

May 2008

INSTORE

THE ONLINE HOME OF INSTORE: THE MAGAZINE FOR THE AMERICAN JEWELRY STORE OWNER

[Home](#) | [Editorial](#) | [Resources](#) | [Subscriptions](#) | [Advertising](#) | [Community](#) | [PogoList](#) | [Contact Us](#)

[Forums Log-In/Sign-Up](#)

commentarythebusiness

Low Appraisal

I AM ANGRY, and I have been for 25 years. For a quarter of a century I've been waiting for the jewelry industry as a whole to clean up its act. A quarter of a century, and nothing has changed.

What am I talking about?

I'm talking about posers, imposters and impersonators running amok throughout the industry. I'm talking about people who are openly misrepresenting themselves as gem and jewelry appraisers when they have absolutely no professional training and no formal education in valuation science and methodology. They don't even belong to a recognized appraisal society or organization, and yet they openly advertise themselves as appraisers to not only the jewelry industry at large but to the general public.

The consumer, who is the very lifeblood of our industry, is being defrauded by these people, and yet the industry as a whole turns a blind eye to the situation. Enough is enough. This must change!

Think about it for a moment. People can't go around impersonating doctors, lawyers, dentists or veterinarians. People get thrown in jail for doing that. Even hairdressers and cosmetologists have to be licensed to operate a business *and* they have to take annual continuing education classes.

Plumbers, electricians, building contractors and insurance agents must take a formal written test and be licensed in their state.

But do you know how many formally educated and professionally trained gem and jewelry appraisers there are in the entire United States? Fewer than 1,000.

And if you were to count only those who are fully accredited as opposed to just dues-paying members who have never taken a formal test to demonstrate their competency of valuation science and methodology, the true number is probably below 500.

How about the number of AGA/certified gemological laboratories in the county? Fewer than 30.

As things stand now, anybody can hang up a shingle and claim to be a gem and jewelry appraiser with absolutely no professional training or accreditation. I've personally seen appraisals written by people who weren't even gemologists and didn't have a lick of lab equipment.

Part of the problem stems from a widely held public misconception that Gemological Institute of America graduates are also appraisers. The GIA states on its website and in other material that people in need of an appraisal should seek out a qualified independent appraiser. But it really needs to do more, such as issuing a public declaration to the effect that Gemologists are *not* appraisers! They never have been and never will be.

At the same time, all GIA-trained and educated gemologists should respect and honor the specialized and professionalized field of gem and jewelry appraising and cease from any and all appraising activity until they are properly trained.

The insurance industry must also change its ways. It continues to accept any piece of paper that vaguely resembles an appraisal from anybody, and I do mean anybody! This makes the insurance industry just as guilty in a crime that causes billions of dollars in damage a year!

Billions? Yes, as a result of over-inflated feel-good appraisals that don't even vaguely begin to correctly describe the items for proper replacement in the event of a loss. All this does is cause the consumer to pay higher insurance premiums with no additional benefits.

This is tantamount to fraud.

The solution is simple. All it will take is for the jewelry and insurance industries to work together. Here are the simple requirements that anyone wanting to accept appraisal work must meet:

1. Be a fully accredited/certified member of one of the recognized appraisal organizations (not just a dues-paying member);
2. Be certified with all appraisals conforming to Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice;
3. Have a certified gemological laboratory as listed and prescribed by the AGA;
4. Complete and maintain 16 classroom hours of annual continuing education credits per year;
5. Recertification every three to five years (Formal written test and practical hands-on lab test).

Rules and requirements will mean nothing unless they are enforced by fines and legal action against those who refuse to abide by them.

All of this could be implemented in less than one year if the jewelry and insurance industries were truly serious about wanting to eliminate this plague once and for all.

The technology is available and in some instances already in place to fully list all the professionally trained and fully accredited/certified gem and jewelry appraisers from the current appraisal societies and organizations.

The infrastructure is also for the most part already in place to properly train and further educate jewelers so they understand the legal and, more important, ethical implications of being a professionally recognized gem and jewelry appraiser.

The insurance industry should support this effort by immediately refusing to accept appraisals issued by people who aren't accredited or certified appraisers.

The general public, our customers, deserve better. And we can do better. We have to if we as an industry are to move forward and bring back the now-alien concepts of honesty, truth, integrity, along with a higher standard of professional ethics and professional conduct when dealing with the general public and others within and outside our industry.

[Lashawn Bauer](#) operates the High Sierra Gem Lab in Reno, NV. He is a member of the Accredited Gemologists Association and the National Association of Jewelry Appraisers. E-mail him at HighSierraGemLab@gmail.com.

[◀ Back](#)

[Home](#) | [Editorial](#) | [Resources](#) | [Subscription](#) | [Advertising](#) | [Community](#) | [PogoList](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Login/Sign-Up](#)

Instore Magazine, 45 West 45th Street Suite 808, New York, New York 10036
Phone: 212-981-9625, Fax: 877-471-1312, E-mail: editor@instoremag.com

MEDIA KIT



[Download Our Media Kit](#)



[Download INDESIGN Media Kit](#)

click here

TO GET A
FREE
SUBSCRIPTION
of
INSTORE
VEGAS

Free only to jewelry retailers base in the U.S. and Canada.
Not eligible for a FREE subscription?
[Click here](#) for subscriptions at a Special Rate