

SFF156: Jay Arbetman

[00:00:00] **Heidi:** Welcome to another episode of the successful fashion freelancer podcast. And today we have a really fun interview. That's a little bit different than our usual conversations with freelancers. I am chatting with Jay Arbit men, the founder of the sourcing district, who is a rep for various textiles that are mostly a U S domestic suppliers and offer small to low minimums.

So I'm super excited to bring this conversation to you because one of the questions that I get a lot from freelancers is how do I source fabrics for my clients, right? Maybe your clients are smaller brands who are not looking to buy from big factories in Asia, where you might have contacts if you've worked previously in the industry.

And so how do you find these small suppliers for some of the startup or indeed? Brands that you're working with. Jay talks us through so many great things, like [00:01:00] how to find suppliers, what questions you should be asking to show that, you know what you're talking about, both to the supplier, as well as to your client.

We talk about sustainability and how you can make sure that the textiles, your sources. Are sustainable and have a sustainable supply chain. We also talk about one of my favorite topics, maybe not my favorite topics, but a topic that comes up a lot, which is, should I share my suppliers with my clients as freelancers?

We can hold our suppliers really close to our chest and think, oh gosh, if I share the supplier with my client, then they don't need me and they can go behind my back and do the whole project themselves. Um, Jay and I talked about this pretty in-depth and some of the conversation and the points that we bring up may surprise you.

So you're going to want to listen to that towards the very end. So in the last things that we hit on, uh, so yeah, if you are working as a freelancer or want to start working as a freelancer and are feeling a [00:02:00] little bit nervous about the sourcing part of it, this interview is going to shed so much light on that and help you understand the whole process and make you feel much more knowledgeable and confident to offer this.

To your freelance clients. All right, on that note, if you are trying to build or grow your freelance career, I would love to help you do that. You can head on over to my website. So heidi.com/freelance, where you can sign up and I will

send you all my best resources on freelancing absolutely for free. And it will also get you onto the email list, which gives you the opportunity to hear about our freelance accelerator program, which opens just a few times a year.

And if that's something you're interested in, I'd love to share more about that with you. So again, head on over to [so hire.com/freelance](https://www.hire.com/freelance), and we'll link that below in the show notes for my best free resources on freelancing. And now let's dive in and talk all about sourcing and what that looks like as a freelancer.

Here we go, Jay, welcome back to the successful fashion freelancer podcast. Um, you were one of [00:03:00] my very early guests on episode 20, as you reminded me was back in recorded in 2017. A million years ago now. Um, so I would love for you just start out by introducing yourself who you are, what you do in the fashion industry, for those people who don't know you and who haven't listened to past episode.

And then we'll dive into all the things that I want to talk about.

[00:03:22] **Jay:** Sure. My name is J Arbit min and I am the owner operator of a company called the sourcing district. I work out of, uh, uh, the home office that I'm in right now in Oak park, Illinois. People actually come here and, and look at fabrics and I do a lot through the mail.

And, uh, so I offer 10 different companies that sell, uh, fashion fabrics and garment construction necessities, and all of them are directed toward what I would call independent designers and domestic production. Okay. So you are able to sample five or 10 or 15 yards or whatever, [00:04:00] make your samples, and then they all have kind of.

And, and so that's, I don't represent any jobbers. I only represent companies that offer continuity. So that's what I do. Well, explain

[00:04:12] **Heidi:** the continuity thing for people who maybe are a little bit more new to the industry.

[00:04:15] **Jay:** Sure. So, uh, they, my, uh, suppliers have what's called the dedicated inventory. So if a style 100 in black runs out, they're going to put more of it in now.

Sometimes there's a space between the time it runs out and the time they restock it, but they're always dedicated to restocking and to offering the same thing,

things get dropped, things get added, but basically on core items. I have things I've been selling for 10, 12 years.

[00:04:50] **Heidi:** Okay. Amazing. So a brand could come back and reorder a year, two years later and still get the same fabric to reproduce the same style.

[00:04:58] **Jay:** And they do. I mean, that's, [00:05:00] that's a commonality, my indie designers who, uh, who meet with some success, uh, then, uh, uh, come back over and over again on the same fabric. And, and that works out very well.

[00:05:12] **Heidi:** Yeah. Amazing. So when we first had you on the show, ah, four years ago, I didn't think it was that long. Um, we talked really specifically about how indie brands can source fabrics for their collections.

And I'd love to kind of. Position our conversation today, more towards freelancers. So a lot of freelancers work with the indie brands to help them, whether it's with the design or the sourcing or the development or the whole process. Um, and as we are now, we previously were successful fashion designer podcast.

We're now successful fashion, freelancer podcasts. We're targeting the freelancers, right. And we're really trying to bring content that speaks to them. And so something that I get asked a lot from freelancers who maybe they, they come from the corporate world, let's [00:06:00] say, and they worked at a job where there was a whole sourcing department, right.

Or they had their established sources that they could just go to over and over, right. To get fabric and trims and materials and all that sort of thing. And maybe they've left that corporate job and they're freelancing now. Um, and they're like, how do I kind of do this from scratch on my own? And then the second part of that question is that we get a lot is, um, I used to live in New York and I could just go to the garment district and I knew places to go, or I don't live in New York and right.

So I don't live in a fashion hub. How do I actually do this? So I realized, I just kind of like threw a lot on you. Um, but where do you want to start? Let's can we talk to some of those points a little bit?

[00:06:44] **Jay:** Well, I, you know, you mentioned something about New York and, um, not that there aren't fabrics there, but the businesses.

So when, when I started, I started out in the coat business 50 years ago, literally, amazingly enough, [00:07:00] wait, I'm feeling a little older. Um, and, uh, um, so when you wanted to buy fabric, you went to New York, there was no other, you didn't go to LA, you didn't go to Kansas city. You didn't go anywhere else. You went to New York and, and if the mills weren't in that area, there's certainly the sales offices were all, all mills had sales offices.

And, uh, uh, that is no longer the case. So while there are some decent, uh, offerings in New York, there are certain categories that don't exist at all in New York, oddly enough performance fabrics. Um, I'm not sure where you'd get that in New York. Um, uh, and, and, uh, uh, there, there are, so I represent 10 companies.

Three of them are in New York. Okay. Florida. One's in North Carolina. Uh, one's in Los Angeles tour in Vancouver, one's in Philadelphia. So there it's a much less centralized business. And in fact, the [00:08:00] designers themselves are less centralized. They're not in New York or Brooklyn. They're, they're all over the country.

And I sell all over the country. So, um, somebody who's, who's coming out of a corporate job, it's likely that that production was done in Asia. Uh, if you're going to do some small batch manufacturing or start out that way, uh, in the United States, that's going to be a whole different group of suppliers who have, who offers something completely different because you're not going to step up the first time that you run your product and buy 2,400 pieces.

You're going to, you're going to buy 25 or 50. So, uh, uh, you need, uh, a fabric supplier it's gear that has the flexibility to offer you in stock, you know, good in stock program. And later on, as your business develops can also develop custom colors or custom prints and, [00:09:00] and can offer you a lot of versatility to.

So from when we talked in 2017 to now, First of all, there is so much more being offered. It's pretty unbelievable. Why did that happen? That happened because the indie designer business and the freelancers who helped them, it's become a much more vigorous business.

