

Jeweller

In late September, jewellermagazine.com reported that Australian jewellery supplier Tusk had ceased business. The story caused considerable comment and a reader wrote to *Jeweller* suggesting that more businesses would close due to very difficult trading conditions. He went on to explain his own store's predicament.

The retailer was happy to have the letter published anonymously and due to the heart-felt and sobering nature of the letter, it caused further comment and greater interest in the industry.

Jeweller was contacted by Bryan Young, managing director, Retail Rescue who offered to provide some insight and solutions on how the retailer could improve his business. Bryan says he is a highly experienced and qualified retail consultant so we decided to accept his offer.

Hello Coleby,

It is unfortunate to read about the problems facing this particular jewellery retailer and indeed I find myself dealing with more and more jewellers on a daily basis, all in a similar situation.

There is no doubt that the industry has changed dramatically over the years and is still changing but the good news is that it's not only possible to survive in this tough climate, but to even thrive.

There may well be many stories of failure out there but there are also stories of success. Perhaps the blog/site/forum suggested would be a great way to pass around requests for help on certain subjects and get answers from those that have already instigated solutions, including any pitfalls encountered. However, it would be important to keep in mind that some things work for some jewellers and not for others.

This is because there is no "quick fix" that will work with every single jeweller; factors such as demographic, levels of competition and even stock/price mix can impact dramatically.

This author was right when they said they need to re-invent and they have been doing the right thing by trying to seek help from other experts, however many of the suggestions given appear to have been made on a "try this" basis, rather than on **what will definitely work for the specific business** in question.

The Answer: Because the industry is a 'whole new world', it is important to look at any struggling retail business with fresh, unbiased eyes, even treat it as if it is just starting out.

That's right, go back to basics, conduct a feasibility study based on demographic market research, product and price mix to suit that demographic and even what marketing techniques are best suited to it. For example, it would be unwise to spend large amounts on TV, radio and newspapers advertising only to discover later that there is an exceptionally high level of youth in your region and therefore a social media marketing campaign might be more appropriate.

Find your niche, or point of difference and if you don't have one, develop one, and then market that, rather than price.

By the way, although I recommend that "bricks and mortar retailers" have an online presence, it should be about driving sales **to your stores**, rather than actually selling online.

The hard truth is online retailing only works for a select few, many finding themselves suddenly in direct competition with overseas competitors that don't have your overheads, so be careful when venturing down that path.

Stay away from any business advisors that say, "have you tried this yet?" and find the one that says "this will have the biggest amount of impact in the least amount of time, for your specific situation".

Also avoid those that don't specialise in retail, many may know how to run a generic small business but they fall apart when it comes to the complexities of managing a retail business. Try asking them how to do stock control, merchandising and sales training, (to name just a few specific needs), and watch them go pale!

Coleby, I started my business to try to help struggling retailers and suppliers to retail. This may sound 'corny' but I get the greatest feeling of success when I have made such an impact that I can basically 'hand the keys back', knowing they will now progress without any further need for my help. Every one of my clients has experienced significant growth to their bottom line.

Although I hear the same thing on a daily basis I am fascinated by your reader's story, so much so that I am willing to 'put my neck out' and offer to help this person on a "payment for success" basis, as they suggest.

To prove my good intentions, I will also provide the first month of my service for **free**.

In this way, they will be able to determine whether what I provide is likely to help them ongoing, so they can see worth in what I do, before they even take on my offer.

Obviously this is a huge risk for me as it could easily cost me a lot of money, should I not be able to improve their business. However, I am so confident that I can do so that I am even willing to make the same offer to other readers. If other jewellers feel that times are getting 'scary tough', and they need help, I will extend the same offer to them which I hope shows how confident I am that with the right guidance, it's not only possible to survive in this tough climate, but to thrive.

As for the blog idea, if there is enough interest, I would also be willing to generate such a site, (at my expense), but only if you helped to promote it's existence. Don't worry, consulting sales related activity would be banned, with only questions and solutions to same allowed.

The best of me to you,

Bryan Young



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