



How to Sell OOK to Retail Stores

THRIVE BY DESIGN WITH TRACY MATTHEWS

You need to know your story, share your story of why you do what you do because that's very important to not only in the store but to end customer as well.

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Tracy: Welcome to the Thrive-By-Design Podcast, Episode #95. Today I have a special treat for you. As you know, it's birthday month for Flourish and Thrive. My birthday was last week. Robin's birthday is coming up and Flourish and Thrive's birthday is coming up in about a month. So, we like to call it birthday month which really birthday six weeks, but today I have a special guest because around our birthdays we like to party together. So, today Robin is on the show. Robin, welcome.

Robin: Thanks Tracy. I'm so psyched to be here.

Tracy: Well I'm psyched to have you here and you sound so excited. Anyway, so today, for those of you who have followed Flourish and Thrive for a while, I'm the Chief Visionary Officer over here. Robin is our Co-founder, because we have a big team over here at Flourish and Thrive now, and she is really the wholesale expert over here and she runs our mastermind and she's just amazing as far as wholesale strategy goes.

So we've been getting a lot of questions in our Jewelry Business Incubator, in our other groups as well about how to actually sell one-of-a-kind to retail stores, and we've talked about this before, but we wanted to actually touch base on this again because we realize that it's a hot topic that people are always curious about, especially designers who design one-of-a-kind and they actually want to sell to stores. We're going to run you through some of the pros and cons today. Sound good Robin?





Robin: Sounds perfect.

Tracy: Awesome. So, first and foremost welcome to the show. I haven't had you on in a while.

Robin: I know.

Tracy: I don't know why. We'll be recording more shows when you're in New York in a couple of weeks, so that will be fun.

Robin: Great, I can't wait.

Tracy: Awesome. So, why don't you give us just a little background on your wholesale experience and then we're going to dive in to some of the topics.

Robin: Absolutely. I've been actually in the wholesale side of things since 2001 and I've seen a really interesting market. I've worked primarily with handmade products since 2001. It's been, as most everyone knows, the economy has ebbed and flowed and many changes, but also the way that stores are doing business has changed and also the way that buyers are buying. So, your customer has been evolving and changing too so there's a lot going on out there.

Tracy: There is a lot going on and it's interesting because wholesale has changed. In our Mastering Wholesale course we have a whole module on the New Economy of Wholesale because it's shifting and we're actually going to be updating that as well because **[3:00]** there is this new economy of wholesale that's sort of on the verge, which is great for all of you guys who design one-of-a-kind jewelry, in particular because so many stores are looking for that more and more these days.

Robin: Absolutely they are. I know, it's been super interesting.

Tracy: So, Robin why don't you talk a little bit about some of the changes, and I would love to hear your take on selling one-of-a-kind to retail stores.

Robin: Fantastic, okay. As I said it's just kind of changing out there and you may have heard words like unique and made for you and custom and (3.33 unclear) and all of those kind of words, but really what it's coming down to is that the customer is really looking for something unique for them. And what's happened is a lot of stores that didn't necessarily buy any sort of one-of-a-kind are now





kind of looking at it with a different eye and opening up to being more receptive to those one-of-a-kind designers. Should we talk about pros and cons or can I talk a little bit about what it is that people look for?

Tracy: Go into what they're looking for, because I know there has been this huge shift and there were many designers when I was actually wholesaling who were selling one of a kind wholesale, and it was actually the way that they positioned it and how they worked well. So I would love for you to kind of walk us through a little bit and then I want to share some of my experiences too of what I saw worked really well.

Robin: Absolutely. So, one of the things that I'm noticing is that the successful designers, one-of-a-kind designers really have a distinct style. So they're very recognizable, and a couple examples I have are Margaret Solo, Sydney Lynch, Jamie Joseph and Lena Skadegard. Now if you look at any of their work, you'll know, it's very easy to see that it's a Sydney Lynch piece or a Jamie Joseph piece. So that's one thing is that it's really important to have that distinct style, signature style if you will, and there is a cohesion there even though each piece will be different.

Sydney Lynch and Margaret Solo actually have pieces that they have what's called a designer line. So they actually do both where they have pieces that are repeatable, but they do have a very strong one-of-a-kind. Really important when you're selling one-of-a-kind too is that you need to be able to photograph each piece. I know that can be really daunting to a lot of designers in general to photograph all your jewelry, but even the one-of-a-kind because if you're planning on selling wholesale, your buyer needs to see it.

