

Instore Magazine – Merchandising for the Female Self-Purchaser

I would like to start this article with a quote from “Why She Buys” by Bridget Brennan – “Female culture should be studied with the same focus that entering a foreign market requires. Mastering female culture is the key to success for companies that depend on women consumers.”

In order to be successful with the female self-purchaser, you need to understand how and why they shop and the product that they want. They are females first, and shoppers second.

One of the problems with retail jewelry today is it is event and gift driven, it is centered around romance, and it is targeted to men. The consumer has been trained to think of jewelry as a special occasion purchase, and not an everyday purchase, or self-purchase. The result is that women can hesitate to spend money on jewelry, even though she just spent \$500 on shoes or a handbag. We need to encourage women to reward and accessorize themselves with fine jewelry.

Many women say fine jewelry is expensive and ornate – geared for special occasions only. I hear over and over from men that “she never wears the jewelry I buy her,” and from women “he buys me jewelry that is too fancy and ends up in the safety deposit box.” The most important thing is to carry designs that will fit her everyday lifestyle, jewelry that she can wear with jeans, grocery shopping, and to the office. We want to make sure that he is successful with his jewelry gifts and that she sees “must haves.” I would focus your assortments on colored gems and pearls, with diamond accents – casual and wearable.

It is extremely important that the jewelry is affordably priced – from \$50 to \$2000 is the sweet spot. Every woman has a dollar threshold when she feels the need to discuss with her husband, or prefer that he makes the purchase, so you want plenty of jewelry in accessible price points.

I would suggest merchandising Collections based on a look and feel, not by designer or product category since women shop by design primarily. Consider creating your own Collection with special displays and names. Some Collections might be named “Brazilian

Beat”(chunky Amethyst, Citrine, Quartz), or “Rings that Rock” (bold, statement rings), or “Drama in Black and White” (black and white diamonds).

The style in apparel today is that things coordinate loosely, but do not match exactly. Keep that in mind when creating assortments – do not feature “sets” of earrings, pendants, bracelets – instead merchandise with similar but complementary styles.

Vignettes of complementary jewelry are a great time saver because you have done the coordination work for her.

Your colored gemstone jewelry should be influenced by seasonal color palette – check out www.pantone.com. Gray in some form has been hot for several seasons now – are you carrying gray pearls, or gray moonstones so a woman can match her jewelry to her wardrobe?

Women tend to connect with jewelry designed *by women for women*. I also find that women designers tend to incorporate versatility into their designs more often. Examples are 36” long chain or peals, which can be worn many ways, or interchangeable earring charms. Women love versatility in clothing, and there is not enough of it in jewelry.

When you are displaying your product, use trendy colors and hues in the cases that can be changed quarterly. Your inventory may not all be new, but by changing the presentation you can keep it looking fresh. Also, don’t forget your store windows – women will spend more time browsing windows than men – and it can be the deciding point of whether to enter or not.

The female self-purchaser is seeking fashion driven, unique and creative designs, with affordable pricing, inventively presented, during an enjoyable shopping experience. If you can provide these things you will capture dollars that she is currently spending on costume jewelry or on-line or on TV shopping networks. You can attract and satisfy this powerful demographic!