[00:09:24] **Heidi:** It's exploded, right? Yeah. The pandemic really pushed it even harder.

[00:09:28] **Jay:** Right. So freelancers, who many times will contact me and say, I've got a client. Can you talk to them, please? We, because they want to get going with color cards and sample yardage so that they can do their thing, do

that with the suppliers that you're working with, uh, uh, from somebody doing business in Asia, that would be a problem.

You know, there's no five yard cuts and it's expensive to move things across [00:10:00] the ocean. It's yeah. It's a different business. Yeah.

[00:10:05] **Heidi:** I mean, it sounds like just come and this is always the advice that I give people, but for some reason they just still sort of get stuck on this. Like, well, how do I source stuff?

I mean, bottom line, they can go to someone like you, they can do some Googling and find some, some like if they were to do some Googling, I mean, obviously you're an amazing resource and I would highly suggest everybody start having a conversation with you, whether or not your wife being the right fit for their client.

Right. Who knows? Um, but you know, I guess when it comes to kind of doing research on your own, like what sort of things should they be Googling to? Maybe some of their suppliers. Yeah, go ahead. Here's here's,

[00:10:41] **Jay:** here's the problem that you can have when you Google and then there's some good things. Okay. Okay.

One of the first things you're going to run into when you Google are retailers. Yeah. So you don't want to buy from a retailer because they cannot offer you wholesale pricing. They they'll give you the designer discount, which is 20%, which is not a [00:11:00] wholesale price. They can offer you. Uh, they cannot offer you continuity.

So you're going to buy something from one from a retailer, come back in three months and want to order a hundred yards. You're not going to be able to get yeah.

[00:11:13] **Heidi:** So sampling versus production is not cohesive. Yeah.

[00:11:16] **Jay:** Yeah. That's exactly right. Yeah. So, uh, uh, there's a pretty limited group of people who do what I do.

There's three other reps in the country who do this. There's, there's a guy in California. Uh, the Ramon brothers, there is another representative in the Chicago area. Uh, fine fabric sales. They're both very good, uh, uh,

representatives. Um, but they, they all do some, we all do something different. Okay. Uh, Ramon does a lot with prince.

He doesn't, he D he represents jobbers, which I don't do. Uh, find fabric sales is a little more couture than I am. Um, and [00:12:00] then, uh, what I do is more moderate to better prices is not really designer priced. I kinda top out at about 20 bucks a yard. Okay. I, sweet spot is seven to 13, \$14

[00:12:12] **Heidi:** a yard. Okay. Okay. Talk a little bit about jobber B jobbers, because even as someone who maybe has a few years experience in the industry, but if you were working with an established corporate brand and you're, you know, like you're sourcing from Asia, that might not be something you're totally familiar with, like what that is and how that all works.

Can you explain it right?

[00:12:31] **Jay:** Yeah. Right. So, so the, uh, the guide to who, who has fabric there's retailers, then there are jobbers and jobbers by. Fabric that already exists. They, they, they might buy out a sample room in New York. They may buy from a designer who has leftover fabric. Okay. They may buy, um, even from a, uh, converter, uh, who were, [00:13:00] let's say they bring in something in the color isn't right now they have to, now they have to get rid of what they have.

Yeah. So they're buying leftovers from a variety of sources. There used to be a lot of jobbers that were available to indeed designers and to even home Sowers that, uh, number as much step business has gotten smaller. Why

[00:13:22] **Heidi:** is

[00:13:22] **Jay:** that? And you think, uh, because they don't have continuity, wholesale pricing or, uh, or, uh, uh, you know, uh, fine quality all the time.

They, there are good jobbers, but. There are times then a jobbers offerings may be applicable. Sure. Um, let's say you're making a limited run of something and you're not, you're not offering it in your line. Your, you know, and you can source that fabric. Uh, some jobbers just sell at a higher price, some at a lower price.

Um, you know, you have to shop the [00:14:00] market, but fabric jobbers are, uh, exist and, uh, like anything else, some are good and some are not as good. Um, yeah, so I was just going to say the next step up is what's called a

converter. Okay. So a converter goes to. Buys what's called gray goods, which is spelled G R E I G E rage, but it's pronounced, right?

Yeah. They, and then they, they put their own colors into it. They put their own finishing on it. They maybe they put water repellency on it. They bond it to another fabric. There's all, all kinds of things. And, and so they convert it to the product they want. And that's what they offer. You. Converters generally have an inventory position as opposed to mills who are just there to take your order.

And then there are importers that have a dedicated inventory, and generally they work in a pretty [00:15:00] narrow classification. Um, I represent a company that does, um, silk classics in polyester. So they have polyester sands, polyester taffeta as polyester spots. They, they are an importer, but. They have an inventory when they run out of something, they replace it.

Okay.

[00:15:19] **Heidi:** They have a constant, very narrow niche.

[00:15:23] **Jay:** It is. Yeah, it is. And they're very good for some people and, you know, for event planners, for example, that, that supplier's a real home run. Yeah. Somebody doing mother of the bride or a bridal they're terrific. So it's depends what you're looking for.

[00:15:41] **Heidi:** So as a freelancer who I've got a new client and they, you know, they don't have experience in the industry, so they have no idea where to find fabrics.

They just have this idea. Right. Which is how a lot of these brands start, um, Where do I start? Should I, I even like [00:16:00] mess with trying to look at a converter or the importer directly, or do I go to you? Like, obviously you are a great resource and I know that I don't go to Joann's or I don't go to a retail place.

Um, but like, what would you suggest? And then can you talk us through a little bit of like what that whole process looks like? Yeah.

[00:16:18] **Jay:** So, uh, first of all, a lot of people go to me and, and one of the reasons they go to me is because if I don't have it, I will direct them towards the person that I know that has it.

Why do I do that? It's not because I'm a nice guy, it's because it's business. And so if you end up being successful, I have a chance of being able to make some

money from you. If you get stuck in the ditch, that's not good for anybody. So, um, you know, there's certain, uh, niche players. Uh, give you a great example.

Nova techs is a supplier in California. Okay. They do lots of folks, other folks swayed that I [00:17:00] don't carry the line, but I'm very familiar with it. So people who are looking for that, I direct, and I just did that with somebody. I said, no, here's the guy to call. Um, and, and they do things like, um, uh, uh, weldable foam.

So I had somebody who buys from me, who's developing in equestrian item that needs to be padded case. And I said, oh, no, go to Nova techs for that. I don't supply that. So, and I think that, uh, I don't know the Ramones as well as I know the other person here in Chicago. Um, but you know, I've had people recommend me who were in different areas.

I, I think people are pretty decent about that sort of stuff. And, and, um, uh, mostly. Uh, companies that are looking for independent designer business, they do it in two or three ways. They do it either through a representative like me. Then the other way is they go to [00:18:00] trade shows that are specifically for indie designers and excuse me, and for, um, uh, um, uh, freelancers and the best one of those is what's called now.

The trade shows, it used to be called DGX Bo, and they have a website. The trade shows.com because of the situation in the world. They don't run a ton of shows anymore. They did one in Miami, the summer, which I went to, they didn't want to in Philadelphia, and they're running in New York in January. And, uh, she'll run 2, 3, 4 shows a year.

