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NOVEMBER 2025

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE AMERICAN
JEWELRY STORE OWNER

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turns scrap
into statement

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builds high-end
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14 BIG
NEW RING
DESIGNS
NEW ARRIVALS

circusLife

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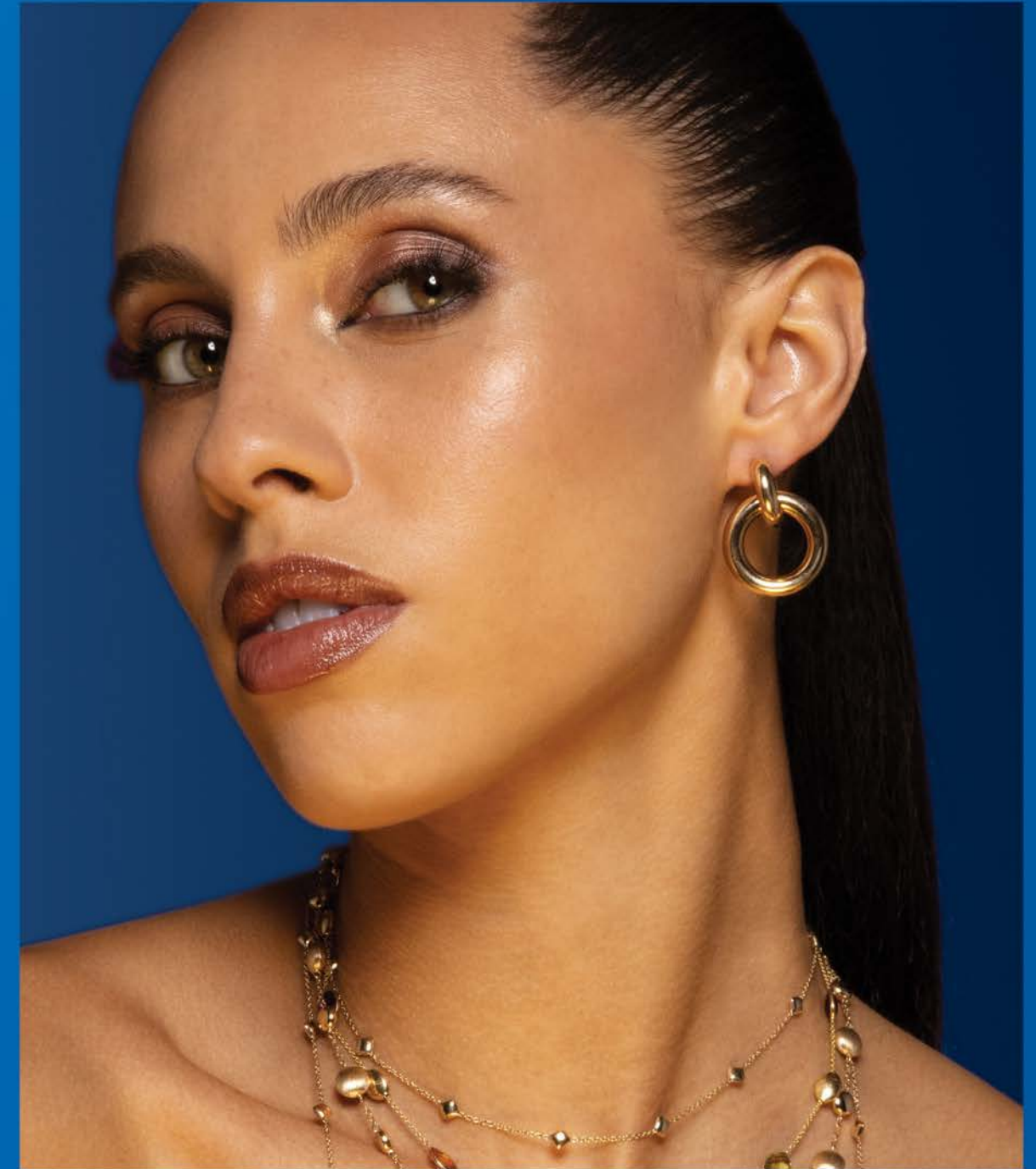
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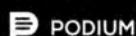
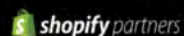
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THE MAGAZINE FOR THE AMERICAN
JEWELRY STORE OWNER

NOVEMBER 2025

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THE 19TH ANNUAL BIG SURVEY

Step right up and prepare to be astounded by the results of the largest data-gathering exercise for jewelry retailers!



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ON THE COVER Platinum jewelry by Platinum Born includes Lunar Studs available in four sizes, \$570-\$880; Aurora Ear Cuff, \$1,140; and rings (from left) Triple Limitless Ring stacked with one Limitless Ring, \$1,280-\$1,360 and \$400-\$450 (based on size); Cosmic Cluster Ring, \$1,075; Stargazer Ring, \$1,370-\$1,400; Limitless Ring, \$400-\$450; Stardust Ring, \$1,540-\$1,600; and Square Limitless Ring, \$790. For more information, contact (888) 869-5419 or sales@platinumborn.com, or visit platinumbornpartners.com. **MODEL:** Lisa Dillon. **PHOTOGRAPHER:** Maria Bentley. **AGENCY:** 121 DX.

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INSTORE

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE AMERICAN JEWELRY STORE OWNER

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NOTE FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

HERE COME THE HOLIDAYS

A year of uncertainty, captured by our Big Survey, will be capped over the next two months **BY TRACE SHELTON**

WHAT A YEAR 2025 has been. Economic uncertainty, rising gold prices, the continued influence of lab-grown diamonds and a slew of tariffs have made it a tricky year for jewelry retailers to navigate. All of these factors and their impact on independent jewelers are measured in this year's Big Survey, our 19th annual edition



of the most extensive data-gathering exercise covering jewelry retail. In addition to reading about how each of these dynamics has affected your peers, you will also learn how your fellow retailers have embraced innovative ideas to drive business success.

Often, challenging circumstances can lead to the most impressive solutions (hey, it's a cliché for a reason!).

At the INSTORE Jewelry Show in September, we got to see firsthand how many of you are heading into the holiday season with sound plans and impressive strategies. The buzz around the show was palpable as attendees didn't just come to browse — they were buying. And lots of you took advantage of our Social

Media Content Studio to produce expert-guided videos and photos for your holiday posts and promotions, not to mention our extensive education program focused on holiday success.

Black Friday is just around the corner. As always, we'll have weekly updates tracking sales for our Brain Squad. If you're not a part of it, sign up at instoremag.com/brainsquad; the more of you who give us feedback, the more accurate our information will be and the more you can benefit.

✉ trace@smartworkmedia.com

FIVE SMART TIPS YOU'LL FIND IN THIS ISSUE

1. Ease workload on your shop and boost foot traffic in January by promoting cheaper repairs after Christmas. **MANAGER'S TO-DO, P. 26**
2. During the holiday selling season, give staff members the chance to take 10-minute walks to clear their heads. **MANAGER'S TO-DO, P. 26**
3. Create a collection of upcycled jewelry in your store from scrap metals and orphaned gemstones. **BEST OF THE BEST, P. 58**
4. Protect your store from costly product recalls by establishing strong vendor agreements that clearly define liability for defects. **REAL DEAL, P. 60**
5. Create a "legacy wall" to tell the history of your business. **COOL STORES, P. 64**





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COVER STORY



THE BIG SURVEY

It's called the *Big Survey* for a reason — we get way more intelligence from it than we can possibly fit in print. Check out INSTORE Online for more results and analysis from the largest annual data-gathering effort in the jewelry industry.

THAT'S LIFE

LONDON CALLING

Naples, FL, store owner and former NCAA track athlete Vivian Grimes loves trips to London and recreational running. Read an exclusive Q&A with Vivian at INSTORE Online.



MARKETING

SPEAK LIKE THEY SPEAK

Are you offering people genuine value in your marketing or just shouting into the wind? In an exclusive column at INSTORE Online, Guy Pineda shares how understanding your client, writing as they speak and creating synergy in your promotional efforts can make your marketing more intuitive and persuasive.

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Products / Latest Trends / Services

INFRONT

PAGE 22 New Arrivals

PAGE 24 Hot Sellers

PAGE 26 Manager's To-Do

Handmade 14K gold jewelry from MIGHTY's FIERCE Collection includes Audacious Pavé Black Diamond Signet Ring, \$11,320; Outrageous Grill Signet Ring, \$9,345; Audacious Pavé Diamond Signet Ring, \$12,125; Audacious Grill Signet Ring, \$6,950; Cheeky Pavé Diamond Signet Ring, \$8,890; Outrageous Pavé Diamond Signet Ring, \$14,710; Cheeky Grill Signet Ring, \$5,385; Outrageous Pavé Diamond Necklace, from \$20,585; and Audacious Pavé Black Diamond Necklace, from \$9,725. For more information, email frances@mightydynamo.com or visit mightyjewels.com.

Flamboyant Fingers

Big rings are the thing BY BECKY STONE

FALL 2025 IS A maximalist style moment: Jewelry lovers are gravitating towards large, distinctive styles, and they're not afraid to wear them together. It's a joyous approach to jewelry, a visual refusal to disappear, full of personality and bold self-expression. Because if you're going to buy new jewelry with the gold price this high, you want everyone to be able to notice it!

MODEL: Lana Taylor

PHOTOGRAPHER:
S. Brent Martin

AGENCY: Sutherland Models

THICK PICKS

RINGS ARE THICKER than ever with chunky, satisfyingly solid settings and often fluid, fantastical forms that feel as good as they look. It's an unapologetically dramatic style, a sizable statement that says the wearer knows who they are and aren't afraid to show it. Remind your customers that chunky rings can still be stacked! Yes, it's a lot of look, but they can handle it.



1. ROYAL JEWELRY
14K yellow gold ring with diamonds (0.50 TCW). info@royal-jewelry.com, royal-jewelry.com
\$2,500

2. ADEL CHEFRIDI
Sterling silver ring with sapphire, aquamarine, and diamonds. info@chefridi.com, chefridi.com
\$1,300

3. ORMAN
14K green gold ring with aventurine. info@atelierorman.com, atelierorman.com
\$7,700

4. ENDLESS DESIGNS
14K yellow gold ring. info@endlessdesigns.com, endlessdesigns.com
\$3,500

5. CLAUDIA MAE
14K yellow gold ring with turquoise, aquamarine, ruby, and spinel. info@claudia-mae.com, claudia-mae.com
\$9,300

6. ANIA HAIE
14K yellow gold-plated sterling silver ring with tiger's eye. salesus@aniahaie.com, aniahaie.com
\$119

7. PENNY PREVILLE
18K white gold and diamond ring. info@pennypreville.com, pennypreville.com
\$4,895



COCKTAIL CRAVING

THE COCKTAIL RING'S NAME dates to the speakeasies of the Prohibition Era, when cocktail rings became a symbol of defiance, a glamorous, sparkling challenge that modern women wore while defying social norms to sip forbidden drinks in secret establishments. This kind of empowerment-through-jewelry is enjoying a new heyday, and it's just as impactful and satisfying now as it was 100 years ago.



8. ELIZABETH MOORE
Recycled 18K yellow gold ring with labradorite. elizabeth@elizabethmoore.com, elizabethmoore.com
\$3,805

9. KABANA JEWELRY
14K yellow gold ring with spiny oyster, mother of pearl, and diamonds (0.04 TCW). custservice@kabana.com, kabana.com
\$3,725

10. CCWW DESIGNS
14K yellow gold ring with amethyst and sapphire. lauren@megamegaprojects.com, ccwwdesigns.com
Price on request

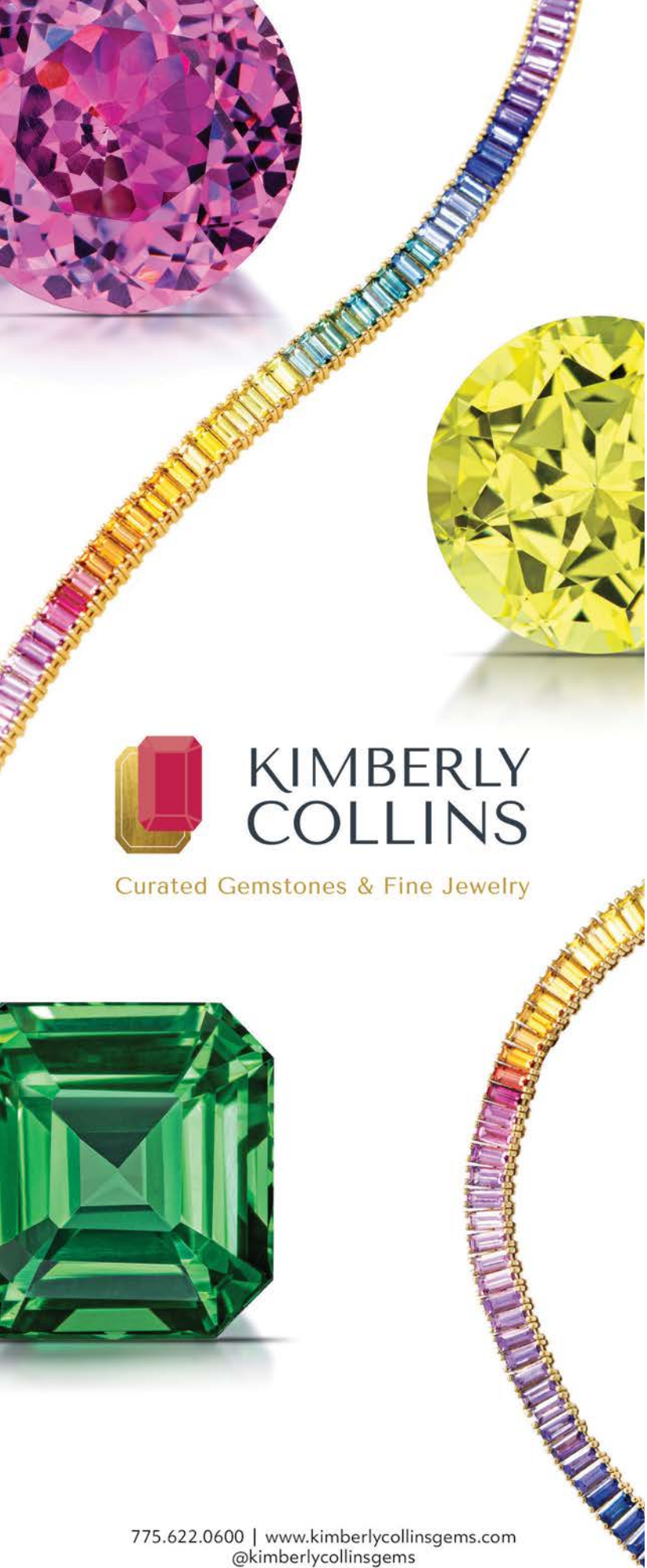
11. AMÁLI JEWELRY
18K yellow gold and sterling silver ring with amethyst. (781) 789-8976, amalijewelry.com
\$1,340

12. LA MARQUISE
18K yellow gold ring with emerald (0.26 TCW), turquoise (0.50 TCW), and diamonds (0.17 TCW). info@lamarquisejewellery.com, lamarquisejewellery.com
\$1,600

13. VIANA BY PRECIOUS
18K yellow gold and rhodium-plated ring with rubies (1.49 TCW) and diamonds (0.28 TCW). (212) 221-7700, precious-colors.us
\$4,995

14. KK WEARABLE SCULPTURE
Sterling silver ring with tourmaline. kkingcgi@gmail.com, kkwearables-culpture.com
\$4,112





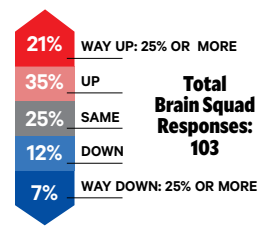
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BY THE NUMBERS

INFRONT

MONTHLY SALES SURVEY
HOW WERE SALES
LAST MONTH
COMPARED TO
SEPTEMBER 2024?



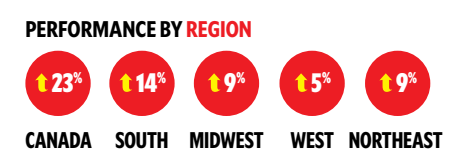
TOP PERFORMING VENDORS
The top wholesalers by sales volume for September.

1. Stuller
 2. Gabriel & Co.
 3. Quality Gold
 4. Heera Moti
 5. IDD
- The wholesalers with the largest increases in sales percentage year over year for September.
1. Stuller **UP 17%**
 2. Heera Moti **UP 15%**
 3. Quality Gold **UP 11%**
 - 4T. Gabriel & Co. **UP 10%**
 - 4T. IDD **UP 10%**

MONTHLY SALES PERFORMANCE

BY SHERRY SMITH
EDGE RETAIL ACADEMY

INDEPENDENT JEWELERS across North America posted strong September results, with notable gains in several regions. As we head into the holiday season, independents are encouraged to focus efforts on strategic marketing initiatives designed to keep their stores top of mind with customers. With increased competition for the discretionary dollar, now is the time to stand out through personalized marketing, memorable experiences, and consistent communication. A strong finish to the year will depend not only on product assortment and inventory readiness but also on the ability to cut through the noise and remain relevant to both loyal and new customers.



* Edge Retail Academy figures are based on an aggregation of over \$3 billion in annual fine jewelry sales data from independent jewelers.

LAB-GROWN DIAMOND WHOLESALE PRICE LIST BY EDAHN GOLAN

WHOLESALE TRADING PRICES for lab-grown diamonds fell an additional 37% year on year in the third quarter of 2025. Wholesale prices declined 9% quarter on quarter. The largest price declines were seen in 3-carat rounds, which plummeted 43% year over year. The LGD Wholesale Price List reflects wholesale market trade, not retail costs. The average retail cost of a round, 1-carat IGI-certified lab-grown diamond was \$178 per carat in Q3. U.S. jewelry retailers currently earn an average gross margin of 79% for 1- to 3-carat rounds.

