

## 3. YOUR TEAM

Effective marketing planning, promotion, merchandising and a great product range will drive customers to your store, but this is only part of the job. Providing potential customers with great service is the difference between making sales and wasted money spent on marketing.

**This module covers:**

- 3.1 Training Your Staff
- 3.2 Product Expertise



Image courtesy of Boodles

It takes £10,000 worth of advertising to bring one customer into the shop for 10 minutes. It takes just 10 seconds for an inept salesperson to turn that customer away and 10 years to get that customer to come back

## 3.1 Training Your Staff

Established jewellers prize their good reputation and you must ensure that any consumer coming into your shop is greeted and served with the same professionalism that you yourself would provide. The path to a seamless customer experience is staff training.

### This chapter covers:

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## What inspires your customers?

Do you know that around 80% of your jewellery sales will go to around 20% of your customers? That 20% then is pretty crucial, so do you know who they are? And just as importantly, how much do you really know about them? What do you know about their lifestyles and their individual preferences?

### Do you know about the 'rule of ten'?

#### Do your staff really know how to sell diamond jewellery?

Never underestimate the importance and value of well-trained sales professionals. Research has shown that shops with effective sales training on diamonds can expect significant increases in sales, as well as increasing motivation and retention.

Jewellery is not a commodity and should not be sold as such. Purchasers will have a strong **emotional** need for buying, whether that is love, personal prestige or self-fulfillment. Your staff have to be able to identify individual customer needs and talk through the sale accordingly.

Your staff need to know how to inspire confidence, reassuring your customers that they are in good hands. Staff shouldn't be afraid of asking open questions, establishing what the customer really wants, and never discussing price until they understand the underlying motives.

How do your staff greet people when they come into your shop? A smile and greeting is the easiest and least expensive way to sell your business. People love recognition.

## What diamond jewellery training do you offer your staff?

Are your staff fully versed with both the emotional value of diamonds, the technical 4C explanations and are they confident selling new diamond jewellery lines in your shop? Do you have a strong team of sales staff who work well together? Do you hold regular weekly meetings to share experiences and to talk to your team about the latest product lines in your shop? Make sure you structure your incentives to reward effort and retain staff without weakening teamwork.

### Winning companies

Winning companies are those who know that their people make all the difference. Learning to motivate your staff is therefore one of the best investments you can make. Do you know about the 'rule of ten'?

It takes £10,000 worth of advertising to bring one customer into the shop for 10 minutes. It takes just 10 seconds for an inept salesperson to turn that customer away and 10 years to get that customer to come back. Your sales staff are vital and fundamental to the success of your organisation and to the success of the industry. You must have staff that can meet the challenge of selling diamond jewellery to a discerning, demanding and sometimes fickle public. Merchandise does not sell itself. Good product knowledge along with interpersonal skills and focused selling techniques are required for staff to be able to operate effectively and successfully in a busy retail outlet.

Jewellery is not a commodity and should not be sold as such. Purchasers will have a strong emotional need for buying, whether that is love, personal prestige or self-fulfillment

As a retailer who aims to become a market leader, you must ensure that the merchandise and products in your shop are presented effectively and sold with integrity. Your organisation must be consistently seen to give excellent service.

We have provided a staff training checklist on page 53. It details the key points that staff need to know to provide great service to your customers. You can then use the mystery shopper checklist (page 55) to ensure that your employees are following the correct service procedure.

It is no longer acceptable to describe sales staff as shop assistants. They are not. If you want the professionalism and dedication from your staff to enable your business to thrive, you must invest in your people. Good investment in sales training will produce good results. Marginal investment in sales training produces marginal results.

An excellent starting place to begin focusing on the skills of your staff is by describing and treating your sales staff as professional jewellery sales consultants. You must also encourage this professionalism by developing the staff through training at all levels.

One of the leading department stores presents their jewellery sales staff with badges on completion of their training, which states that they are sales consultants. Employees must be empowered to achieve a total focus on your customer. The Beaverbrooks case study on page 57 is a great example of how you can encourage and facilitate employee development.



### You should develop and train your staff because it will:

- Improve efficiency
- Improve your company image
- Ensure good customer relationships
- Set high standards and establish a culture of excellence
- Demonstrate your Company's commitment to its staff
- Demonstrate your Company's awareness of the employee's need for personal development
- Go some way to ensuring employee loyalty
- Possibly reduce staff turnover
- Result in a better turnover of diamond stock and therefore improve your profit margin

### Your staff will want to be developed because it will:

- Enable them to develop the knowledge and skills needed for them to give your customers the very best service possible
- Give them confidence and job satisfaction
- Make them feel enthusiastic and knowledgeable about the products and services offered by your organisation
- Encourage and instil motivation
- Allow them to successfully interact and connect with the diamond-buying consumer
- Enable them to learn the language, codes and ethics used by the diamond jewellery community and thus allow them to contribute to and engage in the community
- Make them feel valued
- Give them a sense of belonging and loyalty, both to your organisation and to the jewellery industry.

**Training and development plan:** Ideally you should have a training and development plan in place with its own budget and objectives. Take opportunities offered by manufacturers and suppliers for training. Take time to audit the skills that are evident in your shop and identify the weaknesses.

**If you have completed the SWOT analysis (page 16) in the *Your Business* module you will be well placed and should have already identified these.** Learning involves changing the behaviour of the individual who is being trained. It is not possible to make someone learn something; they have to want the knowledge. It is vital therefore, that before any training takes place, you speak to the staff concerned, so they are prepared mentally for the training experience.





## Winning companies are those who know their people make all the difference

The training experience involves:

- Ensuring training and development is focused and relevant
- Instruction and input must be appropriate
- The training should be perceived by staff as a reward or perk, they need to understand the benefit to them in their future career
- The training must be followed up; it is beneficial to discuss what they've learnt in some tangible way. This will reinforce their knowledge and pass it on to other employees through discussion.

Continuous professional development of the sales consultants should involve:

- Developing the individual's interpersonal skills such as listening, reflecting, rapport building and persuasive techniques
- Facilitating in-depth product and service knowledge
- Establishing strategies, that enable him/her to overcome customer objections, close sales, trade-up and consistently make add-on sales.

