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HAMILTON BRADSHAW
Investing in people with passion

The big boys love our toys. How can we woo indies?

**Ask
James**



James Caan

Dear James,

We are a successful toy distributor. We have been very successful with big retailers but have difficulties getting independent retailers to buy from our range. We have no minimum order and a carriage paid order is only £200. We have used agents to represent us, on 10% commission. At what stage do you believe it is worth getting your own reps rather than using agents?
Thierry Bourret

THIERRY, from the information you have provided, I believe you are giving independent retailers a good deal, so let's address why you may be finding this sector a struggle.

There are many possible factors. The first question is, are your products relevant to the retailer's customer base? You may need to do some research here. There is never a "one size fits all" strategy and you will need to bespoke your offer.

I would review the performance of your agents and, if you feel you are not getting value, recruit someone into your firm. Agents, when they perform, can be of great benefit as they have connections in specific industries, but are they as passionate as somebody within the business? I have found that the best sales people are often those who believe in the product and the vision of the firm.

There are many good sales people out there who could be right for your

firm. When you find one, work closely with them to ensure they grasp the brand properly, and provide them with incentives. Be realistic: calculate your turnover and the targets you think they can achieve.

■ For the full article and news of James Caan's free app, go to standard.co.uk/askjames. His book, *Start Your Business in 7 Days*, is out now.