ROUNDS				FANCY SHAPES				SQUARES			
1 ct	VVS	VS	SI	1 ct	VVS	VS	SI	1 ct	VVS	VS	SI
D	76	73	70	D	98	94	84	D	76	72	67
EF	74	72	70	EF	95	91	80	EF	74	71	60
GH	79	75	70	GH	91	85	69	GH	71	67	60
1.5 ct	VVS	VS	SI	1.5 ct	VVS	VS	SI	1.5 ct	VVS	VS	SI
D	106	94	89	D	112	105	92	D	78	74	68
EF	102	91	86	EF	107	98	81	EF	75	72	60
GH	94	89	76	GH	92	85	79	GH	70	66	59
2 ct	VVS	VS	SI	2 ct	VVS	VS	SI	2 ct	VVS	VS	SI
D	128	116	91	D	125	111	99	D	92	89	79
EF	107	102	78	EF	111	103	90	EF	89	85	71
GH	100	95	71	GH	90	83	80	GH	76	71	66
3 ct	VVS	VS	SI	3 ct	VVS	VS	SI	3 ct	VVS	VS	SI
D	139	122	115	D	134	113	103	D	112	102	95
EF	104	101	77	EF	106	101	93	EF	103	92	78
GH	99	94	85	GH	95	88	82	GH	87	76	70

* The price list is based on actual transaction prices for larger certified lab-grown diamonds in nice makes. Prices are for small volume purchases.

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DECEMBER

MANAGER'S TO-DO LIST



ERIC STEVENS, STEVENS
DIAMOND JEWELERS,
WEST SPRINGFIELD, MA

“Make sure all debts are paid for inventory and memo so you can start with a clean slate.”

WEEK 1

NOV. 30-DEC. 6

MANAGEMENT Given all the economic uncertainty, the momentum this holiday season is likely to be slow to build, so keep faith in your marketing efforts and put in place a contingency plan in case you have a sudden rush in the last week before Christmas.

OPERATIONS Run through a checklist of everything that needs to be taken care of to allow you to focus on selling during the holiday season. After a busy day working, the last thing you'll want to do is run an errand.

SHOP Repairs are a revenue staple, but too many at this time of year can be an unwelcome drag on store operations. Target your customer list with a promotion that includes a cheaper option for repairs collected in January. You'll ease the workload on the shop and boost foot traffic in January as well.

WEEK 2

DEC. 7-13

SERVICE Let your best customers know that you can organize private visits during off-store hours to show jewelry, either in the store or at their homes (for your true VVIP clients).

MERCHANDISING Do a run over your displays. Make sure the glass tops of your showcases are completely clear of clutter. In fact, clear the entire store of “visual clutter,” such as plastic flowers and excessive window coverings.

SELF-CARE Keep water bottles for yourself and staff placed strategically around the store. Staying hydrated during this time is critical.

WEEK 3

DEC. 14-20

TRAINING Keep coaching. Changes in small behaviors can have huge results. Each day, ask employees to keep in mind one specific behavior. It could be mimicking, maintaining eye contact, smiling, getting customers to try on items,

getting permission to follow up, and asking, “So ... who else is on your list?”

CRM Lull in the store? Or just need a break from the sales floor or managing staff? Start drafting thank-you notes (although don't send them yet). You'll appreciate the head-start come Dec. 26.

WEEK 4

DEC. 21-27

STAFF Give staff members the chance to take 10-minute walks to clear their heads. Great tip for a quick foot massage: Keep a bottle or a golf ball handy to roll under your feet.

DATABASE BUILDING Christmas is done. Start entering all that customer data you collected in the last few weeks.

WEEK 5

DEC. 28-JAN. 3

PLANNING Put reminders on your 2026 calendar, including one mid-year, to check in and see what you've accomplished at that point and what you need to do to get or stay on track.

MANAGEMENT On New Year's Eve, here's a question to ask yourself as you prepare to close your doors on 2025: Was the less-than-successful approach I took to a long-running issue/challenge/problem this year the same one that I used in 2024?



HOT DATES

14 Hanukkah comes earlier than usual this year, starting on the evening of Dec. 14 and running until Dec. 22. The timing will allow you to offer a distinct display that doesn't get lost in all the Christmas revelry.

19 On National Ugly Sweater Day, encourage your team to show off their most egregious fashion miscalculations with a sweater from years past (most likely the 80s). For customers walking in, it immediately lowers the stress levels and any feelings of intimidation.

21 Winter is here and with it the final desperate flock of “late birds.” When the 43% of consumers who were planning to shop for holiday gifts between Dec. 21 and Dec. 24 last year were asked why they waited until the last minute, “finding the best deals” and “busy schedules” were the most popular reasons given, according to a PriceGrabber survey. With only a few days to go until Christmas, this is your chance to start moving any slow sellers that would be facing heavy markdowns after the holidays.

25 It's Christmas. Turn off your cellphone. Turn off your email. In fact, turn off your brain and simply open your heart to all the wonderful, warm-hearted people who share your home and your life. They've missed you!



GEM QUIZ I don't really blame René Just Haüy; he just wanted a Greek-inspired name that reflected the way I “scatter” when put to the blowpipe flame. Still, it evokes images of toenail fungus, and it is thus no surprise I've become better known by trade names such as Csarite, ottomanite, Turkizite, and zultanite, which play on my connections to the Anatolian Mountains, the only place I'm found in gem quality. Marketing aside, I'm known for my remarkable color change and perfect cleavage. **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.)

OCTOBER'S ANSWER: Uvite
WINNER: Summer Rhoads, Disinger Jewelers of Jasper, Jasper, IN



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PERFORMANCE

PAGE 30 Better than a stuffed bear! Earnings have flattened across much of the industry, but this group of jewelers is taking home the big prize.

BUYING

PAGE 34 Step right up! This brand is 2025's hottest ticket!

SELLING

PAGE 38 Hear feats of daring, strength and skill that will leave you breathless as jewelers share the most inspiring (and regrettable) thing they have done to clinch a sale.



PAGE 42 Watch and be amazed as our industry's conjurers turn carbon into diamonds and profits. Can it last? Jewelers tell.



PAGE 44 "The show that has captivated audiences around the world!" If you feel you are walking a tightrope this year, you're not alone. Economic uncertainty was the No. 1 concern for independent jewelers.



PAGE 48 Elephants are trustworthy and wise, but there's another circus animal that jewelers are more likely to identify with.



PAGE 52 Come take a glance into the future! 60% of jewelers are now using AI tools to support their business. Hear what applications they are finding the most useful.



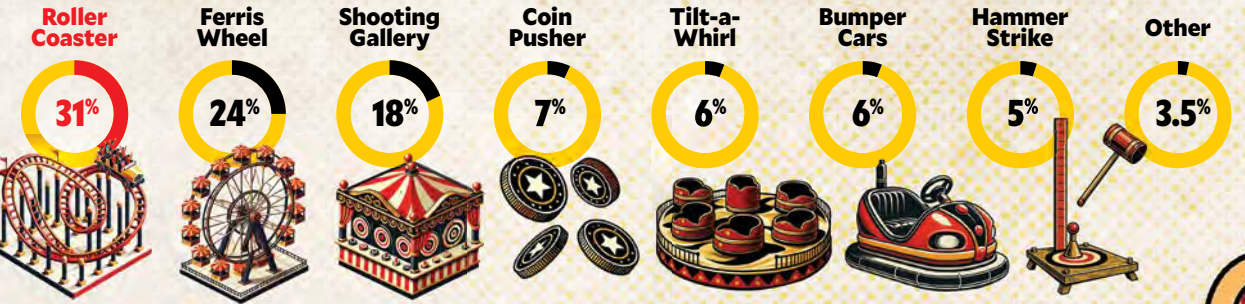
PAGE 54 630 jewelers from 43 states answered the 2025 INSTORE Big Survey, which was conducted via an online form throughout the month of September.

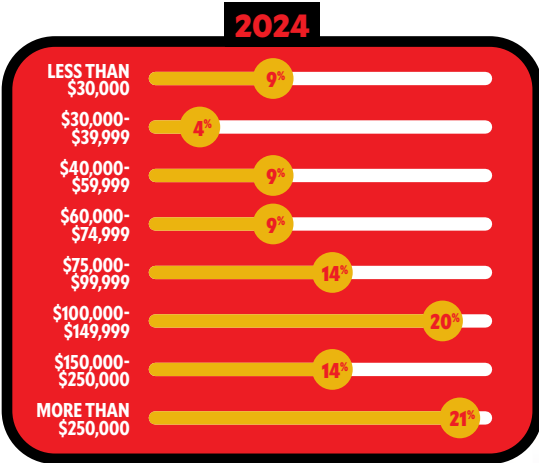
Roll Up!

The 2025 INSTORE Big Survey is Back to Amaze You

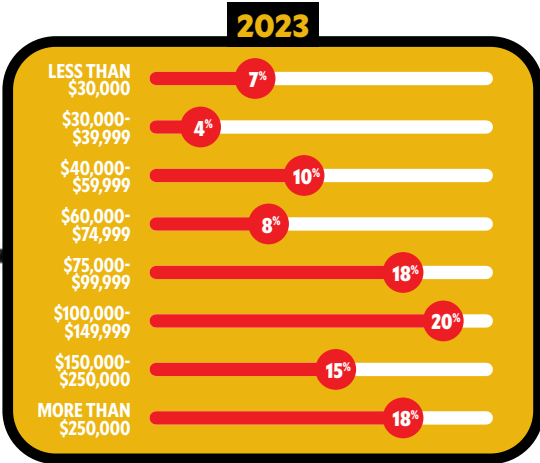
Welcome to the **2025 INSTORE Big Survey** — or should we say Big Tent? The last year has been a wild ride marked by economic uncertainty, high-stakes political acrobatics, soaring metals prices and the rise of technological wonders. Yes, it's left some of our readers feeling a little breathless, but it's rarely been boring. So, come, step inside for the results of our latest annual survey into the state of the independent jewelry industry in America. Prepare to be amazed, astounded and astonished!

Pick the amusement park ride that *best* describes the day-to-day lived experience of owning/running your business:





As a store owner, what did you earn (salary + share of profit) last year?



NOTE: Reflecting wider economic trends, those at the top end (jewelers who reported earning more than \$250,000 a year) continued to do well last year, with this group expanding to account for more than one in five jewelers. Proportionally, these jewelers were most likely to be found running well-established stores (at least 40 years old) from downtown addresses in small cities with a strong focus on bridal. They were also most likely to be men at 77%, versus 61% for our overall pool. Note that 4% of our survey-takers reported earning \$500,000-\$1 million a year, and a little over one percent earned more than \$1 million.

PERFORMANCE

RETAIL IS A COMPETITIVE sport. Here are the key stats: sales, average tickets, earnings, the competitive threats ranked, and the gold that awaits the winners (or that currently can be turned for a nice profit).

What was your average ticket for product sales in 2024?

- Less than \$250 4%
- \$250-\$499 16%
- \$500-\$749 15%
- \$750-\$999 14%
- \$1,000-\$1,499 13%
- \$1,500-\$1,999 10%
- \$2,000-\$2,999 8%
- \$3,000-\$3,999 5%
- \$4,000-\$5,000 2%
- More than \$5,000 2%
- I don't calculate/track this. 11%

What was your average price per item sold in 2024?

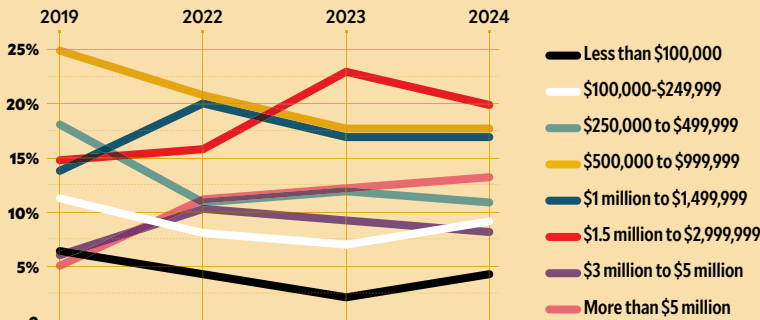
- Less than \$100 1%
- \$100 to \$249 7%
- \$250-\$499 12%
- \$500-\$749 18%
- \$750-\$999 13%

- \$1,000-\$1,499 13%
- \$1,500-\$1,999 9%
- \$2,000-\$2,499 4%
- \$2,500-\$3,000 5%
- More than \$3,000 6%
- I don't calculate/track this. 12%

The No. 1 factor driving your sales is:

- Great location 4%
- Great products 4%
- Great marketing/sales strategies 6%
- Superior prices 1%
- A particular business circumstance (e.g., a special partnership with a certain supplier, such as Rolex) 1%
- Reputation for service/trust/jewelry-making skill 82%
- Other 2%

WHAT WERE YOUR TOTAL SALES LAST YEAR? (IF YOU HAVE MORE THAN ONE STORE, PLEASE TELL US THE AVERAGE PER STORE.)



COMMENT: Amid a year when consumers curtailed discretionary spending, independent jewelers' sales slipped slightly. At the lower end, 13% of jewelers reported sales under \$250,000, up from 9% in 2023, while the share reporting sales over \$1 million fell to 58% from 61% in 2023. As for the very top end? More than 5% of the stores reported 2024 sales of over \$10 million.

HAVE YOUR SALES BECOME MORE CONCENTRATED OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS? (ARE YOU SELLING MORE TO FEWER, RICHER CUSTOMERS?)

27% No change

18% No, we are actually making more smaller sales to a larger pool of customers

46% Yes, moderately so

6% Yes, dramatically so
3% I don't know

THE TOP 5% OF YOUR CUSTOMER BASE (YOUR VERY BEST CLIENTS) ACCOUNTS FOR ABOUT WHAT PROPORTION OF YOUR SALES?



COMMENT: VIP customers have always been important to jewelers, and the trend seems to be becoming more prominent with a notable share of jewelers witnessing increased wealth concentration among their clients, reflecting broader trends of economic disparity and wealth accumulation across the U.S. How to best respond if you're seeing a similar situation in your market? Keep doing the things many of the best jewelers do: Invest in exceptional customer service and personalized experiences to build loyalty, build relationships and trust, use targeted marketing campaigns to reach different segments, and stock the high-end, customized, or exclusive pieces that appeal to affluent consumers.

What small win felt like a giant stuffed bear this year? (For example, a refund customer that ended up turning into a \$20,000 higher sale.)

Many respondents noted routine services like watch batteries, appraisals, or minor repairs that blossomed into major sales, sometimes tens of thousands of dollars. Others celebrated unexpected windfalls such as estate purchases, vendor mistakes, or social media posts that brought in outsized sales. A recurring theme was customer relationships:

turning complaints into loyalty, winning referrals, or welcoming back multi-generational buyers. Here were some of the best.

- I just had a first-time customer come in for an earring repair. While I was pricing it, my sales associate got her trying on jewelry and sold her an \$18,000 bracelet! I decided to throw in the repair for free!
- I repaired a gold chain that belonged to a client who had just inherited it from her mom's estate. The sentiments for the small chain were far greater than any value. That client

was so pleased with the work, she bought a 12-carat natural diamond tennis bracelet!!

- A small post on Facebook about a firecracker necklace led to a \$100,000 diamond necklace sale for the 4th of July.
- Dropping off breakfast to our local sheriff's station resulted in \$15K of sales so far!
- It didn't result in a \$20,000 sale, but we made one customer a pledged lifelong customer after we found almost the exact antique white gold diamond ring for her. She had lost hers and was sick

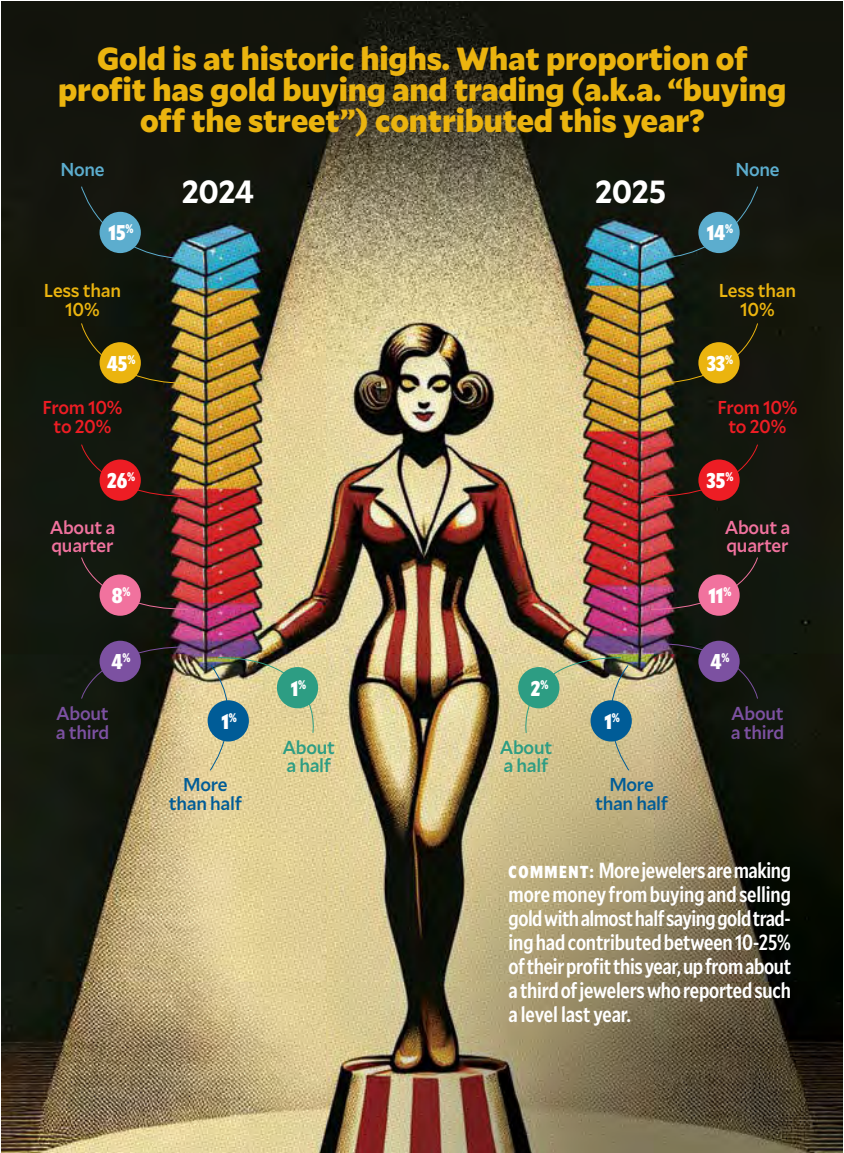
How did you achieve your highest-sales day ever?

