THE ATELIER SESSIONS

Outsourcing Production

Scaling Beyond Your Own Hands

A Companion Whitepaper to the JDMIS Growth Lab

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Contents

How to Use This Whitepaper 1

The Core Thesis: Buy the Repeatable, Keep the Judgement 2

PART ONE · THE DECISION 3

Chapter 1 · Make or Buy, Step by Step 3

Chapter 2 · The Step Map: Nine Buyable Steps 3

Chapter 3 · The Production Ladder: Seven Rungs 4

Chapter 4 · Four Ways to Buy the Making 5

PART TWO · START SMALL — THE LOCAL LANE 7

Chapter 5 · Rung 1: The Room 7

Chapter 6 · Rung 2: The Singapore Jobbing Trade 7

Chapter 7 · CAD: The Control Point 8

Chapter 8 · The Brief: A Spec a Stranger Can Follow 8

Chapter 9 · Three Sample Gates 9

PART THREE · GOING ABROAD 10

Chapter 10 · Where Things Are Made 10

Chapter 11 · The China Engine: Shuibei and Panyu 10

Chapter 12 · The OEM Run: Anatomy of an Overseas Order 11

Chapter 13 · MOQ, Tooling and Unit Prices 11

Chapter 14 · The Fair Calendar and the Delegation 11

Chapter 15 · The Shenzhen Rung: The Full Visit 12

Chapter 16 · Case Files: Three Who Did It 13

PART FOUR · KEEPING CONTROL 14

Chapter 17 · The Quality System 14

Chapter 18 · Photo Gates and Hired Eyes 14

Chapter 19 · Automated Setting: The Machine Is Real 15

Chapter 20 · Finishing and Plating: Microns, Named 15

PART FIVE · PROTECTING THE BUSINESS 17

Chapter 21 · IP: Register Before You Share 17

Chapter 22 · When It Went Wrong: Case Files 17

Chapter 23 · The Nonsense Playbook: Delays, Silence, Substitutions 18

Chapter 24 · Payments and Fraud 19

Chapter 25 · Freight, Incoterms and the Singapore Side 19

Chapter 26 · The Economics, Worked 20

PART SIX · THE OPERATING RHYTHM 21

Chapter 27 · The Cadence and the Supplier Ledger 21

Chapter 28 · AI at the Outsourcing Table 21

Chapter 29 · Live Mechanisms: Tonight's Moves 22

APPENDIX · TEMPLATES 23

A. The Production One-Pager (fill-in) 24

B. The Tech Pack (one page per style) 25

C. Factory & Workshop Vetting Scorecard (score 1–5 each) 26

D. The Festival & Closure Calendar 2026–27 (print this) 27

E. The Factory Question Bank 28

F. Local & Regional Directory (start here) 29

References & Further Reading 30

A Final Word from the Atelier 32

"You cannot make more hours. You can rent them — and keep the judgement."

How to Use This Whitepaper

This document is the field guide companion to the Atelier Sessions talk on outsourcing production. It is written for one person, reading at their own bench, who may be any of the following:

- A new graduate whose orders are growing and whose hands are the ceiling
- A part-time maker paying yourself S$20 an hour to do work a workshop charges S$85 a piece for
- A growing brand whose best-selling line deserves a factory but whose designs must stay theirs
- An established business buying repeat volume abroad — and tired of delays, drift and surprises
- A student mapping where manufacturing sits in the MK100 product and place decisions

Each chapter follows the same three beats as the talk:

◆ ① WHAT AM I BUYING?

> *— The step, written as numbers*
>
> *② What does control cost? — Your hours, freight, GST and working capital*
>
> *③ What if it goes wrong? — Rejects, delays, copies — who pays, decided in advance*

At the end of each part you will find a Decision Compass. The paper closes with ready-to-use templates: a production one-pager, a tech pack, a factory vetting scorecard, the festival calendar and the factory question bank — plus the sources behind every number.

◆ ⚠ A NOTE ON ACCURACY: FIGURES WERE VERIFIED

> *⚠ A note on accuracy: Figures were verified against operator pages, official documentation, trade press and corroborated sources during early October 2026, and are marked Verified (official/primary or corroborated), Reported (vendor, community or single-source) or Typical (industry benchmark ranges). Machine-performance figures are vendor-stated. Nothing here is legal advice; for deals with real money at stake, have a Singapore lawyer — and for China contracts, a China-side one — read the paper before you sign it.*

The Core Thesis: Buy the Repeatable, Keep the Judgement

MK100 puts the problem plainly: workshops in Myanmar or Bangladesh "produce intricate designs similar to yours for just cents, without your overheads" — and the course's remedy is to add value rather than compete with the mass-produced price. This paper adds the other half of that sentence: those hands are for rent, deliberately, on your terms.

A piece of jewellery is a chain of steps — design, CAD, printing, casting, setting, finishing, plating, assembly, stamping, packaging — and each step is separately buyable. The rule that decides which ones you buy:

◆ IF A STEP IS REPEATABLE AND CAN BE WRITTEN AS A

> *If a step is repeatable and can be written as a spec, you can buy it. If it needs your judgement, keep it.*

Outsourcing never removes cost. It moves cost — from your hours to briefing, quality control, freight and working capital. Three case files set the scale of what a well-run version looks like:

- By Invite Only (Singapore): designed in Singapore, "crafted in Hong Kong SAR by skilled craftsmen with over 30 years of experience" — a local brand running an offshore bench at accessible prices, since 2015. (Brand site — Reported)
- Mejuri (Canada): built on a three-generation manufacturing family and small certified workshops (Toronto, Seoul), with RJC- and Kimberley-backed suppliers. (Fashionista, Feb 2019 — Reported)
- Pandora (Denmark): began 1982–87 importing Thai-made jewellery, then built its own Thai plant in 1989 — still its sole manufacturing base, 13,200 of 26,000+ staff, with a Vietnam site announced 2023. Outsourcing taught them what to own. (Pandora group history — Verified)

And the timing note that opens the talk: this session falls inside China's National Day Golden Week (1–7 October 2026 — Verified), with the mainland's plants shut — Shenzhen alone counts 30,000+ jewellery businesses (JNA, 2020 — Verified fetch). The factory floor you are learning to rent is, this week, on holiday. Calendars matter; Part Five is about little else.

