

INSTORE®

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE AMERICAN JEWELRY STORE OWNER

JANUARY 2022

T U R N S

20

**BEST OF
THE BEST OF
THE BEST
2002- 2021**



**20 YEARS
OF HOT
SELLERS**

T H E B I G S T O R Y

D I S R U P T E R S

THE BIGGEST CHANGES IN JEWELRY RETAILING OVER TWO DECADES

EVOLUTION OF COOL

How store design
has become client-centric

REAL DEAL RETROSPECTIVE

Kate Peterson reflects on one of
INSTORE's most popular features

THE LAST WORD IN SALES

Shane Decker's
final regular column

TOP-PERFORMING BRANDS

Best-selling brand performance
over the last 14 years

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DON'T MISS OUT ON THE FASTEST-GROWING JEWELRY CATEGORY OF 2022!

Now is the time to stay ahead of your competition and be a leader in the exploding market for lab grown gemstones and jewelry. With over 80 years of experience, Chatham is the world's leading lab grown brand. Here are five reasons why Chatham is the obvious choice to help you make the most of the lab grown business.



CHATHAM DESIGNS AND CRAFTS AWARD-WINNING DESIGNER JEWELRY

Show your customers unique jewelry featuring unusual brand-protected shapes that cannot be found in mined stones. Chatham's collections cover all your jewelry needs: color & diamond fashion, bridal, initials, zodiac and statement pieces.

OUR ONLINE REFERRALS DRIVE CONSUMER TRAFFIC

Before they step through your doors, consumers today research lab grown online and discover the Chatham brand. Our online Concierge Service connects consumers with our branded retailers, driving traffic to your doorstep.

CHATHAM EXEMPLIFIES PREMIUM QUALITY AND SUPERIOR SERVICE

With innovative designs and exceptional craftsmanship, Chatham is the finest quality lab grown brand in the industry. It's no wonder we've survived this long and we're still growing.

OUR MARKETING PROGRAMS GENERATE SALES

Since expanding into jewelry, Chatham has developed comprehensive programs to effectively drive sales. Each program is complete with supporting marketing materials, displays, sales training and more.

CHATHAM OFFERS A LIFETIME WARRANTY PROGRAM

No one in the industry guarantees colored gemstones for life, except Chatham. Our lifetime warranty creates the consumer confidence that closes sales.

Chatham

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ZEGHANI

LOVE IS IN THE DETAILS

EDITOR'S NOTE

THANK YOU FOR 20 YEARS

Our readers, our advertisers and our staff all deserve gratitude

I'm happily tongue-tied. Flabbergasted. Bursting with thought but at a loss for words.

This issue, we celebrate 20 years of INSTORE.

Can you believe it? It seems like only yesterday that we were a fledgling publication in a crowded field of giants, trying to carve out our own niche and convince advertisers that yes, our readers really did love us!

Many of you have shared with us how much INSTORE has



meant to you. Well, you mean even more to us, because without the support you've shown to us and our advertisers, we wouldn't still be here.

So, I want to take this opportunity to thank you, our readers, for sticking with us through thick and thin, for giving us your feedback, for sharing your best ideas and practices, and for putting your faith in our work. It means the absolute world to our entire team.

I also want to thank our advertisers. Many of you have trusted

our publication to promote your businesses for over a decade. Our readers notice, and we notice.

Your faith in us matters more than just dollars and cents — it feels like we're all in this together.

Lastly, I want to thank our superlative team at INSTORE. We have visionary leadership, the most conscientious editors in the business, a sales team who "gets it" and loves our industry, and a design team that's constantly pushing our visual approach to the cutting edge.

Congratulations on 20 years of INSTORE — to all of us!

TRACE SHELTON
trace@smartworkmedia.com

FIVE SMART TIPS YOU'LL FIND IN THIS ISSUE

1. Offer \$50 in store credit to any client who refers a new customer. (*Manager's To-Do, p. 22*)
2. Get an independent appraisal of your inventory. (*Manager's To-Do, p. 22*)
3. Upgrade your lighting to LED to provide better illumination of your inventory. (*Cool Evolution, p. 40*)
4. Close one extra day during the summer and fall to give staff time off to unwind. (*David Geller, p. 59*)
5. Have just one person greet each arriving customer with a smile, direct eye contact and verbiage that doesn't sound "sales-y." (*Ask INSTORE, p. 62*)



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WHAT'S HAPPENING ON OUR WEBSITE IN JANUARY 2022



Fun A PICTURE OF ME



MEMES

We went searching for fun takes on the industry and found some real gems (so to speak). Don't miss our growing collection of jewelry retail memes at instoremag.com/jewelrymemes.



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Sherry Smith

OMNICHANNEL MARKETING

Omnichannel marketing is a must for 2022. In an INSTORE Online exclusive column, Sherry Smith explains how a changing retail landscape demands that store owners challenge themselves.

Farewell Interview



SHANE DECKER

In this issue, jewelry sales trainer Shane Decker explains why he will no longer be writing his monthly column. Check out INSTORE Online for an extended Q&A as Decker bids his farewell (although he wants to be clear – he's not retiring).

Love In Full Bloom

The gift of fine jewelry is a heartwarming expression of true love when words just aren't enough.

Stuller offers new, romantic styles, customized jewelry, personalized engraving, and pretty packaging to make this Valentine's Day one your customers will never forget.



See the complete selection at
[Stuller.com/ValentinesDay2022](https://www.stuller.com/ValentinesDay2022).

Items featured, top to bottom: 87161, 72198,
124652, CH1109, CH1111, 87725



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GIVING RETAILERS THE EDGE

Congratulations to INSTORE from a 20-year advertiser

BY DICK ABBOTT

It is only by coincidence that INSTORE and The Edge are celebrating their 20th anniversaries in the same year. I launched The Edge in 2002 with the goal of offering independent jewelers a total retail solution to improve their store management. I embarked on this mission with one objective in mind: to do everything I could to make the independent jeweler more successful through our comprehensive software solution. That has continued to be The Edge's mission to this day.

When I initially sought an advertising medium to communicate our message, I knew I wanted to work with a company that held the same standards and goals as mine. INSTORE Magazine was just launching, and after a few long conversations, I was confident that I had found the right partner to communicate The Edge's message to the jewelry marketplace.

From its headline news and press releases, to the tips and how-to columns, to its feature stories, INSTORE has always put the needs and objectives of the independent jeweler front and center. Over the last two decades, as jewelry trends have come and gone and consumer shopping habits have drastically changed, it has continued to be an invaluable tool for retailers.

That has especially been illustrated through the industry

challenges we've faced, from economic recessions to the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Just as we created a series of educational webinars to help our users get the most out of The Edge in 2020, INSTORE did the same, reaching out to industry experts to craft informative articles and webinars. Both of our goals were to see retailers successfully through the crisis.

The Edge started advertising in INSTORE from its inaugural issue and has been with them in every issue since. For 20 uninterrupted years, INSTORE has been conveying our message to the independent



jeweler. This has been a major contributing factor in our success. We are the industry leader in jewelry store management solutions, and The Edge has been installed in nearly 4,000 independent jewelry locations. Without INSTORE, we would not be as effective in carrying our message and mission to retailers across the country.

With that, I say a well-deserved congratulations to INSTORE on 20 years of providing inspiring, helpful, and valuable information to the industry and independent jewelers. I hope your next 20 years are just as successful.

Dick Abbott is president of The Edge, a point-of-sale interface for retail jewelry stores.

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I was recently shocked when sourcing a natural diamond for a client. Prices have skyrocketed for natural diamonds, making the case even better for lab-made diamonds. I think lab will continue to gain market share, especially if diamonds become unaffordable. Not to mention the younger

generation's affinity for environmental friendliness, blood diamond stigma, price sensitivity, the battle between experiences and "things," the growing fear of increased crime, the fact that the younger generation would rather invest than spend, etc. The case for lab-made is only growing stronger. **Jeremy Auslander, Roxbury Jewelry, Los Angeles, CA**

I'm curious how many jewelers applied and received EIDL funding. We are still (21 months later) trying to receive what we qualified for. I've had to complete

one form nine times since August 2020. In addition to our forced closure by our state, I've also been out for months in 2021 due to COVID-19 pneumonia, having to quarantine at different times, and sadly, caring for and losing my mom due to COVID-19. My physical and financial means are exhausted. I so want this behind me so we can focus again on our growth and stability. **Jill Keith, Enchanted Jewelry, Danielson, CT**

It's always the time of year when a client says, "I've had this in my jewelry box for so many years and I'd like it repaired for ..." (you

guessed it...) "Christmas ... but I need it in two days as I'm leaving town and want to take it with me." Ahhh, retail at Christmas. Vulture central comes to mind, as one of our dear stone cutters used to say. Merry selling Christmas, everyone. **Karen Fitzpatrick, Harris Jewelers, Rio Rancho, NM**

What a unique year with the JCK Show being so late and merchandise arriving on back order. Christmas just happened so fast! Less time to think and more pressure to make inventory and advertising decisions! **Susan Eisen, Susan Eisen Fine**

Jewelry & Watches, El Paso, TX

This holiday has been wonderful. We had a record November. I have to constantly balance watch repair, jewelry repair and custom work versus selling and stocking the store. It's a lot of work with just two people, but the rewards are much more profitable. **Rick Nichols, Nassau Jewelry, Fernandina Beach, FL**

Keep it up! You are the small businessman's best friend! **J. Dennis Pe-tinezas, Watchmakers Diamonds & Jewelry, Johnstown, PA**



"The GemFind team developed our new company website, which looks awesome and more importantly has increased our business and visibility significantly. We also started using their digital marketing services and our business has really exploded since then. Our conversions went up tenfold when their team took over. To say I am happy is an understatement.

We highly recommend GemFind to everyone in the jewelry industry!"

-Nazar's & Co. Jewelers



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Digital Marketing



Web Tools



Product Data

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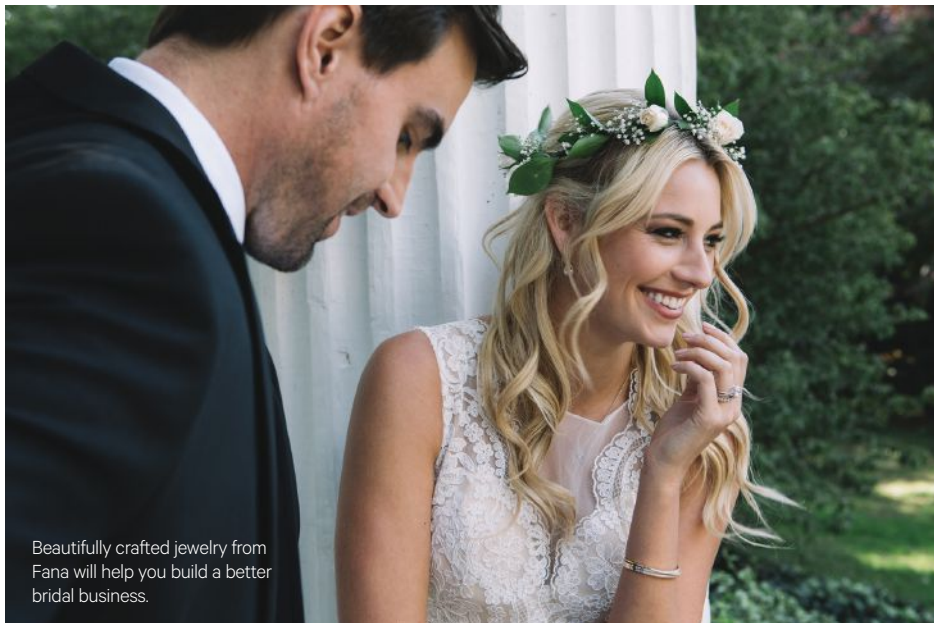


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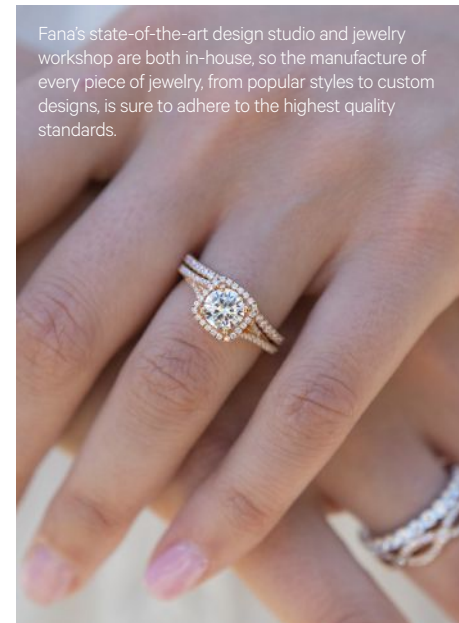


HAPPY 20TH ANNIVERSARY TO IN STORE MAGAZINE

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Beautifully crafted jewelry from Fana will help you build a better bridal business.



Fana's state-of-the-art design studio and jewelry workshop are both in-house, so the manufacture of every piece of jewelry, from popular styles to custom designs, is sure to adhere to the highest quality standards.

FIVE THINGS FANA CAN DO FOR YOUR STORE

Fana makes beautiful jewelry that will bring joy to your clients. Here are five reasons to start a conversation with Fana, delight your customers, and better serve your store.

1 Build a better bridal business. Fana is obsessed by the design process because we know how expertly crafted jewelry makes your customers feel when they wear it. We take classic designs and add subtle details and a modern edge, all perfectly finished. Let Fana's vast selection of gorgeous engagement rings and wedding jewelry help you make your clients' dreams come true.

2 Say 'yes' to custom jewelry requests. Unlike many brands, we own our state-of-the-art design studio and jewelry workshop, so we can maintain the highest quality standards at every stage of making Fana jewelry. And when it comes to custom jewelry, we promise top quality and offer complimentary CAD services – backed by graduate gemologist-level experts on our client care team – to help you translate your client's vision into beautiful reality. We use high technology to create high-touch jewelry built to last more than a lifetime.

3 Reach new customers. Fana is committed to finely tailored marketing solutions, including national advertising and a strong digital presence

that reflects our values of love, commitment and care. We support you with co-op marketing and social media assets and the option to receive luxurious point-of-sale displays for your store. And our pioneering website was designed with you and your customers in mind, with incredibly detailed photos and videos that you can share on your website.

4 Keep the promises you make. Like you, Fana understands that integrity means treating our team, vendors and clients with respect and dignity. In a world that places a premium on speed, we choose to value relationships, and we sacrifice nothing in our commitment to sustainability and social responsibility. All gems are sourced in accordance with the non-conflict-guaranteed Kimberley Process, and we constantly audit our sourcing and production to reduce our environmental footprint.

5 Love what you do. We are inspired by love, and we are grateful that every day, we help couples celebrate their unique stories through precious jewelry. Fana stands ready to be your partner in the same spirit of generos-

ity and kindness with which you serve your customers. Your happiness is our mission.



Top: Fana stackables in 14K white, yellow and rose gold with diamond and ruby accents **MSRP range:** \$1,050 – \$2,700 (in 14K) | **Bottom:** Fana semi-mount engagement rings with center diamonds of varying shapes and carat weights. **MSRPs:** \$1,600 – \$3,475 (in 14K – center stones not included)

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We're gaga for gorgeous,
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BY BECKY STONE

Whether 24K, vermeil, or somewhere in between, glittering, glimmering gold remains the ultimate in luxury. Sure, gold prices are high, but so are some customers' bank balances after a year and a half without vacations or nights on the town. Gold jewelry is a feast for the eyes and a treat for the skin, an investment that your customers will be able to enjoy for years to come.

Jewelry from the Dream Collection by Ary D'Po includes 14K yellow gold-plated brass and sterling silver earrings with black enamel pattern, \$135; and 14K yellow gold-plated brass and stainless steel pendant-necklace with black enamel pattern, \$120. Visit arydpo.com or call (818) 731-4600 for more information.

MODEL: CARLY DIAMOND
STONE. PHOTOGRAPHER:
HALDANE MORRIS

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JEWELRY PRO GEAR
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2



3



4

BUTTERY BEAUTIES

There's nothing in the world like lustrous expanses of smooth, buttery gold — you know it, and so do your customers. Warm and sunny, satisfying to stroke, and so lusciously luxurious, these pieces revel in their use of this irresistible element. Timeless, touchable, tactile, and terrific.



5



6



9



7



8

1. SANDRINE B. JEWELRY 10K yellow gold ring with black onyx. \$650, sandrine@sandrinejewelry.com, sandrinejewelry.com | **2. ANIA HAIE** 14K yellow gold-plated sterling silver ring. \$59, sales@chicpistachio.com, chicpistachio.com | **3. RETROUVAÍ** 14K yellow gold ring with Mozambique ruby. \$11,160, meaghan@forfuturereference.com, retrovai.com | **4. SOUTHERN GATES** Sterling silver earrings with palladium and 14K yellow gold Hamilton finish. \$156, (800) 845-6964, cargoholdinc.com | **5. PHILLIP GAVRIEL** 14K yellow gold bracelet. \$1,390, (800) 6220-0960, phillipgavriel.com | **6. PICCHIOTTI** 18K yellow gold bracelet with diamonds (1.70 TCW). \$22,600, (404) 239-9900, picchiottiusa.com | **7. DANA BRONFMAN** 18K yellow gold cufflinks with black onyx and diamonds (0.22 TCW). \$5,125, (650) 269-1101, danabronfman.com | **8. GWEN BARBA** 14K yellow gold earrings. \$875, studio@gwenbarba.com, gwenbarba.com | **9. FACET BARCELONA** 14K yellow gold bangle with diamonds. \$9,899, (212) 302-8200, facetbarcelona.com/usa



10



11



12



13



14

CLAVICLE COUTURE

First rings were the thing, then earrings were everywhere ... now it's the neck's turn. Head-turning décolletage décor might mean lush layers, curated charms, or spectacular solo pieces. Any one of these dangling darlings is sure to become a prized member of your customers' neckwear collection.



