

CHAPTER SEVEN

Sourcing Relationship Health Assessment

What makes a good buyer? What makes a good supplier? We created this assessment as a guide to offer insight into the quality of your relationships. The responses are to be used for internal reflection and self improvement only.

If your score is low, take time to reflect on what you as a buyer are doing to facilitate a trusting/open relationship and what you may be doing to undermine that relationship. How can you improve communication?

A GOOD BUYER TENDS TO:

- Share buying forecasts, lab test results, and requirement changes proactively
- Communicate problems and cancellations early.
- Connect buying price to reality, not just market benchmarks.
- Visit with curiosity and follow up with action.
- Treat supply chain members as relationship holders, not means to an end.

A GOOD SUPPLIER TENDS TO:

- Name constraints early, before they become failures.
- Invest in traceability and quality systems, and help buyers understand what those costs are.
- Share what good looks like from their side and push back when buyer requirements don't match reality.
- Make buyers feel welcome to visit, and use visits to show the complete picture transparently.

Buyer » Supplier (Internal reflection tool).

For each question, select a score from 1 (low) to 5 (high). Answer based on what you experience most of the time.

1. Supplier openness about challenges

Does the supplier raise challenges on their own, or mostly in response to your questions?

Score	Description
1	Only shares issues when pressed
2	Shares late, after problems escalate
3	Shares sometimes, but not consistently
4	Usually raises issues early
5	Proactively flags risks and constraints without prompting

2. Usefulness of information shared

When the supplier shares information, how useful is it for your decision making?

Score	Description
1	Information is vague or too late to act on
2	Some detail, but limited decision value
3	Generally useful, but gaps remain
4	Clear, timely, and supports planning
5	Consistently actionable and anticipates downstream needs



SHI discussion between brands and suppliers in Nicaragua

PART II — REFLECTION: What's working and what's not?

5a. Overall, are you satisfied with the quality of the botanical materials you source?

☐ Yes ☐ No

5b. If not, what would you like to change? (Check all that apply and explain.)

AREA

☐ Quality

☐ Price

☐ Quality (testing etc.)

☐ Relationships (vendor/manufacturer is not listening, meeting your needs, etc.)

☐ Sustainability (i.e. product is not organic or fair certified, distance is too far, too much energy required to process the botanical, diminishing supply due to climate change, at-risk plants, etc.)



Lemon balm fields, l’Herbier du Diois, France

3. Proactivity in updates

How proactive is the supplier in sharing updates on crops, formulations, processing, or risks?

Score	Description
1	You have to chase for updates
2	Updates arrive late or incomplete
3	Basic updates, not always timely
4	Timely updates with useful detail
5	Clear, forward-looking updates that support planning

4. Clarity around trade-offs

When constraints arise, how clearly are trade-offs discussed (price, timing, quality, volume)?

Score	Description
1	Trade-offs are hidden or emerge only after failure
2	Trade-offs are mentioned but not explored
3	Some discussion, but decisions feel one-sided
4	Trade-offs are clearly explained and discussed
5	Trade-offs are openly named and worked through together

5. Transparency around costs and constraints

How open is the supplier about cost drivers and operational limits?

Score	Description
1	Cost and constraints are opaque or avoided
2	Minimal disclosure, often defensive
3	Partial transparency when asked
4	Open discussion of key cost and constraint areas
5	Clear, proactive sharing of cost pressures and limits

What to do next:

Remember to use this tool for self reflection and self improvement only.

If your score is low, take time to reflect on what you as a buyer are doing to facilitate a trusting/open relationship and what you may be doing to undermine that relationship. How can you improve communication?

6. Ease of communication

How does the relationship feel on a spectrum from interrogation to coffee with a friend?

Score	Description
1	Tense, guarded, or transactional
2	Polite but cautious
3	Neutral and functional
4	Open and comfortable
5	Candid, trusting, and human

7. Reliability and follow-through

How often does the supplier keep their word? And how do they respond when they can't?

Score	Description
1	Commitments often missed, little explanation
2	Missed commitments with weak communication
3	Usually delivers, but struggles to explain failures
4	Keeps commitments or communicates early when issues arise
5	Highly reliable, transparent, and accountable

Scoring

Add up the seven scores. Total possible: 35

7–14	Fragile relationship High risk. Low trust. Likely extractive or misaligned.
15–22	Functional but strained Works day-to-day, but breaks down under pressure.
23–29	Stable and collaborative Solid working relationship with room to deepen trust and planning.
30–35	Strong and resilient Relationship supports long-term quality, supply security, and shared problem-solving.