



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Show Notes at: makeitbritish.co.uk/016

Hello and welcome to the Make it British Podcast.

Today I've got a very special episode for you - as it's the first in a series of 5 podcasts that accompany my [Get Set for Manufacturing Challenge](#).

Each day this week I'll be bringing you a special short solo episode where I tackle one of the 5 key things that you need to consider if you want to start working with a UK manufacturer.

Today's episode is going to give some tough love.
If you're not prepared to listen and learn then switch off now.

If on the other hand, you want to send emails to manufacturers that get a response, then listen up, because you're going to find this really useful.

And if you're a manufacturer listening to this I can already hearing you gonna be nodding your head thinking 'yep, that sounds about right'.

Today I want to talk about why it's so important to be clear when communicating with a manufacturer. Especially when you send that first email, or first give them a call.

One of the most common complaints I hear about UK manufacturers is that they don't get back to your emails. You get perturbed and disillusioned and you give up.

You might even...shock horror...start contacting overseas manufacturers instead. Who will all get back to your emails straight away (and I'll come on to why that happens a but later)

So why do UK manufacturers have a reputation for not getting back to emails?

I'm not trying to excuse them, however, when I get contacted by people saying that they've not had a response from a manufacturers, I dig into it a little deeper, and I usually find that it's for one of the following three reasons:

1. The email was too vague
2. The email was too long
3. The email was just plain rude and disrespectful!

Now I know you would never fall into category 3, so let's focus on no's 1 & 2.

1. Your email was too vague

Think of it like this. UK manufacturers are all pretty busy at the moment. They can afford to pick and choose who they work with. And they are probably getting several hundred emails like yours a week. If they look at your email and it is unclear what the end result for them might be....then they'll more than likely move onto someone else whose email is more clear.

What do I mean by vague? Requests that don't clearly state what the product is that they want to make.

For instance...if you say you're making sportswear, that would be too vague. You need to define the sport that it's for and the technical names for the products. There is a big difference between the garments that you'd wear for skiing compared to the ones you'd wear for cycling.

Think of it like a department store. You'd never have all of the products in that one store made by the one factory.

Now break it down into departments.

Let's take the womenswear department, as that's where I used to work.

Within the womenswear department there are lots of different sections. You might have eveningwear, casualwear, accessories, lingerie and so on.

And if you break that down even further, using the women's accessories department as an example, you might have a handbag department, a footwear department, gloves, hats, jewellery...you get the idea.

And in a department store there is probably a buyer for each of those different departments. And within each of those departments the buyer might work with half a dozen different factories. So the footwear buyer may have 6 factories - one produces high heels, one produces boots, one produces slippers, another flip flops etc And each one of those factories is a specialist in what it does.

So if each buyer within women's accessories works with half a dozen factories each and then each of the buyers within all of the other womenswear categories has a few factories that they work with. So the evening wear buyer may have a factory specialising in lightweight silk, whereas one of the buyers in casual wear will work with a factory just making jeans.

So can you imagine how many factories just the womenswear department alone has across their portfolio?

And menswear and homeware would be the same.

So if you send an email to a manufacturer and say you want to make womenswear, can you see now how vague that might be for them?

Whereas had you sent an email saying that you were looking for a manufacturer that can make lightweight silk blouses, and the manufacturer that picked up that email DID make silk blouses (also because you did your research in advance and looked at their website and got an idea for the type of product that they made) you'd have a much better chance of getting a response.

One caveat here is that sometimes manufacturers don't have very clear websites, so it is often quite difficult to define what they make just by looking them up online. But in this instance I'd always recommend a quick phonemail anyway rather than an email. Provided you had already defined what it was exactly that you needed from them

2. Your email was too long.

It's far too detailed and you've given them your life history, your inside leg measurement and the name of the person that lives next door to you.

You need to think - what do they need to know in order to ascertain whether they can provide the service that you need.

The family details can come after. Once you've sat down with them for a cup of tea and you're making chit chat

A manufacturer is going to be skimming your email looking for an indication that here is some good potential business in it for them...not afternoon tea with your granny. When you're communicating to a manufacturer you need to think 'what's in it for them?'

Are they reading your email and seeing potential business? Or are they looking at it thinking 'that sounds like a lot of hard work!'

So I know what you're thinking..."Kate, if you say that unless we do all this a UK manufacturer isn't going to bother getting back to me...so in that case I might as well go overseas right from the start. In fact I've already contacted a few manufacturers in China / Turkey / Romania (delete as appropriate) and they have got straight back to me and been super helpful already."

Well, they probably have.

You see the difference is that there are lots and lots of factories in the countries that I've just mentioned. And they're all vying for your business, because their factories are probably not that full because there's so many of them. So they probably have several people working in their sales department responsible for bringing in new leads.

But a bit like all those broadband providers who constantly leaflet you and call you and advertise on the telly, telling you their broadband is the very best, and you speak to a very helpful sales person offering you and their super keen to get you signed up. But once you have their broadband installed there's nothing but problems (and yes I'm talking about YOU Virgin Media) and trying to get hold of anyone to help you when your internet goes down for the entire days is virtually impossible.

But you do get to speak to a lovely chap in India, who has no way of connecting your broadband back on, because the poor bloke is just there to answer the phone, those overseas manufacturers that are super keen to respond to you when they want your business, may not be so helpful when there is a problem and your product is 3,000 miles away.

Which is probably why the very best broadband suppliers don't advertise on the TV - because they don't need to, because they sell their services through word of mouth because they are so good (hello Zen internet).

The same goes for UK manufacturers.

And once you do get to work with them, because you build up a partnership that works for both of you, they are just on your doorstep if ever there is a problem.

So it REALLY is worth persevering and doing the small amount of research and preparation that you need to do in order to find the right manufacturer for your products.

Just remember, when you email a manufacturer, if you want the best chance of a response, don't be vague, and don't tell them your life history in the first email.

And if you were a manufacturer reading it, how would it answer the question of "what's in it for me?"

So I hope you found that useful.

I'll be back tomorrow when we'll be discussing materials, and what you need to know about them before you take your next step.

And don't forget, there's still time to sign up for the challenge. Even if you are listening to the podcast in the past.

You can go to www.makeitbritish.co.uk/getset to join.

And if you'd like to find the full transcript of this podcast along with any other details that I have mentioned go to makeitbritish.co.uk/016

Until tomorrow

Bye-bye