



Definitive Guide to **Finding Suppliers** for **Eyewear Startups**

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Intro

Let's be honest, finding the right manufacturer or supplier anywhere in the world is a chore, and China is no exception. But finding the right supplier for your eyewear is probably the most critical task for your business, and it's likely you haven't been using all the tools at your disposal correctly. Don't worry; we've written this eBook to give you all the tools required to find the best possible supplier for your eyewear.

Understanding China Manufacturing Regions

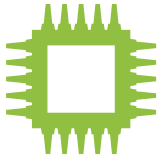


If you've never been to China, you could easily form the wrong picture in your mind of what it should be. You'd likely think that you can hop off anywhere in China and take a drive to any range of factories and start sourcing, but this can't be further from the truth. To understand China manufacturing, you should know that different regions/cities in China manufacture different products, often called a cluster. This isn't to say that there aren't exceptions to the rule, but generally speaking, you would go to one specific region or province for a particular range of products. For eyewear, the two main areas in China are Dongguan and Wenzhou in Guangdong and Zhejiang provinces respectively.

China Manufacturing Breakdown By Region



Textile Industry: Mainly in Zhejiang and Jiangsu, the rest in Fujian, Guangdong, and Shandong Provinces.



Electronics Industry: Mainly in Guangdong, the rest in the Yangtze River Delta, Sichuan, and Shaanxi Provinces.



Metal Products (pipes, fittings, nozzles): Zhejiang, Guangdong, Jiangsu, Shandong, Hebei, and Henan provinces.



Eyewear: Zhejiang (Wenzhou), and Guangdong (Dongguan).



Leather: South-East Coastal areas, Hebei, Henan, Chongqing, and Ningxia provinces.



Ceramics: Jingdezhen in Jiangxi province.



Furniture: Mainly in Guangdong and Hebei provinces, the rest in Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Shanghai, Chengdu, and Beijing.



Construction Materials: Mostly Shandong province, then Hubei, Henan, Guangdong, Jiangsu, Beijing, and Zhejiang.



Household Appliances: Guangdong, Zhejiang, and Shandong provinces.



Stationery & Sporting Products: Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong, and Hubei provinces.



Paper Making & Printing: Guangdong, Zhejiang, Jiangsu, Shandong, and Fujian.



Machinery Manufacturing: Dongbei Area, Hunan, and Hubei provinces.



Petrochemical Industry: Shandong, Liaoning, and Guangdong.



Food & Beverage: Liaoning, Shandong, Jiangsu, Guangdong, Fujian, Hebei, Henan, Hunan, Hubei, and Inner Mongolia.



Pharmaceutical Industry: Tianjin city, and Xian city in Shanxi province.



Eyewear Trade Shows - How to Get the Most out of Them

Arguably the most efficient way to find an eyewear manufacturer in China is to attend an eyewear trade show in the region. But before you pack your bags and business cards here are a few tips on how to best prepare for a trade show and what to do while there.

First things first, make sure to look for shows that have factories exhibiting, as not all have manufacturing sections present. Trade shows are an important launching platform for sourcing and introducing thousands of new products. They are also an excellent starting place for importers looking to find, network, and select the right suppliers for their eyewear business. Experts recommend the use of trade shows as part of any product sourcing business strategy. In short, there's no substitute for shaking hands and putting a face to a name with your potential manufacturing partner.

The suppliers/manufacturers will be almost like a business partner to you, so wouldn't you want to know the person you are going into business with before doing business with them?

You will benefit from face-to-face meetings and can focus on agreeing to terms and conditions at the trade show. This will cut down on the endless back and forth communication via email, WeChat, Skype, etc. We'll deal with the questions you should be asking potential manufacturers later in the eBook.



Here are a few tips to take into consideration when preparing for a trade show:

Start with pre-show research - You will be better prepared if you know whom to speak to once you get to the exhibition. Take a look at the profiles of all the exhibitors that will be present at the show and note down whom you want to talk to. In recent years many of the show organizers have been making direct enquiry forms available to buyers through their websites. Use these as far ahead of time as you can to arrange meetings with suppliers because they tend to book up quickly with other buyers and competitors.

Do your Due diligence on suppliers - Start with the suppliers you want to meet with, see if they have participated in any exhibitions previously. In doing so you can break down if they are seasoned exhibitors or new to the game. Write down the booth numbers, product information, and product pricing ahead of time if it's possible. Double check the companies you're interested in online using Alibaba and/or Global Sources, to see what kind of presence they have online.

Make use of QR codes to filter through supplier information quickly; if you don't have a QR scanner on your smartphone, it's easy enough to download one for free from the APP store. Scan the QR codes displayed at booths, or on business cards, and they'll direct you to the supplier's website. Make sure you have data on your phone for this, if your phone doesn't roam you can get a local number using your passport.

Walk through the exhibition multiple times - Obviously this doesn't count for trade shows that are the size of a State in America, but if the show is a manageable size, try to walk through the aisles at least three times with different objectives each time. This way you will ensure you don't miss anything and keep an open mind by looking at the show from different angles. Your first lap should be purely to see who is where and what they're offering. Your second round should be to examine exhibitors by category and suppliers to shortlist. Use your third round to engage in conversation and conduct in-depth interviews with the suppliers you've shortlisted, and remember to exchange business cards.



Don't rush into any orders at the show - One could easily fall into the trap of a "good deal" when you're at a show. Although placing wholesale orders at a trade show can be a very good opportunistic move, do your homework before pulling the trigger. Familiarise yourself with the purchase criteria and obligations before you commit to a purchase agreement.

Review your notes - Take a look at your notes and see if you've gathered enough information about suppliers and products to realistically meet your needs. Would you be comfortable placing an immediate order to buy eyewear from the supplier? Are you at ease with each supplier you've shortlisted and do you have all the contact information to reach them after the show? Don't think you can go and google this again, trust me it doesn't work, so get the name, email and contact number of the person you were talking to and take a business card if it's available. Give them something to remember you by, perhaps a branded company item, something you can attach to your business card, tell a story, or make reference to something you can bring up in conversation when contacting them after the show.

Get in touch after the show - Follow up with an email to whomever you noted down not longer than three days after the show. Ensure you get the pricing, incoterms, and services required sorted out as soon as possible to evaluate your next step.

Some eyewear trade shows worth looking at:

Wenzhou International Optics Fair

The Wenzhou International Optics Fair is a show dedicated to eyewear and spare parts alike and comprises of 4 China eyewear industrial clusters including – Wenzhou, Danyang, Shenzhen and Xiamen. As well as spare parts production base – Yuhuan, China sunglass manufacturing cluster – Linhai, China eyewear packing manufacturing cluster. The show usually runs from 6 - 8 May each year, but keep an eye out for any updates on the schedule.

