

# AM I READY TO CO-PACK?

Is this business making enough money to be a full-time job for at least one of the owners?

No →

It's essential that your business is a full-time job for at least one owner. Most likely you will need multiple employees for all of the roles necessary in your company, but if you're not yet making enough money for one owner to be full-time, you likely still have a hobby business. Not to worry though, you're on the right track if you've planned this far ahead!

YES!

Are you currently selling in retail stores?

No →

You need to have your product in several retail stores before attempting to scale your production. The early accounts will help you learn valuable lessons about your product, your pricing and the industry in general. Try getting your product into a few smaller, independent, local retailers. Start selling in a few, then a few more, before long you'll be ready for a regional and/or national retailer.

YES!

Are you currently making the product in larger batches than you had when you first started? Have you begun scaling your operation?

No →

A co-packer is looking for efficiency, it's how their business model works. Many recipes need to be adjusted in order to scale the batch sizes up. If you're still making cookies with a 5qt mixer, it's time to test out that recipe in a 20qt or 60qt mixer. You don't want any surprises in quality when working with a co-packer.

YES!

Is your packaging able to be automated?

No →

A co-packer needs to be able to have as much of your process automated as possible. Many can only suit certain types of packaging (some may only bottle, jar, or dry pack). Make sure your packaging is as effortless (and fool-proof!) as possible before going to a co-packer.

YES!

Are you a micromanager?

YES →

Do you always find yourself looking over your employee's shoulder as they work? Do you ever get frustrated because they don't "do it like you do" and end up taking over the task yourself? If so, you may not be ready to co-pack. You need to be comfortable with letting someone else execute the recipe. You can't stand over the shoulder of a co-packer.

NO!

Are you ready to be "hands-off" your production? Are you comfortable with someone else executing your recipes?

No →

You won't be able to have direct oversight of your product being made when you use a co-packer. Some may let you see the operation occasionally, some won't even allow you onto the production floor. But most certainly, you will no longer be in the kitchen when your product is being made. This is hard for many food entrepreneurs who are making a cherished recipe, but this is the step you have to take if you want your food business to grow into a food company.

YES!

Do you have your business' finances in order?

No →

If you don't know your numbers, it's nearly impossible for you to know if you can afford/are ready to work with a co-packer. But don't worry! There are many local organizations that can help you with this essential step. See resource sheet for more information.

YES!

Do you have a formal, written business plan?

No →

This step can be intimidating, but it's critical. Don't worry! There are many local organizations that can help you with this essential step. See the resource sheet for more info.

YES!

Do you have a formal, written plan for the new capacity that co-packing will allow?

No →

The capacity of your business (due to the co-packer and the newly available time you'll have now that you're not in the kitchen anymore) makes this step wildly important. How else will you know what steps to take next? Don't worry! There are many local organizations that can help you with this essential step. See the resource sheet for more information.

YES!

Are you ready for your role to change from "small business owner" to "CEO"? Or do you have someone assigned for the role?

No →

This is a tricky step, but someone has to keep the engine running. When you first started your business, you wore all the hats you had to, jumping in wherever you were needed. Your role was very "reactive"- something happened, you react. A CEO knows how to manage all the over-arching operations and employees (production, sales, marketing, bookkeeping, etc.) but has to be creating and analyzing a plan for the future of the company. It's no longer reactive, it's strategic and calculated. But don't worry! There are many local organizations that can help you with this essential step. See resource sheet for more information.

YES!

**You should consider co-packing!**  
It's time to grow your business!