- It was a regular holiday season day that went bananas 19%
- It was just a normal day in the year that went bananas 15%
- It was one customer who spent a small fortune 35%
- It was a string of big spenders, one after the other 9%
- It was driven by a special event (Ladies Night, round-table, etc) 12%
- It was driven by a big sale with attractive price cuts 6%
- A calendar event (St Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, etc) 1%
- Other 3%

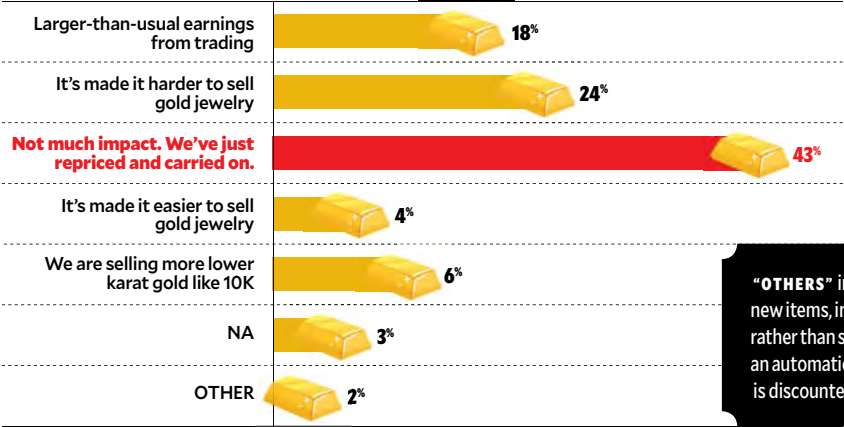
Last year, the holiday season (from Black Friday to New Year's Eve) accounted for what proportion of your sales?

- Less than 10% 5%
- 10-19% 27%
- 20-29% 41%
- 30-39% 19%
- 40-50% 6%
- More than 50% 2%





What’s been the main impact on your store from the surge in the gold price this year?



“OTHERS” included boosting custom work as clients use the value of their old gold for new items, increasing bullion sales, squeezing margins, and increasing the option to melt rather than selling trade-ins. It’s also caused headaches with tags. “I don’t like giving away an automatic discount (i.e., if tag is at \$2,800 gold) that the customer doesn’t even realize is discounted. That drives me insane,” noted one jeweler.

Rank your rivals from toughest competitor to least:

Internet retailers **5.24***

The independent jeweler around the corner **5.23**

Chain stores **4.90**

Big box stores (Costco, Walmart, etc.) **3.74**

Brands selling directly to consumers **3.66**

Non-jewelry luxury retailers **2.89**

TV shopping networks **2.55**

***SCORES** represent a weighted average based on how respondents ranked the options.

COMMENT: We asked this question a little differently back in 2021, when the country was still in the depths of the pandemic, but the results were quite similar. Online retailers were identified as the top competitive threat, ahead of the fellow independent around the corner. Chain stores have improved their competitive position in the last few years while the issue of brands selling directly to consumers appears to have eased somewhat.

What’s the most unethical thing a direct rival has done to you in the name of competition?

The range of low actions was impressive, from slander, to poaching staff, to design theft, to pricing manipulation. Here are some of the more egregious ones:

- ➔ Recommended shady characters to our store.
- ➔ Said I was going out of business.
- ➔ Used our company’s name in their SEO to drive sales away from us and to their website.
- ➔ Store name almost identical to ours a half mile away.
- ➔ Negative Google ratings.

➔ Owner of (the store) threatened to sue our client for canceling an order with him that was two days old. He said he couldn’t take the stress of being sued anymore and asked if we would refund his money.

➔ She asked if I would do appraisals for her while her appraiser was on medical leave. I did. She plagiarized at least one of those appraisals, removing not only my name and my company name but also my address. I am a CGA.

➔ One said they were related to us and it was a family business “joined at the hip”.

➔ Put their microscope at 30x and showed my customer a created blue sapphire with a supposed chip on the edge of it. The ring had been discounted to get the sale and the chip was not there.

➔ Told a client the custom ring we made for her contained lab diamonds, not natural. It cost us \$350 to prove him wrong.

➔ Tried to get one of my main suppliers to sell exclusively to her by placing a huge, huge order with the condition they sell to her and not to me.

➔ Parked a billboard truck announcing their GOB sale across the street from our store.

➔ Slandered us, saying we sold sterling silver as 14K white and were selling fracture-filled diamonds undisclosed.

➔ A rival duplicated one of our original trademarked designs. The client’s girlfriend came in to replace a missing diamond because she thought he bought it from us. And she was very upset when she found out he had a much lower quality version made elsewhere.

➔ Previous employee stole my customer database and did a direct mail campaign to them.

➔ Told people that we were antisemitic.



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BUYING

GET THE BUYING RIGHT and the rest of the job of selling jewelry is so much easier. Here we look at jewelers' most successful brands, where these products are manufactured (and the impact of tariffs) and what store owners look for in a vendor.



ALLISON-KAUFMAN held onto the No. 1 position for the second year in a row, receiving 50 votes. Gabriel & Co. climbed into the second spot with 40 votes, followed by Stuller at No. 3 with 33 votes. Sylvie slipped to fourth place with 29 votes, while Ostbye stayed steady in fifth with 25 votes. Results are based on the responses of 288 independent jewelry retailers to the question, "What are the three best-performing jewelry lines that you carry?"

What are the 3 best-performing jewelry lines that you carry?

2025	Brand-Name	2024	Change in Rank
1	Allison-Kaufman	1	—
2	Gabriel & Co.	3	↑1
3	Stuller	4	↑1
4	Sylvie	2	↓2
5	Ostbye	5	—
6TIE	Fana	11	↑5
6TIE	Lashbrook	6	—
6TIE	Shy Creation	8	↑2
9	Hearts on Fire	12	↑3
10	Quality Gold	10	—
11	Simon G.	7	↓4
12TIE	Leslie's	*	↑9
12TIE	Marco Bicego	*	↑9
14TIE	Ania Haie	*	↑7
14TIE	SDC Creations	20	↑6
16TIE	A. Jaffe	12	↓4
16TIE	ASHI	16	—
16TIE	Artistry	*	↑5
16TIE	David Yurman	20	↑4
16TIE	IDD	16	—
16TIE	Le Vian	*	↑5
16TIE	Rego	*	↑5
16TIE	Tacori	12	↓4

* Finished outside top 20 in 2024

What do you think will be the next breakout trend in jewelry?

→ A resurgence of yellow gold, often in bold, chunky, and statement styles reminiscent of the 70s and 80s, was the trend seen as most likely to break out next. At the same time, the rising price of gold is a major concern,

leading many to predict a shift toward more affordable alternatives, including silver, platinum, and other metals, as well as gold-filled, plated, and vermeil options. "Things are going to start getting 'dainty' (as in hollow, thin and flimsy)," noted one jeweler. One of their peers was more hopeful:

"As gold goes to \$4,000 and beyond, someone will come up with a new combination of gold and alloy that will be affordable, beautiful and durable."

The lab-grown versus natural diamond debate was prominent. Some jewelers anticipate a comeback for natural diamonds, while others

see continued growth for lab-grown diamond fashion jewelry, especially as prices fall.

Specific styles mentioned include vintage, estate, and antique-inspired looks, custom redesigns of old jewelry, and bezel settings. Elongated diamond cuts were also said to be gaining popularity, a trend

many attribute to Taylor Swift. And then there was "anything flex or stretch" to fit individual finger sizes.

As for trends that were fading: layering and halos. "I'm thrilled that I haven't been asked to do a halo design in 10 months!" said one jeweler.



What are the 3 best-performing watch brands that you carry?

2025	Brand-Name	2024	Change in Rank
1	Citizen	1	—
2	Rolex	3	↑1
3	Seiko	2	↓1
4	Bulova	4	—
5	Tissot	5	—
6	Shinola	6	—
7TIE	Movado	*	↑4
7TIE	Omega	9	↑2
9	Tudor	*	↑2
10TIE	Michele	*	↑1
10TIE	Tag Heuer	*	↑1

* Finished outside top 10 in 2024

WHAT JEWELRY OR WATCH BRAND WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO ADD TO YOUR CASES?

→ As they do every year, watch brands dominated the list with Rolex once again finishing top. It's worth pointing out that almost a third of the respondents replied "None", which was by far the most frequent response. The reasons given included a lack of interest in promoting brands, a focus on their own store brand, or "all the brands that I love the most are selling direct to consumer."

- 1 Rolex
- 2 Omega
- 3 Cartier
- 4 Tag Heuer
- 5 David Yurman
- 6 Breitling
- 7 Patek Philippe
- 8 Mikimoto
- 9 Seiko
- 10 Gabriel & Co.



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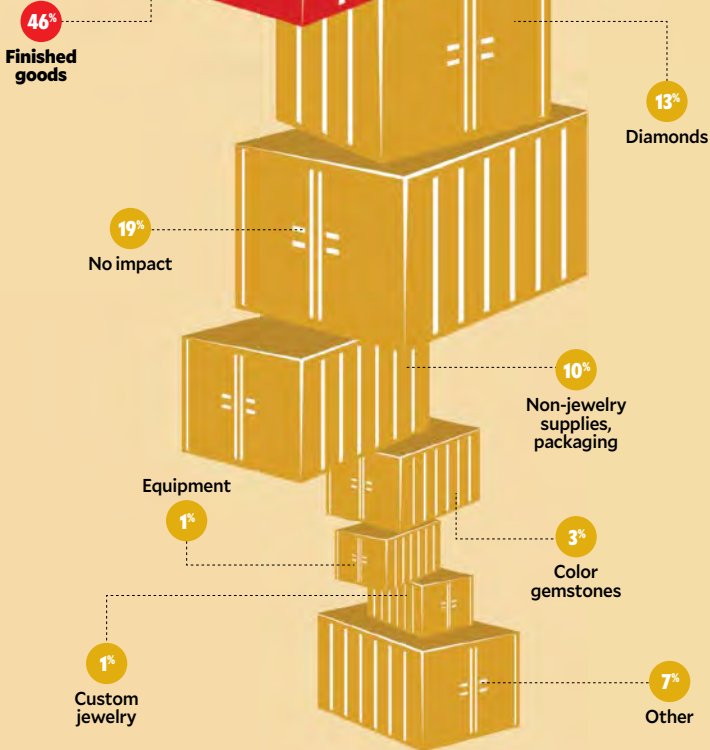
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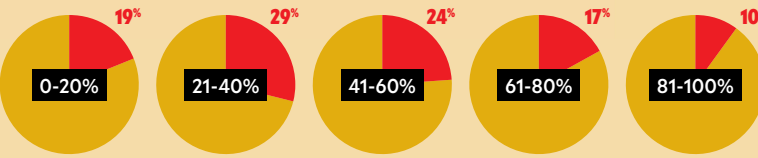
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WHERE ARE YOU MOST SEEING THE IMPACT OF TARIFFS?



WHAT PERCENTAGE OF THE PRODUCTS YOU CARRY ARE MADE IN THE USA?



Rank these qualities in a brand partner, from most to least desirable. (Ignore if you don't sell branded goods.)

- Product quality 4.62*
- Willingness to stock balance 3.76
- Exclusivity 3.55
- Support 3.39
- Easy terms 3.12
- Brand power 2.61

*SCORES refer to the weighted average, based on the ranking assigned to each options.

Has the timing of when you do the bulk of your buying changed in the last three or four years?

- Yes, we now buy earlier in the year 15%
- Yes, we buy later in the year 13%
- No change 71%

COMMENT: While the results indicated most jewelers had made no major changes to their buying patters, when asked to elaborate, the comments showed a significant portion were moving away from reliance on a few large, scheduled orders toward continuous, opportunistic buying throughout the year, particularly of fast

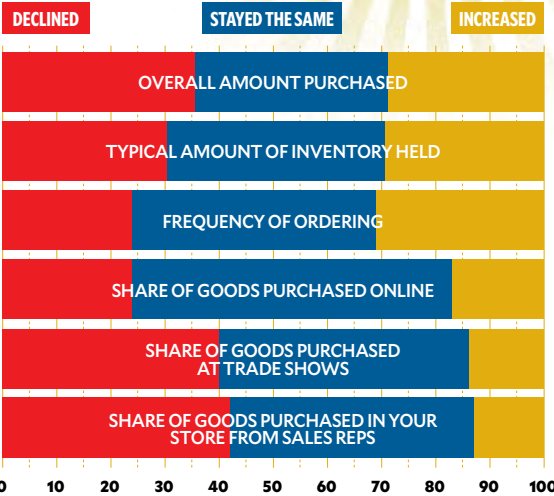
sellers. Some reported doing almost no Christmas-specific purchasing, as December "no longer gives us the big bump as it did 10 years ago." In addition, more frequent buying, such as ordering weekly or daily, was favored because it allows for "better cash flow and forecasting," although it meant limiting purchases from companies with long lead times (6-8 weeks out).

What point of sale program are you using?

- The Edge 51%
- Jewelry Shopkeeper 16%
- Shopify 4%
- QuickBooks POS 4%
- Jewel360 2%
- WJewel 2%
- Clover 2%
- Square 2%
- None 9%
- Other 18%



Have your buying patterns changed in the last three or four years in terms of:



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Find a solution for every need this holiday season with Stuller's vast in-stock inventory – ready to ship with rapid delivery.

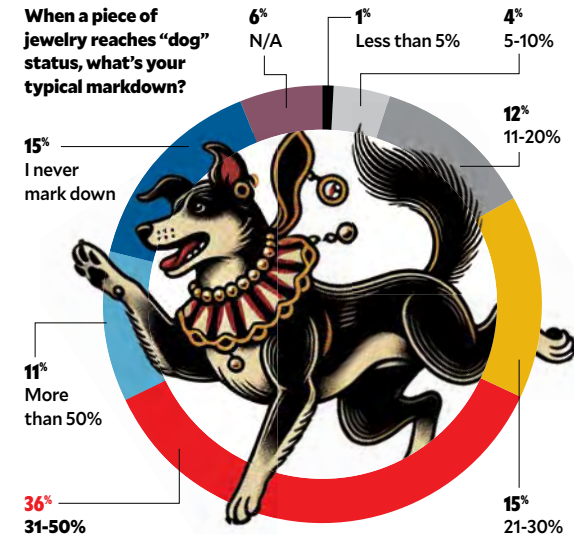


Stuller.com/Holiday

Featured items: 688853, 689407, and 653717



SELLING IS AS MUCH an art as a skill. Here jewelers share their best moves and their missteps, as well as insights and benchmarks to help the process go more smoothly — and in your favor.



How much of your inventory is over 1 year old?



NOTE: As a general guideline and depending on the kind of goods they stock, jewelers are advised to keep the share of inventory older than one year to below 30% to maintain healthy cash flow and allow them to keep up with current trends. But as our figures show, that’s not easy, with only 40% of jewelers able to achieve that target.

Are your prices negotiable?

- Always 13%
- Usually 13%
- Sometimes 40%
- Rarely 26%
- Never 8%

If you use the Geller Blue Book as a reference, do you set your repair prices ...

- Higher 13%
- Lower 16%
- In line 61%

NOTE: For the 16% charging less than the recommended rates, David Geller has a word of advice: “In the shop area, if you ask, 90% will pay. It’s a trust issue, not a pricing issue.”

What’s the wildest excuse you’ve heard for a product return?

- A common theme was relationship problems, with cheating, breakups and divorces frequently cited as reasons for returning jewelry. Some customers blamed external factors like “bad energy” or divine punishment. And then there were those trying to return items long after purchase or for reasons clearly due to their own misuse. Here are some that stood out:
- My husband gave the same piece to his mistress, so I don’t want it.
 - The customer is allergic to diamonds. (I wish this was a joke)
 - I have worn this ring uninspected for 6 years and I keep

- losing stones. I want a refund.
- She died. (She didn’t.)
 - You said I could return it anytime 4 years later.
 - Had a customer tell me that they prayed on it, and fear that God will punish them by making them spend eternity in hell for being selfish.
 - Ring containing an antique diamond: ‘I can feel the bad energy from the previous owner.’ My online girlfriend wasn’t real, can I return this engagement ring?
 - Hoop earrings exploded in the jewelry box.
 - t has bad mojo (gives her bad dreams so the diamond is cursed).
 - Necklace didn’t fit her dog.
 - It just jumped out of the box and broke in mid-air. It was never worn.
 - My diamond, It just looks sad :(
 - Returned rainbow bracelet: friends thought she was gay.

What have you done in the last few years to make the shopping experience more convenient/frictionless for your customers?

- The most common enhancements involved the introduction of technology, but there was also an increased focus on good old personalized service:
- Increased the amount of sample selling systems we have in store. It makes custom a breeze and special orders way easier to sell.
 - Added a drive-thru pickup window.
 - Work outside of conventional hours, make house calls.
 - Made our website a live link to our current inventory.
 - Added substantially more greeters and frontline staff.
 - Reserved paid parking in our secure underground heated/AC parking garage right next to the elevator to our store.
 - We streamlined our repair intake process, added text and email updates so customers never feel in the dark.
 - Secure text-to-pay options.



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Scan this QR Code to learn more about all of National Chain’s offerings.

