



What North American Buyers Never Tell Overseas Suppliers

**The Unwritten Rules That Determine
Who Gets the Deal And Who Gets Ghosted**

Written specifically for packaging factory owners in Asia
who want to sell into the North American market
but are tired of wasting money on trade shows, sales reps,
and LinkedIn outreach that goes nowhere.

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Inside This Guide

Introduction: Why I Wrote This For You	3
Rule #1: They Buy 'Safe,' Not 'Cheap'	5
Rule #2: Trust Flows Through People, Not Companies	8
Rule #3: Your Website Is Invisible to AI	11
Rule #4: Generic Messaging Confirms Their Fears	14
Rule #5: Systems Beat Effort Every Time	17
The Solution: Extract. Translate. Advocate	20
Next Steps: How to Begin	23

Introduction: Why I Wrote This For You

I've been in the packaging industry for 35 years. I've visited factories across Asia Vietnam, China, Thailand, India. I've sat with General Managers and owners. I've seen what you can do.

And here's what breaks my heart:

You have capabilities that North American converters cannot touch.

Veloflex structures. MDO PE films. Recyclable multi-layer materials with barrier properties that domestic suppliers can't match at your price point or lead time. You serve Nestlé. Unilever. Mars. GSK.

And yet... your phone doesn't ring from North America.

Why?

It's not your product. It's not your price. It's not your English.

The problem is that North American buyers operate by a completely different set of rules than you're used to. Rules that no one ever explains. Rules that determine who gets the deal and who gets ghosted.

I wrote this guide because I've watched too many world-class factories waste too much money on tactics that don't work: trade shows that generate nothing, sales reps who disappear, LinkedIn campaigns that destroy credibility, marketing agencies that produce beautiful content with zero results.

You deserve to know the truth about how buying decisions actually happen in North America.

So here it is. The unwritten rules. The things buyers think but never say. The real reasons you're losing deals you don't even know exist.

Let's begin.

Rule #1: They Buy 'Safe,' Not 'Cheap'

What Buyers Never Tell You:

"I would rather pay MORE for a supplier I trust than save money and risk my reputation."

This is the most important rule in this entire guide. And it's the one that overseas factories misunderstand most often.

When a North American procurement manager, R&D; director, or operations VP evaluates a packaging supplier, they are not primarily thinking about cost savings.

They are thinking about risk.

Specifically, they're asking themselves:

"If I choose this supplier and something goes wrong, what happens to ME?"

"Can I defend this decision to my boss?"

"If there's a quality issue at 2am, who do I call?"

"Will this supplier make me look smart... or make me look foolish?"

This is why 'competitive pricing' messaging backfires catastrophically.

When you lead with price, North American buyers hear something very different from what you intend:

What You Say	What They Hear
"Competitive pricing"	"We're cheap—probably cutting corners"
"Cost-effective solution"	"Quality might be questionable"
"Best price in the market"	"There must be a catch"
"Save money with us"	"This is risky"

The Real Decision Framework:

North American decision-makers evaluate suppliers through four lenses and price is last:

- **Expertise:** Do they understand MY specific problem? Not packaging in general MY application?
- **Proof:** Have they solved this before? For someone like me? With verifiable results?
- **Credibility:** Is this information trustworthy? Or is it just marketing?
- **Backup:** If something goes wrong, who helps me fix it?

Only AFTER a supplier passes all four tests does price become a factor. And even then, a buyer will often pay 10-20% more for the option that feels 'safe.'

Key Insight: Stop competing on price. Start competing on safety. Show them that choosing you is the LOWEST RISK decision they can make.

Rule #2: Trust Flows Through People, Not Companies

What Buyers Never Tell You:

"I don't trust your company. I don't trust your website. I trust PEOPLE who have proven themselves trustworthy."

In Asia, company reputation carries enormous weight. A factory that serves multinational brands has credibility simply because of who they serve.

In North America, it doesn't work that way.

North American buyers are deeply skeptical of company marketing. They assume every company says they're great. They assume every website exaggerates. They assume every brochure is designed to sell, not inform.

What breaks through that skepticism?

A trusted individual who puts their personal reputation on the line.

When a respected industry expert says, 'I've visited this factory. I've seen their equipment. I've talked to their customers. They can do what they claim' that carries weight.

When your own website says the same thing, buyers think: 'Of course you say that. You're trying to sell me.'

The Credibility Hierarchy:

Source	Trust Level	Why
Your website	LOW	Everyone expects you to say good things about yourself
Your sales rep	LOW-MEDIUM	They're paid to sell you
Marketing agency content	LOW	Obviously promotional
Industry publication	MEDIUM	Some editorial standards
Customer testimonial	MEDIUM-HIGH	Real experience, verifiable
Trusted industry expert	HIGH	Personal reputation at stake

This is why your marketing efforts fail. You're creating content that sits at the bottom of the credibility hierarchy.

