



Texas Jeweler

The Newsletter for Jewelers

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Mark Your Calendars Now for the 67th Texas Jewelers Association 2005 Conference

April 9-11, 2005 — Port Royal Ocean Resort Condominiums

Check out this beautiful conference site location, TJA members and potential members. The TJA Annual Conference and Exhibitions will be located at one of the most scenic and fun coast locations in Texas. Port Royal Condominiums is nestled among the dunes overlooking the Gulf of Mexico, and is a 25-acre tropical oasis. The moment you step onto

the private deck of your island condo and take in the Gulf breezes, only one word comes to mind: *paradise*. Once you arrive at Port Royal you'll be greeted by a full-time security guard, and once through the gate anything is possible. Let the kids go play, walk on the beach, enjoy water sports, golf, tennis, lagoon pool swim-up bars—and for your condo needs, an on-facility grocery store and restaurant. Port Royal is all self-contained and waiting for you to arrive.

The location is **spectacular!** But, so is the other half of this unique and one-of-a-kind jeweler conference. This year's conference educational business program is not one to miss. While we all want to enjoy the beach and pool facilities, TJA will have presentation speakers coming to the 2005 conference that are nationally acclaimed and are a rare opportunity to see anywhere in the United States. For less than a tank of gas (for most Texas members) you can see them here in Texas next April and learn their information without hopping a plane and paying high hotel prices. These nationally sought-after presenters will make a huge impact on your stores' success and benefit you personally with knowledge you wish you would have had learned years ago. Just to drop a few names:

DAVID GELLER—"Bench Profits and How to Price Your Store Repairs"—Geller is renowned for his bench knowledge and has written numerous books considered to be the bible of "How To" do it right on benchwork repairs.

DON GREIG—"Managing Your Inventory & Suppliers to Dramatically Increase Your Profitability"—Former retail jeweler and now a widely respected international management professional, Don has been presenting management seminars to jewelers for 20 years in four countries. Prior to the formation of Focus Management Group where he is the current president, Don was cofounder and president of ARMS-USA (Advanced Retail Management Systems), which he brought to the USA in 1993.

BOB JANET—"Top 10 Bad Business Assumptions That Cause You to Lose Money"—Bob is nationally known for his jeweler advice newsletter that almost everyone in the business is receiving or should be receiving. Bob's message is always electric, and his book "Join the Profit Club," hits right between the eyes, taking the mystique and mystery to layman terms and common sense concepts you will remember long after his presentation.

SAM ARNSTEIN—"Seven Successful Strategies for Competing with Discounters"—Arnststein is a long-time industry professional who can whittle down a retail situation and have you cured in a matter of moments. His insight is sought by all who know him, and he is sought around the country for his presentations.

JURGEN MAERZ—"Working with Platinum Alloys...Features and Benefits"—Known by most on two continents for his cutting edge knowledge of platinum Maerz as the educational director of Platinum Guild International is coming to South Texas and giving you the opportunity to gain this fantastic insight.

This selected variety of top-quality and nationally known presenters and lectures is only a small sampling of the entire conference program offered to you at the Texas Jewelers Associations' 2005 Annual Conference to be held in Port Aransas, TX. Port Royal is located just 20 minutes from Corpus Christi, TX. Mark your calendar, reserve your condo early, and most of all **don't miss out** on this rare jewel being held for show April 9-11, 2005. This **Texas-sized** program holds up to **national** conference prestige standards yet you can drive to our 2005 conference right here in your own Texas backyard. ❄️



President's Message



Since we are all right in the midst of our busiest selling season, I am going to keep this column brief and to the point.

Find your **2005 calendar**.

Go to the **April** page.

Cross through **April 9, 10, and 11**.

Write in the words "**Texas Jewelers Association Convention, Port Royal Resort.**"

Now that was almost painless, wasn't it?

Your TJA staff and board of directors are planning a fantastic conference that will bring you—

1. some of the brightest stars in the jewelry industry so you can learn from them and pick their brain;
2. a chance to network with others from around the state at roundtable discussions and between seminars;
3. a few days of R&R that you so sorely need—an evening dinner and gaming cruise on the Gulf of Mexico, a great place to bring the family, and the largest swimming pool in Texas;
4. face to face with new and established suppliers in the Discovery Room.