15



18



16



17



10. LAFONN Necklace in sterling silver bonded with platinum and gold, with simulated diamonds (0.76 TCW). \$305, (615) 557-2270, lafonn.com | **11. ARTISTRY, LTD.** 14K yellow gold necklace with diamonds (0.14 TCW). \$1,095, (888) 674-3250, artistrylimited.com | **12. ALLISON KAUFMANN** 14K yellow gold necklace with diamonds (0.18 TCW). \$1,620, (800) 800-8908, allisonkaufman.com | **13. MIDAS CHAIN** 14K yellow gold necklace with diamonds (0.05 TCW). \$701, (201) 244-1150, midaschain.com | **14. BONDEYE JEWELRY** 14K yellow gold necklace with white sapphires. \$1,550, info@bondeyeyjewelry.com, bondeyeyjewelry.com | **15. HARWELL GODFREY** 18K yellow gold pendant with tourmaline and diamonds., \$19,950, meaghan@forfuturereference.com, harwellgodfrey.com | **16. KC DESIGNS** 14K yellow gold necklace with diamonds (0.09 TCW). \$1,725, (800) 552-3790, kcdesignsnyc.com | **17. NADINE AYSOY** 18K yellow gold necklace with tourmaline. \$7,380, julia@cabinecreative.com, nadineaysoy.com | **18. ARY D'PO** 18K yellow gold over sterling silver necklace with cubic zirconia and rhodium plating. \$170, (747) 229-0880, arydpo.com

Hot Sellers *Hot products with the Brain Squad*

"**Tacori** event. The best bridal company in the business. Handcrafted in Los Angeles, California. 2-3-week delivery."
Michael Rumanoff, Rumanoff's Fine Jewelry & Design, Hamden, CT



Founder's Collection RoyalT engagement ring by Tacori in platinum with diamonds (1.10 TCW), \$12,490 (not including center diamond), tacori.com

Every type of product is currently selling. Some of our top designers this month were **Lagos, John Hardy** and **Gabriel & Co.** We also had strong sales with **Hearts On Fire**. Engagement rings have been very strong, too. Can't recall a time like this. **Tonia Ulsh, Mountz Jewelers, Camp Hill, PA**

Quality Gold stone and sterling earrings and fashion necklaces. Cape Cod bracelets from LeStage by **Marathon. Ostbye** custom bridal thanks to our new prototype displays. **Jill Keith, Enchanted Jewelry, Danielson, CT**

ArtCarved bridal, **Carla Corp.** earrings, **Rembrandt Charms**, any estate jewelry (fastest turnover due to aggressive social media posts). **Eileen Eichhorn, Eichhorn Jewelry, Decatur, IN**

Everything! Diamond engagement rings led the way, fashion was second. **Hearts On Fire, Gabriel & Co.**, and **Tacori** in bridal; and **David Yurman** and

diamond basics in fashion. **Tom Duma, Thom Duma Fine Jewelers, Warren, OH**

Bridal has been strong, especially in lab-created. Repairs have been strong, too. Probably the one area that we have seen a significant increase is lab-created diamond stud earrings. **James Sickinger, Sickinger's Jewelry, Lowell, IN**

Repairs made the most money, but the highest percentage up was batteries installed. Making mad money on just installing batteries. **Craig C. Curtis, Belfast Jewelry, Belfast, ME**

Lashbrook wedding bands and custom wedding bands. Many people postponed their weddings to fall 2021 because of COVID restrictions. **Dianna Rae High, Dianna Rae Jewelry, Lafayette, LA**

Silver and gold designer jewelry by **Lagos** and Philip Gavriel by **Royal Chain**, and diamond necklaces, of

course. **Susan Eisen, Susan Eisen Fine Jewelry & Watches, El Paso, TX**

Sylvie Collection bridal and fashion has been a very strong seller for us. Also, **Bassali** and **Shy Creation**. Shy Creation is a wonderful price point for diamond and gold jewelry, great for those \$200-\$800 purchases. **Daniela Balzano, Water Street Jewelers, Guilford, CT**

Big diamonds, especially ovals! Mid-range diamond pendants from **IDD** and **AV Diamonds**, custom from **Overnight Mountings**, silver/color from **ITALGEM** and **Michou. W.J. Smith III, Smith Jewelers, Franklin, VA**

Alamea sterling silver, **Shula NY** pendants and rings, many in-stock diamonds, and semi-mounted engagement rings with lab-grown diamonds. **Rick Nichols, Nassau Jewelry, Fernandina Beach, FL**

Self-indulgence is the underlying trend here. "After last year, I deserve it." **Steven Wardle, Forest Beach Design, Chatham, MA**

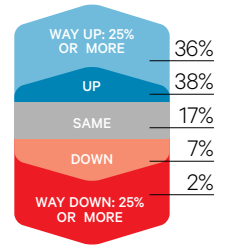
Anything **Allison-Kaufman!** Broad appeal, well crafted, a pleasure to sell it. **Karen Fitzpatrick, Harris Jewelers, Rio Rancho, NM**

Gold chains for men selling like crazy. Anything in paperclip jewelry. Can't keep this stuff in stock. **Michael Kanoff, Michael's Jewelers, Yardley, PA**

MONTHLY SALES SURVEY

HOW WERE SALES LAST MONTH COMPARED TO NOV 2020?

Total Brain Squad Responses: 170



HOT BRANDS

TOP-SELLING JEWELRY BRANDS IN NOVEMBER

Gabriel & Co. (5), **Sylvie Collection (4)**, **Allison-Kaufman (3)**, **Hearts On Fire (3)**, **Shy Creation (3)**, **Alamea (2)**, **IDD (2)**, **Lagos (2)**, **Marathon (2)**, **Ostbye (2)**, **Overnight Mountings (2)**, **Quality Gold (2)**, **Rembrandt Charms (2)**, **Stuller (2)**, **Tacori (2)**

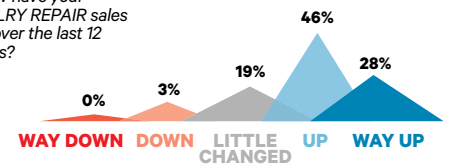
Brands mentioned by at least two of 120 Brain Squad respondents.

FIXING WHAT'S BROKEN

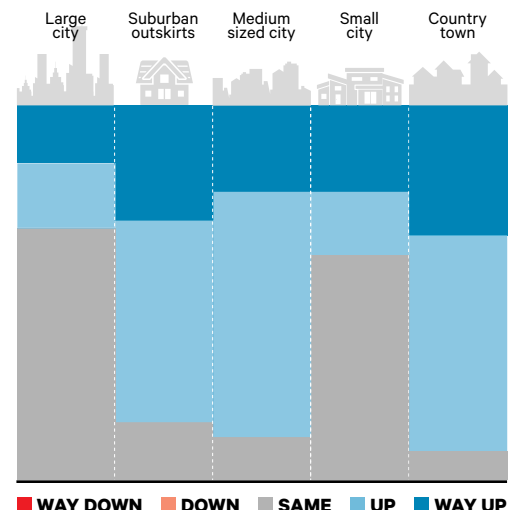
It's rare a jewelry category shows growth across every market type and in every region, but that was the case for repairs over the last 12 months. Consumers obviously spent time going through their jewelry collections while at home during the lockdown, while also evidently feeling a need to restore items that meant something deeply to them. Smaller markets posted the strongest growth, along with jewelers in the Midwest.

OVERALL MARKET

→ How have your JEWELRY REPAIR sales been over the last 12 months?



MARKET TYPE BREAKDOWN



SYLVIE

BY A WOMAN, FOR A WOMAN



Top Jewelry Brand

INSTORE BIG SURVEY | 2020 · 2021

sylviecollection.com



FEBRUARY

FEBRUARY BIG DATES

14 Here it is: the bleeding, beating raw heart of the jeweler's retail calendar — **VALENTINE'S DAY**. Whether you do something traditional (like a team-up with a florist), something good (such as participating in Wear Red Day), or your own event (how about a chocolate tasting?), seize the opportunity provided by V-Day to go after the younger crowd. They are losing interest in this key date, in part because they aren't being targeted.

2 2/2/22 ... It's **TWOFRER DAY!** There won't be another one for 100 years, so get thinking: Two bands for the price of one if they buy the engagement ring? 22% off if a customer brings a friend?

13 For **SUPER BOWL SUNDAY**, "Know the team colors and hand-pick some stackable bands for a trendy right-hand assortment," recommends Megan Crabtree of Crabtree Consulting.

15 On the **210TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF CHARLES LEWIS TIFFANY**, remember that he understood well the benefits of bold publicity, direct sourcing and the power of branding. Do you?



MANAGER'S TO-DO LIST

"Put your red jewelry into clusters for ease in pulling from the case."

Jim Doggett
DOGGETT JEWELRY, KINGSTON, NH



WEEK 1 JAN. 30-FEB. 5

STRATEGY Step outside your store to better position your sales inside. Start visiting nearby competitors throughout the year — or delegate a member of your team — to compare their customer service, sales, price points, etc. Look at the cars, stores and nearby homes in your shopping area. Is your store positioned to attract these passersby with your price points, displays and merchandise?

DISPLAYS Decorate your store and reorganize your showcases for Valentine's Day. Aim for fun, not schlocky. Scatter some cupids in your cases, a few touches of red and pink here and there. Look for Larry Johnson's tips in the INSTORE archives.

REFERRAL SYSTEM Work on a referral system. Maybe a bonus of a \$50 in-store credit to every client who refers someone.

WEEK 2 FEB. 6-12

SALES If engagement ring sales are picking up, as they typically do in Feb-

ruary, can wedding-band sales be far behind? Unfortunately, the answer too often is "no." Create an incentive to get spring wedding couples back in the store. And don't forget those attendant gifts.

SEO The notion of creating a sea of content in the form of a company blog that Google can't ignore may seem daunting, but it's actually not so hard. Start with the 100 questions customers ask on a daily basis and turn them into 100 blog posts with those questions transformed into the titles. If you write two a week, that's a whole year's worth of fresh content.

SALES A major complaint customers have about retail salespeople is a lack of follow-up. Create such a system and let your customers know you will always be there for them. Promise a lot. Deliver more.

DISPLAY Starting with your Valentine's displays, keep a record of your cases from now on. Take a photo of each case on the first of every month. With



a history of it, you'll know what Valentine's Day 2022 looked like when it comes around to doing the display in 2023.

WEEK 3 FEB. 13-19

CLIENTELING Share the love. Send Valentine's cards to your customers with a simple message: Enjoy the day!

NETWORKING Build your social reach. Look into joining the local country club or sponsoring a local Little League team.

INVENTORY Go through your unsold Valentine's stock and see if it can form the basis of a Gift Gallery on your website.

WEEK 4 FEB. 20-26

INVENTORY Begin preparations for Mother's Day and graduation season. Start researching hot sellers.

IN-STORE Winter drags on ... but you can get a jump on spring with fresh flowers in your store.

SALES Energize staff with a Saturday sales contest: Pay commissions on the spot.

GEM QUIZ

➔ "Glory days, well they'll pass you by ..." Gemological expert George F. Kunz speculated that I was the star stone on Moses' 12-gem breastplate. That, of course, was the high point for *real* rocks like me and my chalcedony brothers, when big cab rings and carved seals ruled the ancient world. My "organic" look has made something of a comeback recently, although I suspect it will be some time before March is mine again (I was once its birthstone). **WHO AM I?**



SEND ANSWERS TO:
GEMQUIZ@INSTOREMAG.COM
Guess this gem for a chance to win a "Jewelry Geek" T-shirt. (Be sure to include your full name and the name and address of your store.)

DECEMBER'S ANSWER:
Wulfenite

WINNER:
Katie York
Holliday Jewelry
Medford, OR

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STUDS PROGRAM

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-2 DIFFERENT QUALITIES

5 STONE BAND PROGRAM

-0.50 TWT - 2.50 TWT
-3 DIFFERENT QUALITIES & 6 SIZES

TENNIS BRACELETS PROGRAM

-2.00 TWT - 5.00 TWT





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Star Power



Sarah Jessica Parker in New York City shooting the *Sex and The City* reboot and *Just Like That* wearing Fry Powers turquoise and malachite beads. Photo courtesy of Shutterstock.

BOHEMIAN BEADS

FROM THE RUNWAYS TO FILM SETS, BEADS ARE BACK

“Bead it” is the theme going into 2022. From styles resembling the “make love, not war” love beads of the late ‘60s to the more elegant styles from the ‘90s that combine gold stations or diamond and colored gemstone touches, beaded necklaces create a look of bohemian chic, particularly when layered or graduated with other necklaces and pendants. Most alluring is the return of lapis, malachite and turquoise with contrasting and unexpected details of precious stones or contrasting clasps. **BY BETH BERNSTEIN**

DO YOU WANT TO SELL YOUR STORE?
DO YOU WANT TO BUY A STORE?

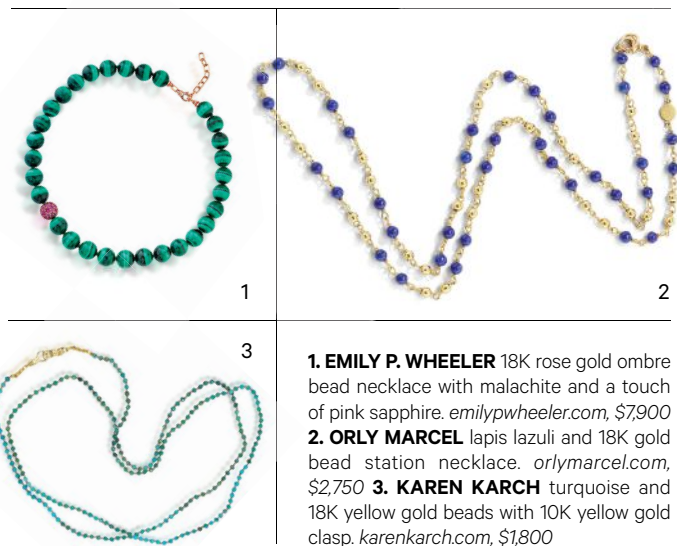
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1

2

3

1. EMILY P. WHEELER 18K rose gold ombre bead necklace with malachite and a touch of pink sapphire. emilypwheeler.com, \$7,900
2. ORLY MARCEL lapis lazuli and 18K gold bead station necklace. orlymarcel.com, \$2,750
3. KAREN KARCH turquoise and 18K yellow gold beads with 10K yellow gold clasp. karenkarch.com, \$1,800

CHRIS PLOOF DESIGNS



THE PROCESS

Every piece begins with Chris, and every item he designs passes rigorous review by our skilled artisans. As a team, we make sure the design is beautiful and will stand the test of time. Our craftspeople make each design to the high-quality standards Chris demands.

The team we have assembled at Chris Ploof Designs is comprised of the best of the best—true experts in the field of jewelry making.



THE CPD GUARANTEE

Over twenty years of experience fabricating proprietary blends of Damascus Steel and Mokume Gane have made Chris Ploof the leader of alternative metal design and material distribution. His influence is market wide. Chris Ploof not only sets the bar for alternative metal designs, he makes the bar. You are guaranteed a collection that is not only innovative, but comes from the source. CPD is as authentic as it gets.

Opening Lines *January's look at the newest jewelry*



\$5,500

CREATIVE CASTING

Pioneering jewelry brand **RIGBY LEIGH** truly thought outside the box when it came time to distinguish their brand from the rest. The Brooklyn-based designer uses specially designed hand-carved wood molds for jewelry casting. The process is very low-waste and results in jewels with a fascinating, unique texture.

18K yellow recycled Fair Trade gold ring with sapphires. rigbyleigh.com



\$1,900

SMART AND SEXY

LAGOS' Smart Caviar Collection is the first fine jewelry bracelet made specifically for the Apple Watch. Stylish but versatile, the collection's latest expansion offers beautiful rose gold styles. Finally, a way to make this cutting-edge tech device as stylish as it is useful.

18K rose gold and stainless steel watch bracelet (watch not included). lagos.com



\$500

TANTALIZING TWISTS

The Entwine Collection from British brand **KIT HEATH** is a fantastic example of why this designer jewelry line is so successful. The bold and luxurious Entwine designs are tactile, beautifully flowing pieces. Each section of the collection's hero statement chain has been individually cast and linked, making it as comfortable to wear as it is striking.

Rhodium-plated sterling silver necklace. us.kitheathretailer.com

\$420

RECYCLED AND RAVISHING

LEIA ZUMBRO JEWELRY is environmentally friendly and organically inspired; her designs look almost like something that grew rather than something that was forged, with lines and shadows that call to mind fascinating rock formations and the enthralling unevenness of old forest growth.

Sterling silver earrings with 18K yellow gold. leiazumbro.com




\$1,780

INDUSTRIAL ICON

KATE EICKELBERG's jewelry combines the organic and the industrial to create unexpected beauty. This dichotomy is perhaps best represented by her fascinating takes on the classic pearl necklace, which pairs lustrous pearls with steel ball bearings and gold elements that allow the ball bearings to spin freely in place. A gorgeous symphony of opposites.

Freshwater pearl necklace on silk with 18K and 22K yellow gold and ball bearings. kateeickelberg.com





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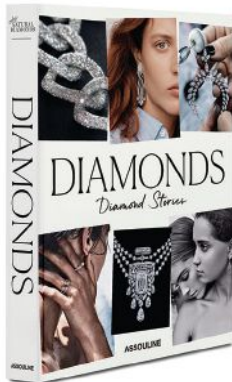
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RAVISHING READING

← **DIAMONDS**, a gorgeous new volume from Assouline, tells the story of natural diamonds' bewitching history up to the current moment with stunning images, sparkling discussion, and interviews with top designers, tastemakers, and enthusiasts. This beautiful book features a foreword by Edward Enninful and was created in partnership with the Natural Diamond Council. **\$95, assouline.com**

DARLING DISH

➔ These sweet little hand-painted dishes by **LEEFILA** are the perfect catchall to hold your jewelry safe when it's not on your body. Its lovely blue and white design goes with everything, and its slanted sides will prevent rings and things from rolling away. Keep one of these handy on your kitchen counter or by your bathroom sink, and you'll always have a comforting answer to the question, "Where did I put my jewelry?" **\$8, leefla.etsy.com**



OUTTA THIS WORLD

← We're always on the lookout for jewelry-themed décor, and this artwork by **LOU TAYLOR** is a true showstopper. Called "Ear-rings from Mars," the piece features a glamorous, stylized woman wearing elaborate earrings and surrounded by floating gems. Listed price is for giclee print; inquire for availability of originals. **\$75 and up, lou-taylor.co.uk**

CAUSE AN EFFECT

➔ Are you looking to brush up on branding? Jewelry designer, entrepreneur, podcast host, and founder of jewelry business accelerator Flourish & Thrive Academy Tracy Matthews has published *The Desired Brand Effect: Stand Out In A Saturated Market With A Timeless Jewelry Brand* to help you expand your audience and achieve more with less stress. **\$19.95 (paperback), \$9.95 (Kindle), desiredbrandeffect.com**



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▶ GemFind Digital Solutions has added a Virtual Try-On feature to its popular RingBuilder App. **GEMFIND's** RingBuilder App lets customers have complete control while building their own dream rings. Now, the Virtual Try On Feature allows clients to see how their custom creations look on their own fingers. **gemfind.com**

CUSTOM CREATIONS

▶ **VDORA CUSTOM** is a new company dedicated to bespoke custom manufacturing. Founded by industry veteran Vik Jain, Vdora's goal is to help retailers provide an elevated and personalized experience to their clients by facilitating the process of bespoke design and custom-crafted gold and platinum jewelry. **vdora.com**



DIGITAL DIAMONDS

▶ **VIRTUAL DIAMOND BOUTIQUE (VDB)**, the industry's largest virtual marketplace, has launched VDB Online Auction House, an app dedicated to B2B industry auctions. It offers industry buyers and sellers greater opportunity to connect in a secure digital environment. **vdbapp.com**

OFF THE CHAIN

▶ **ROYAL CHAIN** has launched its 2021-2022 catalog! The much-anticipated volume features a colorful new look and offers 500+ pages of goodness, including brand new collections in both gold and sterling silver, as well as pieces from the company's branded collection, Phillip Gavriel. **royalchain.com**



TIKTOK TECH

▶ **SARINE** is taking full advantage of technology with their new marketing campaign, which uses trendy video sharing app TikTok to post bite-sized snippets of diamond education. Sarine's "TechTok" campaign's videos use a light, humorous approach to make diamond-buying education easily digestible for the most online generation. **sarine.com**



TOO COMFORTABLE?