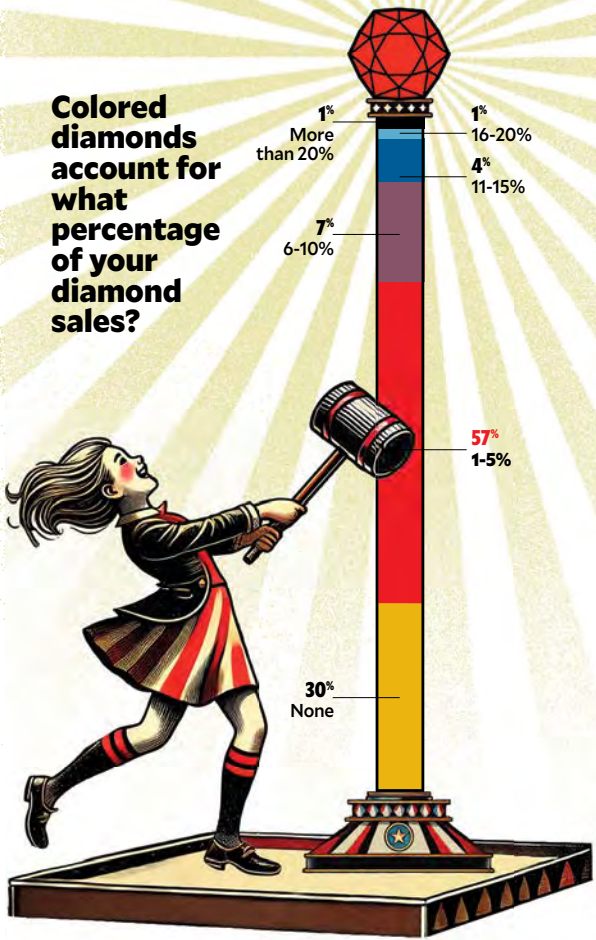
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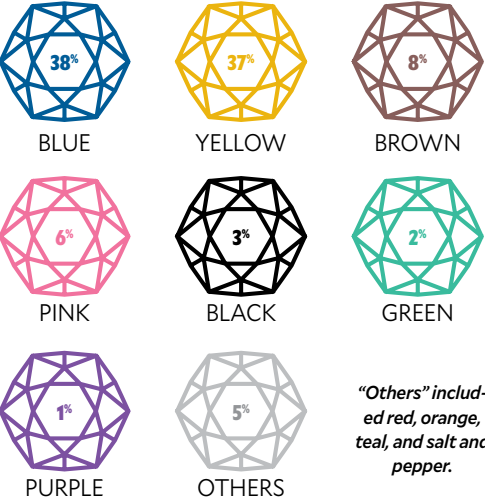


Electroformed to your custom design





What color diamond sells the best?



What's the most inspired thing you've ever done to clinch a sale?

- ➔ I partnered with SpaceX and NASA to send a parcel of diamonds to space so my client can say, "My love for you is out of this world!"
- ➔ Built a silver pendant for free for the client's daughter. It closed an \$8,500 sale and will be a lasting relationship for their jewelry.
- ➔ Helped plan an international trip for the customer where the husband could sneak away to our supplier's office for a very special diamond sale.
- ➔ My top salesman pulled a rubber chicken out of his pants and slammed it onto the diamond case. He had said, "If I pulled a chicken out of my pants, could you make a decision?"
- ➔ Not run the credit card of extremely drunk customer and then calling the next day (not morning!) to discuss what happened the night before. Customer very happy I didn't run his card for the \$60K. Happily spent half that.
- ➔ Partnered with a local high-end restaurant to have the watch brought out and unveiled by the server.
- ➔ Met someone in the middle of the night (the town was having a midnight run) behind a port-a-potty to deliver the engagement ring so she wouldn't know. Small town life!
- ➔ Offered him a bottle of Don Julio 1942. Done deal.

What's the most regrettable thing you've ever done to clinch a sale?

- ➔ Offered to do an earring conversion "at no extra cost". No words can describe the pain.
- ➔ Modeled a ring by walking like the creep's wife.
- ➔ Drove four hours to their art gallery with \$450,000 in loose gemstones to just have them be indifferent.



- ➔ Allowed a customer to put an item they couldn't afford on layaway.
- ➔ Charged too much.
- ➔ Talked too much.
- ➔ Not getting a deposit for a repair and then the customer took their item back after work was done but not finished.
- ➔ Lied to a customer about the color and clarity of a diamond.
- ➔ Gone out for coffee with a client's son.
- ➔ Sell to a drunk person knowing they didn't know what they were doing.
- ➔ Modeled a ring by walking like the creep's wife.
- ➔ Arranging a two-week gem trip to Brazil (many years ago) for 20 of my best clients. Imagine 20 'A' type personalities with limited Third World experience. It was like herding a

- ➔ pack of cats! The predominant question was "Have you done a head count?"
- ➔ It was Christmas and I was not thinking, but I accident-on-purpose sold a care plan on a sterling silver chain that cost as much as the chain itself (\$25). I had informed the customer that if the chain broke it would cost that much to repair it, so if it broke twice (as sterling silver chains are likely to), the care plan paid for itself. I'm still teased over that one.
- ➔ Gave in to a badgering customer.
- ➔ I don't really regret it because it's not my decision, but I think every time I sell a lab grown diamond a little piece of me dies.
- ➔ Agreed to be their sperm donor.



Attic Gold
Design by Simone Ferkul Projects
Photography by Riley Snelling

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What is the calendar breakdown of your engagement ring sales?



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IN THE TWO YEARS since we last asked about lab-grown diamonds, much has changed. Here we revisit the most talked-about category in jewelry.

Are you seeing any blowback from past customers since lab-grown diamond prices have declined over the last year?

	2025	2023
Yes	6%	6%
Occasionally	20%	13%
No	74%	81%

*Results exclude jewelers who don't sell LGDs.

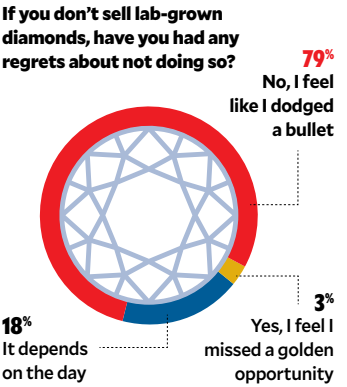
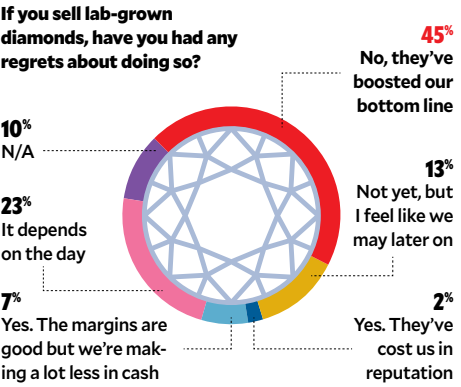
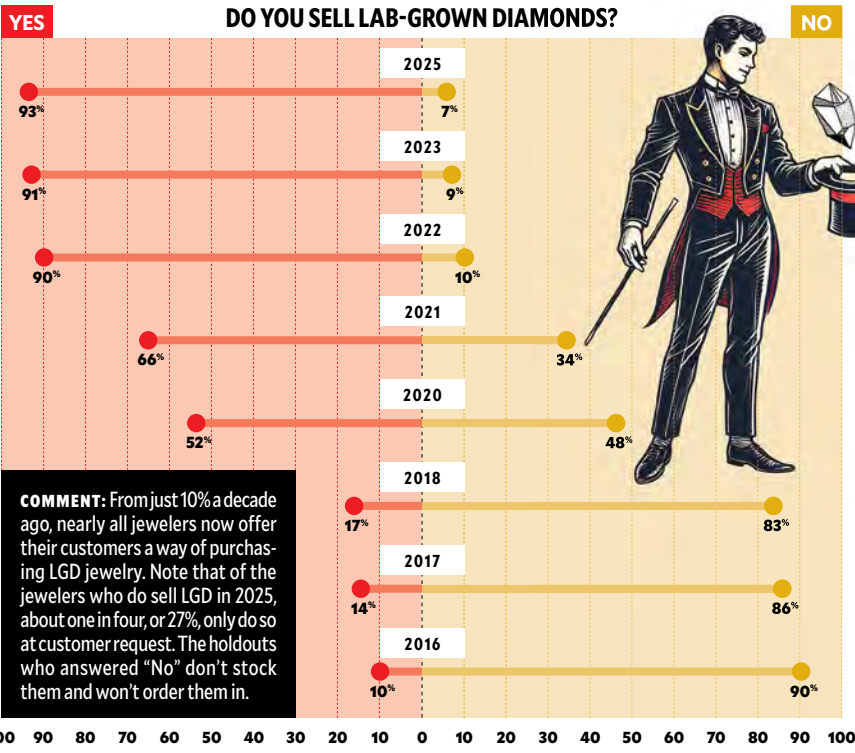
COMMENT: Jewelers report that customer blowback over falling lab-grown diamond prices has been limited but not nonexistent. A few noted angry calls when clients discovered friends buying the same size stone for thousands less just a few years later, or disappointment when appraisals showed steep declines. However, most respondents emphasized that they preempt such reactions with upfront education, explaining that lab-grown diamonds have no resale or trade-in value, prices will likely keep dropping, and they should be viewed like technology that quickly depreciates. Retailers who sell with transparency and conservative margins say customers generally accept the reality, while those who bought labs elsewhere at inflated prices are the ones most often

upset. Overall, jewelers stress that consistent disclosure, honest pricing, and managing expectations have prevented widespread backlash, though many anticipate more difficult conversations as time goes on.

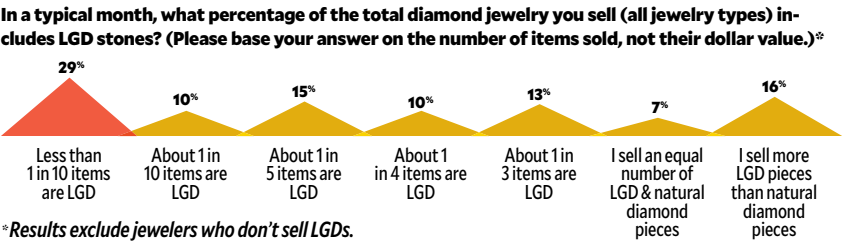
Of the engagement rings you sell, what percentage (by unit) have lab-grown center stones?

	2025	2023
0%	5%	9%
< 10%	13%	18%
10-20%	7%	9%
21-30%	5%	8%
31-40%	5%	5%
41-50%	10%	10%
51-60%	11%	11%
61-70%	9%	24%
71-80%	14%	
81-90%	10%	
91-100%	7%	
NA	4%	6%

NOTE: Lab-grown diamonds have come a long way in a short time, with one in two jewelers now saying LGDs now account for at least 50% of their center stone sales. That is up from about a third who disclosed such a high level two years ago.



MANY JEWELERS feel conflicted or even resentful about selling lab-grown diamonds, saying they "ruin the magic" of natural diamonds, erode value, and lead to uncomfortable customer situations when resale prices collapse. Others take a pragmatic stance, emphasizing transparency, education, and customer choice: They sell lab-grown if asked, but warn about long-term value and discourage illusions of investment. A number of respondents view labs as a "necessary evil" to stay competitive, while some report strong sales in categories like tennis necklaces or engagement rings, praising the affordability and higher margins.



*Results exclude jewelers who don't sell LGDs.

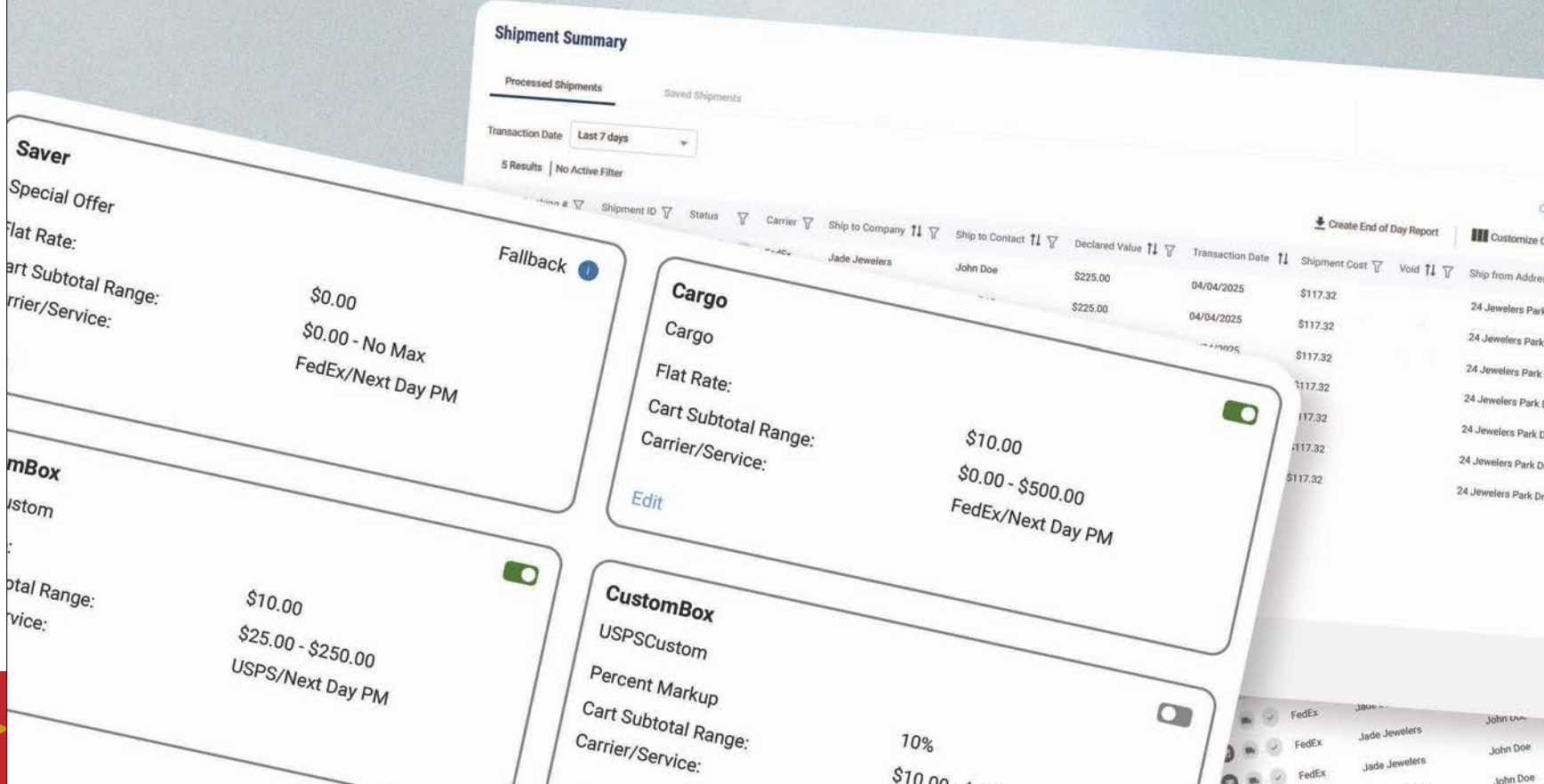
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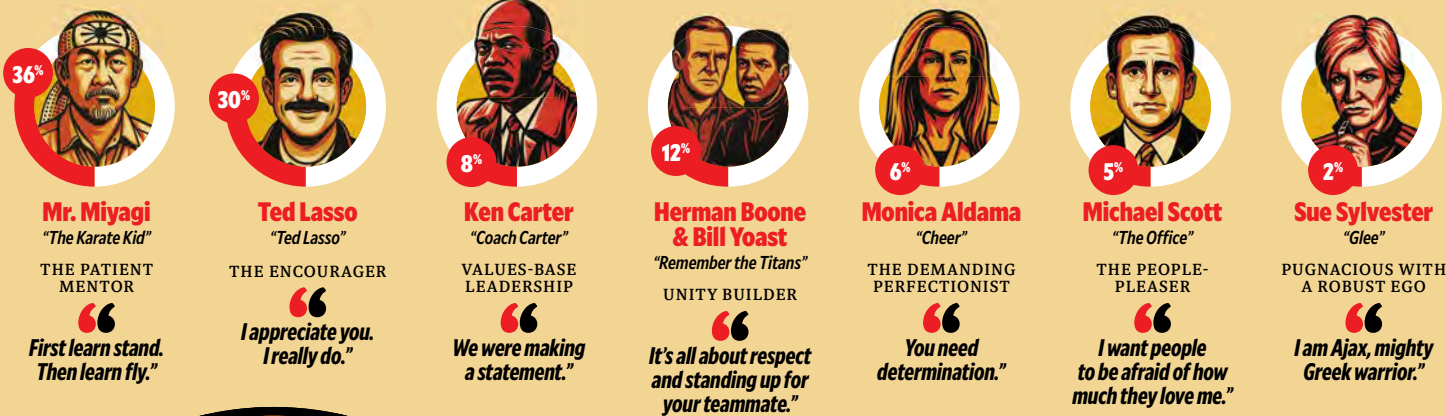
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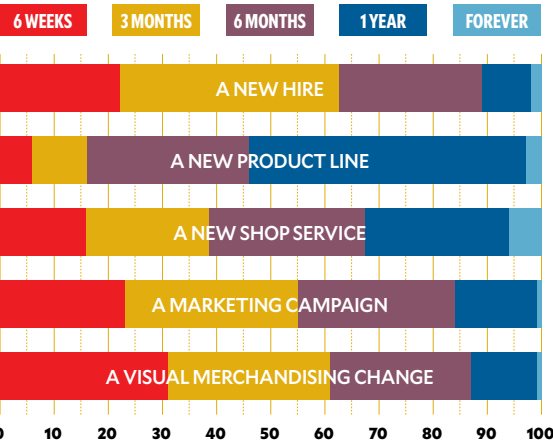


What’s your style of management, based on one of these pop culture icons?



IF YOU’VE EVER thought of yourself as a ringmaster trying to keep a circus under control, you’re not alone. Here, jewelers tell how they manage their stores and their staff while also sharing what’s worked best for them.

How much time do you give the following to start showing it/they can perform?



If you had the opportunity to start over with your business, knowing everything you know now, what one thing would you do differently?



“OTHERS” included take on debt, start with more capital, scale/upgrade faster, manage inventory better and “not worked so many hours or worried so much.” Of course, many of the lessons can only be learned. As one respondent put it: “It’s all part of the journey, and all necessary.”

What one decision, change or idea did you implement in the last 12 months that benefited your business the most?

A significant proportion of the responses touched on the hot button areas of the last few years – lab-grown diamonds, social media, gold trading and staffing. Of course, the genius is in the details. Here are some that stood out:

- Embraced vintage-jewelry reselling. The younger ladies/girls are loving it!

- Buying deeper into a brand.
- Increase clienteling with visual pictures of jewelry.
- We stopped sending paper checks and now pay everything electronically. It has saved us time, money, and headaches.
- We finally moved beyond some long-time problematic personnel.
- Using the repair calendar that is on the Edge for our

“We dropped the term lab-grown and are using “cultured” diamonds and we are calling earth diamonds “natural.”

