

ON SALES

# KNOW RETURN



**Customers are getting real smart, real fast. To increase your sales, you've got to do the same, says Shane Decker.**

**DURING MY TRAVELS** around the country, I find someone in every store challenging the sales team. Asking hard questions about the products they sell. Probing for details, testing their knowledge. Backing them into a corner until they're confused, bewildered and frustrated. Unfortunately, I'm not talking about store owners or managers — I'm talking about *customers*.

Consumers are more educated than ever. I'm sure you've seen the 20-something Google junkies who often know more about the product you sell than your salespeople. (And watch out for their elders, who are also catching on fast!) They've spent hours on the Internet, checking websites, message boards, and blogs to make certain that they're purchasing exactly the right product for them. It's not just jewelry, it's everything — cars, TVs, MP3 players, and more. But that's cold comfort when they're walking out of your store, dissatisfied.

These days, customers enter your store armed with knowledge, and they'll be making objections for one of two reasons. First, for reassurance — they want to know they're buying the right product. And second, to *challenge* you — they want to buy from the best, most knowledge-

able store in town. In short, they want to know they're purchasing from someone who knows more than they do about the product. If your salesperson can't answer, the customer will think he or she's either undertrained or new. Either way, the customer walks and the sale is killed.

Some jewelers emphasize gemological training, and while that is extremely important, it's not enough. Salespeople need to know the *stories* behind the brands they sell. All of them.

A lot of salespeople allow themselves to be "category smart." They bone up on watches, or designer jewelry, or bridal jewelry — but not all three (or any of your other myriad categories). But what if the store is busy, and they can't T.O. the sale? Now you've got an amateur selling your jewelry. The only real solution is to make sure that every salesperson on your staff is proficient in each category that you sell.

That's the whip, but there's also a carrot. More product knowledge means more self-confidence. And the more confident the salesperson, the more confident the customer is that

they've found the right product, and the right person from which to buy it.

Fact: the more knowledge you have, the less you need it. Customers can *tell* when you know your stuff. They'll stop challenging, and you can get to the real meat of their objections. And if you don't know your stuff, they'll challenge you relentlessly. They're nervous about your lack of knowledge, and it will show.

Even better, the more you know, the less you have to negotiate price. Why? Because you now have the tools to qualify the price — you can prove its worth! If a customer thinks a product costs too much, they don't know enough about what it took to make it. But *you* should. And when you explain it, you'll find their price objections *melting* away. The "poverty-level mentality" so common in salespeople, where they don't think customers can afford certain products, would be eliminated if they'd just take more time to learn about what they're selling.



HIT THE BOOKS FOR BETTER, MORE CONFIDENT SALES.

Owners, product knowledge isn't something to think about teaching your

staff. They *have* to have it. Bring in your sales reps to train on their products. Make up tests for your staff.

Don't assume anything — assess each person's strengths and weaknesses. In some cases, the entire staff may need training. In others, maybe a one-on-one session makes more sense. Whatever you decide, just be sure to act.

**SHANE DECKER** has provided much sought-after sales training for more than 3,000 stores worldwide. He can be reached at (866) 424-2472.



## BRAINSTORMS NEW IDEAS FOR YOUR STORE

Got a staff that you're worried will eventually end up competing with you? Don't fight them ...

### Encourage entrepreneurial action.

At Google, engineers can spend 20 percent of work time on projects of their choice. (Google figures some of these will eventually become new product lines for the company.) Could offering employees time (and even cash) for projects of their choice mean opportunities for you?

SOURCE: *The Big Moo*, Seth Godin

## TRUE TALES

STRANGE STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES

**"This has happened** more times than I can count in our three-year history. I use 'sold' tags to plug holes when I sell a ring. I cannot tell you how many customers have asked me if that means *all* the rings in the six-, eight-, or even ten-ring display are sold. I have never experienced this before, even when I used to travel around MI, OH, IN, and WI doing trunk shows and remount events. At first, I thought people were kidding, but they are serious. I usually answer them with a laugh and say, 'Well, if I had sold all ten of those rings today, I would probably closed a little early and gone out to celebrate.' Does this happen to anyone else?"

"SOLD? SO THEY'RE ALL SOLD?"



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