This paper's argument in one line: outsourcing buys other people's hours and machines so yours move up the value chain — and the work is the brief, the gates and the paperwork.

PART ONE · THE DECISION

Chapter 1 · Make or Buy, Step by Step

The make-or-buy question is asked about steps, never whole pieces. Run one step through two questions:

1. Is it repeatable? Do you do it the same way every time — casting a CAD model, rhodium-plating a finished piece, stringing a pearl strand?
2. Can it be written as a spec? Weights, dimensions, tolerances, finish references — numbers a stranger could follow.

Two yeses → the step is buyable. A no on either → keep it: design judgement, client measurements, the final quality pass, and the story you sell are not spec-able, and outsourced judgement is just someone else's taste with your name on it.

The hidden invoice. Every bought step adds control work you did not have at the bench: writing the brief, checking the counter-sample, chasing photos, clearing freight, paying GST. Chapter 26 prices this properly; the short version is that your effective hourly rate, not the unit price, is the scoreboard.

Chapter 2 · The Step Map: Nine Buyable Steps

#	Step	What happens	Market rate (tags)	Control you keep
1	Design & CAD	Idea → manufacturable file	Drafting US$50–150 simple / 150–350 cluster / 350–800+ complex (Reported)	The design; the native file
2	3D print	File → castable resin/wax	US$5–20/pattern at bureaus (Verified vendor)	The CAD source
3	Casting	Model → metal, lost wax	Quoted as metal weight + labour; wastage 10–15% in OEM formulas (Reported)	Weight in/out records

#	Step	What happens	Market rate (tags)	Control you keep
4	Stone setting	Seats cut, stones set	Hand US$15–30/stone (US bench) (Reported); machine ~US$ 0.068/stone (vendor-cited)	Stone sourcing & grading
5	Finishing	Polish, texture	Hand premium; mass finishing pennies/piece (Typical)	The approved finish sample
6	Plating	Colour layer	Specified by micron — Chapter 20	The micron number
7	Assembly	Chains, clasps, posts	The classic cottage step	Final QC pass
8	Stamping	Purity / maker marks	Included in OEM; accuracy liability is yours	Assay records
9	Packaging	Box, card, anti-tarnish	Local: MK100's supplier list; volume: Yiwu/ Shenzhen (Typical)	The unboxing moment

Two properties of the map matter more than the rates. First, CAD is the control point: every downstream step follows the file, so whoever holds the file controls the product. Buy the drafting, keep the file. Second, the steps are mix-and-match: most growing brands buy four or five steps and keep the rest — there is no rule that says outsourcing ends at owning nothing.

Chapter 3 · The Production Ladder: Seven Rungs

The venue ladder (session 7) and the collab ladder (session 8) had a logic: each rung is a proof you buy, in cash and data, for the next. Production runs on the same machine.

Rung	Lane	What it is	Typical first size	What it proves
0	DIY bench	You make everything	—	Your hands are the ceiling

Rung	Lane	What it is	Typical first size	What it proves
1	Piecework	One job to one trained hand — CAD, setting, finishing — via the room, CJS, Calibre Match (preview)	S$30–500/job	Delegation works on one step
2	Local workshops	Singapore jobbing shops take whole steps, repeatedly	S$300–3,000	A repeat local partner
3	Offshore bench	SG design + QC, overseas making (the By Invite Only shape)	50–300 pcs	Volume at spec
4	Fairs & delegations	HKTDC twin shows on the JDMIS mission; OEM halls and matching	MOQ runs (50–300/style)	You can source a factory
5	The Shenzhen visit	Shuibei markets + Panyu factory belt, in person, association doors	Factory-direct	You can audit a factory
6	Dedicated production	Exclusive tooling, contract lines	Seasonal volume	Manufacturing as moat

The rule: each rung buys capacity, and the proof you bank there — delivery records, signed samples, assay results — is the ticket to the next. Skipping rungs is allowed only with someone else's money. The reverse direction is the Pandora story: rung 6 is where an outsourcer becomes an owner once volume justifies it.

Chapter 4 · Four Ways to Buy the Making

Model	Plain English	You control	Watch
OEM (original equipment manufacturer)	Your design, their hands — the factory works to your tech pack. Jewellery's word for contract manufacturing.	Everything specifiable: design, materials, finish, gates	Briefing discipline + QC; nobody else catches a bad run
ODM (original design manufacturer)	Their catalogue design, your brand — pick from samples, customise plating/stones, order.	Choice, customisation, price	No exclusivity unless paid for; their bestseller ships to others
White label	Same design, many brands — the factory's stock line with your logo.	Price and timing only	Zero differentiation; a marketing contest

Model	Plain English	You control	Watch
Piecework (CMT-style)	One operation on your goods — set stones in castings you supply. Metal stays yours.	Full	Per-job admin; metal reconciliation

(Definitions per standard contract-manufacturing convention — Verified.) Rungs 1–2 are mostly piecework; rungs 3–5 are OEM; ODM is the fair-catalogue shortcut for a fast line. The choice is per-product, not per-brand: one collection can be OEM silver + ODM packaging + in-house bespoke.

One neighbour question, settled quickly: outsourcing is not hiring. An employee buys you hours you direct; a supplier sells you steps you spec. Payroll makes sense when one step needs your supervision every day — until then, buy per job and keep the flexibility. (The Collaborations paper's delegation chapter prices the employment route.)

Decision Compass 1 — Which rung am I on?

◆ COUNT THE LAST 30 DAYS: MAKING HOURS VS ORDERS

Hours full, orders queue → rung 1 now — buy one step from the room.

One line repeats → rungs 2–3 — a workshop, then an offshore bench.

Volume beyond local capacity → rungs 4–5 — the delegation, then Shenzhen.

Hours free, no queue → rung 0 — the bottleneck is demand, not making (see the SG Sales Venues paper).

Move: exactly one rung above where you stand, one step of one piece. Two rungs at once buys two sets of mistakes.

PART TWO · START SMALL — THE LOCAL LANE

Chapter 5 · Rung 1: The Room

Your first delegation is a person, not a factory.

