

# What Entrepreneurs Don't Know About Surviving in Consumer Goods

Todd Kelly · General Manager, Canada | 1440 Foods

Founder, Accel Growth · Professor, Seneca Polytechnic

*This worksheet pairs with Todd Kelly's Lesson on VettedCV. Watch the 3-minute video first, then work through each section honestly. The value is in the honesty, not the answers you wish you could give.*

## SECTION 01

### The Reality Check

Before you pitch a retailer, raise money, or scale production, answer these three questions. If you can't answer them clearly in one sentence each, you're not ready.

**What problem does your product solve that no other product on the shelf solves today?**

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**Who is your specific customer — not "everyone who eats" — and why would they switch from what they're currently buying?**

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**If your product disappeared from the shelf tomorrow, would anyone notice? Be honest.**

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## SECTION 02

### The Value Proposition Test

Todd's rule: if you can't explain why your product deserves shelf space in 30 seconds, the buyer won't give you 30 minutes. Write your value proposition below — then read it out loud. If it sounds like every other

pitch, rewrite it.

**My product is:**

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**It's different from what's already on the shelf because:**

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**The retailer should care because (their margins, their category, their customer):**

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**Now cut it in half. Say it in two sentences:**

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### SECTION 03

## Retail Readiness Checklist

Before you walk into a meeting with a retail buyer, you need every one of these. Check the ones you actually have today. Be honest about the gaps.

- Product is shelf-stable, properly packaged, and compliant with Canadian labelling regulations
- You have a landed cost and a retail price that gives the retailer acceptable margin
- You can fulfill a purchase order — production capacity, supply chain, and logistics are in place
- You have a trade spend and promotional plan (not just "we'll do social media")
- You have proof of consumer demand — sales data from independents, farmers markets, DTC, or another channel
- You have liability insurance and any required food safety certifications
- You can answer "what happens if this doesn't sell" — slotting fees, delistings, unsold inventory
- You know who the category manager is and what their current priorities are for the planogram

**Count your checks.** *If you have fewer than 6, you're not ready for a major retailer. Start with independents and build your proof there.*

### SECTION 04

## Brand Awareness Audit

Todd's insight: founders obsess over product and underinvest in brand awareness. A great product nobody knows about loses to an average product everybody recognizes. Score yourself honestly.

**Can a stranger in your target market name your brand unprompted?**

- Yes
- No
- I don't know (which means no)

**If someone sees your product on a shelf, do they already know what it is before reading the label?**

- Yes
- No

**Do you have a consistent visual identity across packaging, social, website, and trade materials?**

- Yes
- Partially
- No

**Are you investing at least 15–20% of revenue in building awareness (not just performance ads)?**

- Yes
- No
- I don't have a marketing budget yet

**Name three specific things you're doing right now to build brand awareness that aren't paid social ads:**

1.

2.

3.

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*If you struggled with that last one, your brand awareness strategy needs work before your retail strategy does.*

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## SECTION 05

### The Humility Audit

Todd's hardest lesson: knowing when you need help and being willing to ask for it. Most founders wait too long.

**What part of your business are you least qualified to run?**

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**Have you brought in outside help for that area — or are you still trying to do it yourself?**

- I have help
- I'm still doing it myself

**If still doing it yourself — why?**

- Can't afford help yet
- Don't know who to hire
- Don't trust anyone else to do it
- Haven't admitted I need help until right now

**What's the one hire or advisor that would change your trajectory most in the next 12 months?**

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**What's actually stopping you from making that move?**

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## SECTION 06

### Your 90-Day Action Plan

Based on what you've worked through above, write down the three most important things you need to do in the next 90 days. Not the things you want to do. The things that will determine whether you survive.

**Priority 1:**

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*What's the first step this week?*

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**Priority 2:**

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*What's the first step this week?*

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### Priority 3:

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*What's the first step this week?*

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#### **About Todd Kelly**

Todd Kelly is the General Manager of 1440 Foods Canada, founder of Accel Growth advisory, and a Professor at Seneca Polytechnic. His career spans leadership roles at Unilever, Coors, Righteous Gelato, and Edgepath Talent Solutions — building brands across craft and scaled consumer goods businesses.

Watch Todd's full profile and Lesson at [vettedcv.com/todd-kelly](https://vettedcv.com/todd-kelly)