TJA has negotiated great room rates for this resort on the Gulf.

And here's the "hook" to make you say "there is absolutely no reason I can't come": Just by attending, you will receive a certificate good for a **free** three-day/two-night vacation at a plethora of resort locations around the country (or if you bring two or more associates along with you—a certificate for a deeply discounted seven-day tropical vacation). Attend the 2005 TJA Convention and get another vacation later in the year either free or deeply discounted! This is not a misprint.

No where else but from the Texas Jewelers Association will you find a better offer than our 2005 TJA Annual Conference.

See you there! ❄️

Peter LeCody
TJA President

Want to Get a Choice of Personal Vacations?

Here's the TJA Deal!

PLAN #1: Three-Day, Two Night Vacation!

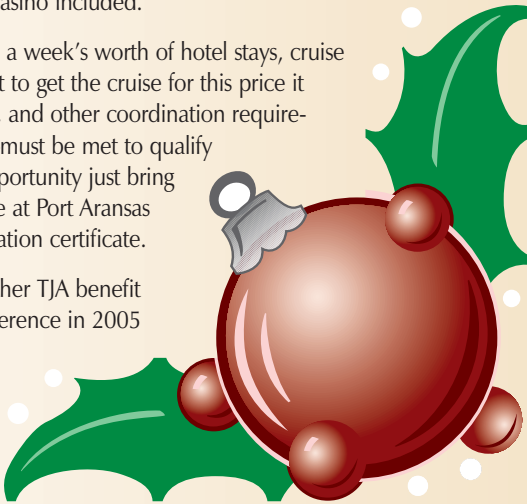
Just register for and attend the TJA 2005 weekend annual conference next April and TJA will give you a three-day, two-night vacation redeemable at over 90 participating hotel locations—and the certificate is good for one year. Now you're thinking, "Aha—there's a catch!" But, you would be wrong. Great hotel locations to choose from, no tours you have to take, just make a few calls, send in a refundable deposit, and a travel agent will lock in your hotel destination for you. With 90 locations, four locations in Texas, 11 in Florida, four in Nevada, two in Hawaii, and many more destinations, you're bound to find a hotel location you like. Even if you just use the Texas locations, you can go to South Padre Island, San Antonio, Lago Vista on Lake Travis/Austin, and Lake Conroe/Resort near Houston. (Transportation not included in this package.)

PLAN #2: Seven Days of Tropical Fantasy Vacation—Deeply Discounted!

- Days 1-3:** In Orlando, FL. Visit theme parks, play golf, or just relax.
- Days 3-5:** Off to Fort Lauderdale, FL, to enjoy the fabulous beaches, shopping, and night life.
- Days 5-7:** From Fort Lauderdale, catch a cruise ship for a two-night cruise to Nassau in the Bahamas—with all shows, meals, entertainment, pools, and casino included.

This trip works out to around \$200 per person for a week's worth of hotel stays, cruise time and fun in the sun. Generally, if you tried just to get the cruise for this price it would be impossible. Transportation not included, and other coordination requirements for the cruise—such as ship launch times—must be met to qualify for this certificate. To receive this special travel opportunity just bring two store employees to the TJA annual conference at Port Aransas next April and you will receive this wonderful vacation certificate.

Any way you look at these vacation plans it's another TJA benefit opportunity just for attending the TJA annual conference in 2005 which you won't see offered at national events or even other Texas conference programs you may be invited to so we hope you will come to TJA's and enjoy the benefits of a great Texas conference in 2005. ❄️



TJA Membership Benefits Keep on Coming!

The TJA board of directors are always in search of unique programs, special benefits, and all in an effort to do the kinds of projects and programs that will make your store life just a little easier, and hopefully make your store profits more significant. While much of the thought process is directed towards retail jeweler store issues they don't want to leave out that three letter word called ***FUN!***

TJA BENEFITS COMING YOUR WAY FOR 2004–2005

1. The Diamond Dealers Club of New York has provided TJA members with a powerful and dynamic way to increase profits on diamond sales and make sure you get the best deal on each diamond your buy or sell. By subscribing to their Web-based Diamond Buying/Selling System, you get the following benefits:

- Increase profits by up to 40%.
- Identify the best deal since hundreds of dealers compete for your business.
- Save up to 43% on Fed Ex express shipping.
- If you do not have time to use the search engine, just call the DDC, and they will do the search for you and fax you the results—*very convenient at holiday time*. Or if you have a particularly difficult diamond to find, call the DDC, and they will assign a Customer Service Rep to help find the stone. The DDC is about personal service and technology.