Also, LA textile is not, is a show that has some, some things that can work for you. Um, if you're a freelancer and I would say, especially if around on the west coast or in the west west of the Mississippi. Um, and so I'm going to kind of stop and mention something that as you're doing this sourcing, remember that there's a [00:19:00] big, uh, there is a large amount of freight that comes with moving fabric around.

And so if you're buying from a supplier, if you're in Florida and you're buying from a supplier that ships out of Washington state, you're going to get a pretty lofty freight bill, and it's going to take a long time to get to you.

[00:19:19] **Heidi:** Yeah. Here costs.

[00:19:22] **Jay:** Right. And so, so if you have a choice that's a little more reasonable and are a little more.

That's great. You don't always have that, but sometimes. Yeah. Um, so, um, uh, most suppliers have websites and, um, and, and if you call up, uh, you know, it does take a little bit of digging. If you call up, um, Pang, grim, they have an office in the United States and you say, you know, do you work with indeed? Is that they're going to blow you off in about two seconds.

Yeah. So, you know, don't be insulted go onto the [00:20:00] person. Yeah. You call car textiles. They're going to welcome your inquiry. Yeah. Um, if you call, um, a certain button companies really only do Asia to Asia, sourcing others, do a big job in the United States, but have really big minimums. So, you know, there there's all different kinds of things out there.

Any of your listeners that you don't want to reach out to me, I'll be glad to give them a little bit of the direction. Um, but, but Googling, uh, it just takes a lot of

[00:20:34] **Heidi:** digging. I mean, that's the case with anything though. The internet is a really, really, really big place. And I think that some people are like, well, where's the answer.

And I'm like, sometimes you just gotta search. You gotta dig. Right. And you gotta look through this resource and you have to call this place. And then you're like, okay, that wasn't a good match. Do you have any place you can refer me to, okay. This other place is a good match. Okay. Do you have that? Right.

That's just how we build these networks and these [00:21:00] relationships of people who can help us do things. Right. Whether it's help our client or like whatever it is. Um, yeah. So I actually think that that like might even be a place where people get a little bit stuck. So freelancers get a little stuck.

They're like, well, how does it work? So I call you Jay, and then what I'm like, Hey, I got this. Uh, now what talk us through that

[00:21:20] **Jay:** either, either they described the project sure. Or the client calls me. Okay. Um, so generally they'll say, okay, we're looking to do athleisure just for example. Sure. Well that puts you in the hands of two or three suppliers that, that really specialize in that.

Yeah. And, or, uh, uh, I'm looking for something sustainable. So that's going to put you in again, in the hands of a limited amount of suppliers. Right. Um, but

for example, in athleisure, there's a huge selection. That was not the case in 2017. When we spoke, um, where there was, I probably had five or six fabrics that worked there.

Now I [00:22:00] probably have 30 or 40 that work in it. That may be more, um, uh, sustainable is, uh, now more than 50% of my business. And. I just looked at it and that is a really recent development. So one of, one of the things, your people who listening to this who are, uh, uh, uh, freelancers or desire to be freelancers are going to find that sustainability is going to come up a lot more often than it did.

And the good news is you're now able to cover a lot of ground. Um, it used to be that I had, you know, some 10 sell a little bit of organic cotton, and that was kind of it. Now there's a tremendous amount of, uh, uh, of sustainable fabrics and some companies that widget ultimately, uh, work hard to be ethical [00:23:00] suppliers.

[00:23:01] **Heidi:** Talk a little bit about what that means.

[00:23:04] **Jay:** So. So let's talk about what happens most of the time is that you're buying from an entity that begins somewhere in China. Sure. Okay. So in China you have a terrific people who are in business, and then you have some people who are not so terrific and who are low quality.

And unfortunately in manufacturing fabric, it's not labor intensive. So you don't have the labor abuses that you have in, let's say garment production it. Yeah. That's, that's exactly right. Yeah. Yeah. Right. Um, on the other hand, um, you do have pollution as being an issue. So if a factory has, what's called an OTO tech standard 100 certification, um, then you know that they've been checked out for, uh, whatever toxicity is associated with them.[00:24:00]

And, uh, so that's a way to source ethically if a lot of your supply comes from, uh, um, uh, either Korea, Taiwan, or Japan, which have, uh, pollution laws and have labor laws or in China where you're with a trusted vendor or you're with, um, a company that, uh, where the factory, where it's coming out of a, a mill that has Occhio tech standard, 100 certification or a dye house as that that's now, I mean, they used to be once in a blue moon.

I find that rare, very rare now it's all the time. Okay.

[00:24:42] **Heidi:** And so you would just, as the freelancer, who's, you know, sourcing for their client, you would look for that in the suppliers that you're buying.

[00:24:52] **Jay:** Yes. Yes. And, and, uh, some suppliers have very good and very informative websites. And I [00:25:00] link people to those all the time and say, well, read this, this will kind of show you what kind of supplier this is.

Yeah. And, um, uh, and actually it's almost a sign of something, not so good if you're not seeing a pretty decent website.

[00:25:19] **Heidi:** Oh, is that the case anymore?

[00:25:22] **Jay:** Somebody who's you want to add? I would say the key word here is transparency. So when a supplier is transparent, um, that's what you're looking for. Whether you're buying sustainable or conventional fabrics, you're looking for somebody that is, uh, uh, that's um, uh, transparent.

There's also some things that can be bought domestically. Not a lot. It's a lot of 10 lines. One of my. Uh, offers domestic fabric. Okay. If you do a great job and, uh, they have [00:26:00] several, uh, knitters that they work with, it's only on knitted goods, not unwoven. And, um, so some in California, there's some in the Carolinas, somebody in Pennsylvania who does some work for those guys too.

And, uh, but it's much more limited. And, um, the problems that you have today with transportation and with, um, all the things that can, uh, make supply chain issues also affect domestic suppliers because they have to get the, the fibers, the yarns generally from overseas. Yeah. So while there's some yarn, Created in the United States.

Most of app, not much. And most of them are not created for the, uh, for the fashion fabric business they're created for homepage.

[00:26:58] **Heidi:** Okay. Home to cart. Okay. Gotcha. [00:27:00] Gotcha. Okay. Um, okay. I learned so many new things. I'm learning here too, right? This is a lot of, this is really interesting and new information for myself as well.

Um, okay. So I call and I'm like, Hey, I've got this client kind of described the project, and then that's going to give you an instant idea of what you do or don't have to offer, or you can refer me somewhere else. And then what happens? Do you send me some swatch cards or how does this.

[00:27:28] **Jay:** Yeah. So the thing is, I always say this is the wild west.

Um, I represent 10 companies. They do things 10 different ways. And I can't imagine that other people who do what I do are not experienced things, the same thing. So, um, I represent two suppliers out of the Vancouver area. Um, they have a little more of a process to get color cards. Uh, one of them, them, you have to go through their website.

I can give you a little code that makes the cards free, but you do have to pay the transportation, [00:28:00] which is going to be 18 to \$20. Sure. Okay. They won't put things in the U S mail anymore. And

[00:28:05] **Heidi:** Hey, freelancer, that's something that your client pays for, not you. Oh, absolutely. People wonder though.

[00:28:12] **Jay:** Right, right.

