THE GOLD SUPPLIER CHECKLIST
Quick Guide for the "E-Success"

Mr. Alvaro Galan
Global Asia Corporation Ltd.

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About The Global Asia Corporation Ltd.

The solvency of years satisfying the most demanding customers of the worldwide distribution.

Backed by company´s powerful resources, global reach and local depth, Global Asia Corporation can help clients address their commercial needs by providing expertise and insights through a single source. We will partner and guide you toward opportunity, while helping to manage the value, working together to help build your best turnover. Know more about us.

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About the Author

Mr. Alvaro Galan, 29. Spain. Chairman and CEO of the Global Asia Corporation Holdings. Joined Alibaba in 2012. 2 years Gold Member. It's also tutor in a training on the Alibaba´s Seller Channel. Recently listed on the "Who-is-Who" ranking of the most innovative professionals in Spain.

THE GOLD SUPPLIER CHECKLIST

When I was considering participating in this competition I started thinking about some of the good practices that we had been running along time. I couldn´t decide for any of them in particular and finally decided to write them all in this paper.

So please, consider this guide as a **Best Practices Compilation**. Most of them are operational practices and e-Commerce on field experience. All this knowledge has been collecting almost from the last 18 months and improved over the time.

Currently the level of deployment covers the entire organization chart, from purchasing, marketing and sales, to the financial department. **Alibaba is the core sales engine of our online presence**. The importance is crucial: Our sales outside Spain now represents over the 80% of our business.

The impact of the deployment is visible in our day-a-day business. Now we react in real-time to market demand, and offer customer-specific promotions and pricing accordingly. We take advantage of customer segmentation technologies to offer special discounts and pricing for any customer, group of customers, order, item or geography. We´ve come to the conclusion:

> *"If that is not working with buyers on Alibaba, probably that won't work with anyone."*

We have also been providing advice and consultancy services for more than 35 companies in the past 6 months, most of them from Europe, which are considering to joining Alibaba Gold Membership or looking for a better performance online. They are actually deploying our best practices on their own organizations.

In fact, the reason of writing this paper is to summarize all the know-how we have been accumulating along this time in the courses, meetings and conference calls with our own people and with our customers.

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1. *Hey! Am on the right place?*

Although B2B e-Commerce doesn't garner the same buzz and attention of its B2C counterpart, already accounts for more revenue: $559B vs. $252B. [Forrester. 2014] And is growing faster, as well: 20% in 2013 vs. 12% for B2C. What's fueling this growth? The **expectations** of B2B buyers.

If you are here is because you are one-in-a-thousand of the businessman/ businesswoman with both vision and ambition; and you are already a Gold Member in Alibaba or you are planning to subscribe it soon.

If you still being an unverified member, please check the differences between Registered Members vs Gold Members, here and convince yourself. Don´t miss the chance to **join us** and bring your business to the next level.

It's important to set appropriate expectations when you are considering joining Alibaba and most of the people ask me about the same: the positive **Return on Investment** (ROI).

The answer is always the same: **Absolutely**.

With one condition: I am assuming that you are not going to subscribe the Gold Membership and go to bed waiting the money comes.

Even doing everything perfect you cannot think your sales will boost in the first year, *Wake Up*!

…But you'll be on track to achieve it.

If someone asked me why we love Alibaba as B2B e-Commerce Platform I would say:
 • Because of the Inquiries & Leads
 • Because of the Networking
 • Because of the Trade & Analysis Tools
 • Because of the Business Insights
 • Because of the Security
 • Because of the Alibaba´s Sales and Customer Service

More & More

Please don´t miss the chance to review all the fantastic materials of the Alibaba´s **Learning Center**, here and Alibaba´s **Training Center**, here.

A couple of months ago and with the staff of Alibaba we recorded a tutorial called "*Boost Your Sales in Alibaba*" which is available here. There´s also a Spanish version: "*Incrementa tus ventas en Alibaba*", here.

2. Understanding the buyer´s needs

There are 26 million of registered members in Alibaba worldwide (and growing) and 23 million of them are **buyers**.

1. Those buyers are visiting your online store 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; from more than 190 different countries. Your site is accessible every time from everywhere.

2. Demanding excellent products and premium customer service, if possible in the same language, using their own currency, metric system, payment terms or business uses and traditions…

3. Sending more than 10k product quotations every day and 100k messages and inquiries.

Imagine that your physical store or office receive customers with the same profile and the implications of that in your business. The ability to adapt your business depending the customer profile is the best strength to succeed internationally.

Your customers also have **expectations** of your site:

- **Find** what they are looking for (70% of site activity is focused on the process of finding information).

- Take some **action** on what they find, for example, request a quotation.

