

Maker Guide

A How-To Guide For Selling Your Work

Building your business? Unsure about the difference between wholesale & consignment? Trying to determine pricing? Wondering how wholesale decisions are made?

We've compiled resources and answers to common questions based on our experiences and learning over the past five years, having worked with Makers and businesses of various sizes. Please note: This is intended to act as a broad guide, take your time, and do your own research before reaching out to retailers.

If you're able to join us at a Maker Meet Up, they are a great way to meet with fellow makers and build connections.

Please don't hesitate to reach out with questions, we're happy to help when we can: events@trainyardstore.com

Kimberley (Owner), Rachel (Manager) & The Trainyard Team

Consignment & Wholesale

Wholesale vs. Consignment Simplified

Wholesale: Retailers purchase goods outright from Makers or suppliers (payment for goods is made upfront) and retailers are then responsible for sale, care and display of items.

Consignment: Payment is made only once goods have sold (payment monthly, quarterly, seasonally). Makers may or may not be responsible for the display, restocking or signage for their goods. In some instances Makers may rent shelf space in a business on consignment terms.

Wholesale tends to be straightforward and requires less organization and reporting from both businesses. Consignment can be a great option for trying out a new product or price, and for getting a start in retail.

Due to the time involved, The Trainyard is not currently offering consignment opportunities.

Consignment Things To Note

Payment Terms: Find out if payment for work sold is done monthly, bi-monthly or quarterly. How is payment made? Will a sales report or receipt accompany the payment?

Selling Term: How long will your work be on display - what is the consignment period?

Display: Are you or the retailer responsible for the display of goods?

Pricing: What is the consignment breakdown? Typically consignment breakdowns are 60-70% of the sale price for the Maker, and 30-40% for the retailer but this varies based on the division of work.

Responsibilities: Be clear on whose responsible for pricing the items, recording sales and managing inventory, packaging, etc. Consignment arrangements can be casual, keep record of what is dropped off, what display items you provide, etc.

Offering Goods For Wholesale

ALWAYS CHECK THE RETAILER WEBSITE FOR SPECIFIC APPLICATION DETAILS & INSTRUCTIONS

- What is your wholesale rate? Typical wholesale discounts range between 40-50% off the retail price. This can vary slightly depending on the complexity of goods or volume ordered.
- Do you want to offer your entire inventory or select goods only?
- How will you tell retailers what products you have available? Consider creating a line sheet or catalog or direct retailers to your website for available designs.
- What would be your minimum initial order value? This can be a total order value or number of units.
- What would be the reorder minimum? This is typically less than the initial order minimum.
- Do you want to offer an additional discount for larger orders? For example a 45% discount for 20 units and 50% for greater than 20 units.
- How will you invoice retailers? Handwritten, emailed, or automatically via your website or Square?
- What will be the payment terms for the retailer (prepayment, on delivery, 30 days)?
- How do you want orders placed? Email, password protected website portal, other?

Learn About The Retailer & How They Take On New Makers

Mentioning this again because it's an important part of the process!

- Head to their website: Typically information on working with a store can be found under headers like "Makers" "Wholesale" and "Consignment" or "Work With Us." This information is on almost every retailers website!
- Can't find the information anywhere? Send them an email or message asking where to find it, or for information on the process. Avoid sending your whole application on Facebook at all costs.
- FOLLOW THE PROCESS!

Often there's just a few hours a month to review applications - so the more easily available the information the better! Must have details are: pricing, minimums, products available (or where to find them).

What Are Businesses Looking For: How Wholesale Decisions Are Made

- Does the application follow the instructions set out on the retailers website? Is the requested information included? If the information isn't included retailers may not ask or follow up.
- Are the products a good fit with the style of the shop? Does the applicant understand the business they're applying to? It's obvious if you haven't done the research!
- How would the goods work with current inventory? Are other similar lines or products carried? Would they compliment or overlap with one another?
- Past success of similar goods, or customer requests for items?
- Are the goods of retail quality?
- Will the packaging hold up? Is there enough information about care & use of the product? What is it made of? Where it's made?
- Is the wholesale pricing workable?
- Are goods being sold elsewhere in Downtown Dartmouth or HRM (or in your city)? Everyone benefits when the goods found in a business neighbourhood are varied and unique!