No, no. And, and, um, but, uh, what, uh, this just happened today, a contract shop that I work with, uh, now they're wanting to build a bit of a library. So we started to talk about that. So, um, that happens also where people want a pretty broad range of things, uh, not so easy to do, but it is doable. Um, so, uh, and some suppliers are very generous with color cards and some not so much, um, you know, some will use the, I'll send them a request.

Then I'll put it on my calendar to call them back in three days because they never, because they never do it after less. I bother him two or three times. Are

[00:28:56] **Heidi:** they just, they just have enough business that they don't really
[00:29:00] need to like,

[00:29:02] **Jay:** no, the, the, the two people who are best about that are the guys that have the most business.

So that's, that's so

interesting

[00:29:07] **Heidi:** to me, right? Yeah. I think there's a common. Maybe stereotype is the right word that right. If, if the factory is like blowing you off or the suppliers blowing you off, that it's just, you're too small. They don't really care to deal with you. And they've got enough other business, um, which has, I could get that angle, but I'm coming from you.

I mean, you're their direct contact. Uh, it's just how they operate.

[00:29:36] **Jay:** You know, Heidi, I've had people call me for the first time, either developers, freelancers or in the designers and sounds so bad sound like there's just not a chance that they could develop into anything. And oh, no, that's wrong. So, and I made every guy have a really terrific client.

And I remember the [00:30:00] first time I spoke to him, I hung up the phone and went, oh, that'll never happen. Not going anywhere. Yeah. Yeah. This is not going anywhere. And it's and what they've, what they've done and what I think freelancers designers and anybody else in business should do is they leverage the things they were good at.

Yeah. So they were good at getting publicity. They were good at the marketing side of it. They didn't know anything about garments. They didn't know anything about fabrics, but they found people that did. Yeah. And so, um, you know, I, I think that for, um, a freelancer, you have to have a decent, all around knowledge of what's out there and what's possible.

So if people want to do, um, you know, a camel hair or a cashmere coat, Well, they better understand that you're looking at something that's going to probably sell for a thousand dollars. Yeah. Yeah. It's not going to be a hundred or 200 or 500. It's going to be more than that. [00:31:00] You're going to get the fabric from Italy.

It's going to be sensationally expensive. Yeah. And then you like anything else, you're going to have loss and you're working loss and so on. And, and, and it's so having an understanding of what can be done at, at, and what are the prices are, is I think something for a freelancer that's important and it'll make, it'll make the freelancer look more expert if they go, oh, for rayon spandex Jersey.

Here's about the range of prices. You know, here's the range of weights that it comes in. How are you using it? I'm going to make tops out of it. Terrific. Here's here's the here's two or three places where you can go for that. Yeah.

[00:31:42] **Heidi:** Well, it's funny, you mentioned that because one of the things that I'm a big proponent of, as you know, I'm, I'm out here educating and supporting people on their journey to become freelancers is be niche in your offering, right?

Because you do need to have some base knowledge [00:32:00] on a lot of the different part. You don't have to do all the parts of the process. I know

freelancers who specifically don't source. They just say I don't source. Um, but if you are going to offer that part of the process, you've got to have knowledge on it, and it's impossible to have knowledge on cashmere and active and denim and lingerie.

Yet. I see people wanting to do a little bit of everything and maybe it's because their career has done a little bit of everything. They'd be like, well, I worked in kids and I worked in men's and I worked in, you know, they've got a 15 year long resume and they want to do a little bit of everything, but I'm like, it's so hard to continually keep up with all that knowledge as things change year after year.

Right. And so if you hyper-focused on almost like you said, uh, some of your importers or the suppliers they've they focus on silk. Right, right. Um, You can do a much better job and you come off as more expert. So there might still be some learning [00:33:00] curve, right? I'm not saying you have to know it all today and there's learning curve and talking to someone like you, because again, maybe they came from corporate and they hadn't really done a lot of sourcing, but they can build that knowledge, but just focus it on that.

Um, and then do your research and talk to someone like you and dig in and ask the questions and start to understand the nuances of the different materials that work for your niche.

[00:33:23] **Jay:** Right? So that, that's a really good point. Yeah. Um, there's obviously S in, in, there's such a wide array of textiles and, and of, uh, of skills.

Yeah. I do want to point out one thing that it, and I think a lot of people do this. So let's say you worked for target in product development. Well, do we that, and then working for someone where there's going to be some kind of a, um, uh, where they're going to do it domestically, they're going to start small and so on.

Yeah. Those are two different things. And you're [00:34:00] going to find two different suppliers list of suppliers. So you, you may go over and you're gonna buy shirting from, you know, this one big mill in China that, but they're not really practical to buy from if you're wanting to buy 50 yards or five yards or a hundred yards.

So who carries that product in the United States? Well, there is somebody who, who does that. Yeah. And so if you're going to do shootings, there are two or three really good suppliers and you should know those guys. Yeah. Um, if

you're do athleisure, there's one sensational supplier and a couple others that have offerings.

Um, I think the other thing that's valid. Is I think as a freelancer, many times, um, somebody's going to come to you and one commonality is that they're going to lead interfacing, or you're going to need muzzling. You're going to need labels and hang tags. And, uh, so the label supplier that I [00:35:00] represent, it's one of my most successful, uh, suppliers, because they're, they're great to work with.

They're easy to work with and they send out a great bag of samples and, and so, um, and all of their businesses really directed toward domestic production and they produced domestically. So th you know, there's, there's people you definitely want to know about, and it will show you to be. Smarter and to, you know, it it'll help you sell your services to have some knowledge.

It doesn't have to be exhaustive, but you have to have some idea where you're going. I think. Yeah.

[00:35:36] **Heidi:** Yeah. I agree. And it can take a minute to build that expertise in that like network of relationships and contacts, but it just comes down to, like we talked about earlier, putting in the effort, making the phone calls, having the conversations, figuring out where to go next.

I'm always asking for like, oh, is there anybody else you can recommend I talk to? Or who else should I know about? Um, and then, like you said, I think, right. It really comes down to as well. It's funny. Cause [00:36:00] you talked about how the other, uh, reps in the United States, you guys refer people to each other and it's sort of like, I'll scratch your back of your scratch my thing, my back sort of thing.

And I talked to freelancers all the time and I tell them other freelancers are not your enemy. They're your friend. You guys will wider referring projects to each other. And the same is true. The relationship between the freelancer and you, right. You are going to help refer them to other places. And they're also going to bring more business to you.

And it's just this, um, it's this ecosystem that lives off of itself, and everybody kind of needs everybody to survive, which I think is such a cool part of such a cool way to look at at this whole process, because fashion has such a stereotype and it can often be true of being like really toxic and really cutthroat and backstabbing.

And that exists of course, but at the root of it, I think most of us are really trying to just like do the thing that we love and we want to help each other. And, and, you know, uh, what [00:37:00] is it? The rising tide lifts, all boats sort of thing to be so

[00:37:05] **Jay:** cliché. And you do have. Who will collaborate in certain ways, or we'll offer you a little bit of direction and sadly others that just won't do that at all.

Matter of fact, I have a very good customer, not going to go into any details about who it is or any description, but I was in this person's studio once and a person came in and said, wait, I love your stuff. I'd love to do something like that. And she just threw her out and unceremoniously just, you know, get outta here.