- Receive a quick and **satisfactory** reply.

A recent survey conducted by Alibaba shown important information about what the buyers are expecting in their website experience and which are the aspects they more valued in a supplier. Below a brief description of each of them:
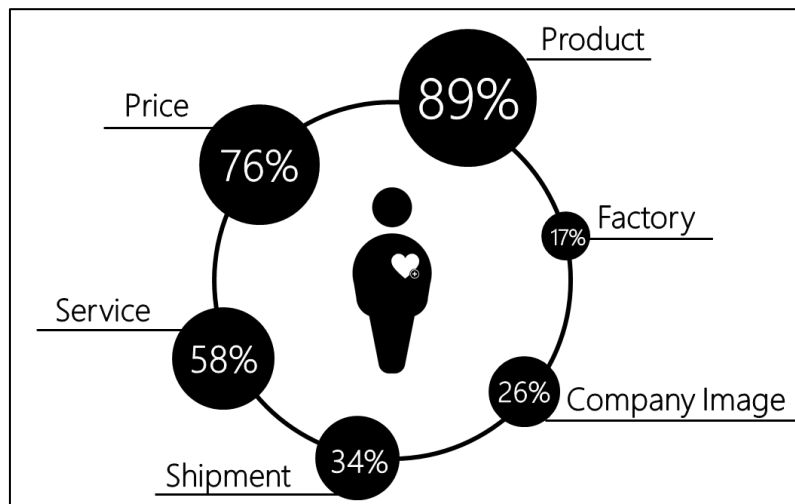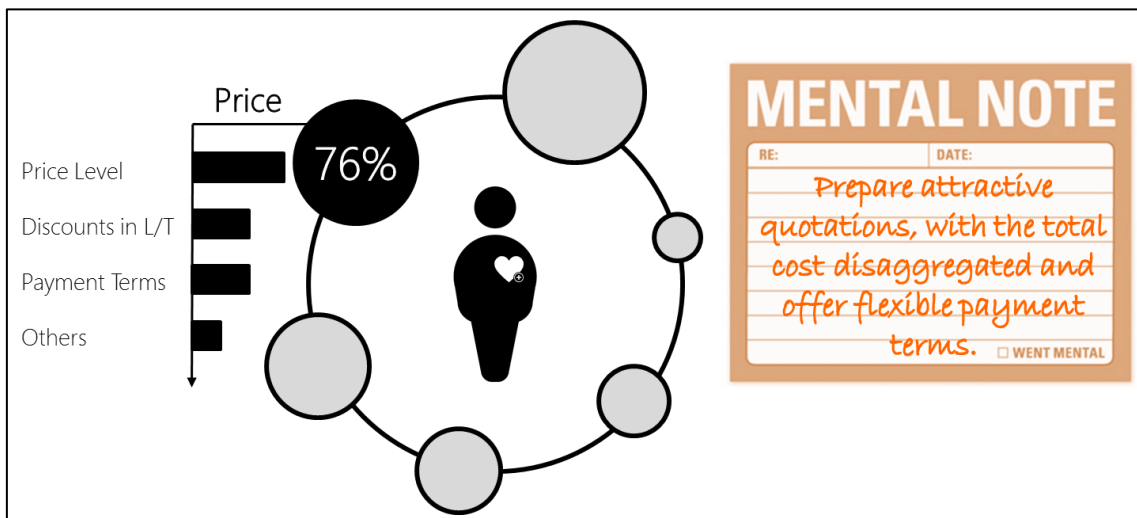
The Product

The 89% of the buyers answered that the most important aspect when sourcing is the product. Posting complete and accurate content educates customers, builds trust and helps improve their perception of your brand.