There are many ways of developing your staff:

You could consider the following:

- 1. One-to-one instruction:** This is where you train staff on the job in a one-to-one situation. Obviously the initial training of a new salesperson would involve this type of technique, as would demonstrating different diamond cuts. Ensure the staff member has the opportunity to take notes and ask questions, ensure that you follow up the training at the end of the day. A simple, useful and effective way of doing this is by asking the question "what one thing did you learn this morning/during the training session that helped you most during the day/identifying the different diamond cuts?" and "is there a question that you wished you'd asked during the session?".
- 2. Group instruction:** This technique is best used when you need to communicate general information. For example, if some aspects of company policy or

procedure changes. When a new product arrives in store, you need to provide all employees with relevant information. Also, it's beneficial to ask for feedback/comments to ensure the information has been properly understood.

- 3. Role-play:** Role-play can be a daunting method of training but is effective if done well. It involves getting staff to play different 'roles'. For example, when you want to teach your staff how to gain your customer's confidence, or how to discover the emotional reasons that make the couple want to buy the jewellery. One member of staff becomes the 'customer' and one or two members of staff serve the 'customer'. Depending on how many staff are being trained at a time it is wise to have an observer to take notes. Providing you set the ground rules before you start, and nobody is forced to participate against their will, staff will enjoy this activity, and do learn from it. It's also useful to follow up with participants. Ask them how they felt, and just one thing that they learnt.
- 4. Using audio or visual tapes:** This technique provides information to individuals or groups in a time efficient way. By teaching staff techniques through video, you can communicate information quickly. Following the video, engage staff in discussion about the video and the key learnings they gained from it.
- 5. Demonstration:** This method is useful in clarifying a key skill. An example of good use of demonstration is how to do the 'add-on' sale. It may be done as a partial role-play. Ensure that the observer does pick up the essentials of the demonstration by either asking them to go through the demonstrated skill themselves, or by using the 'open question' technique that enables the observers to engage in discussion and debate about the demonstration. For example, "what did you particularly like/or not about the demonstration?" or "what specific part of that demonstration do you think you will be able to use in the future?". Don't ask 'closed questions' such as "will you do it like that next time?" or "can you

do that?” because closed questions only ever produce short answers that will not necessarily mean that anything has been learnt or has even been taken in.

- 6. Speakers/seminars:** Presentations can be a very effective way of training your staff. They will always enjoy a good speaker, and they will be pleased and encouraged that you are prepared to pay to develop them. If you engage a speaker to do a seminar, ensure that the staff are told in advance what the session will be about and that they are fully prepared to make the best of the training opportunity. It is essential that training is followed up. As a manager of people, you are really quite like a pilot, or a chef. A pilot sets his course; a chef puts together his ingredients. Both will follow up their actions to ensure success. Providing just the training is not enough. You must ensure that the training is periodically followed up.
- 7. Your shop and your staff:** With any marketing campaign, it is important to comprehensively plan how you will involve your shop and your staff. It is often tempting to think that the money you have invested in the venture will guarantee a successful outcome. Any campaign will work better if it is supported at shop level in a co-ordinated and integrated fashion.

Just think about it – how many times have you walked into a shop to enquire about something that you have seen advertised, to be met by a member of staff who knows nothing about any advertisement, let alone the product featured? So, to ensure that you get the most success from your promotion, you should:

- **Fully involve your staff:** ensure that they completely understand what promotions and initiatives are planned and their role in these.
- **Ensure that your window and in-store displays reflect your campaign:** feature framed copies of an advertisement or buy show cards. Or, if it is a direct mail feature, then put it in a frame and leave the open pages on counters displaying the merchandise.
- **Use the advertising as a selling tool:** most customers like to buy something that is advertised.
- **Ensure that your staff buy and wear your product:** when possible, the way to do this is by giving a generous staff discount and by taking advantage of suppliers' offers.
- **Get staff involved in the success of your company:** logically your staff should benefit from the success of the company – if the company reaches a target, you feel pleased and proud, the staff should also be made to feel as good as you do.

- **Give staff their own business cards:** get them to give them out regularly to their customers and during the evening when they meet new people. They will be ambassadors for you – especially if they are wearing the product you sell too.
- **Encourage staff to go to trade fairs:** to read trade and consumer fashion magazines and to be aware of the latest designs and trends for diamond jewellery.
- **Create a buzz in your shop amongst the staff:** get them talking about the promotion even before it happens. Create an atmosphere of excitement.

## How to create a buzz

Why not create a staff incentive scheme on the product category being promoted and not just the items featured? This will create a sales push around the products being promoted in-store and give greater alignment to your campaigns.

Marketing is designed to capture the customer and entice him/her to your shop to make a purchase. It should be noted that many customers who are tempted in would also buy merchandise other than that on offer. This is because their choice of product has been immediately extended by the array of merchandise available and on display.

Your incentive scheme should:

- **Be achievable:** be realistic about the goals you set
- **Be measurable:** in terms of numbers of items or value sold
- **Be geared to all staff:** including part-time and temporary staff
- **Be self-motivating:** create a poster for the staff room wall, on which the sales of each member of staff is recorded either in volume or value terms or both
- **Be prestigious:** announce the results periodically and offer congratulations on a regular basis in front of all staff. Above all, try and develop a scheme that will ultimately benefit every member of staff even if they are not actually a member of the sales team.

Remember, if you want your team to pull together they must all have the same goals. Some of the most highly appreciated incentive prizes are money and electrical goods. However you could also include time off and/or an item of stock of the winner's choice.

Whatever scheme you choose for your store, remember your staff are one of your most precious assets and are key to conveying the essence of your store 'values' and driving sales.

## Business tool 1

## 6-step sales associate checklist

### 1. The basics

- **Good listeners** – how to ask open-ended questions and listen for clues that will reveal what the customer wants.
- **People skills** – approach every customer with an open mind and ensure that you address their needs.
- **Passion for the product** – enthusiasm is contagious, so spread it!
- **Expert in the area** – customers will look to sales associates for information, so be ready to provide details, facts and figures about the jewellery you sell.

