



Fashion Jewelry

7 Advanced Jewelry Sales

Fashion Jewelry

In This Lesson:

- Endless Opportunities
- Fashion's Importance
- The Fashion Spectrum
- Fashion Customers
- Buying Fashion Jewelry
- Selling Fashion Gifts
- Assisting with Self-Purchases

ENDLESS OPPORTUNITIES

The term *fashion jewelry* has a number of different meanings. To most people, it means the same as *costume jewelry*. Thus, it refers to pieces designed for wear with current fashions and made of inexpensive materials. Many retailers use the term for low-cost jewelry of all kinds, regardless of style. But in jewelry stores, the fashion category often includes diamonds.

You might say that all these definitions are traditional, conventional, or functional. In recent years, however, ideas about jewelry have changed. This has created a new and expanded meaning.

Consumers along with professionals in both the jewelry and apparel industries have come to recognize that jewelry and fashion are closely linked. A major factor in this transformation has been the emergence of women as primary buyers of fine jewelry.

As a result, many experts would now define fashion jewelry as any piece a woman might buy for herself, or receive as a gift, and wear as part of her wardrobe. That excludes engagement and wedding rings, as well as designs created especially for anniversaries. But it includes almost everything else in women's jewelry.



The fashion category includes any jewelry a woman might wear as part of her wardrobe.

Photo courtesy Robert Leser, Leser Enterprises.

Cover photo courtesy Judith Ripka.

This lesson is about products that fit this updated definition, and that you're likely to see in your store. It doesn't cover what most professionals would still call "costume jewelry." However, the things you'll learn could also help you sell bridal items as presents for birthdays, gift-giving holidays, and other occasions.

Ultimately, definitions, labels, and categories don't matter much from the standpoint of advanced selling. In fact, it's probably best to avoid using the term "fashion jewelry" in most presentations. That way, you keep from possibly confusing customers.

What's most important is recognizing that the jewelry you'll learn about in this lesson represents endless opportunities for your customers and you.

Fashion
jewelry
represents
opportunities
for your
customers
and you.

Lesson Objectives

When you have successfully completed this lesson, you will be able to:

- Understand the meaning and importance of fashion jewelry.
- Identify jewelry forms and styles that fit in the fashion category.
- Recognize key differences among customers for fashion jewelry.
- Outline the buying process for gift givers versus self-purchasers.
- Help men buying gifts for holidays, birthdays, and other occasions.
- Assist women with fashion jewelry shopping and self-purchasing.



Photo courtesy Rudolph Erdel/OE Designs.

FASHION'S IMPORTANCE

In Lesson 6, you saw that the bridal category is the cornerstone of American jewelry retailing. This status is due to deeply rooted cultural factors, steady consumer demand, and current demographic trends. It's reflected in the category's share of both the overall market and individual store revenues.

But fashion is actually bigger. Each year, about 50 million Americans buy fine jewelry you could place in the fashion category (using the updated definition). At the national level, those purchases represent more than 1/2 of all fine jewelry sales measured by value, and more than 3/4 in terms of items or units. The fashion category also makes up about 1/3 of the average jewelry store's total annual income.

Fashion jewelry does present some challenges, however. The most significant involve *merchandising*, *competition*, and *external influences*.

- **Merchandising** – Changes in style, and even basic materials, occur much more often and rapidly with fashion jewelry than with bridal designs. They're less predictable too. This can make it hard to plan inventory purchasing so that a store will have what fashion-oriented customers want when they want it.
- **Competition** – A huge number of outlets sell fashion jewelry. Most customers strongly prefer traditional fine jewelry retailers for bridal purchases. But many are willing to buy fashion pieces from department stores, gift shops, clothing boutiques, mass merchandisers, internet websites, and other sources.
- **Externals** – Fashion jewelry is sensitive to external influences like political events and economic cycles. For example, sales in this category fell sharply following the September 11 attacks, around the beginning of the Iraq War, and during the 2007-2009 Recession. In contrast, bridal sales tend to hold steady – and may even grow – in troubled times.

Fashion
jewelry
is sensitive
to external
influences.



Each year, about 50 million Americans buy jewelry you could place in the fashion category.

Photo courtesy Maria Canale for Suna.

Because of these challenges, the fashion category is less dependable than bridal as a “money maker” for most jewelry stores. However, it’s still important because it represents valuable sales – and even more valuable relationships.

You can’t eliminate the built-in challenges of this category. But selling at an advanced level means doing the best you can in the context of your store’s brand and merchandising approach, with the products you have and the customers you serve.



THE FASHION SPECTRUM

The full spectrum of fashion jewelry includes non-bridal diamond forms and designs, as well as colored gemstones, pearls, and all-metal pieces. Most women enjoy owning and wearing all of these, whether they receive the jewelry as a gift or purchase it for themselves. Many men place such items high on the list of regular gift ideas for the leading women in their lives.

Market research shows that more than 3/4 of American women own gold (only) jewelry, while about 2/3 have pieces made entirely of silver. Ownership rates for gem-set jewelry are about 2/3 of women for diamonds, 1/2 for gemstones, and more than 1/3 for pearls. These statistics reflect strong consumer desire and demand for jewelry in the fashion category.

FORMS AND STYLES

The most important fashion jewelry forms are rings, necklaces, earrings, and bracelets. Necklaces and earrings together make up about 1/2 of all unit sales for the category, while rings account for the same share of value.

Pins (or brooches) have more limited and cyclical appeal, but they possess a strong following among collectors. Also included in the fashion category are hair ornaments and the various kinds of “body jewelry” – anklets, belly chains, belts, toe rings, items for piercings, and so forth.



Rings, necklaces, earrings, and bracelets are the most important forms of fashion jewelry.

Earrings hold a special place in the world of fashion jewelry. They're essential elements of almost every woman's wardrobe, and there are countless variations in style, materials, and decorative details. As a result, earrings provide choices ranging from easy and inexpensive self-purchases to some of the most lavish and symbolic gifts.

In one study, nine out of 10 American women reported owning earrings that might be sold in a fine jewelry store. Almost all those women had also purchased earrings for one reason or another. The greatest number had bought for themselves, but many had also given earrings as gifts to their friends, daughters, sisters, aunts, or mothers. Almost 1/2 were open to buying earrings at any time, for no special reason.



Earrings are part of almost every woman's jewelry wardrobe.

GEMS

Most contemporary fashion jewelry features gems – by some estimates, more than 75% measured in units and 95% by value. Diamonds have a big lead by either measurement. But there's strong demand for colored gemstones too.

Blue sapphire, ruby, emerald, and tanzanite are consistently best-sellers. Amethyst, cultured pearls, topaz, tourmaline, various garnets, and fancy sapphire (especially pink and yellow) also make frequent appearances on the "Top 10" list. Depending on fashion trends, market conditions, and economic factors, other gems cycle in and out of style.

From a professional standpoint, this wide and shifting line-up points to a need for product knowledge that's broad, deep, relevant, and constantly updated. You need to be able to discuss fashion angles, quality and value factors, color symbolism, and interesting history, science, lore, or pop culture trivia – as well as practical points of care and cleaning – for any gem you present.



A wide variety of gemstones are used in today's fashion jewelry.