- CJS members. The Creative Jewellery Studio — the JDMIS-supported graduate co-operative, a registered precious-stones-and-metals dealer — is also a bench network: members take overflow setting, finishing and repair work. The collective's shelf at DORS sells while you produce.
- Classmates. A CAD specialist, a setter, a polisher — trained on the same standards you were, one job at a time, your QC. The Atelier room is the warmest shortlist you will get this year.
- Calibre Match (match.jdmis.com — coming soon; preview only). JDMIS's talent portal: graduates publish competence cards (role, specialisation, skills checklists, residency status), employers swipe the same way; both sides signal interest before anyone writes a message. The gig board is free to post, with budget bands, deadlines and a visible interest count. Preview counts at 3 Oct 2026: 7+ employers, 41+ graduates, 15 matches, 4 open gigs — staging data; the site has not launched. Sign-in is a magic link, 30 seconds. The gig shapes already on the preview board — "Fix my wedding ring" (S$100–300), "Photo my jewellery" (under S$500), a 4-day SIJE sales stint — are exactly the piecework grammar rung 1 runs on.

The papering for rung 1, carried over from the Collaborations paper because it applies unchanged: a written IP assignment for any CAD or design work (Singapore's default is that the maker of commissioned work owns the copyright unless the contract says otherwise — IPOS, Verified), notional value and usage rights for swaps, and the delivery record — photo, invoice, one-line testimonial, a number — banked in your proof folder.

Chapter 6 · Rung 2: The Singapore Jobbing Trade

Singapore has no public B2B casting-only house — serious volume casting is a Bangkok or China conversation — but it has a working jobbing trade, concentrated around Lucky Plaza and Far East Plaza:

Workshop	What they take	Indicative price
Sunny Jewellery (Lucky Plaza #02-09)	Laser chain welding (15–20 min); resizing (~2h–1 day); bespoke via 3D model → wax cast → set	Resize ~S$60; bespoke from S$300 + stones
Meiya Jewellery (Lucky Plaza #B1-77)	Repairs, restringing, gold & rhodium plating; 2–7 days, rush 1–2h	Repairs from S$15; plating from S$20
GSJ Jewellery (Far East Plaza #02-28)	Resize, reset, polish — 30+ years	S$20–100, ~3-day wait

Workshop	What they take	Indicative price
La Ronde (Lucky Plaza #03-63)	Repairs, refurbishment, IGI certification routing	From S$30

(Harper's Bazaar SG, 24 Nov 2025; meiyajewellery.com — Reported.) Treat the table as a floor, not a ceiling: prices move with metal and complexity, and the trade runs on relationships — the shop that resized your first ring straight is the shop that will take your casting overflow next season.

Vetting, straight from MK100's outsourcing module (09.01): look for reliable ratings; try to contact previous clients by email. Add two references and one trial job, and the screen is complete. The course wrote it for hiring designers; it works on workshops unchanged.

Chapter 7 · CAD: The Control Point

Everything downstream follows the file. That makes CAD both the most outsourcable step and the one where control matters most.

- Rates (Reported, service guides): US$50–150 simple band / 150–350 cluster or multi-stone / 350–800+ high complexity; 3–7 day turnaround; Asia rates sit under Western ones.
- Formats: .3dm (Rhino — the design source), .STL/.OBJ (what printers eat), STEP (machine interchange). Buy the .3dm, not only the print file — without the native file you own a printout, not a design.
- Delivery discipline: watermarked renders for quotes; native files only after deposit; staged delivery (screens, then file) on complex jobs.
- The legal default: commissioned CAD belongs to the maker unless assigned in writing (IPOS — Verified). One sentence fixes it: all designs, files and output produced under this engagement belong to [you].
- AI renders are not CAD. Generative images do not cast. The deliverable you pay for is a manufacturable file with wall thicknesses, seat geometry and shrinkage compensation — the things a printer and a caster can act on.

Chapter 8 · The Brief: A Spec a Stranger Can Follow

Your brief will be read by someone who has never met you, often in their second language. Numbers, not adjectives. The one-page version (full template in Appendix B):

Block	Contents
Identification	Style number, metal, stones, target weight, revision date
Geometry	3-view renders, overall dimensions ±0.1 mm, wall minimums
Stones	mm sizes + calibre codes, cut, clarity/colour floor, treatment rules, melee source
Finish	Reference sample ("golden sample") named and attached; polish sequence

Block	Contents
Plating	Metal, micron thickness, coverage
Tolerances	Casting ±3–5%; ring size ±¼; stone seat fit; stamp placement
Packing	Polybag + anti-tarnish strip; box SKU; inner card
Acceptance	AQL levels (Chapter 17); defect list with photos; reject/rework procedure
Dates	Sample due; production start/end; EXW date; shipping mode

A brief like this does double duty: it prices the job accurately at RFQ stage (no "I thought you meant…"), and it becomes the acceptance standard when the goods arrive.

Chapter 9 · Three Sample Gates

1. Golden sample — your approved master: finish, weight, feel. The standard the order is judged against.
2. Counter-sample — the supplier's copy of your master. Both sides sign; each keeps one. Production is compared to the counter-sample before shipment (sourcing practice — qualityinspection.org, Reported).
3. First article — piece #1 of the actual run, inspected one by one before the rest are made. Catches tooling drift while correction is still cheap.

Sample economics (silver OEM, Reported): mould US$30–100 per design, frequently refunded once ~200 pieces of the SKU are ordered; pre-production samples 1–3 pieces at +20–50% or a refundable US$50–150. The sample is part of the price of the order, not a fee on top of it.

Decision Compass 2 — Which step leaves first?

◆ SCAN YOUR LAST TEN PIECES: WHERE DID THE HOURS

Repetitive + spec-able (cast, plate, polish) → buy those first.

Design backlog → buy the drafting, keep the design (.3dm stays yours).

Valuable stones → setting stays with you until a setter has three clean deliveries.

Client-facing moments → keep measurement, final pass, hand-over.

The 30-day marker: one step, one piece, outsourced and priced — bring the numbers.

