

COLUMNS

How to build trust and bring luxury to jewelry ecommerce

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By A LUXURY DAILY COLUMNIST

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For many shoppers, buying a piece of fine or semi-fine jewelry is very personal and special.

In the past, if you wanted to find a necklace or bracelet for Mom on Mother's Day that was customized with her children's birthstones in a specific setting, you had to go to a bricks-and-mortar store. Now you can get the same kind of personalization online.

Not only did jewelry account for **40 percent of Mother's Day gifts** last year, but according to the **annual survey** by the National Retail Federation, consumers will spend roughly \$7.8 billion on jewelry.

Instead of offering factory-made options, jewelry ecommerce brands are enabling shoppers to be more creative with their choices. Shoppers can choose from a wide variety of stones and settings, and get the jewelry personally engraved and gift wrapped with custom messaging included.

Tech-savvy consumers currently expect the same kind of first-class experience when shopping online for high-end jewelry that was once only available by going to a bricks-and-mortar location.

Brands and retailers understand that they must deliver the same premium experience online that shoppers would get in a physical store to capture loyalty.

The jewelry market worldwide is expected to increase in value to more than **\$330 billion** by 2026. By offering digital tools that enhance the online shopping experience, brands can continue to win more of the growing market share.

Behind the scenes just as important

The jewelry ecommerce experience takes a lot of choreography at distribution centers (DCs) to pick, personalize and pack these high-value items.

Insurance requirements and delivery needs are also critical in this space. It is important for brands to work with their third-party logistics provider (3PL) to ensure a solid multi-layered security protocol.

With fine and semi-fine jewelry, you need product-specific quality assurance and inventory control procedures. For instance, in other retail verticals, standard practice calls for counting top-moving SKUs to build an accurate cycle count program. But with the jewelry and accessories industry, the focus should be a value-based program versus one built around velocity to ensure that you are appropriately securing and tracking the higher priced products.

Keeping close tabs on data is key to strong **inventory management**, ensuring that new product is ordered before supplies are depleted and to quickly react to purchasing trends and behaviors. This is especially important during periods of peak gift giving events such as Mother's Day.

A diversified multi-node fulfillment network can also help brands deliver exceptional customer experiences during high demand periods.

Leveraging traditional DCs, pop-up fulfillment centers and retail stores, the multi-node approach enables faster fulfillment and equips customers with access to those alternative delivery methods that they have come to expect, i.e., buy online, pick up in store (BOPIS) and ship-from-store.

A strong 3PL can help extend a brand's reach through an expansive multi-node network for optimal efficiency in the order delivery process enabling a reliable and fast experience for customers from the moment an order is placed to when the package arrives at the doorstep.

Concierge experience

Customers expect to be able to customize their online jewelry purchases.

To remain competitive, brands need to be able to handle any form of product personalization, including hand and machine engraving, custom sizing and customer-designed products. Free ring sizing kits, for instance, are just one of the ways brands can decrease duplicate orders, subsequent returns, and support a seamless customer journey.

First impressions matter.

For **65 percent of U.S. customers**, a positive experience with a brand is more influential than top-notch advertising. But one negative experience can do extensive damage to brand loyalty.

The delivery of an online order is typically the first tangible interaction customers have with a brand. When it comes to jewelry and accessories, along with other luxury items, it is essential that brands maintain a premier level of care throughout the customer journey, including a **great unboxing experience**.

Leaving a lasting impression through memorable packaging does not necessarily require a costly investment in materials or timely processes.

For a relatively small added cost, specialized wrapping or messaging creates a sense of indulgence and adds a layer of luxury to any jewelry purchase, regardless of the price point. It is all part of the effort to replicate the jewelry counter experience and give shoppers a level of confidence when purchasing a high-end bracelet, ring or watch.

Distinct messaging, personalized products and branding are all details that can have a big impact.

By enabling consumers to design and order personalized jewelry products through a convenient online shopping experience and doing so with a premier level of customer service at every step inspires long-term loyalty and encourages repeat purchases on a level that stands to outperform the traditional bricks-and-mortar experience.

THE KEY TAKEAWAYS are:

- Brands must provide the same first-class experience online that they do at the physical jewelry counter
- There are a lot more opportunities to customize and create unique fine and semi-fine jewelry when purchasing online
- A 3PL can help brands deliver on the promises of a luxury experience while maintaining optimal security and inventory management practices for the vertical.

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