

**SHANE
DECKER**

COMMENTARY / ON SALES



Make Your Lab a Sales Ally

➔ Know when and **HOW TO USE GRADING REPORTS** in your sales presentations. They can be a great partner, with the right kind of customer.

When a consumer calls an online diamond seller, chances are the person he's talking to has never worked in a jewelry store. Chances are that phone operator has never taken a GIA course or even seen the diamonds he's talking about. He sits there in front of a computer that shows a lab report for the diamond (but he may not tell the customer which lab).

Why would a customer trust someone like this when the customer hasn't seen the diamond and the person selling it to them probably hasn't seen it either?

Diamonds never should have been made a commodity that's traded on facts and figures alone, which is what the e-tailers have done. Diamonds aren't something to be bought and sold "by the numbers." People celebrate life's special moments with diamonds. The specs are secondary, and they should be used only to help confirm the value and rarity of a diamond, but never its beauty.

What a lab report *does* do is establish you as having integrity. The more integrity you have when you're selling, the more confidence your customer can have in you and the diamond. Lab reports give your customers freedom from risk.

But remember — this is important — you don't share a lab report with every customer. When you get to the technical part of your presentation, ask your customer, "Would you like to know more about your diamond?" He may say, "No, I trust your expertise." Or you might say, "Would you like to see it under magnification?" His response may be, "No, I wouldn't know what I was looking at anyway." Obviously, it's only going to hurt your chances of closing the sale to get more technical with that type of customer.

On the other hand, if you're working with a research junkie, it's the opposite. When you pull out a lab report, he has proof that you know what you're talking about, and that your store has done the research to buy the proper diamond. When



you tell him that you aim to give your customers the best value in a diamond, you don't have to justify or apologize for the price. Everything's written out, it's there in black and white, and he can see the color and clarity under magnification.

Lab reports add integrity, polish and professionalism. The customer has no doubt that what he's just heard from you is the truth.

There are three lab reports I recommend. The American Gem Society is the institution that sets the standards for ethics and integrity — its lab report gets an A+ in my book. The Gemological Institute of America is the Supreme Court of our industry, the final authority on how diamonds should be graded; it also gets an A+. Finally, there's the Gem Certificate Assurance Lab, which actually guarantees the color and the clarity of each diamond it grades — this lab is very accurate and thorough as well.

Ultimately, it's up to you to help customers understand that they need to see the diamond in person — a lab report can't substitute for the eye-ball test — but if it comes with a lab report, it's just that much more proof that the diamond is as described. That equals peace of mind for the customer, which means more sales for you!

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See contributor's details on page 20

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