

BEFORE YOU GO ON YOUR MARRY WAY

THE WEDDING JEWELRY BIZ IS ABOUT SO
MUCH MORE THAN SELLING CASE UPON
CASE OF DIAMOND SOLITAIRES

By Amy Elliott

ENGAGEMENT RINGS AND wedding bands are the bread and butter of the jewelry industry, but are you satisfying the tastes of today's consumer? Top experts in the bridal category say it's time to mix things up. We've gathered advice from flourishing designers, in-the-know fashion editors, retailers who are doing everything right, and other wedding pros—all of whom have valuable insights into how couples think, shop, and make decisions. Given the competitive and fast-moving nature of the marketplace, it's essential to perfect your multi-tasking skills, customer outreach, and social media savvy. Ready, set, sell!

Roslyn collection
customizable rings
in 18k gold and
platinum; **\$2,100–
\$2,600** (without
center stones); **Tiny
Jewel Box**



MONICA ELIAS

CEO /
EXECUTIVE
PRODUCER
ELIAS WORLD
MEDIA



NEW YORK CITY

"Being current and present in all facets of business, design, marketing, and media dictates the success of a bridal jewelry brand. I also think it comes down to thoughtfulness when connecting and communicating with consumers. We often see brands measuring dollars spent against actual sales. In today's market, it's about awareness, and the more visibility you have, the more consumers will get to know your brand. The programs, content, and activations you invest in to reach them will say a lot about who you are and may influence how consumers shop."

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JIM ROSENHEIM

OWNER, TINY JEWEL BOX

WASHINGTON, D.C.

"There are only so many ways to set a stone in an engagement ring, but I believe we have found an answer to this younger generation of brides who desire individuality in their rings. I think that when they ask for vintage, what they really mean is unique. So about a year and a half ago, we created the Roslyn collection, a series that encompassed Edwardian- and Art Deco-inspired details. Today, when our clients ask for vintage, they frequently opt for Roslyn rings because they allow the client to choose whatever metal, details, and center gem they desire to create a custom look."



BETH CHAPMAN

OWNER/FASHION STYLIST
THE WHITE DRESS BY THE SHORE

CLINTON, CONN.

"It's critical to identify your target client. And providing her with an exceptional retail experience in your store is key. This actually starts before a bride even makes an appointment with us through her interaction with us via email, phone, or social media. In store, it's important for the environment to delight all five senses. We pay attention not only to our decor, but also to how the store smells, the music that we play, and we serve our tea and coffee in vintage teacups. Our goal is to create a memory when she shops with us."



JULIE THOM

OWNER, VON BARGEN'S JEWELRY
HANOVER, VT.

"Our biggest drivers of bridal business are word of mouth and digital marketing. We are also watching the interests of our clients to be sure we have an offering that speaks to their values and design preferences while maintaining our own priorities for the finest-quality diamonds and ring styles. For us, this has meant introducing more non-classic engagement ring styles, more fancy-shape diamonds, and vintage-cut estate diamonds."

Geometric diamond ring with 4.54 cts. t.w. translucent green, cloudy white, and yellow-orange rose-cut diamonds in recycled 18k gold; **\$7,740**; **Melissa Joy Manning**; sales@melissajoy Manning.com; melissajoy Manning.com



RACHEL LEONARD

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR
THE BRIDAL COUNCIL

NEW YORK CITY

"In my 30 years in the bridal industry, the brands that have succeeded all have a specific point of view; you can recognize the work without looking at the label. Yet they are always evolving. They're able to adapt to the marketplace while staying true to their core vision. Also, the successful companies seem to have great working partnerships within. Things work well if the designer only has to think about design and the business partner is focused on sales."

Elite collection Diana ring in 18k white gold with 0.56 ct. t.w. round brilliant diamonds; **\$4,450** (without center stone); **John Atencio**; 720-445-5292; johnatencio.com



NATALIE FEANNY BERGER

DIAMOND BUYER
J.R. DUNN JEWELERS
LIGHTHOUSE
POINT, FLA.

"We are expanding our bridal inventory to include more slender engagement rings, which are having a moment, as they pair with any type of wedding band or ring stack and seem to better express the modern bride's desire for a polished look. I also feel that having sales associates who are prepared to compete with the online bridal marketplace is key. The conversation is going to happen, and we need to be consuming the same content as our customers."



Baguette ring with 0.45 ct. t.w. diamonds in 18k yellow gold; **\$1,095**; **Tresor Collection**; info@tresorcollection.com; tresorcollection.com

AMY SHEY JACOBS

FOUNDER/CREATIVE DIRECTOR
CHANDELIER EVENTS

NEW YORK CITY

"Today's couples are very savvy and have a lot of inspiration at their fingertips. They value experience, solid advice and options, and quick answers. They expect their vendors to have a strong digital profile—being active on Instagram has been a huge factor in attracting clients and winning their business. Organization, tech-savviness, and the ability to recognize and understand current trends are key. I also suggest following your competition; you need to see what your customers are seeing in order to speak their language. And did I mention quick answers? This cannot be overestimated."



JADE TRAU

JEWELRY DESIGNER

NEW YORK CITY

"Keep it simple. The smallest change can make the biggest difference in a finished design. And listen to your clients—the good, the bad, and the ugly. That's how you learn what works and what doesn't work. Learn to be nimble and pivot."



Astor diamond engagement ring and band in 18k white gold; **price on request; Forevermark by Jade Trau;** info@jadetrau.com; jadetrau.com



SHELLEY BROWN

FASHION AND BEAUTY EDITOR
THE KNOT

NEW YORK CITY

"Right now, the most successful bridal jewelry brands are the ones that speak to consumers through a strong social media presence. The rising popularity of colorful center stones, yellow and rose gold, fancy-shape diamonds, vintage-inspired settings, and even imperfect, raw diamonds speaks to the millennial bride's desire to stand out. The brands that adapt to this by offering nontraditional designs and customization will thrive. The brands that are less flexible—for example, sticking to chunkier platinum settings with round-cut diamonds only—will miss out."



Platinum ring with 2.5 ct. padparadscha sapphire and 0.45 cts. t.w. diamonds; **\$15,995; Coast Diamond;** 800-523-5937; coastdiamond.com

BEFORE
YOU
GO ON
YOUR
MARRY
WAY...



Coastal Crescent collection rings in 14k gold; **\$1,490–\$2,390** (without center stones); **Tacori;** 800-421-9844; tacori.com



NAN PALMER

OWNER/MANAGING DIRECTOR
FACETS JEWELRY CONSULTING

DENVER

"Whether you're a single-channel or omnichannel brand, a luxury or an emerging designer, you need to have the ability to manage custom requests. Because today's consumer wants something that cannot be found on a pad of ring settings in a jewelry case. The more established bridal jewelry brands should reconsider their collections in this context, offer a variety of attractive price points—driving unit sales rather than dollar sales will be the most profitable in bridal—and invest in technology that allows customers to preview collections online before they come in to shop."



SALLY MORRISON

CHIEF MARKETING
OFFICER, LIGHTBOX

NEW YORK CITY

"The greatest hindrance to success in the bridal category is resistance to change. It's no longer possible to live by the same playbook if we want to engage this new generation of customers. We need to take our cues from other categories—fashion, accessories, cosmetics—that allow consumers to play with the brand, even if they're not in the market for an immediate purchase. This means delivering plenty of interesting, sticky content that engages the customer while she's browsing and learning so she keeps coming back... hopefully until she's ready to shop."

JCK