



Interview guide: identify and engage with your ideal distributor

I developed this interview guide as one of my clients was going to visit overseas distributors and asked me how I usually evaluate a distributor. It goes through the evaluation but I also close the interview with next steps. The follow-up actions from this meeting are as important as the meeting itself. You need to show your professionalism in the follow-ups. You will also have a feel for the distributors' motivation depending on how responsive they are following the meeting.

Size	Small - Medium - Large
Size	Turnover, number of employees, geographical coverage, growth? Impact of Global Financial Crisis?
Type of distributor	Are they a catalogue-based selling distributor with x thousands of items to sell or do they have a narrow range? <i>(i.e. High-tech products need focus from the distributors especially in the initial phase)</i>
	How many sales representatives? Their territory? On the road? On the phone?
	Do they sell the whole catalogue? Or Are they product specialists? If yes, what are their expertise?
	How do their sales team get trained on the product?
Type of clients	What type of customers do they target?
	Do you sell to end-users of the product, i.e. OEM manufacturer? What % of your turnover?
	Do you sell to a network of resellers? How many? What do you offer to them? What % of your turnover?
	In What market segment Are your strengths? (i.e. Automotive, Pharma...)

Type of Marketing	Which Trade Show do you exhibit at? Do you attend as a visitor?
	Do you advertise in magazines? Which ones?
	Online marketing? Any other marketing activity?
Product distributed	Competitive products sold? What volume? What price?
	Any specific technical/product expertise?
After-sales	How do you usually manage after-sales? Return? Any expectations?
Their needs	What do you need to launch a new range (i.e. collateral, sales kits, training...)?
	What margin do you usually expect?
	Any other (financial) support you expect (end of year discount...)? Any supplier terms and conditions?
Their plan for my products	What do they think about the product?
	How do you think my products can fit into your range?
	Would you like to evaluate the potential of my product range? How? How do you make your Go/NoGo decision
	What actions will you establish to launch my products? E-mailing? Trial sites with specific clients? When?
What can we offer	What can I do to help meet their needs and help to execute their plan.
Next steps	ACTION? WHO IS IN CHARGE? BY WHEN?