Tracy: Yeah, totally. And I want to stop you there so we don't skim over this because I wanted to talk a little bit more about how this has impacted the one-of-a-kind in the wholesale industry since trade shows aren't necessarily dying, but there's been a shift in attendance and how often people go. It used to be that people like Jamie Joseph and there's this brand Dora, who's designed all one-of-a-kind back in the day. **[6:00]** And they would be able to bring all their stuff to trade shows and the buyers would buy it up. Whoever got there first was able to grab it and it created this great sense of urgency. There's been this shift because people aren't attending as many trade shows as they used to.





So, like you said, every single piece has to be photographed, which can become a little bit more challenging because it's not okay this is exclusively for you, come see me at the show, or I'll bring my line in, if you're going to do any sort of digital sales, everything needs to be photographed. It's a little bit more work.

Robin: Yeah, absolutely. You brought up a good point that there are still some strong shows out there and when these designers show. So, I was recently at the New York Now show and I saw Jamie Joseph and I saw Margaret Solo and I saw Lena Skadegard at this particular show. And what they do is when a buyer comes in to buy at a wholesale trade show, they will place their order from what they see and then the designer will go back to their studio and ship out on the date that they want it. So there's still hand picking, but to your point, not every store buyer is going to a show, and that's why those images are so important.

A lot more designers are actually physically going to see their accounts directly. And I know Lena Skadegard and Margaret Solo are represented by Christy Harris and Harris (7.28 unclear) Showrooms, and so they actually have showrooms that will go in and see the stores directly. So, those are all important components too because you do need to get in front of the buyer in some way, shape or form in order to sell it.

Tracy: Absolutely. Alright so, anything else about photography, Robin?

Robin: Definitely a white background is key. I mean, the white background, keep it really simple and showcasing the work is great. If you have some interesting class or something, it's great to show the whole piece. And with your line sheets just give as much detail as you can. I think that's really important to have, not only the photograph but also to have line sheets where the detail of the pieces are mapped out for the buyer.

Tracy: Awesome. Alright, what's next?

Robin: A couple of other things, you want to research the store because you don't want to be knocking on doors where the store hasn't every had one-of-a-kind. So do your research. Make sure that the store does offer one of a kind, and have conversations. See the assortment that they have will support or look good with your jewelry too. So do due diligence, do your research on the stores. Also really important, your story.





We can't say this enough about every jewelry line, especially one-of-a-kind. You need to know your story, share your story of why you do what you do because that's very important to not only the store but the end customer as well. [9:00]

Tracy: Awesome. Researching the stores that actually do it, because not all stores like that. They want to be able to know exactly what they're going to get, and other stores really like the fact that they're the only one that has it exclusive to them.

Robin: True, absolutely true.

Tracy: Alright. Now what else Robin?

Robin: Well I think it's really important to look at what kind of stores do offer one-of-a-kind. And it's actually grown a lot. So just a handful you may be familiar with, Ling 23, Twist, Eliza Page, The Clay Pot, Quad Room and (9.35 unclear) are just a handful, but a lot more are offering it. So, again do you research but I thought it was super interesting to look at these stores because these are very successful stores and I feel that one-of-a-kind has become more and more important to them and to their customer.

Tracy: You know what's going to be so funny is that Ling 23, Twist, Eliza Page, The Clay Pot, Quad Room and (9.57 unclear) are going get an influx of inquiries now.

Robin: Just for the record, do your research. Do not bombard stores. Just because we are saying the names here doesn't mean that they're the right fit for you. The other thing I want to point out too is that if you talked to a rep years ago, I can almost put money on that that a majority of the reps would say, oh you're one-of-a-kind, I'm not going to rep you. That's too hard. It's too hard of a sell. Today you're seeing more reps picking up one-of-a-kind, so there's also that opportunity there too. And I think that's just a lot to be said for how one-of-a-kind has come around.

