

Jewelry Selling INSIGHTS



VOLUME 6, NUMBER 1 | January 2011

From the Editor

Point A to Point B



If you have been reading this newsletter for any length of time, you know that I believe strongly in helping you get as much for your jewelry as possible.

That typically means selling your jewelry direct to the consumer. The fewer people between buyer and seller, the more the seller makes.

That being said, many jewelry makers either don't have easy access to a market, or they are willing to give up some of the profits in return for someone else selling their jewelry. That's where galleries and stores come into play. Just because you're not selling directly to a consumer doesn't mean that dealing with galleries doesn't involve "selling."

So, in this issue and a future one, we'll present a two-part feature on the best ways to approach and sell to galleries. Our goal is to provide you with the most up-to-date information on how to turn gallery approaches into real sales.

Thanks for reading, and go make something great!

David Weiman
Editor and Publisher



5 Quick Tips

Home parties are an excellent way to create a fun and festive buying environment. Here are 5 Quick Tips for successful home parties:

- 1. Know thy host.** Jewelry parties can be fun and profitable, but to avoid “surprises” (we’ve heard of many) make sure you know the host well and understand who the host plans to invite to the party. Make sure he or she knows your jewelry well and the prices you intend to charge.
- 2. Put everything in writing.** There are plenty of ways of compensating a host (including a free piece of jewelry, a percent off, or even a percent of revenue) ... no matter what the arrangements, put everything in writing so that responsibilities, fees and payments are clearly spelled out and agreed to in advance.
- 3. Create your own invitations if the party is hosted by someone else.** Jewelry makers are often surprised when the host creates a cheap invitation that doesn’t match the style of the jewelry or the jeweler! Provide the host with ready-to-send invitations at no charge. If an online invitation service is used, provide the artwork for that, too.
- 4. Use the party to recruit new hosts.** A jewelry party is a great time to recruit new hosts. Bring handouts that explain how guests can host a jewelry party of their own featuring you and your jewelry.
- 5. Be positive!** Once the party is underway, get in the mindset of having fun! Even if just a few people show up, treat each person with warmth and the sincere desire to learn as much about them as possible. Relationships you establish at the party may pay off continually down the road, so keep your spirits up no matter what happens!

To share a selling tip, send an e-mail to david@marketingjewelry.com. If we use your tip, we’ll extend your subscription by one issue, free.

 Q & A

Q: This is probably a question you don't get very often. I have a customer who has repeatedly brought the same item back to be repaired. I know she has small children at home, and I suspect that she lets the little ones play with the bracelet. Although I usually don't charge a good customer for repairs, I've about had it with this one. Any advice? — Charisse

A: Believe it or not, I hear questions on this “theme” quite a bit! There are three issues bundled up in the question: 1. What kind of repair policy should you have in place? 2. How do you deal with the repeated return of an item? 3. How do you deal with your own suspicions about what's causing the breakage?

In terms of the first issue, you should have a clear, written policy about repairs. Although well-made jewelry can outlast the buyer, her children and her children's children, a good repair policy — regardless of what your policy is — will ease the minds of new buyers.

I would distinguish between alterations to a piece because the customer wants something shorter, longer (or something else) from repairs to jewelry that breaks due to normal wear. (Of course, that brings up another issue entirely about what constitutes “normal wear,” and we'll leave that aside for now.)

Keep in mind, as well, that there are consumer protections relating to the performance of just about anything you can buy, so you might visit the [Federal Trade Commission](http://www.ftc.gov) website and go to the jewelry section to see what they say about jewelry and about the responsibility of sellers. You might also check out the [Better Business Bureau](http://www.bbb.org) for general guidance on repair policies.

In terms of the second issue, you can say to the customer, “Gee, I use the strongest wire we have for a bracelet like this, and I haven't ever had one returned before because it broke. Tell me what happened — where were you and what were you doing when it broke?”

Don't place blame on the customer because it will put them on the defensive. Ask, in as neutral a way as possible, what was going on at the time it broke.

Depending on what she said, you can respond with some good customer education about how to care for the jewelry. For example, I routinely see people who have physical jobs wearing jewelry that could catch on a piece of equipment or an object they work with. So, you might learn what the customer does for work and play and give them specific instructions on when it's okay to wear the piece in question, and when it might be better to leave it at home.

