Session 3: Product Sourcing, Closing the Supplier and Supplier Relationships

- **Sourcing High-Quality Products**
    - Identifying and vetting reliable suppliers.
    - Dropshipping vs. holding inventory for high-ticket products.
- **Scaling Through Client Work**
    - How to help clients source products and provide SEO-driven product optimization.

Objective: Develop expertise in product sourcing and understand how to offer these insights as part of your SEO services.

E-Commerce SEO Training: Product Sourcing & Supplier Vetting

Identifying and Vetting Reliable Suppliers

A supplier's quality directly impacts your brand reputation, customer satisfaction, and profitability. Always look for the following five crucial elements (often referred to as the 5 Pillars of a Good Supplier):

Pillar	Vetting Requirement	Why It Matters (Impact on Business/SEO)
1. Fast & Reliable Shipping	Supplier must ship items out within **1–2 business days**. Total delivery time should ideally be **3 to 14 working days**. Must provide a tracking number.	Slow shipping (e.g., 20-40 days) leads to chargebacks, customer complaints, and lost sales. Fast delivery generates customer referrals.

2. Product Quality & Value	Products must be high-quality to prevent returns and bad reviews. Seek **good value for the price** (avoiding the cheapest option often means sourcing from a better supplier).	Bad products lead to bad reviews, chargebacks, and customers never returning. **Always order a sample** to quality test the product and packaging before selling.
3. Communication & Service	Supplier must reply to inquiries within a **maximum of one business day**. Look for clear, reliable, and responsive communication.	Your customer service is a reflection of your supplier's customer service. Slow replies mean slow responses to your customers, leading to lost business.
4. Flexibility & Returns	Must have a **flexible refund/return policy** and accept returns for damaged or broken goods.	A good return policy (e.g., 90 days or even a year, depending on the product) reduces customer friction.
5. Trust & Partnership	Look for suppliers with proven experience (ideally 3-10 years). Seek a long-term relationship where they offer competitive pricing and discounts as you scale.	Trust ensures consistency in quality and shipping times, preventing problems when you scale.

How and Where to Find Suppliers
Suppliers can be located through directories, marketplaces, or manual research, depending on your needs.

A. Finding Suppliers in China (For Private Label/Bulk/Cheaper Costs):

• **Alibaba/Global Sources:** Massive online directories for Asian manufacturers and vendors. Global Sources often lists larger factories, resulting in higher Minimum Order Quantities (MOQ) but potentially higher quality suppliers.

• **Import Records (Advanced):** Tools like Import Yeti, Jungle Scout, Panga, or Import Genius can search public shipping records to find the actual factories used by major retailers (e.g., Dick's Sporting Goods).

• **Business Databases: Data Axle (formerly Reference USA)** is a directory of virtually every US business. You can search by category (e.g., "Apparel wholesale") to find suppliers directly.

• **Retailers with Drop Shipping Programs:** Many large US retailers (e.g., **Walmart, Amazon, Home Depot, Target, Costco, Sam's Club**) have fast shipping, good customer service, and flexible returns, making them viable dropshipping sources, especially when integrated with automation software like AutoDS.

C. Automation Platforms and Marketplaces:

• **AutoDS/ZenDrop:** These platforms vet private suppliers and offer fast shipping (often 2-10 days to the US) and automated fulfillment. AutoDS also provides customizable branding options (e.g., printing your logo on thank you cards).

• **Niche-Specific:** Suppliers like Home Depot (Home Improvement), Park Flyers (RC Toys), or Pure Formulas (Health/Supplements) specialize in certain niches, often resulting in higher quality products in that area.

High-Ticket Sourcing and Vetting Process (The A+ Supplier Method):

This process is critical for identifying suppliers suitable for **high-profit, branded e-commerce stores** and can be offered as a premium client service. (This method focuses on products priced over $1,000).

A. Initial Competitor Research

1. **Build a Competitor List:** Use Google Shopping and search "buy [product type] online." Filter results by products **over $1,000**. Add competing stores (especially those with the niche name in their URL) to a spreadsheet.

2. **Find Brands/Manufacturers:** Go to each competitor's website and locate their listed "Brands" or "Manufacturers" (usually in the menu or sidebar). List these brands in your spreadsheet. This list should ideally include hundreds of potential suppliers.