But when your product data is incomplete, inconsistent or hard-to-find in your B2B eCommerce sites, time-starved customers simply go elsewhere to satisfy their needs, resulting in lost sales and trust.
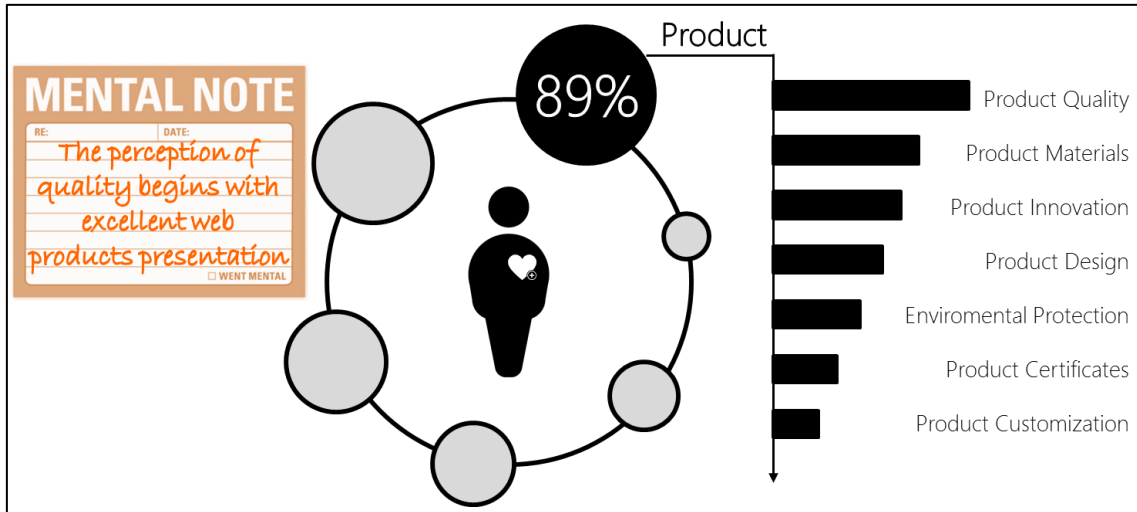

The Pricing

We won´t discuss in this paper the different marketing strategies to follow in Alibaba regarding the pricing. Within B2B pricing is complex, order values are often greater, and the number of orders per customer is often larger, as are the quantities. Strongly recommended qualifying the customer and the lead first, and then talk about the price.

The Customer Service

Although B2B e-Commerce is convenient for customers, it carries more perceived risk than traditional sourcing. Since a buyer can not touch the product or immediately discuss the product face-to-face with a salesperson, he or she feels more pressure at every stage of the buyer's cycle.

Having a fantastic website doesn´t mean neglecting one of your greatest assets: the **human interaction**. Is crucial a timely response to the inquiries and be online to chat using TradeManager.
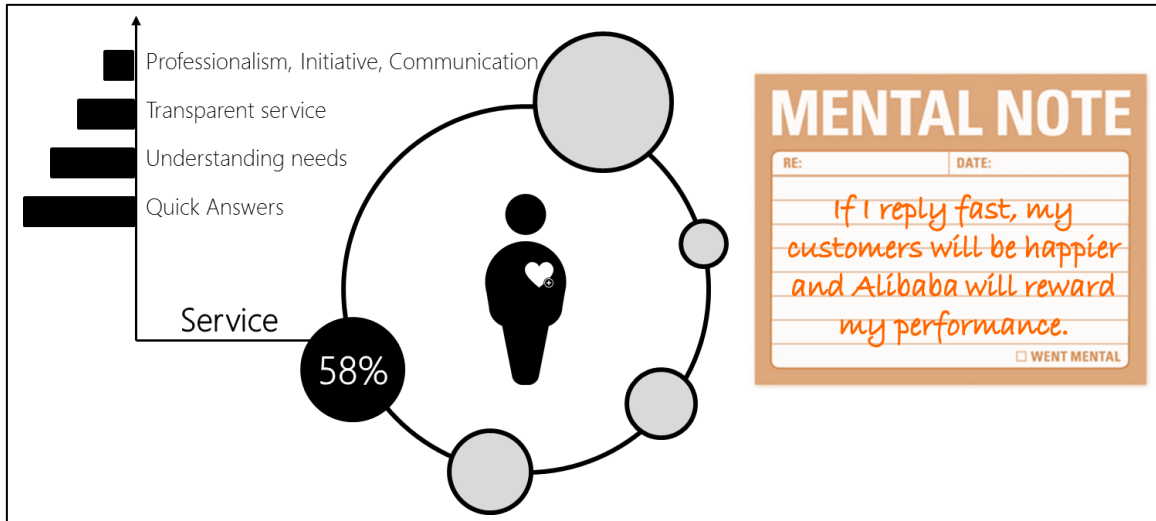
The Logistics and the Company Image

There really much to say about the need of a good logistics department or carrier agency who help us to deliver the product to the customer, quickly, safely and saving costs, but is out of the scope of this paper.

