

The Jeweler Is In

House calls are de rigueur for Idaho retailer Dan Norman



Norman Jewelers
owner Dan Norman

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1 What advertisement or promotion elicited the biggest response, and why do you think it worked?

One of the best things we have done in the last 15 years is buying beautiful gold-plated Christmas ornaments. We give them to our best customers and say "thank you for being a great person." The response has been great—people love them.

2 When you walk through your door, what do you like most about your store?

What I like most isn't what I see, but what I feel. When I get up and come to work, I know there are a lot of people coming in who have faith in us, who

trust us and know we'll do our very best for them. I have never come to work, since 1966, and not had a lot to do. I chalk that up to my dad [founder

William Norman]. He is a gregarious, ebullient man. He loves people. He's 91 and has macular degeneration, but if he could see, he'd still be working today.

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3 Can you describe your most memorable sale?

We make house calls for people, and oftentimes that will be someone in a nursing home who can't come and see us or someone who's housebound for a period of time. I was out of the store

helping a friend with jewelry questions once. The man, whom my family had known for years, was a gentleman who had severe arthritis. He asked if I could come out to his house and meet with him and his wife and make preparations for them. While I was there, he said, "I need to buy a new diamond for my wife. Could you come back with some?" I went back days later with some diamonds, and he picked out a 2.5 carat diamond. I didn't expect a sale—I just expected to be able to help them out.

4 What is your biggest challenge, and what are you doing to resolve it?

Our biggest challenge is that people think everything they read on the Internet is true. So trying to educate them sometimes is not easy. They're mostly miseducated about diamonds. We're seeing a considerable lightening of mountings recently, just to save money. But it sacrifices quality. Sometimes we just say "We can't" when people ask for a [specific] price. I think a certain segment will always want to see and feel the jewelry they're buying—and the pendulum will probably swing back and forth between [online and brick-and-mortar stores] for a while. I do feel like people don't know what they're getting sometimes unless they know the people they're buying from.

5 What's the best idea you've ever come up with for your store?

Hiring my wife, Kathy. She came on after our kids went to high school. We have six kids—she was very busy when they were younger. She is perceptive and people-oriented. All of our children, when they're old enough to work, get drafted to come and help in the store when we get busy. But Kathy is able to speak to people in a way that makes them feel like they really matter. —Emili Vesilind