### 2. When the customer enters

- **Professionalism** – you are selling a luxury product and this should be reflected in the way you look. Being smartly dressed and presented also makes the customer feel special.
- **Acknowledge customers with a positive attitude** – smile, make eye contact and greet them. A smile and greeting is the easiest and most inexpensive way to connect with a customer. People, particularly regular customers, love recognition.
- **Encourage browsing** – some customers know what they want and need help immediately, but some might still be in the consider stage and are 'just browsing'. Remember, most women love to browse, so give them the space and opportunity to browse. Make sure to react appropriately. Whatever you do, never be pushy.
- **Engage the customer** – when the customer has had a chance to browse, find a way to engage the customer in a non-threatening way. You will be starting a relationship with the customer, breaking the ice and opening the sale.
- **Listen** – to open the sale, you need to be an expert in not just asking questions but also listening to answers. Most customers will look to sales associates not only for information, but also for inspiration. In order to live up to these expectations, you must learn to ask open-ended questions and listen for clues that will allow you to advise appropriately. Here are some things to listen out for:
  - **Identify what purchase stage the customer is in** – determine if they are considering, searching or ready to buy – this will lead you to the appropriate action.
  - **Find out if they are buying for themselves or for someone else.**

- **Determine the reason for the purchase** – is it a special occasion (birthday, anniversary, promotion, birth of a child etc) or a 'just because' purchase?
- **Motivate your customer to buy** – capitalise on their desire to be admired and their self esteem and pride
- **Understand their needs and priorities** – is it design, brand, size, wow-factor etc?

### 3. Building Trust and Confidence

A customer's trust and confidence is the backbone of the jewellery business. Trust is an investment with the customer's loyalty as the payment and reward. Here are some tips:

- **Communication** – listening builds trust because it shows the customer that you value them and their opinion. It also meets a psychological need to be respected as a person.
- **Being open** – open and honest dialogue is highly valued. A customer will actually react positively to you voicing your opinion, even if it's not what they want to hear. For example: 'if you want my honest opinion, I don't think that is the most flattering piece on you. However, I like the first piece better.'
- **Prices are visible and fair** – Unfortunately many customers are anxious and uncertain about the pricing of jewellery, however, if you discreetly display prices you will take away that anxiety.
- **Follow up with promises** – Regardless of whether or not a sale is made, it is imperative that customer's expectations are fulfilled.

### 4. Presenting the Product

Sometimes customers will only have a vague idea of what they want. Your job is to find the jewellery which will be the perfect match for their desires. You will need to use your observation and listening skills, as well as your judgement in selecting the right items.

Once you've uncovered what the customer wants you can present the product. Remember that product knowledge is the key at this stage of the selling process. You are expected to be the expert!

### 5. Overcome the Objections

All customers are likely to voice doubts or objections, so be prepared. Use your professionalism to handle and overcome any objections. Your knowledge of benefits will help you and don't forget, being honest and genuine will help you overcome the objection.

## The three key steps to handling objections successfully:

- **Identify the objection**

You need to find out if there's anything behind the objection. Invite the customer to put the objection to one side for the moment, then probe to see if there is anything else behind it. If there is another objection, then it should be revealed and you can ignore the initial objection. But if there isn't, then you will need to deal with the original objection.

**For example:** 'Leaving the price to one side for the moment, do you like it?' or 'What else, if anything, concerns you?'

- **Re-state the objection and make it specific**

A customer's objection is likely to be loose and generalised, so try to get the customer to refine it. It's vital that you understand exactly what the customer is objecting to so you can respond to it.

**For example:** 'Is it that you feel the diamonds are too small?' or 'Is there something about this design that you're concerned about?'

- **Put it into perspective and state a compensating benefit**

Use your knowledge to sell the benefits. Sell the benefits your customers are looking for, not the ones they aren't. The benefit is determined by the customer's need. Translate your knowledge into language, your customer will understand and position the benefits accordingly.

**For example:** 'The diamonds in this ring are perfectly matched and of particularly good quality. That makes them not only more beautiful, but also much more rare and valuable.'

'She'll never forget the moment you gave her this ring. It will certainly make a splendid gift – one she'll always treasure.'

## 6. Closing the Sale

When you sense that the customer has decided on their diamond jewellery, you should be positive and help the customer towards the final decision to buy. Here are some tips:

- **Observe and listen** for the moment to close the sale - studying the piece intently, smiling and looking content and happy are good clues.
- **Lead** the customer to buying with certain questions and statements. **For example:** 'How soon is the occasion?' or 'We can re-size it for you in just a few days.'
- Aim to build an **agreement staircase** – creating a climate of agreement by getting the customer to say yes to a number of your comments, which gets them in the mood to buy.
- **Don't be pushy** – just because they don't buy today doesn't mean they won't come back tomorrow. Make sure that you give them a brochure and your business card.

Understand the customer's needs and priorities





## Business tool 2

# Mystery shopper questionnaire

This mystery shopper questionnaire is a simple tool that will enable you to determine if your sales team are serving your customers well.

Print out this questionnaire and give it to a friend or relative, your 'mystery shopper'. The mystery shopper must be someone that your staff are not familiar with. This person must act as if they were a genuine customer.

Directly after their visit, they should indicate a yes or no against the 12 points listed below.

This information will give you an idea of the level of service being provided in your store and will allow you to rectify any weaknesses. Make sure that you give feedback to your staff, both positive and negative.

Ensure that all staff members are tested by a different mystery shopper.

- |  |        |
|--|--------|
| 1. Did the sales associate look well presented?      | Yes/No |
| 2. Did you feel welcome?                             | Yes/No |
| 3. Did the sales associate smile and greet you?      | Yes/No |
| 4. Did the sales associate allow you to browse?      | Yes/No |
| 5. Did you feel engaged by the sales associate?      | Yes/No |
| 6. Did you feel the sales associate listened to you? | Yes/No |
| 7. Did they ask you what the purchase was for?       | Yes/No |
| 8. Did you trust the sales associate?                | Yes/No |
| 9. Did the sales associate select appropriate items? | Yes/No |
| 10. Did they explain the benefits well?              | Yes/No |
| 11. Did they listen to your objections (if any)?     | Yes/No |
| 12. Were they pushy?                                 | Yes/No |

## Case Study

## Beaverbrooks

### A Passion for People



Beaverbrooks – the 88-year-old Lancashire-based jewellery retailer – has just won a clutch of prestigious awards that confirm it really does have a passion for people.

In the Sunday Times Top 100 Companies to Work For, Beaverbrooks, over the last 3 years, have come 2nd, 3rd and 4th and have come top in the Leadership category for each of the last 3 years. They have also achieved the newly introduced 3 Star accreditation from Best Companies to Work For. They have also just won the UK Jewellery Awards' Retail Employer of the Year, and Best Multiple (which they have won nine times in the last 13 years).

So what is Beaverbrooks' secret formula? How do they keep their staff happy? How can you use their experience to improve your people management? We take a few tips from Beaverbrooks MD Mark Adlestone.