The next chapter describes in detail the key factors about designing your online store, a critical issue to build the online image of your company.
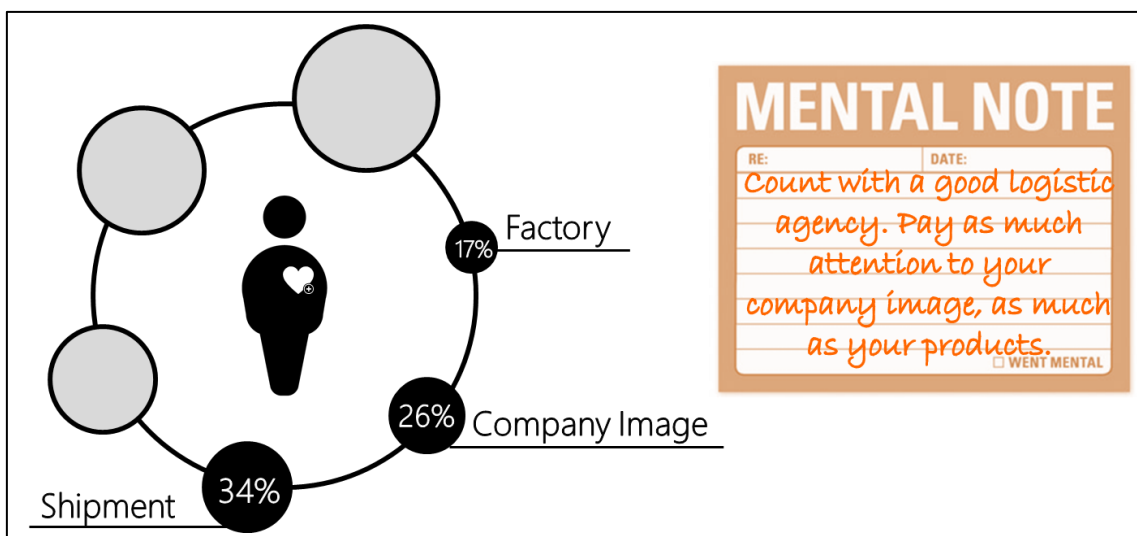
3. Setting Up your Store – Love at first sight ❤

E-Commerce is not limited to a digital payment gateway where transactions are issued. It's a whole shopping experience. In the B2B segment, it is important to know the needs of the customers to configure an appropriate website for them. Below you will find listed the elements to consider when designing and maintaining your site on Alibaba. It is always a good idea to take a look at the websites of other suppliers, even of the same sector or industry.

The Home Page

Your home page is one of the most important pages on your website to get right. Not only is it your 'shop window' it is also a high footfall area. The design tools on Alibaba are very complete and allow enough flexibility to configure the structure and functionality of the homepage. Include hot sales or recommended sections to display your main or latest products.

Clear Navigation and product categories

Browsing is a core user activity on the home page. So your site navigation menu should be simple enough to be clear to the user, yet allow them a more comprehensive choice of browsing than top-level categories alone.

On-Site Search

For B2B, on-site search is even more important. Your products are very complex with lots of detail, specifications, attributes and variants. And you may have a significant product views increase.

Slideshows

The Gold Members in Alibaba are able to include two products in its Homepage Showcase. These products have a great visibility for customers and it is important to deploy and use them correctly. In the "Track your Performance" section you will see a practical example.

Use consistent, high quality photography

A picture tells a thousand words and more so when it comes to the product page. Let's get this straight. The image on your product page is the hero of your movie. Having beautiful photography doesn't mean you need to hire a really expensive photographer, but it does mean a time investment in capturing the right photos of your various products or services to help people to look through your offerings and buy.

SEO (Search Engine Optimization)

I really think I need to write a paper exclusively discussing about the SEO in Alibaba. Next time. You have to think that Alibaba is not only a huge e-Commerce platform, is also an engine for indexing and search, that helps customers to find what they are looking for. In order to help the buyers to find your product, it is important to take care of the **name you assign to it,** at the time of publishing, because that will impact the indexing engine and therefore, in the number of visitors you will receive.
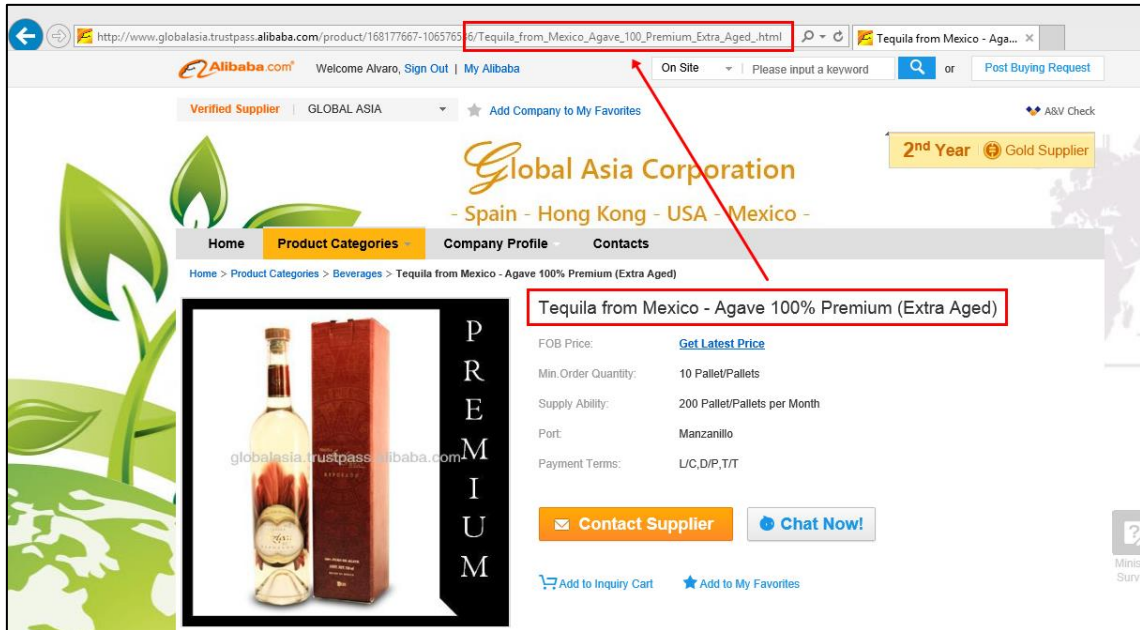
Visible Contact Information

