

## Web-focused Arizona jeweler does business on his time

By Joseph Dobrian

SCOTTSDALE, ARIZ.—Thanks to a Web site, and to a family business that dates back a century, Joseph Schubach is a jeweler who sets his own schedule.

“I wanted to do something that wasn’t regular retail, set my own hours, have something other than the normal jeweler’s lifestyle,” says Schubach, chief executive officer and head jeweler of Joseph Schubach Jewelers, based in a 1,000-square-foot Scottsdale, Ariz., showroom staffed by six.

“It’s upstairs in an ordinary building, not easy to find unless you’re looking for us,” he says. “It’s not exactly closed; if you want to wander in, you can, but we prefer to see customers by appointment.”

It wasn’t always this way. The Schubach family has been in the jewelry business since 1910, operating stores in Arizona, Idaho and Utah. Schubach’s father owned nine stores in the Phoenix area from the late 1950s until he retired in 1994. Then, Joseph Schubach took over, closed all the units and switched to an Internet-heavy retailing model that de-emphasizes walk-ins and entails doing most of his face-to-face sales by appointment only.

The jeweler’s Web site

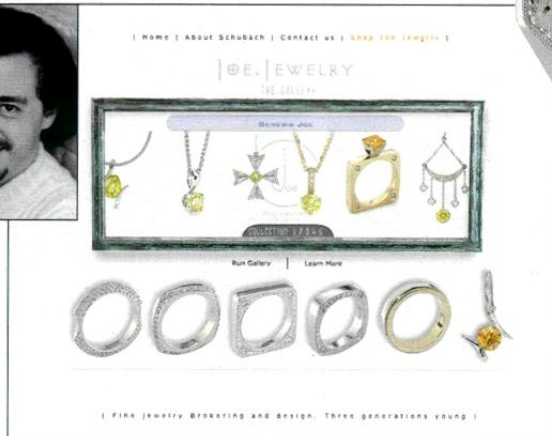
displays Schubach’s custom creations, offers credit, and promotes moissanite, enhanced diamonds, enhanced diamonds and other options that are not available from his competitors.

“We stay on top of styles, trends and innovations, and we saw moissanite as a great opportunity early on,” Schubach says. “When we got involved with it, nobody else in Arizona was selling it. We also offer colored moissanite, fracture-filled diamonds, Gemesis [lab-grown] diamonds and simulated stones. Lots of jewelers take a closed-minded attitude to anything that doesn’t come out of the ground, and this is one way to differentiate ourselves.”

But Schubach says he also foresees a new push for natural diamonds and is having his Web site redesigned to home in on that category too.

“Palladium is gaining popularity too, what with platinum priced at \$1,400 an ounce, and it might be a big part of our marketing efforts in the next few months,” Schubach says.

Instead of in-store events, Schubach focuses his marketing efforts on e-mail, direct mail, online advertising and the Web site. Most of his local



From left: When Joseph Schubach took over his family jewelry business, he set up an appointment-only shop and a Web site for Joseph Schubach Jewelers featuring his custom “Joe Jewelry” and pieces like these rings, above, from his bridal collection.

premier retailer of all types of fine jewelry, from natural diamonds to simulated diamond jewelry and beyond. No matter what the item, the greatest satisfaction is selling a piece that makes the customer say, “Wow! I love it!”

business is by referral and many of his sales are customized versions of his extensive jewelry portfolio.

Schubach feels that offering the face-to-face option sets him apart from other online jewelers who do most of their business via the Internet. Cyberselling, he admits, is difficult for a jeweler who offers so much custom work.

“Selling online takes a lot of hand-holding, a lot of e-mailing pictures,” he says. “It’s easier when the customer comes in and says, ‘I want that.’”

The line most identified with Joseph Schubach Jewelers is the “Joe Jewelry” collection, bridal jewelry that employs unusual design ideas such as

notched, beveled and square rings, many of which feature micropavé diamonds and moissanite. Hand-engraving is another well-known characteristic of Schubach’s designs.

Colored gemstones such as citrine, amethyst, topaz and quartz dominate his extensive fashion jewelry line, and Schubach recently announced a major expansion of diamond and diamond alternative inventory, adding natural pink and yellow sapphires, pink moissanite and blue color-enhanced natural diamonds.

“We want to suit every budget and still offer the highest level of quality and craftsmanship,” Schubach says. “We want to be known as the

For more: [www.joejewelry.com](http://www.joejewelry.com)

### TIPS > on online sales

■ If you decide to sell online, don’t set your expectations too high. Online sales are as challenging as brick and mortar sales, and they require a strong customer base and top-notch marketing.

■ Don’t think you can do the marketing all by yourself. Find a good marketing group that handles branding, e-mail campaigns and Web site design.