METALS

Gold is the favorite choice for all kinds of fashion jewelry — both all-metal and gem-set. With diamonds and all-metal items, the split between yellow and white gold is about 50-50. But with colored gemstones, most customers prefer yellow to white. About 1/2 of women also like two-tone and tri-color gold.

Platinum and silver have their fans, but both metals also have their limitations from a marketing-strategy standpoint. Platinum is expensive, and it's promoted by the jewelry industry mainly as a bridal metal. So, many customers don't think of it or budget for it when they're shopping for fashion pieces.



Gold is the favorite metal for all kinds of fashion jewelry.

Photo courtesy Roxann Souci for John Atencio.

On the other hand, silver is affordable – which helps to make it popular with designers and self-purchasing women. In fact, women purchase more than 90% of all silver jewelry. But men are often reluctant to buy silver jewelry as a gift because they're not sure it has the symbolism and status to convey the messages they want to send.

If your store offers fashion items in platinum or silver, you may be able to increase sales by educating customers and widening their horizons. You can help both self-purchasers and gift-givers recognize that platinum isn't just for engagements, weddings, or anniversaries. You can also show men that a lot of beautiful, desirable, and meaningful jewelry is created in silver – especially if you've pre-sold the women those men are buying for, and have silver items on wish lists.



Silver's beauty, versatility, and affordability make it popular with self-purchasing women.

Photo courtesy Samuels Jewelers .

FASHION CUSTOMERS

Like all jewelry customers, those buying fashion pieces can be analyzed in terms of demographics, psychographics, and behavior. As you've seen in previous lessons, the most important demographics are based on gender, age, and income. Key differences in psychographics and behavior often follow those same dividing lines.



Women usually buy fashion jewelry for themselves.

GENDER

You can put almost all customers for fashion jewelry into one of two groups – women making self-purchases or men buying gifts. Women are definitely the primary customers for the category. They make up to 2/3 of purchases measured by value, buy the great majority of items (or units), and ultimately receive most of the rest as gifts.

Men are important because they purchase and give most of those gifts. On average, they also spend about 70% more per purchase than women do.

Men are more likely to buy diamond jewelry than women are. For most men, diamonds represent a “safe bet” for gift giving. But diamonds are the favorite gem for women’s self-purchases too. Women are also the top purchasers of all-metal, gemstone, and pearl jewelry.

Research shows that men are among the most frequent buyers of women’s fine jewelry. Thus, men who’ve discovered that a gift of jewelry is sure to please – and that you’re able to help them make successful choices – are likely to be among the loyal clients you see and sell to most often.



Men buy fashion jewelry as gifts for the important women in their lives.

Photo courtesy Samuels Jewelers.

There's
a strong
correlation
between
fashion
jewelry
purchasing
and
lifestage.

AGE AND INCOME

In past lessons, you learned that it's usually best to make age-based analyses according to generational cohorts. This approach separates most of today's jewelry customers into Baby Boomers, Generation X, or Millennials.

Members of all three groups buy fashion jewelry. So, the generational approach isn't especially helpful with this category. But there's a strong correlation between jewelry purchasing and lifestage – or where people are “at” in their lives. This relates more to age in actual years than to generational lines. It results in three distinct purchasing phases, which occur among *young*, *middle*, and *mature adults*.

In addition, there's a general link between age and income that often affects buying in the fashion category.

YOUNG ADULTS

The first phase of fashion jewelry self-purchasing and gift buying comes in young adulthood – typically in the mid 20s to mid 30s. At this point, most Americans are getting started with their adult lives and careers.

Many women are putting together a professional wardrobe, and acquiring strategic jewelry pieces is part of that process. Those with good jobs and rising incomes may have extra money to spend, and are likely to reward themselves in ways that include self-purchases of fine jewelry.

Men in this life stage are often going through their first serious adult romances. Like their female contemporaries, they may have relatively high levels of discretionary income. The combination of love and money frequently leads to experiments with jewelry gifting. While these may not be big at first, they're important. Scoring a “home run” with jewelry sets an excellent precedent for the future.

For most of the next decade, customers in this phase will belong to the Millennial generation. As you saw in Lesson 6, these are also the main buyers of engagement rings and wedding jewelry.

When you help a Millennial customer with a fashion purchase – no matter how small – remember that you have the opportunity to craft a buying experience and create a relationship that may bring them back to you when they’re ready for what could be the most important jewelry purchase of their lives.

On the other hand, when you work with bridal customers, keep in mind the possibilities for fashion purchases in the future. Be sure to gather the information you’ll need to develop those sales through clienteling.

MIDDLE ADULTS

The second phase in fashion jewelry purchasing occurs among women and men in their mid 30s to mid 50s. Factors that affect exactly when it happens include marital status, career path, and family situation – especially the number and ages of children – as well as major financial obligations like mortgages, car payments, and saving for college or retirement.

At some time during this period, many Americans begin to approach their highest earning levels. They’re also actively engaged in “material acquisition” – buying things they feel they need or want to make their lives more enjoyable, meaningful, or secure.

Women in this phase often have a fully developed sense of personal style, along with both the budget and determination to possess the jewelry they desire. Many are moving beyond wardrobe basics to pieces that express their unique individuality – who they are or would like to be. Meanwhile, men are striving to express their feelings in increasingly significant ways.

In 2010, customers in this phase were about evenly divided between Baby Boomers and members of Generation X. In the following decade, Boomers will move on, while Gen Xers take center stage and Millennials begin to make their entrance. These cohorts differ in certain traits, but share many of the same concerns and priorities. (To review jewelry customer traits and priorities, see Lesson 2.)



Many middle adults are actively engaged in acquiring material possessions – including jewelry.

Photo courtesy Samuels Jewelers.

Regardless of which generational cohort they belong to, middle-aged Americans tend to be stressed and pressed for time. This is due to demanding jobs, active lifestyles, and multiple responsibilities. But it produces different responses in women and men.

Women self-purchasers seek stores where they feel comfortable, pampered, and entertained. When women do recreational shopping, they're really taking (or at least looking for) a mini luxury vacation. In contrast, men buying gifts place a premium on efficiency and convenience. They want to find the perfect choice as quickly and easily as possible.

You can meet women's needs by making your store a great place to shop, and providing lots of personalized attention – plus all the extra touches you can come up with. On the other hand, you can often give male customers what they want through advanced profiling and clienteling techniques, which you'll learn later in this lesson.

Mature Adults

Jewelry buying tends to decline after age 65, but from the mid 50s until then, many Americans go through a third phase of jewelry self-purchasing or gifting. Customers in this life stage are often in their peak years of earning and professional success. Many have paid off their mortgages and finished putting the kids through college. They have maximum levels of discretionary income, and they're ready to indulge themselves or those they love.

Baby Boomers already occupy this age bracket, and they will remain there until after 2020. Members of the Boomer cohort have always been motivated by the need to be different, to learn, and to seek fulfillment, and these traits probably won't change.

Another emerging priority for Baby Boomers is the need to remember and be remembered. This influence also shows itself in different ways with men and women.

When they're buying gifts for birthdays or holidays, many husbands want to celebrate the things they've shared and achieved as a couple. Women making self-purchases are often commemorating milestones in their lives – consciously creating a “personal memoir” through jewelry.



With gifts to their wives, many Baby Boomer husbands want to celebrate the things they've shared and achieved as a couple.