Sticking to your current inventory model just because it's just what you've always done? Memo can drive profitable sales and protect cash flow ... if done properly.

Adding memo programs to your merchandising strategy can be both freeing and profitable, but only if done properly. A responsible and profitable memo program must be beneficial to both the retailer and the manufacturer.

Keys to a successful memo program:

- 1** Establishing a true partnership and **trust** level between the retailer and the vendor. So what does that mean? The manufacturer carefully curates and supplies fast turning product with healthy margins for each program. The retailer allows the vendor to replace high turn product immediately and to replace slow turning product with merchandise that will create more sales.
- 2** The retailer's **overall** inventory remains at the proper level and is not inflated by adding the memo merchandise. The product should be targeted and not compete with other merchandise in the store.
- 3** The memo program merchandise should be supported by a **comprehensive** marketing package to help drive sales. This includes print, video, social media and anything the retailer needs to run a successful advertising campaign.

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CENTURION

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THE BIG STORY

DECADES



OF DISRUPTION

**THESE ARE THE FORCES THAT HAVE
CHANGED JEWELRY RETAILING OVER THE
LAST 20 YEARS, FOR BETTER OR WORSE**

BY TRACE SHELTON

When INSTORE launched in January 2002, keystone was still the benchmark for retail diamond margins. A shift toward stand-alone superstores in high-traffic locations was all the rage. The only social networking sites were Classmates, Six Degrees and Ryze (remember those? Me neither). Socially speaking, the measure of an engagement ring was simple: How large was the diamond?

My, how things change.

Today, most retailers are happy to get a 40 percent margin on loose diamonds. But they do much better on custom designed mountings — which works out, because today’s jewelry customer (primarily millennials) almost always wants something unique. While the physical location of a store is still important, its website is generally more critical for building traffic. And a variety of social networking sites allow consumers to communicate with and compare notes on retailers more than ever before.

Not only that, but INSTORE shipped to about 50 percent more doors. We’ve lost close to 10,000 retail jewelry stores since the early 2000s.

As part of INSTORE’s 20th anniversary coverage, we’re looking back on the forces that have most affected jewelry retailing over the last two decades. In so doing, we hope to give you some insight into how we got here, as well as some thoughts about where we’re heading as an industry.

E-COMMERCE



When e-com giants like Blue Nile and James Allen began selling jewelry direct to consumers for lower prices than traditional brick-and-mortar retailers could afford to charge, many of our readers cried foul, and some worried that the future of the independent jewelry store was under threat.

But something strange happened. Blue Nile and James Allen began opening physical locations to capitalize on the brand power they had built (while simultaneously undermining their message that brick-and-mortar retailers could not compete). At about the same time, independent retailers were figuring out how to use their websites to sell jewelry, promote their stores and build traffic. “I believe e-commerce is the biggest



BEN SMITHEE










HAROLD DUPUY

disruptive game-changer for the jewelry industry, and we haven’t even come close to seeing or feeling its full impact yet,” says Ben Smithee of The Smithee Group, a digital growth agency. “The media is appropriately priced, the data intelligence a small business has access to is incredible, and the always-on nature of e-commerce is completely scalable.”

Harold Dupuy, vice-president of strategic analysis for manufacturing group Stuller, agrees that e-commerce is the biggest disruptive force in the jewelry industry. “This sector’s growth is impressive (12-15 percent per year) over the past 15 years, the exception being the 2020 pandemic year where it grew at an increased rate of 25 percent,” says Dupuy. “The biggest problem with jewelers thinking about e-com is that many view it as ‘us versus them,’ when it’s a complementary channel *and* a consumer preference that enhances the holistic shopping experience if done properly.

“Five years ago, e-com was predicted to wipe out brick-and-mortar, but consumers have spoken and want stores... to touch and feel product, pick up and return online orders, etc. The channels now play an important role in supporting each other.”

Consultant Kate Peterson of Performance Concepts compares e-commerce with earlier 20th century phenomena like catalog shopping and television sales networks like HSN and QVC — all of them made purchasing jewelry more convenient for consumers. The retailers who are thriving now, she says, are those who embraced online technology, even if they didn’t know what they were doing at first.

2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
<p>JANUARY The first issue of INSTORE arrives in jewelry retailers’ mailboxes</p>  <p>JANUARY The oldest of the Millennial Generation turn 21.</p> 	 <p>AUGUST Skype is launched.</p>	<p>FEB Facebook is launched.</p>  <p>MAY Blue Nile raises \$76 million in its IPO.</p>  <p>JULY: Yelp is launched.</p>	<p>BRILLIANT EARTH</p> <p>AUGUST Online retailer Brilliant Earth is founded to sell ethical jewelry.</p> 	<p>DECEMBER Blue Nile announces sales of \$197 million in engagement rings and wedding bands, surpassing Tiffany & Co.</p> 

“This is the group that has grown steadily over the past decade-plus, that never missed a day during any of the shutdowns, and that, by and large, did more business per store in 2020 than in any other year in their history.”

Custom jeweler Jim Tuttle, owner of Green Lake Jewelry Works, is one such retailer. “E-commerce lets us reach outside our local market, and although available to all jewelers, it is not used well by many and has allowed newer businesses to stand up and compete with the most venerable old names,” he says. “We compete against the Blue Niles, CustomMades and 10,000 ‘Instagram jewelers’ who often use a simpler e-commerce model and seem to hope to skim only the ‘easy cream’ off the top and frequently refuse to do the ‘hard work’ of being a true custom jeweler.”

E-commerce not only provides the consumer with more choice, but it also allows the retailer to expand their offerings without investing in more inventory, says Shane O’Neill, vice-president of Fruchtmann Marketing. “For retailers without a physical store, the cost to scale up a business falls dramatically. People can build businesses out of their homes and grow into a brick-and-mortar versus the other way around,” he says.

“Many retailers see it as a pain to deal with a shopper who has found something online, but over the last decade, most have realized this is the norm,” says consultant Megan Crabtree. “We coach retailers not

“
**WE COMPETE
AGAINST THE
BLUE NILES,
CUSTOMMADES
AND INSTAGRAM
JEWELERS.”**

to run and get the G color SI2 diamond like the customer found online, but to educate the customer, build a relationship, and point out the benefits of shopping locally, such as lifetime service or upgrade policies.”

Additionally, the tools available to independent

retailers online allow them to compete on an even playing field with the e-tail giants, says Alex Fetanat, founder and president of GemFind Digital Solutions. “With things like a streamlined check-out process, order tracking, in-store pickup options, online financing, online payment installment options, fraud prevention and more, jewelers who take full advantage of e-commerce solutions specifically created for jewelry stores are the ones seeing a significant increase in sales.”

**MILLENNIAL
SHOPPERS**



Just as INSTORE’s first issue was reaching jewelry store owners in 2002, the oldest of what was then called

Generation Y (now usually referred to as “millennials”) turned 21 and began to make their presence felt in the engagement ring market. Born between 1981 and 1996, they are the first generation to have grown up totally immersed in a world of

digital technology.

“I got my start in the jewelry industry because of so many businesses’ interest in the millennial consumer,” says Smithee. “They are what drove the impact of e-commerce and social media, and arguably many of the disruptive forces in the jewelry industry.”

Wrote one respondent to INSTORE’s 2020 Big Survey: “Millennials — you know the type. Oversensitive, phone-obsessed, selfie-snapping, ‘Friends’-binge-watching, kombucha-guzzling, influencer-obsessed complainers.”

Perhaps, but those who ignored the predilections of this enormous generation of consumers did so at their own peril.

“Since they could hold a phone, they have been going to the World Wide Web,” says consultant David Geller of JewelerProfit. “You need to be there constantly. You need to walk the walk and talk the talk, just like they do.”

Today, the most successful stores are the ones that have embraced millennial shoppers and seek to meet them where they are. “We have had great success connecting with this generation because we have people just like them behind the counter,” says Rhett Outten, co-owner of Croghan’s Jewel Box in Charleston, SC. “The biggest change is the use of technology. Millennials are website and Instagram shoppers who prefer a direct message, email or a text to a phone call or a face-to-face visit. We feel that we have adapted pretty well, but there is always more to learn.”

Matthew Rosenheim, president of



RONNIE MALKA



ALEX FETANAT



RHETT OUTTEN

2007	2008	2010	2012
<p>JAN The iPhone is introduced.</p>	<p>JULY Apple introduces the App Store.</p>	<p>JANUARY Pinterest is launched.</p>	<p>JANUARY Facebook starts showing ads called “featured posts.”</p>
	<p>SEPTEMBER The first Android mobile device is launched.</p>	<p>JUNE Apple’s FaceTime app is introduced.</p>	<p>APRIL Facebook acquires Instagram.</p>
		<p>OCTOBER Instagram is launched.</p>	<p>SEPTEMBER Zoom software is launched.</p>
		<p>JANUARY Diamond Foundry, a lab-grown diamond grower, launches with \$100 million in funding, including investor Leonardo DiCaprio.</p>	<p>OCT Facebook reaches 1 billion active users.</p>

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Tiny Jewel Box in Washington, DC, believes that millennials are just another shopper that jewelry retailers have to adapt to. “Millennials have proven that certain things are very important to them: sustainability and ethical sourcing is one of them,” he says. “I’m not personally a retailer who bemoans how difficult it is to deal with millennial shoppers; I don’t feel that way. I think as they get older, they’ll start to look a little more like other generations of shoppers.”

Regardless of how they’ll look in the future, it always starts with listening to the customer, says Ronnie Malka of Malka Diamonds & Jewelry in Portland, OR. “Baby Boomers and Gen X were comfortable being placed in a box: You went into a store, you saw what you saw, and you bought it. It seems like millennials and Gen Z are focused on an experience and us creating something together, custom making it, and creating something unique,” says Malka. “It’s a cool way to do the work we do, because I’m not trying to sell something; they’re coming up with concepts along with me.”

LAB-GROWN DIAMONDS



If there’s been a topic more asked about, discussed and dissected over the last five years, we don’t know what it is. “Lab-grown diamonds are clearly the most disruptive force, from a product perspective, that I’ve seen in over four decades in the



SUSANNE SIEGEL



ELLEN FRUCHTMAN



JOHN CARTER

industry,” says Harold Dupuy of Stuller.

Of course, lab-grown diamonds have existed for even longer than that four decades: since 1953, in fact, when a Swedish electric company called Allmana Svenska Elektriska Aktiebolaget created the first batch. Gem quality lab-grown diamonds became commercially available in the late 1980s. Why, then, did it take another 30 years for lab-grown diamonds to make waves for retail jewelers? Two reasons: cost and scalability.

Lab-grown diamond growers like Diamond Foundry, founded in 2012, figured out how to make beautiful gem-quality diamonds more efficiently and on a larger scale. According to a report from the Antwerp World Diamond Centre, it cost \$4,000 per carat to produce a CVD-grown diamond in 2008. By 2018, that cost was just \$300-500.

Mined diamond producers reacted to these developments with alarm, sensing a threat to their business. Dupuy believes this was a mistake. “I think the opposing forces strategically erred by creating a ‘natural versus lab-grown’ adversarial relationship. It seems that after six years and large advertising expenses, the tone has shifted and now the natural segment is highlighting the benefits of its own product.”

Susanne Siegel, a Chicago-based jewelry designer/retailer, says that regardless of how jewelers feel about lab-grown

diamonds, consumers are increasingly asking for them. “Ultimately, it’s an individual choice for designers and retailers to make, and one that many have changed their minds on as consumer demand continues,” she says.

Despite attempts by De Beers and other mined diamond producers to influence consumers to view lab-grown diamonds only as options for fashion jewelry, many shoppers are openly accepting lab-grown diamonds as center stones in their engagement rings. According to Dupuy, more than 40 percent of jewelry retailers now sell loose lab-grown diamonds.

“Based on Indian imports into the U.S. for the trailing 12 months June 2021, over \$930 million of LGD came into the U.S. The average year-over-year imports

growth since 2019 is an amazing 90 percent increase. Estimating importer and retailer markups, this translates to approximate \$2.5 billion at retail value or close to a 15% market share of the U.S. diamond market,” says Dupuy.

With volume comes choice, says Crabtree Consulting VP Jackie

Johnson. “Not only do you have hundreds of suppliers to source lab-grown through, but also, due to the technology advancements, you have more consistent goods and a larger range of qualities to choose from,” says Johnson. “The larger range in quality has allowed retailers to expand their offering of lab-grown diamonds

“**LAB-GROWN DIAMONDS ARE THE MOST DISRUPTIVE FORCE I’VE SEEN IN OVER FOUR DECADES.**”

2013

FEB Instagram reaches 100 million active users



NOVEMBER

Instagram introduces sponsored post advertising targeting US users.

2014

NOVEMBER Consultancy Frost & Sullivan releases report claiming “mined diamonds represent more than seven times the level of impact as compared to grown diamonds.”



NOVEMBER

Amazon’s Alexa software is introduced.

2015

AUGUST 1 billion users access Facebook in a single day.



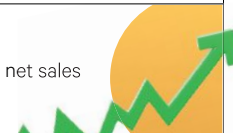
NOVEMBER

Diamond Foundry lab-grown diamonds enter the market.



DECEMBER

Blue Nile reports net sales of \$473 million.



APR The Apple Watch launches



Instagram reached 400 million monthly users in 2015, surpassing Twitter.



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and to offer up to three qualities, such as a good, better, and best option. These programs have been successful, allowing retailers to accommodate all consumer expectations.”

SOCIAL MEDIA



Although it began as a way to connect with family and friends, social media is now one of the most crucial and cost-effective ways for businesses to market to their customers.

“From a retail perspective, referral has been and is the No. 1 driver of new business. Social media allows not only consumers to share products or experiences they love, but also for retailers to reach out to the consumers en masse,” says Shane O’Neill of Fruchtmann Marketing.

John Carter of Jack Lewis Jewelers in Bloomington, IL, has been amazed by how quickly social media has displaced traditional media as the medium of choice for marketing, calling it not disruptive but “eruptive.” “If you really stop to think about what it has done, in less than 10 years, it has changed the way all companies around the globe attempt to reach the eyes and ears of the consumer. Other forms of media dominated the landscape for more than a hundred years, and nearly

overnight (in the scheme of things), those have been displaced.”

But like any new technology, social media has changed rapidly over the last two decades, sometimes reversing course entirely in terms of how businesses can engage with their followers. “Over the past decade, it has evolved from a lot of visibility of organic posts and content to virtually zero visibility unless ads were being utilized to today where quality content is king and long-form video content avenues like Instagram Reels and TikTok are taking over,” says GemFind’s Alex Fetanat.

Another aspect that social media has changed is transparency, says Kate Peterson. “Social media has taken away every corner in which to hide ‘trade secrets.’ Platforms like Google, Facebook,

Twitter, Yelp, Trip Advisor, NextDoor and others have made transparency an imperative, and have turned ‘stars’ into legitimate currency.”

Yet despite its challenges, social media has proven to be an affordable way for jewelry retailers to drive interest and engagement with

their clients. “If we would have had to rely on traditional media in 2020, we would have seen a lot of businesses completely disappear,” says Smithee.

Smithee warns that upcoming advances in social media will be even more disruptive than what we’ve seen over the past two decades. “Similar to



KATHLEEN CUTLER



SHERRY SMITH



JIM TUTTLE

e-commerce, the world of social media is still in its infancy stages, and businesses are about to see another shocking round of disruption within social media with regard to data intelligence and paid advertising,” he says. “Data intelligence will separate the haves and have-nots in the industry.”

O’Neill agrees, citing Facebook’s metamorphosis into the company called Meta and its goal to create a “metaverse” that spans the physical and virtual worlds. “Facebook — or I should say Meta — is spending billions of dollars on the next evolution of social media, called the Metaverse, and while many will dismiss it with a chuckle, it’s very real and will make the next 10 years 100 times more disruptive than the past 10.”

“**DATA INTELLIGENCE WILL SEPARATE THE HAVES AND HAVE-NOTS IN THE INDUSTRY.**”

UNIQUE AND CUSTOMIZED JEWELRY



Is the movement toward unique and customized jewelry a natural evolution of consumer preference? Does it have to do

with fundamental differences between millennials and previous generations? Or is it due to advances in technology that allow the custom process to be completed both more quickly and more affordably?

Regardless, it’s the single biggest disruptive element of jewelry retailing in decades, says Jim Tuttle of Green Lake Jewelry Works. “Although it has always

<p>2016</p> <p>JUNE Instagram reaches 500 million active users.</p> <p>DECEMBER 1,269 U.S. jewelry retailers closed this year (up from 760 in 2015).</p>	<p>2017</p> <p>JANUARY Google becomes the largest site of online reviews.</p> <p>JANUARY The youngest of the Millennial Generation turn 21.</p>	<p>JUNE Facebook reaches 2 billion active users.</p> <p>SEPTEMBER TikTok launches.</p>	<p>2018</p> <p>LIGHTBOX LABORATORY-GROWN DIAMONDS</p> <p>MAY De Beers launches Lightbox, a brand of lab-grown diamond jewelry.</p> <p>APRIL INSTORE’s lead story in this issue addressed the topic of e-tail and the opportunities available online.</p>
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Peter Reines

"There is really no way one person can cover all the bases, from the marketing to the pricing of the merchandise, to the displaying of the merchandise with the proper identification, to helping with the sale."