Shanghai International Optics Fair

One of the largest optical exhibitions in Asia that showcase most of the international brands and products i.e. Spectacle Frames, Sunglasses, Lenses, Contact lens, 3D glasses, Digital lenses, Visual test equipment, Machinery & Materials for making spectacles frames and lenses, etc. The show usually runs from 5 - 7 March each year.

Beijing International Optics Fair

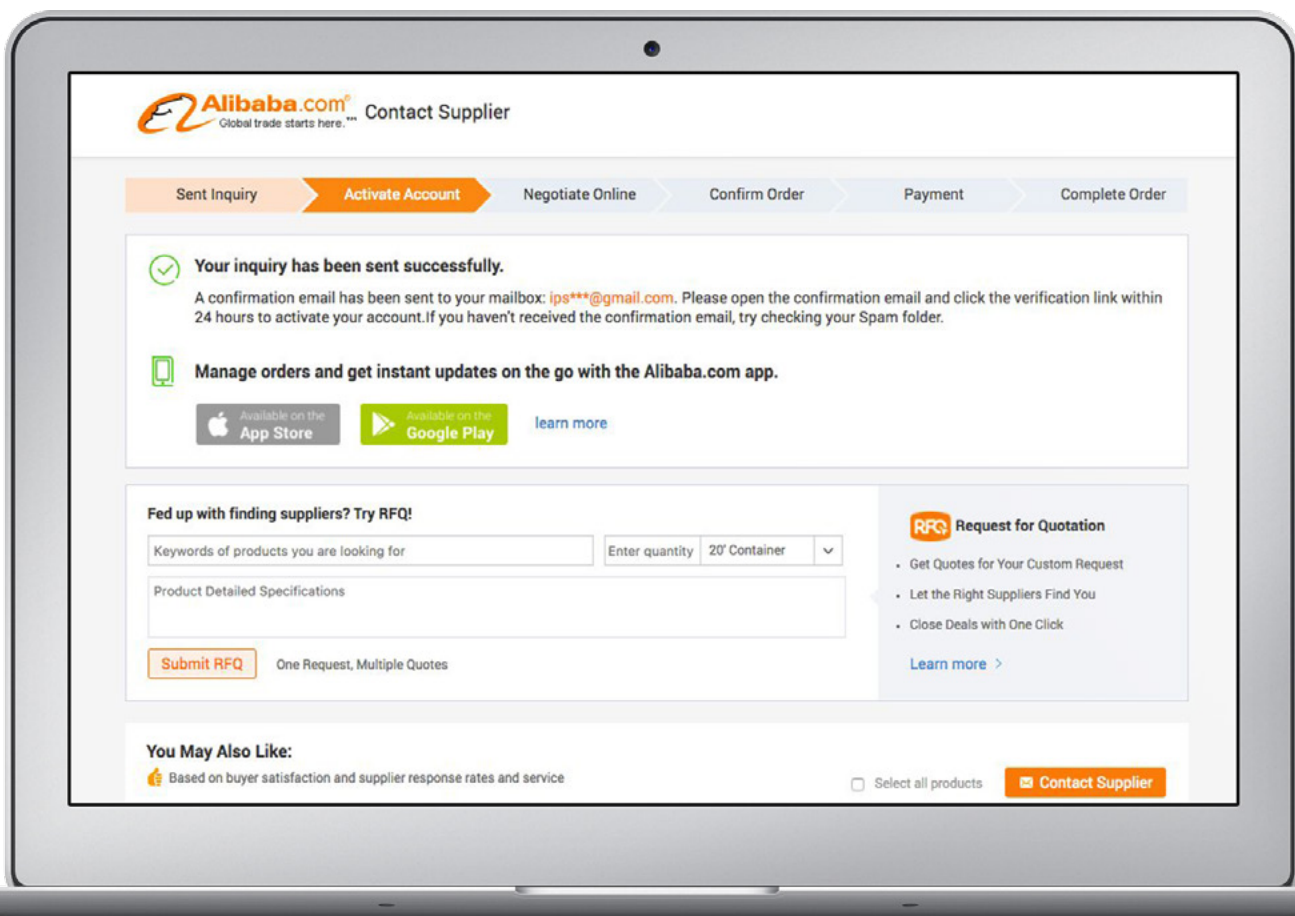
One of the longest-running optical trade shows in China. You can expect exhibitors from all corners of China focusing on products such as - Frames, Sunglasses, Lenses, Accessories, Reading Glasses, Sports Glasses, Optical Parts & Tools, Lens Adjusting Equipment, Lens Processing Equipment & Tools, Frames Processing Equipment & Tools, Raw Materials for Frames & Lenses, Contact Lenses & Related Products, Examination / Measuring Instruments. The show usually runs from 14 - 16 September each year.