PART THREE · GOING ABROAD

Chapter 10 · Where Things Are Made

MK100's candid country notes (Sourcing session, Chapter 16) extended to production:

Origin	The production reality
China	The volume engine — Shenzhen and Guangzhou OEM at every price point. Sharp prices; expect re-negotiation on every order and keep your price ledger (MK100).
Thailand	Silver and coloured-stone manufacture with a strong OEM culture; regional casting houses run 5–10 day leads (Verified vendor). Songkran (13–15 Apr) pauses the lane.
India	Jaipur silver and gem-set work at cottage scale. Independent guides corroborate MK100: quality "can be exceptional — and highly inconsistent, even within the same factory over different production runs"; lead times 60–110 days; add a 15–20% buffer on any quoted date; pre-shipment inspection on the first 2–3 orders (Epic Sourcing, 2026 — Verified).
Sri Lanka	A gem trade with a small bench industry; the April New Year (13–14) closes workshops about a week (Verified); recent economic shocks still echo in reliability.
Bali	Handmade silver, MOQ-friendly, beautiful — and clock-unreliable (Sourcing note stands).
Hong Kong	Not mainly a factory: the meeting point — offices, fairs, brokers. The plant behind a HK letterhead is usually in Guangdong. Contract accordingly (jurisdiction, language).
Italy	Vicenza/Arezzo machine chains and high finishing; expensive and proud of it. Buy there when failure costs more than price (MK100).

The lesson is portfolio, not prejudice: price reliability alongside product. The cheapest quote with 20% un-saleable goods is the expensive one.

Chapter 11 · The China Engine: Shuibei and Panyu

- Shenzhen hosts 30,000+ jewellery business units; 8,900 sit in Shuibei (Luohu district); all 14 publicly listed Chinese jewellery companies keep offices there (JNA/JewelleryNetAsia, 23 Sep 2020 — Verified fetch; figures 2020-dated). Sourcing-trade claims put Shuibei at ~60% of China's gold-jewellery trade and ~70% of platinum/K-gold, with labour at US$1.45–7.15/gram by complexity (JingSourcing — Reported, no official source).
- Panyu (Guangzhou) processes ≈60% of China's jewellery exports — destinations led by the EU, Hong Kong, US, Singapore and the UK; roughly 70% of Hong Kong's jewellery entrepôt trade; clusters at Shawan, Shatou, Shiqiao, Donghuan and Shiji; Chow Tai Fook,

Chow Sang Sang, Luk Fook and TSL run production bases there (JNA, 2020 — Verified). One city pair, two jobs: Shuibei prices it (materials, matching, metal at Shanghai-Gold-Exchange-linked rates); Panyu makes it (your OEM run).

Chapter 12 · The OEM Run: Anatomy of an Overseas Order

1. RFQ + tech pack — quote off drawings and weights, to three suppliers, never one.
2. Sample + counter-sample — mould US$30–100; both sides sign the master.
3. 30% deposit — order confirmed; dates written into the PO.
4. Production + photo gates — mid-run photos of random pieces against the counter-sample.
5. Pre-shipment inspection — yours or third-party, to the AQL in the PO (Chapter 17).
6. 70% balance — against inspection evidence; then it ships.
7. Land + GST + incoming QC — 9% GST on CIF; inspect 100% on first orders.

The spine of the sequence: payment follows evidence — sample photos, mid-run photos, inspection report — never the calendar. Every failure case in Part Five starts where this sequence was skipped.

Chapter 13 · MOQ, Tooling and Unit Prices

Benchmark	Number (tag)
Mould / tooling per design	US$30–100, often refunded at ~200 pcs (Reported)
MOQ — custom silver	30–50/style (20–100 heavy pieces) (Reported)
MOQ — stock styles	from 10 pcs (Reported)
FOB silver band 2–4 g	US$2.50–5.00 (vendor-stated)
FOB CZ-set ring	US$4.50–9.00 (vendor-stated)
FOB moissanite ring	US$8–18 (vendor-stated)
FOB earrings / bracelet	US$2–6 / 10–28 (vendor-stated)

The formula behind every quote: (metal weight × spot + 10–15% wastage) + labour + stones + plating, × factory margin (Reported) — and retail generally needs 3–5× landed cost, which is the Pricing session's floor logic applied to a purchase order instead of a ring.

First-order maths: 50 rings × US$6 + S$120 freight + 9% GST ≈ S$550. Treat it as tuition — it buys a supplier relationship and real landed costs, the numbers your next 500-piece order is priced from.

Chapter 14 · The Fair Calendar and the Delegation

Fair	What it is for production	When
HKTDC twin shows (Diamond, Gem & Pearl + Jewellery Show, HK)	Finished jewellery + OEM halls, buyers' services, business matching — the delegation's destination	2–8 Mar 2027 (2026 ran 2–8 Mar)
JGW Hong Kong (September, Informa)	The world's largest jewellery fair: materials, equipment, finished goods; OEM core	22–26 Sep annually
Shenzhen September fairs (GAC + Shenzhen association; CWJF)	Factory-belt exhibitors — Panyu and Shenzhen OEM makers at home	Sep (CWJF 2026: 24–26 Sep)
Canton Fair (Guangzhou, Phase 2)	General trade fair; jewellery & accessories within Phase 2 — useful around factory visits	Apr & Oct phases

The JDMIS × HKTDC trade delegation (jdmis.edu.sg/events/2601hktdc — Verified): the 2026 mission ran 2–8 March and closed with 35 delegates under the JDMIS banner. Perks: VIP Dragon Lounge, 60-minute expert guided tour, business matching (personalised supplier and partner introductions — read: OEM meetings arranged before you land), and financial support of HKD 2,000 travel reimbursement or HKD 2,500 hotel sponsorship. Who can join: students, alumni, industry partners and individual designers under the mission banner. Registrations of interest for the 2027 twin shows follow the January-deadline pattern — watch jdmis.edu.sg/events and the graduate bulletin.

The Sourcing session sent the delegation for materials. The second job now: walk the OEM halls with your tech pack and let the matching service book the factories Panyu sends to Hong Kong.

Chapter 15 · The Shenzhen Rung: The Full Visit

The top rung most Atelier businesses will physically reach, assembled in four moves:

1. The Shuibei materials walk — price metal at Shanghai-Gold-Exchange-linked rates, stones by the parcel, findings by the kilo. Bring your price ledger: everything is comparable to everything.
2. The Panyu factory floor — the audit walk: production lines, QC bench, sample room, who runs the setting machines (Chapter 19). The fair booth is the shop window; this is the shop.
3. Association doors — China's trade associations are real infrastructure: the national Gems & Jewellery Trade Association of China (GAC), Beijing, 2,000+ corporate members, co-organiser of the September Shenzhen fair (HKTDC supplier directory — Verified); provincial bodies such as the Gems & Jewelry Trade Association of Jiangsu (chartered 2017 — Verified) extend the network; and JDMIS's own partner list includes TAO, Shenzhen, plus the Hong Kong jewellery manufacturers' association (jdmis.edu.sg partnerships, fetched 3 Oct 2026 — Verified). Association introductions skip the portal fog — the same slow-channel logic as the Sourcing session's trade commissions.
4. Timing the week — wrap the visit around the September Shenzhen fairs or Canton Fair Phase 2: factories Monday–Wednesday, fairs after.