- Peter Reines
Reines Jewelers
Charlottesville, Virginia



WHERE CHARLOTTESVILLE GETS ENGAGED
REINES JEWELERS

"My name is Peter Reines and the name of my store is Reines Jewelers, located in Charlottesville, Virginia. I started my company in 1975 and, in the industry, we're associated with the RJO buying group.

The thing that led me to have this type of sale is I realized the best way to maximize the return on my investment over all the years was to have a liquidation going-out-of-business sale with Wilkerson. After many years of doing the due diligence to figure it out, I came to the decision that Wilkerson was the company to do this with.

Wilkerson exceeded everything that I was very nervous about, to be honest with you. There was no way one person or one company, in my opinion, could run a sale the way we have for the past ten weeks.

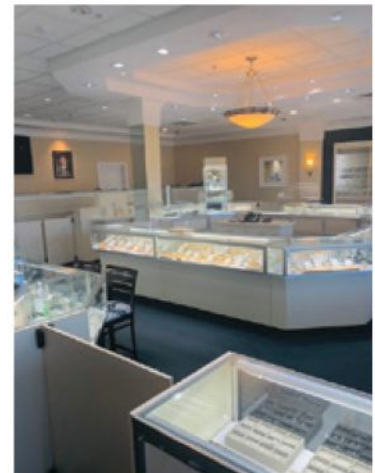
The day-to-day information I received from the on-site consultant was incredible. There is just no way a store owner could have done what was provided to me with daily and weekly reports. The projections were spot on and I can't say enough for how well it was handled.

The process for liquidating our inventory was spectacular. Being helped by the consultant to get the old stuff out, to get it into the case, and take the proper markdowns, is invaluable. A big part of the success of the sale, reaching my financial goals, I attribute to that. We have exceeded those goals!

I would recommend Wilkerson and reiterate what I've said. There is really no way one person can cover all the bases, from the marketing to the pricing of the merchandise, to the displaying of the merchandise with the proper identification, to helping with the sale.

I have been in business for a long time, and they have the whole package from soup to nuts to ensure success, unquestionably."

-Peter Reines



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been done, and it used to be the *only* way to get jewelry 100-plus years ago, the return to custom jewelry as *the* standard, and the desire to connect with something more than an expensive bauble that any other reasonably well-off person could also own, has changed many industries, jewelry for sure. I believe it has to do with an innate desire to have a story to tell about one's life. Jewelry is one of the most personal items we own, and the only thing most people will wear every day for the rest of their lives.

"We also know that no matter how expensive, a gift can be quite thoughtless, but a custom-made gift, like a wedding ring, push present, anniversary or graduation memento, requires much thought about the wearer and therefore imparts far more meaning than even a more expensive 'off the rack' item."

As meaningful as custom jewelry is to consumers, it also pays well for retailers. "While the margins on loose diamonds may not be what your parents were used to, custom margins are easily keystone or better with no inventory required. Better margins and awesome turn. What could be better?" says David Geller.

Moreover, custom jewelry by definition cannot be price-shopped. "Most custom customers are not looking for a 'deal,'" says Fruchtman. "They are driven by the design."

Rosenheim says that Tiny Jewel Box took the custom concept and used it to design a bridal collection several years ago that is now its best-selling line. "We began by using classic silhouettes with period details. It became immediately



MATTHEW ROSENHEIM



SHANE O'NEILL

successful and has grown to the point that it completely dominates our bridal business," says Rosenheim. "We own all the CAD designs, so it's all customizable. We can alter molds. It's turned into a monster."

He goes on to say that, even outside of the bridal collection, most customers want to customize even the most basic designs. "You could see four or five variations in the showcase, but they want to put their own spin on it. It's not like people want anything esoteric; they just want that feeling of being involved, having a hand in it and reflecting their own personal style."

consultant Kathleen Cutler. "As online sales became ubiquitous, customers have been faced with an overwhelming amount of noise disguised as 'choice' and are in desperate need of guidance from a trusted advisor. The past 10 years have shown an

“
**CHAT FEATURES
ALLOW INSTANT
DIALOGUE WITH
WEB VISITORS.**”

absolute requirement for old-school clienteling practices," she says. "What is old is new, and the ability to focus on creating sophisticated customer experiences will set apart the next generation of showrooms, both physically and virtually."

Part of that experience will be making the selection and purchase process ever simpler, says Fetanat. "This shift has brought not only another way to book appointments with clients but accommodate people wherever they are. Furthermore, offering a chat feature on websites allows instant dialogue and is more likely to turn a website visitor into a purchasing customer."

Dupuy says that the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the use of such technology, both by retailers and by consumers. "The one-to-one communication provides electronic intimacy and is a tremendous time-save for the consumer, even if just for 'pre-shopping' and not actual purchase. This channel will become more important as customization continues its growth trajectory. Smart jewelers can engage the consumer at all steps of a customized piece of jewelry, providing a sense of ownership of design in the experience."





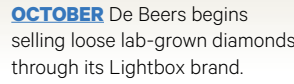
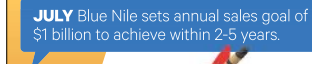

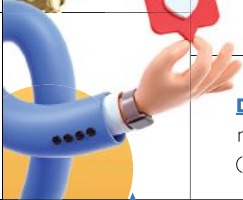
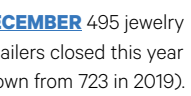


DIGITAL CLIENTELING TOOLS



One of the core questions of being a jewelry retailer has always been: How do I get my clients to come back? In the early days of INSTORE, we ran many articles about how to convince engagement ring buyers to return and buy more jewelry over the course of their lives.

Today, thanks to technology like video conferencing, website chat, review platforms and even simple phone texting, reconnecting with clients is astoundingly easy.

And jewelry buyers want that, says

2019		2020		2021	
 <p>FEBRUARY Google/Ipsos retail study shows that 83 percent of shoppers used online search before visiting a brick-and-mortar store.</p>	 <p>APRIL Zoom raises \$356.8 million in its IPO.</p>	 <p>SEP INSTORE covers lab-grown</p>	 <p>JANUARY The oldest millennials turn 40.</p>	 <p>OCTOBER De Beers begins selling loose lab-grown diamonds through its Lightbox brand.</p>	 <p>JULY Blue Nile sets annual sales goal of \$1 billion to achieve within 2-5 years.</p>
 <p>MAY Trucost study (sponsored by DPA) claims lab-grown diamonds have three times the carbon footprint as mined diamonds.</p>	 <p>APRIL 5G technology is introduced.</p>	 <p>DECEMBER 495 jewelry retailers closed this year (down from 723 in 2019).</p>		 <p>NOVEMBER A valuation of Podium, a clienteling software designed to improve the online reputation of retailers, is announced at \$3 billion, up from \$1.5 billion in 2020</p>	



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EVOLUTION OF COOL

HOW JEWELRY STORES HAVE EVOLVED TO BE MORE CUSTOMER-CENTRIC

BY EILEEN MCCLELLAND

The evolution of jewelry store design has been reflected in the pages of INSTORE, particularly in the America's Coolest Stores contest, since the magazine was founded 20 years ago. Today lighter and brighter customer-centric interiors with residential vibes and in-store technology are increasingly the norm among the coolest stores we see.

Store designer Jesse Balaity of Balaity Property Enhancement says jewelers must compete for customers' time before competing for their dollars

by creating spaces that encourage exploration and lingering.

"If the coffee shop or national merchant next door offers a more enticing space, then customers may not even notice the jeweler," he says. "I believe the more successful jewelers take the time to understand customer expectations and craft spaces that meet or challenge their modern definitions of luxury."

Andrea Hill of Hill Management Group says customers want to feel safe, welcome, comfortable and stimulated, and so jewelers need to find a way of "being

luxury" without being formal. Hard cases, dark colors and static pathways all signal formality and protection against loss. "Channeling those older forms of luxury tends to identify a brand as being older, less hip and out-of-touch," she says. "Today, luxury brands are trying to convey intimacy, graciousness, belonging and purpose. How they do it is different for each brand because they are interpreting these concepts relative to their own brand messaging and identity."

Here are 10 ways stores are updating their form and function to be more accessible.

Essentials

by MARATHON

Quality Locket, Bracelets, & Religious Jewelry



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Side-By-Side Selling Encourages Conversation

There's a diversity in case size as well as floor and ceiling treatments and less reliance on a ring of same-sized showcases in the center of the store. New modular case configurations allow associates to be on the same side as shoppers, making the process more friendly and casual. Layouts can loosen up, too, becoming less grid-like and more free-flowing or divided into distinct function-driven areas. Kate Peterson of Performance Concepts says the owner should be prepared, when transitioning to side-by-side selling, to completely retrain the sales team, and not only about security concerns.

"It's an entirely different interaction with the customer that requires the development of a more engaging, more collaborative sales approach," she says.

Privacy Is Not Just For VIPs Anymore

In a change hastened by pandemic considerations, jewelers are meeting their clients in private spaces, whether to discuss engagement rings or ponder other significant purchases. Late last year in New Orleans, MS Rau unveiled an 8,500-square-foot jewelry boutique designed by architect Jonathan Tate and Truitt Brand Design. The centerpiece is a glass-walled consultation room known as the Crystal Palace, well suited for clients to examine rare

colored diamonds and such diverse vintage celebrity vintage finds as Prince's stage jewelry and Wallace Simpson's brooch. The VIP space is equipped with light-changing technology, while its showcases are fitted with glass that slides out of the way, receding into the body of the case, with the touch of a key card.

Selling Custom Design Around The Table

Collaboration extends to the custom design process, leading to an emphasis on design desks, tables, counters and niches. Jewelers often employ CounterSketch software while their clients can watch and make suggestions, bringing them into the process. Interior designer Leslie



Art + Soul in Boulder, CO, is set up for side-by-side sales consultations.



MS Rau's glass-walled space inside the New Orleans jewelry boutique offers a private spot for high-level chats.



Marisa Perry Atelier of New York makes a design table a focal point of the showroom.

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📍 Gorjana's newest Manhattan Beach, CA, location reflects a proclivity for a white and bright look.

McGwire has integrated tech bars into store designs, inviting customers to view jewelry on computers. But even if the jeweler is working with pencil and paper, showing a portfolio, or laying out materials, these activities may take place on expansive design tables that become focal points. "It is truly amazing how this has become popular," says Ruth Møllergaard of GRID/3 International. "I think these tables remind us, subconsciously, of good family events at the dining room table or the kitchen island."

Elevating The Art Of Hospitality

It's important to stop treating seating as an afterthought, Balaity advises. Think of a lounge or bar as not just a necessary sacrifice of showcase space, but as an amenity that demonstrates your commitment to the customer experience. "You are seeing so many beverage bars being included in the final design of the store," observes Keely Grice of Grice Showcase. "Many are even including

lounge areas to sit with their clients and enjoy the moment during the sale or while waiting for the repair to be brought to them." McGwire says store owners she's worked with serve gourmet coffee in the morning and beer, wine or cocktails in the afternoon.

A Light And Airy Look Banishes Formality

Mirroring residential interior design, jewelry stores are lightening up in many ways, employing cases without bases, for example, to create more visual white space. As for the color palette, creams, light taupes with mixed silver and gold metals are popular, says McGwire. "The overall design looks to create a more light and

airy feeling."

Jewelry designer Gorjana Reidel and her husband, Jason Griffin Reidel, own 25 Gorjana-branded jewelry stores around the country, all of which reflect a beach-cottage vibe. "Our No. 1 goal was how do we make it feel like you're coming into our home," says Gorjana. Mango wood finishes, blue Shibori accents and greenery all recall the brand's Laguna Beach origins and complement the laid-back



📍 At Carter's Jewel Chest in Mountain Home, AR, designed by Balaity Property Enhancement, a beer tap is integrated into the bar.

selling style.

Kate Peterson of Performance Concepts says the shift from “dark and heavy” (i.e., lots of wood, richly colored carpets, focal point light fixtures, etc.) to lighter and more minimalist, especially in higher-end stores, is a significant change that reflects a new concept of professionalism, which is all about the customer. “I think the evolution in store design reflects that perfectly. Lighter, airier spaces, less crowded displays, *much* better lighting options, more functional/sensible (and often sustainable) materials and more inviting storefronts are all hallmarks of successful ‘next generation’ stores.”

A Window On The Shop: “Seeing How The Sausage Is Made”

Shops are increasingly visible through a window or doorway or integrated into the showroom itself. Clients may be invited to tour the shop, watch bench jewelers set their diamonds, and make their wedding bands or cast their engagement rings. “We used

to believe that customers did not want to see how the sausage is made, that a shop that was anything but pristine could detract from the fancy jewelry buying experience,” Balaity says. “Two things have changed. First, the demand for full custom design exploded, from sketches to casting to a unique product no one else can show off on Instagram. Nothing demonstrates a jeweler’s custom abilities like the shop itself.” Second, a visible shop plays into the experiential aspect of modern retailing, rather than detracting from the presentation. “Essentially, customers ARE interested in how the sausage is made,” he says.

LED Lighting Can Brighten A Mood As Well As A Showcase

Advances in LED fixture design are freeing for store design, Balaity says. “We now have access to a tremendous variety of fixtures at different levels of power, beam spread, and color temperature for every specific little application within the store.”



London Jewelers in Manhasset, NY, designed by Nelson Worldwide, balances comfort and elegance.

The biggest change, though, relates to the illumination of non-jewelry areas within the store. “The old strategy of bright and even illumination over a sea of showcases feels dated,” he says. “It’s unwelcoming to the customer who is accustomed to great retail spaces even for lower price point products. Now we create luxurious lounge spaces, bars, game areas, and patios. We use decorative and indirect lighting to create a mood in these spaces, which is complementary to the jewelry areas.” Randy Mitchum says choosing recessed LEDs for his store in Ozark, MO, rocked his world. “If you worked in a store with fluorescent and halogen lights and all of a sudden it’s so much brighter, you can go into shock,” he says. “People talk about how amazing the lighting is.”



At the vibrant Green Lake Jewelry Works in Bellevue, WA, designed by owner Jim Tuttle, customers can see the shop through a floor to ceiling glass wall in the ultimate expression of transparency.

Residential Influences Set Shoppers At Ease

Balaity’s clients Barry and Laura Cole of Bere Jewelers in Pensacola, FL, included a full bar area, an outside seating area and a lounge area, too, in their newest location. “When you walk in and see Barry in this environment, it looks like you’re seeing him in this large living room,” Balaity says. “It really is the owner’s personality that melds with the design and makes it a retail experience.”

McGwire says decorative lighting, accessories, including art, and the use of color and texture all add visually interesting layers that create residential vibes.

Personality Plus: The Joyful Argument For Bold Color

Creative designers are taking dramatic measures to ensure jewelry shopping is fun and inviting, while expressing the brand's personality. Bold color choices are one way to achieve this goal.

Fiat Lux is a fine jewelry boutique and piercing parlor in San Francisco. Owner Marie McCarthy's first Fiat Lux location had a punk rock vibe suited to the neighborhood. But for her second location in a different part of town, McCarthy opted for what she calls "joyful maximalism."

Interior designer Noz Nozawa, whose focus is primarily residential, concentrated on creating a homey experience, as if the shopper were in the living room of a friend who just happened to have a lot of fabulous jewelry. "This is often a very expensive purchase for something that is tiny," she says. "How do you address the experience so that it is not intimidating?"

An octagonal, custom designed and fabricated burgundy jewelry case is at the center of things, the color inspired by lighter sapphires and deeper rubies, and the shape influenced by emerald-cut gemstones.

Decorative painting by Caroline Lizarraga includes a black and white



snake coiled on the floor and portraits of the jewelry itself. Most dramatically, expensive wallpaper is in effect "ruined" by dripping gold dust and resin onto it. "To have lovely wallpaper on the walls and make it very prominent and then technically ruin it is a nod to the punk rock heritage of the brand origin story," says Nozawa. Existing wall cases were painted and dressed up with brass-tiger hardware; each touchpoint is surprising and exciting.

"Color is a powerful meter to amp up when it comes to retail and jewelry," Nozawa says. "A lot of times, I think people live very much in the brain and ignore the senses. You have to bring color in if what

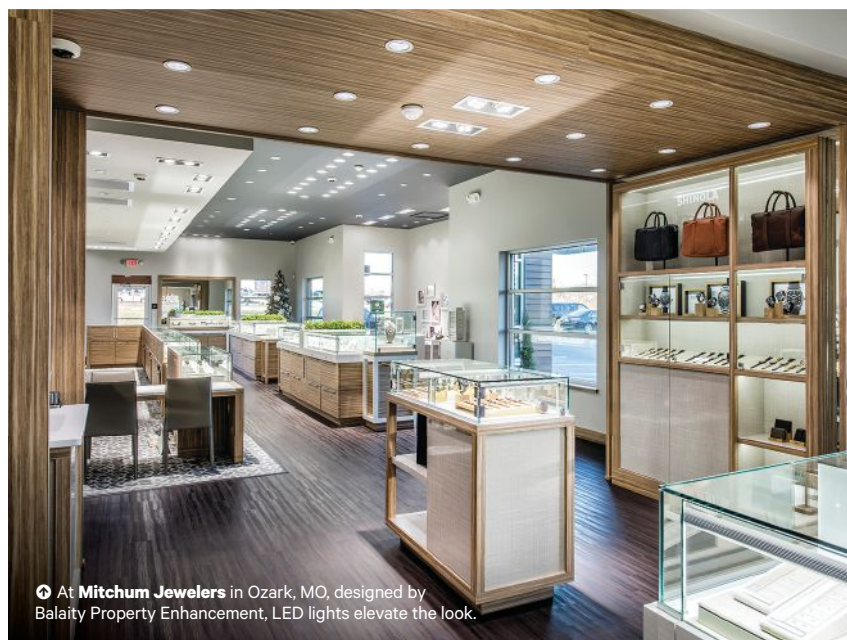
◆ Noz Nozawa used color and creativity in the design of Fiat Lux in San Francisco to achieve owner Marie McCarthy's goal of joyful maximalism.

you want to convey is joy, to be transported into this vibrant happy energy, where the jewelry is what makes you happy."

A Natural Affinity For Bringing In Daylight

In 2017, the Yeko family of Janesville, WI, built a new store under the design direction of Leslie McGwire. After 30 years in a windowless mall, they were ready to see the light with 270-degree views. The store has more than 2,000 square feet of glass curtain walls, with more than half of that glass tilted out to span a height of 24 feet, floor to ceiling.

