



COUTURE's roster of international (non-U.S.-based) designers and brands traditionally hovers around 50%. While searching the globe for the most imaginative and innovative jewelry and timepieces in the world, we are continuously mindful of how we can support these designers and brands and promote their success in the U.S. market.

We have partnered with a U.S.-based agency that specializes in working with international brands to put together the below reference guide focused on *How to Make it in America*.*

REPRESENTATION/CONSULTATION:

There are many benefits of working with a U.S.-based agency. As the largest jewelry market in the world, U.S. retailers offer an amazing opportunity for international jewelers. And the U.S. market does tend to be more adventurous than other jewelry markets and will offer opportunities to innovators. However, American retailers have so much jewelry to choose from that it takes patience and dedication on the part of international jewelers to develop their footprint in the USA. An agency that is adept at working within the U.S. market can help guide the development of your collection and your business practices with the necessary insights into the nuances of the business.

When looking to hire an agency:

- Find a representative that you like and vibe with; different representatives have different personalities and specialties, so take your time and find one that fits best with your personality and your collection.
- Allow your representative to provide input into the operation of your U.S.-business. Culture, policies and procedures can vary between countries and this applies to the United States as well.
- Understand that this is a journey and not a race. Regardless of how well-known or well-funded your collection is, introduction to American consumers may take some time.
- If isn't feasible to hire a full-time U.S.-representative, consider hiring a U.S.-based agency for a formal consultation.**

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DESIGN:

There are cultural differences throughout the world, and America is no different. American style also varies by region, with different tastes in silhouettes, colors and scale prevalent from state-to-state, and even city-to-city.

A few things to keep in mind when presenting your collection to retailers:

- Don't make the mistake of thinking you know what Americans want because you follow store or stylists' Instagram accounts, the American market can be very fickle.
- Listen to the retailers' comments. Ask them questions and be open to hearing their feedback.
- Be mindful of cultural norms when presenting your collections, i.e., U.S. Bridal-wear is very different than in other cultures.
- Design and manufacture based on the size of your business; the volume of design output is not relative to the growth of sales in the U.S.



Lucas Botz Photography

OPERATIONS/LOGISTICS:

Each country has their own way of doing things. When working in the U.S., international collections will need to adjust to the American way of doing things.

- Navigating carnets, TIBs, shipping, landing and U.S. Customs clearance is best left to the professionals. Unless a collection is large enough to warrant its own international shipping office, it's highly recommended that you employ the services of an accredited international shipper such as Malca Amit, Ferrari or Brinks. Prior to shipping, discuss the shipment with the service to ensure all documents and licenses are in place.
- Ship with the expectation that there will be delays. We do not control the U.S. or international customs offices; they work at their own speed and this cannot be predicted.
- If working with an agency, create operational systems that interact seamlessly with the U.S. representative's systems and procedures.
- When fulfilling retail orders and special orders, always under promise and over deliver. If delivery is quoted for two weeks, then the item(s) must be in the store by the deadline.
- Keep in mind that no matter how much you plan, the process always takes longer than expected.

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RETAILERS:

The jewelry business is increasingly becoming less strictly transactional and more of a partnership between the designer and the retailer. Ultimately, collections need the support of retailers to make it in the American market, so treat them well!

- Build a few points of margin into your wholesale pricing with the expectation of financial partnerships with retailers to promote and sell your collection, such as co-op advertising and sales incentives.
- Choose your retail partners carefully. Each market in the U.S. has one or two dominant retailers. Rely upon your U.S.-representative or industry colleagues to provide guidance. If you do not have a U.S.-based representative, do your homework extensively—follow the store on Instagram, look at who they stock, ask friends and industry colleagues for feedback, etc. If your collection is selling well with a U.S. retailer, ask for their advice for like-minded stores in other areas that may offer opportunities. They may even be able to provide you with an introduction.
- Retailers require constant contact and immediate response-times from their brands. For example, if a store is trying to close a sale and needs assistance, they expect you to be available immediately.



- Provide copious amounts of photos and marketing materials for the stores to use. By providing such information, you are providing necessary selling tools to the store sales associates. Also, in providing all relevant information, you are better able to control your image via social media, as well as the retailer/customer interaction.
- Line sheets and proper still life photos of each piece are required.
- If you cannot go into stores for site visits, try to keep up communication with store owners, buyers and sales associates remotely. Follow the stores and staff on their social media accounts, personally thank the associates for their sales and support; the better your communication with the store and staff, the better your awareness and partnership in the business.
- If on-boarding a collection remotely, be mindful of the bandwidth of the sales associates when sharing selling tools. Provide the staff with key information about the collection, but try not to overwhelm them with too many small details.
- Participate in COUTURE! Depending on your position in the U.S. Market, COUTURE is the best opportunity to meet with the most coveted retailers in the United States.



**The COUTURE team is grateful for the guidance and expertise of Tony Goldsberry of Rock House, who had extensive experience representing international and domestic brands and helping them navigate the American market.*

***If you'd like recommendations for representatives who may be open to working with you on a consulting basis, please [contact](#) a member of the COUTURE team.*