- Making a Meaningful Mission Statement
- Listening to Your Employees
- Creating a Positive Culture
- Promoting from Within
- Managing Well
- Motivating and Developing Skills
- Encouraging Good Ideas

### Make a Meaningful Mission Statement

Beaverbrooks have a mission statement, which every new employee has to sign to indicate they understand it. It is then counter-signed by Adlestone.

The mission statement encapsulates the Beaverbrooks' culture, its attitude to employees and to the business. And it is only seven words long!

### Developing each other to achieve continual improvement

In this, Beaverbrooks' staff know that the company stands for teamwork, support, training, development and the evolution of the business.

'It's a virtuous circle,' says Adlestone, 'because as we help each other, so we help the business.'

Do you have a mission statement? If not, how would you best encapsulate your company culture? If so, do your staff understand it? Does it reflect how you operate or could it be improved upon? Clear goals make better business sense.



### Listen to Your Employees

What makes the Sunday Times award unique, says Mark Adlestone, apart from the fact that they were the only jeweller on the list, is that the votes came from the company's own staff.

'It's a strong indication that we are doing the right thing,' he says. But back in 1990, Adlestone admits, Beaverbrooks was a 'paternalistic, slightly autocratic but caring company'. However, a series of consulting exercises highlighted that there was some scope for better people development.

Then in 1996, Beaverbrooks decided to hear what their employees had to say. Three five-hour focus groups, conducted by Adlestone personally, revealed some hard truths.

'Some of the things were painful to hear, and difficult to accept. I had to bite my tongue to stop myself trying to justify our position,' he says.

However, the process of listening to undiluted opinions was so rewarding that he now repeats it every year. 'I can now see on an annual basis how things have improved,' he says.

These focus groups are shored up by a biannual People Survey, where staff take two minutes to provide simple 'Yes/No' answers to questions such as 'Do you feel proud to work for Beaverbrooks?' or 'Do you feel valued?'.

'We are continually measuring how people feel,' says Adlestone.

Do you listen to your employees? Do you know how they feel about the company or if they believe there are improvements that could be made? Perhaps a focus group or a survey would help you to understand employee morale.

## Case Study: Continued

### Create a Positive Culture

The Beaverbrooks culture is highly valued by its staff and managers.

Says Debbie Taylor, replenishments supervisor at the Lancashire head office: 'I enjoy the friendly family atmosphere where the directors and executives are as approachable as my peers. Staff are made to feel highly valued and trusted, to use their best judgement in all situations.'

The keyword for Beaverbrooks is trust. They trust that when people come to work, they want to do a good job.

'It would be nonsensical,' says Adlestone, 'to focus on the 2% who want to buck the system. By doing so, you create a negative culture. We try to focus on positive energy.'

Emma Freemantle, a retail sales professional at Beaverbrooks' Oxford branch, says what she values about the company culture is the sense that each staff member is as valuable as the next.

'There is no sense of hierarchy and no one person is better than the other. We are all considered equals, no matter what position we are in.'

Do you have a positive company culture? Are your employees glad to be there or are they surly and unapproachable? Consider ways you can increase levels of trust and make people realise that they are valuable. In doing so, you make coming to work a pleasant experience.

### Promote From Within

All eight of the most senior executives have been with the company for more than 25 years. Of the 58 managers, all have been promoted from within the company.

Wigan assistant manager Debbie Chadwick says that the 'fact that they always promote from within makes you feel valued.'

Adlestone feels that this policy has enormous benefits for Beaverbrooks. It means that the culture remains consistent, and that, while people's job descriptions may change, they are still working towards the same goal.

'People arrive in their new jobs highly motivated, able to propagate the culture, and we just have to teach them the relevant skills.'

Keeping the Beaverbrooks culture is also vital when looking for new hires. In the interview process, they look for a good cultural fit, for people who would be 'Beaverbrooks people'.

What is your promotion and hiring policy? Do you enhance trust and loyalty by promoting from within?

The benefit of doing so is that staff believe they have a career path at your company and you are less likely to lose valuable skills. Do you match new hires to your company culture?

### Manage Well

Of the 100 Best Companies to work for, Beaverbrooks came first for honest managers and second for most appreciative managers.

'We believe in honesty, in admitting mistakes if they happen, in being inclusive, in being consistent,' says Adlestone. 'We are getting better at being candid with people, at telling them what we think while letting them retain their dignity.'

As MD, Adlestone himself takes pains to get to know his staff – impressive stuff seeing there are 720 of them.

'If Mark came into my shop tomorrow, he would know the name of the cleaner and how long she had been here,' says Debbie Chadwick.

He admits this is no amazing feat of memory, but says that he takes the time before visiting a shop to run through the list of employees, look at their photograph and note how long they have been there.

Adlestone then spends a minimum of five minutes talking to each person in the shop. 'If I can't spend five minutes showing an interest in them, how can I expect them to show an interest in our company?'



This dedication to people has been recognised. According to the Sunday Times, 91% of staff praise his positive energy and 82% find him inspirational.

Are your managers honest and appreciative? Do you remember people's names and make the time to chat to them personally? Even five minutes can make a difference. Make people feel special by remembering something about them.

### Motivate and Develop Skills

Beaverbrooks also topped the Sunday Times charts for training, with 84.5% of employees saying they felt supported by their managers when wanting to develop new skills.

South-West area Visual Merchandising Manager Sally Tate says in her five years at Beaverbrooks she has received constant training, encouragement and support.

'They allowed me to grow and develop by trusting and empowering me to fulfil my ambitions.'

All staff receive half an hour of training once a week. There are also daily sales meeting which serve as informal training forums. Staff are encouraged to study for the Retail Jeweller's Diploma, which the company pays for.

Since Beaverbrooks promote from within, they have their own management development programme. Tina O'Donnell, Assistant Manager from the Peterborough branch, says from joining as a 'shy and unconfident 17-year-old expecting nothing more than a sales job', she is now proud to be part of the Management Team.

'I would not be in the position I am today without the constant training, motivation and support from my colleagues and management.'

Do your staff receive regular training, whether internal or external? Are there ways they can improve their skills? Do they feel supported in doing so? Allow people time to develop and grow – it can only benefit you.

### Encourage Good Ideas

Ninety-seven percent of Beaverbrooks' staff say the company believes in putting the customer first – the highest score amongst the top 100 companies.