30-Day Free Trial—The DDC will provide TJA members with a 30-day free trial after approval of your application. By using the DDC system free of charge for a month, you will experience first-hand how you can increase profits and save time with the DDC!

Key-Stoning Feature—Retailers can use the key-stoning feature to put their own mark-up on the diamonds and show the search results to customers.

Effective Way to Compete Against Blue Nile and other Direct-to-Consumer Web sites—The DDC Diamond System gives you an effective way to compete against direct-to-consumer Web sites by providing a vast inventory of stones and excellent pricing. It takes the buying power and clout of the DDC to compete against these new Web sites.

Buy/Sell—If you want to sell diamond goods that you bought from customers or walk-ins, you can post the diamonds on the Buy/Sell Network. It's like E-Bay, only the DDC does not take any commission. It is an excellent way to sell diamond goods and create a new profit center.



TJA Business Corner

MIDAS-TEXAS SHOW 2004

September 10–13, 2004, marked the first MIDAS- TEXAN SHOW held at the fabulous new Gaylord Texan Hotel in Grapevine Texas. By all accounts this year's MIDAS SHOW was well managed and attended over previous years which were held at Market Hall in Dallas. President of TJA Peter LeCody would like to state his appreciation and thanks to Janisue Rigel for allowing TJA to participate with an exhibit booth at the jewelry show. President LeCody stated he witnessed regular and new store owners alike participating and felt it was a great networking opportunity for TJA officials. TJA was represented at this year's MIDAS program weekend by Peter LeCody, Doug Jackson, Richard Hirsh, Eric Wright, Mark Priest and Joe McCullough

TEXAS JEWELERS ASSOCIATION Crowne Plaza Hotel • September 13, 2004 • Addison, TX BOARD OF DIRECTORS MINUTES

1. **Call to Order.** President Peter LeCody – 9:00 am
2. **President's Report.** A short discussion about attending the MIDAS program was reported on and discussions as to whether it was a success.
3. **Reading of the Minutes. Motion:** Motion was made to dispense with the reading of the April 17, 2004, minutes. Approved.
4. **Financial Report. Motion:** Motion was made to approve the 2004–2005 budget. Approved.
5. **Conference Discussion and Committees.** Joe McCullough reported that San Antonio, Austin, Dallas, Lakeway/Austin, Port Royal, and South Padre were all reviewed for best price and opportunities. Port Royal had more amenities for our members to enjoy.
 - The board decided that 2006 dates and location will be decided based on turnout at Port Royal in Port Aransas.
 - Speakers suggested and discussed: Platinum speaker at MIDAS/Jurgen, Sissy Jones, “Sales and Motivational”—sissylogcabin.com.
6. **Executive Director's Report.** Given by Joe McCullough:
 - Membership was 583 in Aug 2004 and climbing.
 - TJA has undergone an healthy image face-lift of sorts over the past nine months.
 - Produced a conference that was financially successful and unique in terms of presenters.
 - TJA is still striving to improve communication efforts via e-mail with members/JA.
 - Presently working on TJA bylaw revisions and updating procedures.
 - Looking to have a strategic planning session to focus on conference and membership October 28, 2004.
7. **TJA Membership Benefits.** Joe McCullough submitted the following ideas for TJA board review based on membership surveys from the 2004 conference in San Antonio.
 - Diamond Dealers Club—Whereas any member can buy from New York diamonds at wholesale price.
Motion: A motion was made for board approval. Approved.
 - Kisamore Internet Business Solutions (KIBS)—Web Design Company. This company can give personal attention, creative design solutions, marketing enhancement advice, and become TJA's source for membership Web site design with customer/client direct marketing.
Motion: To accept KIBS as our TJA referral Web design company. Approved.
 - Federated Insurance Company—An umbrella insurance organization for one-stop shopping (i.e., employee health, 401Ks, jewelry insurance needs, worker's comp, and more.
Motion: To review products and clients of Federated for effectiveness, pricing. Approved.
8. **2005 TJA Committees.**
 - Conference/Awards: Chair Doug Jackson, Elaine, Amber, Curt Kip, Ziad, and two general members.
 - Conference Membership Attendance: Chair Mark, Eric, Richard, Robert, Bob S., Alan, and two general members.
 - Finance: Chair Stan, Joe McCullough, and two general members.