What factory-direct really means: going direct skips the broker — and the broker's quality control. You inherit both jobs. Appendix E is the question bank; Chapter 24's assay rule is non-negotiable on first batches.

Chapter 16 · Case Files: Three Who Did It

- By Invite Only — the local proof. Singapore label, founded 2015: designed in Singapore, crafted in Hong Kong — a rung-3 brand (local design and QC, offshore bench) holding accessible price points in local department-store retail. (Brand site — Reported.)
- Mejuri — the network proof. The founder's family had three generations in jewellery manufacturing; production runs through small workshops in Toronto and Seoul with RJC- and Kimberley-certified suppliers. Lesson one: a small certified network beats one big anonymous factory. Lesson two (Chapter 24): scale attracts copying claims — David Yurman sued Mejuri in 2021. (Fashionista, 2019 — Reported; JCK — Verified.)
- Pandora — the ownership proof. Importer (1982–87) → own Thai plant (1989) → sole manufacturing country, 13,200 of 26,000+ staff, third site in Vietnam announced 2023. Outsourcing taught them what to own; the cost base is what makes their price points possible at all. (Pandora group history — Verified.)

None began with a factory. A trusted bench, papers on the chain of custody, volume that justified each next step.

Decision Compass 3 — Local or abroad for this order?

◆ **UNDER S$1,000 OR A 2-WEEK CLOCK → STAY LOCAL**

> *Line repeats, 50+/style, 6-week clock → go offshore (rungs 3–4): sample first, deposit against dates, inspection before balance.*
>
> *One-off bespoke → never offshore: the approval loop costs more than the making; the client bought your hands.*
>
> *Peak season incoming → buffer or stay local: Christmas needs the PO by mid-September; CNY eats February.*
>
> *Test: same piece quoted both ways — landed cost and your control hours (Chapter 26).*

PART FOUR · KEEPING CONTROL

Chapter 17 · The Quality System

Quality you no longer touch is still your name. The system has three parts:

① The gates (Chapter 9, reused at every rung): golden sample → counter-sample → first article. The sentence that belongs in every PO: production shall be compared to the counter-sample before shipment.

② The defect list, written before production. Your PO names them, with photos: porosity (casting pits), stone spin, prong gap, plating bleed, solder marks, size drift, hallmarks off-position. A defect with a photo is a reject; a defect without a name is an argument.

③ AQL — the maths that defends a rejection. AQL (acceptable quality limit) is the worst defect share you will tolerate in a batch, on average, under the ANSI/ASQ Z1.4 sampling standard (QIMA explainer — Verified). You inspect a random sample, not the lot:

A 200-piece order, general inspection level II	
Sample size	32 pieces, chosen at random
Critical defects (fake metal, cracked stone, sharp point)	AQL 0 — accept none
Major defects (stone spin, prong gap, plating bleed)	AQL 2.5 — accept ≤2, reject at 3
Minor defects (micro-scratches, box colour off)	AQL 4.0 — accept ≤3, reject at 4

One line on the PO — "pre-shipment inspection per ANSI/ASQ Z1.4, level II, AQL 2.5 major / 4.0 minor" — and a rejected batch is arithmetic instead of a negotiation.

Why the system pays: the 1-10-100 rule (quality-management heuristic — Verified as published): a fault caught at the sample costs S$1, in production S$10, after shipping S$100 — returns, reviews, reputation. MK100's version is the same asymmetry in words: a bad experience is retold ten times more often than a good one.

Chapter 18 · Photo Gates and Hired Eyes

- The photo gates: sample photos (the counter-sample, all angles) → mid-run photos (10 random pieces against the sample) → pre-ship photos (packed goods, box marks, counts). The payment rule that enforces them: no photo, no payment — each release of money lands after its photos do.
- Third-party inspection (China, per man-day): V-Trust US$268; QIMA US$300–380 (consumer goods); Intertek/SGS/Bureau Veritas US$600–1,200 (Reported, 2026 pricing guides). Book before the balance is due, not after the ship date. India guides recommend inspection on the first 2–3 orders from any new supplier (Epic Sourcing — Verified), audits for orders above £5,000–10,000.

- Incoming QC at your bench: rungs 1–3 — inspect 100% of every delivery; rung 4+ — sample per AQL, and keep one untouched sealed box per batch as evidence.

Chapter 19 · Automated Setting: The Machine Is Real

The dominant "automatic setting" is wax setting: 5-axis machines place calibré stones into the wax model, and the stones are cast in place. Round stones only, typically 0.9–3 mm.

The machine lane	Figures (vendor-stated)
SuperbMelt SPB-5DZ1000 (Shenzhen)	6,000–10,000 stones/hour; ±0.02 mm repeatability; ~1.5M stones/yr vs 90–120k for a hand setter
Semsons X4 Pro Plus (Mumbai)	up to 12,000 stones/hour, double-station
Songnaintech (Guangzhou)	"automatic diamond setting robot" lines; case studies claim 50% cycle cuts
Entry machines	from ~US$1,200–1,300
Market price per machine-set stone	~US$0.068 — against US$15–30 per hand-set stone at Western benches

Machine-set buys: micron-uniform micro-pavé regularity across hundreds of pieces; unit cost that makes dense pavé affordable; lead time (a 50-stone layout in minutes). It costs: round calibré only; breakage liability sits with the process (hard stones survive — see below); uniform micro-prongs are harder to hand-repair than work-hardened hand prongs; program set-up pays off from mid-hundreds per style (Typical).

Cast-with-stone facts (Rio Grande instruction sheet — Verified): diamonds, rubies, sapphires, garnets and most synthetics can be cast in place; CZ is castable but prone to girdle cracking; never emerald, opal, quartz family, peridot, topaz, tourmaline, turquoise or organics. Nano-crystal was engineered for the process (Reported).