Ruth Møllergaard of GRID/3 International says daylight shows off diamonds and supports a movement toward natural environments. "This human-nature affinity is called biophilia, and we are seeing more interest in adding plants to stores, even green walls, since they improve the air quality in indoor spaces."



◆ At Mitchum Jewelers in Ozark, MO, designed by Balaty Property Enhancement, LED lights elevate the look.



◆ The Diamond Center in Janesville, WI, boasts 270-degree views of the great outdoors.

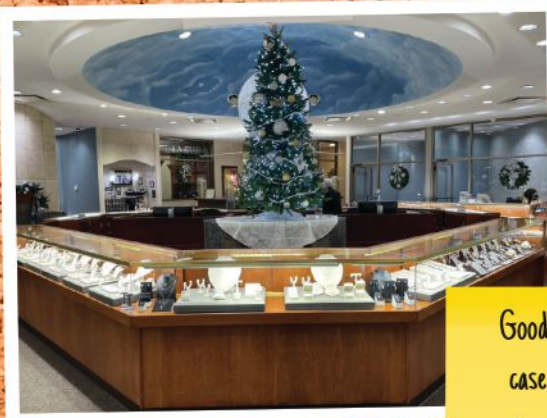
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- Bonnie Frey, Harris Jeweler



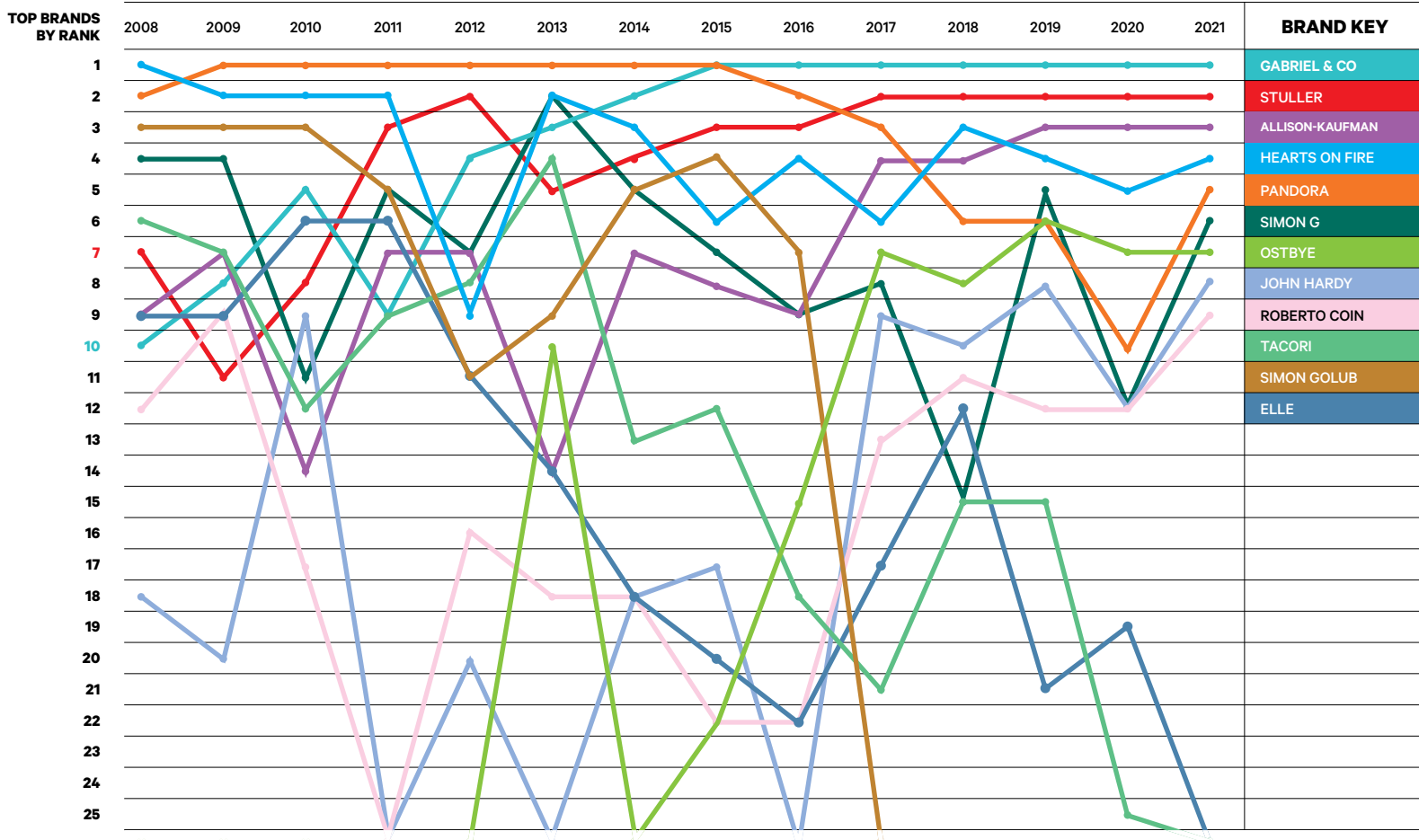
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TOP PERFORMING BRANDS 2008-2021

BY CHRIS BURSLEM

Beginning with our second Big Survey in 2008, we have tracked jewelry industry brand performance based on an open-ended question to jewelry retailers. This chart illustrates those results over the past 14 years.



The first time we asked our readers about their best-selling brands was in May 2004 (among those nominated: Hidalgo, Polar Bear Diamonds, Hearts On Fire). Such “market intel” became a regular feature in the magazine when we launched our Hot Sellers column in January 2006. In the more than 15 years since, our faithful Brain Squad has named hundreds of jewelry brands and styles that were doing well in their stores. To add to this vital feedback from every corner of the country, we tried ranking brands based on how they “performed” for jewelers for the first time in our 2008 Big Survey. The wording was intentionally vague — we

wanted jewelers to feel free to interpret it based on sales, return on effort, what the brand did for the store as a whole, and so on.

Looking at the brands that have dominated the list over the years, it feels like they have been around forever. But it’s probably useful to keep in mind that before the 1980s, jewelry brands (apart from the historical giants like Tiffany, Cartier and Harry Winston that catered to the rich and famous) weren’t really a thing in the minds of most consumers. The local jewelry store was “the name” everyone knew, and jewelry brands needed to build partnerships with those merchants to ensure prominent display

and marketing. In many ways that remains the case. Gabriel & Co., which has topped our annual Best Performing Brand survey for the last six years, has always been good at doing this, and it began investing in omnichannel marketing early. Stuller, the next most popular industry brand, also invested in technology, and its popular CounterSketch software has allowed independent retailers to offer customization more easily and quickly to shoppers. The 12 brands shown in the chart above represent highlights of a sort from the last 15 years: Most finished highly in the 2021 poll, while some have disappeared. Check back with us in November for our next Big Survey to see which brands come out on top in 2022!



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SENDING OFF SHANE

Shane Decker reminisces on what it's meant to be a columnist for INSTORE (and says he's not retiring!)

BY TRACE SHELTON

Shane Decker is an industry legend, a powerful speaker, and the preeminent jewelry sales trainer of all time. Equally important to us at INSTORE, he's written a monthly sales column for our magazine faithfully almost since the publication's inception.

I've worked with Shane on these columns from the beginning — even before I did my first freelance story for INSTORE — so with Shane announcing he would no longer be writing his monthly column, I felt I deserved some answers. Here they are.

You've been writing columns for INSTORE for almost 20 years.

How does it feel to retire from regular duty?

► I'm going to miss it. And I will still write an occasional column when INSTORE has something special they want me to write about. But we're going to focus on putting together an online training program that jewelry store owners and their teams can use to improve their selling capabilities. I have a lot of material that I've never even written about, and I think it'll be much more effective than just reading a magazine column every month. But I am going to miss it. I've made thousands of friends from the columns because people write and text and ask questions.

What has it meant to you to be an INSTORE columnist?

► I was honored that they asked me to do it. I spoke at every SMART Show that INSTORE put on in Chicago at Navy Pier, which had audiences of hundreds. I also did their best attended webinar in 2020 when the pandemic hit, with more than 1,000 viewers attending. The magazine is an industry leader, and it's for people

who want to learn about improving their businesses. There are a lot of other great writers in there who are friends of mine — Kate [Peterson], David [Geller], people I've known 30-plus years. The information is endless, and everybody should read it cover to cover because you're going to get a nugget out of it every time you read it. Some of my columns took hours and hours to research, and sometimes the researcher learns more than the reader, so I've enjoyed it very much.

What's the mistake that people make in sales that drives you the craziest?

► Lack of training. Stores hardly do any; very few have sales meetings or review their people at the end of each month. Salespeople don't know how to close. Owners spend money on beautiful stores and inventory and marketing, and that's great. But if you can't train your people how to sell and deliver an experience, it's all worthless. When I was a full-time salesperson, I wrote 10 closes every night for a year, 365 days. I've been in stores where people have been selling for 40 years and never written 10 closes

once. It's appalling to me. Most people are happy with status quo, and that's my biggest irritation.

How did you get started in jewelry sales training? ► I got into the jewelry industry by accident.

I was working in a furniture store and a jeweler came in. He said he was just looking, and I said I was just selling. (I never said that again, but that is a true story!) I sold him a ton of dining room furniture, like \$45,000 worth, and he asked me if I wanted a job. I said no. But he later won me over. The most 1-carat diamonds I sold in one day while working in jewelry retail was 16. Later

on, I was at the New York show after I had opened my company. I was talking to a diamond vendor, and a trade magazine editor walked up to him. The diamond vendor asked him, "Do you know this young man?" He said, "No. Why should I know him?" The diamond vendor said, "He sold more diamonds out of

a little store in Kansas than all my other accounts put together." They wrote an article, and all of a sudden, jewelers were calling me from all over the country asking me, "How do you sell all those diamonds?" Because that year, I had sold 137 1-carats, 40 2-carats and 33 of 3 carats or larger. All of a sudden, all these jewelers wanted me to come show their staff how I did it. So here's me, a 28 year-old guy flying all over the

U.S. showing 50-, 60- and 70-year-old store owners something totally new.

“
He said
he was just
looking, and
I said I was
just selling.”

What are some of your most memorable moments as a jewelry sales trainer? ► I've had owners say, "I

wish I'd had you come here 20 years ago." I've had salespeople who, as soon as they heard my first presentation, showed a battery client a diamond and sold it and they couldn't believe it because they didn't realize it was that easy. I've kept all the thank-you notes and cards I've received, and I have two big boxes full of

SHANE DECKER BY THE NUMBERS

19

Years of writing for INSTORE

4,500+

Stores visited throughout career

27

Speaking appearances at The JCK Show

16

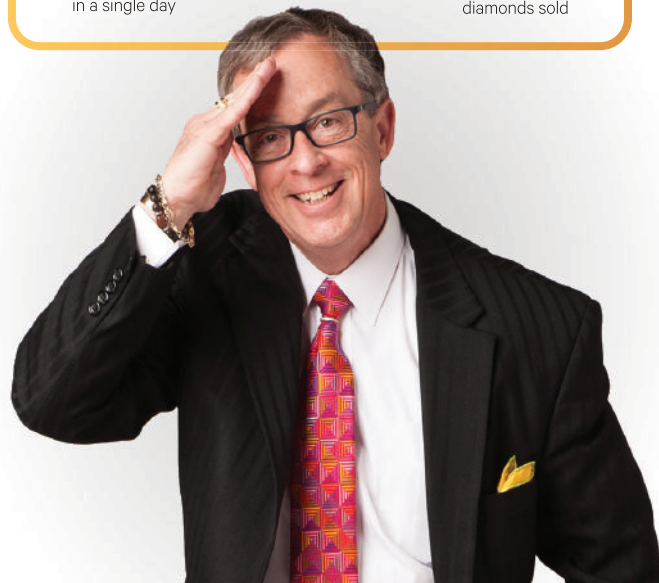
One-carat diamonds sold in a single day

193

Columns written for INSTORE

4

Years of 100-plus one-carat diamonds sold



how I've changed their lives and their income. What they wrote motivated me to keep doing it. I trained one guy who sold 22 diamonds over a carat in a day and broke my personal record. All records are meant to be broken, and he probably has more to say about how I've changed his life than anybody, and he's become a dear friend.

Have you ever done anything you later wished you hadn't? ▶ You say stuff every day you wish you wouldn't have. That's part of being human. But as you age, you get more patience and wisdom and you're not as reactive in your communication. One time, I was speaking at a national convention, and I wanted to let this young man know that I thought he had something on the end of his nose, and I said something and it was actually a wart. I hurt his feelings. I tried to speak to him afterward, but he was gone. I found out who he was and apologized to him later and sent him some of my training DVDs. But yes, I've said things and regretted them. I've trained in 4,500 stores, and if I trained 10 people per store, that's about 45,000 people, so yeah, I've stuck my foot in my mouth before.

What's ahead for Shane Decker?

▶ I'm going to keep doing what I'm doing. More training than ever through INSTORE's upcoming online series. Speaking at national conventions. I want to thank God and the Lord Jesus Christ for giving me this opportunity and having a career I love. I want to thank my wife for supporting me. I'm thankful that I have my health, which allows me to do this. I still have a ton of energy and passion. I don't know anyone who's had a greater career than I've had. I'm very, very thankful.

Read more of Shane's interview at instoremag.com/decker!

THE LAST WORD ON SALES

Shane Decker shares touchstones for sales wisdom in his final regular column

Shane Decker on Sales



I've been writing articles for INSTORE Magazine for 19 years, and this my last regular column. I'll still write when INSTORE has a special request, and *no*, I'm not retiring: I'll still fly and train in stores, speak at conventions, and connect with jewelry retailers via video conferencing. I'm also working with INSTORE on a new online training series, and we'll have more to announce about that soon.

I want to thank INSTORE for the opportunity to allow me to write for them all these years. It's been an honor. I also want to thank all my readers for your questions, texts and loyalty, and for honoring me by using my advice in your stores for sales training.

For my last regular column, I want to share with you some of the "Dad-isms" that my father said to me throughout his life. I'm working on a book about these "Dad-isms," where each chapter will revolve around one of his many sayings and what it meant. He started saying these things to me when I was a kid, and they meant even more to me as I grew into adulthood. I hope you will consider each "Dad-ism" and what it might mean for you, because as Dad said, "Don't prove yourself; improve yourself." He also said:

- *If you think you can, or you think you can't, you're right.*
- *On time is late; early is on time.*
- *If you didn't have time to do it right the first time, how are you going to find time to do it right the second time?*
- *Does your mom work here?*
- *Your word is your bond.*

- *Your actions speak louder than your words.*
- *The more you think about it, the more you'll probably do it, right or wrong.*
- *You never get a second chance to make a first impression.*
- *Learn to really listen ... really.*
- *Respect is never given; it's earned.*
- *Never pre-judge anyone.*
- *If you hang out with the turds, you'll get s@#! on you.*
- *Never judge anyone until you've walked a mile in their moccasins.*
- *Live, love, work and laugh. And take care of your family and friends.*
- *Always be a leader and a motivator.*
- *Kindness goes a long way in the workplace and at home.*
- *Help others succeed.*
- *Be a team player and a servant when you need to be.*
- *Never quit learning. Self-educate.*
- *If you love what you do, you'll never work a day in your life.*
- *Be the first to apologize.*
- *If you lie, it will take a long time for me to believe you again.*
- *Celebrate life's important moments.*
- *Winners never quit; quitters never win.*
- *You'll get out of it what you put into it.*
- *Procrastination is a time killer, attitude smasher and communication spoiler.*
- *Never say "It's not my job."*

My dad was a wise man. I've thought about these sayings throughout my life, and maybe some of these will help you as well. Happy selling!

CONTACT SHANE AT:
sdecker@ex-sell-ence.com
Read columnist bio on Page 54

As We Turn 20, a Special Thank You to Our Advertisers

Back in 2002, things were different. INSTORE launched into a crowded marketplace, the distant fifth magazine in a five-magazine market. We were a small team with big dreams. We didn't know much, but one thing we did know was that American jewelers absolutely loved reading our publication. We just weren't sure how to convince the rest of the industry that this magazine was worth supporting. Fortunately, there were advertisers out there who saw our potential and believed in the connection we had with readers. To those out-of-the-box thinkers, and all the other advertisers who have supported us along the way, thank you for believing in us.



We love you and look forward to working with you for another 20 years.. and more!

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PAST YEAR REVIEW

FORGET GOAL SETTING, says productivity blogger Tim Ferriss. Do a past-year review instead. It involves going back through your calendar, journal or diary and highlighting what left you feeling uplifted and like you were making personal progress, as well as what floods you with negative memories. And then it's just a matter of scheduling to do more of the former and less of the latter. The idea is to leverage the things you do well and that make you feel happy. Go here for details: instoremag.com/pastyearreview



NO 64% **DO YOU OR DON'T YOU** Do you partner with local businesses for cross-promotion? **PAGE 65**



REAL DEAL The Case of the Wholesale Whodunnit. **PAGE 66**

BEST OF THE BEST The most bar-raising, excitement-generating stories from the past decade. **PAGE 56**

ONLINE AT instoremag.com

SHERRY SMITH: Here's how retailing will look in 2022 ... and why omnichannel marketing is a must. instoremag.com/smith0122

JACKIE JOHNSON: This is how to keep that customer for life. instoremag.com/johnson0122



ANDREA HILL

→ Bring your brand promise to life through a careful visual approach in your store. **PAGE 58**



DAVID GELLER

→ Why 2022 should be about keeping your staff, promoting custom and clearing old inventory. **PAGE 59**



BILL BOYAJIAN

→ Whether they admit it or not, everyone could use a business coach. Here's why. **PAGE 60**

TIP SHEET

PLANNING



1 When brainstorming, improvising, jamming with others, you'll go much further and deeper if you build upon each contribution with a playful "yes — and" example instead of a deflating "no — but" reply, says WIRED co-founder Kevin Kelly on his blog.

COMMUNICATION

BLIND DOUBLE CARBON

2 This is one of those, "How come nobody told me" tips: If you want to send an email to a group while ensuring that only you receive the replies (thus ensuring your inbox doesn't fill up with witty but irrelevant banter), don't type "Please Do Not Reply All." Make it impossible for your employees to do so by putting them in BCC, from where they are only able to reply to you and not the group.

MANAGEMENT

BONUS IN CASH

3 Barbara Bradley Baekgaard, co-founder and CEO of fashion brand Vera Bradley, has maintained a personal touch throughout the retailer's impressive growth to \$500 million in annual sales. When the company first started, the leadership would put \$50 in employees' birthday cards with a note that said: "This has to be

spent on you." As the company has expanded to 3,000 employees, there's still a \$50 bill in each card. "Finance asks every year if we can just put the money in people's paychecks, and I say no," Bradley Baekgaard told the NRF's online magazine. "When you have found money in cash, it's just more meaningful."

