

One Man's Trash... Could Be Your Treasure - 3 Rules Of Thrifty Product Sourcing

By: Chris Malta & Robin Cowie

Thrift shops and consignment stores can be excellent sources for your product inventory — they always have fresh items to pick through and you can find some great pieces for rock-bottom prices.

- *Consignment stores*, are commission-based. People bring in products for the store to sell on commission — what doesn't sell is returned to the owner.
- *Thrift stores* are often 'not for profit' and get most of their goods via donations.

In comparing the two, thrift stores are typically more willing (and able) to bargain with you simply because they have more room to do so.

Online retailers sometimes feel that these types of resale stores are not a good place to find inventory because there's not enough of a profit margin. But author Kate Holmes, founder of Too Good To Be Threw (<http://www.tgtbt.com>), disagrees. Holmes asserts, "These stores have a very limited market. If nobody in their town happens to want to buy a pair of Jodhpurs that week, those Jodhpurs will be sitting there waiting for an eBay seller to snap them up." The end result can be amazing deals on quality items with an online demand.

In addition to a narrow market, Holmes also cites restricted space as a factor in second-hand stores' bargain pricing. She points out, "They only have so much space, so they can only carry so many things. If they can move an item on and bring something else in, they're pleased with that."

3 Rules of Sourcing Products in Thrift and Consignment Shops:

1. *Shop the Edges*. Even resale stores tend to carry certain types of products. What doesn't fit a shop's profile, they usually want to move out quickly. They tend to put these products around the store's edges, so start there.
2. *Shop Often*. These stores are constantly turning over product and bringing in new items, so don't let a dry trip or two discourage you. Your persistence can pay off in a big way.
3. *Cultivate Relationships with Shopkeepers*. If they like you, they'll be much more willing to give you deals. They may also be more willing to set things aside for you, if they know what you're looking for, and guide you to items you might have otherwise missed.

If you're just starting out, a good place to find resale stores is in the Yellow Pages, under either "consignment" or "thrift." Don't be afraid to ask shopkeepers if they know of other stores in the area — if they don't have what you're looking for, they'll usually be happy to refer you to someone they think might.

About The Author:

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