

# Are You Retail Ready?

SEED SPOT

## The 5 Knowledge Areas Every CPG Founder Needs Before Approaching Retail

Based on data from nearly 1,500 CPG founders in SEED SPOT's programs, these five knowledge areas are what separate founders from their first real retail conversation. Buyers assume this foundation is already in place. Use this checklist to find your gaps and close them.

### 01 Line Sheets & Sales Sheets

*A line sheet is the first document a buyer uses to evaluate your brand. Without one, the conversation often ends before it begins.*

- I have a current line sheet with product specs, pricing tiers, and MOQs  
*Minimum order quantities should be clearly stated*
- My line sheet includes lead times and shipping/logistics info
- I have a one-page sales sheet summarizing my brand story and key SKUs
- My materials are formatted professionally and easy to scan quickly  
*Think clean layout — buyers review dozens of brands*
- I can send my line sheet within 24 hours of a buyer request

### 02 Retail Math

*Retail math is the economic language of a vendor relationship. If you can't speak it, buyers can't evaluate whether your product works on their shelf.*

- I know my cost of goods sold (COGS) per unit
- I understand the difference between wholesale price and MSRP
- I can calculate my retailer's margin from my wholesale price  
*Retailers typically need 40–60% margin*
- I know what slotting fees and promotional allowances are  
*And whether I can afford them*

- I understand what contribution margin means for my product's viability

### 03 Pricing Architecture

*Direct-to-consumer pricing and retail pricing are different problems. Your margin stack needs to work at every point in the chain.*

- I have worked backward from a viable retail shelf price to my production cost
- My pricing can accommodate distributor margin AND retailer margin  
*And still leave room for me to be profitable*
- I know my break-even point at wholesale pricing
- I have tested whether my current COGS supports a retail margin structure
- I have a pricing model that accounts for promotions and markdowns

### 04 Distribution Channels

*Buyers need to know you've thought through how your product gets from production to their shelf — before you walk in the door.*

- I understand the difference between direct-to-retail and distributed models
- I know what a broker or distributor does and whether I need one
- I have identified the right route to market for my target retailer  
*e.g. UNFI for natural grocery, KeHE for specialty*
- I understand what compliance and logistics requirements my retailer expects
- I can speak to my production capacity and fulfillment reliability

### 05 Retail Product Development

*What shelf-ready means varies by retailer and category. Know your requirements before the pitch — not after.*

- My packaging meets the labeling requirements for my target retailer/channel

- I know the shelf-stability requirements for my product category
- My product has the necessary certifications for my target retailer  
*e.g. organic, non-GMO, kosher, halal*
- I understand what ingredient compliance looks like for my category
- My product is shelf-ready — it doesn't require special handling or display

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### Score Yourself

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|----------------------|---|
| <b>20–25 checked</b> | You're retail-ready — now make it count. The RBA refines your pitch and presentation, pairs you with experienced CPG mentors, and puts you in the room with national retail buyers. |
| <b>12–19 checked</b> | 86% of founders who graduated from the RBA left with a buyer follow-up.   |
| <b>Below 12</b>      | Start with retail math and line sheets — those unlock everything else.  |

**Ready to close the gap?** The Retail Brand Accelerator was built for CPG founders at exactly this stage.

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