You can also post a description of a diamond you want to buy—this is an excellent way to buy diamonds that are difficult to find. It's like making a call to hundreds of dealers in seconds without the hassle and time wasted in calling one dealer after another.

About the DDC—The DDC is the oldest and largest diamond trading organization in the country. Founded in 1931, the DDC has over 1800 members who are the top wholesalers and manufacturers of diamond goods in the country. The DDC has built its Diamond Buying/Selling system to enable retailers to find the best possible stones at the most competitive wholesale prices. The DDC has developed a joint program with Jewelers of America which provides a special discount price on memberships--\$375 a year. The regular price is \$500 per year. TJA members can also visit the DDC diamond trading floor at 580 Fifth Avenue once a year.

2. Covenant Financial Solutions, LLC has offered our TJA members a fantastic offer—if TJA members convert to ***the TJA approved Merchant Services Program before December 30, 2004.***

- **PLUS**—Two **free** round-trip airline tickets to destinations like Hawaii, Mexico, Las Vegas, and the Caribbean.
- **PLUS**—\$50 towards your TJA Membership for 2005!
- **PLUS**—No annual, batch, monthly, statement, or conversion fees.

Call today 1-866-320-8808, or TJASAVER@CFS-Texas.com (Ask for August Harris)

3. TJA 2005 Membership Dues Have Been Discounted! The TJA board is asking for your **e-mail address** on this year's TJA/JA renewal form. And they are willing to pay you to get it. Just give TJA your business or home e-mail address and Web site address, and TJA will discount your 2005 renewal up to \$10. TJA needs this information quickly! With the upcoming year being a legislative year, we must be able to communicate quickly, often, and as efficiently as possible. Please help.

4. Send in your Texas Jewelers Association 2005 Conference Registration Form by February 15, 2005, and you will be automatically qualified for a free three-day, two-night stay at Port Royal Ocean Condominiums (drawing to be held by February 30, 2005). ❁



- Nominations/Election: Chair Bill Koen, and three general members.
9. **Old Business.** A study was done, by Joe McCullough, showing membership counts in major metro areas and the following results were:
Austin 23, Dallas 29, Corpus 10, El Paso 12, Fort Worth 16, Houston 73, and San Antonio 38.
 10. **New Business.**
 - **Membership Dues Increase. Motion:** Raise TJA Membership fees from \$125 to \$135 to take effect January 1, 2005. Use extra \$10 for Texas PAC fund and special projects. Approved.
 - **Bylaws content review. Motion:** A motion to approve the new bylaws “as is” and to send them to a professional parliamentarian for final improvements. Approved.
 - **TJA Strategic Planning Committee:** Set meeting date for October 21–22, in Austin. Approved.
 - **Motion:** A motion to invite DDClub to become an Associate Member of TJA.
 - Creation of a Bounty for jewel thieves via TJA. Tabled.
 11. Next Board Meeting—TBD. Will advise.

Adjourn: 3:30pm ❁



Help Your Traveling Salesperson This Season



On the evening of November 17, the FBI and local law enforcement in the Houston area held a three-hour meeting with the jewelers from the Houston area. The meeting was well attended, with over 100 local jewelers and law enforcement personnel. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the crime activities of the South American gangs against traveling jewelry salesmen.

Attendees learned the following:

The South American gangs are well organized in their efforts to steal the jewelry lines from the salesmen.

Over the years, the crimes against the traveling salesmen are becoming more violent, as firearms and weapons are now commonly used.

The local retail jeweler can assist the traveling salesman by

1. offering to store the line in the store when closed to business. (Generally, the salesman's insurance will provide coverage while the line is in safe keeping within your store.);
2. view the salesman's line in your private office instead of the showroom;
3. ask the salesman to call you before he enters your parking lot, so you or an employee may stand outside of the store and observe his arrival at the appointed time;
4. as the salesman leaves your store, stand outside the store with a cell phone and observe the salesman leave your parking lot, then call the salesman to confirm he is not being followed.