Hong Kong Optical Fair

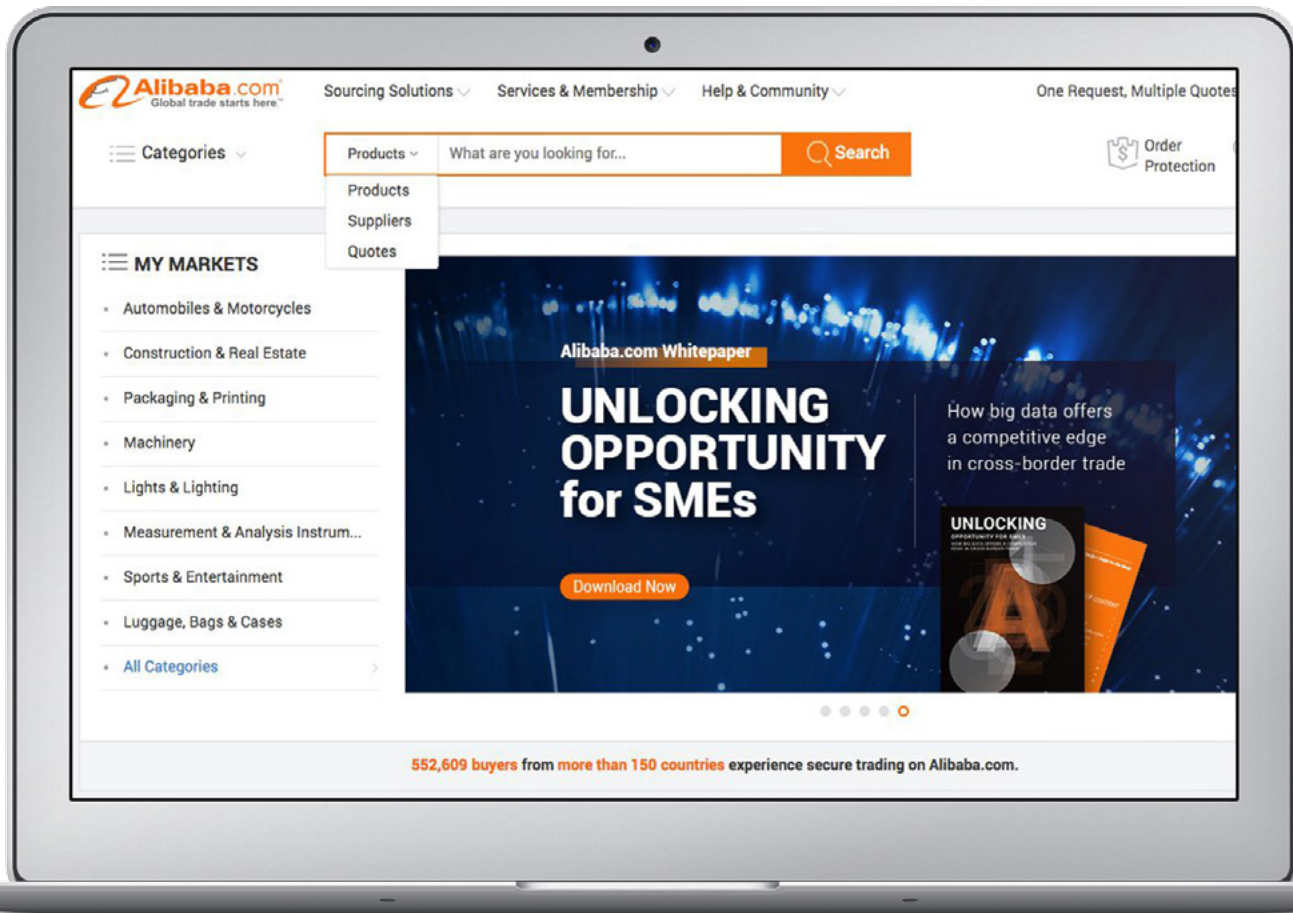
The fair attracts nearly 800 exhibitors each year and over 15 000 buyers from around the world. The major exhibit categories include - Binoculars & Magnifiers, Brand Name Gallery, Contact Lens & Accessories, Diagnostic Instruments, Eyewear Accessories, Frames, Lens and Parts, International Designer Elite, Kids Eyewear, Optometric Instruments & Machinery, Reading Glasses, Smart Eyewear, Sporting & Professional Eyewear, and Trade Services. The show usually runs from 8 - 10 November each year.

Sourcing from Alibaba - Guide and Website Walkthrough

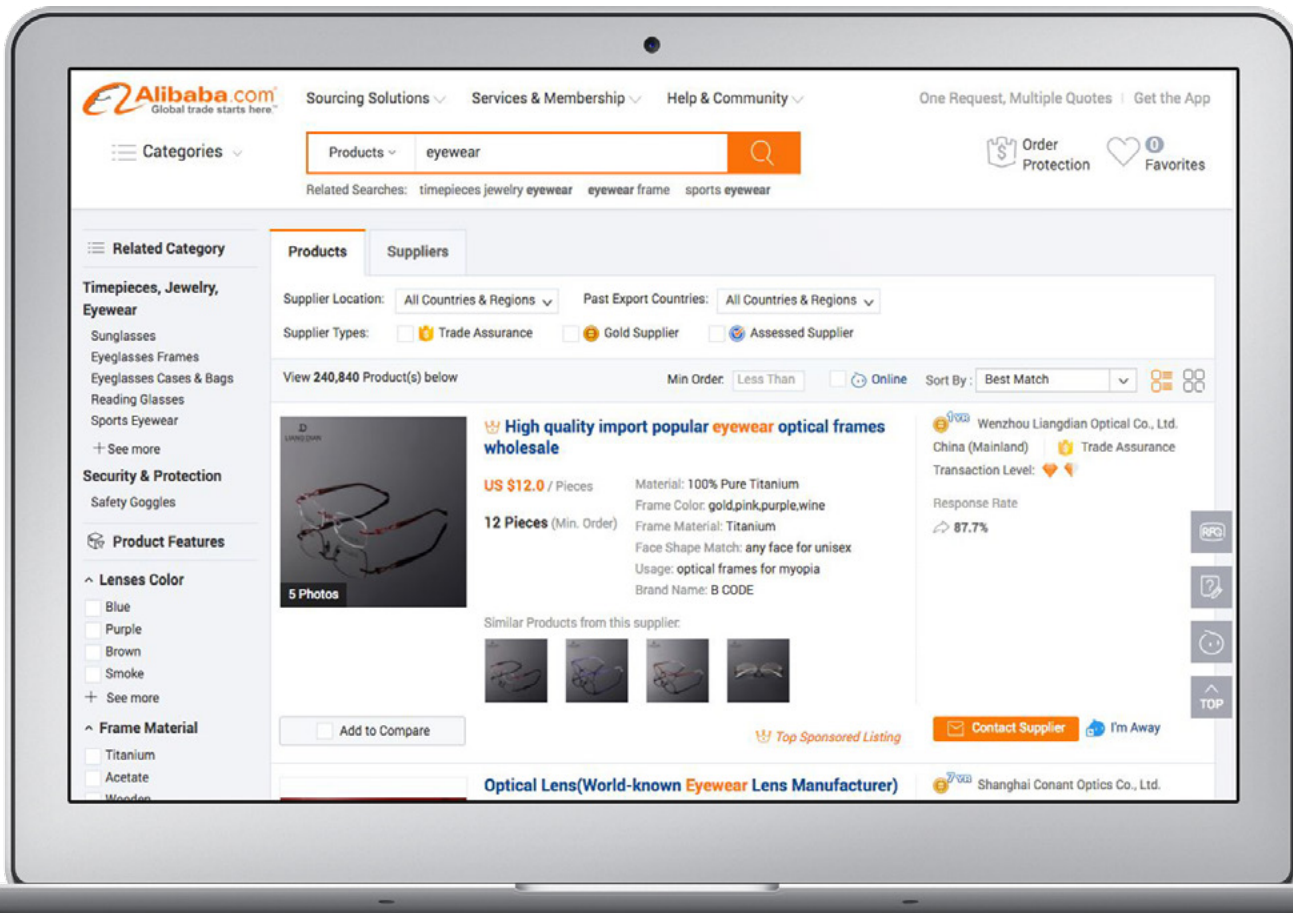
1. You will need to open a free account with Alibaba in order to request pricing and details from potential supplier and manufacturers. Once you've filled out a request for information, a link will be sent to the email address you entered and you can confirm your subscription from your inbox.