'We want the customers' experience to be better than acceptable,' says Adlestone. 'It has to be unusual, or memorable in some way.'

In this vein, newly engaged couples can be offered flowers and champagne or someone waiting for a ring to be fixed might be offered a free lunch.

Staff are encouraged to be creative in finding new ways to make shopping in their store memorable. They can contact the MD directly with ideas via phone or e-mail. Or, they can send ideas to the Company's internal suggestion scheme – every suggestion is responded to and rewarded as appropriate.

How readily can staff make suggestions for improvements to your business? Are there channels for them to do so? Do they know how to access these channels? Let people know that good ideas are encouraged.

Sources: Interview Mark Adlestone



"There is no sense of hierarchy and no one person is better than the other. We are all considered equals, no matter what position we are in"

*Emma Freemantle,  
Beaverbrooks*





Formed at the beginning of time each diamond is as unique as a fingerprint

## 3.2 Product Expertise

This section looks at where diamonds come from, why each diamond is unique and how you can explain the diamond's characteristics to your customers in a way that will appeal to them. While the chapter focuses on diamonds, it details the level of expertise that you should have across all your product types.

### **This chapter covers:**

- Where diamonds are found 60
- The myth, magic and mystique of diamonds 60
  - 1. Explaining the cut 61
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  - 3. Comparing clarity 63
  - 4. Understanding carat 64
- The synergy of the 4Cs 65
- You as the diamond jewellery expert 66

## Where diamonds are found:

Diamonds are beautiful, mysterious and rare. Before arriving in your store, each has undergone a unique journey taking billions of years. Crystallised at tremendously high temperatures and pressures within the earth's crust, formed before dinosaurs roamed the earth, diamonds remained hidden until powerful forces carried them upwards in volcanic molten lava. They were then concealed again by falling ash and rock, where they awaited discovery below the earth's surface.

Today, many of the major mines have been developed on sites where diamonds were first brought to the surface. But not all diamonds are found where they first came to the surface. Over the centuries, the weather has often carried diamond-bearing material far from its original location – through streams and rivers, sometimes as far as the sea. It is for this reason that we hear stories of people stumbling upon big diamonds simply lying on the ground – but unfortunately this does not happen very often.

Today, diamonds are mined in around 20 countries spread across four continents, with the majority of diamonds being found in Australia, Zaire, Botswana, Russia, Canada, South Africa and parts of South America.

## The myth, magic and mystique of diamonds

Whilst diamonds are rare treasures, this is not the only reason that they are considered special. For thousands of years, they have been shrouded in mystery and intrigue, but why is this?

### 1. Diamonds are enchanting treasures that have fascinated people throughout the centuries:

The unique properties of diamonds led many to believe that they were magical. No tool could cut them, even the fiercest fire will leave diamonds mysteriously unscathed – phenomena which led many to believe

they had supernatural powers. For these reasons, diamonds have been sought after, fought over and even worshipped. Some believed that they were splinters of stars fallen to the earth, others that they were the tears of the gods.

### 2. Diamonds are the ultimate symbol of love:

Kings wore diamonds as a symbol of strength, courage and invincibility, but for thousands of years diamonds have also been associated with romance and legend. In 1477, the Archduke Maximilian of Austria gave a diamond ring to Mary of Burgundy, and this gave birth to the tradition of the diamond engagement ring. The word diamond also comes from the Greek word "adamas", meaning unconquerable enduring love.

### 3. Diamonds are unique:

Every diamond is unique, with a mystery and beauty which is all its own. Each diamond carries with it unique characteristics bestowed by nature and preserved for eternity. Since every diamond is different – varying in size, colour and clarity – each presents a fresh challenge to the diamantaire who will turn the raw stone into a sparkling gem. Cutting a diamond is a delicate work of art.

### 4. Diamonds were formed at the beginning of time

Some diamonds are older than the stars, formed in the core of the earth millions or even billions of years ago. Each diamond has undergone an amazing journey through the earth throughout time.

## Selling the 'magic' of diamonds:

So, why are diamonds special to you? What magic and mystique do you suppose they hold for each of your customers?

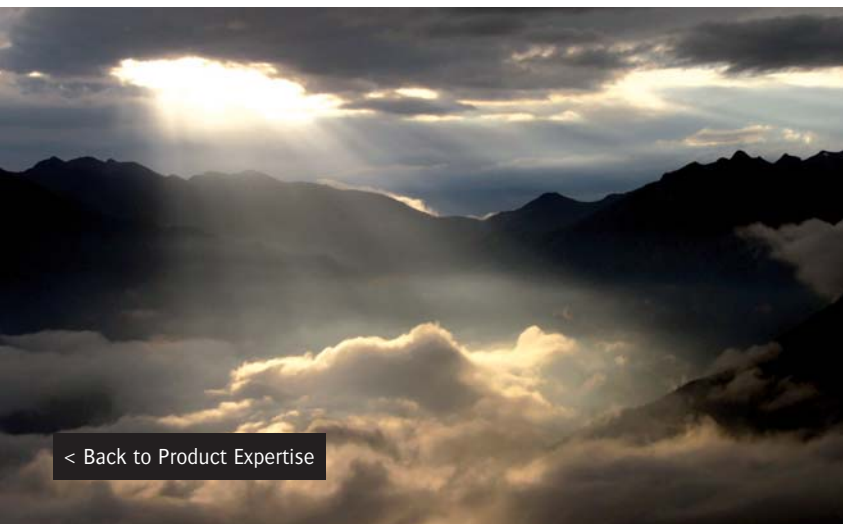
You know that every diamond in your shop is millions of years old, that it has followed a tough journey of discovery, mining, grading, cutting and polishing before it arrived as a glittering jewel for your showcase, but what difference does this make to your customers? How do you tie the facts about diamond rarity and value to the romance of the moment?

Let's consider some possible selling strategies.

### Key selling strategy – metaphors

When a consumer enters your store, more often than not they will need you to explain what makes one diamond different from another.

Whilst it is tempting to just provide them with a run-down of the 4Cs, this is probably not what they are after.



You must remember that they have entered your store with a vision of what diamonds mean to them. This is the emotional reason that the consumer has for wanting a diamond (i.e. the fact that diamonds are unique, magical, the ultimate symbol of love, etc.). If you make their purchase too technical (i.e. by over-focusing on the 4Cs), they are more likely to see the product as a commodity and focus more on value for money than the product that most captures their heart! From a selling point of view, this means they are more likely to trade down than up as the product becomes less aspirational.