You might say, "I'm happy to repair it again, and let's make sure that it stays fixed! What would be the best way to do that?"

As with your repair policy, a written card with "Charisse's Jewelry Care Instructions" will help customers wearing your jewelry or any jewelry.

If the customer brings it back after that, consider refunding her money and taking the piece back. You want to avoid an unhappy customer as well as time spent repairing something that is possibly being misused. You can refer to your own repair policy at this point, and indicate how unusual a situation this is. "It might be that this piece just isn't the right one for you – I can refund your money and take it back, or give you a credit towards something else ..." might be the best way of stating it.

Finally, there's the issue of how to deal with what you suspect is the jewelry being given to her children to play with. I'm sure it's difficult to deal with the possible misuse of something you made with your own two hands. However, following the steps above should make it unnecessary to pursue any questions that you might have about whether or not her children are playing with the jewelry. It's possible that they are, so asking her about how the breakage occurred may reveal that they were playing with it, but if she's embarrassed about that or wishes to conceal that, you may create hard feelings by pursuing it.

Have a question? E-mail david@marketingjewelry.com.

Feature

Do's and Don'ts for Selling to Galleries, Boutiques and Stores

By MARGARET LEFEVRE
ASSOCIATE EDITOR



In addition to selling face to face at shows, home parties and other live events, jewelry makers are also ramping up their marketing online through their own websites and social media efforts, too.

Live events and online stores bring the jewelry seller into direct contact with the buyer.

Many jewelry makers also find that brick-and-mortar galleries, shops and boutiques are also a viable and often lucrative market for selling their work. And for jewelry makers who are shy or don't feel they have a strong enough desire to learn selling skills, galleries and stores can provide a welcome method for selling their jewelry and creating a following of loyal, happy customers.

Well-established galleries often have a carefully cultivated clientele that is willing to pay a premium for the unique, handmade and hand-selected items that they know they will find there.

It can feel very intimidating to approach a gallery or boutique with your work because of the risk of face-to-face rejection, but remember that gallery owners can be your jewelry's best friend. They search out original work that best fits with the overall feel of their venue, and when they choose to add your work to the mix. And smart gallery owners will work closely with you to represent you well because sales for you equal sales for them, too.

Because jewelry artists and gallery owners can be such great assets to each other, it pays to learn the best ways to approach galleries in the most effective way possible. To help you out, we went straight to the source, interviewing 48 gallery owners from across the nation about what they need, what they like and what they don't like when artists come calling.

From their enthusiastic responses, we've compiled the following guide so you'll be confident and well-prepared when you approach prospective gallery clients.

First things First: Do Your Homework

Before approaching a gallery, find out all you can about it. This can be achieved through a visit to a gallery's website and perhaps an anonymous in-person visit during which you scope out the work they represent and how it is displayed, the store's atmosphere, and its clientele. Your best bet is to visit at different days and times to get a sense of what it's like throughout the week.

Said Jean Opilla of [Aurora Gallery](#) in Annapolis, Md., "I am annoyed when an artist has not done their homework. If they haven't visited my gallery in person or on my website, they have no idea what I sell. Just because they sell jewelry and I sell a lot of jewelry does not necessarily mean we should sell jewelry together."

Ease into the Intro

So you've done your homework, and now you're ready to walk out the door, jewelry in tow, to present your work to a gallery you're really excited about, right? Well, not so fast.

Almost unanimously, our respondents told us that the most sure-fire way to alienate gallery owners and cause them to not want to sell your work — no matter how good it is — is cold calling.

That's right — just showing up and asking them to look at your work, with no appointment or advance notice, shows the gallery owner that you do not respect their time, which creates a negative impression and often ruins the chance of ever having a business relationship with that gallery.

That's because gallery owners are usually extremely busy tending to customers and working to sell their artists' work, which is good news for you if you happen to be one of the artists they represent!

Said Barbara Mullaly of [Mullaly's 128 Studio & Gallery](#) in Elk Rapids, Mich., "I try to respect the time and energy of the artist, and I expect the same. I wouldn't walk into your studio while you were working and usurp your time with my wants. Likewise, please don't expect me to drop everything because you arrived unannounced."