- repairs and custom work so we don’t overbook due dates.
- Adding a wedding band event.
- Not servicing watches – it was a waste of time.
- Shrinking the business and focusing on what makes us money.
- Stop offering alternative options for repairs like, ‘you can get by with only 10 retips for now.’
- Starting to measure KPIs, creating a strong Standards of Excellence and leveling up our staff (mindset and confidence, professionalism).
- Transitioned into high-end color diamonds for investment.
- Investing in training! I packed up my team, bought them business suits and sequin shirts, and took them to the shows. The result? Their product knowledge, vendor relationships, storytelling skills, and confidence all skyrocketed.
- Upgraded CAD and shop equipment.
- Increase marketing for old gold purchasing.
- Introduction of an extra spiff to staff that is only for in-stock items.
- Used Google boost.
- I found a new location for us. We now own our own building instead of renting in a downtown location. We have free parking and easier access to the store.
- We had our salespeople determine 20 new styles they wanted to add to the store based on requests they were seeing from their customers.
- New card processing: best fees ever.
- I hired a virtual assistant, it has changed my life!
- Get into AI.
- Hired a superstar salesperson.
- Giving out gift certificates when we people asking for donations then giving out actual jewelry.



Sale Results

191%
ANNUAL SALES
Achieved in 8 Weeks

95% SOLD
Owner's Inventory

PROJECTED RETURN ON
INVESTMENT*
131%

ACTUAL RETURN ON
INVESTMENT*
173%

“I was pleasantly surprised how over the top it was busy. I appreciated all their expertise, especially on the marketing side, because that was way over my head.”

– David Rees
d’Original Jewelers
Bellevue, WA



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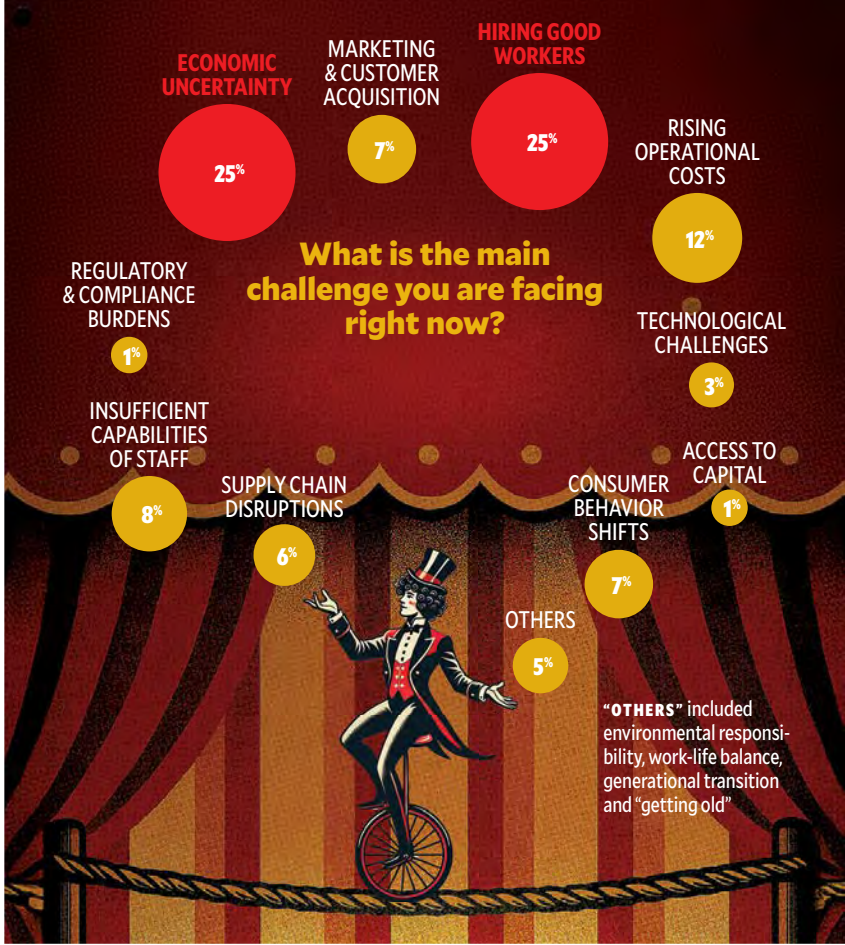
*Projected and Actual ROI calculated after expenses.



Tell us something you've introduced to help you save money in the last three years.

The most popular answer to this question had to do with inventory, whether reducing old stock, sticking with a strict open-to-buy budget or aggressively reordering top-selling pieces. Since inventory is generally the highest recurring expense for jewelry retailers, it makes sense that the most potential cost savings can be found there. However, the second most popular answer might be more surprising: energy savings. Some cited LED lighting as a big cost saver, while others mentioned solar panels or motion-sensing lights. Recycling metals and gemstones, reducing store hours and embracing new technologies were also popular answers. Here were some more useful suggestions:

- ➔ Ordering what sells geographically, not personally.
- ➔ Using high-rate short-term CDs and asking my bank to match APYs.
- ➔ Avoiding and retiring debt—becoming more liquid.
- ➔ Switched credit card processing to Integrity Merchant Solutions — saved thousands.
- ➔ Two-day shipping instead of overnight — saved \$10K a year.
- ➔ Trade scrap for 24K grain; alloy what we need.
- ➔ Moved to sample rings instead of live models — huge savings.
- ➔ Took over the books — found years of overpayments.
- ➔ Charge for cleaning and polishing — no more freebies.
- ➔ Negotiate everything — rent, bank rates, boxes, insurance.
- ➔ We save all packing material for reuse.



What's something you've done as a manager/business owner that's had a much bigger impact than you expected?

Many respondents credited hiring decisions — whether it was finally letting go of the wrong person or investing in the right one — as their most transformative move. Delegation and empowerment were also recurring themes, with several owners discovering life-changing results after trusting others to handle key responsibilities. Others cited embracing technology — POS systems, CAD design, lasers, social media — as a major game-changer, while some found success through reducing hours or going appointment-only, leading to happier staff and unchanged profits. A number of retailers said selling lab-grown diamonds had reshaped their

business entirely. And many emphasized positivity, kindness, and gratitude, which never go amiss. Here were some of the most interesting or helpful responses:

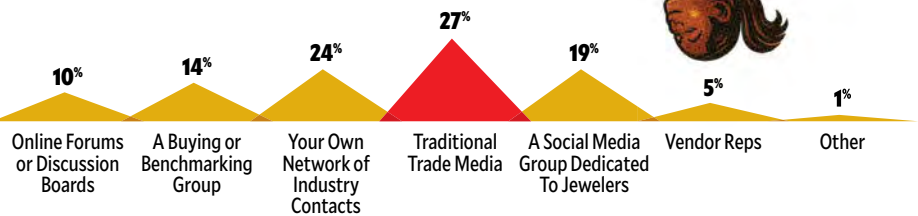
- ➔ Moved goldsmith's bench to the front window — people love watching torch work!
- ➔ Hired high schoolers who interview their own replacements.
- ➔ Started a jeweler apprenticeship program.
- ➔ Created a simple 100% Texas Woman pendant and sold thousands.
- ➔ Finding space in our budget to provide snacks and drinks in the break room for employees.
- ➔ Sending an automatic text message after each purchase to thank the customer and ask for a Google Review. It has increased our Google Reviews dramatically.

Rank the following on what you believe generates the best return for your dollar?

- Staff training **4.73***
 - Self-improvement (including consultants) **3.69**
 - Advertising **3.94**
 - Technology upgrades **3.41**
 - Buying trips **2.81**
 - Refurbishing the store **2.63**
- *SCORES refer to the weighted average, based on how the respondents ranked the options.



FOR YOU, WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT CHANNEL FOR STAYING ON TOP OF INDUSTRY NEWS?



Who would you fire first? Rank them in the order you'd get rid of these workers.

- Untrustworthy **8.31**
- Suspected drug or alcohol abuser **7.08**
- Someone who is just a dark cloud in the store **6.26**
- Successful but disruptive **4.86**
- Underperformer **4.79**
- Disorganized **3.75**
- Slow learner **3.63**
- Nice but mediocre **3.60**
- Someone whose job could be outsourced/replaced by technology **2.89**

Which frustration makes you most want to get off the wild ride of owning a small business?

- Staffing challenges **26%**
 - Factors outside your immediate control **24%**
 - Negative customer behaviors **9%**
 - The workload **10%**
 - The income **4%**
 - Inability to compete on price **1%**
 - Brand expansions that have a negative impact on sales and/or supply **1%**
 - None of the above. My business is "the most magical place on Earth" **21%**
 - Other **4%**
- *OTHERS*** included vendors, cheap landlords, government bureaucracy and lack of work/life balance.

What will be your No. 1 priority next year?

- Growth **24%**
- Clearing old inventory **19%**
- Boosting profitability **17%**
- Cutting expenses **6%**
- Surviving **5%**
- Working less **7%**
- Bringing in new technology **3%**
- Preparing to exit the business **14%**
- Other **5%**

NOTE: Most of the "others" could be summed up as "Finding good staff."

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4 ways JewelLink by Jewelry Sales Academy is revolutionizing our industry

1. Brand Experience at ground level for Vendors:

Retail owners and Buyers have a deeper connection to your Brand because they have a relationship with you. They know you, see you at shows, have dinner with you, etc. But those relationships rarely make it to the people that move your product daily - The sales associate. JewelLink gives Vendors the ability to ensure their brand is presented properly and more often, all throughout the year.

2. Consistency and Frameworks for Retailers:

If retail owners and managers had the luxury of handling every single customer, in most cases, store sales would increase dramatically. Unfortunately that scenario isn't feasible, and it certainly isn't scalable. The JewelLink system by Jewelry Sales Academy gives retailers a proven system to replicate the ultimate luxury experience, so that it's not completely reliant on the owner or top seller working the door.



LEARN MORE

3. Innovation from within:

Our industry is very unique, and can sometimes feel antiquated compared to others. In reality, some of the technology that other industries utilize just don't make sense in our climate. With JewelLink, every feature that is developed comes from a retailer or brand perspective, with 2 questions in mind: 1. Can it be easily implemented? 2. Will it move the needle?

4. Quick Turn Growth:

If you've been following them from the beginning, you've seen how rapidly they've evolved from a training platform, to an operational suite that rapidly pushes out impactful features. From Ai customers and Vendor Portals, to 1 on1 Management with Sales Analytics, it's been a joy to follow. I can't wait to see the new Clientelling System and Marketing Platform that are dropping soon!



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THE SHOW IS only as good as the ring master. Here we get to know our readers, and America's independent jewelers, a little better.

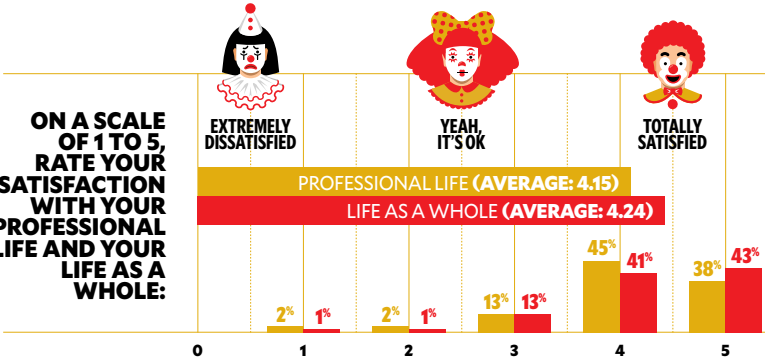
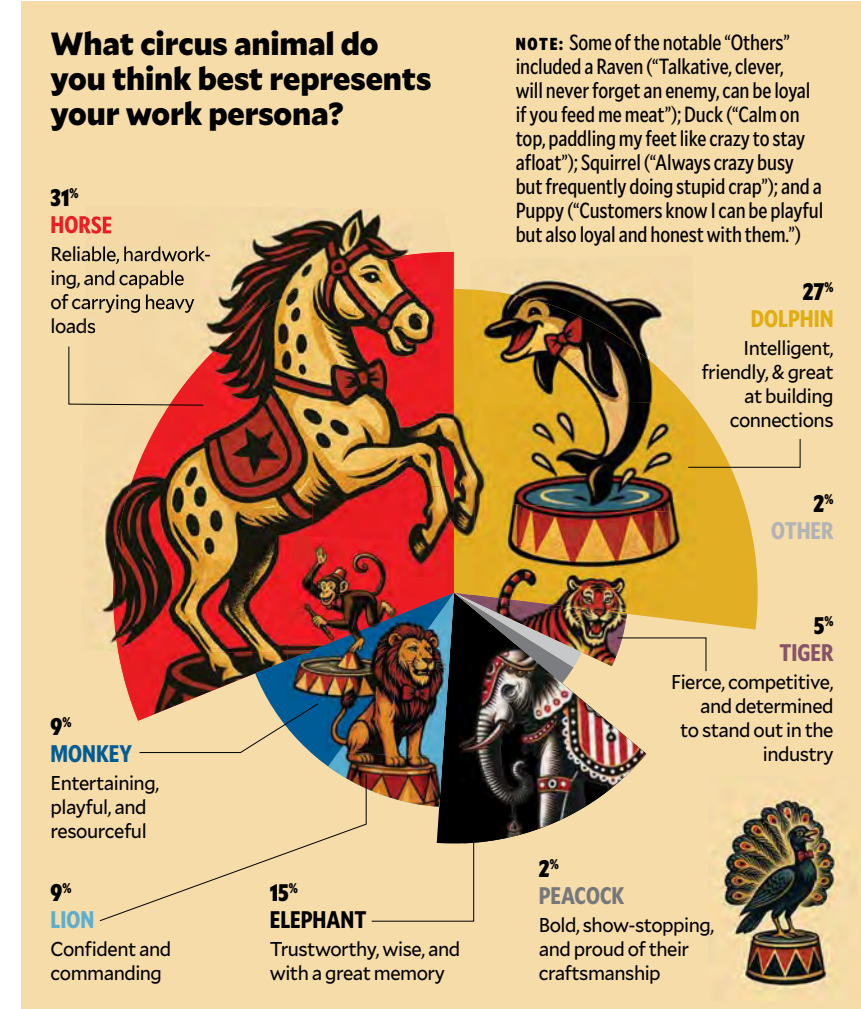
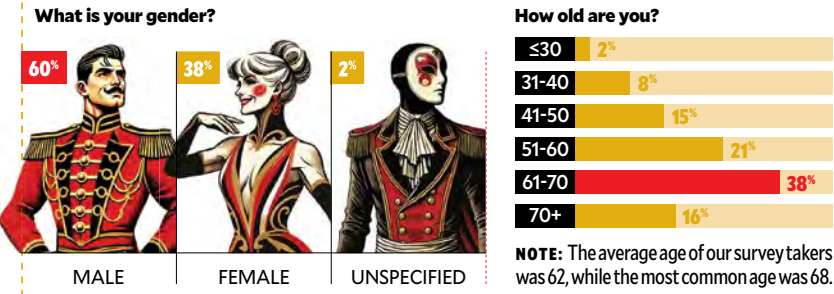
When do you feel most engaged or in the flow at work?

➔ In short, the answer would be "when busy", especially when jewelers get to use their hands. Our readers reported feeling most engaged at work when they are actively involved in the creative and problem-solving aspects of their craft. Many said they found deep satisfaction and engagement when designing custom pieces, as well as "working directly with customers to bring their visions to life." The hands-on nature of jewelry making, such as stone setting, polishing, and detailed bench work, was also frequently mentioned as a source of flow. "Repairing sentimental or high-value jewelry and returning it to a happy customer" was reported as exceptionally rewarding. Other factors that enhance engagement include mastering new techniques, collaborating with colleagues, and overcoming challenging technical issues.

What is your personal walk-out song?

1. "Eye of the Tiger" SURVIVOR
2. "My Way" FRANK SINATRA
3. "I Will Survive" GLORIA GAYNOR
4. "Simple Man" LYNRYD SKYNYRD
5. "The Four Seasons" VIVALDI
6. "Thunderstruck" AC/DC
7. "Back in Black" AC/DC
8. "Don't Stop Believin'" JOURNEY
9. "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend" VARIOUS
10. "Fireball" PITBULL

NOTE: The three songs that store owners most identify with are all fierce and individualistic — the perfect combination for small business owners. Others receiving votes that fit the same mold were songs like "She Works Hard for the Money" by Donna Summer, "We Are the Champions" by Queen, and "Thanks for Making Me a Fighter" by Christina Aguilera. Some jewelers thought the exercise was lame ("LOL, we're not in our 20s," wrote one respondent), but we beg to differ! Our walkout song? "Everyday I Write the Book" by Elvis Costello, naturally!



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The Edge is more than a POS system; it's like adding a staff member with an MBA in Jewelry Retailing.



Scan to learn why jewelers across the nation trust The Edge.



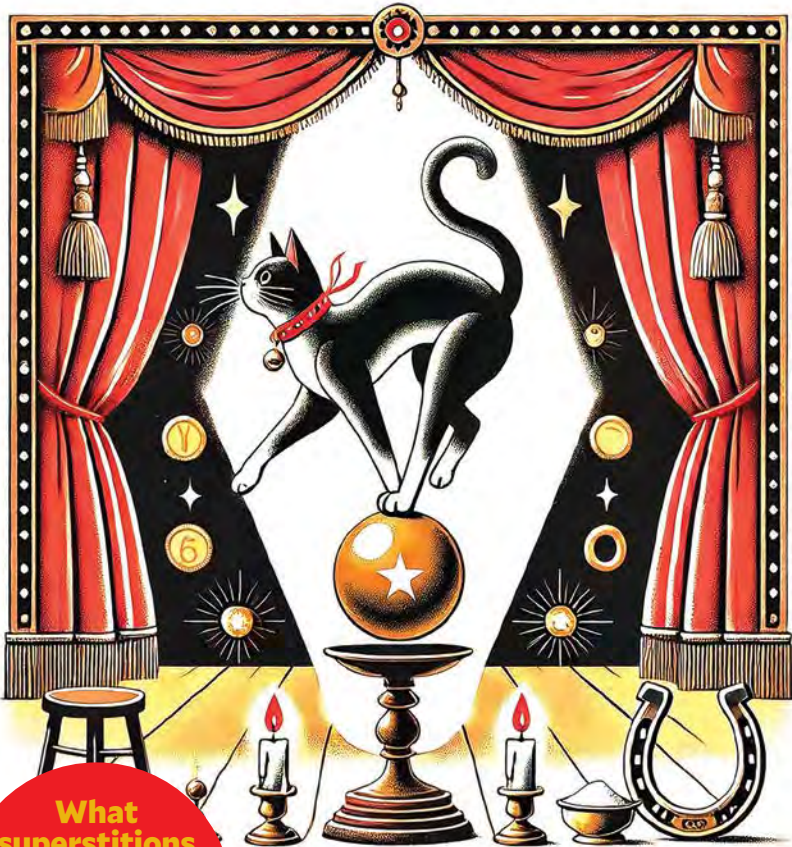
For a **FREE** demo, contact us at 1-855-TRY-EDGE or sales@ajsllc.com.