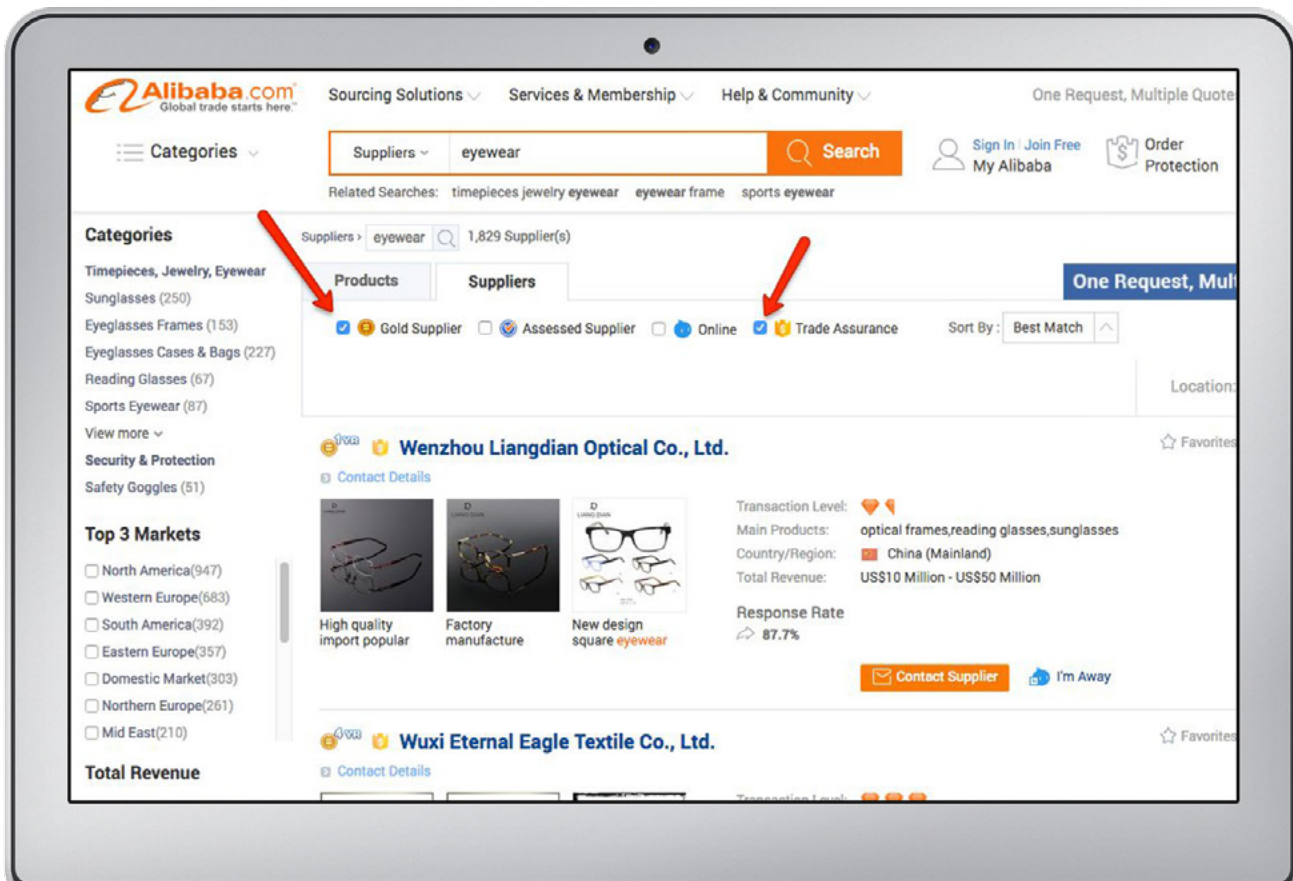
2. The search bar is where you can search for any products, suppliers or quotes on any type of eyewear you may be interested in. The drop-down box on the left hand side of the search bar is where you can select the “Products”, “Suppliers” or “Quotes” categories to refine your search.



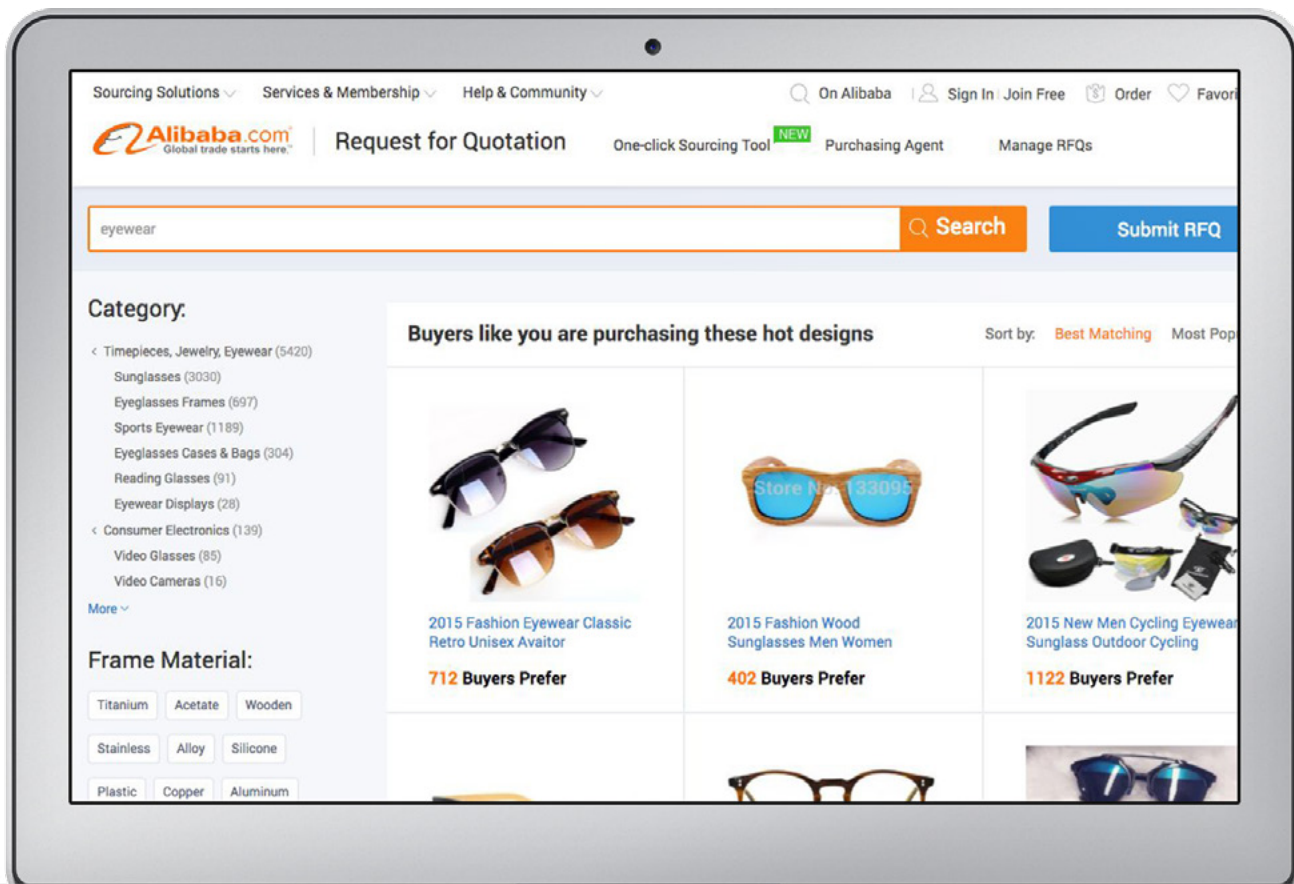
3. This is how the search results will appear when eyewear is typed into the search tab with the “Products” category selected. As indicated, the search results will show the results for the products on Alibaba that relate to your search term, in this case eyewear.



