Retail Ready Checklist

Product liability insurance:

Product liability insurance isn't merely a product guarantee or warranty. It protects businesses from the fallout that occurs in the event that a product causes injury or other damage to third parties. Product liability insurance can help protect you in the event that your business faces a lawsuit. Contact your insurance agent to inquire as to coverage for your business.

UPC codes:

The Universal Product Code is a barcode symbol that is widely used in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, in Europe and other countries for tracking trade items in stores. UPC consists of 12 numeric digits that are uniquely assigned to each trade item.

Since a SKU is unique to the company, the same product would have different SKUs if sold by different companies, but they would have the same UPC. Another difference is that SKUs are typically eight alpha-numeric digits, while UPCs are 12 digits, numeric only.

A good starting point for learning about UPC codes as well as how to obtain them is the GS1-US website: https://www.gs1-us.info/

Nutrition facts:

Many if not all retailers and distributors require a transparent set of nutrition facts. This link provides a list of labs in Indiana and the Midwest that can help with that.

Know your competitors. Can you effectively describe your product and pitch to retail buyers?

Know what is unique and valuable about your product—to retailers, to their shoppers, and to their end consumers. Why does your product truly belong on their retail shelves? What should it replace? What data or insights can you bring to back up that pitch? Shoppers, consumers, and competitors. Know who buys products in your category and why. Who are you targeting for your new product? Who is the end consumer? Who are your future key competitors? Is it your own products or competitive brands? If you have a product ready to launch, all of these should be well known to you by now. Visit and audit stores to learn the market and retailers.

Branding:

Buyers and shoppers connect with brands, not just products. Be prepared to talk about your brand and your plans to build your brand in the future.

Things to consider:

- Have a branded social media presence *(optional)*
- Have a static website landing page *(optional)*
- Have 1 point of contact: phone, dedicated business email address, mailing address
- Packaging
- Bandwidth to intake returned or damaged product
- Credible, inspected co-packer or processor
- Copies of all food safety certifications, inspection reports, food handling certifications

Customers:

Get quick wins early. Success can accelerate if you can point to others already buying your product. Create an early success story with one to two retailers. Bring your story and your numbers to prove your results to others.

Sell Sheet:

Your sell sheet is a front and back selling tool that lists everything the buyer needs to know to buy your product from you. It should include:

- *Brand logo* – establish the brand for this product
- *Product photo* – a great photo of what your product looks like inside and outside of its package
- *Product specifications* – all product dimensions, packaging dimensions, product, package and pallet weight, shipping configuration, boxes per case, cases per pallet
- *Product availability date* – when your product will be available to ship
- *UPC code and case codes* – for the retailer to enter into their system
- *Merchandising information and suggestions* – use a separate sheet if you are offering prepacked shippers
- *Information on how to place the order* – are orders placed on your website, Facebook Marketplace, etc.?
- *Company and contact information* – to reach you after the meeting
- *Marketing calendar* – show your launch support – this can be on a different sheet if room is needed for the above