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**Beware Knock Offs - How Not To Get Ripped Off**

By "Bridget P. Allen"

Designer duds are expensive, plain and simple. If you are in the market for superb items straight off the runway but do not have the budget for buying items straight from the store, there are alternatives. However, you should be warned that buying designer items from anyone else that the original manufacturer leaves you open to possibly purchasing fake goods. Designer knock offs are sold on the street, in stores, and most popularly, on the World Wide Web. Protect yourself from spending hard earned money on items that have been poorly made from sub par materials. Just because the item in question possesses a brand name that is no guarantee you are dealing with the real McCoy!

Most of those items that are claimed to be designer goods sold on the street are just plain fakes. Use a bit of common sense when buying any type of goods from any type of seller. If you buy a fifteen dollar Louis Vuitton signature purse, there is a strong chance that item is indeed a fake. Remember the old adage, "if it is too good to be true, then it probably is." This cannot be truer than individuals looking super deals on authentic designer duds.

Regardless where you choose to purchase your cut rate designer goods, be sure the seller is reputable. If you are purchasing items from virtual stores on the World Wide Web, look to see if there are any complaints lodged against that specific company. Also, if you choose to purchase designer items from online auction sites like Ebay or Yahoo! Auctions, carefully evaluate the seller by searching the feedback responses. As always, go with your gut instinct--if you think something is a fake, and then avoid buying the item. No matter how great you are at sniffing out a deal, there is not way that bag you are buying for fifty dollars is a genuine Hermes Birkin bag.

The best way to avoid buying faked designer goods is by feeling the items. If the materials seem cheap, rough, unevenly dyed or woven, or poorly made, the item is probably a fake. Furthermore, take a close look at the craftsmanship. Check the seams, buttons, zippers, and any other items that can give an item away as a fake. With bags and shoes, look at the quality of the leather. Furthermore, the lining of a bag can tell you more about the quality of that particular purse than anything else, so be sure to take a peek inside.

Bridget Allen has worked for many years in the fashion industry, at a senior level, and she has written an amazing totally free fashionista minicourse that will thrill, entertain, and most importantly educate you about what you absolutely need to know about fashion. Get the free course " Fashionista Essentials" now at

<http://www.i-stylish.com>

### **The 7 Steps To Successfully Responding To Product Knockoffs**

**By Robert L Moment**

It's every small business owners nightmare: you find and market the perfect product or service only to wake up one morning and find that someone else is producing cheap knock offs of the same thing.

So how do you deal with it? By following our seven steps...

#### 1. Offer a better product

It sounds simple, but offering a better product is both the easiest and most effective way to respond to product knock offs. There is always a market for products which improve on the ones that have come before them: make sure you're consistently looking for ways to improve your product, and you'll remain one step ahead of the knock off sellers.

#### 2. Create a marketing edge

A great deal of good business comes down to great marketing. This is another area in which it's easy to gain an advantage over product knock offs. The people who sell knock offs aren't interested in building a brand, creating a buzz or researching their market. In fact, they want to spend as little time and money as they possibly can on selling more units of their product knock off. By investing in your marketing, you can gain an important edge.

#### 3. Make quality a priority

You'll never be able to stop knock offs completely. What you must remember, however, is that knock offs have one big disadvantage over your product: their quality.

Most knock offs are cheap, mass-produced copies of quality goods. That's why they're sold for so little. By offering a product which is truly high quality, you'll appeal to those buyers who aspire to owning the real thing, and make it much more difficult for anyone to copy you.

#### 4. Getting a patent does not prevent competition

A patent will help you deal with knock offs to a certain extent. What it won't do is eliminate the competition. You'll never completely eliminate the competition. All you can do is rise above them by making sure your product, service and marketing is the best it can possibly be.

5. Target smaller or niche markets where you can have the edge

While you may want to conquer the world with your business, it's often far more effective to conquer a small part of it by targeting a niche which you can excel in. By concentrating on a niche market you can get to know your clients and their needs inside out, and make sure your product or service is tailor made to fit that niche. Leave the rest of the world to the knock off sellers.

6. Adapt to market changes and trends

In business, you have to adapt or die. By allowing your business to trudge along, doing the same thing in the same way you leave yourself wide open to competitors who are willing to be innovative and to move with the times.

7. Provide exceptional customer service

Businesses which produce knock off products often aren't interested in customer service. People like to do business with other people they can trust: that may not apply to sellers of knock-off products, but it should apply to you. If it does, you have nothing to fear from product knock offs.

Summary

While it's impossible to completely eliminate product knock offs completely, it is possible to respond to them in such a way that your own sales don't suffer. This article provides seven steps to help you make sure that your products and service are able to stand up to the competition.

Robert Moment is an innovative business strategist and author of , "It Only Takes a Moment to Score" and upcoming book "Invisible Profits: The Power of Exceptional Customer Service" published in Fall 2006. Visit

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