

LH COLLECTIVE

LH RETAIL READY CHECKLIST™

A Professional Assessment Framework For Brands Preparing For
Retail Placement

*“Evaluate your brand, product, operations, and retail strategy
before approaching buyers.”*

*This checklist is a diagnostic tool built for founders, product teams, and
business owners preparing to place a brand in retail environments. It is
designed to bring the rigor of a retail buyer's evaluation into your own hands
— before the meeting, before the pitch, and before the shelf.*

RETAIL READINESS FRAMEWORK™

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GETTING STARTED

How To Use This Checklist

01 Complete Each Section

Work through all ten sections of the assessment in order. Each section evaluates a distinct dimension of retail readiness — from brand foundation to retail strategy.

02 Score Your Readiness

For every checklist item, mark the box that best reflects your brand's current state: Complete, Needs Improvement, or Missing.

03 Identify Weaknesses

Low-scoring items point directly to the gaps most likely to stall or disqualify a retail conversation. Treat these as your priority list, not an afterthought.

04 Create An Improvement Plan

Before contacting retailers, build a written plan to close the gaps identified in this assessment. Retailers evaluate brands once — be ready before that meeting happens.

THE SCORING SYSTEM

2**COMPLETE**

The item is fully in place and retail-ready.

1**NEEDS IMPROVEMENT**

The item exists in some form but requires refinement.

0**MISSING**

The item does not yet exist within the brand or business.

SECTION 01

Brand Foundation

2

1

0

Retailers place brands, not just products. This section evaluates whether your brand identity is developed enough to represent itself credibly on a shelf.

Clear brand mission is defined and documented

☐☐☐

Target customer is clearly defined

☐☐☐

Brand positioning is distinct within its category

☐☐☐

Professional brand identity (logo, color system, typography)

☐☐☐

Website credibility supports a retail-facing brand

☐☐☐

Social media presence reflects an active, maintained brand

☐☐☐

Brand story is developed and consistently communicated

☐☐☐

Customer trust signals are established (reviews, press, credentials)

☐☐☐

SECTION SCORE

 / 16

BUYER PERSPECTIVE

“A buyer forms an opinion of your brand before they ever touch the product. Weak brand foundation is the single most common reason strong products get passed over.”

SECTION 02

Product Quality & Development

2

1

0

A retail-ready product performs consistently, photographs well, and gives customers a reason to return.

Product is clearly differentiated from competitors

☐☐☐

Product solves a defined customer problem

☐☐☐

Product has undergone formal testing

☐☐☐

Quality control process is documented and consistent

☐☐☐

Product photography meets retail and e-commerce standards

☐☐☐

Customer feedback has been collected and incorporated

☐☐☐

Product shows realistic repeat-purchase potential

☐☐☐

SECTION SCORE

 / 14

BUYER PERSPECTIVE

“Retailers return products that under-perform. A product that is not yet consistent is a liability to the relationship, not just the shelf.”

SECTION 03

Packaging & Presentation

2

1

0

Buyers evaluate packaging in seconds. This section measures whether your presentation communicates value at a glance.

Packaging is retail-ready (durable, shelf-appropriate)

☐☐☐

Product labeling meets regulatory and category standards

☐☐☐

Barcode / UPC is assigned and functional

☐☐☐

Instructions or usage information are included where needed

☐☐☐

Packaging demonstrates shelf appeal against comparable products

☐☐☐

Customer can understand the product within five seconds

☐☐☐

SECTION SCORE

 / 12

BUYER PERSPECTIVE

"Shelf appeal is a five-second decision made by a customer standing at arm's length. If the packaging can't sell itself, the buyer won't take the risk."

SECTION 04

Retail Compliance

2

1

0

Retailers cannot onboard a vendor without proper documentation. This section confirms the legal and administrative foundation is in place.

Business is formally registered (LLC, Corp, etc.)

☐☐☐

EIN (Employer Identification Number) is established

☐☐☐

General liability / product insurance is in place

☐☐☐

Applicable certifications are current (safety, organic, etc.)

☐☐☐

Legal requirements for the product category are met

☐☐☐

Vendor paperwork and compliance documents are prepared

☐☐☐

SECTION SCORE

 / 12

BUYER PERSPECTIVE

"Missing paperwork is an instant disqualifier. Retailers cannot legally onboard a vendor who is not properly registered and insured, regardless of how strong the product is."