Posting contact information in visible places can go a long way in establishing credibility and providing a pleasant shopping experience. Customers will have problems and questions during the buying process and being there for them is a huge usability plus.

Reserve your own company URL

The Gold Members in Alibaba are able to reserve their own URL name. It is extraordinary important for the store SEO. For example, in our case we changed our initial URL http://es1043486173.trustpass.alibaba.com for this one: http://globalasia.trustpass.alibaba.com . Take a look on "Company & Website" > "Change My Website Address".

Regular Audit your own site

It is important that you eventually visit your own website as a customer does, from different devices if possible. Check whether the images are properly displayed and the definition is good and if the page takes a long time to load.

4. Beyond the Screen – Is your company following you?

The things we do online have an impact on our business. And sometimes the company must adapt itself to become more competitive online. The company must be prepared for international business before jumping overseas.

Delegating into the right people

We´ve created a new role inside the company, the **eCommerce Manager**, reporting directly to the Group Sales Manager. This resource is a full time employee dedicated to attending the Alibaba site and the TradeManager tool. It's also in charge of the reporting and the coordination of the marketing agency which is producing the banners, brochures and other online resources.

It's important to note that is a position with a high responsibility, because is the online face of the company and in charge to cause an **extraordinary first impression** to the customers.

We thought that it would be a good idea to share in this paper all the details of the position, which was used at the recruitment stage and actually deployed. Even if you want to do it without hiring a dedicated person, this information will be useful to know the tasks you have to perform and the basic knowledge.

Responsibilities:

- Leadership for Group eCommerce, including practices in product presence, demand generation and analytics utilized to improve the sales of the Group.

- Work closely with cross functional teams, including sales and channel teams to identify eCommerce opportunities.

- Follow identified best-practices and processes to improve product presence on eCommerce websites. This includes actively consulting and supporting the business team as they execute on account negotiations, SKU presence improvements, product detail page improvements, images, videos and rich content and other requisite best-practices to reach eCommerce sales goals.

- Work closely with the marketing agency to identify best practices and processes to manage data and assets for eCommerce programs.

- Partner with the business unit teams to define objectives in eCommerce, including product content, product positioning, website advertising and demand generation programs, channel strategy and competitive response.

Basic Qualifications of the candidate:

- Bachelor's degree or higher from an accredited university.

- Minimum of three (3) or more years of eCommerce experience.

- Minimum of five (5) or more years combined experience in key account management, sales planning, account development, marketing and/or business development.

- Understanding of consumer/shopper experience as it relates to online shopping and as it contrasts with brick-and-mortar shopping.

- Ability to drive strategy and change while implementing, analyzing and reporting on numerous concurrent eCommerce projects.

- Superior analytical skills and experience applying data to make decisions. Record of making decisions and implementing change.

- Project management experience with demonstrated ability to prioritize work independently and manage multiple tasks.

- Fluent English and Spanish, both written and spoken.

Delivering the information to the decision makers

As a part of our online strategy we also decided to set-up some tools and practices:

- Create a Cloud-Based folder, accessible for everyone and from everywhere, where all the staff can share ideas and experiences; it's an open forum to discuss and propose alternative ways to bring our customers new products and to learn about our own mistakes and success. The information contained in that folder is the raw material of this paper.

- Providing the key people with mobile devices.

- Integrate the e-Commerce with all back-office technologies, specially the ERP and the CRM.

- We use customer segmentation to offer customer-specific promotions and incentives as a way to drive volume, increase conversion rates, boost average order value, reward loyalty, and even clear out inventory.