Local law enforcement in the Houston area is aware of the problem and will continue a coordinated effort to reduce the attacks against traveling salesmen. ❁

TJA 67th Annual Conference & Exhibition

Tentative Schedule

Friday, April 8, 2005

5 – 7pm	BOD Meeting
Conference Rm	
6am	Fishing
8am	Golf
1 – 4:30pm	Registration/Exhibits
Lobby A	
3 – 4:30pm	SESSION 1
Conference Rm	
Managing Your Inventory & Suppliers to Dramatically Increase Your Profitability	
Don Greig, Focus Management Group	
3 – 4:30pm	SESSION 2
PVCR	
Sell Solutions to Solving Problems to Increase Sales	
Bob Janet	
3 – 4:30pm	SESSION 3
Ballrm B-C	
HPHT	
Alex Grizinko and Alina Gueterrez	
5pm	Arrive 5:30pm to
Cruise Ship	
12:30am. Cruise and Gambling	

Saturday, April 9, 2005

8:30 – 10am	Breakfast
Restaurant	
9:30 – 10:45am	SESSION 4
Conference Rm	
Coaching for Improved Performance	
David Peters	
9:30-10:45am	SESSION 5
Ballrm B-C	
Alex Grizinko	
10-11:30am	SESSION 6
PVCR	
Top 10 Bad Business Assumptions That Cause You to Lose Money	
Bob Janet	
11am – 12n	SESSION 7
PVCR	
Don Greig, Focus Management Group	

11am – 12n	SESSION 8
Ballrm B-C	
Bench Profits and How to Price Your Store Repairs	
David Geller	
12n – 2pm	Lunch/Business Banquet
PR-Restaurant	
JA—Charity/PAC, Awards. Lunch, Business, Officers, Balloon Auction.	
2:15 – 3:30pm	SESSION 9
Conference Rm	
TBD	
2:15 – 3:30pm	SESSION 10
Ballrm B-C	
7 Successful Strategies for Competing with Discounters	
Sam Arnstein	
2:15 – 4:15pm	SESSION 11
PVCR	
Working With Platinum Alloys Features and Benefits	
Jurgen Maerz	
5 – 9pm	Visit Exhibitors and Dinner
Ballrm A	

Monday, April 11, 2005

8 – 9am	Breakfast
PR-Restaurant	
David Peters and JCK	
9 – 10:30am	SESSION 12
Ballrm B-C	
Inventory Management	
David Geller	
9 – 10:30am	SESSION 13
PVCR	
Share Fair/Five Topic Speakers: Elizabeth Barnes, Business Webs; Darin Kath, Security Issues; Sam Arnstein, Employee Issues; David Peters, Marketing Issues; Alex Grizinko, New Diamond Innovations	
9 – 10:30am	SESSION 14
Conference Rm	
TBD	
9 – 10:30am	SESSION 15
Ballrm A	
Platinum Repairs, Techniques and Bench Tricks	
Jurgen Maerz	

Take Steps Now to Protect Your Store and Employees

Holiday Safety Information to Remember

- Never show more than one item at a time. And make sure all goods are locked away when doing a presentation.
- If a second item is requested show it on your own finger or wrist.
- Leave entire trays of diamond merchandise out of sight when waiting on a customer.
- If a new customer is at hand you may want to place an employee on the other side of your counter and have a code for making that happen.
- Don't display your high-end stones and merchandise near the front of the store. Maybe create a showroom area, and ask a potential thief to sit down while you show your merchandise. This will hopefully discourage attempts of theft.
- Obviously, surveillance camera's and surveillance signs during holiday season would discourage snatch and grab thieves.
- Don't be afraid to ask for identification as a store regulation for unknown customers being shown high-end merchandize. Have a sign you can point to in order to demonstrate your store policy.
- Never let a customer, especially during the holiday season, step outside for "better light," or your merchandize is going to be gone.
- Never chase a thief but rather pay close attention to clothing, height, and distinguishing characteristics with suspicious customer encounters in the store.
- Always prepare your staff not to overreact. Have an "employee alert signal" if an employee is getting concerned. Always remain calm, and be mentally prepared. ❄