PRODUCTIVITY

BEEP BEEP

4 Some jobs, such as managing a retail store, are prone to interruptions, which can make them exciting as you rush from point to point to deal with problems or help customers, but it can play havoc on achieving your goals for the day. In *18 Minutes: Find Your Focus, Master Distraction, And Get The Right Things Done*, Peter Bregman recommends you do the following: Set your phone to beep every hour, and when that timer goes

off, take a deep breath and ask yourself, am I doing what I need to be doing right now? If you're with a client — great. Ignore it. If you're doing something constructive, you'll feel good. If you've gotten sidetracked by something that's really not all that important, it will get you back on track.

ORGANIZATION

THIS YEAR, DITCH YOUR TO-DO LIST

3 Studies show the vast majority of items that go on to-do lists never get done. Consultant Kelly Nolan suggests in its place you try her "Bright Method." It boils down to blocking out time for everything in a digital calendar (including waking, showering, dressing, exercising, etc.) so that you know what you can say yes and no to. Nolan finds that the system empowers people to make good decisions "because they realize when it's actually impossible to take something else on."



MANAGEMENT

RECORD YOUR PROGRESS

6 One of the problems with being the boss is that few people will give you feedback on your performance or offer kind words to inspire you. Yet studies show that the single biggest motivator of performance is the feeling of making progress on a meaningful task. So, you may have to go out and find the feedback yourself. The best way to do that, says author Dan Pink, is to establish a progress ritual. "At the end of every day, take just 60 seconds to record what progress you made that day." You may be pleasantly surprised by just how much you are getting done.

Contributors' Bios

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SHANE DECKER has provided sales training to more than 4,500 jewelry stores. Shane cut his teeth in jewelry sales in Garden City, KS, and sold over 100 1-carat diamonds four years in a row. Contact him at sdecker@ex-sell-ence.com.

DAVID GELLER is a 14th-generation bench jeweler who produces *The Geller Blue Book To Jewelry Repair Pricing*. David is the "go-to guy" for setting up QuickBooks for a jewelry store. Reach him at david@jeweler-profit.com.

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Best of the Best

BEST OF THE BEST OF THE BEST

Jewelers' creative ideas stand the test of time

BY EILEEN McCLELLAND

Jewelry retailers are a creative bunch, especially when it comes to marketing, events and promotions, which are often the focus of our popular Best of the Best department, a regular feature of INSTORE. Here are just a few of our all-time favorite (and timeless) ideas pulled from our archives in honor of INSTORE's 20th anniversary.

FEBRUARY 2012: ROGER'S GALLERY TROLLBEADS FEST

As owner of Rogers Gallery in Mattapoisett, MA, Louise Rogers built a global community of Trollbeads fans and celebrated them by hosting an annual Trollbeads Fest in her store and local civic center. She sold and marketed the charms as individual works of art, an approach that appealed to customers, who became die-hard collectors and propelled her to

become a top Trollbeads dealer. An e-commerce site and lively fan forum led to an annual week-end event that felt like a family reunion. Festivities included a cocktail party, a silent auction, education, a boat cruise and the opportunity to meet Trollbeads designers from Denmark. **The takeaway:** Become an enthusiastic expert and brand ambassador no matter what you sell. Shoppers will seek you out.

MARCH 2012: THE DIAMOND DIG

It took less than 20 minutes for 200 women to dig up \$5,000 worth of diamond jewelry buried in an Omaha, NE, Stormchasers baseball field, as groundskeepers cringed and fans cheered. The annual Diamond Days promotion was invented by Borsheims of Omaha. Before the game started, Borsheims personnel buried



Contestants in the Borsheims Diamond Dig search for buried treasure.

jewelry boxes in the field; after the game was over, the digging began. Entrance was free, but for a donation to Big Brothers/Big Sisters, participants also got an ice cream scoop to make digging easier. Every digger got a free "Borsheims: Can you dig it?" T-shirt. **The takeaway:** Every year they did the promotion, they sold more diamond studs. It also associated the brand with a fun and memorable evening.

JANUARY 2013: MOST VALUABLE PROPOSAL

Partnering with the local network TV affiliate airing the Super Bowl, Bremer Jewelry of Peoria, IL, scored big publicity points with a Most Valuable Proposal contest that helped a local couple get engaged live on air during halftime. Leading up to the event, people visited the TV station's website to vote for their favorite ring while men were invited to explain why they'd like to win a ring. The

winner was notified the Monday before the big game, at which time he taped his proposal. On Super Bowl Sunday, a TV crew showed up where the winner was watching the game and captured the reaction as the televised proposal aired, then — to build suspense and ratings — the TV station told its audience to tune in "tonight at 10" to hear her reply. **The takeaway:** Sports appeal to everyone of all ages, and a football-themed promotion offered Bremer Jewelry a chance to gain fans among men and women alike.

JANUARY 2014: LOVE IN THE HILLS

Stephenie Bjorkman, owner of Sami Fine Jewelers in Fountain Hills, AZ, spearheaded a community-wide vow-renewal event for Valentine's Day 2013, to be called Sami's Love in the Hills. She recruited a minister, a florist, a DJ and a photographer and secured the site of Fountain Hills Park, a favorite spot for local weddings.



Louise Rogers created an avid tribe of collectors around Trollbeads activities.

A news helicopter flew over the event, as if it were stalking a celebrity wedding. Local anchors wore Sami Fine Jewelry pieces during promo segments for the event. Sami Fine Jewelry also designed wedding bands to commemorate the event. In all, 762 couples renewed their vows, including the mayor of Fountain Hills and her husband. **The takeaway:** “I could never advertise enough to get the goodwill that we generated,” Bjorkman said.

MAY 2018: THE MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

Wes Skinner, a college student who is also a spearfishing commercial fisherman, found a bottle bobbing in the Gulf of Mexico that contained the remarkable message that he had won a prize from Mark Loren Designs. When he brought his message to the jewelry store, he discovered it was redeemable for a 1.90 carat round brilliant diamond valued at more than \$10,000. On Feb. 12, Mark Loren, owner of Mark Loren Designs in Fort Myers, FL, had helicoptered along the coastline and dropped three bottles, each with messages, as a promotion for Valentine’s Day. Two bottles contained \$2,500 gift certificates valid for any purchase or services. The third held a certificate for the diamond that Skinner claimed. Loren had expected the bottles to wash up on the beach, but easterly winds pushed them out to sea. **The takeaway:** Try something romantic, dramatic and unexpected.

DECEMBER 2018: SMYTH’S VIRAL VIDEO

Kori Kline, a former Baltimore Ravens cheerleader, had appeared in two commercials for Baltimore’s Smyth Jewelers in character as a wedding guest and a maid of honor. She then got a call from the ad agency working with Smyth and learned she would be cast as

a bride-to-be for the next one. When she arrived for the shoot, the director told her that the actor who would play her boyfriend was stuck in traffic and they’d be ready to shoot as soon as he arrived. So when — instead of a harried actor — her real-life boyfriend, Zach Sullivan, appeared on the set bearing a ring box, she was stunned. He proposed during filming and the answer was “yes.” Smyth used the video as a TV commercial. **The takeaway:** The video quickly racked up more than 17,000 views within a few weeks in a market where Kline’s connection to the Ravens made her a local celebrity.

MAY 2019: THE MURDER MYSTERY

Lynnette Solomon, special events coordinator at MJ Miller & Co. in Barrington, IL, decided she needed to make trunk shows more fun and interactive. She spent a year writing a murder mystery and pitched it to owner Michael J. Miller as a way to create drama around jewelry designer Victor Velyan’s two-day visit. Customers, along with team members and Ve-

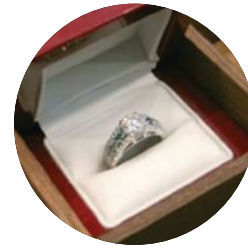
lyan himself, were assigned roles; each character wore jewels from Velyan’s collection, and each was teamed up with a staff member so they received personal attention. **The takeaway:** Find a way to elevate the in-store experience and add excitement to trunk shows.

JANUARY 2009: SPEED DATING

When R.S.V.P., a regional magazine, wrote a series of articles on speed dating, Marqurette’s Exquisite Jewelry in Montgomery, AL, decided to give it a shot in their own store and partnered with the magazine to promote it. Forty five people participated. **The takeaway:** Jewelry stores can be daunting places. Warm up yours by making it a place for a community to mingle and munch. And of course, any speed dater who fell in love would know exactly where to buy the engagement ring.

SEPTEMBER 2011: “EXTREME MAKEOVER” CUSTOM RING

Lee Krombholz of Krombholz Jewelers in Cincinnati, OH, was approached about creating a ring for India Dickinson, the wife of U.S. Marine Bill Dickinson, in an episode of ABC’s “Extreme Makeover: Home Edition.” The family were chosen to receive a new house while Dickinson was deployed in Afghanistan. Bill regretted that he had never been able to give India an engagement ring,



Lee Krombholz created a ring featured on a TV show.

so the TV team asked Krombholz to design and create a ring. The diamond ring was accented with birthstones representing the family’s six children, and presented during the show to India’s delight. **The takeaway:** Enter jewelry design contests and promote awards. Krombholz says he landed this opportunity because he had put time and effort into developing a reputation as an award-winning designer.

OCTOBER 2010: FREE VALENTINE’S DAY GIFTS

Debbie and George Fox, owners of Fox Fine Jewelry in Ventura, CA, realized the extent of their customers’ financial suffering during the Great Recession, when they started bringing in sentimental, heirloom pieces to sell — sometimes in tears. By January, unemployment in California had reached 10 percent and Debbie realized many Ventura residents wouldn’t be able to buy Valentine’s Day gifts. She decided to give away silver necklaces and inspired retailers in multiple states to join the effort. **The takeaway:** Consistent outreach to the community in times of trouble ensures people will remember you when fortunes improve.



Kori Kline says “yes” to a surprise proposal that became a commercial for Smyth Jewelers.



YEAR OF THE VISUAL MERCHANT

Bring your brand promise to life through a careful visual approach in your store

Andrea Hill on Merchandising



Even people who don't like to shop know the sensory immersion of walking into a brilliantly merchandised store. Window displays draw you in; the shop's visual theme is a continuation of the windows, enveloping you in an experience that started outside and continues inside; and everywhere you look, the store design is delightful.

This is visual merchandising: The marketing practice of using every visual element at your disposal — window displays, floor plans, lighting, technology, color, and point-of-purchase collateral to use the retail space to engage the customer and drive more sales. Part of the power of this merchandising strategy is repetition. By repeating a theme from window to store, and from place to place within the store, you reinforce the message that called the visitor into the store in the first place. Repetition is the persuasive heart of successful marketing.

Products are central to the theme, with mini-islands and scenarios creating

emotional engagement between product and shopper. This is called staging, and like its reference to theater, it's all about presenting product in an appealing light. On Broadway, if you want the audience to know they are witnessing a happy moment, the lighting crew beams a combination of blue and yellow lights on the scene. In a store, lighting is just as powerful. High-end car dealerships use lighting to feature cars on the show floor. Dazzling diamond treasures can be specially lit in a feature tower. Consumers respond well to these buying experiences because the visual awe and emotional response contribute to the pleasure of the purchase.

There is nothing new about visual merchandising, but as retail experts continuously talk about reinventing retail,

visual merchandising takes on more importance than ever. This is an area in which physical shops can create experiences that cannot be replicated online.

Seasonal marketing is the focus of most visual merchandising, which makes sense. Holidays have powerful, recognizable visual elements that are broadly used across all product sectors as cues for consumption. Consumers have been exposed to these cues their entire lives, so it's easy for retailers to connect those cues to their own products. From the red-and-white hearts of Valentine's Day, to the pastel hues of Easter, to the flowers of Mother's Day, mortarboards of graduation season, autumnal displays of Halloween and Thanksgiving, and sparkling reds and vanilla spice of Christmas, the receptive minds of consumers have been trained to connect these cues to the desire to shop.

But seasonal visual merchandising also begins to feel a bit stale, as anyone who has complained about Christmas merchandising happening earlier and earlier each year knows.

Most jewelry businesses use part — but not all — of the visual merchandising oeuvre. Of course, jewelry presents more challenges to display than less security-challenged products. But great challenges present great opportunities.

There is tremendous opportunity for individual retailers to create their own visual merchandising strategies, based on their brands and values, and featuring their curated (and ideally, differentiated) product selections.

Those retailers who successfully imagine and implement powerful store experiences using the whole visual merchandising toolkit will attract more shoppers and turn them into loyal customers.

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Read columnist bio on Page 54



Real questions asked by real customers.

► "Will you help me deliver my chihuahua's pups? You're good with small things."

CUSTOMER: Do you believe in "the planets"?

ME: Like, the solar system?

CUSTOMER: Yes.

ME: I do.

► "Why is something growing in my diamond?" (She was serious.)

Oddball Questions were contributed anonymously to INSTORE's 2021 Big Survey.

FUTURE'S SO BRIGHT

This year, put an emphasis on keeping your staff, promoting custom and clearing out old inventory

David Geller
on Management



In 2015, if someone had asked you, “So, where do you see yourself in five years?”, you would have never guessed “smack in the middle of a world-wide shutdown due to a pandemic.”

With that in mind, here’s my best guess for 2022 based upon the last two years.

1. Your sales will continue to increase. It may not be your best year ever again, but it will be darn close. (If this has not been a stellar year for you in some way or form, then you need to invest in help with advertising and especially social media.)

2. Shop sales continue to be friggin’ awesome for almost every store. There are two large generations keeping custom jewelers busy:

→ Millennials: Bridal is the ticket. Yes, they scour the internet for diamond pricing, but custom is a “one on one” sale, highly profitable and they are willing to wait to get what they want.

→ Baby Boomers: Many are in “homes,” up in years and too old to buy jewelry, but boomers today, unlike the “Greatest Generation,” live longer, healthier lives. They still like nice things and will remake their old jewelry. Boomers will also pass down their old jewelry. Many will want to redesign the items, and many will just sell it to you for cash. Another profit opportunity.

3. Higher priced items are selling from the case. But don’t be slack or you’ll get too much debt. I doubt you’ll see another PPP gift from the government anytime soon. Inventory management comes down to this simple formula: If it sells within six months, order another one the week following. Anything over a year old, move those doggies out through a special sale showcase, sales spiffs, or stock balancing. Eighteen months? It’s outta here, by hook or crook. Scrap, I don’t care.

“

2021 has seen the 'Great Resignation.' If they don't like their job or pay is too low, they'll leave and find a better place to work.”

4. Staffing will still be a struggle. 2021 has seen the “Great Resignation.” If they don’t like their job or pay is too low, they’ll leave and find a better place to work. One multi-store chain I know closed one day a week during the summer and fall to give staff time off to unwind.

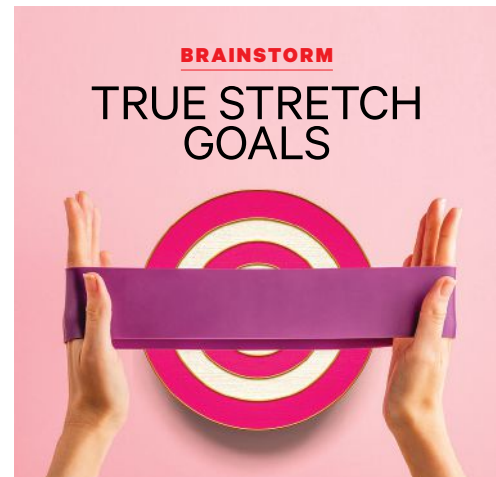
Then the store handed out raises to everyone in the company and bonus checks. This is not the time to be cheap on payroll. I expect this will continue for at least the first six months of 2022.

5. Store closings: GOB sales are the winner. In eight weeks, they typically will bring in a *whole year’s sales*, but many stores told me over the last two years that they made a lot more than a year’s income. But there are new startups. The industry is shrinking, but not by much anymore. Opportunity, opportunity.

How do I know this? My guess is about as good as yours, but I do keep my ear close to the ground.

CONTACT DAVID AT:
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Read columnist bio on Page 54



2022 is here, and with it, normalcy. We hope. That means setting targets for a fairly regular year and then hoping your staff can just beat them. Or giving your people “5 percent stretch goals” and seeing if, through extra hard work and efficiency, they can attain them. But what if you told them to improve their performance in a certain area by 30 percent? Then no longer will the same old approach, no matter how much harder they work, be effective. They would have to totally rethink how they go about hitting their numbers. And that’s the idea: To kickstart innovative thinking, you have to first destroy the old ways of doing things.

THE JEWELER

BY TIM SEARFOSS



THE FAMILY SECRET REVEALED.

COACH SPEAK

Whether they admit it or not, everyone could use a business coach

Bill Boyajian
on Management



With the exception of perhaps only Bubba Watson, all top professional golfers have a coach. It's the same with the highest level of performers in almost any field: entertainment, broadcasting, keynote speaking, athletics, and others. If you want to stay healthy, you might even have an exercise "trainer." What does that trainer do but help you do what you don't, or can't, or won't do on your own: *exercise!*

The most surprising thing to me as a business consultant is how rarely people in our industry seek a coach. Owners or executives will sometimes pay to have someone "teach" or "coach" a younger or inexperienced manager or an up-and-coming star, but they seldom believe they need someone to help them.

My experience is that the people who need a coach the most are the least likely to get one.

Maybe it's ego, or fear of being exposed to weaknesses, or an area in which they feel they already excel. Or maybe it's the money you have to pay for a coach when you feel the results may be hard to measure. Facing challenges head on, dealing with difficult employees, establishing goals and objectives, and setting the stage for disciplined improvement are all hard issues to face, and even harder to execute.

Some owners simply don't want to deal with the difficult decisions they really should make. Often their strategy is to take a "wait and see" attitude, hoping the problem will just go away. It seldom does, and often gets much worse. Whatever the reason, almost all business leaders are in some form of denial about what they need and what could improve their economic and strategic position.

Coaches are advisors who get to know you personally, understand your strengths and areas of needed growth, and help you be better. A coach is not an agent who represents you, although they can be very helpful. A coach is someone

who comes alongside in your business to help you make good decisions.

Clients hire advisors when they need people they can trust to accomplish goals they can't meet on their own. Ergo, the fields of exercise trainers (really coaches) and dieticians (trusted advisors) have exploded because people now have the money to pay someone to force them to stay healthy.