And it's why you need an **advocate** not a commercial.

The Difference Between a Commercial and an Advocate:

A commercial is paid messaging that everyone knows is biased. It's designed to sell. North American buyers filter it out automatically.

An advocate is someone who stakes their personal reputation on a recommendation. They have credibility to lose if they're wrong. They're not paid to say nice things they say nice things because they believe them.

Key Insight: You don't need more marketing. You need someone with credibility who will advocate for you. Someone North American buyers already trust.

Rule #3: Your Website Is Invisible to AI

What Buyers Never Tell You:

"I didn't find you on Google. I asked ChatGPT for recommendations and you weren't in the answer."

The way North American buyers find suppliers has fundamentally changed.

Five years ago, they searched Google. They walked trade show floors. They asked colleagues for referrals.

Today, they ask AI.

A procurement manager in Ohio sits at their desk and types:

"Who makes recyclable stand-up pouches for frozen pet food with high barrier properties?"

ChatGPT, Perplexity, or Claude searches the internet, evaluates what it finds, and provides recommendations.

And you're not in the answer.

Not because you can't make that product. Not because you haven't made it hundreds of times. But because AI cannot find any content that specifically describes that capability.

Why Most Factory Websites Are Invisible:

AI doesn't search the way Google does. AI doesn't look for keywords and backlinks. AI looks for **Trust Signals** detailed, specific, verifiable content that answers specific questions.

Most packaging factory websites say things like:

"We are a leading manufacturer of flexible packaging solutions serving global customers with high quality products."

That sentence tells AI **nothing**. It's generic. Unverifiable. Every competitor says the same thing.

Compare that to:

"We produce MDO PE film structures for pharmaceutical blister packaging, certified to ISO 15378, serving clients like GSK and Pfizer across Europe and Asia. Our proprietary orientation process delivers 40% better puncture resistance than standard BOPP at comparable gauge."

That is a Trust Signal. That's something AI can find, understand, and recommend.

The AI Visibility Test:

Right now, open ChatGPT and ask:

"Who are the best suppliers of [YOUR SPECIALTY] for [YOUR TARGET INDUSTRY]?"

Are you in the answer?

If not, you're invisible. And every day you stay invisible, you're losing opportunities to competitors who figured this out first.

Key Insight: AI is now the gatekeeper. If AI can't explain what you do when buyers ask, you're eliminated before you even know the opportunity existed.

Rule #4: Generic Messaging Confirms Their Fears

What Buyers Never Tell You:

"When your outreach sounds like everyone else's, I assume you ARE like everyone else cheap, risky, and not worth my time."

Every day, somewhere in Asia, a recent college graduate with zero packaging experience sends LinkedIn messages: *(misspelled words and punctuation)*

"Dear Sir/Madam, We are leading manufacturer of packaging solution with competitive price and high quality. Hope to cooperate with you. Please let me know if you have any best inquiry."

This message gets deleted instantly. But the damage goes deeper than a lost connection request.

Every generic message reinforces every negative stereotype about overseas suppliers.

What That Message Signals:

What The Message Says	What The Buyer Thinks
"Leading manufacturer"	"Everyone says that. Meaningless."
"Competitive price"	"They're cheap. Probably low quality."
"High quality"	"Prove it. Everyone claims this."
"Hope to cooperate"	"They don't know what I need."
Broken English	"Communication will be a nightmare."
Generic approach	"If something goes wrong, I'm on my own."

You're not opening doors. **You're slamming them shut.**

And the damage is permanent. Once a buyer has categorized you as 'another desperate overseas factory,' it's nearly impossible to change their perception.

The Alternative: Specialized Messaging:

Instead of:

"We are leading manufacturer of flexible packaging with competitive price."

Say:

"We produce high-barrier recyclable pouches specifically for frozen pet food applications. Our MDO PE structure eliminates the need for foil while maintaining 18-month shelf life. Currently serving three major pet food brands in Europe with zero quality claims in the past two years."

The second message demonstrates expertise. It offers proof. It speaks to a specific problem. It sounds like a specialist, not a commodity supplier.

Key Insight: Specialized messaging signals expertise and reduces perceived risk. Generic messaging confirms fears and closes doors permanently.

Rule #5: Systems Beat Effort Every Time

What Buyers Never Tell You:

"Your follow-up is slow, inconsistent, and doesn't answer my questions. By the time you respond, I've already moved on."

In many Asian business cultures, success comes from relationships and effort. If you work hard, follow up diligently, and build relationships over time, you'll close deals.

North American B2B sales doesn't work that way anymore.