Mature women may also see the jewelry they buy as a potential heirloom – something they can pass on to future generations. This usually isn't the case with husbands, however. When they're buying jewelry for their wives, they don't want to be reminded of old age or death. Instead, men most often think of jewelry's heirloom aspects when they're buying for their daughters or granddaughters. Then the jewelry becomes something of lasting beauty, value, and meaning that will serve as a cherished reminder of the giver.



Mature women may see jewelry they buy as a potential heirloom.

Photo courtesy Tahitian Pearl Association

Most men have a mental list of gift possibilities ranging from standard to extravagant.

BUYING FASHION JEWELRY

With fashion jewelry, customers take one of two paths through the buying process, depending on whether they're buying a gift or making a self-purchase. It's easy to identify and understand important differences by comparing what's going on at various steps in the process.

TRIGGERING AND PONDERING

As you've learned, triggering is the first step in buying, and it usually occurs in response to an event of some kind. The second step is pondering whether to invest in jewelry or something else.

GIFTS FOR SPECIAL OCCASIONS

For gift purchases by men, the trigger is most often specific, external, and "official" – for example, a gift-giving holiday, a birthday, or a special occasion like a job promotion or the birth of a child. The event, or its approach, prompts the gift giver to make some complex calculations. Key variables include the importance of the event, the man's (or couple's) current financial condition, the messages he wants to send via the gift, and the expectations of the woman who will receive it.

Most men have a mental list of gift possibilities ranging from standard to extravagant. This typically starts with a card, candy, or flowers; runs through dinner, a night on the town, or weekend getaway; and extends to more expensive things like a dream vacation, home remodeling, or a new car. Jewelry gifts usually fall in the mid to upper part of this range.

Whether or not a man decides to give jewelry on a certain occasion often depends on three factors – the *desire for variety*, *requests from the receiver*, and the history of *previous gifts*.

- **Variety** – Most men like to vary selections from their gift list, or use different combinations of items over time. This adds an element of surprise to the gifting experience and keeps it fresh. As a result, some men give jewelry one or more times each year, but the majority do so less often. Very few pick jewelry for every gift occasion. This behavior underscores the need for consistent and sustained clienteling.
- **Requests** – How frequently a man gives jewelry is largely determined by how much he thinks it's desired. Fine jewelry is high on the list of gifts most women would like to receive for almost any occasion. But many fail to communicate this. So, you need to encourage female customers to make their wishes known, and work with them to accomplish this in creative and effective ways.
- **History** – A successful gift encourages most men to give others like it. But the opposite is true as well. That's why it's important to make sure each gift choice you help a customer make is as close to perfect as it can be, and to provide a safety net in case it isn't.



Fine jewelry is high on the list of gifts most women would love to receive for almost any occasion.



Most women say they make self-purchases of jewelry "just because."

SELF-PURCHASES "JUST BECAUSE"

There are many possible triggers for women's self-purchases. Some – like holidays, birthdays, and job promotions – are similar to those for gifts bought by men. Others include accessorizing an outfit, replacing an item that's been lost or damaged, and private milestones like finalizing a divorce, surviving a health crisis, or receiving an inheritance. However, when asked specifically about their reasons for making self-purchases, most women answer, "Just because."

To some extent, this response is linked to cost. Women's self-purchases are usually less expensive than men's gifts, and the lower an item's price, the easier it is to buy for no special reason. This explains why 3/4 of silver self-purchases are made "just because." But more than 1/2 of diamond jewelry self-purchases are too. So, cost alone isn't the determining factor.

Researchers also say that self-purchases are often made on impulse. This goes along with the “just because” rationale. But it really doesn’t explain much, and it’s no help at all in making sure self-purchases happen in your store.

To understand what’s happening, you have to dig deeper.

Women most often make self-purchases as a gift or reward for themselves, or as a personal celebration. Thus, the trigger is more generalized and internal than with a man’s gift. The basic urge to buy is present all the time. (One way it’s expressed is through window-shopping.) But instead of a specific external event, the trigger for a self-purchase occurs when the urge builds up strength and encounters a favorable set of circumstances.

The basic
urge to buy
is present
all the time.



Women most often make self-purchases as a gift or reward for themselves, or as a personal celebration.

You can see the difference between the triggers for gifts and self-purchases by thinking about what might happen on a woman’s birthday. Her husband is almost certainly going to buy her a gift – not only because he loves her and wants to show it, but also because she expects it and this is considered “the right thing to do” in modern American culture. Thus, the trigger for the gift is largely external. In contrast, the woman may or may not buy herself something, depending mostly on how she feels that day. The fact that it’s her birthday plays a part in initiating the purchase, but the primary trigger is internal.

As with men and gifts, most women have a mental list of items they may purchase for themselves. Along with jewelry, that list often includes clothing, shoes, and other accessories, as well as cosmetics, fragrances, and personal indulgences like a pedicure, massage, or day at the spa.

The buying process for a self-purchase usually doesn’t involve a great deal of pondering. Instead, the item chosen for a particular self-gifting, self-rewarding, or self-celebrating purchase is likely to depend on a woman’s general preferences, her own desire for variety, and her mood at the time. Also critical, however, are the appeal of the choices she happens to encounter, the setting in which they’re offered, and the overall feeling of the shopping experience.

SEARCHING, SELECTING, AND COMMITTING

In the searching, selecting, and committing steps of the buying process, the customer seeks information and compares options, then makes a final choice and completes the purchase. During these steps, there are big mental, emotional, and behavioral differences between gift buying and self-purchasing.

Many experts compare the differences to those that existed in primitive human societies where men hunted animals while women gathered plants for food and other purposes.

GIFT HUNTING

Like hunting, gift buying is usually very focused and directed. Most men shop for a definite purpose, not entertainment.

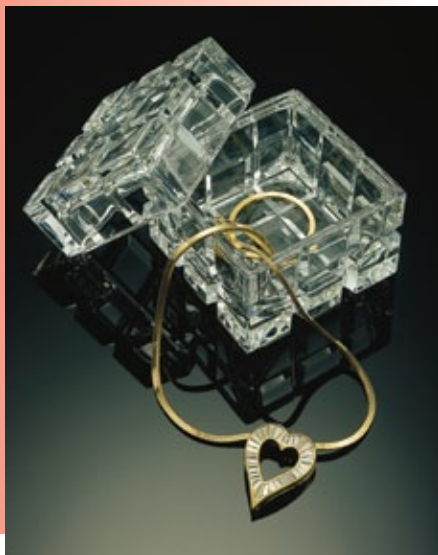
Most men
shop for a
definite
purpose,
not
entertainment.

Time and Inspiration

As you've seen, the gift-buying process usually begins with an external trigger that's linked to a specific date such as a birthday or holiday. The timeframe for the rest of the process then varies according to the significance of the occasion.

For most people (both men and women), Valentine's Day and the year-end Holidays are the most important gift occasions on the public calendar. The searching step may begin a month before Valentine's, and even earlier for the Holidays. With Mother's Day, birthdays, and other occasions, two or three weeks beforehand is more usual. But – as with anniversaries – the whole buying process for any gift can get crammed into the last minute.

Sources of inspiration and information for men's gift purchases also vary. For annual gift-giving holidays, media advertising is likely to be a major influence. When it comes to birthdays and non-calendar occasions, many men rely on memories of comments made by the women for whom they're buying.



For women and men alike, Valentine's Day is an important gift occasion.