TJA Retail Store “Member” Window Decals for 2005



TJA's board of directors have approved the printing of TJA retail storefront decals that visually demonstrate to your customers that you are an active member of your trade association, the Texas Jewelers Association and Jewelers of America. Your storefront window decal signifies professionalism—that you care about your profession and educational standards, and that you have signed and adhere to an industry “Code of Ethics.” Please place this decal on your window for the holiday season. You should find yours enclosed in this newsletter. ❄

14th Annual “Jewelry Design” Competition

DEADLINE — MARCH 25, 2005

— TJA JEWELRY ENTRY FORM —

Dear Applicant,
Thank you for your entry in the 14th Annual TJA Jewelry Design Competition. We appreciate your interest and support of the organization.

Please fill out and submit the following form with your entry fee. Finished entries **must be received by March 25, 2005.**

Name

Company

Address

City/ST/Zip

Phone

E-mail

Categories entered (only one piece per category)

☐ Category 1

☐ Category 2

☐ Category 3

(\$25 entry fee)

(\$25 entry fee)

(\$25 entry fee)

Describe the jewelry pieces entered, including material value (cost). Attach an additional page if necessary.

Mail entries to
Texas Jewelers Association, Design Competition
Attn. Bill Koen
611 Congress Ave.
Austin, TX 78701

All finished entries must be sent by registered mail, insured, with a return receipt. Photographs and press releases will be given to each winner for designer's personal use. Entries remain the property of the person entering them. All nonwinning entries will be returned by registered mail as soon as possible. TJA reserves the right to keep the winning entries for a period of two months for photographing and promotional use. TJA assumes no liability for loss or damage to any piece entered.

Eligibility

Anyone who is a TJA member, or is employed by a TJA member, or a student, currently enrolled at a college or university, who is interested in designing and/or creating a one-of-a-kind piece of jewelry.

Rules of Entry

- Pieces must be original designs created by the persons entering them.
- Pieces may be designed and made by more than one person.
- Pieces cannot have been mass produced or previously sold.
- Pieces must have been produced between April 2004 and March 2005.
- Pieces may have been entered in other competitions, but cannot have won any awards.
- Pieces should not be identified or hallmarked until after the judging.

Details of Entry

Entrants may enter one piece in each of three categories. Each piece must be submitted with a \$25 nonrefundable entry fee. Only finished pieces will be accepted.

Category 1 — Material may not exceed \$1,000. Pieces must be made of silver, gold or platinum and may contain precious stones.

Category 2 — Materials from \$1,000 – \$3,000. Pieces must be made of gold or platinum and may contain precious stones.

Category 3 — Materials over \$3,000. Pieces must be made of gold or platinum and may contain precious stones.

Deadline — March 25, 2005

Application, entry fee, and finished piece must arrive by April 15, 2004.

Judging

The entries will be judged by qualified people in the jewelry industry. When the pieces are being judged, they will be identified by number only. The judges will select the winning pieces on the basis of creative use of materials, craftsmanship, wearability, originality, and fashion merit.

Awards

Awards will be awarded to the winning piece in each category listed above and to the “best overall,” which may be from any category. Display of entries and presentation of awards will be during the Annual Convention. Entrants are encouraged to attend. The winning piece judged “best overall” will be entered in the Jewelers of America National Contest in February 2006.

10 Tips to Build, Manage, and Profit from an E-Commerce Web site

By Vinai Prakash, JA

Just because you’ve built your e-commerce Web site doesn’t mean the customers will begin to come. You need to bring in the visitors, showcase your products, convince them to buy, and bring them back yet again to make any significant gains.

The customers need to be wooed by the unique customer experience that will bring them back and have them sing your praise to their friends, spreading your name. This may seem like a tall order, but isn’t. Listed here are the top 10 tips to build, manage, and profit from your e-commerce Web site. Follow them and see the benefits for yourself.

1 Organize your Catalog around Product Categories

Many sites either provide a long list of products or lump them behind a search button, making it difficult to find them. Arrange your products into logical categories and subcategories, but do not overdo it. Research says it that most people get overwhelmed with more than seven categories. The customer must be able to easily search any product without help.

Your product should have a clear and high-quality picture, short and detailed specifications. If necessary add video or pictures of different view points (top angle, side view) along with the product specification.