Seasonal Goods: Typically are put on display 1-1.5 months before the holiday/occasion. Less than 4 weeks is not long enough in retail for seasonal items. The Trainyard does not place orders for the Holiday Season after October 31.

Craft Shows & Markets

Applying For Craft Shows & Markets?

Do your research and find markets where your style is a good fit – that's where your customers will be. Sometimes you have to try a few different markets to find what works for you! HRM is home to lots of markets from small scale shows run by community centres to larger professional shows.

Deadlines: Application deadlines for the larger markets are typically 2-3 months before the actual event. Join maker groups on Facebook, follow along with shows on social media or sign up for their mailing lists to keep up to date on deadlines and find resources. For larger markets typical Fall/Holiday Market deadlines are in July-Sept; Spring/Summer Market deadlines are in February/March.

Display: Do a few test runs! Layout your table display at home, try different heights and table covers until you find something that feels like the right fit! Do you need power for your booth?

Payment Processing: Will you take card payments via Square or another payment app? E-transfer? Cash only? How will you provide receipts? Where are you keeping cash? How are you keeping record of sales? Have a plan, and signage for customers.

Branding, Packaging & Signage: Have your contact information available for customers, either on business cards or a sign they can photograph, etc – folks want to look you up, but don't want to ask for the information. Make sure your business name is visible somewhere in your display! Have tissue paper or bubble wrap on hand to wrap fragile items, and a few paper shopping bags available.

Tips for Making Your Application Stand Out

- **Share Your Process:** Explain where you source materials, how you plan designs, create the product, packaging and branding – EXPLAIN IT ALL! The more you share, the better selection committees understand the complexity of your process.
- **Share Your Business Story:** What makes you unique, why you started, how you've grown or adapted and what makes your brand unique. Make sure your business name is included!
- **Photos:** Send bright photos, or photos of your work in action (when applicable). Your photos really tell the story of your work and can help clarify details or questions for decision makers. If you've done markets before, a photo of your set up or branding is also helpful!
- **Include Details:** Pricing, size, quality, packaging & care details. Whatever is relevant to the committee understanding how your goods work/how they should be used.
- **Quality:** Are your goods made to last? Have they been tested? What types of materials do you use?
- **Take Your Time:** On an application form, never leave any relevant field empty. The more detailed information included the better. This is your chance to make an impression!

Markets To Follow: Dartmouth Makers, Halifax Crafters, Etsy Halifax, Christmas At The Forum, Alderney Landing Farmers Market, Halifax Forum, Halifax Seaport, Windfall Handmade Market

Selling Your Goods With The Trainyard - Part 1

Pricing

We do our best to honour the MSRP for products, especially those at 50/50 wholesale, but may price slightly higher to cover the cost of shipping, to bring in line with other goods, or to account for loss/breakage in certain categories.

Order Frequency

We typically place wholesale orders twice a year, Spring/Summer and Fall/Holiday. Most orders last a minimum of six months in slower seasons, and a large holiday order tends to last through to January, reorders are not guaranteed or may take several months, though we're optimistic! Please send along seasonal updates to your offerings if you have a new product you think would be a good fit. We love hearing about new designs & new products seasonally. These updates are reviewed monthly in preparation for restock orders.

Sales & Order Expectations

Though we continue growing, our capacity and sales are still quite small in comparison with more established businesses and shopping districts. We know that many of our Makers are growing their capacity as well and understand that smaller orders may be the most manageable. We are happy to work with you to find the best way forward. Often it takes up to 2 months for new items to begin selling in the shop and then things pick up quickly, patience is key!

Markdowns & Sales

With the introduction of our Pay What You Can section we are able to redirect many "Lasts" rather than marking them down. Items placed on our sale shelf are typically older than a year, the last of an order or design, or have slightly damaged packaging or are otherwise unable to sell at full price. It will never be just your products placed on sale. Final markdowns may be up to 50% off.

