

MANUFACTURER QUESTIONS SHEET

What to Ask, and How to Read the Answer

Bring this to the call. The rule is the same for every question: a strong answer is specific and admits difficulty, a weak one stays general and reassures. Trust specificity, not enthusiasm.

HOW THEY WORK

“Do you work CMT or full package?”

Why you ask: Who buys the materials shapes your budget and your workload.

STRONG ANSWER

Names the model, and says what they need from you in each case.

RED FLAG

“Both, whatever you want,” with nothing about what changes.

“What’s the minimum, and where does it come from?”

Why you ask: A reason behind the number shows they know their supply chain.

STRONG ANSWER

Ties it to something physical, like the smallest fabric roll the mill sells.

RED FLAG

A figure with no logic, or one that shifts during the call.

YOUR SPECIFIC PRODUCT

“What’s the hardest part of making this?”

Why you ask: A brochure can’t answer it. The reply shows if they know your product.

STRONG ANSWER

Points at something real: a construction, a fabric, a hardware choice.

RED FLAG

“No problem, we can do everything.” Every garment has a hard part.

“What would you change to make it work better or cost less?”

Why you ask: Separates a partner who improves your brief from a supplier who just fills it.

STRONG ANSWER

Offers a specific suggestion, while respecting your brief.

RED FLAG

“We’ll make whatever you want.” You carry every design risk alone.

TIME

“When could you start, and how long does production take?”

Why you ask: Two numbers, not one. A busy workshop may not start for weeks.

STRONG ANSWER

Gives a start date and a duration separately, and sounds realistic. A single fast number, or a promise too good to match the others, is the warning.

RED FLAG

One fast number with no start date, or “we never have delays.” No real workshop can say that honestly.

MONEY

“What does the deposit cover, and what’s not in the quote?”

Why you ask: Reveals how they handle money, and surfaces the costs a clean quote hides.

STRONG ANSWER

Explains what the deposit reserves, and names the likely extras: sampling, shipping, duties, trims.

RED FLAG

Vague about the deposit, or “that’s everything” on a quote that’s clearly too clean.

SHIPPING & DUTIES

“Who books transport, and who prepares customs documents?”

Why you ask: Both tasks need an owner before anything ships.

STRONG ANSWER

Assigns each task to a party without fuss.

RED FLAG

A shrug, or “we’ll sort it out later.”

“Is insurance included, or an extra? What does it cover?”

Why you ask: A policy covering only part of the value isn’t real protection.

STRONG ANSWER

Precise about cost and about what the cover does and doesn’t include.

RED FLAG

Unsure whether there’s any cover at all.