I'm not going to have. Yeah. And I was, I was a little, I wasn't, I didn't think that was so great. Um, yeah, it, it is. So, you know, there, there are, uh, uh, people who are, who will gladly give out information and others that won't, and, you know, I think part of your job as a freelancer is find out who will help you and who won't.[00:38:00]

And, uh, so some of that you can do through Google, but what I'd recommend is that. That you pounded the telephone a little bit or emails, right. I, you know, emails, calls, and, and just, you're not going to find it all the time by reading, uh, uh, somebodies, uh, uh, website or their posts or whatever. Uh, sometimes it just takes, it takes some calls.

And, uh, I do think it's a lot of digging. I do that on my end, too. I mean, if, if, if I'm looking for a product, um, you know, and I have, uh, I've got an opening right now for something. And, uh, I just paid the first call today and said, you know, do you fit, you fill into this? You know, here's what I do. And you have a little back and forth and it just see if it's right for me.

And. No. So that's something that, you know, I'm trying to do that job on my end, and I'm sure the other people who do this do [00:39:00] the same thing. They they're, they're looking for good things and they're, they're trying to do the best job they can of supplying in the area that they are expert in. Yeah.

[00:39:10] **Heidi:** Um, I love that attitude and like anything in life, not everybody's going to be helpful, but there are the helpful people out there.

And like you said, it's, it's your job to find those people and then collaborate and be the helpful person back to them. And then it just comes full circle. Right. Um, so I'd love to dig a little bit more into the actual process, right? So let's pretend I'm a freelancer. I call you, Hey, I've got this athlete leisure brand and we're doing a tank and leggings or whatever we're doing.

Um, And you can get me. I know that each of the different companies you represent sort of do things differently, but maybe we can just talk like generally, how does this work? So the, the freelancer out there, who's not done this in the past. They have a little bit of an idea of what the whole process looks like.

So they call you, they get some swatches and [00:40:00] then what happens?

[00:40:01] **Jay:** Well, the first thing is the swatches. So, so they're saying, okay, I'm going to do an athlete's your line. Well, first of all, to kind of backtrack a little bit and I'll get to your question quickly, but, um, as a freelance. Uh, there's one of my rules of textiles is that you can cheap out on woven, but you cannot cheap out on knits.

We

[00:40:21] **Heidi:** talked about this in our last

[00:40:22] **Jay:** interview. I'm not surprised I've lived with that for, I've known about that, that little saying for a long time. And, uh, uh, so that's part of your consideration is, uh, you're not gonna find, uh, very helpful \$2 and 50 cents a yard, uh, uh, uh, polyester Jersey, or, you know, it's going to be pretty crappy if you can get it at price.

Yeah. Um, so yeah, I think your initial job is for either you or your client to get color cards in their hands. And so I assist people in doing that saying here two or three suppliers, [00:41:00] let's get you things from them. Here's what, here's how you do it. And with one of my suppliers, I actually send them instructions on how to go through their website.

Right. And here are the style numbers you want to order, you know, and I almost iSTYLE numbers that do that every day. Um, uh, but there are, and there are people who I have one, I have a guy who manufacturers who has a terrific leggings fabric. Just great. So as soon as I hear leggings, I'm like, oh, you got to pay attention to this.

This is going to come your way. The sample is going to come your way. And you know, it has a great track record. They have a good inventory. They always, you know, and, and so that's, you know, what I try to do is put as much product in their hands and try to at the same time, deliver priceless and minimums and things like that.

That's all things you want to know about wanting want to get a hold of a price list. Those are changing now. Uh, some suppliers changing 2, 3, 4 times a year. I [00:42:00] one supplier who's been changing, uh, going upwards. Every six, eight weeks everything's going up right now. It's pretty. And in some cases pretty dramatic and in other cases not so dramatic.

Um, so I think initially you want to get fabrics in front of yourself and in front of your clients, that can be helpful. And then start to look at, you know, while we like this, this feels great. Then you're going to try to buy five yards or 10 yards, whatever you need for sampling. Yeah. And, uh, I would always suggest that because of the nature of freight, that if you can buy more than one thing, because the, the, the freight for five yards and the freight for 20 yards is almost

[00:42:47] **Heidi:** exactly the same.

Right, right. Because it's rolled and it just.

[00:42:52] **Jay:** Right. So if you could do that and sometimes that doesn't work out your mind, one thing at a time, that's fine. But, uh, um, but [00:43:00] freight has become increasingly a component that's very important. Yeah. So, um, so you want to get those things in front of you? Um, a good rep is going to have some idea, uh, about, uh, the inventory position.

Some of my suppliers I'm able to log into their computers and actually tell you exactly what's there. Um, um, uh, some, I have to make a call or some, I have just knowledge of what they have. Yeah. Um, so this is, uh, um, uh, it's kind of a step-by-step thing. And I think that, uh, uh, a lot of times I always say that I should be the second call you make, you're going to start to maybe make a mood board.

If you, if you're a designer that. Or a freelancer who's helping somebody with a project mood board might be first. And then you start to, you have to get some colored cards and, and be able to pin some fabrics up on that color card. And, you know, we're [00:44:00] gonna, we're gonna use, uh, you know, this recycled poly, uh, shirting, and, uh, that has wicking antibacterial Teo.

So, so that's one thing we're gonna use. We're gonna use this, uh, compression fabric in this way. And so you're, you're going to get those things in front of you. And then, and then you're going to start to plug them into some spots and order some five yard cuts or 10 yard cuts, whatever you need and, um, see what makes up and how it makes up.

I would caution, uh, uh, any freelancer, uh, that, uh, you really it's limited what, you know, until you make a sample. Oh, for sure. So you can see something and go up. This is it. This is. And then you make it up and you're disappointed. You could see other things that you think, wow, this, this is kind of ordinary to make it up and it, and it, and it looks great.

Yeah. So, um, I think it's almost like a pyramid. [00:45:00] You're going to start by making a, uh, by, uh, getting a lot of color cards. And then when you start to make samples, you're going to be more limited. And of course, as you start to develop a product, you're going to be even more.

[00:45:12] **Heidi:** Yeah. You picked up. And so then, like you said, a couple of things to pay attention along the way, which are really smart.

And I think these are the things that freelancers maybe who are new to the sourcing arena, you know, they're very experienced, but this is a specific task they've not done before. Things to really pay attention to, like you said, is, um, well the freight first huge and. Looking at the inventory and maybe like what lead times are on that, based on your client's ideal production timeline.

And so you want to make sure that that could potentially batch up and obviously things always go awry. But thinking about that in advance, at least. And then also, like you said, the price increases are any of the suppliers like holding their PR, like, okay, I'm going to send this to you. And it's good for 60 days.

Like, [00:46:00] are we seeing that? At least

[00:46:03] **Jay:** you're seeing some suppliers that have more stability in their pricing than others that is not necessarily, um, that doesn't necessarily make a comment on the goodness of their product. So I have one absolutely fantastic line that I represent and they're the ones that have a pretty steady there.

Their prices

[00:46:25] **Heidi:** are going up all the time, every, every, almost every two months. And. Oh, so if I, or let's say they're like about due for a price increase

and I'm ordering and I'm like, okay, it can get, can this price be good in six or eight weeks? No, it doesn't matter. The price is going to be what it's going to be in six or eight weeks.

That's just the case. Right?

