

INSTORE

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COMMENTARY / RETAILER'S VIEWPOINT



Need Wise Advice? Go Buy Some

➤ One of the best investments you can make is in an outside professional. They bring **EXPERTISE, PERSPECTIVE AND AN EAR YOU CAN BEND.**

When you hear the word "consultant," you usually think "expensive." But I learned early that the knowledge and experience you buy when you hire a consultant can save you thousands of dollars in the long run and put you on the road to success.

For me, it all started about 18 years ago when I needed help understanding the dynamics of the showroom floor, the interaction between customers and staff, how to positively train and educate my staff on being the best they could be, and how to be an effective leader.

As a first-generation jeweler with no family in the business, I had no relatives to go to for advice. I had read lots of books and attended seminars but I still felt there were holes in my knowledge, so I invested in an executive coach. Over the years this coach has been an objective ear, filling me with insight and guiding me to pursue the goals I have set.

Her insights into the various personalities of my staff and the different ways to motivate and teach them helped me approach each one differently on the various aspects of the business.

For instance, not having a

degree in education, I did not realize the different ways that people learn and how important it is to train them in the way they learn best. In one of our weekly training sessions about diamonds I used the three ways she taught me to teach and I was amazed at how well they retained the information in comparison to my previous training efforts.

I was thrilled the next day when a customer came in and their newfound knowledge flowed right out of their mouths so eloquently!

The process of writing my book, *Crazy about Jewelry – The Expert Guide to Buying, Selling, and Caring for Your Jewelry*, and finding the time to do it along with the sacrifices I made to get it done were discussed at almost every session we had together.

Executive coaches are found in every city and now online, and I recommend that if you plan to hire one you interview him beforehand and find out his expertise and experience in handling management and business issues.

Our customers expect us to be jewelry experts 24 hours a day and from day one I wanted to do everything in my power to become a jewelry expert. But sometimes it helps to have input from a different perspective.

Consultants' business experience often stems from other industries, and hearing from a third party how other businesses deal with situations is really enlightening and helps you think out of the box.

At least 15 years ago I remember reading about an author who was going to do a presentation on niche marketing at a jewelry-appraisal convention. I was unable to go but asked one of my friends who was attending to get me a copy of the book (no Amazon then!). I read the book, loved it, and proceeded to call the author to see if she would consult with me. I knew there was a chance she wouldn't even answer my call, but she did and we spent the next five years, long distance, working on the various marketing campaigns that I wanted to do. I needed someone to filter through all the ideas I had, accept or veto them, and then help me go forward. It was an invaluable experience and it gave me the guts to pursue the products and designs I wanted to create and the perspective on how to design future ones.

We all spend so many dollars on advertising and whether you use an advertising agency or do it in-house, there is a whole lot to know about that we may not be privy to. Just as we are constantly learning about our industry, gemstones, the gold market, etc. consultants spend their time doing the same. And no one really has the right answer, or we would all be doing it.

With this in mind I found an advertising consultant to help put my advertising dollars to best use. He and I brainstorm together often, and he is able to objectively focus on my budget and my advertising goals without selling me anything other than his experience. This eliminates the huge expense of an agency and yet yields a lot of the same results.

So the next time you are looking at your budget and trying to make it work more effectively and profitably for you, toss around the idea of a consultant and give it a try. When you find the right one, you will probably wonder what took you so long.

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