There are problems with either approach, however. Media ads alone – unsupported by requests from women – may result in gift choices that appeal to givers but not receivers. Memories are often faulty or out-of-date.

Men also seek guidance from the past – looking back to successful gifts they’ve given on previous occasions. This is basically a good idea. But faulty memories pose a challenge with this approach too. Many men can’t remember a piece of jewelry accurately enough to identify another item that will match it or coordinate well.

Faulty
memories
pose a
challenge.

Finding the Perfect Gift

Men often comparison-shop for gifts in the fashion category much as they do for bridal jewelry. The number of stores they visit is usually fewer – maybe two to four. But decisions about where to shop are based on the same factors: the selection, quality, and price range of the store’s merchandise, along with its reputation, team, and service.

For male gift buyers, the top priority is finding the perfect gift. That might sound obvious and simple. But it means finding something that will please the woman the man is buying for, express his feelings, embody the spirit of the occasion, fit his budget, and deliver good value for the money he’s spending.

To accomplish all this, most men need professional help.

For a gift giver, it’s important that the gift will be appreciated, worn, and enjoyed – not put in a jewelry box, a dresser drawer, or safety deposit box and taken out only occasionally (if ever). But picking out a piece that combines the right form, design, and materials to suit a woman’s taste, lifestyle, and wardrobing needs can be a challenge. For most kinds of jewelry, selecting the correct size is another issue.

In order to commit and make the purchase, gift-givers need certainty that they’re making educated decisions, trust in the store and its team, confidence that the purchase can accomplish all that they need and want it to, and assurance that any problems will be fixed.



For the gift buyer, the top priority is finding the perfect gift.

Photo courtesy Samuels Jewelers.

If you can overcome the challenges in selecting a gift, guide the customer to a good choice, and provide all the mental and emotional elements he needs to make the commitment, you've earned the sale – and you deserve it.

SELF-PURCHASE GATHERING

Self-purchasing and primitive food gathering are alike in several ways. Both activities begin with visits to likely sources. Self-purchasers and food gatherers find out what's available, and make their choices when conditions are right.

For a food gatherer, those conditions might occur in a shady forest or a bright, sunny meadow. In order to attract today's self-purchasing women, you need to do your best to make sure they come together in your store.

Self-purchasers
make their
choices when
conditions
are right.

Purchasing Scenarios

There are actually three distinct scenarios for jewelry self-purchases by women – *impulse buying*, *recreational shopping*, and *destination shopping*.

- **Impulse** – True impulse buying occurs “on the spur of the moment” without forethought. It normally happens when a woman is shopping for something or someone else – for example, a new outfit for herself or a gift for a friend. In a jewelry store, it might also stem from a trip to the service department. With impulse buying, the customer doesn't plan to buy. But she's in a receptive state of mind as well as a favorable setting, and then encounters an appealing choice. Since she's already making a purchase or transaction of some kind, it's easy to go ahead and include an additional item.
- **Recreation** – Recreational shopping is as much about socializing and fun as it is about buying things. It's likely to involve two or three friends, family members, or coworkers. It may also include dining, entertainment, and personal pampering (like a manicure session), along with lots of window shopping and in-store browsing. In such circumstances, the customer is open to buying for herself and she's already thinking about it. But the store's environment and team must contribute to the “party” feeling of the experience.



Impulse buying normally happens with a woman who is shopping for something or someone else.

- **Destination** – In destination shopping, the customer makes a special trip to the store, or includes the visit in a planned itinerary. This may happen when she has a special personal event, like a birthday or job promotion, and decides that buying herself jewelry is the part of the way she wants to celebrate. Other triggers for destination shopping include advertised sales and invitations to store receptions or similar events.

These scenarios differ mainly in how much conscious thought the customer gives the purchase in advance. Only destination shopping involves the kind of pondering that typically happens with a gift. Destination shopping may also include searching and selecting activities like doing research on the internet, seeking advice from friends or family, and comparison-shopping. If the customer intends to spend a significant amount of money, the buying process may extend over several weeks – or perhaps even longer.



Colored gemstone jewelry makes a great impulse, recreational, or destination purchase.

Photo courtesy the Stanton Group.

In destination shopping, the customer makes a special trip to the store.

In contrast, impulse buying and purchases made during recreational shopping trips happen quickly and don't entail a great deal of separate information gathering.

Or that's how things may seem.

What really happens, however, is that most women "conduct research" and comparison-shop continually. They do this by reading magazines and visiting websites, talking to peers, paying attention to media advertising, and most of all by actively window-shopping and systematically browsing. As a result, they generally have an accurate sense of what's available, where to find it, and who's offering the best deal.

Seeking the Best Choice

When making self-purchases, women seek the best choice among all the possibilities that are offered to them. As with clothing, they look first at jewelry's style and design. Personal preference is most important, but fashion also counts. So does the price-quality-value equation.

As you learned in Lesson 3, buying an item on sale or for a discount feels like winning to many customers, and adds to the emotional satisfaction of the purchase. This doesn't mean skimping on quality, however. While female self-purchasers would much prefer not to pay "full price," they're willing to invest more for better quality and greater value.

Women tend to be very sensitive to the store environment.

Photo courtesy Panowicz Jewelers.



Another thing most self-purchasers aren't willing compromise on is the shopping experience – especially service. Women tend to be very sensitive to the store environment. This includes decor, merchandise, and displays. But it also extends to housekeeping details, background music, and scents that are carried in the air.

Female shoppers also appreciate extra touches. They want mirrors so they can see how they'll look when they wear the jewelry they buy. Frequent shoppers like merchandise and displays that change with the seasons and reflect current styles.

Most of all, female self-purchasers want, expect, and demand to be appreciated and treated with respect. Research shows that more than 2/3 of women base self-purchase decisions largely on how they're treated in a store. This means that the power to "make or break" a self-purchase sale is often in your hands.

SELLING FASHION GIFTS

Assisting men who are buying gifts in the fashion category is a lot like helping them with anniversary purchases. For one thing, you're either dealing with new customers or established clients, and this basic distinction affects how you work through the selling process.

NEW CUSTOMERS

A new customer is likely to be anxious due to the setting and circumstances. He's in an unfamiliar store, dealing with someone he's just met, buying a product he doesn't know much about, for a person who means very much to him, on an important occasion.

Therefore, one of your first objectives is to get the customer to relax and focus on the positive aspects of the whole equation – the person he's buying for and the joy of the occasion itself. You can start accomplishing this goal with a simple, friendly greeting followed by some rapport building.



You need to get gift-buying customers to relax and focus on the positive aspects of the experience.

When you find out the reason for the customer's visit, *congratulate* him, *anticipate* success, *translate* what's happening into emotional terms, and *appreciate* the opportunity he's giving you. For example, if a customer tells you that he's looking for a birthday gift for his wife, a good response might go something like, "That's great! We have a large selection of beautiful jewelry, and I'm sure we can find a perfect choice. You're looking for a gift that will show your wife how much you love her, and capture the meaning of this special celebration. This is an important purchase. Thanks for letting me help."

To make
good gift
suggestions,
you have to
know about
the receiver's
taste in jewelry.

STEP-BY-STEP PROFILING

In profiling, you need to learn about both the customer who'll give the gift and the woman who will receive it.

Critical questions regarding the customer include: What does he already know about the purchase? What else does he need to know? What unique message does he want this gift to carry? What does he personally need from the buying experience?