If you had one request for the “fortune teller” booth in relation to your business, what would it be?

→ If independent jewelry retailers could sit down with a fortune teller, their questions would be strikingly consistent. At the top of the list is the future of their businesses. Will the store grow, shrink, sell, or close? Because so many jewelry stores are family-run, the future of their business is also the future of their legacy. Closely tied to store success is the next most popular question asked by readers: What will happen to gold prices? Jewelers want to know if the market will stay strong, fall, or soar to new highs — and whether they’ll be able to keep their margins intact.

Retirement looms large as well. Many jewelers are asking not only when they can (or should) retire, but also what comes next: Who will take over, and will the business survive? That dovetails with questions around succession and the next generation — whether children, grandchildren, or no one at all will step into their shoes.

Beyond that, jewelers are curious about future trends, the impact of lab-grown diamonds, and the broader economy. A few said they prefer not to know what’s coming. For some, though, the best fortune might be simply having fewer surprises — and a little peace of mind.



What superstitions or good luck rituals do you have in your store?

→ Many independent jewelers practice some sort of ritual to ward off something bad happening. Ironically, something bad could even be a certain

client walking into the store. “Never speak a client’s name unless you want them to make an appearance,” wrote one respondent, and several others echoed the same sentiment. Similarly, some advised to “not talk about the big sale until it’s complete.” Others rely on certain lucky substances, like knocking on wood, sprinkling

salt across the front entry, or burning sage and candles. One even wrote, “*shmeat the cake*.” Many rituals involve money, like making sure all of the bills in the cash register face the same direction, carrying a lucky coin at all times, and keeping a citrine in the cash register. Some said that the first customer of the day is the key: You must sell them something in order to have a successful day. And still others invoke a team ritual, like a 30-second dance party or standing on their heads before an event. Meanwhile, about half of independent jewelers shrug off luck entirely, stating that they only need their faith, prayer or even nothing to get by. The rest hedge their bets — just in case the universe is listening.

On what occasions do you fib?

- To support a surprise gift **71%**
- To boost a staff member’s confidence **18%**
- To save someone from embarrassment **47%**
- To compliment someone’s

- jewelry taste **33%**
- To close a protracted sale **4%**
- To close any sale **1%**
- When handling a complaint **8%**
- To get out of a time-consuming request **22%**
- When letting someone go **6%**
- Never **13%**

NOTE: To sum up the findings, a couple of quotes from our survey-takers: 1) “I’ll not outright lie, won’t say jewelry is an investment, and avoid hard sales tactics. But if the toast needs a little butter for ‘It’s a great day,’ ‘You’re one of my favorite customers,’ ‘You pick such great things,’ well ... then I butter it up.” 2) “When answering the phone after hours, I’m the cleaning lady.”

Rate yourself on our extrovert scale from “lock me away in the back of the shop” to PT Barnum-style entrepreneur (1 to 5)

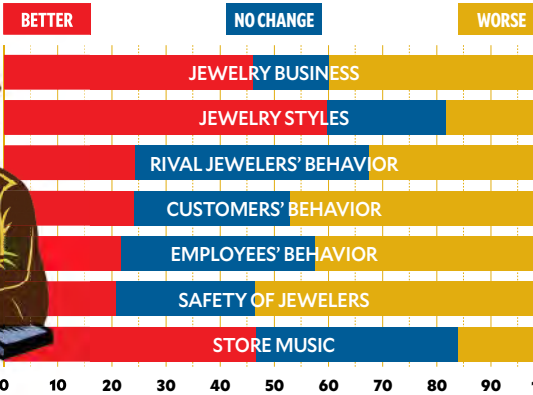
- 1. **3%**
 - 2. **14%**
 - 3. **34%**
 - 4. **33%**
 - 5. **15%**
- (AVERAGE IS 3.5)

What was your favorite school subject?

- Math **20%**
- History **18%**
- Art **15%**
- Science **14%**
- English **10%**
- Workshop **6%**
- Gym class **6%**
- Computer class **2%**
- Music **2%**
- A language **1%**
- Other **6%**

MAJOR SURPRISE: We expected shop to rate higher. For what it’s worth, the jewelers earning more than \$250,000 a year were over-represented by those who liked Math and History, with those two subjects accounting for half the responses. Want to know if a job candidate has a successful career ahead of him? Perhaps ask them if they enjoyed algebra or stories about the Revolutionary War.

TELL US WHETHER YOU THINK THE FOLLOWING THINGS HAVE CHANGED FOR THE BETTER OR WORSE SINCE YOU FIRST OPENED YOUR DOORS.



On what occasions do you fib?

- To support a surprise gift **71%**
- To boost a staff member’s confidence **18%**
- To save someone from embarrassment **47%**
- To compliment someone’s

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THERE'S A LOT of skepticism about AI among our jewelers, reflected not only in their low take-up of the technology rate but also in their thoughts. For many, it threatens to take the soul out of jewelry-making... or to maintain our theme, it's about as appealing as going to Disneyland and then paying someone else to ride Space Mountain on your behalf.

Tell us about a use of an AI app that has markedly improved your business life?

The most prominent applications fell into five main categories.

COMMUNICATION & WRITING:

- Improving clarity and professionalism in emails, texts, and customer responses ("Seasoned a GPT to write in my voice. It took a long time to do so, but now it helps keep the voice across the website consistent, regardless of who produces the content.")
- Crafting product descriptions, blog posts, and social media content.
- Generating ideas for marketing initiatives and ad copy.
- Assisting with review responses and complicated correspondence.

BUSINESS OPERATIONS:

- Developing CRM systems.
- Streamlining performance reviews and goal-setting processes.
- Enhancing website development.
- Creating job descriptions and offer letters.
- Simplifying and polishing store policies ("Used ChatGPT to write a new dress code").
- Generating vendor and accounting reports and financial

analysis ("I use ChatGPT when writing up new contracts or waivers for memo or certain repairs"; "I am using it to help me create basic code for spreadsheets, website, etc. I am able to create forms and payment collection tools that streamline our processes").

CUSTOMER & VENDOR INTERACTION:

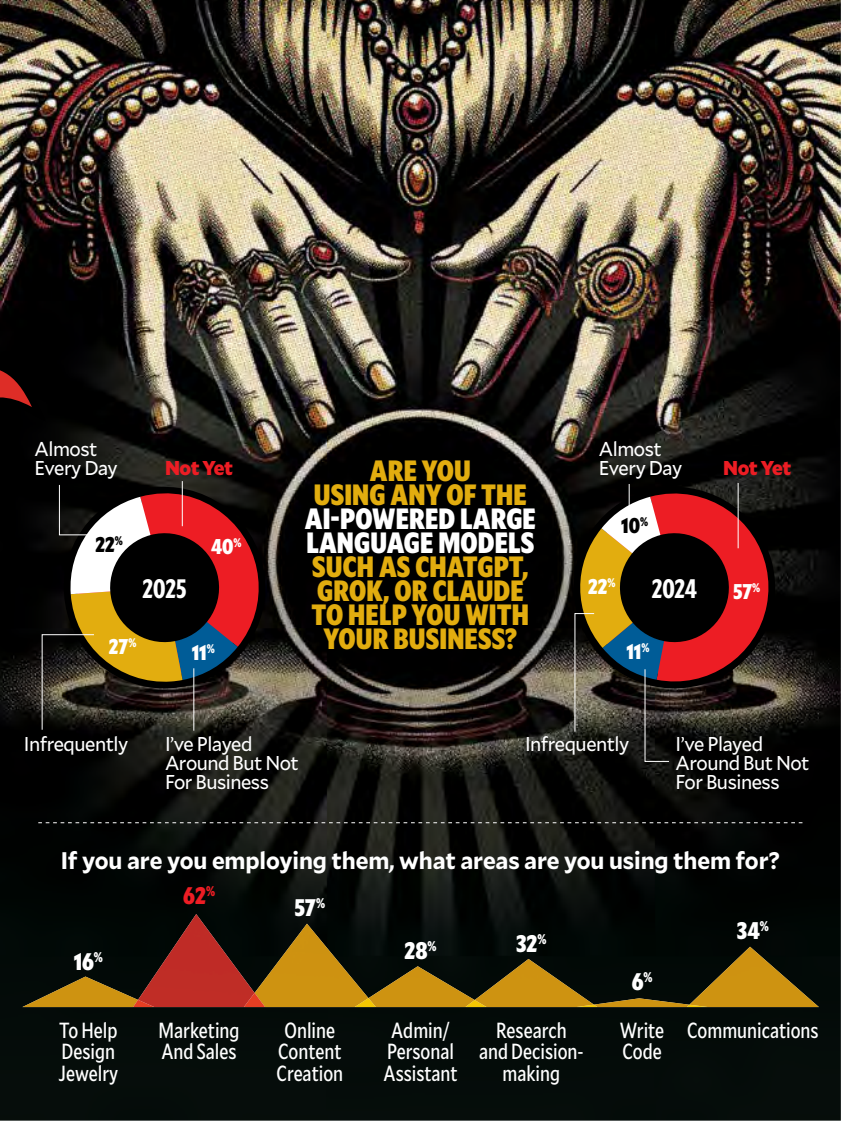
- Integrating AI-powered phone systems and chatbots to handle inquiries and missed calls ("Podium's AI agent knows what I have in stock along with prices and can answer many customer questions").
- Creating visual content to supplement customer communications ("Both ChatGPT and Midjourney help with customer and vendor replies. A picture is worth a thousand words but clear and concise instructions are priceless").

MARKETING & SEO:

- Developing marketing strategies and content ideas
- Assisting with SEO optimization.
- Creating billboard and advertising content.
- Generating newsletters.

DESIGN & VISUALIZATION:

- Quickly generating design ideas (though some jewelers explicitly avoid using AI for design).
- Visualizing store layouts.



Do you think that the ultimate benefit of AI will be to ...

- Increase productivity by taking over rote tasks **25%**
- Add a new "brain" to your business that can help you come up with brilliant new ideas and plans **24%**
- Provide you with an informational resource **32%**
- Boost performance by taking over creative tasks **7%**
- Take over the responsibility of educating customers **3%**
- Other **18%**

SOME JEWELERS didn't see any benefit at all, just risk:

- "This is a touchy topic in our store. Some (like me) are ardently opposed to letting machines do our thinking for us. Others seem to have embraced ChatGPT. I hope he doesn't mind his granddaughters living underground in a lithium mine in permanent servitude to their metal masters."

We are now closer to 2050 than the year 2000. How do you envision jewelry retail looking by mid-century?

- Mostly moved online **6%**
- Designed by robots, created by robots, shipped by robots **3%**
- Pretty much unchanged from now — mostly made and sold by humans **23%**
- A hybrid model blending online convenience and personal in-store experience, assisted by AI agents **50%**
- Who cares. I won't be around **18%**

MOST JEWELERS accept that technology will increasingly become part of the jewelry-making and selling processes. But at its heart, most fervently believe it will remain a human-centric endeavor, since jewelry is about beauty and emotion. Here are some of your fellow jewelers' thoughts on the future of jewelry:

- Virtual showrooms,

augmented reality try-ons, and AI-assisted designs will make custom pieces more accessible than ever, while still honoring the tactile, emotional experience of handling fine diamonds and gotta-have-it unique colored gems in person.

→ Jewelry design and manufacture by AI /robots will be a terrible thing for the jewelry business, and hopefully never becomes the norm.

→ I believe that the human "touch" for jewelry will not be eliminated, possibly will even be enhanced. The high sentimental value and personal nature of jewelry will make the product resistant to full robot-ization.

→ The best part of our collection is being able to say it was handmade.

→ True jewelry is a creation of a human soul, just like art. No machine has feelings or imagination, as yet. It is useless to guess.



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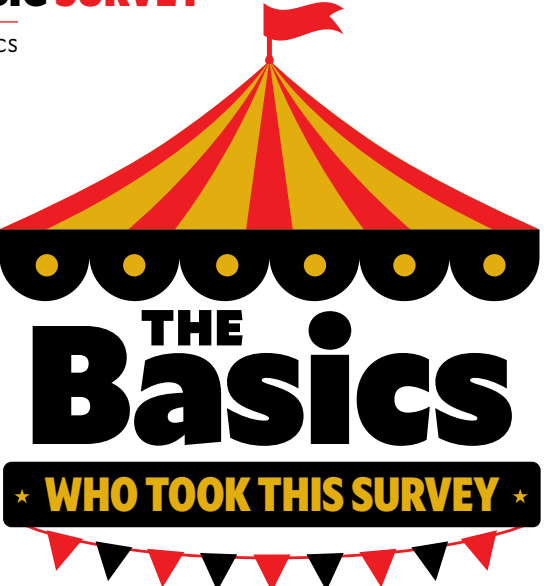


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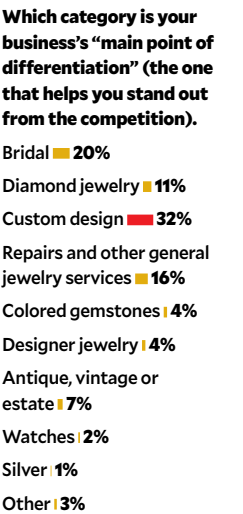
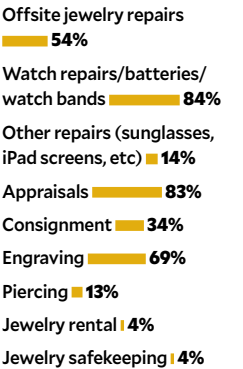
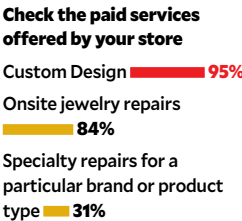
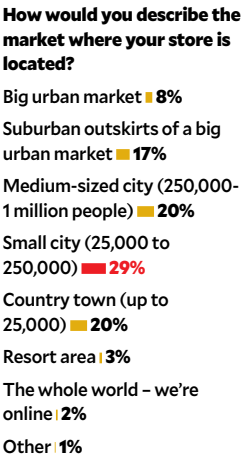
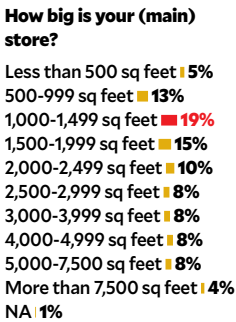
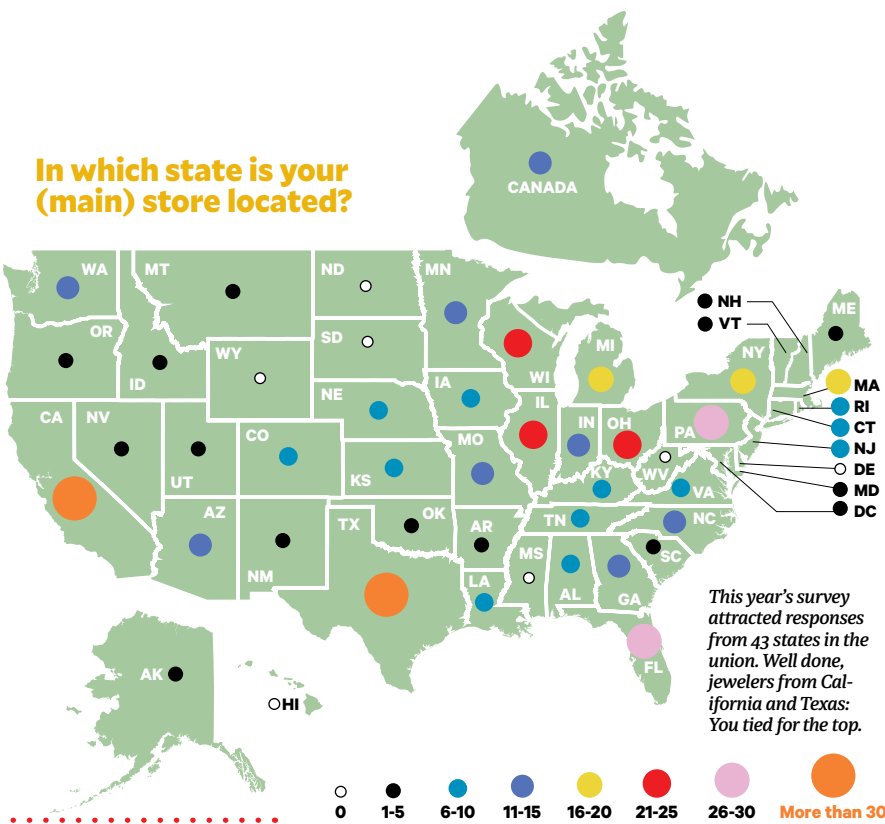


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THE TYPICAL INDEPENDENT jeweler in America is still a one-store downtown operation. The largest portion ply their trade in small to medium-sized cities, offering a full range of jewelry services while proud of the edge their custom design skills gives them.



SPONSORED CONTENT

BRAND AMBASSADOR

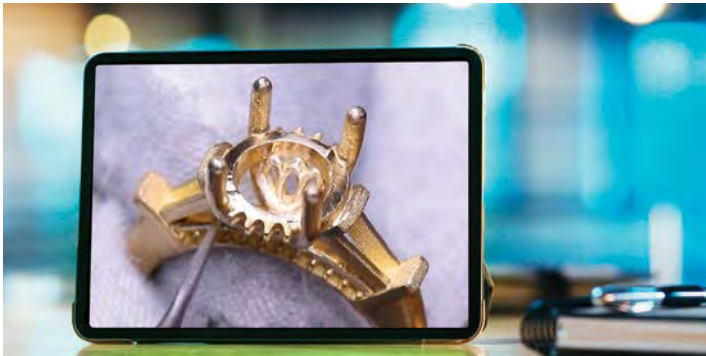
FROM ONE IN TWENTY TO ONE IN FIVE: HOW CUSTOM JEWELRY IS TRANSFORMING RETAIL

AT NECKER'S JEWELERS, A 16-YEAR PARTNERSHIP WITH MALAKAN HAS TURNED CUSTOM WORK INTO A GROWTH ENGINE, WITH NEARLY 20% OF BRIDES NOW CHOOSING PERSONALIZED DESIGNS.