Remember that at the end of the day, the consumer will choose the diamond that appeals the most emotionally to them. Integrating the 4Cs technical information with emotion requires the careful use of language. One solution is to use metaphors to explain each of the 4Cs in a way that is accurate and easy for customers to understand.

Metaphors are used to tie the 4Cs with romance. Metaphors are comparisons designed to help customers understand the 4Cs in ways that are interesting, engaging and emotional. Let's consider how this could work for each of the 4Cs - cut, colour, clarity and carat (size). In the sections below, we will take each of the 4Cs, consider the facts about each and then suggest ways that you can convey these facts to the customer in a compelling way. Let's start with the 'cut'.

## 1. Explaining the cut

### Cut-the facts:

The diamond's cut is the human element; a melding of art and science that unleashes the fire and brilliance of the diamond. Diamonds that are cut too deep or too shallow lose light that spills through the side or bottom. As a result, poorly cut diamonds are less brilliant and certainly less valuable. A diamond that is cut to good proportions reflects light internally from one facet to another and then disperses it through the top of the stone. A diamond that is well cut will display maximum brilliance and fire.

Cut grading of round brilliant diamonds (following the brilliant cutting pattern with 58 facets) also considers the perfection of the placement of each of the facets (symmetry) and the absence of minor blemishes (polish or finish). The diamond's crown and pavilion angles, table and culet size, and crown height and pavilion depth must all fall within very narrow acceptable ranges (proportion grading). Every facet is checked to ensure that it is exactly shaped and positioned, to line up and match each of its counterparts. Even the girdle is graded for correct proportion and thickness.

The diamantaire's challenge is to create the largest and most beautiful diamond possible from the rough crystal. Poorly cut diamonds are often the result of the diamantaire trying to cut a bigger diamond, rather than a more beautiful one.

### Cut in terms of rarity:

A diamond's cut can also be linked with its rarity – something which is very important to the consumer when buying.

Over the past 1,000 years, styles of cut have evolved that have made the diamond more sparkling and bright. Three types of light are visible from every diamond:

- **Brilliance:** the total light reflected from the facets and their reflections
- **Scintillation:** sparkling flashes seen as the diamond moves, a combination of brilliance and dispersion
- **Dispersion:** the flashes of rainbow colour or fire created within the diamond

The rarest diamonds are those that are carefully cut to maximise the diamond's ability to handle light. A diamantaire must always balance the desire for a beautifully cut diamond with the possibility of leaving a bigger stone. Extremely well cut diamonds are rarer and more expensive than other diamonds because the cutting requires more skill and time. Also, the exactness of the cutting usually results in a smaller diamond than could have been cut from the same rough diamond.

If you make purchasing too technical, the customer is more likely to see the product as a commodity rather than a highly aspirational treasure



## Describing the cut:

*“Cut is the human element that makes a diamond sparkle and glow brightly from within. Every diamond in our shop has been cut and polished by hand – the hand of a master craftsman. Diamantaires use science to determine the best possible way to make the diamond brilliant, but it takes an artist to make each diamond as beautiful as possible”*

*“Light is the symbol of life and love. For centuries, diamond craftsmen have tried to cut diamonds to capture perfectly and to reflect the greatest degree of light possible. Cut is the result of the love that goes into enabling a diamond to capture perfectly and to reflect light brilliantly”*

*“Cut gives a diamond its fire, its passion. A beautifully cut diamond reflects light like moonlight on water”*

*“Master craftsmen cut every diamond you see here”*

### Cut with metaphors:

The challenge is to explain to your customers what cut and rarity mean to them in the context of the beautiful diamond they are seeking. While it is important to demonstrate the path of light and explain the careful proportion measurements, you eventually will want to redirect the customer’s focus to the romance.

## 2. Describing the colour

A diamond’s colour is graded by measuring the degree to which a diamond approaches colourlessness. The rarest diamonds are graded D, E, and F. The majority of diamonds are near colourless or very faintly tinted – these are graded G-L. Diamonds of M grade or lower have a visible and noticeable tint. Fine quality diamonds come from nature in many palettes of colours, hues and tints.

### Colour – the facts:

Most customers know that colour is important when buying a diamond, but are often surprised.

To discover how very subtle the colour differences really are trained gemmologists grade unmounted diamonds in perfect lighting conditions by comparing them to known-colour diamonds. Customers typically wear mounted diamonds in less than ideal lighting. Most jewellers know that just keeping a diamond clean can make it appear more valuable and sparkling, regardless of colour.

The size of the diamond and how it is cut can have as much effect on the colour visible as the colour grade itself.

For example, a well-cut diamond will show more fire and brilliance, often masking the body colour with strong white light and spectral colours. When mounted, colour can be even harder to distinguish. Unlike lower grades in clarity or cut, it is important to note the colour does not affect either the brilliance or the wearability of a diamond. When discussing colour grades, the best description of the differences in tint can be described by using the terms such as “near colourless”, “very faintly tinted”, or “faintly tinted.”

### Colour in terms of rarity:

Colourless or white diamonds are rarer and more expensive than are those with a hint of colour. This does not mean however, that they are most beautiful. To the untrained eye, there is little observable difference between diamonds with grades from D to L. Some customers prefer diamonds that fall toward the warmer shades, finding them richer looking than the cooler colourless or white stones.

Diamonds come in every colour of the rainbow. Perhaps the most famous coloured diamond is the Hope Diamond – an amazing 45.52-carat blue diamond.

Diamonds with strong natural colours such as blues, pinks and greens are extremely rare and are called “fancies”. Fancy colours are more valuable than colourless diamonds of similar size and clarity. Many customers want a diamond that appears colourless or near colourless. Your challenge is to explain the very subtle differences in colour between the icy colourless diamonds and those that have some tint. Between colourless diamonds and those that are tinted, there is a large range of diamond colours. Be very selective with the words you use to describe colour. For example, “warm white” is a more appealing description than “tinted yellow or brown.” Diamonds come from nature with many variations of colour. The one that your customer finds the most beautiful and appealing is the right diamond.

### Colour with metaphors:

When it comes to explaining colour, some customers will want a detailed grading lesson while others will only require the top-level reasoning for the distinctions in colour. Whilst technical explanations can add value, it is always important to return the customer’s attention to the romance of diamonds. Don’t overburden customers with unnecessary technical detail and spoil their ‘buying experience’.