Tracy: Well also I think that that's good too because if you have a rep who's actually on the road more so than just a showroom rep, I feel like road reps can do really successfully with one-of-a-kind because they can do almost like a cash and carry situation where they hit up the stores and show them the collection and then the store can just buy right there. So, it's like an in-person trade show, and then they basically write a check or give the credit card and pay for it at the moment. It's not like where they have to ship it always.





I know my friend Tricia, from years ago, used to rep a one-of-a-kind line. She said it was her top selling line because people love to dig and it was almost like they were getting something super special so they loved it.

Robin: That's exactly right. It's not only really nice for the store owner to be able to buy and take it right there, but it's really great for the rep too because that's a cha-ching, hello, sale right there.

Tracy: Yeah, totally. Alright, what else Robin?

Robin: As this changing, kind of changing environment, I think we're going to see a little more demand for what's unique and different and what's going to be, especially with millennials, there's just so much access to having things that are going to be unique to each individual. So it's going to be, I'm excited to see [12:00] what happens, but I think this is absolutely a growing category.

Tracy: Amazing, yeah, totally. What about the story? I think the one-of-a-kind is an important thing to be able to... part of the selling point from this retail store perspective is really about being able to communicate your story. I know with my jewelry, because it is B Spoke or customer or however you want to call it, commissioned work, people are commissioning me for a piece of jewelry, one of the things that's interesting about that is that my story and the reason why I came across or started doing custom work has been really powerful in actually getting people to buy it or getting people to work with me. So I think the same is true for people who are actually selling one-of-a-kind to stores. Would you agree?

Robin: I absolutely would agree because your story is powerful, and it's where the connection happens. So there's a lot of gorgeous jewelry out there, but the story is going to really solidify why it's that extra connection and how the stones are chosen. If you read the stories of any of these designers we talked about, it's really wonderful to hear their background, to read about their background too to see what calls them to designing and what makes it so special and their perspective on it. So, I think the story is really key. And if you talk to any rep group nowadays, the story is going to be the primary thing that they're really looking for, if you have a very strong story.

Tracy: That's how they actually sell the work and they share the experience and the brand. It deals with more than just I learned to make jewelry at Rhode Island





School of Design or something like that. It goes way deeper than that. It's really like what's your influence? Why are you passionate about the type of jewelry design? What are your inspirations? Even further, for me it's really about that personal connection because that's my why. The personal connection that I have with my clients to actually create the piece of jewelry. So it can go to multiple levels. I would say the more deep you're willing to go, the better chance of selling one-of-a-kind, actually getting the stores to buy, but also on the flip side getting the people selling your jewelry in the stores to be able to communicate about your brand and actually increase your sales significantly.

Robin: Absolutely. And I'll just read you from Lena's story. She says, Lena's Collection reflects in the synthesis place where history, culture and faith and landscape. So it's this vital relationship between all of that.

Tracy: So were they merged?

Robin: Yeah, it's like the landscape and always emphasizing the most vital relationship of the talisman to the dreamer, the object to the adorn. So what she does in her... what's really deep for her is taking the place, taking history, culture, faith and landscape and this is where she gets her inspiration. This is where she's molding all of this together and how she crafts her **[15:00]** pieces. So it's so much deeper than I like pretty things and I like making things. So I think that's really important to know what's calling you to create these beautiful pieces.

Tracy: Yeah, and Margaret Solo has a really interesting story because she came into this because her brother died. It was sort of she was in a career change in Hollywood and she would have never made that transition if it hadn't had been for her brother on his deathbed, saying something along the lines of follow your passion. I'm summarizing, but from our conversations with Margaret I feel like that was something that was really powerful for her. I know Jamie it's really about the stones. It's what she finds. I mean this has been her thing, lapidary cutting the stones, finding the rough and turning that into the jewelry. So it's an interesting evolution I would say.

Robin: It so it, and I love just even hearing these stories that we're talking about. You even feel even more of a connection with these people, these designers. Sydney Lynch, I know that her grandmother always had really wonderful costume jewelry and she would, as a little girl, rummage through her grandmother's





drawer and it was really inspiring for her. So there are different stories and each resonates with different people. So it's such a big part of it, and like I said, if you talk to any rep, that's going to be one of their main questions.

Tracy: Yeah, exactly. So do you want to go through some of the pros and cons of selling one-of-a-kind to wholesale?

Robin: I think that would be so helpful, right.

