

## Why Building the Right Team Is Critical To Your Happiness

It's not only crucial to your success that you build a team, but you must build it with the right people. I'm not talking about hiring employees, I mean building indispensable relationships that **save you time and money.**

You might not need everyone on this list depending on your business model, but here is a list of professionals that are important; product vendors, fabric showrooms, a window treatment work room, and a reliable contractor.

These people are going to be your teammates, your partners, and ultimately help you grow your business into a money making machine. **Choose them wisely!** They will become a reflection of the business that is you.

Ask around town and get some resources lined up to interview. It's important that not only is their work up to your standards, but they are also someone you feel you can get along with on a business level.

## Drapery workroom:

I feel this is one of the most important members of your team. Draperies and bedding are difficult to make, which is why **your clients will pay handsomely** to have you design and produce these for them.

With that in mind, you need to find a cooperative workroom that can assist you in learning the ropes.

- You need to be meticulous in your measuring, so it's best if **you have them do this for you.**
- The design and construction are **directly related to the types of fabrics** you can specify. If you're unfamiliar with this procedure, then your seamstress will become invaluable.
- Installation is a task **best left to the professionals**, and in some states it's required by law.
- Your drapery workroom might also sell blinds and shutters and will share with you a larger discount so you can make more money. There is a huge mark-up in hard treatments, so you shouldn't have a problem negotiating this bonus.
- Don't forget about custom bedding, throw pillows, window seat cushions, dining chair cushions. The possibilities are endless. Get your imagination flowing and your income growing.

Here are some questions to ask, and a place to keep your research organized...



## **Drapery Workroom:**

Owner \_\_\_\_\_

Contact \_\_\_\_\_

Head Seamstress \_\_\_\_\_

Hours of operation \_\_\_\_\_

How many years in business? \_\_\_\_\_

Are they licensed? \_\_\_\_\_

What is their typical lead time on a project? \_\_\_\_\_

Do they make all types of treatments, swags, shades, drapes, cornices? \_\_\_\_\_

Do they sell blinds and what brands? \_\_\_\_\_

Do they have an in-house installer or can they recommend someone? \_\_\_\_\_

Do they sell directly to the public or work strictly with the trade? \_\_\_\_\_

Do they have a "to the trade" price sheet, and will they figure and quote prices for you? \_\_\_\_\_

What is included in the pricing? \_\_\_\_\_

Do they provide a re-measure service to verify measurements? \_\_\_\_\_

Do they offer stock lining, interlining, and blackout for sale? \_\_\_\_\_

Do they have fabric sample books to loan out? \_\_\_\_\_

Can you purchase fabric through them with a designer discount? \_\_\_\_\_

## Product Vendors:

Don't worry if your town doesn't have a huge selection of furniture and designer accessories, that's not what you're looking for. You need **quality** over **quantity**, and they must consider customer service as their first priority.

**\*You can work with retail furniture stores, but expect to pay full retail and then plan your pricing structure to reflect that strategy.**

- Ask if they sell custom or semi-custom furniture so you have some choices to offer your clients.
- Do they represent a large number of manufacturers or just a few specialties?
- Take note of each store and what you would shop for there. Write down the contact information, including their email contact info, and make sure you have a specific associate to ask for. **The better the relationship you have with that person, the easier your life will become.**

You can find a multitude of resources online. Your typical furniture store retailers like Pottery Barn and Restoration Hardware aren't your only choices.

My best recommendation is Design Trade Service. It's a program that I helped develop with a group of designer friends and industry experts, so that independent designers anywhere could have the same selection and pricing of those near big to the trade design centers.

(I no longer have a direct affiliation with the company, but I have negotiated some perks for you)

It's the only place that I know of where any designer with their business basics in place, can get a minimum of 40% discount off of true MSRP pricing. You then sell it to your client for the retail price and keep the percentage as your fee. [www.designtradeservice.com](http://www.designtradeservice.com) is the site to register for your membership.

Enter DFL90 code for membership signup that will grant you a 90 day trial period at the Premier Level.