B. Vetting for A+ Supplier Status

Once you have the brand list, filter it based on the five core components. A supplier is excellent if they meet three or more of these criteria:

1. **High Price Point:** Check if a large contingent of their products costs **over $1,000**.

2. **Minimum Advertised Price (MAP) Enforcement:** Check a specific product model on Google Shopping. If multiple stores list the item at the **exact same price**, MAP is likely enforced. *This is crucial because it eliminates price wars and forces competition to shift to SEO, customer service, and branding*.

3. **Branded Search Demand:** Use SEO tools (like Ahrefs or SEMrush) to check the monthly search volume for the specific brand name. The "sweet spot" is typically
2,000 to 5,000 searches per month. = Excellent
5000 + = High competitive
500- 2000 = Best
Below 500 = Low

4. **Low Competition:** Check Google Shopping and count the number of sellers listed for that brand. **Under 10 sellers is ideal; 10 to 30 is acceptable; over 30 is highly competitive**.

5. **High Margins:** Test margin potential by contacting stores selling the brand and asking for a discount. If you can secure a 10% discount, that usually indicates at least a 15-20% margin. 15-20% discounts suggest very good margins. = 28 -35%

Actionable Next Step: Create a tiered ranking system (e.g., Green for best, Yellow for middle, Red for poor) based on these five traits. Start contacting the middle-tier (Yellow) suppliers first to build your store reputation before approaching the top-tier (Green) A+ suppliers.

Scaling and Client Work: SEO-Driven Product Optimization

A. Helping Clients Source Products

You can use the principles from Steps 2 and 4 to consult clients on their sourcing strategy:

• **Supplier Selection Consulting:** Recommend reliable suppliers based on the client's target market (e.g., US-based suppliers for fast shipping) and ensure the chosen vendor meets the five key vetting requirements (shipping, quality, communication, etc.).

• **Supplier Vetting Report:** Create a report utilizing the A+ Supplier methodology (MAP, Branded Search Demand, Competition) to justify which suppliers the client should prioritize.

• **Dropshipping Agreement Documentation:** Help clients understand the importance of formal agreements, such as the one Costway offers, which can legitimize a business partnership, especially for platform requirements (like eBay).

B. SEO-Driven Product Optimization

The insights gained during sourcing translate directly into SEO optimization strategy:

1. **Capitalize on MAP Enforcement:** When a supplier enforces MAP, price competition is neutralized. Advise the client to focus resources on off-site SEO, high-quality content, customer service, and brand reputation (reviews/UGC) to win trust, rather than competing solely on price.

2. **Target Branded Search Demand:** Use the list of high-volume branded search terms identified during the A+ vetting process. Optimize product pages specifically for these branded keywords, as these searchers often have the highest intent to purchase.

3. **Optimize Product Descriptions and Imagery:** Since you have tested the quality (Step 2), ensure that the product descriptions and imagery accurately reflect the high quality and features of the sourced items, reducing customer confusion and improving conversion rates.

4. **Leverage Supplier Perks for Customer Experience:** If a supplier offers customizable branding (e.g., custom thank you cards or branded invoices via AutoDS), ensure the client utilizes this for a more professional and personal customer experience. A better experience leads to positive reviews, which boosts SEO authority and credibility.

5. **Utilize Sourcing Tools for Keyword Research:** Use the trending product lists available through suppliers or marketplaces (e.g., Amazon best sellers, new releases, movers and shakers) to find trending products for immediate keyword targeting and optimization.

Suppliers Ko Close Karne Ki Strategy (Closing Suppliers)

Objective: Trust build karna aur high-margin, low-competition suppliers ko authorize retailer banne ke liye raazi karna.

Step 5: A-Plus Suppliers Ki Pehchaan (Quick Review)

Aapka goal sirf suppliers dhundhna nahi hai, balke **A-Plus** suppliers ke saath kaam karna hai.