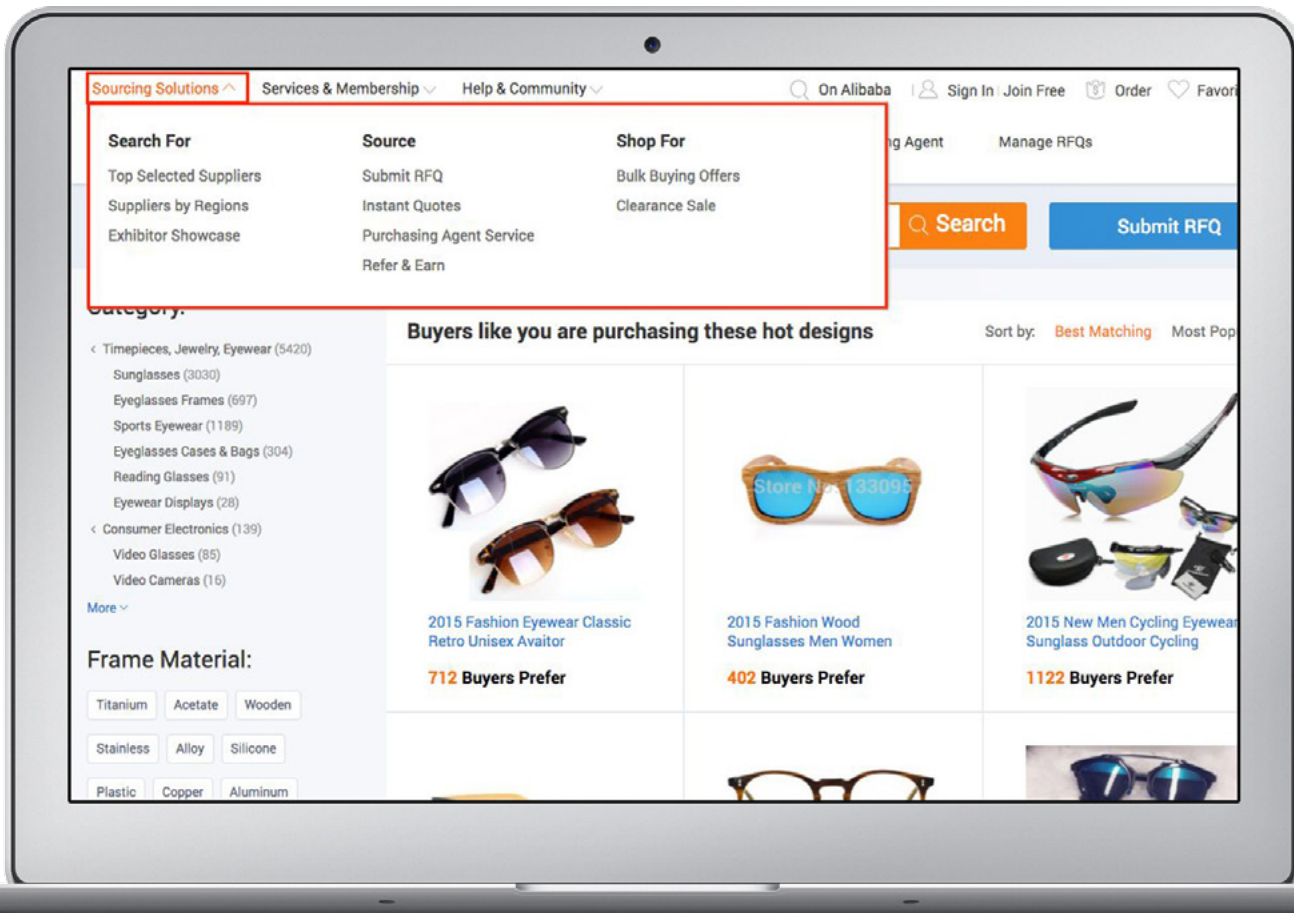
4. Here's what the same search would look like if you search for "eyewear" with the category "suppliers" selected. You have the option of ticking the boxes for "gold supplier" and "trade assurance".
- **Gold Supplier** is a premium membership for suppliers on Alibaba.com. Essentially showing that the company you're looking at cares enough to pay for their membership with Alibaba
 - **Trade Assurance** is a free service by Alibaba.com that's designed to help create trust between buyers and suppliers. Trade Assurance helps buyers in the event of shipping and quality-related disputes.



5. This is how the search results appear when you search for “eyewear” with the “Quotes” category selected. The search results you see are for suppliers who can give instant quotes for the products you’re looking for.



6. The “Sourcing Solutions” drop-down menu provides you with an array of options you can use to refine your search. Search suppliers by region, look at global expos, submit a buying request, shop for ready-made stock etc. The menu can help you refine your search much more efficiently.



All in all, Alibaba can give you a very good idea of what suppliers there are, pricing, MOQ's etc. to facilitate you in making an informed decision about your eyewear supplier.

Safety Concerns when Buying from Alibaba



Alibaba has in the past been recognized for scam transactions. However, they have been working hard in recent years to build a trustworthy reputation. Some steps have been put in place like the “gold supplier” and “trade assurance” buttons when searching for suppliers or manufacturers, and they’ve even introduced an “assessed supplier” function.