Buyers expect immediate, relevant, informed responses. They expect their questions to be answered before they ask. They expect a professional process that makes them feel confident.

And they have zero patience for:

- Slow response times (more than 24 hours = too late)
- Generic follow-ups that don't address their specific needs
- Salespeople who can't answer technical questions
- Inconsistent communication that makes them chase you

The System Gap:

Most overseas factories rely on **human effort** for sales: a rep who makes calls, sends emails, follows up manually, and tries to build relationships one by one.

This approach fails because:

- Reps can only handle so many prospects at once
- Follow-up is inconsistent some leads get attention, others fall through the cracks
- Reps who don't understand packaging can't answer technical questions
- Time zones create delays that kill momentum
- When the rep leaves, all the relationships leave too

Meanwhile, sophisticated North American companies use **systems**: automated qualification, lead scoring, nurture sequences, routing rules, and AI-powered responses that work 24/7.

What a System Does:

Stage	What the System Does
Capture	Identifies when a buyer engages with your content (reads, downloads, watches)
Qualify	Determines: Is this a real decision-maker? Real project? Right fit?
Educate	Provides relevant information based on their specific interests
Nurture	Maintains contact over time without human effort
Route	Delivers qualified, educated opportunities to your sales team

The result: Your sales team only spends time on warm, educated, qualified opportunities not cold leads who waste their time.

Key Insight: You can't out-effort a system. You need a system of your own one that captures, qualifies, educates, and routes opportunities while you sleep.

The Solution: Extract. Translate. Advocate.

Now you understand the rules. The question is: what do you do about them?

You don't need another sales rep. You don't need another trade show. You don't need another marketing agency.

You need someone who will:

EXTRACT

Somewhere inside your factory is something you do better than anyone else. Maybe it's a material. A process. A specific application you've perfected.

But you don't know it's special. You've been doing it so long you assume everyone can do it.

They can't. What's routine to you is rare to the market.

Extraction means pulling out your hidden superpowers. Not generic capabilities specific problems you solve better than anyone else. The things that make you the **only option**, not just another option.

TRANSLATE

Once we've extracted what makes you special, we translate it. Not from Vietnamese to English from **factory language** to **buyer language**.

You might say: 'Advanced extrusion capabilities with precise gauge control.'

A buyer hears: Technical jargon I don't understand.

But if you say: 'Your line runs faster with our film because the gauge is consistent across every roll. No more stopping to adjust tension. No more wasted product.'

Now they hear: **This solves my problem.**

Translation also makes your capabilities visible to AI so when buyers search, you show up in the answer.

ADVOCATE

This is the piece most overseas factories miss entirely.

You can have the best capabilities. You can have beautiful content. But if it's coming from YOU, North American buyers are skeptical. You're the seller. Of course you say you're great.

What buyers need is a trusted third party who validates your claims.

Not a commercial. **An advocate.** Someone who has been in the industry for decades. Someone who has visited your factory, seen your equipment, talked to your customers. Someone who has their OWN reputation on the line when they recommend you.

When I say, 'I've worked with this factory. I've seen what they can do. When they say they can run 92 bags a minute, I've watched them do it' that carries weight.

Because I'm not on your payroll. I'm putting MY credibility behind YOUR capabilities.

That's what an advocate does.

Next Steps: How to Begin

If you've read this far, you understand something that most of your competitors don't.

You understand that the old ways aren't going to start working just because you keep trying them. Trade shows aren't coming back. Great sales reps aren't magically appearing. LinkedIn spam isn't building trust.

Something has to change.

The Specialized Packaging Marketplace

I've built something specifically for factories like yours.

Not a directory. Not a marketing agency. Not a trade show booth.

A platform where your specialized capabilities are extracted, translated into language buyers and AI understand, and advocated for by someone with 35 years of credibility in the North American packaging industry.

A system that captures buyer interest, qualifies opportunities, educates prospects, and routes sales-ready leads to your team so you're not chasing, you're closing.

What Happens Next:

1. **We talk.** A conversation to understand your factory, your capabilities, your target market, and what hasn't worked in the past.
2. **We extract.** I dig into what makes you genuinely different the specialized capabilities that North American buyers can't easily find elsewhere.
3. **We translate.** We create Trust Signals content that AI can find, buyers can understand, and that positions you as the specialist, not the commodity.
4. **We advocate.** Your factory gets positioned on the Specialized Packaging Marketplace with my credibility behind it.
5. **The system works.** Qualified opportunities flow to your team educated, vetted, and ready to buy.

This isn't about spending more money on tactics that don't work.

It's about finally doing something different.

Ready to Learn More?

If you're a packaging factory owner who is tired of wasting money on trade shows, reps, and marketing that doesn't work and you're ready to try something different let's talk.

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This guide is the first step. The next step is yours.