How This Jewelry E-tailer Made Popping the Question So Much Easier

Once you've found the right person to marry, finding the right engagement ring (if you choose to go that route) should be a cakewalk. But it's not.

Buying jewelry can be very difficult, especially for such an important occasion. Once you get over the issue of legitimacy —is this diamond worth the price — you have the find the right shape, color and cut, while making sure the stone comes from a conflict-free part of the world. So much to think about.

And with today being Valentine's Day, there is extra pressure indeed. According to search engine Bing, a whopping 50 percent of proposals happen on Feb. 14.

Related: No Money to Start a Business? No Problem. Try These 5 Options.

While I didn't pop the question to my now-wife on V-Day, I was pitched jewelry e-tailer James Allen while I was actively thinking about buying a ring.

The website, which was founded in 2006, has sold jewelry to more than 150,000 customers and was acquired last year by Signet Jewelers for $328 million, actually did make the engagement ring process significantly easier. Really, what makes it so disruptive is that with just a few clicks of a mouse or gestures on a touchscreen, you can customize an engagement ring every step of the way — including selecting a setting style, the metal its made of and the stone that goes in it. And with its detailed 360-view photos, you feel like you're in a store.

I spoke with Dean Lederman, one of the co-founder of James Allen, to get his insights on serving customers and building a good company as well as provide insights from my own experience.

1. Make it easy for customers.

The fact that customers trust a website for a purchase as significant as an engagement ring is incredible.

What immediately hooked me to shopping on the site was its useful tools and images. There are several sliders you can adjust including color, clarity, cut and carat, along with helpful explainers of each. It makes a daunting process easier to comprehend. There are also 360-degree photos of the rings and diamonds, which instills confidence through a screen. The company also has an extensive marketing operation, mostly through email.

The site is also accredited by the Better Business Bureau, has great customer reviews and offers a lifetime warranty. It also openly explains how it sources its diamonds.

Related: The 6 Best Ecommerce Platforms for Small Businesses

2. Always be there.

I’m the type of shopper that wants to be in and out without talking to anyone. But for a diamond ring purchase? It was nice to have someone there. Lederman says that one of the most significant boosts for the company was adding 24/7 customer service. But it wasn’t an easy decision for the company to make.

“That was bold of us and I’m grateful we did it when we get it,” he says. “In retrospect, I wish we had done it even a year earlier. But you don’t know that the revenue will come to support it. It’s a challenging balancing act between building

the vision and making sure that you're economically sound in case everything doesn't go as planned. You really want to be two steps ahead of where you are, not six steps ahead."

3. Take on the risk for your customers.

Finding the right ring is stressful, especially when you're shopping online with a company that doesn't exactly have household recognition. But I felt assured by what Lederman calls James Allen's "risk free retail" customer service – meaning shipping to customers as well as return shipping is on the company.

Related: 67 Fascinating Facts About Ecommerce vs. Brick and Mortar (Infographic)

"Ten years ago, our biggest challenge was for the consumer to have confidence in the company," he says. Offering customers 24/7 service as well as free shipping means they have "zero investments."'

Fortunately for me, I found a ring she loved.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/309026