Assessed Supplier - when you do a search that includes only assessed suppliers you will only see results for factories that have been assessed by third party inspection companies and can download the report that goes with it.

That being said, there are still scams being reported from time to time, and ultimately it’s your responsibility to take all the necessary precautions to prevent yourself getting scammed.

Here are some precautions you can take:

1. The best thing you could ever do is to use your common sense. If it looks too good to be true then it probably is, if you don't feel good about it then don't do it. There's no substitute for gut feelings, so make use of it.
2. Run a "background check" on the company you're looking to work with. Make sure phone numbers, emails, websites and physical address check out. Go to their website and confirm that the phone figures on the website and Alibaba match. See if they're a member of any trade associations as this will give you more insight into their operation. [Third party inspection](#) companies can do background checks and on-site verifications before you place any orders. Companies such as PEL are well situated for this and could save you a significant amount of time and effort.
3. Search Alibaba forums, Google or scam.com for complaints or up to date testimonials about the company you're researching. If there's something amiss it should come up quickly, complaints tend to find their way onto the internet much faster than praise.
4. Ask for references from your suppliers. If they are a trustworthy supplier, they shouldn't have any issues providing you with recommendations, but double check those references to make sure they are in fact legitimate. Ask those references if they ever had any problems working with the supplier, how long they've been using them, are they still doing business with them, and if they're willing to share the information how much they spent on materials for eyewear or the eyewear itself.
5. If you're working with a supplier that produces branded eyewear, like Ray Ban sunglasses, for example, make sure they have the rights to either produce or sell eyewear to you, so you don't run into any legal issues later on. The responsibility will fall on you and not the supplier if they supply you with products which infringe on other companies' copyright or trademarks.
6. Visit the factory. Nearly all manufacturers and suppliers welcome site visits, so if they object to a visit this should set off alarm bells.
7. Make use of a third party quality inspection company, and be sure to use an inspection company that deals specifically with eyewear. Use only reputable companies with a proven track record to inspect your eyewear, companies that won't be compromised by bribes from suppliers. Really do your research on these companies and only settle for the best.

8. Take special note of the methods of payment the suppliers accept. Do they work with Paypal or Alibaba's Secure Payment System? If they do it's a good sign, those are two of the safest ways to make payments on Alibaba as they offer installment payment services (sort of a 50% down 50% on delivery, if you like). Or they offer dispute resolution services if the suppliers don't follow through with their part of the deal. Be careful of suppliers who only accept WesternUnion or Moneygram payments as these are cash payments and scams have been known to happen through these types of transactions.
9. Keep records of absolutely everything. Save texts, emails, WeChat messages, film Skype sessions, keep sample products safe. This is not only good to keep as evidence if a dispute comes up later, but also to keep you on track with everything that was discussed and to make sure you get the best possible eyewear from your manufacturer or supplier as promised.



Global Sources

Global Sources is essentially a concentrated version of Alibaba, but what most people don't know is that it's been around longer and in fact predates Alibaba. GS works on the fact that not everybody out there wants unlimited options but a more concentrated version of high-quality verified suppliers.

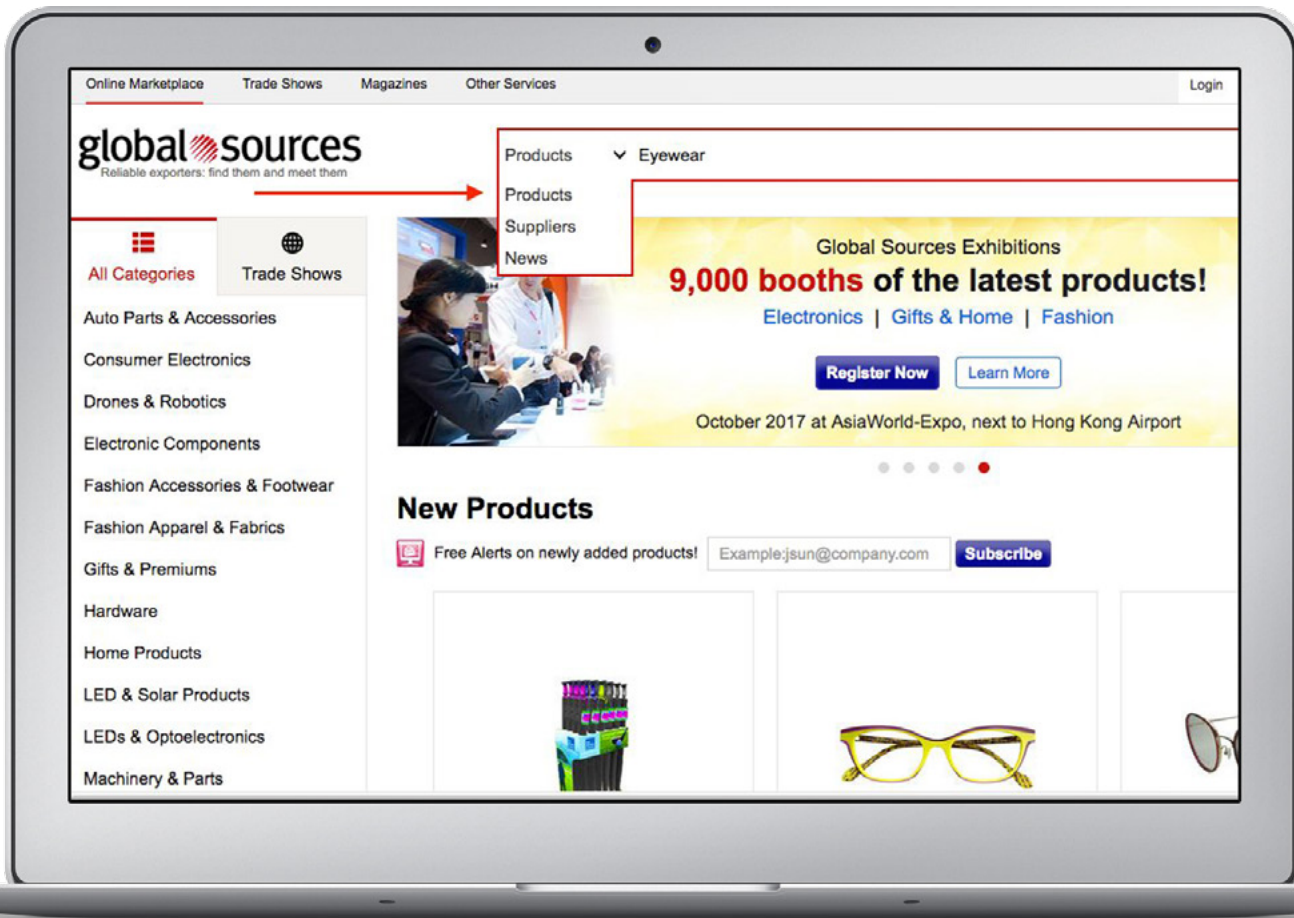
Based in Hong Kong, Global Sources is excellent for sourcing high-quality suppliers on their supplier/buyer platform. Their unique value proposition lies in the fact that they organize a bi-annual trade show in Hong Kong, at the same time as the Canton Fair, and have a good B2B platform as well. There's a lot of integration between the platforms and the trade shows which provides you with the best of both worlds.



