

FROM PITCH TO PARTNERSHIP: HOW TO WIN OVER RETAIL BUYERS AND STAY ON SHELF

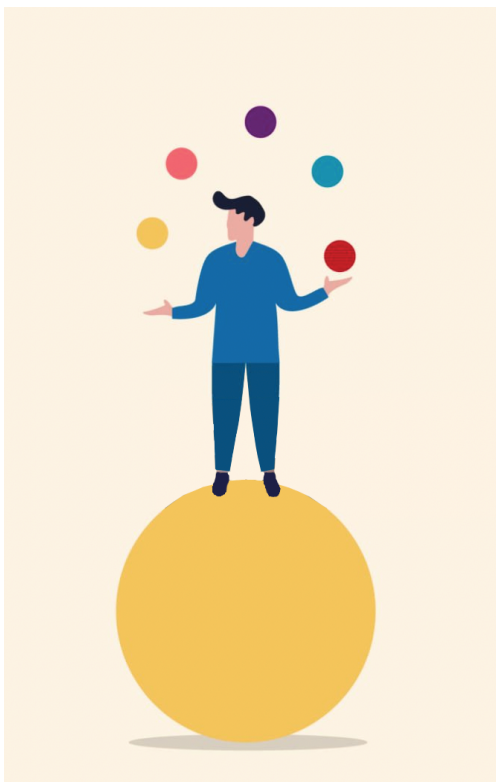


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Winning at Retail is a Relationship Game

Picture this: You've finally landed that big meeting with a retail buyer. You've got your deck ready, your numbers lined up, and your best pitch rehearsed. But as soon as you sit down, the buyer is already checking their watch, scrolling through emails, and giving you the dreaded *I've-heard-this-all-before* look. Then, the meeting ends with a polite, "We'll be in touch."

You walk away feeling like you just pitched into a black hole.



Retail buyers are overloaded, risk-averse, and looking for reasons to say "no". They're juggling hundreds of brands, fighting for limited shelf space, and constantly under pressure to make sure every product they approve delivers results. The trick to becoming a trusted retail partner that buyers actually want to work with is to understand how to think like a buyer, build trust, and communicate effectively.

This is a roadmap to help you go from *just another brand* to a *trusted retail partner*— and turn "we'll be in touch," into, "let's make this work."

STEP ONE: Put Yourself into the Buyer's Shoes



Imagine you're a buyer for a major retailer. You've already seen five presentations today, and they all sound the same: "We have the next big thing! Consumers love us! We're different!" And before your next series of back-to-back-to-back meetings, another brand, is coming in to pitch a product.

Every brand thinks they're special. But for you, the retail buyer, every new product is a **gamble**—and if it doesn't perform, it's your reputation and job on the line.



Three Things Every Buyer is Really Thinking

01

“Every Square Inch of Shelf Space is Precious”

Bringing in your product means cutting another. Every buyer is constantly asking themselves, “Why should I take this risk?”, and “How will this product increase sales?” If you can’t prove clearly and quickly why your product deserves a place...you’ve already lost.

02

“I’ve Been Burned Before”

Buyers need evidence, not hype. They’ve heard every promise in the book, marketing support, guaranteed velocity, influencer buzz, etc. But if brands don’t deliver, buyers get stuck with underperforming SKUs and markdowns.

03

“I Need Quick, Clear, and Actionable Information”

Buyers want data-driven insights, clear plans, and a simple reason to say yes. They don’t have time for drawn-out pitches or vague claims.



STEP TWO: Do Everything You Can to Make Your Buyer's Job Easier

The brands that win in retail aren't just the ones with great products—they're the ones that make life easier for the buyer. Imagine walking into a meeting and instead of pitching, you say:

"Here's exactly how our product will help you hit your category growth goals, backed by real data. We know you need products that move, so we've built a clear plan to drive sales. And to make this easy for you, we're already aligned with your marketing priorities. Here's the proof."



Have the Conversation Buyers Want to Have

Follow Through, Always

Buyers remember brands that say they'll deliver—and actually do. If you promise promotions, make sure they happen. If you commit to a marketing campaign, provide the proof, and the results. Trust is built in the details.

