

sell & TELL

CHAT WITH SUCCESSFUL JEWELRY ARTISTS

Selling to Shops

with MYSTI GULSRUD



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Q: When did you know you were ready to sell at shops?

A: I put on a couple of home shows. When I saw that people actually liked and bought my jewelry, I became confident that my jewelry was worthy of a price tag.

Q: How did you know what shops to approach?

A: You only want to sell where it's a perfect fit. Since my jewelry has a vintage look, I scouted out shabby chic garden shops; French antique shops; fashionable clothing stores; and upscale salons. Before you make a sales call, be sure to visit the store in person to get a sense of its ambiance, the amount of jewelry it already sells (will yours be a unique addition or get lost in the crowd?), and price points. Remember, shops are going to at least double your wholesale price, so you want your jewelry somewhere where customers aren't going to be surprised to pay, say, \$60 for a necklace, somewhere that supports decent prices for handmade items.



Mysti's vintage-style jewelry

Q: How can a designer best prepare to make a sales call?

A: First, call ahead. Ask the shop owner or manager if you can come in and show them your jewelry. I found it's better to be general about what time you'll stop by—in the morning or the afternoon—versus specifying an exact time. Shop owners are busy and sometimes reluctant to pin down meeting times. When you do visit, dress nicely and wear your jewelry. Bring along a good selection of your collection. I usually bring twenty to thirty pieces in nice jewelry rolls. Also bring an inventory sheet to record merchandise left with the buyer and a business card or something with your contact information to leave behind. Let the owners select which pieces they want to carry. If they say your jewelry isn't their style, ask if they know somewhere else where it would work better. This is a good way to get a free referral. Most importantly, go in ready with your price points and know whether you want to sell wholesale or on consignment.

Q: What can you do to set yourself apart from other vendors?

A: You could offer to set up your jewelry display. Some shops like to do their own merchandising, but others are less creative and would consider your styling offer a bonus. Be prepared to sell your jewelry props. Inevitably, people want to buy them!



Mysti's jewelry roll

Wholesale vs Consignment

CONSIGNMENT means shop owners pay designers only for what they sell based on a predetermined retail price and rate, usually around 60 percent for the designer.

Pros: All shops have to lose is space. The designer sets the retail price. No production deadlines. Designers can create more expensive and one-of-a-kind merchandise. Shops will often take more inventory than if they had to purchase the pieces outright. Ability to establish close relationships with buyers.

Cons: Your jewelry, its care, and the potential profits it could bring are in the hands of someone else. A shop could close without paying for jewelry sold or returning unsold pieces. Inventory could be tied up for long periods of time. You

must be diligent about finding trustworthy, professional buyers; keeping track of inventory; and making smart written contracts or agreements.

WHOLESALE means you set a fixed price for each piece of jewelry, and the buyer purchases in bulk, usually with a minimum-order requirement. Jewelry designers typically set their wholesale prices at four to five times the cost of materials.

Pros: You're paid up front. The risk is absorbed by the buyer.

Cons: Your pieces usually have to be inexpensive, as the buyer will at least double the wholesale price. You have less freedom to sell one-of-a-kind pieces as bulk orders require easy-to-replicate pieces.