Direct metal printing (SLM/DMLS) exists at bureaus — EOS/Cooksongold PRECIOUS M 080 (Heimerle+Meule service), Sisma MYSINT — tool-less, hollow and movable one-piece forms (Verified). It pays on complexity casting cannot reach, not on unit price at volume.

Chapter 20 · Finishing and Plating: Microns, Named

Spec	Thickness	Retail meaning
Flash plating	< 0.175 µm	Colour only; one season — the "why did it fade" complaint
Everyday plate	0.5–1.0 µm	Earrings, pendants — low contact
Heavy plate	1.0–2.5 µm	Rings, bracelets — high contact; specify or receive flash

Spec	Thickness	Retail meaning
Vermeil	≥ 2.5 µm gold (≥10K) over sterling	A defined standard (US FTC 16 CFR 23), a price point, a printable claim

Rhodium typically 0.1–1.0 µm; mass finishing (tumble, centrifugal disc, magnetic pin) polishes bulk at pennies per piece, with the last 10% — edges, highlights — as hand work. A PO that says "gold plating" without microns is a hope, not a spec: flash is the factory default because it is the cheapest. Local re-plate references: S$20 (Meiya) to S$50 (Princess Gem) — the warranty you can sell against it.

Decision Compass 4 — Machine or hand for this design?

◆ **ROUND CALIBRÉ + HUNDREDS + FASHION PRICE →**

Mixed cuts, value stones, repair line → hand route (named setter; three clean deliveries before crown work).

Customer pays for hand-made → hand + document it — the maker story is the margin (MK100, adding value).

Prototype/one-off with impossible geometry → direct metal print — bureaus quote from the file.

Mixed lines are normal: machine-set silver volume + hand-set gold capsule, decided per design in the brief.

PART FIVE · PROTECTING THE BUSINESS

Chapter 21 · IP: Register Before You Share

The file-then-share ladder:

1. Singapore registered design — S$200, ~4 months (IPOS, session 8 figures). Absolute novelty: publication anywhere before filing kills it — file, then post, then ship.
2. Hague System — one international design application covering multiple states, including China since May 2022 (Verified). Member-state fees apply; one workflow protects the export markets that matter.
3. China trade mark, Class 14 — China is first-to-file: register before the first sample ships, or meet your own mark on a squatter's certificate. New Balance paid RMB 5 million to the holder of a squatted Chinese mark (Suzhou Intermediate Court, 2015 — Reported).
4. NNN agreement for factory discussions — non-disclosure, non-use, non-circumvention, in Chinese, with CIETAC or HKIAC arbitration (Harris Sliwoski/China Law Blog, 2026 — Verified). A Western NDA stops at confidentiality; NNN also bars the factory from using or bypassing you. At volume, the NNN graduates into a full manufacturing agreement (quality, delivery, tooling, IP, remedies).

Operational discipline (Typical practitioner practice): split orders so no single factory sees the whole BOM (parts list) — CAD here, casting there, setting elsewhere for crown designs; mold ownership written (the physical mold is yours, and no unauthorised production from it — or pay for exclusivity); watermark CAD and deliver in stages; stone weights shared per-piece, never as a full sheet.

Sizing the risk, in numbers: most copying is marketplace fast-follow after a design wins publicly, not your factory defecting — factory copying concentrates on proven sellers and trade-fair photography. Register, split, watermark; then worry about the right things.

Chapter 22 · When It Went Wrong: Case Files

Case	What happened	The lesson
Tiffany v. Costco (US, 2013–21)	Costco labelled 3,349 ring settings "Tiffany". A US$21M damages award (trebled profits + punitives) was vacated on appeal (2d Cir., Aug 2020) and the case settled undisclosed (Jul 2021) after eight years.	A name you don't own will find you; even winners pay in years, not dollars. (Verified)
David Yurman v. Mejuri (2021); FoundRae v. Pandora (Sept 2026)	Design-copy suits between established brands, both filed and both expensive regardless of outcome.	Copying risk runs both directions: protect yours, and never bring "inspired" files to a factory. (JCK — Verified)

Case	What happened	The lesson
Under-karat sweeps (NJ/NY/FL, 2002)	New Jersey testers found nearly two-thirds of sampled gold pieces under-karat; New York fined 18 retailers and 2 distributors; Florida charged 8 stores.	Assay (XRF) the first batches from any new supplier — purity drift is the oldest trick in the trade. (JCK — Verified)

Chapter 23 · The Nonsense Playbook: Delays, Silence, Substitutions

The calendar that eats orders (dates Verified unless noted):

Window	Event	Effect
1–7 Oct	Golden Week (China) — tonight	Mainland plants closed; order queues build behind it
6–12 Feb 2027	Chinese New Year (2027 date Reported)	2–4 week factory shutdown (Typical) — order by early December or lose February
8 Nov 2026 / 28 Oct 2027	Diwali	1–2 weeks of stoppage across North and West India
13–14 Apr	Sinhala & Tamil New Year	About a week of closure in Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu
13–15 Apr	Songkran	Thai production pauses
Feb 8–Mar 8 2027	Ramadan → Eid (~9–10 Mar)	Malaysia/Indonesia lanes and Muslim workforces slow (dates approximate by nature)
Jun–Sep	Southwest monsoon	Flood and port disruption on Indian lanes

Christmas maths: sea freight 1–2 weeks + production 4–6 weeks + a 2-week approval loop → the PO must land by mid-September. If you are reading this in October, you are planning 2027.

The management tools (the "yes-culture" counters):

- Never ask "can you do it by X?" — a cottage supplier says yes to keep the order. Ask "when do the stage-two photos arrive?" and re-confirm at every gate.
- Buffer +15–20% on any quoted lead time (Verified, India-sourcing guide); 30–50% on first orders with a new cottage lane (Typical).
- Silent-week trigger: five working days without reply activates the backup supplier. Dual-source critical lines from day one.
- Re-work matrix agreed before production: factory fault / ambiguous cause / client-changed spec — who pays what, in the PO.

- Expect un-saleables at cottage scale (MK100's standing note; corroborated) — order the extra percentage and QC on arrival, not on trust.
- Beware merchant exporters — traders posing as factories; verify registrations (GST/IEC in India, business licence in China) and take two buyer references (Verified, Epic Sourcing).