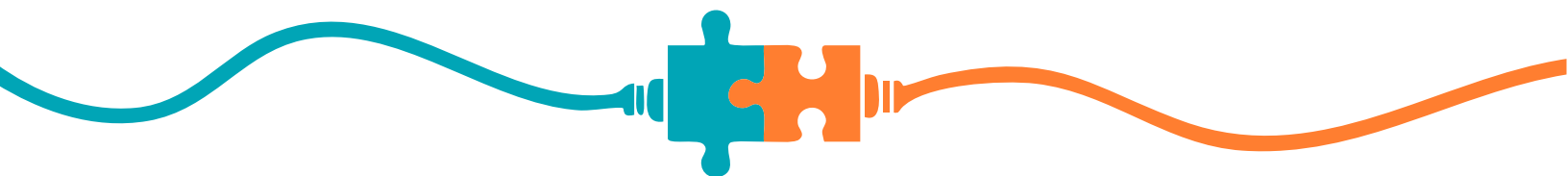
Plan *With* the Buyer, Not *For* the Buyer

Don't just show up with a pitch, invite the buyer into the process.

Ask:

- “What gaps are you looking to fill in this category?”
- “What challenges do you see with my product's success?”
- “What data do you need to feel confident in bringing this in?”

Buyers want partners, not vendors. When you involve them, you get buy-in much faster.

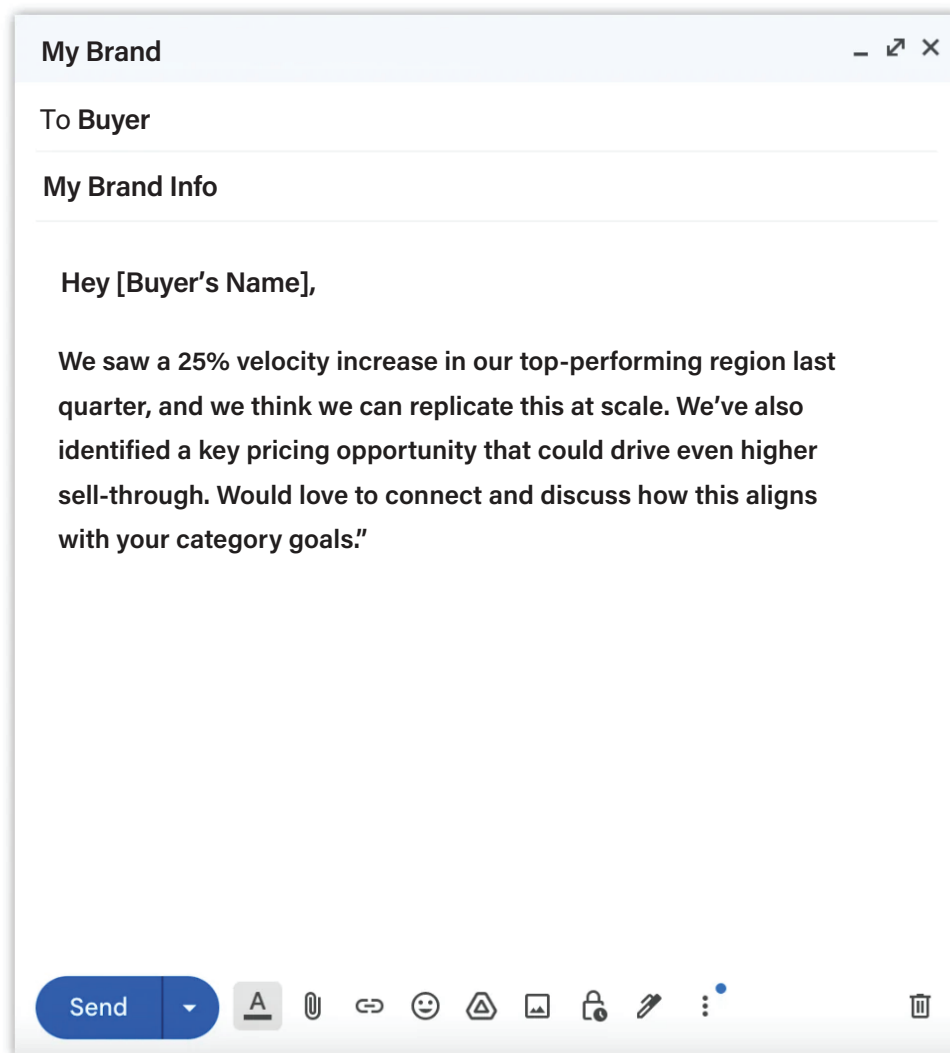


Show, Don't Tell

Instead of saying, “We have a strong social media following,” show engagement data. Instead of promising, “Our product will sell,” show regional test results, eCommerce sales data or third-party retail data, like IRI that proves it. The more tangible the evidence, the more comfortable the buyer will be.