While some artists might be concerned that simply sending a photograph will not convey the true look and feel of a handcrafted piece, Amy Hoffman, president of [Arts & Artisans LLC](#) contends, "That is true, but a buyer knows if it is a look they want to carry. The photography doesn't matter in that case."

So how would gallery owners most like to be approached? Nearly all said they prefer to receive an email with several high-resolution photos of your best work attached.

Said Opilla, "Email saves time for both of us. If I like what I see, we can make a follow-up appointment to see the work in person. If it doesn't fit in, I will have saved everyone a trip, time, and possibly hurt feelings."

If you would prefer a more personal form of contact, most gallery owners say they are fine with artists phoning instead of emailing to arrange an appointment, although when you do call, be prepared for some to ask you to send an email first.

Some also mentioned that, because they are so busy, they like for an artist to give them a follow-up phone call a few days after sending an email so that it doesn't fall through the cracks.

The great news is that both emails and phone calls can be much easier forms of initial contact for those of us whose knees start to shake just thinking about showing up out of the blue and presenting our work to strangers!

In addition to photos, here are 6 things gallery owners mentioned that they like to see in the initial email:

1. Full descriptions and dimensions of the pieces in the photos
2. A cover letter
3. An artist bio
4. Wholesale and consignment prices
5. Where your work is currently sold
6. A link to your website if you have one

But be sure to avoid sending an email that simply directs the gallery owner to your website to learn all about your work.

“A one-line email that says ‘check out this website’ is not good,” said Jessica Bohus of [Good Goods](#) in Saugatuck, Mich. “If you won’t take the time to present yourself to me, why should I go looking for you? Your tone and attitude are important — you want to enter in to a relationship with a gallery. Start off by letting us know you are serious and can handle business.”

Experienced gallery owners usually have a very good feel for what will and will not sell in their shops, so if they do not pursue your work further after they receive your initial email, it is probably for the best and will keep you from tying up your work in a place where it won’t sell.

“Every style doesn’t fit every shop, so accept it and move on,” said Kathy Jones of [Artisan Design Gallery](#) in Murfreesboro, Tenn. “Don’t take it personally — wait for the day when the shop calls you back and asks/begs to carry your work.”

What Jewelry to Bring to Your Appointment?

So let’s say you’ve called or emailed and scored an appointment with a gallery owner. What’s the best way to present yourself and your work? Often, the owner will tell you specifically what to bring and in what format when they make the appointment with you. Although you should definitely bring in what they request, you can bring additional pieces as

well – it may be something unique or different that unexpectedly catches their eye.

There seem to be two nearly equally-divided camps on the subject of how much work to bring. About half of those with whom we spoke said to bring everything you have currently available for sale.

Said Hoffman, “When an artist brings the work in for viewing, the rule of thumb is the more the better. You never know what the buyer likes, and having more is better than less.”

Added Barbara Hummel at [Skyland Farm](#) in Watkins Glen, N.Y., “I love it when they have a large selection that I can just choose from, buy and be done. I will usually buy a large selection from an artist so that I can make a statement with their work.”

The other half of owners we polled say that it is best to bring a sampling of between six and 20 pieces that truly represent your work. Choose pieces in a variety of styles and colors, if applicable, and bring several different types of jewelry, such as necklaces, earrings, bracelets, etc., depending on what you make.

Said Nicole Capozzi of [Boxheart](#) in Pittsburgh, “Galleries and independent retail venues, such as clothing boutiques, look for a consistent series of pieces that will create a presence for the artist in their shop. This could translate into any number of individual pieces; therefore, jewelry artists should have a specific line of works they feel fits into the atmosphere of the shop and will grab the attention of their clientele.”

Ed Menapace, owner of [The Farmhouse Store](#) in Westfield, N.J., offers this tip: “Before packing your sack and bringing in your collection, lay the entire line out in front of you and decide which pieces best represent your work.”

Bohus added some definite don'ts: “Do not show a gallery one-of-a kind things that you made in college. Don't bring everything you have ever made, either. You have a limited amount of time to make an impression — hit them with your best shot. Make it succinct and to the point — a body of work that we could group/display together and market.”