Pay What You Can

We offer an assortment of goods to customers Pay What You Can, at whatever price they can afford. Signage is provided to explain the love that goes into each product, but we do not set a minimum price. It will never be just your products offered, but they may be included. If you have products you would like to offer PWYC please reach out anytime and we can make it happen!

Online Sales

We now have an online store! Whenever available we use photos and descriptions from your website or social media for listings. Not all products carried are listed online, if items have multiple variations or colours they may be in store only items; We are always working to add items to the online store, but a listing is not guaranteed. The majority of our focus and business remains on the in-store experience.

Selling Your Goods With The Trainyard - Part 2

Promotion of Your Work & Social Media

We keep a Maker Guide at the cash desk for our staff team to reference, please send along any tips or need to know details for the care or use of your items, including this on your packaging is ideal! We try to keep up our with social media posts, but rarely offer solo feature posts. Credit is given for your photos if used, and whenever we can find accounts to tag we will, feel free to comment if you spot your work!

Seasonal Products

We have had limited success with seasonal items so we order these in small quantities. To have seasonal items considered, please send the details to us a minimum of two months in advance of the season or holiday, three months in advance for the Christmas season. *We finish our Christmas season buying by October 31 each year.*

Line Sheet or Catalog

A formal line sheet is great, but not required if your work is easily viewed on a website or Etsy page. Quantities available, ordering minimums, pricing (retail & wholesale) are what we need to make a decision.

Pricing & Order Minimums

We rarely place orders with wholesale discounts of less than 40%, as lower margins make it difficult to cover our operating expenses (rent, staffing, insurance & fees, damage, breakage, loss, packaging).

Packaging & Display

All goods should be tagged or labelled with your branding, contact information and any necessary care instructions, prior to drop off. In addition to item tags, we will take a maximum of 15 business cards (should you have them) to be shared upon request. No additional signage is required.

Displays are created by The Trainyard, and changed often to ensure stock is rotated regularly. Branded business specific displays are not required or used in store as with so many businesses represented there just isn't enough space!

Quantity & Delivery

We understand many of the businesses we work with are small, and offer limited capacity for orders, we can be flexible on both quantities and delivery timelines. We do ask that if a delivery is going to be delayed that you let us know as soon as possible so we can plan accordingly. In the event that an order is delayed by more than three months (without contact with us) we reserve the right to cancel that order. Please keep in touch!

When Goods Don't Sell

Occasionally products we're excited about don't have the sales needed to garner a repeat order, or may be included on our Pay What You Can wall, or in End Of Season sales to ensure we have the space and capacity to bring in new products in the future. We will make every effort to streamline future orders to focus on the products that sell best with our customers.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Cheerfully Made (Ontario)

Maker Resources & Wholesale Info
cheerfullymadeuniversity.mykajabi.com

Workshop Mag (Canada)

Online Maker Resources
www.workshopmag.com

Briana Corr Scott (Halifax)

Local Artist hosting weekly IG Live Shop Talk videos on Maker Topics
[@brianacorrscott](https://www.instagram.com/brianacorrscott)

RESOURCES FOR SUPPLIES

Maritime Labels (Bedford)

Labelling and Packaging www.gomlp.ca

Power Promotions (Dartmouth)

Custom product creation- powerpromotional.com

Allen Print (Dartmouth)

Prints & Card Printing - allenprint.ca

Cooke Sales (Dartmouth)

Packaging Supplies - www.cookesales.ca

MARKETS TO FOLLOW

Dartmouth Makers

Spring & Winter www.dartmouthmakers.ca

Halifax Crafters

Spring & Winter www.halifaxcrafters.ca

Christmas At The Forum

Holiday Season www.christmasattheforum.com

One Of A Kind Show (Toronto)

Spring & Fall www.oneofakindshow.com

Craft East Buyers Expo

Spring www.craftalliance.ca

Windfall Handcraft Market (Antigonish)

www.windfallhandcraft.com

**Application deadlines are typically 2-3 months before the events*