- Maintain real-time inventory levels and pricing accuracy to ensure our business is always on top of shipping, order fulfillment, and accounting. Inventory control tactics prevent customers from inadvertently making orders that cannot be fulfilled, and provide suppliers with insight into exactly what's going on at their warehouses and fulfillment centers.

- Weekly reviews of performance and business track of Alibaba. The Ecommerce Manager prepares and sends a report to the board of directors the last Friday of the month. Deciding the new products to include and to take offline. Deciding the products to display in the showcase depending the market trends.

5. Tracking your Perfomance

It's important to know if all the work your company is doing in Alibaba worth for something. For sure you always can track the sales performance, but it's important to know **from where** the sales are coming: An unexpected sales boost in a region? More inquiries from a specific product? Visitors from a country you never export before?...

Is better if you can answer those questions if your boss asks!

Alibaba website essentially penalizes one thing: the **inactivity**. So no matter how good your products are, if you are not attending your place or your customers. That's because we insist on having **dedicated people** taking care of the Alibaba site.

Your trade performance depends on two main factors: how quick you answer the received messages via Alibaba site and Trademanager chat. Take a look on "Company & Website" > "Trade Performance":

One of the most powerful resources you will find in the Alibaba dashboard is the **Data Visualization tool**. The primary goal of DV is to *communicate information clearly and efficiently to users via the information graphics selected, such as tables and charts. Effective visualization helps users in analyzing and reasoning about data and evidence. It makes complex data more accessible, understandable and usable* [Wikipedia. 2014].

If you want to start analyzing, click on "**Biz Trends**":
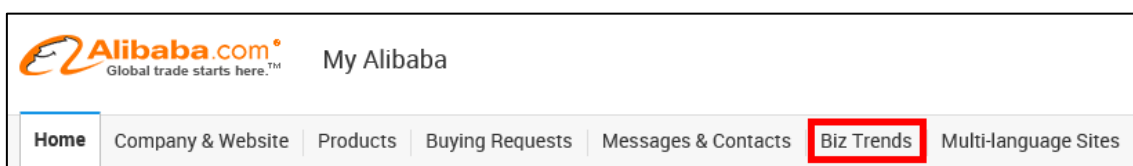
Biz Trends will provide a better understand buyers' behavior, maximize your return-on –investment and get valuable feedback on your performance and operation. So your first step should be the "**Advisor Overview**", a great summary of your overall performance and the basic tips to improve your ratios:
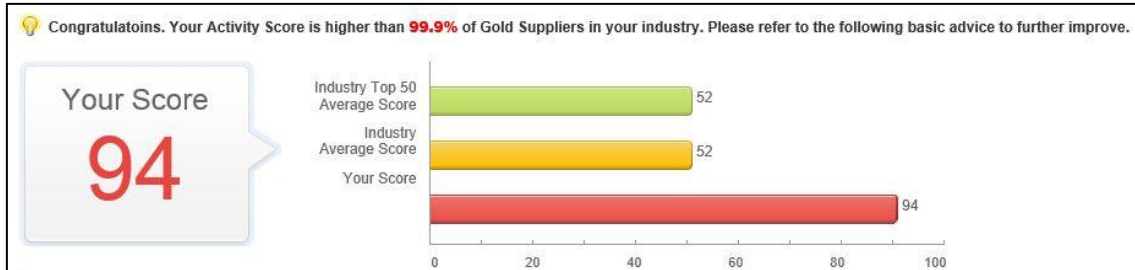
One of the better things of the information displayed here, is that you are **able to compare** your company´s performance with the industry and top suppliers performance, so you can actually know how is your company positioned in the market.

A deeper insight of your website performance; click on "Biz Trends" > "My Performance" > "My Minisite":

Useful tips I use to recommend:

- Check your performance once a week.

- Display your response rate.

- Reply **every single email** within 48 hours.

- Install TradeManger both in your PC and Smartphone and try to **answer immediately** (within 1 hour) to the messages received in TradeManager.

- Don´t forget to check the "Credibility Record".

- Use the "Hot Keywords" to identify how you can better reach your customers.

- Try hard to meet the criteria of the "**Quotation Express**" and gain access to the "Golden Bridge" to your customers.

- Post someday a RFQ (Request for quotation) in Alibaba for a better understanding of how your responses usually look like. We have nicknamed this as "**E.B.Y.O.C**.": Experience to Be Your Own Customer.