And although you will be bringing your best work, be sure that the future work you bring to the gallery lives up to the standard set by the first round.

“If the artist will be sending or bringing additional items (once we have agreed to a business relationship), I expect to see the same quality, or better, than my initial review,” said Mullaly.

We Eat with Our Eyes First (Or Do We?)

When selling to consumers, the visual presentation of the jewelry – much like the presentation of a meal in a restaurant – can have a significant impact on the buyer’s perception of its value. And although jewelry consumers often make up their mind about the quality of a piece based on how it’s presented, professional buyers, such as gallery owners, tend to focus more on the jewelry itself, and not any elegant display materials you bring along to show your work.

“I don’t care how it’s presented,” said Vivian Stein of [Vivian’s Art to Wear, Art for Living](#) in Charlottesville, Va. “Display boards save time over Ziploc® bags. But often I like to handle it, put it around my neck, etc., which pinning to boards discourages.”

Added Mullaly, “I have successfully worked with artists who have pulled the tissue-wrapped jewelry out of their purse and with the artists whose cases are full of perfectly displayed jewelry. Having been in the business for nearly 20 years, I look at each piece ... how it is designed and made, how it feels when holding it and how it looks when wearing it. The quality of the work is paramount; how it is presented to me is of little consequence.”

Your jewelry to be clean and displayed in a way that makes it easy to see each piece, although this needn’t involve expensive boxes, backdrops or props. Group related designs together neatly.

“I prefer that the artist display their work attractively and quickly ... meaning, I don’t want to wait while they fumble through plastic bags and slowly take out one item at a time,” said Connie Lior of [CBL Fine Art](#) in West Orange, N.J. “I don’t mind giving them time to set up their display in

the back while I'm doing other things. It doesn't need to be a flashy display ... even just laying things out on a velvet pad [is fine]."

Added Carrie McBride of [Earrings and Company](#) in Freeport, Maine, "The work should be clean! (yes, it happens!!). If they do shows, they could use some part of the props for this. In any event, at least have the work logically laid out in trays."

Some gallery owners suggested placing labels beside the pieces indicating the price and item number, if applicable. And be sure to pay as much attention to how you present yourself as you do your jewelry. Dress nicely and wear some of your jewelry so that you make a great personal impression, as well.

Talking Price



Gallery owners are savvy about pricing and profit, so you should be well-prepared to discuss the wholesale price of your jewelry. This is a point of confusion for many novice jewelry sellers, so keep in mind that the more people in between you and the customer, the less you make, because the gallery owner must make a profit, too. You need to have in mind a price at which you can sell to the gallery and still make a profit. Gallery owners are not going to pay you what the retail price at which you sell directly to consumers. In fact, many jewelry makers under-price their jewelry at retail, making it much more difficult to arrive at a wholesale price that's attractive to the gallery and which also nets you a profit.

"Often new artists come in without understanding wholesaling," said Michelle Lalonde of [Mimosa](#) in Saratoga Springs, N.Y. "They will want to sell me the jewelry for what they sell it for at craft shows they participate in. Sometimes they will ask me what I think the item should sell for. This is very unprofessional. I usually ask them to return once they've figured that out."

Added Laura Davis of [New Discoveries](#) in Chicago, "A big pet peeve is when they only have one price in their mind ... what they sell retail. I cannot give them that and compete when they are going to fairs and

festivals in the area selling it for what they want to sell it to me for. Please ... if you are going to wholesale your work, figure out at what price and make it competitive with your own retail price.”



Determining a profitable price to galleries can be very confusing for inexperienced artists. Here’s how it works: Let’s say you must gross at least \$30 on a piece to cover your time and expenses and make a profit, as well.

You’ll want to price the piece so that no matter where it sells at retail, the price will be the same. That way you won’t be competing with the galleries that represent you, or setting them up to compete with each other.

These days, the maximum most galleries will take in a consignment arrangement is 50 percent of the retail price. Many only take 40 percent. That means that you’ll need to price for the maximum, so that for the piece you need to recoup \$30 on, your retail price would be double that, or at least \$60.

Don’t aim low – often the perceived quality of a piece is related to its price, so charging even \$180 for a bracelet for which you need \$30 for it to be profitable is not unreasonable if someone would pay \$180 for it.