As with comparable scenarios for anniversary purchases, you need to find out whether the customer has clear ideas about the gift, and offer whatever guidance he may require.

To make the best possible suggestions, you have to know a great deal about the receiver. This takes in-depth profiling in five areas – the woman's *taste and personal preferences*; her *lifestyle, personality, and physical features*; and also her existing *jewelry wardrobe*.

- **Taste** – Does the woman who'll be receiving the gift prefer her jewelry plain or fancy? Antique, traditional, or modern? Rings, necklaces, earrings, bracelets, or maybe pins? All-metal or gem-set? Diamonds or colored gemstones? Gold, silver, or platinum? What are her favorite colors? This kind of information points you in the general direction and helps you start thinking about possibilities.

- **Lifestyle** – What does the woman do for a living, and what are her favorite recreational pastimes? What’s a typical workday like? How about weekends and vacations? When does she wear jewelry? How much? Details like these provide more clues about possible choices for forms and styles, and may reveal durability or security issues you need to consider.
- **Personality** – Is she elegant or down-to-earth; formal or casual; feminine or “tomboy”; glamorous or understated; conventional or artsy? Making such distinctions allows you to fine-tune the picture of the receiver’s personal style.
- **Physical Features** – What’s the woman’s body type? Is she full-figured, petite, thin, athletic, tall, short, or in between? What are the shapes of her face and hands? The color of her skin, hair, and eyes? Although some of this information might feel too “personal” to ask for, you need it to identify items that will be flattering and fit properly.
- **Jewelry Wardrobe** – What jewelry does she already own? This area overlaps with taste and personal preference. But it’s more “inventory” oriented. For example, does the woman have diamond studs? A pearl necklace? A gold link bracelet? Although you might suggest additional items in any of the basic forms, styles, or materials, it’s usually best to avoid exact duplicates.

Almost any customer will appreciate extra time, effort, and personal attention.

This is a lot of information, and most men are going to get impatient if you try to obtain it all at once, before showing any jewelry. For advanced selling, you can use a step-by-step approach. Start with one or two key questions for each area, to get a quick snapshot of the woman the jewelry is for. Then fill in details as you give the customer a guided tour of your showcases and displays.

If you make the process informative and entertaining, keep the tone comfortable and conversational, stay focused on romance, and explain how the information you’re gathering helps you help him, almost any customer will appreciate the extra time, effort, and personal attention.



Knowing what jewelry a gift receiver already owns can help you suggest items to fill-in gaps or expand her wardrobe.

Photo courtesy Barbara Westwood.

PRESENTING AND CLOSING

Once you have the information you need to make the right suggestion, the rest of the selling process can be relatively simple. Just remember: As you're presenting gift possibilities, get the customer physically involved by letting him touch them and hold them. Use professional tools like the ring stick. Create mental involvement by translating features into benefits, and add emotion with romantic descriptive words.

Also paint verbal pictures of giving, receiving, and enjoying. "You could hit a real home run with this ring. It's going to dazzle you wife. She'll feel like a movie star when she wears it. And you'll get to enjoy her glow."

As with anniversary gifts, work with the customer to craft a unique message. What's special about this occasion, and what's the most important thing he wants to say through this gift?

Work with
the customer
to craft
a unique
message.



Watch for buying signals and trial close whenever you think you've spotted one.

With purchases for birthdays, holidays, and so forth, the customer's defensive barriers usually aren't as high as they are with engagement rings or gifts for major anniversaries. However, you should still look for an opportunity to deliver your value proposition – to state clearly why the choices you offer represent the best value the customer can find. This proactive step helps you deal with comparison-shopping.

When you've narrowed the selection to two or three choices, you can help the customer move toward a decision by comparing and contrasting. Pick the most important differences and make them clear, while keeping the focus on symbolism and emotional meaning.

Watch for buying signals and trial close whenever you think you've spotted one. Use silence as a selling tool. And if you don't succeed at first, keep trying. If a customer continues to hesitate, work your way through the critical confirmations – **certainty**, **trust**, **confidence**, and **assurance**. Finally, take the risk out of the purchase by offering your "satisfaction safety net." Promise that the gift will be a success, and that you'll make things right if it isn't.

INDIRECT ADD-ONS

After closing a gift sale, your chances of making an add-on are reasonably good. About 1/3 of male jewelry customers buy two or more items at a time. Rings are most often purchased singly, but necklaces and earrings are a natural and logical combination.

No matter what the first sale is, there's no harm in trying an add-on. However, an indirect approach may work best. As with engagement rings and anniversary jewelry, the buyer of a fashion gift may think an add-on attempt means that what he has already bought isn't enough – and that's not the message you want to send.

There's
no harm
in trying
an add-on.

When they're purchasing gifts, many men look ahead. For example, if a man buys a necklace and there are matching earrings, he might figure that if the initial piece is a "hit," he'll come back and get the earrings for another occasion.

You can use this behavior to make immediate add-ons and plant the seeds for further sales too.

To do that, suggest two or more possibilities, but make them for a later date. Thus, you might say, "If she loves this necklace as much as I'm sure she will, we also have a matching bracelet and earrings. So, you might put those on the list for future gift ideas." This can accomplish three things:

- It avoids implying that the purchase the customer just made is somehow inadequate.
- If you go ahead and show the bracelet and earrings, you may add-on at least one of them.
- If you make the add-on, the customer will still have one more purchase to think about – and if you don't, he'll have two.



Matching or coordinating items can give you opportunities to make add-ons and plant ideas for future sales.

Photo courtesy Kwiat Diamonds.

EXTENDED FOLLOW-UP

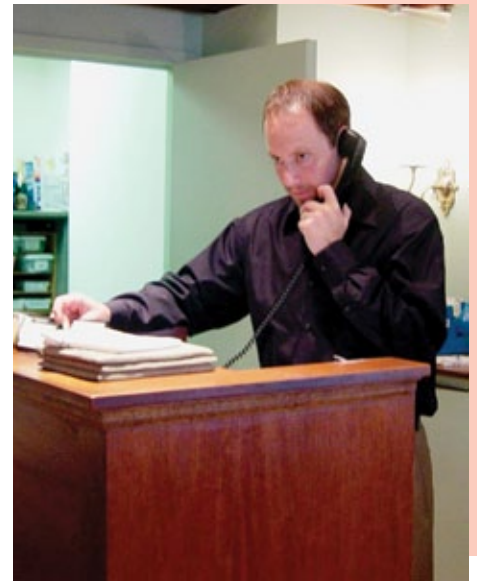
Keep in mind that your long-term professional goals go beyond selling jewelry. For maximum success, you have to build relationships. A gift sale provides a great opportunity for doing this because it gives you a role in a relationship that already exists.

After making a gift sale, be sure to extend your follow-up to the receiver. When you make your 30-day satisfaction call to the man who purchased the gift, offer to call the woman who received it and talk to her too. Tell the customer you want to make sure the gift fits and answer any questions the woman has about keeping the piece in like-new condition.

When you contact the woman, first make certain she's satisfied with the gift and there are no problems or concerns. If there are, do your best to resolve them.

Then start cultivating the new relationship. Take time to build rapport. Tell the woman about the services you offer, and how they can benefit her. Invite her to the store, and try to make an appointment for her to come in. Even if she declines your invitation, add her to your regular service follow-up and clienteling efforts.

