

Instore Magazine – Merchandising Your Website

When I start working with a client one of the first things I do is look at their website. I am hoping to get a feel for the range of products, what lines / designers they carry, what their store looks like, what services they provide and their company philosophy. Usually I am quite disappointed.

I would think that the vast majority of shoppers today are looking for similar information. 83% of all bridal shoppers first go on line to visit their *local jewelers'* websites. At first, I thought that was good news, until I considered the possibility that a potential client would choose not to cross your threshold because of the impression created by your website.

There are many aspects to a great website, and I don't claim to be a website expert. There are abundant resources out there to counsel you on what the newest design, functionality, search engines, etc. But I do have some thoughts on how it should be merchandised and what it takes to entice and excite a jewelry shopper visually.

Brick and mortar retail jewelers generally view their websites two ways:

1. As a vehicle to drive prospective clients into their stores
2. Drive clients into their stores *and* sell jewelry

Effectively selling jewelry on line requires considerable commitment – financial and time. One of the biggest challenges of having a broad assortment of product on your website is the expense of photographing each item, and posting the images, descriptive text and pricing. Conversely, product needs to be removed as you discontinue items, vendors or lines. Simply adding a shopping cart does not create sales.

Even if you choose not to engage in e-commerce, shoppers want to see what you have to offer and will often decide whether to come into your store based on what they see on your website. The most cost effective way to show a robust array of product is to link to a designer or vendor's website. Many of these are now constructed so that your prospective client never leaves your website and the transition is seamless. If you don't carry branded product, you will need to invest in photographing a representation of each of your Collections or product categories. I would recommend professional group shots (or hero shots) that will make your prospective clients want to see more.

Almost as important as the styling of the jewelry presented, is the quality of the images. This sounds pretty elementary, but it is not, based on what I see out there.

Here are a few tips:

- Do not be tempted to use vendor images – inconsistencies include: different color backgrounds, different viewing angles, different quality of the image
- Images need to be high resolution – at least 300 dpi
- Every image needs extensive re-touching, which is what makes the image so expensive
- Make sure that the diamonds are crisp (especially the melee which can look dead and “frosty”) and have some dispersive colors like red, blue and yellow
- The metal needs to be highly reflective looking, with a feeling of depth and dimension – it should almost glow
- Colored gemstones need to be true to color – also easier said than done
- Jewelry needs to be viewed from multiple angles – I especially like an animated rotation
- Have zoom functionality to view and appreciate the details of a piece
- But, improperly re-touched images can show porosity and manufacturing imperfections, which achieves the opposite effect

Many jewelers spend significant money on their showcases, lighting, displays – all with the goal of enhancing and presenting their jewelry at its very best. This philosophy needs to be extended to your website. If you treat your website like an afterthought, it will look that way. The food industry does an amazing job at producing images that literally make your mouth water – we, as jewelers, need to do the same thing with our beautiful jewelry!