If your \$60 piece sells in a 50-50 arrangement, you get your \$30. If it sells in a 60-40 arrangement, you get \$40, which is even better. No matter what the wholesale deal is that you cut with the gallery owner, the retail price in the store should match what you charge when selling the jewelry yourself.

While you might not think people would ever notice these things, they do.

“The public is very savvy about prices,” said Diane Horning of [Diane’s Artisan Gallery](#) in Lawrence, Kansas. “The arrangement between gallery and artist will not be successful if the artist charges one price when selling directly and the gallery another.”

If you agree to a consignment arrangement, you only receive payment for the piece if it sells. This is a serious consideration, especially if you tie up

too much of your inventory in galleries that aren't effectively selling your work. Approach consignment arrangements carefully, and make sure there's a timeline in place after which you would take the jewelry back.

The alternative arrangement – and the one that's better for you – is a wholesale agreement where the gallery buys your pieces outright.

Again, you need to have a wholesale price in mind. The wholesale price is the amount, as mentioned above, that you would need to receive in order to cover your expenses and make a profit – in this case, \$30.

While this figure might be a bit lower than what you could make selling the piece yourself or in a 60-40 consignment arrangement, you have the benefit of selling the piece (or often many pieces) immediately and being done with it, without having to spend any more time or money on marketing and maintenance.

With wholesaling, the gallery takes over the responsibility for all of that, and you make money whether or not the work sells.

So, for all of the pieces you make available to a gallery, you should bring a price list that includes both the wholesale and suggested retail price points, along with descriptions, item numbers (for inventory and re-ordering purposes), and possibly even thumbnail photos for easy identification.

Besides this, the gallery owners we spoke with mentioned a few other things they might request from an artist:

1. An artist biography or explanation cards to display with the work, preferably including a photo of you, but *not* your contact information. Galleries do not want to show their customers how to easily get in touch with you. (If you market yourself effectively on the web, someone should be able to search online and find you easily from your name/company name.)
2. Photos, a catalog, or a brochure showing some of your other work
3. Cleaning instructions, if appropriate
4. Shipping policies, if applicable

5. A list of other galleries where your work is sold, and possibly references
6. A listing of any awards your work has won
7. Contact information
8. Payment terms (net 30, COD, etc.)

Be prepared to answer any or all of these questions:

1. Are you open to consigning and/or wholesaling your work?
2. Are you prepared to leave the work at the gallery, or does the gallery owner need to place an order for the pieces they want?
3. Will you exchange jewelry with the gallery for work that hasn't sold?
4. How much can you produce, and can you keep all of your galleries supplied?
5. Will the pieces be available for order if they sell out, and, if so, what is the delivery timeframe for orders?
6. How was your work created, and what materials were used?
7. How long have you been creating?
8. What is your inspiration?
9. Are you willing to offer the gallery exclusive rights to sell your work or a particular line of your work, at least within a specified city or geographical area?
10. What are your best-selling styles?
11. What is the history of the lines you offer?
12. Do you accept special orders or commissions?
13. Do you offer any guarantees on your work? If so, what is covered, and for how long?
14. Do you have a minimum order quantity or amount?
15. If you sell rings, do you offer sizing?

While it may seem like a lot to prepare for, it's better to be prepared than to appear inexperienced or unprofessional. And, according to Tara Hall of [UniquExpressions LLC](#) in Pine Mountain, Ga., it all goes toward helping you to help them to help you: "Be ready to talk about yourself and your craft. If we are selling your work, the more we know, the better we can sell."

Selling to galleries is not for everyone. You'll find it difficult to make a profit this way if you sell only lower-priced work.

Also, if you want to maintain strict control over how your work is displayed and promoted, you assign those responsibilities to a gallery when you sell your work through them.

Finally, flexibility is key – if you must get a certain price for your work to feel good about selling it, galleries may not be for you.

However, galleries offer a venue, environment and exposure that you might not be able to get any other way. Pair those advantages with a seasoned gallery owner, and you may establish a very profitable combination!

Briefs

Do Your Market Research Socially!



