

SHANE
DECKER



COMMENTARY / ON SALES

Go for it: Take the Initiative

➔ Acting defensively will only hurt your chances of survival. Now is the time to **START PLAYING OFFENSE** in your business mind-set.

I've read the reports. I know our nation's economy is taking a beating. I know that competition from the Internet and chain stores means independent jewelry stores have to work harder for every dollar.

But we're making it worse for ourselves. We're allowing ourselves to get caught up in all the negatives: the high price of oil, the mortgage crisis, the stock-market slide. Acting defensively will only hurt your chances of survival. You've got to take the initiative.

Consider this story of two jewelers. They run into each other at a trade show, and begin to talk:

Jeweler A: I heard business will be slow this year. I'm cutting back on my advertising.

Jeweler B: Huh? I'm planning on spending *more* on advertising this year. I want to do a better job of reaching people who have never heard about us before.

Jeweler A: Well, I'm going to curtail my buying at the show. I'll invest less in inventory and carry fewer large goods.

Jeweler B: Interesting. I'm beefing up my inventory. Have you seen the trends? Bigger is better, so I plan to carry more high-end pieces.

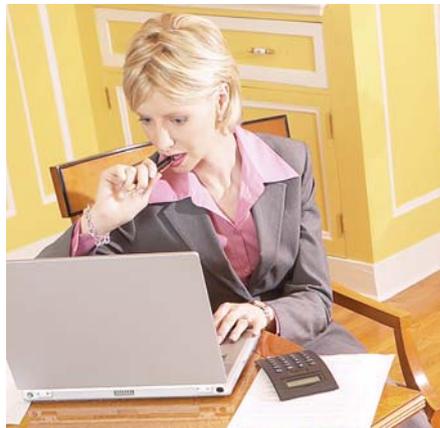
Jeweler A: I was going to remodel my store this year. It needs it, but it'll have to wait. I'll just put some duct tape on the holes in my carpet.

Jeweler B: I'm not only remodeling, I'm adding on about 1,500 to 2,000 square feet. There are some beautiful superstores in the country, and I feel like if I'm going to grow, I need to be one.

Jeweler A: I have a couple of salespeople who have been with me for years, and they're really good, but I can't afford them any more — I'm going to have to let them go.

Jeweler B: If you'll give me their names, I'd be interested in hiring them.

Jeweler A: You know, I'm even going to cut back on training this year. Our sales meetings are just a waste of time; those people don't do anything



you tell them to do anyway.

Jeweler B: Not only am I holding weekly sales meetings, but we have a 15-minute mini-meeting every morning. And, I'm bringing in a professional trainer.

One year later, Jeweler A and Jeweler B meet again:

Jeweler A: Man, I'm glad I cut back. That was the worst year I ever had!

Jeweler B: That's crazy — I had a record year, by far our most profitable!

It's no accident that Jeweler B continues to succeed in his business, while Jeweler A has to be satisfied with cutting his losses.

Now, I'm not telling you not to be *smart* with your money. But the bottom line is this: You can listen to all the negative things the media says, but if you let it affect your business decisions, you're just hurting yourself. Standing still — or worse, cutting back — is like chopping off your nose to spite your face. If you're going to stay alive, you have to be willing to change. Be proactive. There's nothing like a little innovation to keep things moving in the right direction!

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See contributor's details on page 24

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