STEP THREE: Make Every Interaction Count

Imagine this: You've been chasing a buyer for months with no response. Instead of another follow-up email asking for an update, send this:



This isn't a generic ask—it's *relevant, data-driven, and easy to say yes to*.

Buyers are Slammed, Don't Complicate Their Lives

Timing is Everything

When trying to reach retail buyers, mid-morning meetings tend to work best—after they've cleared urgent emails but before decision fatigue kicks in. Timing your interactions appropriately could mean the difference between a positive reaction and being brushed off.

Ask the Right Questions

Instead of, “*Can we get more distribution?*”

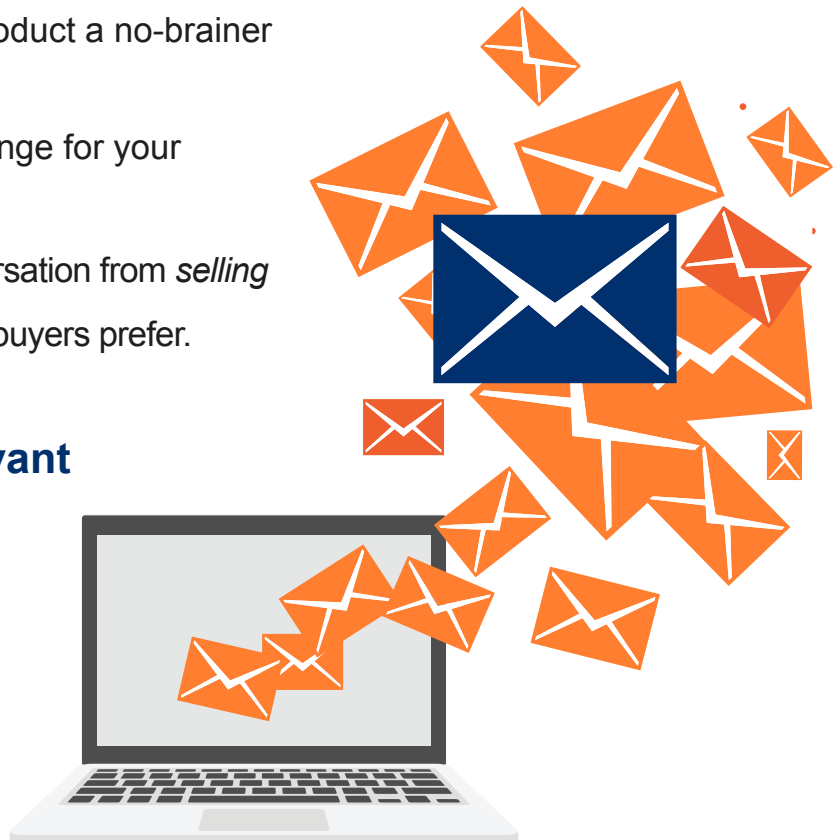
Ask:

- “What trends are you seeing in the category that we can align with?”
- “What would make this product a no-brainer for expansion?”
- “What’s the biggest challenge for your category this quarter?”

These questions shift the conversation from *selling* to *collaborating*—which is what buyers prefer.

Keep It Tight and Relevant

Your emails should be short, clear, and valuable. Avoid long blocks of text; stick to key data points and actionable next steps.



Final Thoughts: Build Relationships, Not Transactions



The brands that win in retail are the ones that buyers trust. And trust isn't built in one meeting—it's built over time, through consistent follow-through, strong collaboration, and making the buyer's job easier.

So, before your next retail pitch, ask yourself, "Am I selling or am I solving a problem for the buyer?"

Remember, the brands that solve problems don't just get on shelves—they stay there.



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