

SOURCING

Supplier Due Diligence Playbook

A 50-point checklist for B2B importers

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Chapter 1 — Why due diligence matters

Most B2B trade fraud happens at the relationship-initiation stage. The cheapest insurance is a thorough vetting before the first PO is signed.

A proper due diligence pass takes 5-10 business days. The cost of skipping it can run six or seven figures.

Chapter 2 — The 50-point checklist

Category 1 — Legal & financial: verified company registration, recent financial statements (audited preferred), tax compliance certificate, beneficial ownership disclosure, current bank reference letter, current credit report (where available).

Category 2 — Operational capacity: factory address verified by site visit or third-party agent, production capacity audit signed by an independent inspector, list of existing customers (cross-checked), certifications relevant to your sector (ISO, sector-specific).

Category 3 — Sample testing: pre-production sample tested at an accredited lab, golden sample retained and sealed for arbitration use, sample test report referenced in the purchase order.

Category 4 — Trade references: minimum three current customer references from outside your country, payment-history reference from at least one freight forwarder, confirmation the supplier is not on any country's sanctions list.

Category 5 — Red flags: refusal of site visit, evasive answers about minimum order quantities, prices significantly below market, requests for changing payment methods mid-deal, mid-deal communication switches to personal email addresses.

Key insight: Treat any mid-deal request to change the payment account as fraud until proven otherwise.