

# Synergy's Approved Vendor Checklist

by Catherine Bennett, Synergy Communications

Each ingredient in Synergy WorldWide's products and Nature's Sunshine Products (NSP) is supplied by one of 350 approved vendors that have endured in-depth scrutiny by NSP's quality control team. All of Synergy's raw materials are sourced through exceptional vendors who hold the highest quality standards. And what are those standards, exactly? Synergy accepts nothing less than the highest levels of purity, potency and safety.



Keep in mind that vendors who are approved aren't approved indefinitely. Each vendor must continue to prove the quality of its products and practices. From start to finish, there are hundreds of steps that NSP's quality control team will carry out to ensure its customers are receiving the best products on the market, said Lynda Hammons, NSP's Vice President of Quality Assurance.

The vendor selection process consists of four basic steps, and each step requires dozens of protocols. Here are the steps Hammons leads her team through so that NSP and Synergy can deliver power, health-enhancing products to you:

## **Questionnaire**

The questionnaire acts much like a preliminary interview. Synergy and NSP want to make certain that they know basic information about potential vendors and their products before pursuing them further. Some of this information includes the company's history, and the procedures they use to manufacture and test their products. Through the questionnaire, our teams find the genus and species of each raw material, as well as the part of the plant that was used. If the questionnaire states that the vendor uses all stem material, but Research and Development finds traces of roots and leaves, the vendor loses credibility.

Vendors must provide information about where the requested raw material was originally harvested. If vendors are located in India or China, for instance, their products undergo additional scrutiny through risk assessments. Materials produced in these locations are considered to be high risk, meaning they are more likely to not meet Synergy's and NSP's quality standards.

## Sample Request

Nothing a vendor states on their questionnaire is taken at face value. All ingredients, including ingredients from previously reliable vendors, must be tested to confirm that their ingredient meets NSP and Synergy standards, which is why vendors who make it past the questionnaire are asked to send in samples of their ingredients. The Research and Development crew, and health sciences teams, review each ingredient's safety information, and then begin testing the product for micro-contamination, heavy metal contamination and allergens. These samples' safety, purity and potency are evaluated in NSP's Quality Control Lab and Method Lab. One of the things the Research and Development team does is make sure the sample ingredient's particles are the correct size and can dissolve in liquid. NSP scientists' end goal in testing samples is to confirm whether or not the ingredient will be a successful building block in formulating the end product.



## Onsite Audit

Hammons, a certified Quality Auditor by the American Society for Quality, schedules onsite audits with vendors who pass the first two steps. During her audits, Hammons evaluates the cleanliness, record management and operation protocols of the vendors' manufacturing plants. However, Hammons still needs to do a little research before conducting the audit.



Knowing the company's history is the foundation to building a lasting business relationship. Hammons finds out how long a vendor has been in business and how many employees they have. She wants to be familiar with the company's organization and their documentation habits before beginning the audit. Every time a vendor employee cleans a piece of machinery or an area in the manufacturing facility, someone needs to document who did it and sign off that it was done properly. This is where environmental micro-monitoring comes into play. Going through sanitation protocol doesn't necessarily make a manufacturing facility clean. The procedures need to be effective. Auditors make sure to survey each area and gauge how successful a vendor's cleaning procedures are.

Proper documentation is only half of the battle, though. Hammons and her team then proceed to verify that the sanitation reflected in their documents is apparent when inspecting the facility. Often, the first thing the auditing team does when surveying the building is check for soap and hot water in the bathrooms. If soap is nowhere to be found, or water in the sink does not become hot within 15 seconds of turning the spout on, the vendor automatically fails the audit. Hammons has issued a few audit failures on these terms.

The auditing team then looks for documentation that proves the vendor's raw materials undergo proper testing. Documentation from one month ago to over one year ago is requested at random. NSP auditors then inspect the labs and equipment, evaluating their testing procedures' effectiveness.

Many companies don't consider questioning vendors about their employee training programs, Hammons said. It is safe to assume that if an employee was not trained to follow SOPs, some standard procedures may be carried out incorrectly. Vendors that enforce employee dedication to current Good Manufacturing Practices are more likely to pass NSP audits.

### **Approval and Ongoing Audits**

After reviewing all of the collected information—the initial questionnaire, the sample testing and the onsite audit—and confirming that all mandatory data was collected, Hammons can add a vendor to the approved list, but only after Research and Development, Quality Control, and Purchasing also provide their signatures of approval.

Hammons conducts 40 to 60 onsite audits each year, which includes both old and new vendors. New vendors are required to pass an onsite audit before approval and vendors who passed their first onsite audit are continually audited every two years. Historically reliable vendors are never given benefit of the doubt. They must prove that their ingredients and procedures are consistently on point.

Every batch of Synergy product is carefully formulated with the consumer in mind, and this careful formulation begins long before the manufacturing process. Synergy is centered around quality, health and its consumers, and for this reason its quality assurance teams will never cut corners. Anyone can purchase Synergy products with confidence that they contain the purest ingredients from top-quality vendors.