



Sales Rep Interview

Kristen Littlejohn is a Denver-based salesrep with Hylighted. More information can be found at www.hylighted.com. She also has her own line, Imminent Rise (www.imminentrise.com).

Q: What is your criterion for a designer before you'll carry their line?

- I need a review of their look books and line sheets.
- I need to see that they have good margins for retailers.
- I will generally look for lines that have products suitable for retailers I already have a relationship with and who are not a competitor of a current brand I carry.
- They need to be on schedule. Selling on time, delivering on time, and capable of fulfilling orders.
- They need to have proof of concept and be selling in some form, direct to consumers or retail accounts

Q: What is one thing a designer should avoid doing when approaching a sales rep?

For me, and I'm sure you would get different answers from different individuals; I want to see a plan that is greater than myself. If you're thinking is, "if only I could get a sales rep then my business will take off" I know that there is more than a sales team that is holding that business back. At the end of the day, a sales rep is not a miracle worker; they are an independent contractor that will need support from the brand to get the job done.

Q: What do you see that sells well to boutiques or are always staple items?

I would say you need 85% to 90% of your line to be products that we know will sell, easy to wear, already in the marketplace, but updated for your brand. 15% to 10% should be forward concepts; visually interesting that will catch eyes and get people talking.

Q: Any suggestions for beginning designers looking to have their lines carried by a sales rep?

Get all your ducks in a row before you approach a rep. Do some research if you are approaching the right rep. It is a waste of time to be approaching reps that have no business carrying your line.



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Q: What is essential for designers to do on their end so it's easy for you to do your job?

My number one requirement is quality images that are styled correctly for your market. Half the time we are reaching out to stores that we cannot see in person, the other half we are reaching out to get an appointment. Both of these scenarios require visually interesting material to get into that store. It does me no good to have great samples but not have a way for a store to get interested in seeing them. Images are always your first point of contact; most storeowners would be off put by dragging samples into their store unannounced.

Marketing, if I have a store that's already heard of a brand, and heard of them in a good way, it is much easier to land the sell.

Building a story around your product. Why is a store going to pick up your black dress and pencil skirt before all the other competitors in the market? What do you stand behind, why are you doing what you're doing. If the answer is making clothes to sell clothes, to make garments because it's your passion, that's not enough substance. There are so many other people doing the exact same thing.

Support, if I have a great store that I want a brand to connect with I'll send an intro letter. At the end of the day, I'm an extension of your team and you want to support your team. The brand that is wining and dining their key stores is going to keep those stores much longer. Think of creative ways to make those retailers know you care, because I'm connecting with them just as much as you are. You're fulfilling their orders and I'm working on getting new ones.

