct access and direct relationships with manufacturers and suppliers. This increases accuracy, quality, and security through accountability.*

Security through accountability? What do you mean?

- *If we are sourcing a product from China or Latin America for you, you will do direct transactions with our USA office. This means that there is no wire transferring money to an organization you don't really know anything about, or making a PayPal transaction to a personal account in China for a business purchase. In addition to the money transfer security, since you are making the transaction with our USA office, we ensure that your product is provided exactly as agreed on.*

Where can you source from?

- *Currently our strengths are in China, India, Central America, and the USA.*

How do I get started?

- *Grab a copy of our Non-Disclosure Agreement. It can be found in the DOCUMENT CENTER folder in the footer of our website, or request one via email and we can send one to you. Secondly, send us as much info on your project as you can. Send us links to your competitors' listings. Send detailed specs and drawings if you have them. Let us know how you want to brand, package, or enhance the item. Once we are completely filled in, we will do some pre-validation and brainstorming from our side as well to figure out a great path forward.*

Once you get an idea of my product idea, then what?

- *We go to work for you! We contact qualified suppliers and work diligently to offer you an option that is cost effective and workable in your business plan. Generally, it takes a minimum of 3 days to work through the inquiry, then we will provide preliminary pricing and availability through our partner suppliers and manufacturers.*

Ok, we have pricing that looks good and we like the product proposal. Next step?

- *Each project is different, but generally we now work on things like custom branding, lead time arrangements, packaging, and bundling. This is where we design the entire project around your specific need and customize the plan to your needs.*

Do you provide factory inspections?

- *We will follow in-house procedures to ensure that we provide you a finished product that matches the agreed-on plan, including matching the production samples supplied. We need to make sure all goes as planned since we are supplying directly to you.... However, if you would like a third part inspection report we can provide that through our partners inspection*

companies at current market rate. The normal and accepted rate of defects in this industry is about 1%, and we do our best to stay below that!

What does this service cost?

- *There are two main ways of doing sourcing, and they are as follows: 1) Up-front fee for being connected with pre-qualified suppliers directly, and 2) Commission or markup based services. Although there are advantages to both systems, we prefer to not take money for a service that may not provide you with a workable solution. Our biggest fear would be that we take your money, then connect you with 3 factories but the pricing and capabilities still are not something that is acceptable and workable for your project. Instead, we will pre-validate your idea and put "skin in the game" ourselves. If we can't find a solution that works for you, we work for free! In addition, we have to keep our prices low or you won't buy the items and we are wasting our time. So, although our markup varies by the project and labor needed, we also look at long-term partnerships with our clients and often keep our margins so low that we make NO PROFIT on the first order or two because of the labor required for the initial project start.*

If we source a product with you, are we stuck with you forever?

- *Absolutely not! We do no patent or trademark your product. This is solely your product and we assure that! If a mold is needed, it is your mold. If a design is implemented that is unique, you can patent or protect it yourself and we don't own it. If you work with us for a few purchases but decide to part ways, that is NO PROBLEM and you aren't stuck with us! You are more than able to take that business elsewhere.*

Can you find anything and everything?

- *Nope. We often get requests that are unreasonable. People want products for less money than is possible, or they want products that just can't be bought without a huge investment in tooling, molds, or production MOQs. However, when this happens, we do work with you to adjust the plan to a workable solution. Although we have a very high success rate, we would never claim that we can do anything! We want to manage expectations, and sometimes people's expectations are not possible...*

What is a time frame for this service?

- *This varies greatly on the project. Some projects we can send initial response within a few days, some projects take 6 months! It all depends, but we will try to give you realistic expectations once we get started on your project.*

If we source through you, do we have to ship with you?

- *Absolutely not! We would love to offer you a logistics solution as well, but that is absolutely not required by any means.... We would quote the logistics portion of the project to you separately from the sourcing project.*