[00:46:44] **Jay:** I would always ask, because I had, I did have a situation where, um, the supplier did agree to honor the price for a period of time. And I was just somebody who's buying a decent amount of fabric. Sure. You're not [00:47:00] going to be able to do that at the beginning. And prices are tending to go up in small increments.

Okay.

[00:47:06] **Heidi:** So nominal enough that the brand could absorb it and like maybe they have to adjust their emprise by like a dollar or two or not nominal. Maybe even just keep it the same and just eat the cost. Okay.

[00:47:18] **Jay:** Right. Right. All right. I mean, you have things going up 25 cents. That's not, you know, or 35 cents.

That's not

[00:47:25] **Heidi:** uncommon, right. From 10 to 10. Okay. Okay. So yeah, that can be absorbed fairly easily, but still something to be conscious

[00:47:34] **Jay:** of. Right. And, and I think that, uh, I know I can pretty much tell somebody, uh, you know, the, the tendency here is that, is that this price will be good for the next two, three months.

I, I mean, I have a pretty good idea.

[00:47:50] **Heidi:** I can

[00:47:50] **Jay:** always, you know, I'm always careful about the word promise, you know, um,

[00:47:55] **Heidi:** hold

[00:47:57] **Jay:** a good chance. That's there, that's been their track [00:48:00] record. And, um, and again, it just depends on the situation. Sometimes I'll talk to the company and say, what do you want me to say here?

You know, what am I, what am I doing? Yeah. And, um, uh, that there is, um, supply. At least the ones I represent, I'm sure the ones other people represent recognize the importance of freelancers and the importance of India designers. And so, yes, that might start out with five yards, but I have a bunch of customers that started out with five yards that now by much bigger quantities.

Yeah. That's amazing. So, uh, yeah, there's, uh, there's definitely more success in, in, in the designer and I think in freelancer, um, then, then they're heading. 2017 the last time. Well,

[00:48:53] **Heidi:** yeah, I mean, I can't really speak to the indie designer world as much anymore, but, um, our freelancers are [00:49:00] seeing insane success.

We've got a, uh, freelance accelerator program. We've got almost 500 students in there and they, you know, we had a drop because COVID freak out what's happening, but everybody has picked back up and is on like greater trajectory. We've got people who are booked two and three months out clients like begging, like, okay, I'll put a deposit down now and wait three months to work with you.

Um, and people are getting fair rates and it's, it's really a cool little ecosystem that's been created.

[00:49:29] **Jay:** So I think that, I think that there's a parallel there in, in, in the designer training contractor, if you want to find a loose sewing machine in Chicago, good luck. There is every context that I know here mean 15, 20 contractors in this town.

And I think everybody's loaded to the gills. And I know somebody that started a business in St. Louis and they're surprised how fast things have, have ramped up.

[00:49:59] **Heidi:** Ah, I wonder if it's [00:50:00] the same person we have a couple of really successful students in St. Louis. Um, I feel like it, I think I might know it is, um,

[00:50:09] **Jay:** yeah, there's a, there's a pattern maker there, a freelancer there.

Who's getting a great reputation and is working

[00:50:14] **Heidi:** Alison heinous. Yes. She's one of my students. Yeah,

[00:50:17] **Jay:** yeah, yeah. She's doing phenomenal right yesterday. I got a call from somebody who said, Alison recommended me. I'm a pattern maker. Can you say,

[00:50:28] **Heidi:** is that Alexandra greater

[00:50:32] **Jay:** somebody in LA.

[00:50:33] **Heidi:** Oh, I don't know who's in Alaska, but Alexandra.

I know it was also one of our students is taking on a lot of work. Um, overflow stuff that Alison can't do. I don't know if they're working directly, but I know like other freelancers are referring to Alison they're like, well, she's booked. And then, so they're referring to Alexandra and then, um, Connie bourgeois, who I just interviewed on the podcast, who's also out of St.

Louis. She might, maybe you're talking to her. I don't know.

[00:50:56] **Jay:** Well, there's a lot more, there were places that were [00:51:00] really big garment places 40 years ago. And as a city St. Louis, Denver, Chicago, those places are picking back up. Yeah. They're picking back up. Not in the same way. Sure. They've got the 20, 21, 20, 22 spin on things.

Yeah. Um, so you know, my business relies on, in a sense on freelancers. Yeah. Cause uh, uh, most indie designers come in with an idea. Maybe they can, so. But certainly not going to be able to grade a pattern or make a mark and, um, or very rarely. And, uh, so, uh, uh, being able to have a network of people you work with and, uh, that you could recommend to people is very

[00:51:47] **Heidi:** important.

It really is. Yeah. Yeah. It really is.

[00:51:50] **Jay:** Yeah. So, and basically I tell people, uh, and you know, again, uh, if you can work locally, it's really a good [00:52:00] thing because, you know, if you find a contractor in your area, then it's great to go see your work as it's developing. Yeah. It's great to, you know, um, I always tell people the first

time they buy fabrics from me is don't send it to your contractor, send it to yourself.

So, you know, what comes in, you know, how it's packaged, you know, what it looks like, you know, you ordered off this color card, but how does it look when it comes in? So I, you know, I would always say that, you know, freelancers should recommend that to their clients. That the first time, if it's at all past.

And has some cost-effectiveness if they're local, they certainly want to try to do that. So I think all these groups are really intertwined for sure. And, uh, you know, from the first time I spoke to you, um, I mean, I've gotten calls for years. People who said, I heard your podcast, they went so high. [00:53:00] Yeah. I mean,

[00:53:00] **Heidi:** it's so valuable still.

I mean, a, like you said, a lot of little things have, or maybe not even let all the loud, big things have changed, but still just the amount of knowledge that they were able to take from that episode that they might've gone into, like fabric is like, I don't know, what do I do? Do I go buy something at Joanne's?

Right. They literally don't know what to do if they're, if they're, you know, if you've been in the industry, you know, you don't go to , but if you're an indie brand and you are coming into this totally blind, you are really like, what, how does this work? Um, so yeah, the information is still really valuable.

One thing that I just thought of, and you may or may not have a thought on this and maybe it goes back full circle to some stuff we've talked about earlier in the conversation, but you mentioned, um, have the free land if possible. And if proximity and regionality makes more sense, have the client. You know, receive the goods or maybe work directly with the supplier.

Um, freelancers get really sensitive about giving [00:54:00] up their suppliers. It's this real like tight lipped mentality of like, oh, well, if I give up the supplier, then they don't need me. Um, and I lose that job or something and you know, maybe it goes back to the whole thing of like, we help people out and it's going to come full circle.

Like, they're going to need you for other things. Right. But people always wonder like, should I charge to share my supplier or do I just give it? Or like, what does that look like? Do you have any thoughts on that? Yeah, I do.

[00:54:28] **Jay:** Okay. So, um, I've had freelancers who contacted me and I, and when they say that to me, um, I, I say, I really don't think that's a good idea.

I think that you should try to be as transparent as possible. Yeah. And, uh, uh, once I know that you're attached to a class. Um, I'm not going to do anything to misdirect your customer towards somebody else. Uh, right. I'm going to be sensitive to that. I'm sure other people who do what I do or [00:55:00] have similar attitudes.