Below an important graph. Take a look of the evolution of the total views, of a product displayed on the **Showcase**:
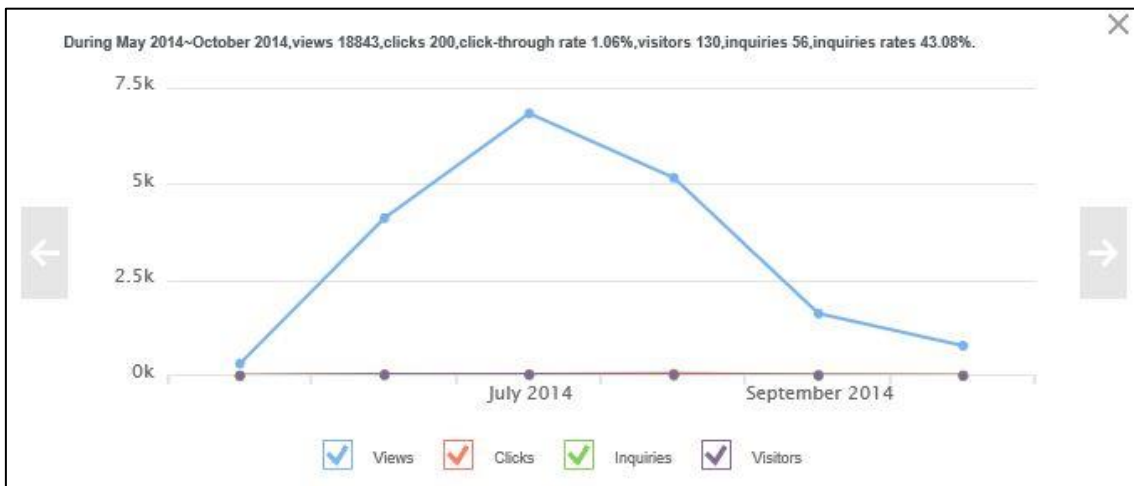
In July we decided to remove the product and substitute it for another. The visibility of a product in the showcase is extraordinary: from 6500 views to barely 500, in just 3 months! See how important is to take correct decision based on the appropriate analysis.

One of the things I use to recommend is the **A/B Testing**. A/B testing is the process of testing two different versions of the same web page to see which features are the most appealing to your web visitors. And works really well.

6. Security Matters

This summer we had a very serious problem. It was a nightmare. A person contacts me asking, like many others, by one of our products.

The truth is that I was not cautious enough. I sent an email with full details of the company and my contact, and never got a reply from the buyer.

A week later my phone rang. Rang every 5 minutes. I was getting calls from suppliers around the world:

> "*Hey! Thanks for contacting us and you interest in our ladies lingerie.*" - Someone said.

> "*Whaaaat????*" - I Said.

> "*Well, that´s what you told us in your email, Mr. Mambuto*".

After two hours receiving calls, one of the suppliers, fortunately another Gold Member in Alibaba, sent me the email he received. It was exactly the same I received weeks before, but in that email the phone number of Mr Mambuto, was mine!!!

The spammer happily decided to send thousands of emails using my phone on the signature.

That caused a significant harm in my day-a-day and for the business. For one month I stopped to answer phone calls from unknown numbers, probably from honest suppliers trying to do business, but misled by the spammer.

The 99% of people doing business in Alibaba are reliable people, but what can we do with the other 1%? Here some tips:

- Change your account password and the password of the email associated to your account monthly.

- NEVER introduce your email information in unknown websites, even if the buyer said the purchase order is waiting for you after log-in.

- NEVER open compressed files containing .exe archives.

- Report Spam and suspicious emails directly from the Inbox.

- Report non-acceptable behaviors to the Alibaba´s Customer Service.

- Remember Sign-Out every time you're not using the Site.

- Register your phone for get validation codes when log-in.

Confirm with the customer in the first contact the following information:
· Company Name
· Company Address
· Contact Information
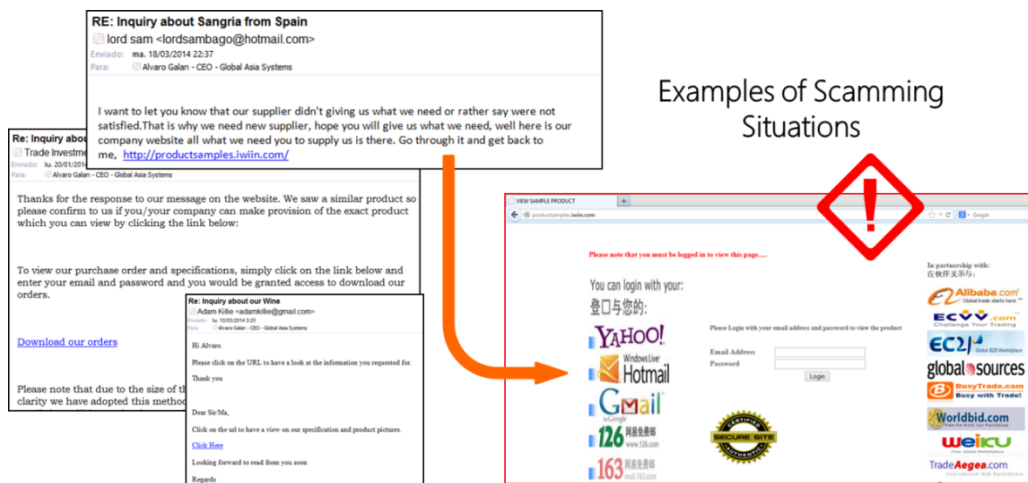· Name and Position of the Person in Charge

A serious buyer won´t have any problem to give that information. If you still thinking the information provided is not enough, you can conduct a deeper **Due Diligence** process.