Three membership levels – Standard (no cost) purchase at 48% OFF, Premier (19.95 per month) purchase at 53% OFF, PRO (29.95 per month) purchase at 56% OFF. We also have a deal in place with CARACOLE, all members regardless of level purchase at 64% OFF.

## Furniture Store

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Owner \_\_\_\_\_

Contact \_\_\_\_\_

Hours of operation \_\_\_\_\_

To the trade discounts and benefits:

Percentage off \_\_\_\_\_

Quantity discount \_\_\_\_\_

Do they have receiving and delivery? \_\_\_\_\_ Price \_\_\_\_\_

Brands they carry, resources (wood samples, fabrics) and lead times.

\_\_\_\_\_ Resources \_\_\_\_\_ Lead time \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Resources \_\_\_\_\_ Lead time \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Resources \_\_\_\_\_ Lead time \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_ Resources \_\_\_\_\_ Lead time \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Resources \_\_\_\_\_ Lead time \_\_\_\_\_

Can you bring your client in to the store to work with? \_\_\_\_\_

What happens if your client comes in without you? \_\_\_\_\_

(Not recommended, you always want to be in control, but it does happen.)

## Reliable contractor:

This should be someone who is licensed, experienced, and willing to help you with even the smallest of jobs. My contractor will assist me with everything from complete construction remodels, to installing molding for a chair rail.

**\*It's best in the beginning, to keep this relationship simple and let them work with the client directly.** The world of permits and liability can be a tangled web, and unless you are experienced with the process, I have found that receiving a smaller finder's fee and staying out of the legalities, is a win-win situation.



I have worked with many different contractors over the years, and I have negotiate a fee or small percentage to be included with his bid and paid back to me after the job is complete. The amount of this fee depends on the scope of the job and how involved you are during the process. **Make sure you sign an agreement spelling out your arrangement. It can be a simple contract you type out and have them sign.**

If you have a good contractor, **you won't have to do as much babysitting on the job.** All the time you spend making design decisions for the project can be billed by you to the client as design time.

## Contractors:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Project manager \_\_\_\_\_

How many years in business? \_\_\_\_\_

Licensed and bonded? \_\_\_\_\_

What type of finder's fee or percentage will they offer you? \_\_\_\_\_

How many projects do they typically have working at a time? \_\_\_\_\_ (the fewer the better)

Do they have their own subs or do you need to find them? \_\_\_\_\_

Painter \_\_\_\_\_

Drywall \_\_\_\_\_

Tile \_\_\_\_\_

Plumber \_\_\_\_\_

Electrician \_\_\_\_\_

Finish work (wood molding and trim) \_\_\_\_\_

Masonry \_\_\_\_\_

Iron work and welding \_\_\_\_\_

Wallpaper \_\_\_\_\_

Faux painting \_\_\_\_\_

Hours of operation \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency work, weekends and holidays \_\_\_\_\_

## Fabric showroom:

Now that you have your tax number, you can set up accounts with different fabric showrooms in your area and purchase fabric at wholesale prices. Below are a few of my favorite fabric vendors.

- The best way to work with these companies at first is to find a trade only showroom that you can check out fabric samples and order yardage through.
- The next is to sign-up online so you can order memos that way. I **don't** recommend setting up your accounts with vendors that **require you to purchase sample books**. It is far too much work to keep track of them, too much space wasted, and completely unnecessary.
- Large chain stores such as Joann's and Calico Corner have a wonderful selection of designer fabrics. You can usually buy these at such a discount that marking them up is still possible.
- As I stated before, most furniture stores and drapery workrooms have fabric books you can borrow if you purchase your fabrics through them. Again, you may only make 20% off of retail, but the ease and convenience will more than make up for the small percentage of money you will make by driving all over town looking for fabrics.

**\*Make sure you don't abuse your working relationships by using their samples and purchasing it on your own. It comes down to ethics and your reputation.**

**There's nothing worse than designers that take advantage of retail stores trying to make a living themselves.**

Fabric accounts to look into:

Fabricut.com, Kravet.com, Robertallendesign.com, Duralee.com

There are so many more, but this is a great selection to start with. Mid-range in price and easy to work with.