



Jewelers of America press release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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JA Holds J-Biz Town Hall Forum at JCK Las Vegas

*JA held an extended Town Hall forum at the JCK Show in Las Vegas,
to inform its education initiative J-Biz*

New York, NY – Jewelers of America (JA) held an extended session of its Town Hall Forums at the JCK Show, Las Vegas, on Thursday, May 31, from 2:00 – 4:30pm, as part of its education program at the tradeshow. The forum was third in a series of four Town Halls, being held at major industry events in 2007, which seek to inform its new education initiative, J-Biz, about the most crucial education and training needs of independent jewelry retailers.

“With each Town Hall Forum, we get a clearer sense of the key questions and challenges independent jewelers want answered and, therefore, the topics J-Biz programs will need to address in order to provide the most relevant support to our membership,” says JA President and CEO Matthew A. Runci, who introduced the session.

Moderated by Paul Holewa, managing editor of *Instore* magazine, the JCK Town Hall featured three industry experts who discussed the need for retailers to embrace responsible business practices, Internet technology and the changing consumer market in order to be competitive in the today’s retail economy. Although addressing very diverse topics, the presenters concurred that independent jewelers must diversify and create distinct identities to attract consumers.

Vicki Cunningham, owner/manager of Cunningham Fine Jewelry, Tulsa, OK, who is on the boards of Jewelers of America and the Council for Responsible Jewellery Practices (CRJP), presented on responsible business practices. Cunningham recently spoke at the 2007 CIBJO Congress, and her Town Hall presentation made it clear

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that jewelry retailers can “stand out” as responsible professionals who offer customers confidence in their products, by being at the forefront of responsible business practices in the industry. As she said, “Together, we jewelers are the ambassadors of the industry to the people who use and buy our products.”

Holly Wesche Conn, owner of Wesche Jewelers in Melbourne, FL, presented on “Technology & Customer Communications: Email Newsletters.” Conn, whose 15,000-sq.ft. store is the largest independent jewelry store in its county, has grown her business through the use of a quarterly e-newsletter. She demystified the “technology” of e-newsletter production by recommending the use of a web service, such as constantcontact.com or mailchimp.com, which provide prepared newsletter templates and will send out the newsletter to large amounts of clients for a small fee.

David McKinney, Ph.D., professor at GIA’s School of Business, concluded with a presentation on “Shrinking Margins & Profitability.” McKinney’s 16 years of teaching expertise in business, economics, marketing and finance were apparent as he explained how to combat shrinking margins. According to McKinney, jewelers must develop a sustainable competitive advantage by researching their market and differentiating themselves from chains and Big Box competitors. McKinney suggested using aggressive strategies to increase inventory turnover, by focusing on what customers want like customization, fashion trends and quality customer service.

The final J-Biz Town Hall Forum will be held at the JA New York Show, Sunday, July 29, at the JA Retail Learning Center in Javits Convention Center, New York City. For more information about the JCK Town Hall Forums and to view transcripts and presentations from the J-Biz Town Halls, visit J-Biz’s new online education center, at www.jewelers.org.

*Jewelers of America is the national trade association for retail jewelers.
With 11,000 member stores, JA also works locally through its 40 state and regional affiliates.
JA advocates high social, ethical, and environmental standards, promotes professional
business and leadership skills, and enhances its members’ profitability by
offering education, certification, marketing and cost-saving programs.*

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