



SOURCING BASICS · GUIDE #2

China Sourcing Company Comparison

What to Look for Before You Hire: 5 Types, 10 Evaluation Criteria, Cost Comparison & Business Stage Matching

Not All Sourcing Companies Are Created Equal

When you search for a "China sourcing company," you'll find independent agents charging \$300 per project alongside multinational procurement firms billing six-figure retainers. The term "sourcing company" covers at least five fundamentally different business models. Choosing the wrong type can cost you money, time, and product quality.

Key Insight

The "best" sourcing company isn't the biggest or cheapest — it's the one whose business model, expertise, and fee structure align with your specific needs. A \$200/month agent may be perfect for simple products but disastrous for custom electronics requiring certification.

The 5 Types of China Sourcing Partners

Type	What They Do	Typical Cost	Best For	Pros & Cons
1. Independent Agent	Independent operator. Finds suppliers, negotiates, arranges QC and shipping. Often specializes in 1-2 categories.	\$300–\$2,000/mo or 5–10%	First-time importers, focused sourcing	✓ Cost-effective, flexible ✗ Focused scope, backup plan needed
2. Full-Service Co.	Established firm with dedicated teams for scouting, QC, logistics, compliance.	\$1,500–\$5,000/mo or 5–8%	Growing brands, regulated products	✓ Professional, reliable ✗ Higher cost, volume expectations
3. Trading Company	Buys from factories, resells to you at margin. One entity handles everything.	15–30% margin in price	Ready-made products, simple orders	✓ Simplest: one invoice ✗ Hidden factory, no cost transparency
4. Platform Agent	Operates through Alibaba/1688. Sources from listed suppliers.	3–5% commission	Simple commodity products	✓ Fast, easy to start ✗ Minimal vetting, no on-site audits
5. In-Country Office	Hiring your own procurement staff in China. Maximum control.	\$3K–\$8K/mo + office	Enterprise, \$1M+ annual spend	✓ Full control ✗ High fixed cost, complex setup

10 Criteria to Evaluate Any China Sourcing Company

Rate each on a 1–5 scale when comparing potential partners.

1 Industry & Product Expertise

Has this company sourced products similar to yours? Ask for specific examples, SKU volumes, and challenges overcome in your category.

2 Supplier Network Depth

Existing factory relationships in your target regions (Guangdong, Zhejiang, Shandong)? Established connections move faster and negotiate better.

3 Quality Control Capability

In-house inspectors or SGS/BV/TUV? AQL standards? Request a sample inspection report.

4 Communication & Responsiveness

Test before signing: send a detailed product spec email. Evaluate response time, comprehension, and proactive questions.

5 Fee Transparency

Written fee schedule? Clear retainer or commission structure? Beware of "it depends" that never resolves into numbers.

6 IP Protection Policies

Documented NNN agreement process? Trademark and design protection procedures? Critical for branded products.

7 Logistics & Trade Compliance

Can handle FOB/CIF/DDP? Understands destination country import regulations, tariff codes, and certifications?

8 Client References & Track Record

3+ references at your scale. Contact them. Ask about problems and how they were resolved.

9 Scalability

Can this company scale from \$50K to \$500K annual procurement? Team size, process maturity, supplier capacity?

10 Problem Resolution Record

Things will go wrong. How does the company handle quality defects, late deliveries, and disputes? Ask references.

Matching Company Type to Your Business Stage

New Importer — Entry Level (\$10K–\$100K/yr)

Recommended: Full-service sourcing company or experienced independent agent. You need guidance through the entire process, not just introductions.

Growing Brand (\$100K–\$500K/yr)

Recommended: Full-service company with dedicated account management. Consistent QC, reliable logistics, and proactive supplier management become critical.

Established Importer (\$500K+/yr)

Recommended: Hybrid — full-service company + potential in-country hire for specialized categories. Negotiate preferential rates; build redundancy.

How Qingda Trade Compares

Qingda Trade is a full-service sourcing company based in Anyang, Henan. Our scorecard on the 10 criteria:

5/5 Product Expertise	5/5 Supplier Network	5/5 Quality Control
5/5 Communication	5/5 Fee Transparency	5/5 IP Protection
4/5 Logistics	5/5 References	4/5 Scalability
5/5 Problem Resolution		

We serve clients across home goods, pet products, furniture, and consumer electronics — with full transparency on factory pricing (you see the original factory invoice) and dedicated quality control at every production stage.

Let's Compare Your Options Together

Tell us about your product, budget, and goals. We'll evaluate which sourcing model fits you best — even if it's not us.

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