Customers tend to think of diamonds as “white” rather than “transparent.” This allows you to use metaphors that



point out the differences in tints using either transparent colourless items (like several crystal vases) or using opaque white materials (such as flowers). Your purpose is to help customers see that there are differences in tone and tint. Once customers understand that you are talking about subtle differences, you can help them select the colour that is most appealing to them. For instance, referring to a vase of white flowers you could comment:

*"The flowers you see here are all white, but each is slightly different from the other. Look at how creamy the gardenia looks next to this white iris. Daisies have their own tone that is different, too. It's the same with diamonds; each one is a slightly different shade or tint. But you see what I mean...we consider all of the flowers white. It takes a very close look to see the difference".*

Using flowers to make your comparison maintains the romance and luxury of the occasion, and is something that customers can easily relate to and understand. Consider the following romantic options to compare the various colours of diamonds. Use whatever materials your shop has available that are appropriate for the customer. For example:

- Consider using three beautiful crystal vases to demonstrate the difference in "colourless" glass
- Use language to suggest the differences between whites, suggesting that the customer may prefer the warmer whites of roses or gardenias to the icy, cool whites of new snow or sugar
- Compare two or three porcelains made by different manufacturers, or different white leathers used for albums or date books

### 3. Comparing clarity

#### Clarity-the facts:

Clarity is the characteristic that consumers seem to understand fairly easily. Clarity for most people means that something is easy to see through, without impurities, or transparent. We have all had the experience of looking through antique glass or glass that has washed up on the beach, which makes it easier to grasp the concept when the subject is diamonds. Clarity grading considers blemishes found on the surface of a polished diamond and inclusions found inside.

Trained experts determine clarity grades with the use of a 10-power magnifying loupe or microscope. Virtually all diamonds have distinguishing characteristics or mineral traces sometimes described as "inclusions" or "nature's fingerprints."

Five factors govern the impact of these natural inclusions to determine a diamond's clarity grade:

- **Quantity:** how many inclusions are there?
- **Size:** how large is the inclusion when compared to the diamond as a whole?
- **Colour or Relief:** does the inclusion have high contrast or does it blend in?
- **Type:** does the nature of the inclusion affect the diamond's durability?
- **Location:** is the inclusion easily seen or hidden under the prongs of the setting? Does it reflect anywhere else in the stone?

Inclusions are either 'minute', creating a VVS clarity; 'minor' which describe VS grades; noticeable in the SI grades; or 'obvious' when the diamond is graded I1, I2 or I3.

#### Clarity in terms of rarity:

The more closely a diamond approaches flawlessness, the greater the diamond's clarity, and the more rare, valuable and brilliant it is. It is important to recognise however that clarity grades (except at the lowest grades) do not reflect the overall beauty or appearance of a diamond. How often have you waited on a customer who wanted a "perfect" diamond? While the true aficionado may scoff at any diamond graded at less than 'Internally Flawless', most customers are relieved to see that the difference in appearance between grades is slight.

Once the customer grasps the idea that inclusions are natural and individual, you can point to the clarity chart as you continue to explain diamond grading. The rarest diamonds have almost no visible traits. Those that are considered less rare have a few minor traits, while those towards the lower end have features that can be seen more easily. These traits are seen by trained graders using a 10-power loupe or a gemscope. There is no other consumer product that is more carefully graded than a diamond. Imagine taking a look at your car or your clothes or your furniture through a magnifying glass!

#### Clarity with metaphors:

Customers are usually surprised that the differences in clarity between most diamonds are so small. It is important that you explain the importance and impact of clarity, so customers can make informed choices but also help the consumer understand that each has its own beauty and a 'flawless' diamond is not necessarily the most desirable.



Almost every diamond has some type of birthmark ...hidden in the diamond crystal as it was being formed millions of years ago

There are good metaphors for explaining clarity:

*"Diamonds are like us...individual and unique. No two diamonds are exactly alike"*

*"Each of us has our idiosyncrasies, the quirks that make us who we are. Diamonds have idiosyncrasies too, slight details that define clarity. These may make the diamond more or less rare, but not necessarily less beautiful"*

*"Think of inclusions as nature's fingerprints. Almost every diamond has some type of birthmark, something that was trapped in the diamond crystal as it was being formed millions of years ago"*

How can you help customers decide which clarity grade is right for them? You could use a comparison that maintains the luxury of the diamond purchase, such as:

- Compare the choice of clarity grades to the options available with other luxury items. Those that are the most rare are like exclusive designer dresses or exclusive cognacs. Some people love to own a rare luxury item, and are willing to pay the price. Other people choose something slightly less exclusive, but equally desirable.
- Compare diamond clarity grades to luxury fabrics. Many interior designers are faced with paying top prices for the finest silks or brocades. The alternative is to consider the same fabric that may be slightly lower quality but purchased for slightly less money.
- Remind your customers that diamonds are like snowflakes - one-of-a-kind natural occurrences.

#### 4. Understanding carat

##### The Facts:

This is probably the easiest of the 4Cs to explain. A diamond's size is measured in carat weight, and a carat equals 100 points.

- 200 points = 2 carats
- 100 points = 1 carat
- 75 points = 3/4 carat
- 50 points = 1/2 carat
- 25 points = 1/4 carat

While larger diamonds are very rare and desirable, two diamonds of equal carat weight can have very different values depending on the quality of their cut, colour, and clarity. People know that a scale measures weight, so your job is half done. Diamonds are weighed on very precise scales. It takes 142 carats of diamonds to equal one ounce, so 2,272 carats would weigh one pound!

Larger diamonds enhance all other diamond characteristics. Colour is more noticeable, cut has a greater visual impact and clarity characteristics may be more easily viewed (or hidden). A large diamond of very high clarity and colour is more often well cut, because only the best diamantaires are allowed to work with such valuable rough diamonds.

##### Carat weight in terms of rarity:

Small differences in weight can have a dramatic effect on the rarity and the price of a diamond. Larger diamonds are rarer than smaller diamonds, so they are priced higher, often substantially higher.

Large diamonds are rare, and the price differences can be quite dramatic. For example, a 1-carat diamond will be

far more expensive than two 1/2-carat diamonds. Even small differences in weight can dramatically affect the price of otherwise similar diamonds, especially when dealing with the "magic sizes" like 1/4-, 1/2-, 3/4- and 1-carat diamonds.