2 Provide Multiple Payment Options

Keep all kinds of payment options available to your customers. Not everyone feels comfortable buying through a credit card, or has one. Allow for debit cards, fax, telephone, snail mail, paper and electronic cheques. And sign-up for fraud checking facility, without which you could easily end up losing entire day’s sales within minutes. Provide a currency converter if you offer products or payment in other currencies.

Including a telephone number for customer support on the order is a must. It gives the buyers some extra feelings of security that they can always talk to a live person if anything goes wrong in the buying process.

3 List out Clearly Outlined Policies

PRIVACY
Make your privacy policy public. Keep it in a prominent place, and link it to the home, products and checkout pages, so that customers who are wary of providing personal and credit card details feel comforted. Tell them if you plan to share their e-mail address with others, or plan to send them promotional mail or newsletters.

Further, allow them to unsubscribe or opt-out of such e-mail if they desire. Never sell the customer’s personal particulars unless they have agreed, as this is a sure way to lose credibility doubly fast.

SECURITY
If you plan to collect sensitive information from your customers, you should use security systems like SSL (Secure Socket Layer). This guarantees that the data provided by your customer will not fall into the hands of a malicious hacker while transferring from his computer to the Web server.

This also will reassure your customers that you are truly concerned about the security of their personal information.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS
Write clearly and prominently all the sales and after sales support terms so as to avoid confusion. The Internet is worldwide, and your customer can come from any country. List your shipping and handling costs upfront, and be ready to ship anywhere on the Earth. Publish your returns policy, support hours, and even the approximate time taken to deliver the goods.

Send a confirmation note thanking the customer, and listing all the products, prices, and key terms of the purchase in an e-mail. Keep the customer updated of the order status at all times by e-mail or by providing a link in your shopping page where they can check the status of their order anytime.

4 Build a Newsletter Around Your Products

To snag new customers and keep the old ones vividly remembering you, seriously plan to launch a newsletter, and send it to all prospects and customers on a regular basis. Apart from the credibility of being a serious player in the market, you dazzle them with your commitment by releasing the newsletter on fixed days—like the 15th of every month, or every Monday.

You can also show your expertise in your field by writing regular, in-depth articles, covering the latest trends in the industry, and reviews of new products. Your customers, distributors, and partners will start to eagerly await your newsletter. Sprinkle your promotions and products in between the contents of the newsletter, and be ready to receive an increase in Web traffic and order bookings every time you send out the newsletter.

5 Let Customers Gift Your Products

Allow people to gift your products to their friends and loved ones. Provide free gift-wrapping, a personalized

message, or a free gift for the purchaser. Allow them to create Wish Lists that they may use to buy later.

These small things **do** matter and act as freebies that your competitor may not have. Although these are fast becoming standard features, make sure you don’t end up with the dumb ones who haven’t figured this simple technique out yet.

6 Promote Your Site Every Day

Strong marketing is the most important aspect of having a successful Web site. The best of sites won’t make money if people don’t come in hordes. Launch promotions, and get the word to everyone possible within your target audience.

You can do promotions using direct mail to your existing customers, in your newsletter, and in fliers. All the methods of traditional marketing apply here. Don’t leave any technique untried. Remember the old adage: Market, market, market!

7 Measure Results and Reorganize

Measure the results you are getting from each promotion, religiously, and note what works and what does not. Experiment. Study. Fine-tune. This is the only way to know how effective your campaigns and promotions are.

You can also bring in some external people to visit your site and give you sincere feedback about each page on your site. The more critical they are, the more changes you will make, and eventually it will benefit you and your customers.

Keep making changes and test what works and what doesn’t on a continuous basis. What works today may not work tomorrow.

8 Keep a Simple Yet Effective Web Design

There is intense competition on the Web. Make a compelling Web site that showcases your USP (unique selling proposition) and brings the customer back to your site. Differentiate from the rest by using your imagination to make your site standout from the rest. A cool, cathy, easy-to-remember name could definitely help.

Make a simple site, with plain HTML, and a consistent look and feel on all pages. Use an easy-to-read font, at least a 10pt size, preferably 11pt. Do not load it with graphics and huge pictures on every page, which may slow down your page’s loading time.