Sales to
new customers
depend on
your ability
to respond to
opportunities
that come
your way.



When you make a 30-day satisfaction call for a gift, be sure to extend your follow-up to the receiver.

ESTABLISHED CLIENTS

Sales to new customers largely depend on your ability to respond to opportunities that come your way. But with established clients, you can create your own opportunities through systematic clienteling combined with advanced selling skills.

MOVING DIRECTLY TO SELECTING

In the standard model of the buying process, you may not encounter a customer until he's already past triggering and pondering, and is into the searching step. However, it's often possible for you to become part of the trigger and move the customer directly to selecting in your store.

This takes the kind of organized outreach you learned to do in Lesson 6. It starts with cultivating a relationship with the woman for whom the customer buys gifts. (In most cases, this will be his wife.) Then you need to maintain an up-to-date wish list of items she'd like to receive, and work with her to communicate her desire for jewelry.

MAKING REMINDER CALLS

After you've done the advance preparation, the buying and selling processes for a purchase can begin at the same time – with a reminder contact from you to the customer.

The best scheduling for a reminder varies with the occasion. For Mother's Day and birthdays, about three weeks in advance is usually good. For Valentine's day, a month beforehand is better. And for the year-end Holidays, you should probably aim for mid November.

As with anniversaries, the initial reminder can be a quick phone call, email, or text message. You just need to let the customer know that you'd like to help him celebrate the upcoming occasion, and you'll contact him again closer to the actual date. This activates the trigger and plants the idea of buying jewelry.

The next step is getting in touch with the wife and making sure her wish list is up-to-date. If possible, have her visit the store and see what you currently have to offer. Remember that a wish list should contain three to five items, representing a range of prices, which the wife would be delighted to receive as gifts.

About one or two weeks before the occasion, you need to contact the customer again. For this second reminder, it's best to call and talk personally. Tell him you have items you know his wife would like, and invite him to come see them.

SELLING AND FOLLOWING UP

When the customer arrives, take time to do some catching up and rapport building. Then present the items from the wife's wish list. If you have similar pieces that are a step up in quality or value, show those too. If the customer has ideas of his own, explore those as well.



With fashion jewelry gifts, the buying and selling process can begin with a reminder call from you to the customer.

(When you don't have a current wish list, you may need to do some profiling to develop suggestions. But also look at the purchase histories of both the customer and his wife to identify possibilities.)

As always, use your best professional skills in presenting. Create physical, mental, and emotional involvement. Paint verbal pictures of giving, receiving, and enjoying. Be sure to explain and show why each item you suggest would make a great choice. And provide the customer with a satisfaction safety net.

When the time comes for the 30-day satisfaction call, keep your promise to make sure the gift is a success. Contact the customer first and then his wife. Ask about the celebration. Verify that the gift was a "home run." If there are any problems, do your best to fix them. Then use service follow-ups and further clienteling to build the relationship and create further sales.

Paint
verbal
pictures
of giving,
receiving,
and
enjoying.

ASSISTING WITH SELF-PURCHASES

Your top goals are the same whether you're assisting a man with a gift or a woman with a self-purchase. You want to meet the customer's immediate needs, craft a great buying experience, and build a long-term relationship. But other things about the two scenarios are very different.

With a man and a gift, you're helping the customer select an item that will express his feelings to a specific "third party." The customer is likely to be anxious about making the right choice. He may also be caught up in the mental calculations that are part of the buying process. One of your challenges is to get the customer to relax and focus on the emotional reasons for what he's doing. Another is discovering exactly what the choice should be for someone who's not present, and you may never have met.

In contrast, with a woman making a self-purchase, you're working directly with the "end user," most often to find something that will help signal her identity to both herself and others. The customer will recognize good possibilities when she sees them. However, she might be unaware of technical factors she needs to consider. She may not know as much about wardrobing jewelry as she does clothes, shoes, and so forth. She could also have reservations about indulging herself.



When you're assisting with a self-purchase, you're dealing directly with the "end user."

To respond to this combination, you need to develop a strong “You deserve this!” theme in your presentation. You can facilitate the customer’s decision-making by supplying informational details and doing some “personal image” consulting. Most of all, however, you have to make the shopping experience enjoyable.

CREATING THE RIGHT ATMOSPHERE

To maximize self-purchases, your store needs to be a comfortable and interesting place for women to stop, look around, and spend time. Creating the right atmosphere involves five areas – *housekeeping, décor, displays, merchandise, and extra touches.*

- **Housekeeping** – As you’ve learned, female shoppers notice the details of housekeeping. To many, a clean and tidy store feels inviting and secure. Good housekeeping is also seen as a sign of the staff’s dedication and diligence. Thus, it serves as a yardstick for judging the entire operation. So – dull and cliché as it might sound – the first step in making your store a favored oasis for self-purchasers is doing your part in routine cleaning and upkeep.



To many customers – and especially women – a clean store feels inviting and secure.

Photo courtesy Panowicz Jewelers.



Curved lines and surfaces can help you create a shopping space that appeals to female self-purchasers.

- **Décor** – Women are also sensitive to the subtle messages communicated by store furnishings and décor. For this reason, many experts in retail design recommend incorporating features that appeal to women – dramatic lighting, lush fabrics, lounge-like spaces, and curved lines or surfaces. Great places to look for examples and inspiration are specialty stores that offer luxury brand cosmetics, fragrances, apparel, and accessories.
- **Displays** – Along with props and themes that help set the stage for gift occasions, displays should include elements that highlight personal style and convey the idea of self-celebration – for example, a “Treat Yourself” section around the Holidays. Photos depicting current trends are a great way communicate that you and your team are tuned-in to fashion. They also suggest ideas for self-purchases. The same is true for groupings that show how pieces can be combined to achieve various looks.

- **Merchandise** – Having the right product mix for self-purchasers is critical. This includes a wide selection of forms and styles that women buy for themselves – especially earrings. Prices should start at easy-to-afford and range all the way up to “save for” or “wish list” levels. Merchandising for self-purchases also requires constant adjustments to keep in phase with style trends, economic cycles, and other outside influences. For example, in a downturn women keep making self-purchases, but may shift from gold and diamonds to silver and less expensive colored gemstones.
- **Extras** – Mirrors are essential “selling tools” for self-purchases, and you need full-length as well as counter-top versions. Women who are buying jewelry for themselves want to see how they’ll look when they wear it – both up close and from across the room. Other extras to consider include background music, ambient scenting, and refreshments. Remember that the more senses you involve, the more immersive and multi-dimensional you can make the shopping experience.

Mirrors are essential selling tools for self-purchases.

Of course, anything you do has to fit within your job responsibilities and the overall “umbrella” of your store brand and marketing approach. But with imagination, teamwork, and some strategic consulting with management, you can probably identify and implement changes that will make your store more attractive to self-purchasers.

GETTING YOURSELF READY

Besides preparing your store for self-purchasers, you need to get yourself ready too. Things to think about and maybe work on include *attitude*, *product knowledge*, and *image consulting*.



Let the customer set the tempo of the buying process while you facilitate the experience.

