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CREATING CONFIDENCE

How one jeweler promotes her custom design services

BY SHAWNA KULPA



Calla Gold of Calla Gold

Jewelry in Santa Barbara, California, doesn't consider herself just a jewelry designer. "I'm an educator by nature," she says.

She's found that her natural born desire to want to explain things works well with her passion for custom jewelry design, especially when it comes to the business side of things. Between blogging and online videos, Gold has discovered the perfect way to reach customers, while educating and interesting them in the custom design process at the same time.

"I feel like I'm the 4-1-1 of jewelers out there," she says.

All joking aside, Gold has discovered that taking the time to explain all things jewelry to customers, even if it has nothing to do with custom design, can really pay off.

"It helps give you authority online," says Gold. And while crafting original content for her website and social media

does take a lot of time and effort, "good things do happen, and I feel like it all balances out."

Putting It Into Words

Gold credits her start with blogging to her innate desire to tell stories.

"When clients had questions, I liked to [answer them with] long stories, not dry explanations," she says. In addition to getting lots of thank-yous from customers for her detailed responses, Gold also closed a lot of sales. "Because I took the time to answer their questions, it made them feel empowered."

But over the years she noticed that she was getting a lot of the same questions over and over again. "I was repeating myself a lot, and I realized that if I had these answers written down, I could talk with them about other things, such as what they want in a piece of jewelry."

“Creating Confidence” *continued from page 50*



Some of the best responses Gold gets on her blog posts are when she details special or interesting pieces that she creates, such as this Purple Heart ring she created for a Vietnam veteran.

Blogging seemed like the best avenue for Gold’s stories, but dedicating time to it was a challenge. It wasn’t until the Great Recession of 2008, when she saw business drop 30 percent, that she finally got around to launching her blog. “[The recession] gave me the time I didn’t have before to do things,” she says.

Gold began blogging twice a week; eventually she had more than 600 blog posts. However, due to the way that Google ranks websites, her site kept dropping in search rankings despite her frequent posts, leading to less visitors. She and her team realized that some of her shorter posts (under 300 words) were being considered as “thin content” by Google’s algorithms, leading to the drop in rankings. She winnowed down the content of the blog site, and now she posts longer blog posts just once a week or so.

She jokes that she’s written so much over the years that it gets tougher and tougher to find things to blog about. She still gets inspired by customer questions, and she’ll sometimes blog about an interesting or special project she’s working on. One such project was a Purple Heart ring she created for a veteran.

“He had a costume ring, but he had always wanted a real one,” she says. The project involved a lot of different

techniques and materials—CAD, custom gem cutting, enameling, oxidation—so Gold thought it would be interesting to discuss on her blog all the aspects that went into making this one special ring. “I got a lot of nice responses,” she says. “People seem to like that.”

Gold uses a Wordpress website installed with Yoast, which her team recommended when she was setting up her blog. It’s a search-engine-optimization plugin that acts as a checklist. “It will remind you of the best practices of things to do on the blog that aren’t visible to the end user,” explains Gold. For example, it will ask if you used your keywords at the beginning of the blog, if you used proper sub-heads, or if all photos are labeled.

“I’ll write and edit the blog, then I check with Yoast and see that I have to do this or that,” she says. “Because it prompts you, it makes it so much easier than having a checklist to review.”

Beyond Words

Although Gold’s blog has been popular with her customers, she came to realize that some people, particularly those of the younger generations, like information in short, focused bits.

“A lot of people like videos better than digging through a blog,” she explains. She happened to know a young man just out of school who did some video work and she inquired about the costs involved. “I asked him what he would charge for videos, and he said \$15 an hour,” she says. “What a deal!”

Initially she was just thinking that she had two to three hours worth of material to record, but she didn’t factor in the editing and other post-production work that would also need to be done. “It was a good thing that I misunderstood what this was going to cost me!” she jokes. “But it ended up being really good. A lot of people who don’t read the blog have found me through the videos.”

When considering topics for videos, she focuses on subjects for which she can provide great visuals, such as the different types of milgrain work, and that don’t take a long time to explain. “I try to limit them to no more than

two to three minutes each," she says.

Outside of her blog, videos, and social media posts, Gold doesn't do much other advertising. Instead, she relies on either customer referrals or for someone to come across her online presence through searches. "I get a lot of new customers who google 'custom jewelers' and find a blog post, then they might look at reviews or my website. It's kind of a snowball effect."

Recently, she was contacted by a woman who wanted to have a custom ring created for her husband for Christmas and to have him be a part of the design process. Although the woman lived in an area where there was no shortage of custom jewelers, she took to the internet to find a jeweler who she thought would really listen to what her husband wanted.

"She had had a few custom jeweler horror stories, and



After creating custom designed rings for a couple who found her online, Gold asked to take photos of them wearing their new rings, believing that pictures of happy clients make for powerful imagery.

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—Calla Gold

she wanted her husband to have a good experience," Gold explains.

In her search, the woman came across Gold's blog posts. Liking the voice Gold uses in her blog, the woman then looked up reviews of her and checked out an online gallery of her work. After reaching out by phone, the woman just had a sense that Gold was going to be able to do what none of the custom jewelers she'd worked with previously had done—really listen to what her husband wanted, and then deliver it.

To surprise the woman's husband, Gold sent him a copy of her just-released book on designing your own ring, along with a certificate good for "One Custom Made Man's Ring Designed by Calla Gold."

"They got the book and got so excited to start the process," she says. And they were so impressed with the resulting ring, that the wife pulled off her wedding set and asked Gold to redesign it for her.

"She had wanted to do something with it for a while, but her previous experience left her leery," says Gold. "It came out gorgeous, and she's so happy. I'm just delighted that I turned out to be the jeweler they needed!"

As much as Gold enjoys relating fun stories and showcasing the finished pieces she creates, she also knows that a simple photo can sometimes say much more. That's why she asks her happy customers if she can photograph them with their new creation and then post the photo online.

"I wanted people to see that it's not just about pretty jewelry," she explains. "It's [about] jewelry that the person I made it for is happy with. People are gun-shy when it comes to custom jewelry. If they see happy people, they think maybe I can work with them on a piece of jewelry and they'll be that happy, too. It creates confidence in the process. And the next thing you know, I'm designing for them." ♦