Tracy: Yeah let's do it. Let's start with the pros.

Robin: So buyers like something unique. So that's something that's a big pro. Actually more and more buyers are looking for those unique pieces, and we've certainly seen a movement for more one-of-a-kind pieces just overall. Something that I know is big for a lot of the buyers too is exclusivity. When you have one-of-a-kind pieces that's pretty exclusive to that store. No other store is going to have it.

Tracy: Yeah you see on websites or in stores, exclusively for, blah, blah. This is the thing where collaborations with designers and stores are starting to happen even in the clothing space or in the handbag space where they're designing specific pieces only for that store so that you can only get it there. When you're a boutique or a smaller designer maybe that's not where you're at at the moment, but that's sort of the direction people are moving in because people are tired of having the same thing or the store owners are tired of having the same thing of all other store owners. I know that some of these stores that you mentioned earlier, Elong 23, Twist, Eliza Page, The Clay Pot, Quad Room and (17.38 unclear) often carry the same lines because they're some of the top designers, but I've definitely seen a movement towards many of these store buyers actually wanting stuff that's exclusively for them so that they're not all selling the same thing online, offline or whatever because it ends up becoming a who is selling it for the best price kind of thing in the store. They want to make sure that they're **[18:00]** getting something like no one else can get.

Robin: Yes, correct. The other thing too is that these established businesses have customers that come back to them again and again and again, and they want to be able to sell to these customers. Just like a jewelry designer having a successful business, you want repeat customers. And if you're selling the same thing over and over again, that customer will probably end up buying as much





as they want to, but then there's that breaking point. So by offering one-of-a-kind and more uniqueness, then that customer can come back and find something to buy every single time.

Tracy: And it also creates a sense of urgency. If I don't get it now and I wait, I won't be able to get it again.

Robin: That's such a good point. The sense of urgency is huge, and it's a great great selling point.

Tracy: Absolutely. So let's talk about some of the cons.

Robin: Alright. So some of the cons, harder to feature and you're going to have to do a lot of photography. That alone.

Tracy: Yeah, it's a lot of extra work. I think it's harder to feature your products. It's a lot of extra work because you're doing basically you have maybe instead of 25 pieces in a collection that's repeatable, you might have 150 pieces that all need to be photographed and every single time, they'll need to be photographed. It's harder to actually do this process virtually, as opposed to having to show it in person I would say. That to me seems like it's a little bit more of a challenge. It's not impossible because of the internet and digital photography and we can snap pictures from our phones these days and get things over quickly. A lot of times the buyers they want professional photos so they can just take that photo and stick it on their site. So, there's a higher expense when it comes to that. It's harder to feature the products for you. So what that ends up doing is making it a little bit more expensive for you to do wholesale.

You need to make sure number one, that it's incorporated into your price point but also that comes back down to it has to be sellable at a retail price point so there's a lot less margin there in your pricing structure, which can potentially happen. So, it's a great way, especially if you're working at a premium price point to get more of your designs out there and more of your unique designs, but these are just things that you want to think about, if you're wanting to approach stores and do this way because instead of making the regular retail markup on a piece, for a one-of-a-kind piece, only going to be making the wholesale markup on a piece and that's less margin for you and more volume that you have to sell and a little bit more work on your end.





Robin: You mentioned that people might want to see it in person, and that's a big thing too is that even though you have great photography, is that you're going to get buyers who won't place an order until they actually see it and hold it, and until they get to know you better and to know the quality and your craftsmanship and trust you. It's that trust factor, right.

Tracy: Definitely.

Robin: And then there's also that you could be limiting yourself most likely because not all stores and catalogues will [21:00] want one-of-a-kind. So there's not going to be as many opportunities to sell your work. So that's something to think about as well.

Tracy: That is definitely something to think about, because not all stores want to do that. They would rather just have it easy and know what they're going to get and know that they can reorder it if it sells through and know that they're favorite piece isn't going to go away tomorrow.

Robin: Yeah it's that, we call it the sure thing. So let's say a store gets a particular necklace and they sell it right away, well they would normally, if it's repeatable, they would normally call you up and say I would love five more of these, but if it's not something that if it's one of a kind, you can't do that. So that's something that they need to consider for their stores if that's something that they want to do and venture into that.