A coach doesn't just tell you the blindingly obvious things to do — things you already know you should be doing but won't without direction from an outside expert. You pay coaches for the advice you need to solve problems and set an agenda for change.

As successful as you may be in running your company, there are almost always key areas where you could be lacking. So, you may want a trusted advisor to provide an unbiased perspective and guidance you can rely on.

Bubba Watson has been enormously successful, winning two Masters Championships and the accompanying "green jackets." But the question I ask is whether he could have been even more successful with a trusted coach. We'll never know.

What about you?

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Read columnist bio on Page 54



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STORE SNAPSHOT



PULL UP A CHAIR

At Christopher's Fine Jewelry & Rare Coins in West Des Moines, IA, the inviting bridal area is a curved bar style station with comfortable counter height seating that allows an up-close look at each specific designer and loose diamond selection. The store, which opened in 2019 and is under the direction of general manager Christine Osborne, was designed by CMBA Architects with showcases by Arco Group.

BEST DAY EVER

Jewelers recall the days that make selling fun ... and rewarding.

FESTIVE JOY

"Christmas Eve 2020. We were supposed to be open with a soft close at 4 p.m. But we had dozens of customers there through 5. We were slammed! At about 4:40, we had a customer buy \$40,000 of various goods including watches, jewelry



boxes, diamond jewelry, engagement rings, and estate jewelry and paid all in cash. At the same moment, we sold a 2.36 high-quality round diamond for \$45,000. Within the last hour, we did over \$100,000 in sales!" **Best Day Evers were contributed anonymously to the 2021 Big Survey.**



Jewelers rave about the devices they've fallen in love with.

“

My new Horotec high torque screwdriver. It takes screws out of Omega watch links with ease when it was damn near impossible before.”

**MARC MAJORS,
SAM L. MAJORS,
MIDLAND, TX**

TRUE TALE

THE TALE OF THE LAST-MINUTE GRINCH

Three days before Christmas after a busy sales day, the store was empty and it was half an hour before closing. All of a sudden, the door opens and a grumpy older man comes in and shouts, “What do you have for \$30?” Then he says his friend told him that he should come and see our unique store and buy a piece of jewelry for his wife. We were startled at his shouting and most of our mouths were open, but we proceeded to show him our sterling silver charms. He then said in a grumpy voice, “She does not have a charm bracelet.” So, we suggested he get her a gift certificate and then she could decide what she wanted. He loved that idea, and so we wrapped it so it could be opened on Christmas morning. He was a very happy man when he left. Part two is when she came in the store about two weeks after Christmas and ended up spending \$350 with that \$30 gift certificate. We have never seen him again since. **Tim Wright, Simply Unique Jewelry Designs, Yorktown, VA**



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ASK INSTORE

We have a small store. If someone is sitting near the front door and they greet a customer, when is it appropriate for others to extend a welcome?

▶ If you've ever walked into a Japanese ramen restaurant where the entire staff stop and holler a greeting, you'll know how disconcerting this can be for the unaccustomed. It's also distracting to other customers who might be in the store, says Kate Peterson of Performance Concepts. Her advice is that the initial greeting be left to one person.

"Customers should be greeted promptly by someone who is already positioned near the front of the store — with a smile, direct eye contact, and verbiage that doesn't sound like a salesperson. That said, if the initial outreach is met with a need to 'browse,' and the

customer is moving around the store, associates should stay busy — but be attentive — and should offer that same smile and eye contact, along with a pleasant 'hello' when the customer gets near to where they are standing."

Sales trainer Shane Decker concurs and advocates you systemize your entire approach to greeting customers, starting with the person closest to the door: "I've written about the 'sweet spot' for greeting: It's 10 feet from the door on the client's right walking in. The salesperson/greeter should never be seated, they should be standing (and not behind a case)."

Decker says that under such a system, there should be only one greeter — determined by your "up system." "Because when more people greet, the client is confused about who will wait on them," he says.

"They should be greeted with a smile, not 'Hi how are you' or 'What brings you in today.' So one greeter, welcome the client, tell them you're glad they came in. Be professional."

I've hired a new employee, but she won't start for a few more months. How can I keep her feeling excited about the job — and lessen the risk she might change her mind?

▶ Think small but considerate gestures, says Jack Mitchell, one of the country's leading clothing retailers and the author of *Hug Your Customers*. Mitchell tells the story of a superstar salesperson with Macy's who, after much wooing, finally agreed to come work at Mitchell's store. Says Mitchell: "We could sense it was a big decision for her, because she is a very loyal and committed person who had established relationships at Macy's. So we sent her flowers with a handwritten note welcoming her to

Mitchell's and telling her how bright her future was here." Certainly, a considerate means of showing appreciation. But Mitchell didn't realize exactly how important his little gesture was until a few years later, when, during a seminar, the sales associate told the flower story and revealed something that Mitchell didn't know. She said that right after she had agreed to join Mitchell's, Macy's made her a counter-offer and she had told them she would think about it. While driving home, she was having mixed feelings, but when she arrived at the house and saw the bouquet of flowers and read Mitchell's personal note welcoming her aboard, she was touched and decided to go ahead with the job switch. The lesson? Mitchell answers: "Most people think a hot button is something big, but it can also be incredibly small, like a bouquet of flowers and a nice note."

One of the things I like most about the jewelry industry is that people are still willing to do business on trust, but then I recently got burned on a handshake deal. How can I know when to trust someone?

▶ For commercial transactions, there is *no substitute* for a properly drawn up contract. Yes, the jewelry industry is special, and the fact that its stock in trade are among the most precious goods known only makes the general trust people have in each other all the more remarkable. But when you do a deal on a handshake,

you're not just putting your trust in the other party's good intentions, you're making a bet the future won't throw one of you a curveball ... and the last few years have shown just how dependable the future can be. Get it down on paper.

Do you have any quick tips on how to compliment people in this sensitive age? It seems such a minefield these days.

▶ "You're so brave to wear that." "Your English is excellent." "You don't even look pregnant." "Your hair is so exotic." Yes, indeed it is easy to unintentionally offend someone (although, that's actually always been the case — people are just less likely to put up with it these days). With just a little care, you should still be able to use praise to quickly get on a customer's good side and boost your chances of making a sale. Start by staying away from anything physical or related to their heritage. When it comes to jewelry, one of the best ways to get on a customer's good side is to praise the pieces they are already wearing or have shown interest in. You are an expert in this field, so it's a compliment backed by authority. Praising a customer's personality is also usually safe ground, especially if you've honestly enjoyed the transaction, so let them know. ("Gosh, I haven't had so much fun serving anybody in a long time!"). Praise is a powerful tool. But, yes, wield with discretion.



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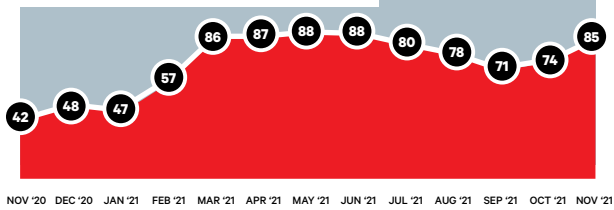
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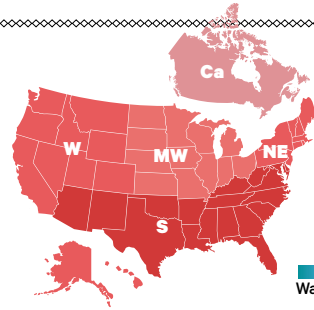
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Buzz session with the **Brain Squad**

INSTORE JEWELERS CONFIDENCE INDEX



THE INSTORE JCI is based on jewelry-store owners' level of confidence in the short-term outlook for their businesses as well as their willingness to place orders for new stock. A score below 50 suggests they are more negative than positive.)



HOT SPOTS

JEWELERS' SALES MAPPED

The good times roll on. The South continued to blaze the darkest shade of red, with 80% of the jewelers in that region reporting on-year sales growth in November. Midwestern jewelers also reported solid gains.

Way down Down The same Up Way up



KAS JACQUOT

BIG BRAINS, WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE PART OF THE SQUAD?

We were floored by the warm and generous responses we received and how excited everyone is to be a part of our monthly survey group, "The Brain Squad." We only wish we had more space in print to include more of your responses — but you can read the rest at instoremag.com! (And if you're not currently part of the Brain Squad, you can also join there as well!)

I've been quoted and in the magazine many times and even have been a Cool Store! It has all been an honor! **Kas Jacquot, Kas A Designs, Jefferson City, MO**

I've been a Brain since the very beginning! I feel proud to have my opinion counted. I've been quoted a number of times over the years and it's *so cool!* **Janne Etz, Contemporary Concepts, Cocoa, FL**

I love INSTORE Magazine and use it to keep up to date on our industry. I love the Manager's To-Do List. It makes me feel special when I am in the magazine because I value what it offers to so many of us! **Karen Hollis, K. Hollis Jewelers, Batavia, IL**

Big Brain? Frankly, I feel like an idiot for not becom-

ing a member of the Squad a long time ago... **Melissa Quick, Steve Quick Jeweler, Chicago, IL**

I grow weary of the constant barrage of autograph seekers. Dark glasses *all* the time now. **Cliff Yankovich, Chimera Design, Lowell, MI**

The one with the really big brain is the person at INSTORE who came up with this idea. **Bill Elliott, Ross Elliott Jewelers, Terre Haute, IN**

I like seeing that I'm not here on the river rowing my boat alone. **Stew Brandt, H. Brandt Jewelers, Natick, MA**

We began our business 21 years ago — about the same time as INSTORE. I feel like we've grown up together! Our staff gets a kick out of our "fame" in the magazine, and I think it helps legitimize our



BETH CEVASCO

small business in a big pond. **Beth Cevasco, Scott's Custom Jewelers, Dublin, OH**

I enjoy it and like to feel like I contribute to the overall feel of the industry for others. I like the fact smaller town jewelers

like myself can have their voice heard. Some other publications seem to be focused on the chains and larger operations. **Tom R. Nelson, Nelson Jewelry, Spencer, IA**

I enjoy reading them. It takes everyone to know what to do next. A giant group to help everyone survive. **Cathy Denney, Denney Jewelers, Springfield, IL**

I feel like I'm helping the statistics be more accurate. I used to think my little store did not matter, but now I know it does! **Rick Sanders, Sanders Jewelers, Gainesville, FL**

When I read Brain Squad quotes from other jewelers, I feel connected, not isolated. I'm part of a community and I can learn what is or is not working for other jewelers. **Theresa Peregoy, Classic Facets, Edgewater, CO**

It feels good when I read something that I responded to. Maybe other jewelers will see something from my perspective. **Tommy Thobe, The Village Gem, Perry Hall, MD**

Has been very informative to see the trends from across the country, as well as how we're stacking up to folks in our geographic area. **Roger Pauling, Lapidary Arts Custom Jewelry, Plano, TX**

I like the monthly process of answering the quiz. It gives me a moment to think about these business issues. I make it a practice to have my bank reconciliation done before the quiz comes out so I know where we stand! I like contributing to the industry with my answers, but I must say I feel like I get back so much from the other retailers.

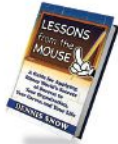


ELLIE THOMPSON

I'm grateful for this forum and for INSTORE! **Ellie Thompson, Ellie Thompson + Co., Chicago, IL**

It's been fun to be a part of a community and hear how everyone else approaches different sales and marketing strategies. **Rebecca Larson, Barry Peterson Jewelers, Ketchum, ID**

I love to read the answers of what's selling. It gives a good idea of what vendors I need to look at. **Karla Doolittle, Mark Jewelers, La Crosse, WI**

**DEEP READING**

Lessons from the Mouse: A Guide for Applying Disney World's Secrets of Success to Your Organization, Your Career, and Your Life BY DENNIS SNOW

It has a chapter titled "What Time Does the 3 O'clock Parade Start?" that deals with the broad questions customers ask when they need specific information. I use this daily when customers ask what time we close today. I always give our full list of hours for the week. — Mark Butler, *K E Butler & Company Jewelers, Vidalia, GA*

FIRE DRILL

Would you fire a customer who is always polite to you, but rude to your employees?



56% YES **44%** NO

ONE QUICK QUESTION

If you could upgrade one of these areas of your store, which would it be?

15%
Flooring

22%
Lighting

32%
Showcases/
countertops

15%
Exterior

16%
My store is
currently perfect

DO YOU OR DON'T YOU**DO YOU WORK WITH OTHER LOCAL BUSINESSES ON CO-PROMOTIONS?****YES 36%**

It's a good idea. My uncle once told me that your enemies don't do business with you, only your friends. Referrals are an endorsement by a friend. **Murphy McMahon, Murphy McMahon & Co., Kalispell, MT**

We love to partner with food trucks, mobile boutiques, and other "odd partners." It's a great way to introduce new traffic to both and builds camaraderie with other business owners! **Jennifer Farnes, Revolution Jewelry Works, Colorado Springs, CO**

We feature local food companies at our trunk shows and cross-promote with a friend who designs couture bridal. **Betsy Barron, Love & Luxe, San Francisco, CA**

We supply the bling for local fashion show events. **Steven Wardle, Forest Beach Design, Chatham, MA**

I always look to collaborate with other businesses. Every time we do an event at the store, we use the same

restaurant/caterer and we promote them in our ads. We get a discount and promote each other. I have a friend who owns a health spa in the area; we have partnered up doing events in each other's place of business. It is good to take advantage of each other's customer bases. **Michael Kanoff, Michael's Jewelers, Yardley, PA**

Hair salons and bridal stores and high-end car stores. **Alan Perry, Perry's Emporium, Wilmington, NC**

We've had some good and some bad experiences with co-promotions. But, it's like a third party endorsement and you hope to collect sales from their customers. At the very least collect data for new customers for future use. **Tim Bodis, Diamond Designs by Bodis, Rice Lake, WI**

We partnered with a local high-end nail salon and offered free nail art for our anniversary party. We also hosted a pop-up piercing event with a local tattoo parlor, that was so much fun! **Rachel Pfeiffer, Lane & Kate, Cincinnati, OH**

My store is on a main street. The town really does up December with "Miracle on Market Street," so we all work together and cross-promote. **Susan Kauffman, Black Dog Jewelers, Lewisburg, PA**

It is becoming harder to do because we are seeing less and less retail in our downtown. Those of us left feel strongly we need to stick together. A lot of effort is put into Small Business Saturday, and we all see the benefit. **Andrew Russakoff, Russakoff Jewelers, Skowhegan, ME**

Wine tasting. Mutually beneficial and loosens inhibitions! **Kas Jacquot, Kas A Designs, Jefferson City, MO**

NO 64%

Had a bad experience with our most acclaimed restaurant. I gave gift certificates for his place to our best customers; he gave our gift certificates to his key employees and family. Will try again with someone who gets it. **Bill Elliott, Ross Elliott Jewelers, Terre Haute, IN**

I probably should; seems like there is never enough time in the day. **Dwaine Ferguson, Goldsmith Silversmith Inc., Omaha, NE**

Have tried on many occasions and nothing seems to fit. Would be open to some suggestions though. **Joseph Deleffano, Regency Jewelers, Rotterdam, NY**

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THE CASE OF THE

THE WHOLESALER WHODUNNIT

A PRIVATE JEWELER GETS HIMSELF INTO TROUBLE OVER A CHIPPED DIAMOND.



CREATED BY Kate Peterson, president and CEO of Performance Concepts, a management consultancy for jewelers. Email her at kate@performance-concepts.net.

Joe Valentine always considered himself a bit of a rebel. His dad was a sales rep who used to refer to himself as a “road warrior” — one of the old-school traveling guys who carried several higher-end lines through the territory surrounding their home state of Arizona. Joe learned enough about the business at an early age to make himself valuable to a few of his dad’s associates as part-time help throughout high school and college. It was great experience, and Joe learned a tremendous amount about both the retail and the wholesale sides of the business.

After graduating from Arizona State with a communications degree (and a G.G. designation earned in 2016), Joe took six months off to travel Europe. When Joe got home, he was not surprised to find that there were several industry jobs waiting for him. He was surprised to discover, though, that he really didn’t want to commit to any of them. It seemed that the restlessness that took him to Europe had followed him home. As much as he loved diamonds and enjoyed working with people, he just couldn’t get excited about being an employee tied to a fixed schedule and a limited inventory.

About a month later, Joe got a text from one of his old high school football teammates asking

for help picking out an engagement ring for his girlfriend. Joe asked him to pass on some details about what he had in mind and offered to help put together a deal with one of his wholesale contacts. With a few phone calls and a couple hours of work, a beautiful, custom 1.5-carat emerald cut diamond engagement ring was born. His friend got a great deal, and Joe made a \$3,500 profit! Shortly after the ring was delivered, the first referral call came in from a local acquaintance in need of an anniversary gift. He’d heard that Joe helped their mutual friend and wondered if he might give him a hand as well. After delivering a fabulous diamond pendant and working with a couple more friends and friends of friends, sourcing everything “as needed” through his industry connections, it occurred to Joe that he might be on his way to starting his own business as a private jeweler. He liked the sound of that.

About a year and 15 or so transactions later, Joe sourced and sold a 1.71-carat cushion cut diamond (H, SI1, with a GIA report) to

Adam Everson, the brother of a college friend. He also sourced a platinum halo setting matching the picture of what Adam said his girlfriend wanted, making the total for the ring \$11,300 — Joe’s biggest private sale so far. When the mounting came in, Joe sent it, along with the diamond, to the local jeweler he typically used for setting. Joe looked at the ring briefly when it came back from the shop, then contacted Adam to pick it up. The ring was delivered May 10 with the GIA report and a printed-from-Excel receipt that noted a 10-day money back

guarantee in the fine print at the bottom.

Adam’s girlfriend Julie was absolutely thrilled with the ring when he proposed on June 21. Once she said “yes” and he knew the ring would actually be worn, Adam reached out to his insurance agent to add it to his homeowners’ policy. His agent said he needed an appraisal and referred him to a local appraiser.

When Adam and Julie met with the appraiser on July 5, the appraiser pointed out a chip in the diamond under one of the prongs. Julie was devastated, believing



THE BIG QUESTIONS

that she somehow damaged her engagement ring within just two weeks of getting it. The appraiser showed it to both Julie and Adam under a microscope. He pointed out that the seat of the prong (like two of the others) didn't align properly with the thick girdle of the diamond and that there was no way Julie could have damaged the diamond in that fashion, even with rough wear. He assured them that the diamond was chipped in setting and said that the damage was enough to reduce the clarity grade to an SI2 at best.

