

Colored Gemstone Course

PROGRAM OUTLINE

Module 1: Introduction

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Module 4: Treatments and Care Issues

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Glossary

excerpt from **MODULE 3: THE 4 Cs OF COLORED GEMSTONES**

You are already familiar with the 4 Cs – Color, Cut, Clarity, and Carat Weight -- from your study of diamonds. The 4 Cs characteristics are also used to grade *colored* gemstones and determine their rarity and value. The importance of each of the 4 Cs varies by gem, but overall, the most important in the world of colored gemstones is – you guessed it -- color.

COLOR

As you may have already noticed, even among the same variety (kind) of stone, color can vary greatly. For instance, some emeralds are milky green, and other emeralds are a clear bluish green. Some aquamarines are pale, and others have a much darker tone.

Knowing how to talk and think about color is essential. Understanding the subtle differences in color will help you understand what makes, for instance, one ruby more rare than another.

ASPECTS OF COLOR

The color of a gem can be broken down into five general categories.

Hue: precise spectral color

Tone: lightness or darkness

Distribution: consistency or evenness of color distribution

Saturation/Intensity: brightness and vividness of color

The paragraphs that follow give examples and further explanation of these categories.

HUE

Have you heard someone say, “All the colors of the spectrum?” A spectrum is like a rainbow. When light moves through a prism, it separates into a band of colors. These colors are called “spectral colors.”

[[Picture of a prism splitting a ray of light into a spectrum of colors.]]

The spectral colors are

Red

Orange

Yellow

Green

Blue
Violet
Indigo

It is almost impossible to find a gem with a pure spectral color. Most of the time a stone will have *undertones* of other spectral colors. For instance, a green stone will have an undertone of blue, or yellow.

STONE

Some examples of *non-spectral* colors are

Black
White
Gray
Brown

These non-spectral colors also show up in gemstones. For instance, white in a red stone creates a lighter shade of red. Black in a red stone will create a dark shade of red.

Generally speaking, stones that are very light or very dark are worth less per carat than those with a medium tone. Each gem will have its own range in tone.

[[SIDEBAR: Don't confuse or discourage a customer by downplaying his or her color choice. Customers' personal preferences for color may determine what they think is "valuable." If a customer wants a pale green stone to match her eyes, she will not prefer the more expensive hue of emerald. If, however, a customer would like to know what color factors affect the quality and price of a stone, you can provide that information based on the gem.]]

[[SIDEBAR: Burmese rubies are some of the most rare in the world because they are very close to being pure red. Though almost purely spectral red, their tone can vary greatly. The rubies with white or black in them will be worth much less per carat than those rubies that come close to showing no black or white. Burmese rubies are red in all light. Rubies mined in other locations will become pinkish or purplish depending on the light under which you view them.]]

excerpt from **MODULE 7: ROMANCING THE STONE**

FASHION

Many customers will come into the store knowing about rubies, emeralds, and sapphires – the Big Three. But there are many other kinds of colored gemstones that may tempt your customers – gemstones that they haven't even heard of yet! How do you help invite the customer into the world of colored gemstones?

Listen:

Do your customers want an unusual gift?

Are they shopping for a “fun” piece?

Do they want something to compliment the clothing they already own?

Would they like to keep up with trends among celebrities?

Would they like to choose jewelry to match the new fashion colors of the season?

Remember that customers expect you to be their guide, expert, and friend during this buying experience. Take this opportunity to make your sales presentation professional and fun at the same time.

Some customers know a lot about fashion. Others will want help with basics such as how to use jewelry to accent their clothes. You should keep yourself up-to-date on fashion by reading jewelry trade publications, fashion magazines, and celebrity style magazines. You may also want to watch television shows that focus on fashion and celebrities. Such “fashion research” isn't hard or very time-consuming – just keep your eyes and ears open as you go through your day. Sometimes, it's all about what you choose to focus on when you watch a television show or flip through advertisements!

EXERCISE: Browse the cases, and decide what types of colored gemstone merchandise (including pearls) might be of interest to the following customers.

Five types of gemstone customers:

- (1) Brides
- (2) Gift givers
- (3) Those buying for self for recognition
- (4) Those buying for self to keep in the family/create an heirloom
- (5) Those buying for self reward

Review and explain your choices with your manager for each of the customer types above. Perhaps you will make up your own scenario: for instance, you may decide imagined customer wants a gift for a February birthday. Note

suggestions given regarding your thought process in matching general customer types with colored gemstone merchandise.

[[MANAGER OK icon]]

Manager: Initial/date here after discussion.

SELLING BASICS

Even if a customer says he is “just looking,” he probably has an intention to buy, even if that intention is only in the back of his mind. Your job is to bring out that customer’s intention to buy – while he or she is in *your* store, not a competitor’s store.

Knowing that a browsing customer probably does have the intention to buy, you can proceed professionally in this way:

Help the customer identify his or her needs or desires
Show the customer products that may meet those needs.
Actively help the customer make a satisfying decision and purchase

(1) Help the customer identify his or her needs or desires

Examples:

Tom may need a present for his mother, Suzi.

Camille may secretly desire a piece of jewelry that will make her look more powerful at work.

Pat may want to keep up with the latest trends the celebrities are wearing.

(2) Show the customer products that may meet those needs.

Examples:

After asking Tom questions, you find out that Suzi is very traditional and enjoys going to the theater. As Tom if he thinks pearls are Suzi’s style. If he says yes, but she has two pearl necklaces already, you may show him pearl cocktail rings, or a pearl bracelet.

After asking questions of Camille, you find out she wants to show her status at work with a large ring. You may suggest a deep red garnet ring, whose size is prominent, and whose color suggests power and passion.

