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Overcoming rejection from Home Depot

Can't get on a retail giant's list of preferred suppliers? Here's how to wiggle your way in.

By [Mina Kimes](#)

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(FORTUNE Small Business) -- *Dear FSB:* I have a newly patented floor tile topped with carpet, turf, or cork. I want to sell it to Home Depot and other DIY companies, but the Home Depot on-line submittal got me an automated rejection, and there seems to be code for preferred suppliers. How do I get through?

- *Robert Simon, Columbus*

Dear Robert: Trying to break through the barrier created by an online application process can be exasperating, but we'll help you gain some insight into what's going on behind the scenes.

Jerry Shields, a spokesperson for Home Depot ([HD](#), [Fortune 500](#)), says that when a supplier is rejected by the company's [online supply center](#), a buyer will send him an explanation of what they're looking for and why the supplier didn't meet the it. The code, he adds, is for Home Depot merchants, not suppliers.

Shields suggests that you sign up to attend Home Depot's next Open to Buy Day (July 15 and 16) in Atlanta, where you can bring samples of your floor tile for the company's consideration.

It may be better to use a middleman. [Matt Yubas](#), the owner of [Yubas Consulting](#), a product marketing and development consultancy in Lubbock, Tex., suggests that you consider hiring a third-party business consultant to act on your behalf.

"Companies like Home Depot and Lowe's ([LOW](#), [Fortune 500](#)) prefer to deal directly with marketing consultants, rather than inventors, because they can speak their language," he says.



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If you'd rather do it yourself, Yubas advises that you target small, independent retailers during the initial stages of introducing your product to market. "Get in with the small home supply stores first," he says. "That way, you can walk up to the store owner and pitch directly to him." ■

How did you become a supplier for the Home Depot, Wal-Mart or another giant retailer? Do you love or hate working with a big company? [Share here.](#)

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