- 5 Steps of preliminary due diligence:
    o Business License
    o Company Chop
    o Mandatory Certificates/ Licenses
    o Financial Status
    o Company operations
- Personal visit and keep continuous contact.
- Do not rush!
- Ideally have a trusted person in the spot.
- Local professional advice.

The Delinquent´s Glossary

- Scamming: A confidence trick (synonyms include confidence scheme, scam and stratagem) is an attempt to defraud a person or group after first gaining their confidence, used in the classical sense of trust. Confidence tricks exploit characteristics of the human psyche such as dishonesty, honesty, vanity, compassion, credulity, irresponsibility, naïveté and greed. [Wikipedia. 2014].
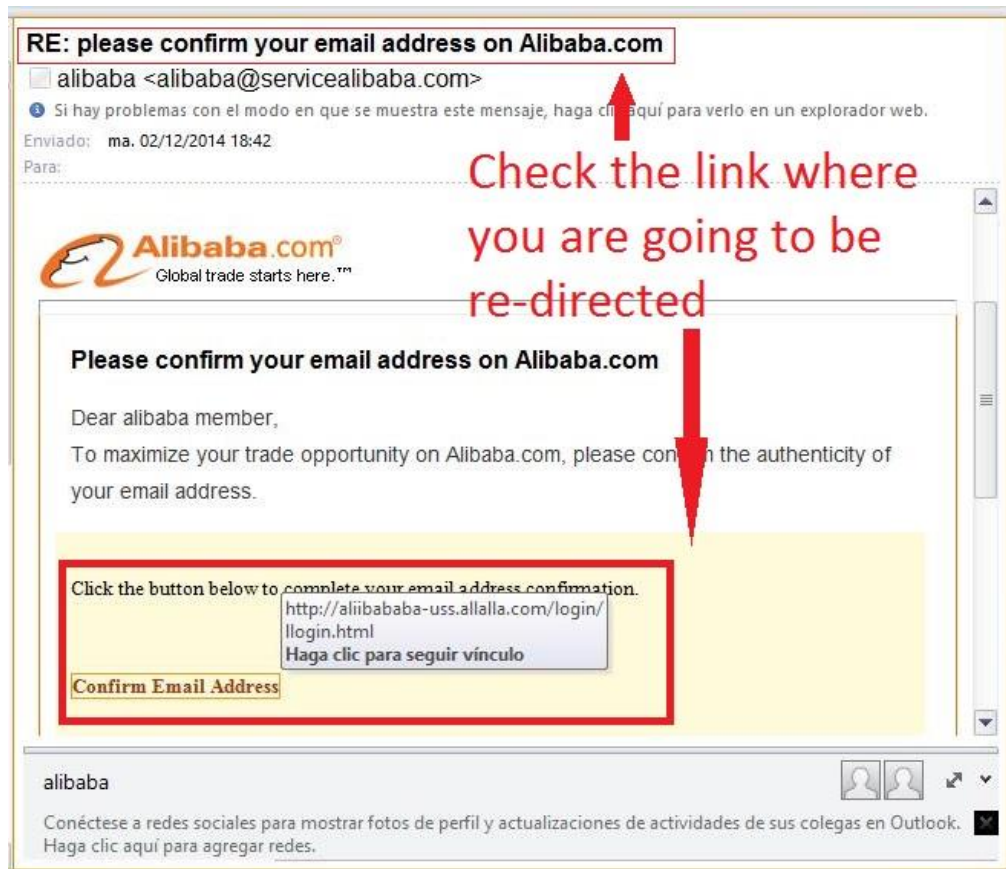
    Below some of the situations you will probably face sooner or later:

Examples of Scamming Situations

- Spoofing: In the context of network security, a spoofing attack is a situation in which one person or program successfully masquerades as another by falsifying data and thereby gaining an illegitimate advantage. [Wikipedia. 2014]. For example, receiving emails on behalf of Alibaba which are actually sent by spammers.

  They are working hard to make you believe that they are acting on behalf of Alibaba´s account members as you can see below:

Thanks!