

O N S A L E S

YULE RULES



Everyone makes money during the holidays. But by making the right preparations, you'll earn so much more, says Shane Decker.

MY ADVICE for the upcoming holiday selling season can be summed up in two words: managers prepare.

It's true that jewelry stores make the most money during the holidays. On the other hand, it's also the time of year that we *lose* the most money. How? By going into the season disorganized and unprepared, resulting in missed opportunities, and sometimes — worst of all — disgruntled customers.

You'll close more sales this year if you begin planning *now*. It's not enough to add part-time staff and wait for a windfall. You must add staff for specific positions, train them (and your regular sales team) specifically for the holidays, and get the showroom ready.

Start by showing up your holiday-related training during sales meetings. Because there are so many customers coming into the store — and *every* one of them is looking to buy — salespeople tend to get sloppy during the holidays. So, go over the basics.

► **RULE ONE:** One principle that often suffers is closing all the way through a presentation. One great way to close during the holidays is to remind the customer that he's told you what he wanted, and you've got it: "You said you wanted a strand of pearls - this one looks amazing." It's

also a perfect opportunity for an add-on: "And check out these matching pearl earrings!"

► **RULE TWO:** Another rule of thumb to cover in the months leading up to the holidays includes asking questions to find out a customer's needs — quickly. With so much foot traffic in the store, there is *no time* to dilly-dally. Don't be distracted by extraneous things, like the customer's upcoming vacation plans or whether family is coming into town. Stay on the subject of what the customer came in for. Never be rude — but do sell a little faster.

► **RULE THREE:** Be sure to stress the importance of add-on sales during the holidays. Customers come into your store in December for one reason and one reason only — to give you money. And, the average holiday shopper buys 15-20 gifts. Why shouldn't they buy them from you? You'll be saving them time and sending them home with breathtaking jewelry for all their loved ones. Think of it this way: your customer count during the holidays could be exactly the same, your number of sales slips could be the same ... but if 50% of those slips have add-ons, your sales increase could be as much as 30%. What would that mean to you in dollars?

► **RULE FOUR:** A concept that cannot be

overlooked during the fourth quarter is store-floor awareness. You must ensure that every person is greeted, that they are offered refreshments while they wait, and that they are served in order. The best way to make this happen is to hire a greeter. This person's *only* purpose is to greet each person with a smile, stating, "Ma'am, we're really glad you're here. As you can see, all of our professional salespeople are busy. Please be patient — I *promise* you, the wait will be worth it! Can I get you a cookie or coffee?" The greeter can also keep track of who needs to be waited on, and in what order.

► **RULE FIVE:** Be organized. Not just you as a manager, but the staff as a whole. Counter the hectic nature of the holidays by equipping every station with a loupe, tweezers, counter pad, keys, finger-sizing tools, pens, sales slips, and anything else your salespeople may need. This way, things aren't being carried here and there, to be lost in the holiday whirlwind. Someone on staff should be assigned to check stations every 15 minutes, to make sure nothing is missing. Otherwise, customers will get annoyed by your fumbling around and taking too long.

► **RULE SIX:** Final point: don't be a head-hunter. Don't pre-judge. Don't hold out for the customers who look like "big spenders." Wait on everybody, and give each person your full attention. You never know which sale will pop.

Having the right inventory and good advertising are certainly critical to a strong holiday selling season — but if you don't prepare your team and your sales floor, you're selling yourself short. Literally!

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