

Want to open a
vintage shop?
experts share their
secrets.

[Business](#), [Marketing](#)



Tya Tiempetch

Owner, The Rabbit Hole, Miami

" The smaller your niche, the easier it is to connect with a core customer base. Plus, your social media presence will be more impactful."

Tiempetch's shop has 15, 000 Instagram followers, but not just because of her wares. She takes photography seriously, down to composition, lighting and styling. If that doesn't come naturally, she says, pay a pro for pointers. Then use your best shots everywhere -- from Twitter to Yelp.

Christophe Loiron

Owner, Los Angeles

" The entire business of antiques, clothing or otherwise, is based on who has the most knowledge and the better contacts to resell at a profit."

Hit the road. " Buying trips are rarely glamorous, but they're requisite for keeping fresh inventory," Loiron says. Go often.

Make friends. Buddy up with -- and tip! -- your local dealers and rag houses (warehouses that sort discarded clothing). They'll call you with hot finds.

Anticipate trends. " The price of a vintage item is based on hype," Loiron says. If you can predict what's next, you'll buy low, wait a bit, then sell high.

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Kathryne Wiseman

Co-owner, Lexington, KY

" Always think of the reason something vintage would be needed today. If it doesn't have a practical or modern function, why would a customer buy it?"

Start small." When my partner and I first opened, we had a booth in an antiques mall," Wiseman says. Smart move. It's cheaper than a store, provides more time to scout inventory and lets you commune with like-minded vendors. Biggest downside: the slice of your sales you owe to the mall. Negotiate your terms upfront.

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Going in...

Gems are often found at estate sales, but don't barge in. " It is a real honor to be allowed into someone's home to look through their loved one's things," Wiseman says. " Be patient and kind and pay the most you feel comfortable with. Vultures earn a reputation, but compassion will earn you respect in your field."

...and coming out

The average American donates 12 pounds of clothing per year, according to the Council for Textile Recycling. Much of that will end up at rag houses. The best is divvied up to resale and consignment shops; the rest is shipped

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overseas (so teenagers in Bolivia can enjoy someone's dad's old polyester shirt) or recycled.