Um, but, uh, you know, as you well know, other than buying the fabric, there's a whole lot of stuff that has to get done. Right? You have to, you have to, you have to make that fabric into something that is, is merchantable

[00:55:15] **Heidi:** because they have this outer supplier doesn't mean they can now do it all.

[00:55:19] **Jay:** Absolutely not

[00:55:21] **Heidi:** factory doesn't mean they can do it all.

They don't maybe know how to like, advise the factory or do the fittings or give comments on protos.

[00:55:27] **Jay:** Right. Right. Right. So many years ago I spoke in front of a class and I'm sure it was people who wanted to go into freelancing or whatever, but this was this. They had to be like 15 years ago. And so right at the beginning, I said, well, here's a little question.

I always ask everybody who here knows what a marker is. And like, you know, four hands go up out of a class of 30, who knows what grade rules are and, you know, so if you need that freelancer for a lot [00:56:00] of things and they feel insecure about their position and, uh, you know, I'm certainly in the business and I just feel it when you talk to me, you're talking to your doctor, you know, there's a certain confidentiality.

And, uh, so I've had, uh, uh, freelancers who called me and said, I've got this client. And when you see about them, you know, and I, and I'll tell them I'm not going to hurt you with them. And I, and I, I don't think that's, I don't think I invented that. I think that a lot of us are sensitive to, uh, uh, and know that, uh, freelancers are important part of our business and an important part of, you know, how I, uh, obtain customers.

[00:56:42] **Heidi:** Yeah. Yeah, I appreciate your thoughts and your perspective on that. It's really enlightening. Um, I think that one thing that kind of gets people and this has nothing to do with sourcing, but it goes back to the whole like cutthroat industry is, you know, you hear all these stories of like, um, I [00:57:00] did a trial project for a job.

And I didn't get hired. And then six months or a year later, like I saw my designs in the stores, like they made my designs and they stole it from my, my interview project. And so people get really sensitive. I think of, you know, getting their stuff stolen and then worried about like putting their portfolio online and like, what if somebody rips up my ideas and at some point I'm like, you know what?

There's going to be brands that rip off your stuff and that's never going to change. And you still have to put yourself out there and it's going to be same with you. There might be suppliers, or there might be clients who like, are going to maybe try to finagle and go behind your back. But that's the world there's always going to be those people.

I think at the root of it, the majority of us are not those people, but those are the stories that we hear about, right. Because, uh, what's the word misery breeds company or misery loves company. Right? Right. So we hear these things and we get really scared.

[00:57:58] **Jay:** Most [00:58:00] suppliers. They actually want me to work with their clients, especially the ones that are like, if it's a New York supplier, they don't know if there's anything west of the Hudson river.

So, uh, and so, you know, they, they actually want me to work with people and, um, and I have an instance of somebody, uh, in Chicago who, you know, distinctly went behind my back. And, uh, so when they sent the invoice, it said salesman and it had my name and they circled it and he sent it off. So, uh, generally it, as you know, on my end of the business, um, you know, I've created some loyalty among suppliers that I have.

So I actually, not too concerned about people going behind my back and I think it actually doesn't benefit you. I think that I supply something that is good

[00:58:53] **Heidi:** for you or provides extra value

[00:58:56] **Jay:** app. Absolutely. So, uh, [00:59:00] and once I'm working with a freelancer, um, I recommend customers to them

[00:59:07] **Heidi:** absolutely goes full

[00:59:08] **Jay:** circle.

I know somebody that I work with that is pretty happy about my existence because I've brought them a lot of customers because every time I do, yeah. They seem to show up in my office, uh, buying fabric. Um, so there's some people you like working with and, uh, and, uh, uh, and B it's a big country. So if there is a, a freelancer in Austin, Texas, I'm going to send people in that direction, who I were in the area.

Yeah. And there's always people, um, looking for freelancers, looking for suppliers, those people are out there. And, uh, and so, uh, I certainly think that, uh, I, for one [01:00:00] know how to scratch your back. If you scratch mine, it's not, not an uncommon

[01:00:05] **Heidi:** thing. No, it's not at all. And, um, you know, it's, I talk to my students a lot about building relationships with people who are, and I don't want this to come off with a bad connotation, but like who are at the top of the funnel?

You're at the top of the funnel, meaning as freelancers in a certain respect as freelancers build relationships with you, or maybe they build relationships with a factory, right. Then there's clients and brands coming to you coming to the factory, like you said, who need freelancers? And so you can be a constant source of like, Hey, I got this due for the answer that came to me.

And so now everybody, or I got this new client, this new brand that came to me that needs some freelance help. Um, and it just builds and everybody kind of helps each other out. The other one thing I'll throw out to you, you mentioned, you know, you got thrown under the bus by one of your clients and they circled your name on the invoice.

Um, it's a really freaking small [01:01:00] industry and stuff gets around. And as much as you said, it's a big country and there's, you know, you have different options. It's a small industry and people know each other. And so as soon as the fastest way I think to ruin yourself is to try to get sneaky or really stingy.

[01:01:17] **Jay:** You don't want to do any of those things. And honestly, one of the things that's kind of interesting. So when I started doing this, um, you know, I kind of dipped my toes in the water about 15 years ago. And then, uh, and

then. 2013, 2014 on my business was starting to become more established. And I started doing more business.

Yeah. It's first couple of years. Um, I didn't always represent the best people. Okay. And, um, everyone's probably still hear about it. You know, it's something that, I mean, there's somebody in Chicago who never buys from me. And I know that it's from something that happened 12 years ago and

[01:01:57] **Heidi:** I've said, and done things that I'm like, maybe [01:02:00] that wasn't the best, but we all go through these, you know, these learning stages and right.

[01:02:05] **Jay:** And honestly it's easier might not be the word, but there's so many more resources now that are so much more. During 2020 during the lockdown, my two top guys, they just continued to develop fantastic product. They just didn't see. And if

[01:02:25] **Heidi:** you're two fabric suppliers,

[01:02:27] **Jay:** the two top guys that I represent, they didn't stop, uh, developing terrific product.

It was nonstop. Yeah. And, uh, one of them, I think, well, I don't, I know experienced 2020 was their best year. Yeah. 2020.

[01:02:43] **Heidi:** It was my best year. Yeah. 20, 21 has been my best year. I, we almost tripled.

[01:02:48] **Jay:** Right. And, and the only thing that stopped me from doing it this year is I got sick for a couple of months. And so, uh, uh, I wasn't away from work, but I was kind of out of it for a couple of months.

Yeah. Yeah, [01:03:00] as much normally do. Um, and so anybody that tells you that there's no relationship to hard work and your results is

[01:03:07] **Heidi:** that I had my son in 2020, like we talked earlier like, uh, three weeks before the pandemic and I had this whole like maternity leave planned. And I had spent all this time, like getting stuff ready for the business.

And I, I've got an amazing right-hand woman who does so much behind the scenes and, um, I've got this new baby and then the pandemic hits and I was like, oh, wait, all this stuff we planned, like, we can't, this can't go out the door.

Right. You've got to change your tongue. And I very quickly learned how yes, hard work does have an impact.

And, uh, I was a little bit low on, on what I could invest being a full-time new mom, but, um, we still had, we S all things considered. We still had a phenomenal year in 2020.

