

4 WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR WEBSITE & PREPARE FOR E-COMMERCE



By Matthew A. Perosi

The local retail jeweler is losing a lot of business to the Internet. The younger generation of jewelry designers, having grown up with the Internet, are building e-commerce websites and selling direct. Meanwhile, there are plenty of jewelry manufacturers who are being forced to sell online because sales to retail stores are down. With social media like Pinterest and Instagram driving interest, the demand for jewelry isn't shrinking, but sales are being funneled through more jewelry e-commerce websites. At least once a week, I hear about a new jewelry e-commerce website that expects to capture a few million in sales within their first year of launch. That's money that obviously is coming out of the pockets of the current population of retail jewelry stores.

Trends indicate that every retail jewelry store will eventually need to have some type of e-commerce website and build an audience far outside their local area. However, I don't think it's realistic to tell you that you need to jump from your current website into e-commerce without first understanding some simple ways to improve your current website habits. We all need to walk before we learn to run, and so I've written the following 4 ways you can better walk with your current site while you plan for the inevitability of running with e-commerce.

1. Update Your Website Frequently

I can't stress this point enough. Your website should be updated every time you have a new event, new promotion, or add a new product line to your store. At minimum, you should update your home page once a month, but your target habit should be to update it once a week. By the time you get to e-commerce, you'll be updating it every day.

2. Learn to Achieve the "Wow"

Jewelry photography is tough, but everyone can eventually learn to do it when you have the right equipment. Most jewelry websites have large photos or ads on their home page that are simply not effective marketing tools. Your home page needs to command attention as soon as someone sees it, yet general photography on white backgrounds will never do it. Unusual angles, extreme close-ups, and colorful backgrounds are among the better ways to "wow" someone. Professional photography is very expensive, and often seems like an impossible barrier to entry into e-commerce, yet it's not impossible at all. I've written a lot of information about jewelry photography which I can't fit into this column, but I'll gladly share some online articles and equipment suggestions if you contact me.

3. Become a Social Maven

There's a new generation of jewelry designers that grew up with the Internet. They find it easy to share photos on Instagram and Pinterest and attract thousands of followers from all over the world. They've managed to attract an audience for their single line of jewelry,

but a retail jeweler has many lines to share. For e-commerce to be successful, someone in your store needs to learn to manage your social media accounts and build a following by engaging customers online. Eventually, you'll need a social media director on your staff.

4. Learn To Tie Your Marketing Together

You have to learn to tie all your marketing together and track it all. Sadly, even though it's easy to track the results from online advertising, most retail jewelers are paying for online marketing without implementing ways to track the results. Print media certainly isn't dead, but it is difficult to measure results. In addition to your local newspaper, you need to find other local places to advertise where your customers frequent. Direct mail, grocery store shopping cart ads, and a full page ad in the program at the local center for performing arts can be used for brand awareness or specific campaigns. Ask your marketing agency for innovative ways to track it. Your future e-commerce website will live or die based on how you measure results, which in turn guide your marketing spending.

Right now, every time a retail jeweler asks me to set up an e-commerce website for them I try to talk them out of it. Although I'd love to build an e-commerce website for everyone who hires me, initially it's better to guide every jeweler through mastering the four points above before committing to e-commerce. Even if you think e-commerce isn't in your future, the success of your store is still tied to your mastery of what I've explained here.



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Matthew Perosi reports the latest Internet trends and methods that are most relevant to the jewelry industry in his 5-day per week newsletter, available through jwag.biz. Tap into the more than 1,100 free newsletters to guide you towards better usage of websites, social, and mobile. Matthew invites your feedback and questions at matt@jwag.biz or 973.413.8211. Many questions from TRJ readers have turned into great newsletter topics.