- **Attitude** – As you learned in Lesson 3, one of the sure-fire shopping spoilers (and self-purchase killers) is what’s often described as a “snooty” attitude. Many women – especially those who like to shop recreationally – complain that jewelry sales associates act annoyed and dismissive if they decide a customer isn’t going to make a purchase on a particular day. Instead of committing this fatal mistake, you need welcome browsers and “just lookers.” Let them set the tempo of the buying process while you do your part to facilitate the shopping experience, build relationships, and keep the interaction moving in a positive direction.

- **Product Knowledge** – With all the forms, styles, and materials that make up the fashion category, you need a wide range of basic product knowledge. But the variety of customers and the differences in their needs and interests call for an even greater ability to select information that’s relevant and put it to use. With one customer, you might need to go over the color options that are available with different kinds of gems. Another may need practical guidance on jewelry care, while a third wants to learn all she can about the magical or spiritual attributes of diamonds or other gemstones.
- **Image Consulting** – Every woman wants to look her best. This desire is as old as human society. But in recent years, books, magazines, TV programs, and internet sites have made the concept of image management a major preoccupation for many women. As a result, self-purchasing customers today want expert advice on how jewelry can help them create and project their own distinctive look and style. This is a large and specialized area where product knowledge intersects with psychology, fashion, and personal beauty. While it’s possible to gain the expertise you need through experience, references like *Jewelry Savvy* by Cynthia Sliwa and Caroline Stanley can give you a good start on the subject.



Due to the diversity of forms, styles, and materials, you need a great deal of product knowledge to sell fashion jewelry.

With
established
clients, you
can create
opportunities.

WORKING WITH CUSTOMERS

Another thing that’s the same about gifts and self-purchases is that you’re either working with new customers or established clients. This distinction doesn’t affect the entire selling process with self-purchases (as it does with gifts). But it makes a difference in whether you have to wait for customers to come to you, or you can take active steps to bring them into your store.

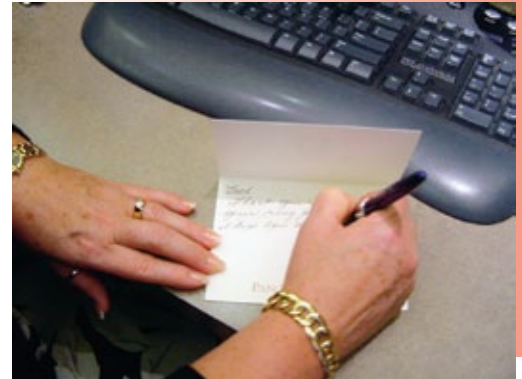
GETTING CLIENTS INTO YOUR STORE

You’re largely forced to depend on advertising, word-of-mouth, your window displays, or luck to attract new customers. As a result, you have no direct control over this source of sales opportunities. With established clients, however, you can produce your own opportunities for self-purchase sales in much the same way you can with gifts – through diligent follow-up and clienteling.

You have a reasonably good chance of making a self-purchase sale any time a female customer visits your store. So, you need to come up with as many reasons as you can for established clients to come see you. Some reasons are likely to be the same for self-purchasers as they are for gift-buyers. But others will be different.

Many women make self-purchases on their birthdays or while they're out shopping for the year-end Holidays. You can encourage this kind of activity by adapting the buying-reminder contacts you make with gift givers. For example, you might send a card with a note of appreciation and an invitation to stop by. If it fits company policy and operations, you could also offer refreshments during the Holidays, and a personal discount or small gift for a birthday. Whatever you do, however, the key is making the contact about the customer, your relationship with her, and the experience of visiting your store.

Other opportunities for creating self-purchase sales come when customers visit for regular jewelry inspections and cleaning, repairs, or appraisal updates. You can also contact established clients in advance of sales and special buying opportunities, as well as educational, promotional, or social events your store hosts or sponsors.



To bring a self-purchasing customer to your store, try sending her a note of appreciation along with an invitation to stop by.



"Just looking" customers are critical to your success with self-purchases.

"JUST LOOKING" CUSTOMERS

When you greet self-purchasers – especially those who are new to your store – one of the most frequent replies you hear is, "Just looking." Knowing how to respond is therefore critical to your success with self-purchase sales.

Many women like to window shop and browse. But studies show that two out of three people who visit a jewelry store have some level of intention to buy. Perhaps they've definitely decided to make a purchase. At the very least, they're open to the possibility.

So, rather than simply taking a “just looking” customer at her word and allowing her to wander aimlessly, you need to be proactive. You can begin to interact with her, manage the shopping experience, and build a relationship.

“Just looking” is often a defensive behavior that’s intended to deflect sales pressure and stay in control of the buying process. Thus, it’s not a stop sign but a signal to go slow. Realize, too, that the customer probably isn’t looking only at your merchandise. She’s deciding whether she wants to buy it in your store, and from you.

The right response, then, is to follow the steps in the selling process. Start by establishing rapport. Don’t rush or push. Make your best effort to help the customer feel comfortable.

If you know the customer and have worked with her before, take a quick look in your client records. This will refresh your memory of her preferences, special events, and previous purchases. It might also suggest conversation starters and provide clues about what she could be looking for.

“Just looking”
is often
a way to
deflect
pressure
and stay
in control.



When you’re working with a “just looking” customer, stop and show her anything that catches her eye.

If she’s a first-time visitor, treat her as you would a new friend who’s come to your home. Offer to show her around the store. The perfect reply to “just looking” is, “That’s great! Thank you for choosing to look with us. Let me give you an idea of our layout, so you’ll find what you’re looking for a little easier.”

Then you can guide the customer through your displays while you continue to build rapport and begin to profile. Along the way, share some of your store’s history. Ask for her opinion of a new item in your inventory. Whether she loves it or hates it, you’re gaining valuable information about her tastes. Be alert for signs of interest, and stop to show anything that catches her eye.

Even if you don’t close a sale on that particular visit, your efforts haven’t been wasted. You’ve shown that you have an appealing selection of merchandise in a warm and welcoming environment.

When the customer leaves, encourage her to take brochures or other promotional material that will remind her of the jewelry she's seen. Include your business card as a reminder of where she saw it and who showed it to her.

For your own records, try to obtain essential contact information. Then be sure to follow-up. Customers who don't make purchases don't expect much in the way of appreciation. So, writing to thank a "just looking" customer for visiting you can be a pleasant surprise. It creates a favorable impression that lasts – and may well bring her back when she's ready to buy.

Writing
to thank a
"just looking"
customer
can be a
pleasant surprise.



Be resourceful and creative in helping a self-purchasing customer get the "biggest bang" for her budget.

STRAIGHTFORWARD SELLING

If you guide a self-purchase customer past the "just looking" stage, the selling process often becomes straightforward.

In profiling, you need to cover the same bases as when you're helping a man choose a gift. These include the customer's taste and personal preferences, along with her lifestyle, personality, and existing jewelry wardrobe. You don't have to ask about physical features because the woman is standing right in front of you.

All the information you gather will be more reliable since you're getting it firsthand. You can also go into greater detail. For example, it's best to find out where the customer plans to wear the jewelry, and how often. Every day in the office versus occasionally for a night out makes a difference in the form, style, or design you might recommend.

Personal finances are a big factor in self-purchase decisions. To keep them from becoming an obstacle to sales, be prepared to offer and compare whatever options you have in the kinds of jewelry a customer is looking for. Be creative, resourceful, and on the customer's side in helping her get the "biggest bang" for her budget.