[01:03:53] **Jay:** You know, and I think, I think what you have to look at, um, is, uh, you know, cause I, this is something I run [01:04:00] into a lot. Yeah. Um, I run into freelancers who on this is how it relates to me.

Um, they kind of either take the first thing that comes up or they don't really dig hard enough. Okay. And I do think that sourcing, especially when you're getting started, you have to. And you have to, you know, get online, see who's out there. Call everybody, see, who seems to be interested in your business.

That's generally a good sign right there. If they're interested in your, in your business. Um, if they're transparent about their minimums and how long it takes them to ship and so on. So those are all very, very important things. And, and you have to, uh, uh, Uh, accumulate that information. And the only way to do it is, is just pounding on the phone or email

[01:04:49] **Heidi:** it is.

But then it's this foundation that you build that when you're working in the niche, it's like, you don't have to do this every time for every client, for every project. You're [01:05:00] building a foundation, you're building a library of fabrics and of contacts and resources. And like you said, it does take effort.

And I appreciate you mentioning that in terms of like, you don't just take the first thing, like you got to push and find the right thing for your client, but as you're pushing through that, and it might feel like, oh my gosh, this is so much work to find this one fabric for this one client you're actually building, like I said, this whole library, that's going to serve you and your other clients into the future.

It's not going to be as much work each time, each time it should actually get a little bit

[01:05:30] **Jay:** easier. Yeah. And so, as a freelancer, your, uh, just getting more knowledge and, and, and finding out what goes together. And as you said, that sticks with you from client to

[01:05:41] **Heidi:** client. I love it, Jay, I have had so much fun nerding out with you on textiles and industry stuff and production and everything.

Um, thank you so much for coming back on the show. It's been really great to have you here and kind of talk at this from a different angle. I think we got to address some things that we didn't get to chat about [01:06:00] last time. Um, first of all, where can people connect with you and pick up the phone and say, hi, what's the best way for them to reach you at at

[01:06:07] **Jay:** here?

There's a bunch of ways to find me. Um, uh, you can go to my website, which is the sourcing district.com. You can go to my Instagram feed, which is the sourcing district. All one word. Yeah. Or you can email me at J my first name, J a y@thesourcingdistrict.com. Uh, or you can call me at (708) 386-8586, always glad, you know, you're not under any obligation to buy anything.

I have people who call me and just, you know what, you know, here's what I'm thinking of doing. Can you help me with this? And, and, and, uh, and I get calls from freelancers all the time. Um, you know, with a similar thing that, you know, uh, you know, how do I go about this? And, and so I, I'm always glad to talk to, uh, uh, people in the business and, um, you'll find that I'm generous with

[01:06:58] **Heidi:** information.

I love it. You're [01:07:00] very, very generous. And I really appreciate that. Um, we will put all of that in the show notes, so people can have that direct access to your contact. And then lastly, I would love to end with the question. I ask everybody at the end of the show, you may remember, and I don't remember what your answer was.

Um, I'll change it a little bit for you since you're not yourself, a freelancer. Um, and we'll, uh, we'll go a little more general, but what is one thing about working in the fashion industry that no one ever asked you about that you wish that.

[01:07:30] **Jay:** Um,

the all-in costs of things. So the freight, um, the width of fabric, all the things that are attached to, how much is this going to cost me? Yeah. So I've had people come to me and say, you know, you know, I can get this for \$4 a yard. And I said, well, it was at mill washed. Is it going to shrink? Is it going to torque?

You know? Um, so I think that's, um, [01:08:00] uh, just. I think people walk in with the wrong impression about pricing that there's, there's, you know, there's more than one thing that's attached to it. And I think getting all that information, you're not going to be able to get specifically the information about, about freight, but you certainly have to be aware that it's there.

And, uh, I think suppliers, people like me, can you at least give you some vague idea that this is going to be 50 cents a yard, a dollar, a yard 50,

[01:08:27] **Heidi:** you know?

[01:08:29] **Jay:** Yeah. So I think, I think that just a lot of, and I think a lot of inquiring, yeah, a lot

[01:08:34] **Heidi:** of inquiring and also that the cheapest price doesn't always mean the best deal.

I remind people about that when it comes to freelancing to the cheapest for the answer is not always the greatest freelancer, just like the cheapest pair of leggings is not always the greatest pair of leggings. You might spend a little more upfront, but what you get in the long run and it's same is true with fabric.

It can be a world [01:09:00] of a difference.

[01:09:01] **Jay:** You bet. Yeah. You bet. And I, you know, I don't think anybody ever went the wrong way by buying something. That was a little too good. Yeah.

[01:09:09] **Heidi:** I commented to a friend the other day who just bought some, a low leggings and I've got a handful of ALO and Lulu's, and I'll tell you some of them I've had for 5, 6, 7 years and they still feel and seem brand new.

And I've got, you know, \$20 leggings from TJ Maxx that get me through a season or two. And then I'm like, I don't know, they're sagging in the knees, the ankle isn't quite that tight. Like they're pilling. It's just as night and day.

[01:09:36] **Jay:** Yeah. One of my daughters is a major consumer of, of, of gym wear athletic wear yeah.

Date major. And she works out every day and, uh, um, and she had initially a brand that she just loves cause she looked so good at it. Yeah. And then she goes, you know, this stuff's falling apart. I said, well, that'll happen, you know,

you [01:10:00] know, but that's why those leggings, like you say, were \$38 98. Yeah.

You're right, right, right. And, uh, uh, the people whose names you see every day, Lulu lemon, for example, they're those themes come up all the time because their quality is so

[01:10:16] **Heidi:** good. Totally. Yeah. And when you have that good equality, the prices, I mean, not everybody's going to be your customer, but the prices is just a

[01:10:25] **Jay:** non-issue.

Right. Right. And, and as, as a freelancer, um, offering yourself a quality service and then offering people you're associated with, uh, who offer quality products or other quality services, that's terribly

[01:10:40] **Heidi:** important. Yeah. It is. It's all aligned in super, super important. Thank you for that insight. I really appreciate it, Jay.

So glad to have you on the show again, and we'll have to do this again in a few more years.

[01:10:53] **Jay:** Always good talking to you. Call me anytime you too. Thanks Jay. Bye. Bye.

[01:10:59] **Heidi:** Thanks so [01:11:00] much for listening to this episode of the successful fashion freelancer podcast. I am your host, Heidi. Thank you so much for being here. I really appreciate your support. I really appreciate you spending some time with me and hanging out today.

I hope that whatever it is that you're doing, you're having an awesome day. I would also love to give a big shout out to two people behind the scenes, Tara, my right hand, who does so much to coordinate the pocket. Make sure we have guests and make sure that it gets published and out into your ears or your eyes if you're watching on YouTube right now.

Um, as well as my right hand, mark who, uh, right hand, I think I said that the last one to my husband and he is also my right hand in many ways, but my husband mark, who does all the tech and the editing behind the scenes to make sure that the show sounds good. Um, yeah, that's what he does among many other things has my right hand husband.

And, uh, yeah, again, thank you to you for listening. Really appreciate being here. I remind you that if you want to get access to all of my best free resources on freelancing in the fashion industry, you could do that by heading over to sew [01:12:00] heidi.com/freelance. We will link that up in the show notes. And thank you so much.

Uh, we'll talk to you in another episode of the successful fashion freelancer podcast by .