

ON SALES

GET SCHOOLED



Create your own store university for employees, says **Shane Decker**.

[BENJAMIN FRANKLIN ONCE said, "Genius without education is like silver in the mine." He could just as easily have been referring to dollars in customers']

pocketbooks that never make it into the cash register of your store. When you don't train your salespeople, you will never see their promise come to fruition.

Jewelers tell me all the time that they can't find good people. Well, if you don't train them up, they'll never be any good! Too many owners treat training as an afterthought ... something to be done here and there, when you find the time. I'm telling you, the time is now, and it's not an option if you want to thrive. Consider the following truths of retailing:

1. You will only make as much money as your people allow you to make.
2. Your store is only as good as your weakest link.
3. You will only be as good as you train. The less you train, the worse your team looks to your customers.

These things are true no matter what you sell — but you're in the jewelry business, and our industry is changing faster than most. And, there's a lot to learn: Product knowledge, store procedures, gemological education, salesmanship, and even a particular store's culture and psychology. All told, it's a three-year learning curve for rookies (and even longer for larger stores).

Are you convinced yet to make training a top priority? If not, here's one last thing to think about: Every day, you entrust your employees with your inventory, your money, your customers, the name on your door, and your integrity.

That's right, your *personal integrity* is reflected in how well you hire and train!

So what's the best way to educate your people?

First, you've got to make your people accountable to learning. Develop incentives and penalties that they will incur based on their learning performance. Encourage them to listen to gemological training tapes on the way to and from work, rather than rock and roll. Have them read the trades, especially **INSTORE**. Let them know you're serious about it by enforcing consequences.

Second, create your own store university. Make it a two- to three-week course that covers the following:

- **Product knowledge:** Work with your vendors to list the 25 most important points of each brand you carry. Start a file on each brand that your salespeople can train on, and test them. Measure their learning about each timepiece you sell.
- **Store procedures:** How are repairs taken in, how should inventory be handled, how should customers be greeted, etc.

- **Gemological training:** The Diamond Council of America has an excellent gemological course for salespeople.

- **Salesmanship:** This will be an

extremely thick file. They should learn how to turn over a sale, the anatomy of a sale, opening and closing, etc. (all covered in my DVD series — sorry, couldn't resist the plug).

For most owners, it takes 18 to 24 months to properly develop the course materials for a store university. But the results are well worth the time and effort.

Once your trainee has graduated your university, have them shadow your top three salespeople for the next three days. Then and only then should you put them on the sales floor to represent your good name to your customers.

After all, would you take your car to an untrained mechanic? Fly in an airplane with an untrained pilot? So why would you ask your customers to trust anyone less than a pro with their jewelry purchase?

Get your university up and running, and make your sales team accountable to learning. You may be surprised at just how much silver is in your mine.

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• See contributors' details on page 16

All told, it's a three-year learning curve for rookies.



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