

ON SALES

ESCAPE THE NET



Consider e-tailers worthy adversaries, with a weakness, says **Shane Decker**.

IS THERE A JEWELRY salesperson in the country who doesn't cringe when they hear the words, "I've been looking on the Internet..."? And who could blame them? Now at \$2.1 billion per year in revenues, online sellers continue to turn up the heat on traditional jewelry retailers.

And so the battle cry has gone out across the industry, and swords have been drawn. Problem is, when we attack Internet e-tailers, we only hurt ourselves. We come across as defensive, and customers think, "Maybe there's something to this Internet thing after all." We need to sheathe our swords, and instead take our lead from the art of jujitsu — a weaponless method of self-defense that uses the attacker's strength against them.

Let's take a look at what the Internet *can't* offer when it comes to jewelry shopping:

1) Personal viewing: 90% of Americans have never held a one-carat diamond in their hands.

Because we in the industry see diamonds day after day, we often forget just how amazing it is to see one for the first time. Furthermore, in your store, customers can check out their diamonds under a microscope, as well as see it under "room lighting." E-tailers ask customers to buy jewelry even though they've never seen it or held it in person — how ridiculous is that?

2) Personal touch: You have sales associates trained on the 4 C's and educated about their products. They understand the fine art of selling without being pushy or threatening. They can answer questions and help customers find exactly what they want. Online sellers tell customers "do it yourself".

3) Personal experience: Most important of all, online sellers cannot offer a "Wow!" experience in jewelry shopping. In general, independent brick-and-mortar stores offer better quality, more integrity, more reliable lab reports, and far greater company benefits than

their online counterparts.

Despite the Internet's strengths, it clearly has some glaring weaknesses as well. And more often than not, your customers know this.

So why do they tell you that they've been looking on the Internet? Because they want you to know that they know something about your product. But they wouldn't be in your store if they weren't willing to buy from you. Deep down, what they're *really* saying is that they're looking for a place and a person to buy from.

How should you respond? By complimenting them on their knowledge and the fact that they've researched the product. It catches your customer off-guard, makes them feel great, and transforms the Internet from your foe to your friend. Remember — *jujitsu!*

At some point in your presentation, be sure to talk about the many company benefits your store offers customers. GIA training for sales associates, scopes on the tables, per-

sonally selected diamonds, owner-on-premises ... all of these will help establish trust and prove that what you say is correct. And, the perceived value of your product goes up while price objections go down.

Just as you should never knock a competitor, don't knock an Internet site. If you do, your customer will wonder why you're defensive. They'll go look at it, if only to prove you wrong — and when they do, they may buy.

That said, it's always okay to establish professional doubt. For instance, you may tell the customer that, in hand-selecting your diamonds, your store rejects more diamonds than it keeps. You might close by saying, "You know, I've always wondered who bought the diamonds we rejected." You're not referring to any competitor specifically, but rather raising the perceived value of your own diamonds while planting a seed of doubt regarding online sellers.

Finally, to be successful against Internet e-tailers, you have to believe in your product and in your prices. If you don't, neither will your customer. It's that simple.

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BRAINSTORMS

NEW IDEAS FOR YOUR STORE

Your store is filled with people who are young and in love. And one thing that such people love to do is capture their special moments in pictures. So why not ...

Install a photo kiosk in your store.

You know, the old-fashioned kind with a curtain that pulls shut. Let couples use the booth for free with no purchase requirement. That will guarantee you some *serious* lovebird traffic!

SOURCE: *Instore*

LINE TIME

WHAT TO SAY AND WHEN TO SAY IT

A customer calls with a complaint or question. You're not ready to respond, but promise that you will. Don't tell them to call you back. Instead, say:

"I will call you back."

WHY? Follow-up phone conversations should *always* be initiated by you — not the customer. Don't forget to call when promised.

SOURCE: Karen Leland and Keith Bailey, *Customer Service For Dummies*

When customers make an unreasonable request, your first reaction may be annoyance. Instead of making a negative judgement, tell them:

"I will try my best."

WHY? You're not promising anything. And who knows, you might find out that their request is easier to fulfill than you thought.

SOURCE: Karen Leland and Keith Bailey, *Customer Service For Dummies*



ONCE THEY CALL, IT'S YOUR JOB TO FOLLOW UP.