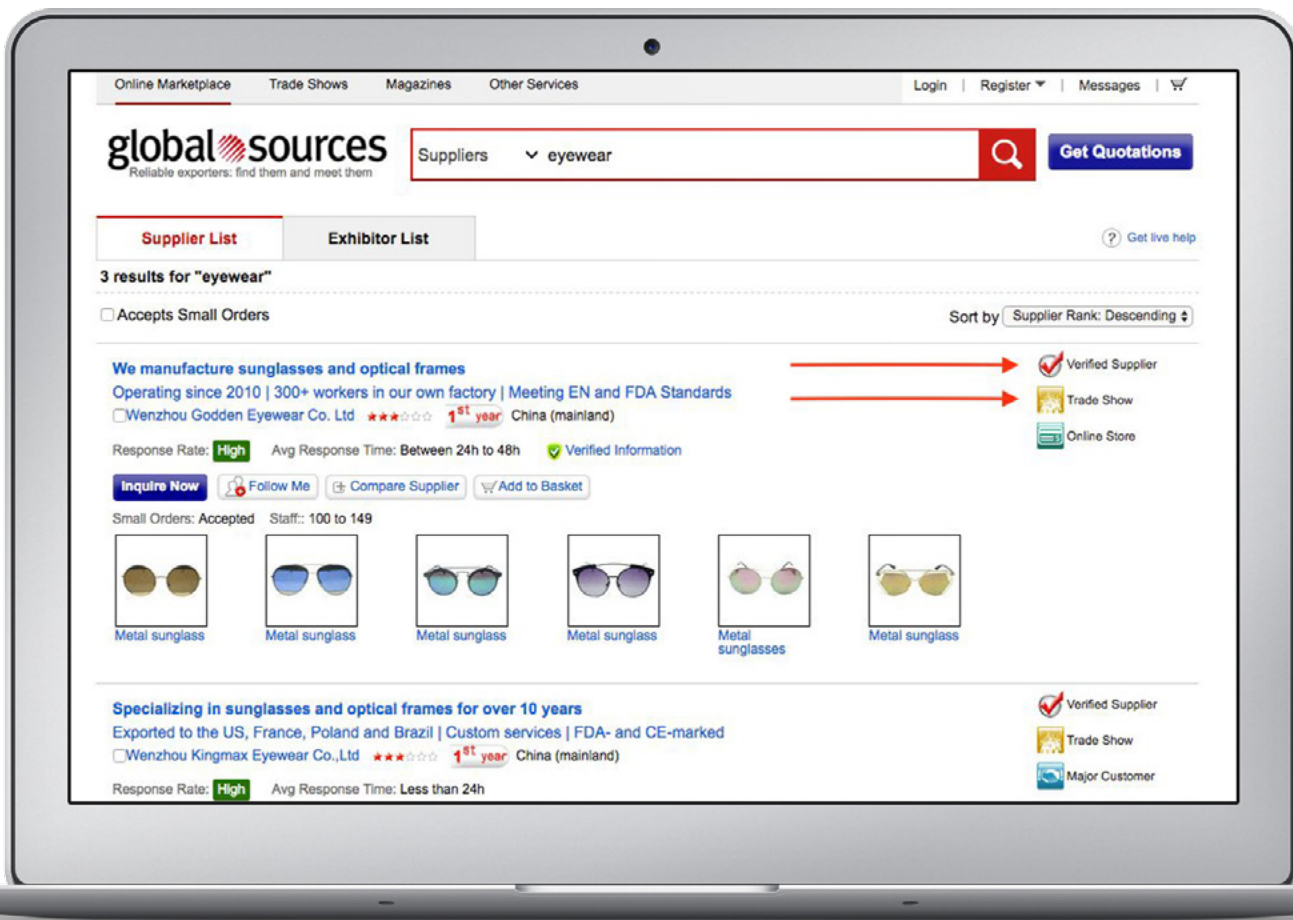


GS also organize a variety of conferences throughout the year that targets different buyer groups, like the Startup Launchpad for hardware startups and the Global Sources Summit for Amazon Sellers, if that's your thing. The biggest benefit of the Global Sourcing Trade Show is that it's in Hong Kong, meaning that most Western visitors won't need a visa to visit, unlike the Canton Fair where you would need a Chinese Visa to attend the show. It's strategically held at the intervening periods around the Canton Fair in Guangzhou, meaning that buyers can visit the Canton Fair and then make the trip to Hong Kong to visit the Global Sources Show. Hong Kong and Guangzhou are only two hours away from each other by train.

The online platform has a very similar feel to Alibaba and is quite easy to navigate. You have the dropdown option of supplier or product next to the search tab as illustrated below.



If you do a search on “Eyewear” with the “Supplier” tab selected you will notice that the suppliers may also display “Verified Supplier” or “Trade Show” on the right hand side:



What this means is:

- **Verified Supplier** - This Verified Supplier's Business Registration profile has been independently verified with relevant government agencies
- **Trade Show** - This supplier has exhibited at one or more of our specialized sourcing Trade Shows

This is all well and good, but what you need to be looking for is a verified manufacturer “stamp” on that list.

- **Verified Manufacturers** - Verified Suppliers whose business scope, as licensed by relevant government departments, allows them to manufacture goods.

You need to be looking for verified manufacturers for your eyewear, as opposed to a supplier representing a manufacturer to make sure you’re getting the best possible pricing.

All in all, Global Sources isn’t a bad second choice to Alibaba and they are pretty upfront about who they allow on their site. It’s an easy enough site to use and although it’s not rife with eyewear manufacturers you never know who might find on there as the site is regularly updated.



Distinguishing Between Manufacturers, Distributors & Trading Companies

Knowing what kind of company you're talking to is especially important when you're searching for suppliers or manufacturers in China. There are essentially three different types of companies, and their functions are entirely different from one another so it's important for you to know which kind you're talking to right from the start.