Chapter 24 · Payments and Fraud

- The standard shape: 30% deposit / 70% before shipment; letters of credit at scale with unverified suppliers (Verified, sourcing guides).
- Trade Assurance (Alibaba) (Verified): escrow — money released after you confirm receipt; on-time-shipment refund; quality claims within 30 days of delivery; "easy return" free-returns capped at US$3,000 and limited to listed countries. Know the limits before you rely on the badge.
- Never: 100% upfront to a new supplier; Western Union or personal accounts; paying an emailed "Trade Assurance" link (fake pages mirror the real ones — log in yourself) (Reported, supplier-safety guides).
- Verify the beneficiary — the account name must match the registered company; "the boss's personal account" is the classic fraud line.
- When your metal travels (piecework with client-supplied metal): a reconciliation letter — weight in, weight out, agreed loss allowance (2–5% typical; no public norm — agree it), signed per batch (Typical practice).
- Assay the first batches — XRF is the trade's non-destructive standard; the 2002 sweeps say why.
- Compliance paper your retailer will ask for — if you supply brands at Signet scale, gold and silver chains of custody come up: the Responsible Jewellery Council's Chain-of-Custody certification (voluntary, any size, third-party audited; 2024 revision tightened recycled-metal definitions — Verified) is what their sourcing teams look for; diamonds rely on Kimberley (rough) plus the World Diamond Council's System of Warranties wording on invoices. SME cost reality: membership from £1,500/US$2,450 plus audit fees (Typical total £3–10k/yr) — earn the ask before buying the certificate.

Chapter 25 · Freight, Incoterms and the Singapore Side

Term	Plain English	Risk sits
EXW	You collect at their factory door and arrange everything	With you, from their door
FOB	They clear export and load it on your vessel	Them until loaded; then you
CIF	They pay freight + insurance (110% value) — risk still passes at loading	With you from loading — the cost/risk split is the classic trap
DDP	Delivered to your door, duties paid	With them — priced in

Lanes, China→Singapore (2026 freight guides — Reported): express courier US$5–12/kg, 3–7 days; air US$1.57–4/kg; sea LCL US$15–30/m³, 7–15 days. Small orders fly; volume sails.

Singapore side (Singapore Customs/IRAS — Verified): jewellery (HS 7113) carries no customs duty; GST 9% applies on import at customs value (CIF basis). The investment-precious-metals GST exemption explicitly excludes jewellery. GST-registered importers who re-export should look at the Major Exporter Scheme, which suspends GST at import. And insure everything: MK100's base rate — a breakage or loss claim every two or three shipments — has aged well.

Chapter 26 · The Economics, Worked

One silver pendant, retail S$390, three routes (illustrative; plug in your own quotes — the Atelier Pricer takes outsourced pieces in its floor logic unchanged):

Route	Your hours	Cash cost	Effective rate
Rung 0 — make it all	8.0 h	S$38 materials	≈ S$44/h gross labour
Rung 2 — local workshop casts and sets; you finish and QC	2.5 h	S$85 making + S$38 metal	≈ S$107/h
Rung 4 — OEM run of 100 (repeat line)	~0.15 h/pc oversight	≈ S$30/pc landed + GST + freight	Hours leave the piece; capital and control replace them

What the table actually says: outsourcing moves cost from hours to control. Rung 2 more than doubles the effective rate on this piece by buying 5.5 hours at S$85; rung 4 removes your hands entirely but buys inventory, lead time and a QC job. The scoreboard for every decision is your effective S$ per hour, before vs after — the same number the Pricing session taught you to defend.

PART SIX · THE OPERATING RHYTHM

Chapter 27 · The Cadence and the Supplier Ledger

Cadence	Discipline	The quota
Weekly	Production hour: chase photos, file quotes, update the ledger	Every open order has a next evidence date
Per delivery	Incoming QC against the counter-sample	100% at rungs 1–3; AQL at 4+; one sealed box kept
Monthly	Supplier review: on-time %, reject %, communication score	Repeat the top supplier; re-brief or replace the bottom
Quarterly	Ladder review (Compass 1) + calendar check (CNY, Diwali, Golden Week)	Next rung decision on the calendar
Annually	One sourcing trip — delegation first, Shenzhen when volume justifies	Budgeted, with a target list

The supplier ledger is one sheet: supplier, step, last quote, on-time %, reject %, assay results, next date. It is the answer to "who do you use for casting?" — and the evidence base Compass 1 runs on.

Chapter 28 · AI at the Outsourcing Table

Job	How AI helps	The guardrail
Supplier research	Drafts a shortlist with categories and claimed certifications in minutes	Verify registrations yourself — AI invents factories as fluently as emails
RFQ + tech pack first draft	Turns your sketches + notes into a structured spec	The numbers are yours; a wrong tolerance casts wrong
Translation	Briefs and POs into Chinese/Tamil/Thai for the actual reader	Have a native speaker check the numbers line
Deal stress-test	"Argue the factory's side of this PO" — the Skeptic pass	The model doesn't know your market; you do
Defect triage	Sort arrival photos into your defect taxonomy	The accept/reject call is yours against the counter-sample
Renders ≠ CAD	Concepts and marketing imagery	A manufacturable file is the deliverable; verify wall thicknesses

CollabForge (jdmis.edu.sg/collabforge — live) carries most of this tonight: its one-page agreement builder takes scope, money, IP and exit; the Skeptic pass attacks a draft exactly

the way this paper does. Write your production PO there, then run the Skeptic on it before it goes out.

Chapter 29 · Live Mechanisms: Tonight's Moves

1. Walk the Calibre Match preview — match.jdmis.com (coming soon). Note how a gig is posted — budget band, deadline, interest count. That is rung 1's grammar; at launch, claim your profile first.
2. Outsource one step of one piece this month — a S$40 setting job, a S$20 plate, a CAD draft at US$50. Bring the numbers.
3. Draft your production one-pager in CollabForge — the agreement builder + the Skeptic, repurposed for a supplier deal.
4. Watch for the 2027 HKTDC mission — jdmis.edu.sg/events; January deadline pattern; business matching is the OEM front door.
5. CJS overflow bench — creativejewellerystudio.com; the co-op's makers are the warmest rung-2 lane there is.