After asking questions of Pat, you may discuss what kinds of jewels were seen on the red carpet at the Academy Awards this year. Trends may help you to show a lab-created pink sapphire necklace, or a three-strand amethyst choker.

(3) Actively help the customer make a satisfying decision and purchase.

Tom feels vulnerable buying something he knows very little about – pearls. He was more comfortable buying his new car last year, in fact. Help Tom feel less vulnerable by providing facts about pearls, and helping him see the differences and values. Perhaps he is curious about how cultured pearls are made. Perhaps he wants to know what makes one kind of pearl more “beautiful” than another. You can guide him through this kind of technical knowledge so that he feels surer of himself. Then, help him visualize the Imagine It moment when his mother opens her gift box and says, “This is a beautiful piece of jewelry!”

Camille wants you to be honest -- do you think anyone will think this red garnet is a ruby? If you can discuss the qualities of rubies and red garnets, together you two may decide that a garnet ring could indeed pass for a ruby of great size. Or, you may also bring out the lab-created rubies for her to admire and consider!

Pat may see two attractive pieces: the pink lab-created sapphire, and the citrine ring. Help Pat make a decision, perhaps according to the season. Is it autumn? The citrine ring will look lovely with tweeds, browns, and other autumn clothing colors. Delighted at your fashion sense and honesty, Pat very well may come back in a few months for the pink stone to go with spring fashions!

BUT HOW DO I GET THAT INFORMATION?

As you already know, you begin with a friendly, genuine greeting. Avoid asking questions such as “How are you today?” that can inspire a brush-off. A simple, “Good afternoon” or “Welcome to Zales” should be fine, especially if you deliver the greeting in a sincere way.

Then, as though you are at a party and meeting a new person, you can say pleasant things to break the ice. Take a few moments to talk about things that don’t have to do with jewelry. Let the customer feel that you are more than just a person who sees dollar signs when someone walks into the store.

At some point it will be natural for you to introduce yourself and extend your hand for a handshake. You can practice your handshake with other sales associates. The customer may choose to introduce herself then, too. Repeat the customer’s

name immediately so that you may learn it. But don't repeat it too much, or you'll seem insincere and too practiced.

Try to ask questions that require more than a "yes," "no," or other limited answer. People are trained since childhood to answer questions. Most of the time, if you are genuinely interested in the answers, people will begin to open up to you. A conversation will begin.

Remember that a sales presentation is more like a dance than a race to the finish line. The conversation is a part of this dance. Don't make your questions seem like you are grilling the customer.

In your own words, you may want to re-state what the customer has said to you. This will let the customer know he is being listened to. You can insert your own observations along the way. Keep your cool—don't bring merchandise out of the counters too soon. Gather information until you can feel that you are in a good position to help the customer make his or her initial choices in jewelry.

HOW SHOULD I SHOW THE MERCHANDISE?

The moment for presenting the jewelry has arrived. Perhaps, given the information you have gathered, you feel you know the perfect piece! Bring it out, but also bring out a few alternatives. Choices help customers feel that they are in control.

Don't feel too limited by price. If you bring out an item that the customer says she cannot afford, she will tell you so. She may even feel flattered that you felt she would be able to make that purchase. Keep an upbeat attitude when moving down in price. You don't want the customer to feel that she can only get "second best" jewelry. Here is an example of how to keep that upbeat attitude: "I understand your concern about this. I do have many other pieces that offer this bright red color you are looking for!"

An important note: Establish the value and beauty of a piece *before* the customer asks the price. If you wait until after the price has been revealed, your words will sound like justifications.

HOW DO I HELP THE CUSTOMER MAKE A SATISFYING PURCHASE?

The customer might be mesmerized by a piece you have discovered together. But she may still hesitate before plunking down her money. This is only natural. The customer may then begin her objections. Don't take these objections as a "no." Often, the customer raises objections so that she can move herself toward making the purchase without feeling that she has moved too fast.

Here is how to handle a customer's objections to a specific piece:

(1) Ask a few questions to get a clearer picture.

You may uncover that the customer really doesn't like the jewelry. On the other hand, maybe she simply wants you to affirm her choice.

If the customer says, "I'm just not sure I should get this," don't ask a whining "Why?" That will make the customer feel defensive. Instead, ask a clarification question such as, "Tell me what is causing your concern."

(2) Express empathy.

Sometimes shopping is fun, sometimes it is stressful, and often it is both at once! Help put the customer at ease by letting him know you understand his concerns. Put yourself in his shoes. Good ways to express this empathy are, "I understand how you feel" and "I'm glad you told me that."

(3) Focus on the relevant emotions and facts

If the objection isn't a rejection of the piece, focus on the positive aspects of the piece. With what you know about the emotions that make the customer want to buy the piece, you may be able to point out a few more positive aspects of the jewelry.

HOW DO I ASK FOR THE SALE?

Sometimes a customer is ready to purchase an item, but doesn't because he or she isn't asked for the sale. Taking the initiative to ask for the sale takes skill and some nerve. But it is often worth your investment!

Here are some examples of how to wrap up a sale:

"May I gift wrap this for you?"

"Suzi is going to love this!"

"Would you like to wear this back to the office?"

"You've really found the perfect piece. You're going to enjoy it so much."

There are many ways to sell jewelry successfully. You may want to refer back to the Diamond Selling Certification Participant Workbook to brush up on the skills you already possess. You might want to pick up new tips and techniques from your manager. Practicing and improving your skills in an ongoing way can be fun and very interesting. That's because there are so many different kinds of customers, situations, and products that come into play each day you are on the job as a sales professional.