There are more than 56 million women using Facebook in the U.S., with 46 million more women than men visiting the site monthly. In fact, more women than men are visiting nearly all the major social networking sites, according to information compiled by [Information is Beautiful](#).

And, according to the report "[Women on the Web: How Women Are Shaping the Internet](#)," completed in June 2010 by [comScore](#), "Nearly 56 percent of adult women say they use the Internet to stay in touch with people, compared to 46 percent of adult men."

ComScore notes higher activity levels among women in social categories such as social networking, instant messenger and e-mail. Furthermore, they report that the bulk of e-commerce dollars spent on apparel, accessories and jewelry sites come from women.

What does that mean for you? It means that social media and your jewelry have a common audience — women! And because women prefer to engage in two-way conversations and to feel like their opinions are being heard by the businesses they patronize, you can let your social media fans serve as an ad-hoc "focus group" for your work!

So if you're wondering whether to add a particular product to your line or want to know what price the market would bear for a particular piece of jewelry, just ask your Twitter or Facebook fans! Not only will you be getting invaluable real-world input, but you'll be engaging your target audience in a way that builds interest and trust in your brand.

New Uses for Old Media

Talk about innovative upcycling! Two jewelry artists have found exciting new uses for the old vinyl records and tomes found stacked in the dusty corners of many an antique store.



[Jeremy Mays](#) pulls cross-sectional plugs out of old books, then layers, compresses, sculpts and lacquers them to create rings, necklaces and bracelets. Each piece is accompanied with the significance and history of the book from whose pages it was pulled. A landscape architect by trade, Mays sources his vintage books from all over the globe and rifles through each work to find a distinct quote that will inspire the form of his final creation.



And jewelry company [Vling](#) cuts old, obsolete vinyl records into intricate shapes to make pendants, earrings, bracelets, hairpins, rings and even clocks. Remember those fun tinted albums? They use those, too, to add colorful accents to their pieces.

It seems there's just no limit to the materials you can use to make jewelry!

Are Your Deducting All You Can?



Many small business owners overlook legitimate business expenses that can result in major tax savings. If you sell your handmade jewelry for profit, here are some of the things you may be able to deduct. Check with your accountant or tax professional to learn more about your specific tax situation (we're not offering tax advice, just mentioning some areas

that are often overlooked):

- *Auto expenses* – You know all those trips you make to buy beads and deliver sold items to the post office? Or the mileage you rack up going to shows?
- *Legal and professional fees* – You may even be able to deduct books that help you learn how to get around these fees.
- *Travel expenses* – Listen up, craft fair vendors! When you take your show on the road, you may be able to deduct plane fare, costs of operating your car, taxis, lodging, meals, business material shipping costs, clothes cleaning expenses, telephone calls, taxes and tips.
- *Interest* – If you're putting any of your business expenses on plastic, you may be able to deduct the interest that was charged on that amount – yet another reason to designate one charge card exclusively for business use (and ask your accountant about why it may be wiser to use a personal credit card to charge business expenses).
- *Software* – If you bought it for business use, it's probably deductible.
- *Education* – If you receive training to improve or maintain your jewelry or business skills, you can deduct it.
- *Advertising and promotion* – This even includes the costs incurred for activities done to create business goodwill, such as sponsoring a little league team.

For more detailed information on these and other deductions, check out the article [“Lesser Known Business Deductions”](#) at [Nolo.com](#) or, better yet, consult with your accountant or tax adviser.

Jewelry Selling INSIGHTS

S T A F F



David A. Weiman, Psy.D.
Editor and Publisher



Margaret LeFevre
Associate Editor

Subscription Information: \$36/12 issues, distributed monthly.

[Click here](#) to subscribe.

For excellent selling tools for artisan jewelry makers, please visit:

<http://www.MarketingJewelry.com>

© 2011 David A. Weiman, Psy.D., PC. All rights reserved.

Content from *Jewelry Selling Insights* may be used for your own personal, non-commercial use. WITH THAT SAID – we often give reprint permission, so if you'd like to copy or reproduce content from *Jewelry Selling Insights*, please contact Dr. David Weiman at 610-642-3040.

World Headquarters: 333 E. Lancaster Avenue, Suite 202, Wynnewood, PA 19096-1929