Manufacturers - Manufacturers make their own products, it's as simple as that. Manufacturers operate factories that have the materials, equipment and/or staff to make physical products.



Distributors - Distributors in turn buy products from manufacturers and then sell them to their clients. The important thing to note here is that they don't actually make the products themselves. Distributors have the resources and relevant contacts to sell their products to businesses that are willing to buy them.



Trading Companies - Trading companies buy a multitude of products from different factories or distributors and resell them. Again, they don't manufacture any of the products themselves, but source them from numerous factories or distributors and sell them to their clients.

Why is this important to know the difference? - It's all about the bottom line. You need to know whether you're sourcing your products from a manufacturer, a distributor or a trading company. Working directly with a manufacturer is by far the best way to ensure you'll be able to make the most profit out of your eyewear. Working directly with a manufacturer cuts out the middlemen, like the distributors or trading companies who add their profit margin onto the product before you get to sell it. Be wary of companies claiming to be manufacturers as this may not always be the case, always double check to make sure.

There are some disadvantages in working with a manufacturer directly however, for instance some of them don't employ the resources to hire English speaking salespeople. Working with a language barrier between you and a manufacturer can create problems. This of course isn't true in every case, there are manufacturers who have the resources to provide English speaking services, but this problem does exist.



In the case of Alibaba, the most abundant type of supplier you'll find will be trading companies that are in the business of selling products they purchase from manufacturers. These types of trading companies often don't have the resources to employ English speaking representatives. The downside to working with trading companies is that they often lack essential product knowledge, especially if you're asking more specific questions, or if you want to modify your product in any way because it's likely that they can't control any product modifications.

If it makes sense for your business it's better to work directly with eyewear manufacturers. Manufacturers know the entire process of making their own line of eyewear, they know how to modify the products, and what the costs involved are likely to be. Purchasing directly from the manufacturer will ensure you can sell to your customers at the lowest cost possible while still maintaining a decent profit margin for yourself.

So how do you know the difference when speaking to a potential supplier? You can ask them, but beware of a simple “yes” as a reply, don’t be too trusting with this. It’s good to know that on Alibaba, it isn’t required for suppliers to identify into which category they fall. The best way to assess whether a supplier is what they say they are is to look at the range of products they have on offer, if you’re looking for an eyewear supplier and they also sell radio’s it’s very likely that they don’t produce either. Manufacturers mostly offer a single range of products in which they specialize in producing.



The 13 Essential Questions You Need to Ask Your Potential Eyewear Manufacturer

1. What are the payment terms and are they negotiable?

On average you would be asked to pay 30% deposit upfront and 70% on delivery or BOL, but be sure to get this ironed out from the start to make sure they don't try and take advantage of you and request upfront payment.

2. What will the total cost of my order be?

Be sure to ask about "other" cost or "hidden fees" i.e. delivery fees, fuel surcharges, restocking charges for returns. Any indication of possible hidden costs, don't be shy to drive this point home.

3. Can you provide us with a Liability certificate?

The supplier should provide written proof that they have adequate liability insurance if the product or parts thereof malfunction or break.

4. Will my designs or specific eyewear brand be produced only for me?

Confirm with the manufacturers that your product will only be produced for you, and if they would be willing to sign an NCND where they would agree not to sell directly to your end-users, or reproduce your product. If they confirm their willingness to sign, they are likely willing to play ball and can be considered further.

5. What happens if delivery is delayed or doesn't arrive?

This needs to be clearly stipulated to avoid your shipment being put on the backburner, in the eventuality that they go to work on a larger order before yours is out of the door. If you have an agreement in place, they are more likely to keep your order moving along before focussing on other, possibly larger orders.

6. Under what circumstances might the pricing change, and what will the warnings be? How early would I be notified?

To avoid dealing with unexpected inflation of prices, you must agree on a set price and under which circumstances those prices could change.

7. Do you have volume rebate, and if we go into larger quantities what will my discounts and/or incentives be?

If your orders pick up and you're producing more eyewear you need to know what kind of discounts you will be eligible for.



8. When do I take ownership of the products?

You will need time to inspect your eyewear and ensure they are in perfect condition. Look at adding a 3-5 day inspection clause to your agreements with your supplier, or speak to a quality inspection company that could answer these questions for you.

9. Is the manufacturer, in fact, a manufacturer?

Establish that are they an OEM/Manufacturer, and not a redistributor for other factories.



10. Will you be able to provide us with a copy of your business license and all certificates of conformity and quality related certification, i.e. ISO certification?

You need to know on which level of production these factories are working on before you engage in business with them. Clarify which certification will be required for the region you will be distributing/selling to beforehand.

11. What kind of quality control systems do you have in place?

Do they have an international quality accreditation? Obtain a copy and check with the authorization organization.

12. What are your manufacturing capabilities, quantities, surplus production per month/year, and can this be increased and what timeframe if required?

This is worth knowing because once your company kicks off you need to know what limitations there could be regarding production volumes, if any.

13. Is the manufacturer a reputable business in the industry and do they protect clients' intellectual property?

Check with industry bodies, their customers, and suppliers and conduct secondary research to find information on the company's reputation. One thing you can't hide from is a reputation, use this to your advantage.



Conclusion

Sourcing good quality, well-priced eyewear from China is not complicated if you follow the advice from this eBook. In the end, it's all about experience; the more experience you gain, the better you get. Golfer Gary Player famously quoted "the more I practice, the luckier I get" when an onlooker suggested he may have been lucky by sinking three bunker shots in a row while practicing. Sourcing the right eyewear supplier has nothing to do with luck when you take your time and correctly use all the tools at your disposal; you will succeed.

We hope that you found this eBook both interesting and useful for your eyewear sourcing needs, and wish you all the best in this endeavor.

About Precision Eyewear Laboratory

Precision Eyewear Laboratory have been China's premier eyewear testing laboratory since 2004.

Our experts serve global eyewear manufacturing companies and brands who produce goods in China, assuring that their products reach and exceed global quality and compliance standards.

We offer a variety of eyewear testing solutions to assure that your products, no matter their category of eyewear, reach and maintain the highest possible standards.

Types Of Eyewear We Test

PEL have expert staff and a cutting edge laboratory who are adept in testing and assessing the following eyewear types and techniques:

- Reading glasses
- Sunglasses
- Ophthalmic lenses
- Safety glasses
- Children's glasses
- Swimming goggles
- Ski goggles
- Glasses frames
- Hazardous substance testing
- Glass and frame property analysis

Eyewear quality issues negatively impacting your business?

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