Headings	Notes
A-Plus Zarooriyat	Supplier mein yeh zaroor honi chahiye:
1. High Price Point	Product ki price **$1,000 se zyada**, aur ideal/behtar **$3,000 se zyada** ho.
2. Strong Margins	Margin **20% se zyada** aur ideal/behtar **30% se zyada** ho.
3. MAP Enforcement	Minimum Advertised Price (MAP) **sakhti se enforce** ho. Iska matlab hai ke sabhi stores ko products **same price** par list karne honge. Isse price competition kam hota hai aur aapka margin mehfooz rehta hai.
4. Brand Demand	Customers us brand ke products ko **pehlay se search kar rahe** hon (Existing Brand Demand).
5. Minimal Competition	Us brand ko sell karne waale stores **kam** hon.

Step 6: Decision Maker Ka Contact Dhundhna (Finding Contact Info)

Supplier ko close karne ke liye, aapko **Decision Maker** se baat karni hogi, general helpline se nahi.

Headings	Notes
Data Sheet Taiyaar Karna	Supplier research sheet mein paanch (5) naye columns banayein: **Phone 1, Phone 2, Email 1, Email 2, aur Apply Online**.
Decision Maker Ki Talaash	Hamesha woh shakhs dhundein jo faisla le sake: **Head of Marketing, Head of Sales, Head of E-commerce, Founder, ya CEO**. Inse contact karne se conversion rate general line ke muqable mein **kaafi zyada** hota hai.
Tools (A-Level)	**Apollo.io** ya is jaisa koi tool (jaise Hunter.io) use karein. Brand name aur domain dal kar un logon ko dhundein jo us company mein kaam karte hain.
LinkedIn Use Karna	LinkedIn par company search karein, phir **'See all employees'** par click karke decision makers ya kisi specific employee ko dhundein. Agar woh faisla nahi le sakte, toh unhein bolein ke woh sahi shakhs se connect kar dein.
General Helpline (Fallback)	Agar Decision Maker nahi milta, toh website par **'Contact Us'** page par jaakar general phone number ya email nikal lein.

Step 7: Effective Outreach and Pitching Strategy

Zyada tar log sirf email karte hain aur jawab nahi milta. Aapko **"Above and Beyond"** jaana hoga.

Headings	Notes
Pitch Deck Banana	Ek professional **Pitch Deck** (Presentation) zaroor banayein. Aap **Canva** ke examples use kar sakte hain.
Pitch Deck Mein Kya Ho	Khud ka ta'aruf (introduction), aapka brand, core values, aur **Marketing Strategy** (focus on SEO, Content Marketing, Email Marketing ke saath Google/Facebook Ads). Isse zahir hoga ke aap *quick buck* nahi bana rahe, balke serious hain.
Loom Video	Pitch Deck par **apna Loom video** record karein. Isse personal touch milta hai.
Pehla Contact: Call Karein	Suppliers ko **call** karne se success ki ummeed sabse zyada hoti hai.
Call Script	Shuruat mein yeh na poochein, "Kya hum aapke products sell kar sakte hain?" Balke poochein, **"Kya aap hamara marketing plan sunne ke liye tayyar hain, jisse pata chalega ke hum ek doosre ke liye fit hain ya nahi?"**.
Focus on Value	Unhein bataayein ke aap unke brand ko aise naye customers tak le jaayenge, jahan woh pehlay nahi pohunche the. Brand ko yahi chahiye.
Be Personable	Zaati baatein karein (jahan se woh hain, unke bachhon ke baare mein) taake woh aapko pasand karein (likable hon).

Step 8: Tracking and Relentless Follow-Up

Closing ek *art* hai, *perfect science* nahi. **Lekin behtar tracking aur follow-up zaroori hai.**

Headings	Notes
CRM Use Karna	Customer Resource Management (CRM) tool use karein. Apne brands ko track karein, jaise: **Not Contacted, Called, Follow-up Email, Closed, Follow up in 1-2 Months**. 50 brands ko bina CRM ke track karna mushkil hoga.
Pitch Deck Bhejna	Jab call par woh raazi ho jayein aur email mangein, toh behtareen tareeqa hai ke aap Pitch Deck attach karke email karein, aur agle steps poochein.
Relentless Follow-up	Agar woh mana kar dein ya jawab na dein, toh **har 2 se 3 din** baad follow up karein. Agar woh kehte hain ke "Baad mein aana," toh **har 1 ya 2 mahine** baad politely follow up karte rahein.
Final Goal	Shuruat mein kam az kam **10 suppliers** ko close karna aur 5 ko store par on-board karna, isse pehle ke agle module par jaayein.