Although this advice is becoming old-fashioned as most people are moving to broadband, it is still a

good practice, as you don’t want to lose the customers who use a low-speed modem.

Flexibility and ease of use are far more important than flashy graphics or cool Java applets. The objective is to keep the customer looking at the products, and not keep them waiting or lose them by slow-loading graphics or effects.

Keep the catalog simple, and with a consistent design with links to Home, Checkout Page, Privacy Policy, Terms and Conditions, and Customer Profile pages handy and at the same, consistent place on each page. Make it easy to browse the store and mark products for later purchase.

9 Make the Longin Process a Breeze

The less clicks needed to order, the better. Amazon patented their One-Click method that minimized the clicks, making the checkout process simpler and easier. Try to make the registration or login process minimal, and only keep the most relevant fields mandatory.

I was disgusted by the lengthy logon process that forced me to enter my middle name, date of birth, and mother’s maiden name for just registering for an online taxi booking service. I left it midway, and went to another taxi operator’s site, which registered me within a minute. A simple thing can result in a costly mistake that loses the customer forever.

10 Reduce Popup Messages

Too many popups distract and disgust the customer. Especially after the visitor closes your Web site window, if you start to popup other windows with more promotions, it leaves a feeling of being chased. It is also the signature of most of the adult sites, so steer away from such insensitive practices.

Show your professionalism and respect the customer’s privacy and time. It will help to build your image as a serious and professional site and enhance your credibility.

11 Use a Reliable Hosting Service

Use a service that is good, reliable, and can provide you with customer support at all hours. Web hosting is getting very cheap but it is better to pay a little more and get a fast and reliable Web hosting. Nothing loses a customer faster than a slow site or a site that is down frequently. Compare a few hosting services, and ask around before signing up for one. You won’t regret it. ❁





Happy Holidays to all our TJA Retail and Associate members in this great state of Texas. I want to take a part of my year-end message and give thanks to those TJA members who have helped me feel at home as your new executive director (ED) over this past year. Bill Koen (Austin) our TJA immediate past president was extremely helpful for my first year as ED and continues to be a guiding influence and source of information as well as Peter LeCody (Richardson), our current TJA president.

Throughout the 2004 year I have interacted with many on the TJA board on different projects. And results have always been positive communication and exchange of progressive ideas. It takes this kind of enthusiasm to drive an association, and without that enthusiastic energy level nothing gets done. One of my common statements to boards and committees is “if you always do what you’ve always done, then you’ll end up being—what you’ve always been.” Basically the no action, no reaction theory.

TJA is not made up of these kinds of people. Your TJA board are enthusiastic individuals who want to challenge the norms and break the molds if it can improve your membership benefits, retail business concerns, and do it cost effectively. These are enthusiastic people who take time from their own work to travel and attend meetings on your behalf. These are selfless individuals placing the “many” before the “few,” who are normally unseen by the majority of TJA members. Your TJA board of directors are your “behind the scenes angels,” if you will, doing what needs to be done. So, when your giving thanks during the holidays, think about those little “business angels” at TJA.

On the news front, TJA’s membership has grown this year to a level never achieved before, with over 600 members and a growing number of Associate Members. Since December of 2003 TJA has found new energy and managed an organizational face-lift—which has resulted in increased recognition, more members, better annual conferences and exciting, new membership benefits that are presently implemented (with more to yet come). TJA has changed. It is moving with enthusiasm and trying to put **fun** back into membership in the organization. We currently have about four different ways of winning some cool vacations—and some are as easy as signing up for the TJA 2005 Annual Conference in Port Aransas next April 9–11. (See more at www.texas-jewelers.org.)

We are also changing TJA from outdated bylaws to the streamlined

2005 Robert Rules of Order procedures, so that we can eliminate language regarding the use of the “telegraph” as means of communication.

Your part as a member of TJA is to help us grow and promote the Texas Jewelers Association.

Simply ask a jeweler retailer in your area to join before the end of this year. Help push our number well over the 600-member mark. Bring a new retailer to the 2005 April conference.

Watch your mail right after you receive this newsletter for the 2005 TJA Annual Conference Registration Program—and picture yourself in that warm, sun-filled pool!

Happy Holidays! ❁

Joe McCullough
TJA Executive Director

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