SECTION 05

Pricing & Profitability

2

1

0

Retail pricing must work for three parties at once — your brand, the retailer, and the customer. This section confirms the math actually holds up.

Product cost (COGS) is fully calculated	☐	☐	☐
Wholesale pricing is established	☐	☐	☐
Retail pricing is established	☐	☐	☐
Retailer margin meets category standards	☐	☐	☐
Distributor margin is accounted for (if applicable)	☐	☐	☐
Shipping and fulfillment costs are factored in	☐	☐	☐
Pricing model sustains long-term profitability	☐	☐	☐

SECTION SCORE

/ 14

ILLUSTRATIVE PRICING EXAMPLE

Manufacturing Cost	\$10
Wholesale Price	\$20
Retail Price	\$40
Retailer Margin	50%

SECTION 06

Supply Chain Readiness

2

1

0

A great pitch means nothing if the brand cannot fulfill the order. This section evaluates operational capacity to deliver at retail volume.

Supplier relationships are reliable and documented

☐☐☐

Production timeline supports retail order volume

☐☐☐

Inventory management system is in place

☐☐☐

Storage and warehousing needs are addressed

☐☐☐

Shipping process is established and tested

☐☐☐

Reorder system is defined and repeatable

☐☐☐

Business can scale production without disruption

☐☐☐

SECTION SCORE

 / 14

BUYER PERSPECTIVE

“A retailer's first out-of-stock is often their last order. Supply chain reliability is trust – and trust is the actual product being sold to a buyer.”

SECTION 07

Sales Materials

2

1

0

Buyers move quickly and expect polish. This section confirms you have the materials needed to be taken seriously in the room.

Line sheet is complete and current

☐☐☐

Wholesale catalog is developed

☐☐☐

Brand deck is polished and buyer-ready

☐☐☐

Product sell sheet is available

☐☐☐

Pricing sheet is clear and accurate

☐☐☐

Physical or digital samples are ready to send

☐☐☐

Retail pitch is rehearsed and confident

☐☐☐

SECTION SCORE

 / 14

BUYER PERSPECTIVE

"Incomplete sales materials signal an unprepared vendor. Buyers rarely give a second meeting to a brand that wasted the first one."

SECTION 08

Market Validation

2

1

0

Retailers reduce their own risk by looking for proof the market already wants what you sell. This section measures the strength of that proof.

Customer reviews exist and are largely positive

☐☐☐

Sales history demonstrates consistent demand

☐☐☐

Repeat customers make up a meaningful share of sales

☐☐☐

Community engagement is active and genuine

☐☐☐

Influencer or customer-generated content exists

☐☐☐

Market demand is evidenced beyond anecdote

☐☐☐

SECTION SCORE

 / 12

BUYER PERSPECTIVE

“Buyers are not gambling on potential – they are confirming demand that already exists. Validation de-risks the decision to say yes.”

SECTION 09

Retail Strategy

2

1

0

Retail readiness is not only about being ready — it's about approaching the right retailers, in the right order, with a clear plan.

Ideal retailer profile is clearly identified

☐☐☐

Competitor retail placement has been researched

☐☐☐

Target customer matches the retailer's existing customer base

☐☐☐

Buyer / decision-maker list has been developed

☐☐☐

Retail expansion plan is documented beyond the first placement

☐☐☐

SECTION SCORE

 / 10

BUYER PERSPECTIVE

“A scattershot approach to retail reads as inexperience. A defined strategy signals a brand that understands its own market position.”

SECTION 10

Final Retail Readiness Score

TOTAL SCORE

 / 100

RETAIL READINESS RATING

SCORING GUIDE

90–100

RETAIL READY

You are prepared to approach buyers with confidence.

70–89

ALMOST READY

Close remaining gaps before initiating retailer conversations.

50–69

DEVELOPMENT STAGE

Foundational work is needed before pursuing retail.

Below 50

EARLY STAGE

Focus on fundamentals across brand, product, and operations.

IMPROVEMENT PRIORITIES

1.
2.
3.

NEXT STEPS

Need Help Becoming Retail Ready?

LH Collective works directly with emerging brands to close the gaps identified in this assessment — turning a promising product into a retail-ready business.

Improve retail positioning and brand presentation

Prepare products for buyer evaluation and shelf placement

Build wholesale pricing, line sheets, and sales systems

Connect brands with vetted retail opportunities

SCHEDULE A RETAIL READINESS CONSULTATION

Contact LH Collective to schedule your consultation