



COMMENTARY BY  
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## THE BUSINESS

# Jingle Bells Ring Wedding Bells

**HIDING AMONG THE HOLIDAY CROWDS IS A KEY CUSTOMER WHO DOESN'T WANT TO BE RUSHED.**

**T**hat ringing in your ears is jingle bells! Jewelers around the country are in the midst of the most important selling season of the year. According to J. Walter Thompson, the holiday selling season accounts for nearly 22 percent of annual diamond sales in the United States, meaning it's still crucial to a successful year for retail jewelers.

Retailers invest months preparing for the season, not to mention dollars! Marketing, merchandising, packaging, special events, and sales training must all be in place.

The other ringing you hear is wedding bells! There is a vital statistic lurking inside that 22 percent number of which you

should be aware: various studies show that about 25 percent of engagements occur during the fourth quarter in the U.S., making your diamond bridal business a key part of holiday sales.

Here's the critical point: amid all the busy-ness of the season, don't overlook this essential category. Make a list and check it twice. Focus on two important areas: Diamond inventory and the particular temperament of the engagement-ring shopper.

From an inventory/merchandise perspective, jewelers should be over-prepared and ready to present a wealth of options and styles to the engagement-ring customer. The adage that one can't sell from an empty wagon applies! Savvy consum-

ers will have scoured the Internet and other retail stores and seen hundreds of ring styles. Their jeweler of choice will have to provide options!

Engagement-ring customers are not the typical Christmas shopper. They are often walking into your store for the first time after, on average, three months of shopping (according to The Knot 2011 Engagement

and Jewelry Study). This consumer is *not* preoccupied with getting a package under the tree, but rather with making one of the most important purchases of their lifetime. They require your full attention and will not respond well to being rushed just because it's Christmas and you're busy. Sales associates must be prepared to give the engagement-ring shopper the time and attention they require.

When making your "list," be sure to include a training session or two to ready your sales staff to effectively engage the wedding-ring customer during the holiday season. Train them to change gears for this consumer so they don't feel rushed or under-served. Use all the resources at your disposal to ensure an impressive engagement-ring inventory that will excite your customer. Make sure your collection of loose diamonds includes a good number of 1-carat diamonds, and if possible, have a 2 to 3 carat on hand. Overnight and "in time" inventory is great, but sometimes you can't make the sale if you don't have the goods!

That ringing in your ears is jingle bells *and* wedding bells playing two distinctly different but profitable tunes during this Christmas selling season! **TS**

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**BUZZ WORD**

### WALKING ZOMBIES

**noun:** What your sales staff become if your daily meetings are used only to complain about those "pesky" customers. For ideas on surviving an encounter with the undead, we recommend Max Brooks' *The Zombie Survival Guide*, or you could simply host productive meetings. Page 66.