When you're presenting suggestions, focus mainly on personal image, style, quality, and self expression or celebration. You can sell fine jewelry as a fashion accessory, but be sure to emphasize its timeless beauty and permanent value as well. You don't have to paint word pictures of giving or receiving, but definitely do conjure images of enjoying.

If you feel that an item a customer is considering truly isn't "right" for her, don't be afraid to recommend alternatives. After all, that's part of giving your best professional guidance. Just make certain she knows you have her best interests at heart, and remember that she has the final say.

Almost 1/2 of self-purchasers buy two or more items at a time. So, be consistent with your add-on attempts.

Finally, use self-purchases to build your gift sales. Work with female customers to create wish lists, and say you'd be glad to help them to acquire jewelry they'd like to have. Discuss the gift-givers in their lives, and obtain the information you'll need to develop further sales.



Use
self-purchases
to build
your gift sales

RECAP OF KEY POINTS

- Although bridal jewelry is the cornerstone of American jewelry retailing, the fashion category is actually bigger in terms of the number of customer purchases and overall market share. However, the category presents challenges having to do with merchandising, competition, and external factors such as economic cycles.
- The full spectrum of fashion jewelry includes non-bridal diamond forms and designs, as well as colored gemstones, pearls, and all-metal pieces. Necklaces and earrings make up about 1/2 of unit sales for the category, while rings account for 1/2 of value. Most contemporary fashion jewelry features gems. Diamonds are most popular, but there's strong demand for colored gemstones too. Gold is the favorite choice for all kinds of fashion jewelry.
- Most customers for fashion jewelry fit into one of two groups – women making self-purchases or men buying gifts. Women make up to 2/3 of purchases measured by value, buy the great majority of units, and receive most of the rest as gifts. Men are important for their gift giving and higher spending levels. The first phase of fashion jewelry purchasing often comes in the mid 20s to mid 30s, when women are acquiring basic items and men are experimenting with gift giving. The second phase occurs in the mid 30s to mid 50s. At that time, women are moving beyond basics, while men are striving to express their feelings in significant ways. The third phase usually happens between the mid 50s and 65. In this period, women are often commemorating milestones in their lives. Meanwhile, men want to celebrate the things they've shared and achieved.
- Gift givers and self-purchasers take different paths through the buying process. For gift purchases by men, the trigger is most often specific and external. The decision to buy jewelry may depend on the desire for variety, requests from the receiver, and the history of success with previous gifts. Gift buying is very focused. The searching step may begin up to a month or more in advance. Men may depend on media ads, memory, or experience for ideas and information. They often comparison-shop, with the top priority of finding the perfect gift.
- Women most often make self-purchases as a gift or reward for themselves, or as a personal celebration. Thus, the buying trigger is generalized and internal. There are three distinct scenarios for jewelry self-purchases by women – impulse buying, recreational shopping, and destination shopping. These differ mainly in how much conscious thought the customer gives the purchase in advance. Most women search and comparison shop on a continual basis. They seek the best choices among the possibilities that are offered to them.

- In-depth profiling is the key to helping new male customers buy gifts. This involves five areas – the woman’s taste and personal preferences; her lifestyle, personality, and physical features; and her existing jewelry wardrobe. After closing a gift sale, your chances of making an add-on are reasonably good. However, an indirect approach may work best. After making a gift sale, be sure to extend your follow-up to the receiver.
- With established gift buying clients, you can create your own opportunities. It’s often possible to activate the trigger and move the customer directly to selecting. This takes organized outreach and follow-up, which involve contacts with both the customer and the woman for whom he is buying.
- Your sales goals are the same with gift giving and self-purchasing, but other things about the two scenarios are different. Self-purchasers know what they like, but may need technical advice and encouragement. To maximize self-purchases, you need to make your store a comfortable and interesting place to shop. This takes attention to housekeeping, décor, displays, merchandise, and extra touches. You also need to prepare yourself for self-purchasers – giving special attention to attitude, product knowledge, and expertise in image consulting.
- You can take active steps to bring established self-purchasing clients into your store. Likely occasions for doing this include birthdays, the Holidays, various service functions, and special buying opportunities. Knowing how to respond effectively to “just looking” customers is critical to your success in making self-purchase sales. Compared to gift purchases, self-purchase presentations are often straightforward, but you still need to use your best professional skills. You can use self-purchases to build gift sales by working with customers to create wish lists and obtaining the information you need for clienteling.

LESSON 7 FOLLOW-UP CHECKLIST

- _____ Add fashion jewelry as a separate category in your regular sales performance measurements. Use the updated and expanded definition – i.e., all women’s jewelry bought by women (either for themselves or as gifts), and all women’s jewelry bought by men for occasions other than engagements, weddings, or anniversaries. Chart the key metrics of total sales, average sale, and average unit sale, both in dollar amounts and as percentages of your overall sales. Determine how important fashion sales are to your success, and how the contribution changes over time. Note how purchase patterns shift in response to external factors like political events and economic cycles.
- _____ In the coming weeks, analyze your fashion jewelry customers. How do your store’s gift buyers compare with self-purchasers in terms of age, lifestage, and income? How are the psychographics (motives, concerns, etc) and behaviors of the two groups different? What are the important similarities? How do the differences and similarities affect your selling process? For added perspective, discuss this topics with coworkers.
- _____ With coworkers, develop fashion jewelry sales scenarios and role-play the following:
 1. Step-by-step profiling (as described in the Selling Fashion Gifts section).
 2. Making an add-on to a gift sale using an indirect approach.
 3. Making a satisfaction call to a gift buyer, offering to contact the receiver, and then contacting her as well.
 4. Dealing with a “just looking” customer.
- _____ Analyze your store from the viewpoint of a recreational shopper and identify changes you might make to create a more comfortable or interesting environment and experience. For best results, arrange for a few friends or family members (who are not jewelry professionals) to pay a “mystery shopper” visit to the store. Afterwards, get their responses and ideas for improvements. Discuss possible changes with management, and implement those that seem both feasible and worthwhile.
- _____ Review your clienteling procedures to make sure you’re maximizing your sales opportunities. This includes advanced reminder calls and extended follow-up for gift purchases (contacting receivers as well as givers), plus adapting reminder calls for self-purchasers clients and obtaining information from new self-purchasers that will enable you to build gift sales.

LESSON 7 SELF-TEST

This lesson also includes a Self-Test that's designed to help you gauge your comprehension of the lesson material. The test is an important part of the learning process, so be sure to complete it.

When you're ready to take the test, go to the Course Materials page (the one that lists all the lessons) and click on "Take Self-Test." Make certain you select the test for this lesson.

All questions in the test are based on Lesson 7. More than one answer for a question might seem correct, but you should select the one best answer based on the lesson discussion.

As you take the test, you may refer to the lesson. To do this, you'll need to have the lesson loaded in a separate window of your browser.

If you feel certain about a question, try answering it without looking at the lesson. But if you're not sure, check the lesson before answering.

After you answer a question, you'll receive immediate results and feedback. You'll find out whether you answered correctly, what the correct answer was (in case you missed it), and also the page number in the lesson where the information can be found. Take time to review any material you're not completely clear on.

At the end of the test, you'll receive your overall results. Then you'll be able to continue to the next step in your coursework.

If you have questions or need help, please contact us. You can use this website – just click on "Help." You can also email studenthelp@diamondcouncil.org or phone 615-385-5301 / toll free 877-283-5669.