

@sourcingwithkain

THE BUILD-IN-PUBLIC PLAYBOOK

# HOW I'M SCALING A 20-YEAR SOURCING OPERATION FROM GUANGZHOU

Taking two decades of family factory relationships and opening them to founders everywhere — the thinking behind it, and where it goes from here.

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By **Kain** — scaling Kawini International from inside the factories in Guangzhou, China.

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# I DIDN'T START A SOURCING AGENCY. I'M SCALING ONE.

Most people who try to source products from China are doing it from the outside — a laptop, a time zone away, a chat window with a stranger who calls themselves a supplier. Kawini comes from the opposite end. My family has been manufacturing and trading out of Guangzhou for more than twenty years — Canton Fair, factory floors, the kind of cross-border trade that doesn't show up on any platform. The relationships, the access, the trust were built long before me.

What I'm doing is taking that — two decades of real factory relationships — and opening it up to founders everywhere. For most of its life, this operation worked the way trade has always worked here: quietly, through word of mouth, for people who already knew us. My job is to modernize it — to take a sourcing operation that used to be reachable only if you already knew us, and make it reachable by a founder anywhere in the world, working the way founders actually work today.

This isn't a how-to. I'm not going to hand you our factory list or the playbook — that's the whole point of what we do. What this is: an honest look at how I think about scaling this, what I've learned doing it, and why a young person on the ground here, backed by twenty years of relationships, beats a faceless agency every time. If that resonates, you'll understand exactly why people work with us.

WHERE THIS COMES FROM

## LEBANON TO CHINA, AND WHAT IT TAUGHT ME

I grew up between Lebanon and China — two places that teach you very different things. Lebanon teaches you how to read people, how to do business when nothing is guaranteed, how to be resourceful. China — specifically Guangzhou — teaches you scale, speed, and how the physical world actually gets made.

Being multilingual and moving between cultures isn't a line on a CV for me. It's the actual job. The reason a deal goes smoothly is often that I can sit on both sides of a conversation and make sure nobody is misunderstood — the founder who's nervous and the factory that's busy. That bridge is most of the value, and it's not something you can outsource or fake.

**I'M NOT BROKERING FROM A DISTANCE.  
I'M STANDING IN THE ROOM.**

That single fact changes everything about how I work — and it's the thing I keep coming back to when I think about why this business is worth building.

# FIVE THINGS BUILDING THIS HAS TAUGHT ME

Not tactics — I keep those for clients. These are the principles underneath, the way I actually think about this work.

## 01 PRESENCE BEATS PROMISES

Anyone can promise quality over email. The thing that actually protects a client's money is someone who can physically go and look. Most of this industry sells the promise; I'd rather build on the presence. It's slower to scale and impossible to fake — which is exactly why it's a moat.

## 02 RELATIONSHIPS ARE THE REAL INVENTORY

The factories worth working with aren't the ones easiest to find — they're the ones you've earned the right to call. Twenty years of family trust isn't something I can teach in a PDF, and that's the point. The relationships are the asset. Everything else is logistics around them.

## 03 YOUNG IS AN ADVANTAGE, NOT A DISCLAIMER

People expect a sourcing agent to be a 50-year-old in a suit. Being young here means I move faster, I'm more responsive than the middleman, and I'm building for the way founders actually work today — DMs, video, speed. I stopped apologizing for my age and started treating it as the edge it is.

## 04 TRUST IS BUILT IN PUBLIC, EARNED IN PRIVATE

I share the journey openly because that's how strangers decide whether to trust you. But the work itself — the negotiations, the factory floor, the catches that save an order — happens quietly, for the client, off-camera. Show the journey; protect the craft.

## 05 DO THE WORK THAT PROVES ITSELF

I don't try to convince people I'm legit by talking. I'd rather do one small, fast, real piece of work and let it speak. Proof beats persuasion every time — and it's a far better way to start a relationship than a sales pitch.

## THE BIGGER PICTURE

Kawini today is sourcing, quality control, and freight coordination for founders and importers. Twenty years in, it's already a real operation — what's new is who can reach it. I'm turning something that ran on word of mouth into a bridge between the people who make things in China and the people building brands everywhere else.

I'm doing it in the open because I think the old model of sourcing — opaque, faceless, distant — is broken, and the people who'll replace it are the ones willing to actually show up. I happen to have grown up in the right place, with the right relationships behind me, to do exactly that.

If you're sourcing from China, or thinking about it, the most useful thing I can offer isn't this guide. It's me, actually looking at your product. So here's the simplest way to start.

LET'S ACTUALLY TALK

# IF YOU'RE SOURCING FROM CHINA, I CAN ACTUALLY HELP.

I source products for founders and importers from the ground in Guangzhou — real factories, real quality control, real freight. The easiest way to see what that looks like is to put a real product in front of me.

## START SMALL, SEE IT WORK

Give me your product. In 7 days I'll come back with vetted factory options, real quotes, samples from the ground here, and a freight estimate to your country. Small, fast, and it tells you everything about whether we should work together.

DM "SOURCE"

on Instagram [@sourcingwithkain](#) and I'll send you the details.

Or find us at [kawininternational.com](#)

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