When Savannah Necker-Lévesque started working with brides at her family's Quad Cities jewelry stores, custom engagement rings were the exception. Today, nearly one in five brides she serves are seeking something completely unique.

"What was once focused almost exclusively on one-of-a-kind engagement rings has now expanded into a broader range of requests," says Necker-Lévesque, director of marketing at Necker's Jewelers, which has locations in DeWitt and Davenport, Iowa. The family-owned business, founded by Don and Dorothy Necker in 1952, has been partnering with Malakan since 2009.

That transformation reflects broader market trends, but it's also the result of strategic storytelling. Necker's has leveraged Malakan's complimentary monthly marketing videos to showcase the artistry behind custom creation, sparking customer interest and driving growth.



Malakan produces customized videos at no cost to retailers. Pictured here is a close-up of a ring designed by Necker's Jewelers in the manufacturing phase.

"Each video gives clients a behind-the-scenes look at the complexities and artistry of custom creation, from the initial design concept to the final polish," Necker-Lévesque explains. "By breaking down the process visually, these videos deepen client understanding and appreciation for what goes into making something truly one-of-a-kind."

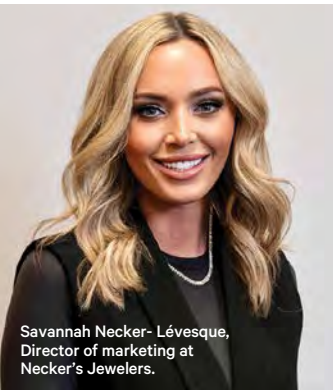
The videos, created at no cost using Necker's own client designs, have proven particularly effective on social media. Combined with shifting consumer preferences toward

old-world craftsmanship and personalization, they've helped expand custom requests beyond engagement rings to include special medallions, bracelets, fashion rings, gemstone designs and memorial pieces.

"More than ever, people want jewelry that feels personal — something that reflects their story, their relationship and their individuality," she notes.

What keeps Necker's confident in taking on increasingly complex projects is Malakan's consistent execution. The company's recent championship ring exemplifies this capability: hand-forged in 18-karat yellow and white gold with 472 round diamonds, 71 specialty-cut stones and vibrant colored gems totaling more than 8 carats, all weighing more than 128 grams.

"The consistency and unwavering commitment to excellence that Malakan delivers is unmatched," Necker-Lévesque says. "Their communication is always clear and responsive, and they provide CAD designs



Savannah Necker-Lévesque, Director of marketing at Necker's Jewelers.

and renderings quickly, which keeps the process moving smoothly."

That reliability extends to every project, regardless of complexity. Malakan's 190 CAD designers deliver more than 600 custom jewelry CADs daily, supporting the company's production of more than 150,000 custom pieces annually for independent retailers nationwide.

"They truly understand the overall design process and collaborate with us every step of the way," she adds. "Most importantly, they work tirelessly to get every detail perfect, every single time."



For more information on partnering with Malakan for custom design, contact the company directly.

E: info@malakan.com
P: (559) 431-1500 • (800) 953-9357
W: malakan.com



Necker's Jewelers operates two Iowa locations. The flagship store in Davenport is pictured.

BRAND AMBASSADOR

Three Generations of Trust: How Royal Jewelry Keeps Rogers Jewelry Co. Ahead of The Curve

In 20 years of partnership, Royal's extensive memo program and 10,000-plus in-stock styles have turned one buyer's first appointment into an all-day shopping event.

JIM CARROLL HAS a running joke about his buying trips to Royal Jewelry's booth at the JCK Las Vegas Show: He could see Royal first and spend the rest of the day by the pool. "Their line is so extensive that I could get everything I needed from just them," says Carroll, vice president of merchandising at Rogers Jewelry Co., a fourth-generation retailer operating seven stores across California and Nevada since 1937.

That breadth has fueled a 20-year partnership between the family-owned businesses. Royal's collection spans everything from birthstone series to bridal goods, all available in 14-karat white or yellow gold. For Carroll, who oversees buying for stores stretching from the Central Coast to Northern California,

that variety eliminates the need to juggle multiple vendors. "The quantity and diverse selection they offer is where our success stems from," Carroll says. "Lots and lots of fashion goods."

But Royal's real competitive advantage lies in its aggressive memo consignment program, which has become increasingly rare in wholesale jewelry. Rogers stocks hundreds of Royal pieces each year, reconciling inventory and refreshing merchandise annually. The program gives the retailer flexibility to test new styles without significant upfront investment.

"It has been a pleasure and very helpful to have their consignment program available," Carroll notes. "We sell hundreds and hundreds of their pieces every year." The partnership has evolved alongside

both companies. Carroll primarily works with Moses Zarnighian, though he's watched Royal's next generation take the reins. Cousins Michael and Sammy Hakimian now direct the company's future, with Michael serving as CEO. "I would say they are in very good hands," Carroll says of the transition.

Royal has expanded its offerings to meet changing market demands. What began as primarily fashion color pieces and diamond fashion has grown to include bridal engagement goods and lab-grown diamond items. The company's collections now include Royal Emeralds, Royal Sapphires, Royal Rubies, Royal D'Oro and Royal Rainbow,

among others. The family-owned manufacturer supports its retail partners with more than product. Royal releases annual lookbooks featuring curated best-sellers, organized by category, metal color and gemstone shape. The books serve as both sales tools and inspiration for in-store conversations. Royal's designs have also graced red carpets, worn by celebrities including Ariana Grande, Cara Delevingne,

Charlize Theron and Gwen Stefani. "At Royal Jewelry, our retailers' success is our success," says Royal Jewelry CEO Michael Hakimian. "We provide the tools to help jewelers to thrive with rapid replenishment and marketing support. Our Memo Consignment

Program keeps showcases dynamic and inventory turning. For us, true partnership means we grow together."

For retailers like Rogers Jewelry Co., now in Carroll's 36th year with the company, Royal delivers what matters most: reliability, selection and partnership.

"I cannot recommend them enough," Carroll says. "The answer is always 'yes' from Royal. They never say 'no.'"



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Diamond-accented D'Oro Collection ring in polished 14K yellow gold with 0.50 TCW diamonds. MSRP: \$2,550 (Style H3611D)

Yellow 14K gold teardrop-shaped earrings with 0.33 TCW diamonds. From Royal Jewelry's D'Oro Collection. MSRP: \$1,850 (Style H3575D)

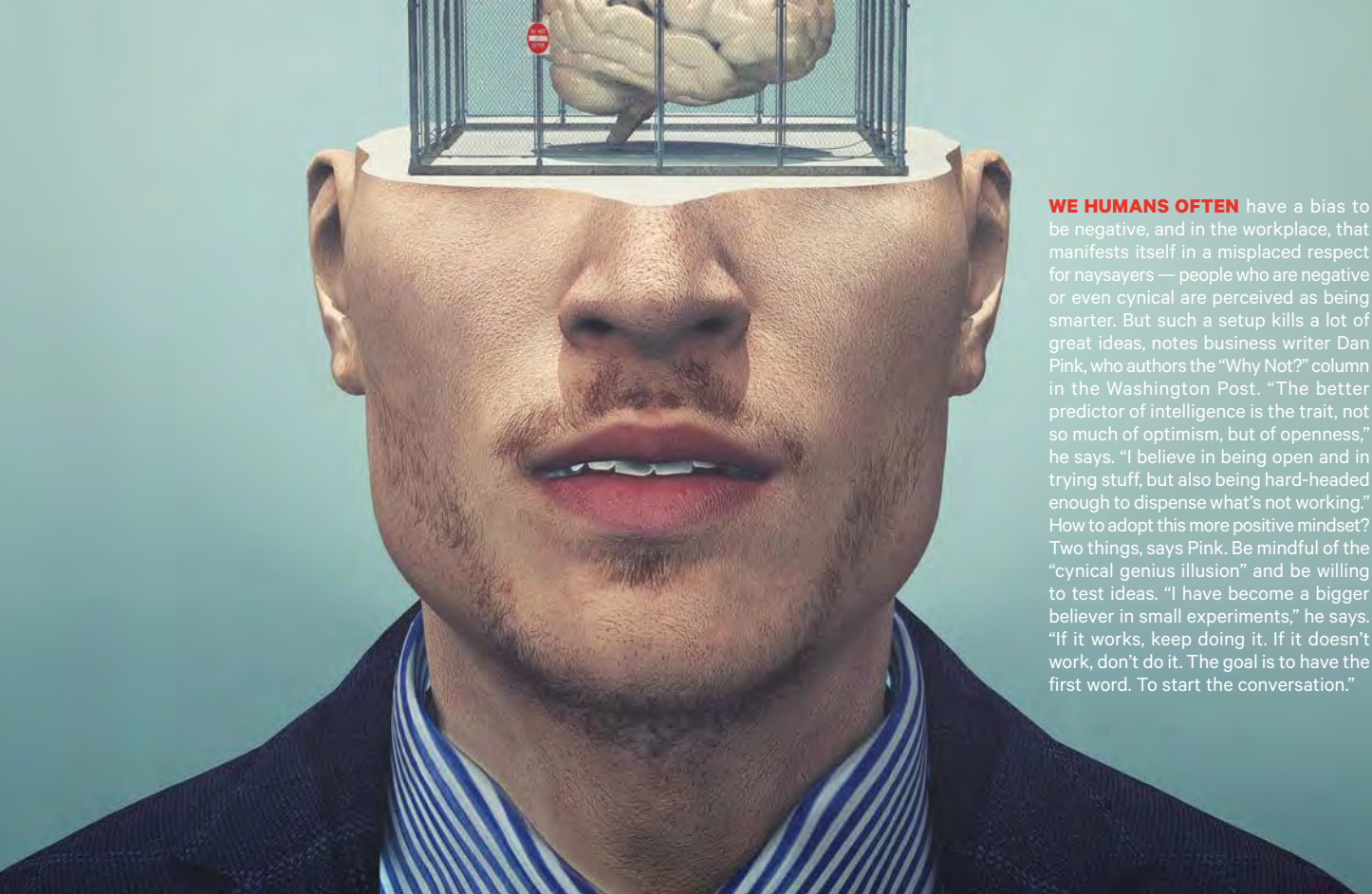
For more information on partnering with Royal Jewelry, contact the company directly.

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P: (800) 762-9900
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IN YOUR STORE

BEWARE THE "CYNICAL GENIUS"



WE HUMANS OFTEN have a bias to be negative, and in the workplace, that manifests itself in a misplaced respect for naysayers — people who are negative or even cynical are perceived as being smarter. But such a setup kills a lot of great ideas, notes business writer Dan Pink, who authors the "Why Not?" column in the Washington Post. "The better predictor of intelligence is the trait, not so much of optimism, but of openness," he says. "I believe in being open and in trying stuff, but also being hard-headed enough to dispense what's not working." How to adopt this more positive mindset? Two things, says Pink. Be mindful of the "cynical genius illusion" and be willing to test ideas. "I have become a bigger believer in small experiments," he says. "If it works, keep doing it. If it doesn't work, don't do it. The goal is to have the first word. To start the conversation."



BEST OF THE BEST PAGE 58

With her up-cycled jewelry line, Jenny Lin of Henne Jewelers

showcases how innovation and sustainability can drive customer engagement, turning overlooked materials into marketable, story-rich designs.



REAL DEAL PAGE 60

A runaway hit at a store quickly turns into a nightmare when it is recalled,

underscoring the importance of strong vendor agreements, crisis response planning, and clear policies for defective merchandise.



COOL STORES PAGE 64

REEDS Jewelers' Landmark concept redefines the jewelry store as a hospitality-driven

experience, blending luxury design, technology integration, and community connection to set a new standard for modern retail.



THAT'S LIFE PAGE 74

What excites Vivian Grimes most is storytelling through design:

whether it's creating delicate, layered pieces influenced by her travels or hiring a private chef to create natural-ingredient dishes that inspired a line of jewelry celebrating natural diamonds.

FROM SCRAP TO STATEMENT

How an innovative approach transforms discarded jewelry into coveted collections

BY EILEEN MCCLELLAND

WHEN JENNY LIN, a goldsmith and bench jeweler at Henne Jewelers in Pittsburgh, PA, approached owner John Henne about turning scraps of gold and orphaned gems into upcycled creations, he thought the idea was inspired and gave her free rein over the scrap bin.

“At Henne Jewelers, we encourage innovation. If a team member comes to me with an idea — and some info about how they will approach it — I try to support it,” Henne says.

The idea also reflects broader industry trends toward sustainability, craftsmanship and storytelling in luxury goods. “Many of our current customers value sustainability, and I expect that trend to continue,” Henne observes. “We are finding that younger generations are seeking unique jewelry that has a story and have an interest in our estate collection.”

For her part, Lin says she was thrilled the idea was so well received by her boss. “I was nervous going in to pitch it, but Henne Jewelers is interested in being at the forefront of pushing boundaries in what the industry is doing. They were all super supportive.”

Upcycled jewelry refers to the process of transforming broken, outdated, or unwanted jewelry into something entirely new and wearable. It’s distinct from simple recycling, where materials are

melted down or refined into raw metals. “I’ve always been drawn to repair and reuse,” Lin says. “In my own jewelry practice, working from scrap often led to my favorite work.”

Lin’s background in fiber arts informs her approach, blending the tactile sensibilities of sewing with the precision of metalwork. Her earliest hobby was sewing and working with fabric scraps. Then, during her Bachelor of Arts studies at Carnegie Mellon University, Lin’s fascination with wearable sculpture took root.

The materials for Lin’s designs come directly from the Henne Jewelers scrap gold program. Before pieces are sent to a refinery, she examines them for potential. Digging through the scrap bin gives her incredible ideas, she

says. “I look for hand-engraving, unique textures, and any sign that a piece was touched by another craftsperson. I love the idea that I’m collaborating with someone from decades ago.”

Her work is largely trial and error, driven by intuition. “I rarely think, ‘I want to make a ring today.’ I start by disassembling a piece and in the process learn how the original jeweler built the piece,” Lin says.

She documents her discoveries through sketches and photographs. She also likes to tack



At Henne Jewelers, outdated jewelry (right) is transformed into new creations (left).



things together, sometimes with a laser welder.

Henne’s social media channels have become an integral part of the project, creating customer engagement and transparency in the creative process. “We’ve featured her creations on Instagram, where followers voted on elements she should use throughout the process,” Henne says.

In one particularly successful campaign, Lin asked Henne followers to choose from three different pieces she pulled from the scrap bin: a necklace, a charm, and an “outrageous” 1980s brooch with interlocking bars. Social media followers chose the most challenging piece, which was the brooch. “The vibe was very outdated. Looking at the pieces it was made of, realizing each little piece was made by a jeweler, I broke it down into components,” she says. Lin refashioned it into multiple pairs of earrings, replacing synthetic stones with natural gemstones.

Her latest collection features

lightweight threader earrings repurposed from vintage pins and charms. She’s also developing a vintage cameo design that incorporates sculptural trims for a touch of Old-World charm.

The pieces are available both in-store and online through the Upcycled Jewelry by Jenny Lin collection, making them accessible to a broader customer base. Customer response has exceeded expectations.

“When we share that these pieces were crafted from unwanted gold or converted from other pieces — such as cufflinks-turned-earrings — they get excited,” Henne says.

It’s also proven to be an effective marketing tool.

“It has brought new customers into the store who may have not considered our jewelry otherwise,” Henne says. “We’ve even had some local businesses comment on the collection after seeing us promote it on Instagram. People are watching and noticing.”



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Model GW-44-2-22 features:

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ILLUSTRATION BY KARINA CUIZON

THE CASE OF THE
**BEST-SELLER
BLOWBACK**

When a holiday favorite becomes a liability, how should a store protect its customers and its reputation? **BY MEGAN CRABTREE**

BRIELLE, merchandise director for Everette & Row, a fine jewelry retailer with five locations across the Midwest, was reviewing early spring stock rotations when the email hit her inbox. It came from the manufacturer of the Solara Eternity Band, a popular white gold design featuring invisible-set princess-cut diamonds, and it carried a subject line that instantly made her stomach drop: “Urgent: Product Recall Notification.”

The Solara Band had been a major success during the winter

season. Its clean, modern profile and seamless row of invisible-set princess-cut diamonds made it a standout piece. It appeared in Everette & Row’s holiday flyer, digital campaigns, and store windows. A total of 112 units had been sold in just three months, making it one of the strongest performers in the company’s Q4 sales.

It was positioned as a signature piece, with premium placement in displays and heavy social promotion. But the recall made it clear: Structural issues in the invisible

setting design were leading to stone failures under normal wear. The ring couldn’t simply be repaired. Retailers either had to source a matching stone, which was often difficult given the precision of the setting, or remake the entire ring from scratch.

By noon, Brielle had a crisis to manage. She immediately coordinated with store managers, ordering all Solara Bands to be pulled from showcases. Managers were briefed on how to communicate the situation to customers. Using the company’s CRM, Brielle’s team identified 91 purchasers with valid contact information. The remaining 21 had been entered into the POS without full details, leaving no way to contact them directly.

Her team began reaching out, calling and emailing each known customer to offer a refund or replacement. Most were understanding. Some were frustrated. A handful were openly irate. The damage to customer trust was immediate.

Financially, the recall was devastating. While repairs or diamond replacements were technically possible, the invisible-set design made them risky. Any fix would likely lead to future issues, especially under the store’s lifetime warranty. The vendor offered only partial credit per unit, covering roughly 40% of the wholesale cost, but not full reimbursement, forcing Everette & Row to absorb part of the cost. Worse, there were no like-for-like alternatives in stock, leaving gaps in inventory and limited upsell options. They stood to lose at least \$140,000 in margin, plus potential future sales

 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.

and customer retention.

Communication with the vendor quickly began to falter. Brielle had worked closely with them for years, often prioritizing their collections in major marketing efforts. But now, her usual contact routed emails to a product specialist, who acknowledged the issue but reiterated the company’s

position: No further financial assistance would be provided.

Brielle pressed for a meeting with the vendor’s executive team, arguing that Everette & Row had promoted the product in good faith and was now absorbing the full cost of a design failure outside its control. The vendor, she argued, had benefited from the exposure and the volume. Shouldn’t the vendor be 100% responsible for the defect and accept all returns at full value?

The recall wasn’t just a product issue; it was now a revenue problem. And the question of what to offer customers who didn’t want a refund but were emotionally attached to the ring still lingered. Replacing the design meant starting over with something that, to them, might feel like a downgrade. Custom work would take time and cost more, something not all customers were willing or able to do.