After taking the ring to a second appraiser for confirmation, Adam called Joe, demanding a full refund. Joe agreed to meet with Adam to look at the ring himself. After seeing the chip and the diamond apparently separated from the prong's seat, Joe told Adam that a refund wouldn't be possible. He said that the ring was in perfect condition when it left his hands and that Julie must have hit it hard to do that kind of damage. He also pointed out that it had been nearly two months since the ring was delivered — well past the 10-day return window. Joe did offer to look into options for recutting the diamond, and as a gesture of good will, offered to split the cost of the job. Adam was not happy, but since Julie loved her ring and was heartsick at the thought of giving it up, he agreed to wait until he heard what Joe found out.

Covering his bases, Joe contacted the jeweler who set the diamond to see if he recalled anything strange about the job, and to see if the jeweler had insurance that would cover damage to customer property. The jeweler completely disavowed any responsibility for the chip, saying the ring was in perfect condition when it left his shop — and told Joe that he'd never had insurance in over 25 years and never

needed it since he never damaged a diamond.

Joe called Adam to let him know that a recut would cost about \$500 total, and that based on his best guess, the recut diamond would lose about 10 percent of its weight in the process. Adam was not happy and threatened legal action. He reminded Joe that when asked about the reliability of the grade on the report, Joe had said he would offer a full refund if the diamond was found to be of lower quality than was stated on the GIA report. Adam pointed out that he now had two appraisals that said that his diamond was actually an SI2.

Joe was not interested in taking the ring back, since, despite the appraisers' contrary view, he was sure the damage had been done after the ring was delivered. Besides, he had already used Adam's money to pay his diamond supplier, the mounting manufacturer and the jeweler who set the stone. There wasn't much profit in the deal either. He didn't have the cash to just buy Adam a new diamond, and he didn't sell "ready-made" rings, so even recut, the piece wouldn't be of any use to him. The bigger issue, however, was that while Joe had enjoyed earning a few extra dollars from time to time over the year, he never quite got around to taking care of the business setup paperwork. While he was known as a "wholesale dealer" within his circle of friends, he was technically a reseller that just didn't charge (or pay) sales tax — and that made any potential legal action seriously problematic.

* Real Deal scenarios are inspired by true stories but are changed to sharpen the dilemmas involved and should not be confused with real people or places. Responses are peer-sourced opinions and are not a substitute for professional legal advice. Please contact your attorney if you have any questions about an employee or customer situation in your own business.

What should Joe do at this point? What should he do to better protect himself and his customers going forward?

Marcus Majors

SAM L. MAJORS, MIDLAND, TX

▶ Classic case of someone trying to make a quick buck in the jewelry industry while having no business sense or real experience. Joe needs to borrow some money from his dad or a friend and give this guy his money back. Whether the jeweler chipped it in setting or the customer did it wearing the ring, he's in some trouble if he doesn't appease this customer. If he had an actual business set up, he would probably have more options like replacing the diamond and having the chipped stone re-cut. Then he could resell it and make his money back. But he doesn't. He tried to beat the system, and that never works out well. Get a real job, Joe!

Stan Greenberg

THE JEWELRY SHOP, CHARLOTTE, NC

▶ Joe should have offered to have the diamond re-cut at no cost to Adam. It's just a cost of doing business when *all* he has is word-of-mouth referrals. Going forward, form an LLC, start charging and paying sales tax, and be sure to personally inspect every single item and diamond that he has his name on before and after setting.

Ralph Himelick

SANDERS JEWELERS, CONNERSVILLE, IN

▶ If you are going to operate at this level, you need (at least) to set up an LLC. The seller should have known better than to just pretend to go into business. There is no way you don't get caught eventually. You are either in business or not. One of the reasons for a business' level of pricing is the panoply of hidden costs a buyer never sees. The seller was playing at this and

got caught. If the dummy goes to court, he'll soon be in another court re: unpaid sales taxes and untold fines. Borrow the money from Dad and work for him to pay it off. For this size transaction, examine the stone under the microscope with the buyer and have him sign a statement that the stone shows no damage. Be darned sure that it is set cleanly and properly. Your lawyer should prepare any statement of warranty or return; all parties should sign. You're in the real world now.

Steve Jones

OLD WEST GUNS & TRADING CO., CAREFREE, AZ

▶ Joe should change his name and move to Europe or pay for a recut out of his own pocket.

Stuart Tamres

TALLES DIAMONDS AND GOLD, REISTERSTOWN, MD

▶ This story kind of makes me smile. Everyone wants to be a jeweler but won't do what it takes. If he was a professional jeweler, he would have known to check the stone before he sold it as well as after it was set. Take care of the problem before it becomes a problem. What I would do at this point is to contact the diamond dealer and try to return the diamond to him to be repaired, and then purchase another diamond to take its place. We all (professional jewelers) have had to do things like this. However, he most likely won't take the loss and won't do anything for the customer, therefore making the rest of us look bad. Shame on the diamond dealer for selling it to a non-dealer.



ONLINE EXTRA! Check out other Real Deals and comment on this one at instoremag.com/realdeal

A REAL DEAL RETROSPECTIVE

Musings on 20 years of challenges and victories

BY KATE PETERSON

“The more things change, the more they stay the same.”

ALPHONSE KARR

I cover a lot of ground in my business, but I have to say that writing the Real Deal for the past 20 years is, without a doubt, my favorite job. The Real Deal was one of the columns developed as part of the original plan for INSTORE Magazine. The idea was to present fictionalized descriptions of some of the most frequently encountered issues in retail jewelry stores, along with specific suggestions for dealing with them. The column appeared in the very first issue of INSTORE in January 2002 and has been a regular feature ever since.

Over the ensuing 20 years — 220 or so columns — we’ve never been at a loss for stories about the bizarre occurrences that are a way of life in retail jewelry stores. The comment/question I get more than any other at shows and industry events is, “I love your Real Deal column. How do you keep thinking up all those stories?” My answer is always the same: “We don’t make this stuff up ... it actually happens!” And the question I ask most often when clients reach out for help with especially prickly situations is, “If I promise to cover up the identifying details really well, can I use this for a Real Deal?”

Looking back over the stories, while the details are different, the issues have not changed substantially over 20 years — from cheating spouses and breakups to difficult employees to nasty competitors and bad appraisals

to customers destroying pieces and wanting refunds (and those are the easy ones!). That first Real Deal back in 2002 was about a “second opinion” killing a diamond sale. Twenty years ago, the second opinion was coming from a best friend. In early 2022, we’ll tell a very similar story — but this time, the second opinion is the chat “friend” on another seller’s website. In 2003, we told the story of an employee overheard gossiping about a customer while in the restroom of a mall restaurant. Last year, the story was about an associate discussing her dissatisfaction with her employer on Facebook. Twenty years ago,

we presented the issue of customers shopping for information in one store while intending to buy in another. Today, it’s shopping for information while intending to buy online. All in all, the reach is quite different, but the underlying issues really have stayed the same. And, there’s comfort in knowing that other business owners face many of the same challenges we do, and some challenges that are even crazier than anything we’ve encountered — yet!

For me, one of the best evolutions in Real Deal history came in 2004 when we decided to make our December column a celebration of our industry and a reminder of why we do what we do. That year, instead of the usual problem to solve, the December Real Deal was about the earliest days of Lee Michaels Fine Jewelry, and about the commitment to extraordinary

service that had Lee Berg putting his visiting brother on a plane to the West Coast to retrieve a special piece that had become available just two days before Christmas to fulfill a customer’s request. (No FedEx in 1978!) In the 17 Decembers since then, we’ve celebrated many other stores and store owners who deserved recognition.

As an industry, we’ve been through a lot of phases in the past 20 years: recession and recovery, natural disasters, public relations challenges, technological innovations, rapidly evolving consumer (and employee) behavior, and most recently, a global pandemic, labor shortage and supply chain craziness — just to name a few. Through it all, telling the stories of our real-life challenges and victories has been a remarkable privilege. I can’t wait to see what the next 20 years brings!



Karen Hollis (left) was featured in December 2016 for her charity work.



Background research helps keep Real Deal scenarios relevant.



Many years of experience provide the Real Deal with context and insight. Kate Peterson (center) is shown here with former colleagues Frank LaRoux and Cindy Groover.



Jeff Bean, featured in December 2017, held a benefit for another local jeweler.

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ATELIER D'EMOTION / SOHO, NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK

SOHO SENSIBILITY

Eclectic retail experience appeals to all of the senses

BY EILEEN McCLELLAND



Alice Sundbom has found her niche in Soho.

People who regularly stop by Atelier d'Emotion never know quite what they'll find on any given day. That's part of the charm of this tempting Soho spot.

A welcoming vibe, one-of-a-kind jewelry and luxurious perfumes are a given. But there might also be the opportunity to have a portrait drawn on the spot

by a guest artist, or to meet the designer of Lady Gaga's hats.

"Atelier d'Emotion is a great local meeting spot for discovering things you didn't know you wanted," says proprietor Alice Sundbom. "I think experience is the way to go in retail.

For jewelry, you need to touch it, you need to feel it, and if you add an experience, you will get people out of the house to see it."

Sundbom collaborated with Jewelry Week NYC, Brooklyn Metal Works and R & Company to host a multisensory "dinner," during which courses served were jewelry and scents, rather than food. Eight jewelers presented an intimate, four-course "meal" of the ingredients behind their work to a small table of guests.

Whatever happens, visitors

know it will be an immersive experience, and that if the unidentified resident friendly ghost gets her way, the ambient music will be smooth rather than syncopated.

"The ghost is friendly, but if we have an annoying customer, she slams the door. And the ghost hates rap music, so we change it to the Pink Martini Channel and everything is fine," says Sundbom.

After a visitor has explored the store a couple of times, they are likely to bring their friends and start making plans to meet their favorite designers in person. Sundbom is adept at building a following both for her store and for the artists her store represents.



Alice Sundbom is building a following.

Customers are invited to develop relationships with the atelier's featured artists, who take custom requests. "If they like the aesthetic of one of our 30 designers, they can say 'I want to make it my own' in the aesthetic of that designer. Now people come to us for wedding pieces that are extraordinary pieces you cannot find anywhere else. That is our niche and that is the future of retail."

Like everything else in her Soho atelier, Sundbom is a one-of-a-kind original.

QUICK FACTS ► **OWNER:** Alice Sundbom | **URL:** atelierdemotion.com | **FOUNDED:** 2018 | **AREA:** 400 square feet | **BUILDOUT COST:** \$20,000 | **TOP BRANDS:** Hi June Parker, Vitae Ascendere, Fedko, Elena Kriegner, Baharra

TRY THIS:

→ **Make sure jewelry artists and designers have a voice in telling their own story in your store.** Designers represented at Atelier d'Emotion regularly visit the store to share their experiences and passion for their work with their followers.

OUR JUDGES SAY

RUTH MELLERGAARD: "This is a very human, giving store and it's also a creative hub for staff and customers who love creative people and the jewelry they design and make."

MICHAEL O'CONNOR: "I love the Bohemian quality of the store and its merchandise mix. It's exactly what one expects from a chic Soho boutique."

JEFF PRINE: "Fantastic merchandise offerings from lesser exposed designers and brands. Smart use of fragrances to augment experiences and keep clients in the store. Unique use of spirituality, etc., to engage customers. Exteriors and interiors harken back to pioneer retailers in Soho who had a point of view, while much of Soho now flounders in big box clones."

JENNIFER SHAHEEN: "Amazing potential. I love the interior of the store. I would love to have stumbled upon this as I walked the city."

Judges for the Small Cool division of INSTORE's America's Coolest Stores Contest 2021 include Hugo Kohl, owner of Hugo Kohl Fine Jewelry in Harrisonburg, VA, and winner in the 2020 Small Cool Division; Jennifer Markas, executive director of the Women's Jewelry Association; Ruth Møllergaard, principal of GRID/3 International, an interior design firm; Michael O'Connor, marketing director for The Plumb Club; Jeff Prine, journalist and consultant; and Jennifer Shaheen, chief digital officer for Hill & Co. and president of the Technology Therapy Group.



Interactive events at Atelier d'Emotion break the ice and usually spill out onto the Soho sidewalk out front.

A psychologist born in Sweden, Sundbom came to jewelry officially when asked to help her best friend market her business of 3D-printed jewelry. Before that, though, she had always had difficulty finding jewelry she liked. Nothing she saw was bold enough. So, she began studying jewelry and modifying what she did buy. "Now," she says, "I would like to buy everything in my store."

She becomes particularly animated when describing the art and the artists.

At Atelier d'Emotion, you can find pieces in solid 22 karat



Manya & Roumen's Gold Pink Sapphire Snail in 18K gold and blackened sterling silver; \$7,900.

gold handcrafted by Bigio, metal chain crocheted jewelry by La Vie Boheme (where a bracelet may contain 300 miles of chain and painstaking work), hand-carved titanium red carpet diamond pieces by Fedko, jewelry animal pets by Manya and Roumen, futuristic 3D printed metal lace designs by Vitae Ascendere, pearls with salt-and-pepper diamonds by Hi June Parker, and pendants that turn into cocktail rings by Elena Kriegner, just to name a few. Some of the perfume bottles are handmade in Italy; Atelier d'Emotion is the exclusive dealer for many of them in New York or on the East Coast.

Beyond seeking a certain style of jewelry, Sundbom is also deeply attuned to the emotions tied to the symbolism of the purchase. The fact that she curates her atelier with one-of-a-kind pieces makes each purchase that much more special to her customers, because, as she says, when you're investing emotionally in jewelry, you don't want to find 10 million pieces that look exactly the same.

"Jewelry *has* to be an object of emotion because it's an emotional purchase."

THANKS TO THE SPONSORS OF THIS YEAR'S AMERICA'S COOLEST STORES!

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As for the space itself, Sundbom filled the landmark building with interior design treasures she found discarded by businesses that closed, such as tables and ottomans from Lord and Taylor's and pillows and showcases from Barney's, creating a casually eclectic look. "Out of the ashes of big retail, here comes Atelier d'Emotion, which is a new form of retail," she says. "Everything is borrowed, recycled and transformed into something new."

Although the store is only 400 square feet, high ceilings make it look more expansive. During a typical event, guests wander in and out of the store, spilling onto the sidewalk with glasses of champagne. But the pandemic brought the atelier's party to a pause, albeit temporarily, in 2020. "Our super vibrant, open, full of people store, became very quiet," Sundbom says.

The front windows, always a

draw, became even more important. She relied on the storytelling power of those windows, showcasing different worlds of art and design, one at a time, changing the art and the displays every week. Passersby began shopping from the sidewalk, and she brought jewelry and art out to them. She also began scheduling virtual appointments that turned into virtual events.

During the early days of the pandemic, Atelier d'Emotion also partnered with Bottomless Closet to help New York City women enter the workforce. During December 2020, 10 percent of every purchase benefited the organization. In November 2020, Atelier d'Emotion helped raise funds for the Global Stress Initiative. The virtual event was designed to raise awareness about a treatment for COVID-19-related post-traumatic stress disorder at a Manhattan Clinic.



FIVE COOL THINGS ABOUT

ATELIER D'EMOTION

1 THE VIRTUAL WORLD. Online, Atelier d'Emotion introduces its designers' work through short videos, allowing each to tell their story, then follows up with images and videos about the designs and promotes those on Instagram and Facebook. "We have recently introduced the feature of booking a virtual appointment, no purchase necessary, another way to show the work of our designers and answer questions about the different materials used and designs," says Sundbom. She sends out a newsletter every month introducing the new designers, art and wearable art pieces.

2 THE BRICK AND MORTAR. Built in 1901, the historical, landmarked Soho building still has its

original tile floors and silver ceilings, preserving the style and elegance of New York City. Original art by New York artists on the walls is constantly rotating, creating a different vibe with every season.

3 THE WAITING LIST. Artists line up to have their work shown in the space. "The only criteria I have is that it doesn't compete with other people and that it's something unique and made in the U.S.," Sundbom says. "You'd be surprised by how many jewelry artists do not fit into the corporate image of the jewelry world."

4 IT'S ON THE MAP. Atelier d'Emotion is on a SOHO Village Association historical walking map, which

draws people to wander by and look at the building. Often, engaging window displays convert sightseers into shoppers. Other local marketing efforts include a display case in the Dominick Hotel and a collaboration with hotel concierges who refer visitors to the store. She also works with

stylists who borrow jewelry for magazine photo shoots when they're looking for distinctive and bold accessories, which is often.

5 PANDEMIC PIVOT. The perfume displayed and sold in the store is unique, unisex and niche, some made

in New York, but also from France, Italy and other regions of the U.S. In response to the COVID pandemic, Sundbom added a variety of hydrating hand sanitizers to the scented collection, as well as masks designed and made in the city. The jewelry designers created unique chains for the masks.





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NINJA MOVES

Connecticut jeweler pivots from one promising possibility to the next

A DEEPER LEVEL

When I was selling on the wholesale level, I didn't often work with customers and hear their stories or hear why they connected with our jewelry. It's so much more of an emotional sale with a retail sale, selling one special piece that makes a difference to them. It's an intimate experience.



ONLINE EXTRA!
Read more about what inspires Daniela at instoremag.com/getinspired/

AN OPEN HEART

A couple years into owning the store in Guilford, Paul Lirot, a bench jeweler who owned a jewelry store in Madison for 40 years, called me and said, "I'm retiring, kid." I had always been inspired by him; he was a mentor to me in many ways. I took over the space and it was a seamless transition. I'm just standing on the shoulders of giants. If you can keep an open heart and open mind, the learning never ends.

FAST MOVER

We renovated the new space in three weeks, pulled up the floor, put in a new window, painted, added cool chandeliers. Did all that in three weeks, and then one Sunday, we closed the small store, and my college-age daughter, my husband and I brought furniture over and I merchandised everything, and it was open for business the next day. It was like a ninja move — but it was across the parking lot, so it was not that complicated.

JUST SAY YES

We've had the craziest jobs brought into the store. Other stores would say, "We just don't do that here," but there's always an answer to be found. I'm not always sure that this is going to be a project that works out, but I realized you can always remake something. Being more vulnerable is a strength of ours.

DANIELA BALZANO, a former art teacher who had considered becoming a veterinarian, found her way to jewelry when she was hired as a sales rep for Kabana and then Sylvie Collection. She opened Water Street Jewelers in 2019 in Guilford, CT, relocating to a larger space the following year. Then, in 2021 when her mentor retired from his store in Madison, CT, she took on a second store. Says Balzano: "We're so busy. There is not a breather between customers. I'm over the moon." She and her husband, Todd Taylor, have six children between 11 and 23. "My husband is so engaged with the kids and my business and our household and that has lent to the success of the stores. He is so hands-on and helpful," she says.

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