

O N S A L E S

GENUINE COOL



The best store design in the world won't offset lame staff. **Shane Decker** lists the four things your sales associates must get right.

ROME WASN'T BUILT in a day. And neither are cool stores.

Don't get me wrong — it's great to have the perfect location, a beautiful building, cutting-edge advertising, and gorgeous merchandise. Money can buy all of those things, and each one can help to build your business. But none of them mean a hill of beans if your people aren't well-trained.

In my travels, I see stores everywhere that seem to have it all ... that is, until you walk inside and speak to a sales associate ... *if they'll even speak to you*. Maybe they're too snooty to help, or maybe they don't know anything about their products, or maybe their presentation is just too "vanilla." Whatever the case might be, they're costing their stores money.

Owners and managers in these stores are setting their people up for failure from the moment they're hired. The jewelry industry is not one in which you can just step in and be your very best — the learning curve is about three years long. But some owners are hiring people and expecting them to just "jump in and

swim," without showing them how.

Let me put it another way. If a blind man walked into your store, how would he react? He can't see your building, or your merchandise, but if he leaves thinking, "Wow, that was awesome!" then you've got a cool store.

His reaction (and that of any of your customers) depends on how he was treated. And how he's treated stems directly from how well your people are trained in these four areas:

1) STORE PROCEDURES: Your employees must know how to act or react in any situation. For example, are they asking to clean and polish the jewelry of every person who walks through the door? Are they asking if they can check all the stones in the customer's ring — knowing that by not using the word "diamonds," your store won't be accused of switching stones if one or more turns out to be fake? Do they know the five-second rule when greeting a customer? How to fill out a sales slip? Flawless execution of the basics — it's what matters most.

2) PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE: You can't allow your sales associates to be "category smart." They have to know *every* product you offer from top to bottom, front to back, in every category. Your store is only as strong as your weakest link, and when you have people who are only "cate-

gory smart," you have weak links.

3) GEMOLOGICAL EDUCATION: customers these days are sharp. Many research your product online before they come in to buy. Therefore, your people have to know more about your diamonds, gemstones, and techniques than the customer. Why would they buy from someone they don't respect?

4) SALES TECHNIQUES: Do your salespeople understand "The Anatomy of the Sale"? Do they know the seven types of closes? Can they create, close, add on and T.O.? And can they do all these things with a high level of professionalism? If not, you're letting them down.

When an owner sets his or her people up for success, everyone wins — the owner, the salesperson, and the customer. But a lot of owners micromanage. Instead of allowing their employees to live up to expectations on their own they constantly look over their shoulders. People tire of this, and teamwork breaks down.

Not only do your employees suffer when they're not properly trained, but so do you. You're holding yourself hostage. Why? Because you can't ever leave them. A really cool store is one in which the owner can leave for a month and the store business isn't affected in the slightest. A cool store is one where the employees don't have to ask the owner or manager questions all the time, but are empowered to make decisions on their own and solve problems.

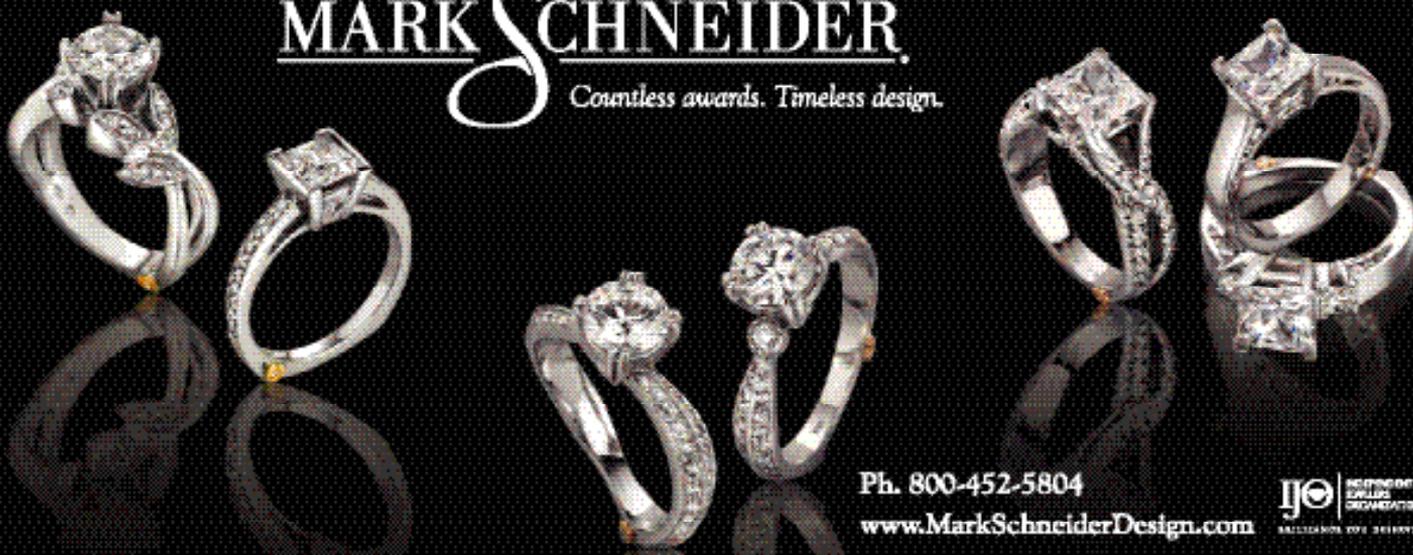
Remember: the happier the employees, the better the shopping experience. And the more important they feel, the happier they are and the harder they will work.

SHANE DECKER has provided much sought-after sales training for more than 3,000 stores worldwide. He can be reached at (866) 424-2472.



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