The 30-day marker, by the next Atelier session: one step of one piece outsourced, priced, inspected. S$40 of experience beats S$4,000 of theory — the room trades proof.

APPENDIX · TEMPLATES

A. The Production One-Pager (fill-in)

◆ **PRODUCTION ORDER — [STYLE # / PROJECT NAME]**

Parties: [Your legal name / UEN] and [Supplier legal name + registration no.], dated [date].

Scope: [x] pieces of [style] per attached tech pack rev [n]. Metal: [925/14K/18K], supplied by [you/them]. Stones: [spec + source]. Finish: [reference = signed counter-sample dated [date]].

Gates: Counter-sample approval [date] → first article approval [date] → mid-run photos [date] → pre-shipment inspection [date, AQL levels]. No photo, no payment.

Money: Tooling [US$/S$, refundable at n units]. [30%] deposit on PO; [70%] against pre-shipment inspection evidence. Payment to [registered company account only].

IP: All designs, files, molds and output belong to [you]. No unauthorised production. Confidentiality per attached NNN. Registrations filed by [party] at [party]'s cost.

Rejects & rework: Defect list attached. Factory-cause rework at factory cost; ambiguous [split %]; changed-spec at client cost. Batch rejected per AQL → [rework/replace/refund] within [days].

Dates & freight: EXW/FOB [port] by [date]. Delay > [x] days → [liquidation/air-freight at factory cost/cancel].

Metal reconciliation (if client-supplied): weight in/out logged per batch; loss allowance [x%].

Signatures: _____ · _____ · Date _____

Working document for education, not legal advice. For China contracts, have a China-qualified lawyer review the Chinese-language version — which should be the governing one.

B. The Tech Pack (one page per style)

Identification (style no., metal, revision) · Geometry (3 views, dims ±0.1 mm, min walls) · Stones (mm + calibre code, cut, clarity floor, treatment rules, melee source) · Finish (golden sample reference + sequence) · Plating (metal, microns, coverage) · Tolerances (casting ±3–5%, size ±¼, seats, stamp placement) · Packing (polybag, anti-tarnish, box SKU, inner card) · Acceptance (AQL levels, defect photo list, reject procedure) · Dates (sample / PP / EXW / ship mode).

C. Factory & Workshop Vetting Scorecard (score 1–5 each)

Criterion	The question
Registrations	Business licence / GST-IEC / export registration real and current?
References	Two buyers who have run this exact step with them — contacted?
Evidence	Sample quality, photos of their production floor, QC bench?
Communication	Dates and numbers answered in writing, or only "yes, no problem"?
Calendar	Which festivals/shutdowns will hit your order window?
Accounts	Beneficiary = registered company; deposit terms within the 30/70 norm?

Below 24/30: trial order only, 100% incoming inspection, full escrow.

D. The Festival & Closure Calendar 2026–27 (print this)

Window	Event	Lane affected
1–7 Oct 2026	Golden Week	China
8 Nov 2026 · 28 Oct 2027	Diwali	India (N/W)
6–12 Feb 2027	Chinese New Year (+2–4 week shutdown)	China, HK
13–15 Apr 2027	Sinhala & Tamil New Year · Songkran	Sri Lanka · Tamil Nadu · Thailand
8 Feb–10 Mar 2027	Ramadan → Eid al-Fitr	Malaysia/Indonesia; Muslim workforces
Jun–Sep annually	Southwest monsoon	India shipping/flooding
Mid-Sep	Christmas PO deadline (sea)	All lanes

E. The Factory Question Bank

① Capability — Who runs my step, in-house or subcontracted? What machines (setting/wax-set lines)? May I see the QC bench and sample room? Last three orders nearest to my spec?

② Quality — Counter-sample procedure? AQL experience? Defect photo protocol? Assay/XRF on site? Certifications (RJC CoC if relevant — Signet-tier retailers will ask)?

③ Terms — MOQ per style? Tooling cost and refund terms? Mold ownership? Deposit/balance shape? Beneficiary account = registered company?

④ Calendar — Which holidays close your line in my window? Peak-season capacity committed to whom?

⑤ IP — Will you sign my NNN (Chinese, CIETAC)? What is your policy on client designs in your showroom/catalogue?

F. Local & Regional Directory (start here)

Singapore jobbing: Sunny Jewellery (Lucky Plaza #02-09) · Meiya (B1-77) · GSJ (Far East Plaza #02-28) · La Ronde (Lucky Plaza #03-63) — Chapter 6 rates. Packaging (MK100): Taurus (Stirling Rd) · De Icon (Arumugam Rd) · SingTai · Yew Lee · BT Plastics. Regional casting/CAD: Morris & Watson (Bangkok; branches AU/NZ) — quote from STL. Trade doors: JDMIS × HKTDC delegation (jdmis.edu.sg/events/2601hktdc) · CJS (creativejewellerystudio.com) · Calibre Match preview (match.jdmis.com, coming soon).

References & Further Reading

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- officeholidays.com (China 2026), chinesenewyear.net (2027), Drik Panchang (Diwali), Wikipedia (Sinhalese New Year, Songkran, Ramadan) — calendar dates (Verified unless noted).
- Responsible Jewellery Council — Chain-of-Custody standard (Verified); Signet Jewelers responsible-sourcing page (Reported); FTC Green Guides / EU Green Claims Directive — recycled-claims scrutiny (Verified).

- JDMIS MK100 course materials — 04.01 Product (adding value, caveat emptor, warranty, packaging suppliers); 09.01 Digital Marketing (outsourcing vetting); Kantar 2019 growth reports (context).
- Calibre Match framing per session 8 (Collaborations); CollabForge (jdmis.edu.sg/collabforge) walked live 30 Sep 2026.

A Final Word from the Atelier

Outsourcing is how a jewellery business buys what it cannot manufacture more of: hours. The ladder is climbed, not teleported — piecework, workshop, offshore bench, fair, factory floor, dedicated line — each rung buying capacity and banking the proof the next one demands. The brief does the talking where your hands cannot; the gates do the checking where your eyes cannot; the paperwork does the protecting where your presence cannot.

Rent the hands. Keep the judgement.

— Alex Zupancich · JDMIS Atelier Sessions · 7 October 2026 · The Atelier Sessions continue