

# BRAND RELATIONS AND MARKETING SMALLER NAMES

WeAr has asked retailers around the world what their bestselling brands are, how they go about increasing sell-throughs for smaller labels, and what kind of cooperation from brands they look out for.

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For smaller brands, spending time cultivating strong social media collateral is one of the best methods to reach out. A strong Instagram following is such a major currency these days, even from a buyer's perspective: one of the first things I will check out is a brand's Instagram page and following. This will certainly not be the one and only deciding factor, but it helps, as it obviously means that the brand already has an established following, which you hope will translate to paying customers.

Product placement can also be a large contributor when it comes to sales, and working with 'influencers' can also help spread awareness. Yes, many do charge for a single post, but conversely, I know many that are happy to support new, up-and-coming brands and are happy to do it for free.

Communication and transparency are key when it comes to working with labels. The fashion industry is totally relationship-driven; having a constant dialogue throughout the buying process is very important. Over the years, I have found brands that are amazing, but in the end I was unable to continue relationships with some of them, simply because their communication was too poor.

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As the global market is quite tough right now, especially for independent boutiques like us, the brands we value the most are the ones willing to work with us on payment terms, product exclusivity or, even better, those who listen to our advice on the design: we do get the first-hand feedback from the customers who are buying these products so it makes sense to let us have some input. Also, it's vital to make sure there won't be a price war in the market.

I think smaller brands need to do enough market research but also to build up their own identities, so that it's easier for customers or stores to recognize them. These days, designers are lucky to have access to social media that allow for promotion without spending a lot of money on marketing. If the brand knows what it's about, it's a good start.

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