Meanwhile, customer reviews started to shift, with one visible complaint citing a lost stone. Internally, Brielle was being pressed by leadership to resolve the issue quickly. But her hands were tied. She had no written guarantee from the vendor regarding product durability and no formal memo agreement to return unsold or defective units.



MEGAN CRABTREE is founder and CEO of Crabtree Consulting, a boutique consulting firm with a proven track record of growing jewelry retailers and manufacturers for over two decades. Known for their data-driven approach, they identify barriers and create tailored growth opportunities, fueling success and helping clients reach their goals in the industry.

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THE BIG QUESTIONS: ❶ What policies or protections should retailers have in place to ensure vendors take back defective products? ❷ How can retailers manage vendor relationships during high-stakes issues like recalls without damaging future collaboration? ❸ To what extent is a vendor financially responsible when a product failure results in major losses for a retailer?

STEVEN WILLIAMS

WILLIAMS JEWELERS,
ENGLEWOOD, CO

This could have been avoided if the buyers and owners had knowledge of the invisible-set issues that have always plagued that style of setting. They should have shown this ring to their bench jewelers. They would have told them not to buy this type of setting in a ring. In a pendant, it would be OK. Now it's time to call in the lawyers. And good luck with that!

DRUE SANDERS

DRUE SANDERS CUSTOM
JEWELERS, ALBANY, NY

How can any vendor not warranty a defect? I am a custom jeweler and warranty every piece that leaves my store. If the vendor had the benefit of great orders from this store for years, they should be bending over backwards to help the retailer maintain their good reputation by giving them their money back on the recalled merchandise. I say shame on the vendor!

SANDY KLUH

S.T. KLUH JEWELERS,
OLYMPIA, WA

The first mistake was featuring or even carrying an invisible-set ring. When a client has a problem, offer a full refund or a credit toward another ring (not one with invisible-set diamonds). Apologize profusely, and that's it. Don't send out a recall — that's looking for trouble! You may actually only see a third returned over the next five years or so. I would imagine

a manufacturer would work with you as the rings trickled in. If not, dump them.

And next time, have your buyer(s) run your 'featured ring' by the shop and avoid this scenario.

GENE POOLE

HUDSON-POOLE FINE
JEWELERS, TUSCALOOSA, AL

I have made it a priority to have great vendor relations. However, I feel that most vendors would do exactly what this vendor did. The jewelry store notifying all customers affected about a recall is exactly what was needed. Putting your customer first is a must. Customers have heard many, many times about recalls. Mercedes, BMW, Lexus, to our food recalls — they are in the news every day. I feel that a lawsuit is needed to get a reimbursement for the loss in revenue.

DAVID BLITT

TROY SHOPPE JEWELLERS,
CALGARY, AB

I had this issue happen many years ago, and when I approached the vendor, they told me some nasty words. I threatened court action, and they changed names and corporate structure. The vendor should be prepared to take back all items at cost or remake them properly. Court can be an expensive alternative but may be the only way left. With the estimated costs, it might be the only way. The real issue is what kind of ethical supplier is this? First issue and they duck and run. I would drop them immediately.

There is a way to spin the narrative on your social media

and with customers to turn the negative into a positive. Explain the issue, how the store is being proactive and is taking them back at full cost, and that it will offer a new item, which the store should have ready. There are recalls of all kinds, and people know that it can happen.

LISA BEERS

KENNY G AND COMPANY FINE
JEWELERS, RENO, NV

Isn't it a travesty when a vendor does not back their work? I guess this is why they don't sell direct to consumer. Still, it is so important to read the fine print and create accurate and legally binding agreements in these B2B relationships.

I would 100 percent expect a vendor to back their quality if I'm going to represent their jewelry. There would be no coming back from this lack of responsibility. I would fire the vendor for this kind of mistake and lack of repair/replacement on their part. If they don't have your back, don't represent them. There are so many great vendors out there — and let's be honest, it's not like you can't find that same style.

JENNIFER FARNES

REVOLUTION JEWELRY WORKS,
COLORADO SPRINGS, CO

Ouch! Hindsight is always 20/20 — and this one may require attorney involvement to find an amicable resolution. Unless there is something in the fine print from the manufacturer about their responsibility, it is a situation that

should be split between the vendor and the store. There is broad knowledge that something will inevitably go wrong with invisible settings. This broad industry awareness means the store was already on notice of the risks in selling the pieces, but the manufacturer also knew what kind of goods they were offering and could have predicted the fallout. The store is doing everything right by notifying clients and offering exchanges — and you can't make everyone happy. It will ultimately be a lesson learned the hard way because no one wins here. Sometimes that means taking a financial hit to best restore your reputation.

JOSEPH VILLARREAL

VILLARREAL FINE
JEWELERS, AUSTIN, TX

Most chain stores should already have a clear written policy with their vendors about defective products. This is a lesson to be learned.

In my opinion, retailer Everette & Row should have had a clear policy in place for defective product(s). This will make for smoother collaboration between retailer and vendor. The vendor should stand behind their product(s) 100 percent, especially for defective products.

Nevertheless, this unfortunate situation should be easily fixable. Without a doubt, the vendor should have the bulk of the responsibility to make things right by offering an open-ended warranty to repair all the defective merchandise without charge to the retailer. Perhaps this will make the vendor more conscious of the quality of the products they are producing.

At the end of the day, both retailer and manufacturer should adopt a clear policy for how they handle defective products.



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REEDS JEWELERS

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QUICK FACTS

URL: reeds.com / **OWNERS:** Alan Zimmer, Genna Zimmer, Brittney Zimmer, Mark Schreiber / **FOUNDED:** 1946 / **OPENED FEATURED LOCATION:** 2004. / **RENOVATED:** 2024 / **AREA:** 9,000 square feet / **EMPLOYEES:** 669 full-time; 88 part-time / **LOCATIONS:** 62 / **TOP JEWELRY BRANDS:** David Yurman, Marco Bicego, Mikimoto, Roberto Coin, Shy Creation, Ippolita, John Hardy, Temple St. Clair / **TOP WATCH BRANDS:** Rolex, Tudor, Breitling, Omega, TAG Heuer



COOL KEYS

Showcases designed to fit sales style

Form meets function in interior design

Family history wall showcases heritage

HIGH-END HOSPITALITY

REEDS Jewelers redefines luxury retail with “Landmark” location. BY EILEEN McCLELLAND

AFTER 20 YEARS without an extensive redesign, REEDS Jewelers could have played it safe with its Mayfaire Town Center renovation. Instead, they threw out the traditional jewelry retail playbook entirely. The result? Their first “Landmark” store — a 9,000-square-foot space where TVs disappear into custom millwork, chandeliers are designed to sparkle like jewelry, and customers come weekly not just to shop but to hang out. It’s a commitment to redefining what luxury retail can be.

There’s a full bar stocked with premium wines and spirits, bountiful floral arrangements, and refrigerators in every corner. It’s the kind of place where customers come weekly to watch a golf game while sipping wine — and maybe walk away with a new piece of jewelry or a luxury watch.

The multi-million-dollar renovation transforms jewelry shopping from a transaction into an experience that rivals fine hospitality venues.

Of REEDS’ 62 locations, 21 are designated as destination stores

that have a mix of luxury brands with shop-in-shops. Another three make up REEDS’ highest tier and are known as Landmark locations, stores of at least 7,000 square feet that will feature extensive experiential and omni-channel retail elements.

“We want it to be a community hub, a place where people can hang out and drink a glass of wine,” explains Genna Zimmer, vice president of operations and strategy and a member of the third generation of the family-owned company. “The whole

experience, start to finish, should mimic the experience of hosting a guest at home, and hopefully buying jewelry in the process,” she says.

Design That Tells a Story

Architect Eric Lewis of E/Line Architecture led the complex renovation of Mayfaire. He understood that REEDS wasn’t just updating their space — they were rethinking how they do retail. “REEDS Jewelers was a true col-

laborator and willing to rethink traditional retail models in favor of a hospitality-driven, immersive space,” Lewis says. “This was a sea-change difference for them in how the design complemented what they were doing with selling and checkout processes.”

The renovation required extraordinary coordination because the store remained open to customers during the multi-phase process.

“The REEDS Jewelers team, from corporate to the sales floor staff, were extraordinarily patient and never wavered from the goal of creating a flagship store,” Lewis explains. “The overarching design goal was to reimagine the entire customer journey as a carefully choreographed and immersive experience, from the moment of

entry to the moment they left the door, weaving together moments of delight, interaction, and storytelling.”

The project involved an expansion into an adjacent storefront, combining two distinct storefronts into a unified design that centralizes the main entry. The new facade introduces a continuous canopy with signage, enhancing the boutique’s presence and accessibility.

Inside, custom elements are woven throughout the space, from casework that integrates store-of-the-future elements and point-of-sale functions to a bar area complete with beverage service, display capabilities, and entertainment features.

The casework is designed to facilitate each section’s mode of

sales. “There are a lot of different ways they can sell, and they are pairing that with what is in the cases,” Lewis says.

More casual, potentially faster, sales are enhanced with cases that encourage side-by-side selling. Podiums with vitrine cases showcase one special piece of jewelry. In the bridal area, where cases are lower, seating is provided.

Attention to detail is obsessive. “There’s not a single case that doesn’t have a hidden cabinet. Glasses have a hidden REEDS logo on the bottom. There are customized ice cubes,” Zimmer says. “TVs go up and down into the millwork so they’re disguised with a beautiful gold backing. Our bathrooms feel like elevated luxury hotel bathrooms. We have an in-store florist and 20 floral arrangements.

We have more than 10 refrigerators and they’re in every corner, so you never have to walk across the store at any point to get a drink for a guest.”

The response has been overwhelmingly positive. “Vendors and customers say, ‘You guys didn’t miss a single detail,’” Zimmer notes.

The centerpiece of the store is a custom chandelier that serves as a striking focal point, reinforcing the store’s refined aesthetic. There’s a story there: “In the original design, we had different chandeliers, but we felt like something was missing,” Zimmer says.

Technology is seamlessly integrated throughout. Customers can swipe through custom design ideas on iPads built into the bar. Virtual try-on stations create an

OUR JUDGES SAY

MEGAN CRABTREE: REEDS Jewelers' commitment to digital excellence is clear, with advanced features like augmented reality for virtual try-ons. It's impressive to see a retailer with such a long history remain so current and forward-thinking.

ALLIE DESEELHORST: My favorite feature of the interior is the REEDS legacy wall of history. This customized idea showcases longstanding community presence and instantly builds trust.

LYN FALK: Great storefront, especially with the florals. The interior is luxury defined! Beautiful and rich colors, simple yet distinct textures, and hard lines combined with soft shapes create spaces that entice one to shop the entire store.

GABRIELLE GRAZI: REEDS Mayfaire is an exquisitely designed space and a wonderful opportunity to have a flagship location in Wilmington.

DUSTIN LEMICK: REEDS is true modern luxury powered by three generations. REEDS has built an eco-system with the tech and touchpoints to make every customer feel seen.

MARK PIMENTAL: Innovation is the key for REEDS. They are staying ahead of the competition with key product collaborations. On their website, it is the use of AR virtual try-ons and in store their Custom Bridal Studio. Historically, they were ahead of the game with e-commerce and the accepting of cryptocurrency before its time.

JUDGES IN THE Big Cool category for 2025 include: Megan Crabtree, founder and CEO of Crabtree Consulting; Allie DeSeelhorst, who owns Copper Canary in Meridian, ID, a first-place winner of the America's Coolest Stores contest in 2024; Lyn Falk, founder and president of Retailworks, Inc.; Gabrielle Grazi, president of the Women's Jewelry Association; Dustin Lemick, founder and CEO of BriteCo, a tech-driven jewelry and watch insurance provider; and Mark Pimental, owner of MP Business Consulting.

omni-channel feel. The space also houses a Custom Bridal Design Studio, along with dedicated boutiques for luxury brands like Rolex and David Yurman.

Building Community Connections

Despite the size of its 13-state operation, REEDS has managed to maintain a distinctly local feel in each market. In Wilmington, a company survey revealed that a majority of customers didn't realize REEDS was a chain. "That's something we're proud of," Zimmer says. "It's not a financial benefit to design this way, but none of our stores look alike. We always bring in localized design inspiration. Wilmington's a coastal town, so in the Mayfaire store, you see a lot of blues and some inspirations from the ocean."

The localized approach is evident throughout their portfolio. "We work with interior designers to create a beautiful environment that's not intimidating. Every Landmark store will have a different vision," Zimmer notes.

As a comparison, Zimmer cites a destination store in Asheville, NC, a mountain town. "There's a beautiful wood slat acoustic ceiling because it's woodsy, and we have a variety of beers and IPAs available because that's very Asheville."



A Landmark store in Corpus Christi, TX, is being built in the heart of a high-end residential area, set back from the road on five acres. "It's a true oasis," she says. "And the goal is just to feel at ease, with spa vibes, and with Spanish inspiration."

"We're pulling from ideas from the best of the best in hospitality, in luxury, when it comes to design, but making sure that it doesn't feel out of place. It has to feel natural for the environment that it's in."

This localized approach extends to staffing and community engagement.

REEDS encourages store man-

agers to become pillars of their communities, following the model of its founder, Bill Zimmer. Bill and Roberta Zimmer founded the company in 1946 in a single store in downtown Wilmington. The company has grown under the leadership of their son Alan Zimmer, who became president and CEO in 1985.

Today, the third generation is actively involved: Genna serves as vice president of operations and strategy, focusing on strategic initiatives. Her sister Brittney is senior buyer, handling diamond buying, designer, and fashion. Their cousin Mark Schreiber is vice president of operations and recruiting, overseeing store operations.

"Our grandfather knew everybody in Wilmington; he was like the mayor in the city," Zimmer recalls. "I make sure to work behind the case one day a week to stay in touch with our clients. But now that we're larger, the family aren't working in the Wilmington store or all of our stores every single day. We don't want to be the face of the store. We want the manager and the people there to be known as the mayors of their store. We really encourage them



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to build those relationships.” Each store does have a family wall illustrating the history of the business and highlighting its family ownership. But the goal from a strategy perspective is that the local team is seen as the family. “We recognize that customers aren’t coming to REEDS necessarily because the Zimmer family owns it,” Zimmer says. “Probably not. They’re coming because they love the experience and the people they have worked with.”

The company looks for managers who embody the same characteristics as its founder — people who show passion for the business and demonstrate strong leadership. “If you don’t like people, you shouldn’t be in the jewelry business,” Zimmer says. “We want happy people who have a strong work ethic, who are good leaders, and who are able to connect with guests and clients.”

Pioneering Spirit and Innovation

REEDS was one of the first jewelers to launch an e-commerce site in 1996, embracing digital

innovation early. In 2014, they became the first fine jeweler to accept cryptocurrency as payment, showcasing a willingness to embrace new technologies. Today, they’re integrating advanced technologies including AR virtual try-ons, data-driven personalization, and a “technology innovation lab” focused on enhancing customer experience and streamlining operations. They’re also cautiously exploring AI applications in IT initiatives, including virtual reality online and AI-enabled notifications for after-hours security.

The customer response has validated the Landmark concept. “Customers walk in and just say wow,” Zimmer says. “We have a beautiful store that matches the experience we’ve always delivered.”

As her dad, Alan Zimmer, puts it: “I love this business, and the foundation of our company’s growth will be the practices my father taught us: personal service, friendships, and quality goods at competitive prices.” The Landmark store concept takes those founding principles and reimagines them for the modern luxury retail landscape.

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FIVE COOL THINGS ABOUT

REEDS JEWELERS

1 EXCLUSIVE COLLECTIONS.

The company has introduced themed collections, including the Downton Abbey Bridal Collection of engagement rings and wedding bands that reflect the show's grandeur, and the Papyrus Jewelry Line showcasing gemstones set in 10K gold in collaboration with the stationery brand.

2 COMMUNITY IMPACT.

The Zimmer family's commitment to community extends beyond retail. Their most significant contribution is the Zimmer Cancer Institute at New Hanover Regional Medical Center, named in honor of William and Roberta Zimmer and established in 2000. Their philanthropic efforts also include support

Performing Arts, Historic Wilmington Foundation, and the Wilmington Children's Museum, reflecting their commitment to enhancing community well-being and cultural richness.

3 POPPING UP AT SEA.

REEDS partnered with Seabourn Cruise Line and IWC for an Alaskan voyage,

taking over a retail shop for a three-week cruise from Vancouver, British Columbia to Juneau, AK. "It was fun and also a big learning curve," Zimmer says. "It took a lot of planning, getting staff and millions of dollars of merchandise to Alaska."

4 REEDS UNIVERSITY.

With the goal of having the best-trained team on-board, REEDS partners with the Gemological Institute of America (GIA), ensuring employees earn AJP certification and complete diamond

grading courses. The education begins with onboarding and continuing with loss prevention, vendor products, storytelling impact and selling through technology.

5 A PERSONAL TOUCH. The family business culture extends to benefits, including no-interest angel loans for employees having unexpected financial bumps in the road. "And my dad writes a handwritten birthday letter to every single employee," Zimmer says. "He's done it for the last 45 years."

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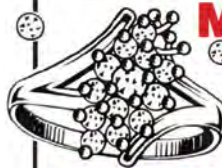
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THAT'S LIFE

Retail jewelers share how they achieve balance between work & leisure

I have a dachshund.

(She is SO funny)

A MUSICIAN

my HUSBAND

WE LOVE TO COOK TOGETHER!

My mom is one of 6 kids. I'm one of 6, and we all live in Naples. We always are hanging with each other.

I've drawn so much inspiration from LONDON.



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I run quite a bit. It is in my blood. I jog with my daughter, Sybil, in a jogging stroller.



I ran track in college. People say they can't run with me. BUT THAT WAS TEN YEARS AGO. I just love being outside.

YOU'RE OUTSIDE A LOT.

Vivian Grimes

HENRI NOEL, DOWNTOWN NAPLES, FL

ON NOV. 1, Vivian Grimes opened Henri Noel in a tourist-heavy spot in downtown Naples, FL. The company, named for her grandfather's business that opened in Naples in 1981, had previously been a shop within a shop inside her father's store, Certified Jewelers. Vivian ran track at Boston College and USC; now, she designs jewelry that can be worn during workouts, beach days and nights out. She lives with her husband, Max, and baby daughter, Sybil.

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