Tracy: Absolutely. Alright Robin, you know, that was so much great information. So we talked a little bit about, I mean, a lot of this is really about the pros and why one-of-a-kind is becoming more common selling to retail stores. I know that when we first started Flourish and Thrive Academy we were saying it's so much harder, it's so much harder and nowadays people want that exclusivity. They want original product. They want something that no one else has because it helps elevate their brand and their store presence and gets people, especially their repeat customers, coming back for more.

So lots of good nuggets in here. So, it's your birthday coming up on June 2nd, right.

Robin: June 1st.

Tracy: Sorry, oh geeze, I should know that. I always say June 2nd. I think another friend





of mine is June 2nd. Alright, June 1st. Sorry guys, I've known Robin for years and I still don't exactly know when her birthday is.

Robin: I think it's just drilled into your brain that it's June 2nd.

Tracy: I know, every year I'm like, Robin's birthday is June 2nd. It's really June 1st. So that's just how you're all here. I'll say it's June 2nd. Well that gives us an excuse to have a birthday party for two days for you.

Robin: I love it.

Tracy: Okay cool. Alright, since it's birthday month we have some free gifts to give you. Robin, are you excited?

Robin: I'm so excited Tracy. You know how I love giving away free stuff.

Tracy: You do love giving away free stuff. I know that about you very much. So we have a really great checklist for all of you who are trying to sell one-of-a-kind to stores. You can go grab the Pros and Cons of Selling to Stores Checklist over at www.flourishthriveacademy.com/episode95. Right there on the podcast post you'll see a place to download this little checklist. You can keep it and when you're ready to sell to stores and remember all the things that you need to think about when you're wanting to sell your one-of-a-kind jewelry to retail stores. It's a pretty great checklist. We also have a master class right Robin.

Robin: Yes we do. I love wholesale, Tracy, you know I do, and I love working with buyers and I can't wait to share it with everybody.

Tracy: Yeah, so we have this great new master class. The name will be revealed really soon. It's designed to show you some of our favorite shortcuts to selling to retail stores so you don't feel like all of your efforts are moving into thin air. **[24:00]** So if you want to join us for that, it's completely free. You can check it out over at www.flourishthriveacademy.com/selltostores. And I love it when Robin gets to present and do master classes because as you heard her say a moment ago, she is really like our wholesale guru over here. She loves wholesale. She loves working with buyers. She loves the ins and outs of everything about selling to stores. So, we're really excited to bring this to you and I know she's extra excited to bring it to you right around her birthday so we can have a double celebration or triple celebration, since I can't seem to remember when her birthday is.





Robin: We'll just keep celebrating it right.

Tracy: We'll just keep celebrating and keep your eyes open because it's pretty much birthday month because we have the Flourish and Thrive birthday coming up on July 5th right Robin.

Robin: We sure do, five years. Oh my gosh.

Tracy: Five years on July 5th. That's five-five right.

Robin: Five on five.

Tracy: Five on five. Lucky number. We're like heading in to our flow here which is super fun because Robin and I just love being here and bringing you guys all this jewelry goodness and we're just thrilled to be here every single week in and out and thrilled to be here on the podcast. We're thrilled to present to you our courses and our membership, like our Diamond Insiders and programs like our mastermind program. So we are just thrilled to be here and excited that it's our fifth year, which is huge. Huge for us, right Robin.

Robin: Oh my gosh, I cannot believe it's five years. It's so awesome, and you know what makes it just the best is that we have an incredible community of amazing designers from all over the world. It's the coolest.

Tracy: Yeah, that's the coolest part for sure. Community and collaboration over competition, #communityovercompetition, best hashtag ever. We're excited to keep bringing you this great business advice every single week and we're thrilled to be here. So, if you want to go grab that checklist, head on over to www.flourishthriveacademy.com/episode95. You'll also see an opportunity to sign up for the Sell to Stores masterclass, which will be presented and we're excited to be here.

As always, if you love what you're listening to, we would really appreciate you to tell us what you think. So you can head on over to the blog and write a little comment in the comments below and let us know how we're doing because it really helps us cater our content, cater our information. If there's something you want to hear about, we really want to know so that we can keep bringing you great episodes every single week. Alright, you guys thanks so much for joining us today. Until next time, have a good one. Bye-bye.