Larger diamonds usually command premium prices, so cutters aim for them. While larger diamonds are very rare and desirable, it should be emphasised that two diamonds of equal carat weight can have very different values. The rarity also depends on the quality of their cut, as well as their colour and clarity grades. Because large diamonds tend to magnify all of the other characteristics, large diamonds of high colour and clarity are rare and extremely valuable. Most large diamonds (especially those with high colour and clarity grades) are also well cut, adding to their beauty and their price.

### Metaphors that help make the transition from technical to emotional:

*"The size of a diamond can be compared to that of your desires or your appetite: you might crave a petite portion of caviar or a perfectly prepared filet mignon. Both can be equally satisfying"*

*"Which would you rather honeymoon in: a cosy seaside cottage or a world-class ocean resort? Both have their attractions – it all depends on what you want"*

### Carat weight with metaphors:

Few customers need much educating about diamond sizes and weights. Your challenge is to help them get a perspective on the romantic qualities inherent in a larger diamond. The diamond's size must also be considered in terms of the synergy of the 4Cs, since larger diamonds will display more quality characteristics than smaller diamonds of similar cut, colour, and clarity. Similarly, preferences for size vary greatly around the world. Some consumers prefer to buy larger diamonds of lower clarity and colour, others prefer smaller diamonds of higher quality but at the same price.

Large diamonds are the stuff which dreams are made of:

- When Richard Burton gave his new wife, Elizabeth Taylor, a diamond, it had to be one that would make her swoon. Mr. Burton purchased what became known as the "Taylor Burton," a 69.42-carat pear-shape diamond set in a ring. While no one has ever heard the diamond moment story from Mr. Burton, the ring was briefly displayed in Cartier's New York store window. People stood for hours in the rain just to have a glimpse of the romantic

diamond that captured the glamour and excitement of the world's most watched couple.

- A large rough diamond is discovered every few years, while only one diamond, the Cullinan, has ever been discovered weighing over 1,000 carats. Perhaps someday another one will be found.

## The synergy of the 4Cs

### The facts:

You now know about the four characteristics that determine a diamond's rarity and, therefore, its value. Each one of the 4Cs has an impact on how a diamond looks. It is the synergy and the many different ways that each of the 4Cs can be combined, however, that is the key to understanding what makes a diamond rare and valuable.

The power of the 4Cs taken together gives each diamond its unique personality. Each diamond is as unique as a fingerprint, a snowflake or a flower. No two diamonds will have exactly the same characteristics, in the same combination.

Even two diamonds with the same grading "stats" can look quite different, as customers who order over the internet have often discovered. It is advisable for customers to see their diamond before they buy it.

Unlike items made in factories, diamonds are natural products, still cut and polished by hand, graded by humans and set by master craftsmen.

Customers need assistance deciding between the wide range of diamond available. Finding the right diamond often means balancing the 4Cs. Most customers understand the need to "trade off" one C for another.

Some people find that one of the 4Cs is most important to them. Some simply want the biggest diamond they can afford while others prefer sparkle and life and choose a well-cut diamond that is smaller or a lower colour grade. It is important to show the customer diamonds with different characteristics, and to listen to your customer's desires.

### Synergy in terms of rarity:

Keep in mind that it is the synergy of the 4Cs working together that give a diamond its unique grading. A well-cut diamond can mask a lower colour grade, making it an effective trade off.

Larger diamonds magnify all other diamond characteristics. Well-cut diamonds often display more fire and light,



and a skilful diamantaire can minimise the impact of inclusions. Some cutting styles can also make a diamond appear larger.

The opposite is also true. Diamonds that are poorly cut can appear more lifeless and dull, regardless of their higher colour and clarity ratings, than comparable well-cut diamonds. Large inclusions may appear unattractive, even though they are large or rare in colour and cut. Each of the 4Cs must be taken together to determine the diamond's rarity and value. Then it is up to your customers to decide which of the 4Cs in combination creates the diamond that matches their dreams.

#### **Rarity does not equal beauty:**

While all diamonds are beautiful, a diamond's rarity and its respective 4Cs grading should not be regarded in itself as an indicator of beauty. 'Beauty is in the eye of the beholder'. What makes a wonderful diamond is a very personal choice. Some customers will want the connoisseur model, with its attention to rarity in all four Cs. Others will sacrifice rarity in one, two or three characteristics to afford the luxury of a diamond that is rare in only one.

#### **Synergy with metaphors:**

No two diamonds are alike. The sum of the 4Cs adds up to a unique genetic fingerprint – a diamond's DNA! Just as you wouldn't try to talk your best friend out of a relationship that makes her happy, be careful not to do the same with your customers.

Customers are buying more than physical properties and 4C attributes; they choose diamonds that represents their deepest emotions, their budget and what they believe to be beautiful. Their diamond will have symbolic and emotional value, as well as its intrinsic value. To explain the synergy, use effective metaphors that are romantic, engaging and interesting:

"Diamonds are like relationships. All the different facets of the two individual personalities involved, their likes and dislikes, their feelings for each other, make up the character of a relationship. Perfection is not the standard; beauty is. Each characteristic adds value".

"Just as in relationships, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts".

## **You as the diamond jewellery expert**

Finally, it is important to remember that, as a specialist retail jeweller, **your ability to provide your customer with good diamond buying advice is a critical selling point for your store.** Market research indicates that the consumer perceives the specialist retail jeweller as a craftsman, a professional and an expert. They also think that you provide a better service and much better level of care. This gives you an enormous edge over other types of distribution such as department stores and catalogue showrooms, etc.

We recommend that you capitalise on this consumer perception in every area of your marketing plan. Mention your diamond expertise in your advertising, in direct mail and in letters you send out. Play to your strengths. Ensure that your staff really are experts and know their product. Encourage them to take courses and display their qualifications in your shop.

Ensure that you focus your customer on your perceived strengths. For example, where applicable, you could tell your customers that you:

- Have completed professional qualifications in diamond product knowledge and selling skills.
- Have a workshop or design studio for bespoke diamond designs (on the premises if applicable)
- Offer professional diamond certification/valuations
- Carry out expert repairs
- Offer a free clean/inspection of jewellery
- Work with your suppliers for the benefit of the customers
- Work with outside, specialised agencies and Industry Associations
- Source innovative diamond designs reflecting the latest fashion styles and trends. Remember, the more you understand about your customer's aspirations and needs, the more you will be able to provide diamond buying advice that they will find relevant, compelling and which will eventually lead to that all important sale.

**No two diamonds will have exactly the same characteristics**