



10 Minutes
with ...

ALAN LODINGER



Texas Star and Road Warrior Alan Lodinger accidentally made his way into the jewelry business, and reflecting back 30 years later, he wouldn't have had it any other way. After graduating from the University of Florida in 1984, he moved to Texas to live near his brother. Since his brother was already a sales-rep in the jewelry business, he offered Alan the opportunity to "sub-rep" his lines. Sales didn't come easy to Alan, especially since he was not an outgoing person at the time. Being new to the state of Texas and also new to the industry didn't help, either. However, Alan rose to the challenge by reading books (Zig Ziglar's "The Secret of Closing the Sale" was one of his favorites), and putting himself on a fast-track learning curve which took him through what he jokingly refers to as "The School of Hard Knocks." Read on to find out what thoughts and advice Alan has to share.

TJAMag: What was your first line, and how did it work out for you?

Alan Lodinger: I sub-repped for my brother for 3 years, and Hadley Roma was my first line. Hadley-Roma is a division of Roma Industries, and they are one of the leading manufacturers in watch attachments, men's and women's leather belts and fashion accessories. Hadley-Roma is a proud manufacturer and distributor of Made in the USA products, and I still carry Hadley-Roma products to this day, which speaks to the quality of their products, and the success my customers have had in selling Hadley-Roma merchandise.

In 2007, Hadley-Roma formed an agreement with Hirsch and Hadley-Roma assumed the position of acting as the U.S. representative for the Hirsch Watch Band line. That agreement allowed me to integrate Hirsch products into my line, as well.

TJAMag: Which line came next for you?

Alan Lodinger: That happened in 1987. Legère was manufacturing a private-label men's accessory line for Hadley-Kalbe. When Roma acquired Hadley-Kalbe, they didn't want to continue with the men's accessory line any longer. Legère, realizing the popularity of this line, contacted several sales reps to ensure they had a sales team on board, and then began branding and wholesaling the men's accessory line on its own. Jewelers started asking if Legère carried pocket watches, so in 1996, Legère put me in touch with Charles-Hubert Paris so I started carrying their full line of pocket watches, wrist watches and writing instruments to meet these customer requests.

TJAMag: How has the changing economy affected the lines you carry?

Alan Lodinger: When the stock market crashed and metal prices turned high, I started looking for a quality product that could meet the needs of my customers and fit into the \$100 - \$300 price point range that jewelers lost because gold prices got too high. I interviewed with Elle, and for my, and my customers, Elle Jewelry has been a perfect fit. I expanded my territory from just 8 accounts to over 100 accounts that I currently service with Elle. I think a lot of the success I've had, including being the #1 ELLE rep in the US for 2014, can be attributed to the fact that the ELLE brand makes fashion accessible and speaks to feminine, positive and self-confident women. Today's consumer likes to express their individuality, and ELLE jewelry and time pieces are designed to do just that!

TJAMag: While many customers specifically want to purchase products that are "Made in the USA," such as Hadley-Roma, some also crave the status of wearing jewelry with an International flair. Do you carry any lines that meet that criteria?

Alan Lodinger: Absolutely! Back in 2009, Hadley-Roma entered into an agreement with Nomination of Italy to represent Nomination's line of Sterling and Stainless jewelry. Nomination Jewelry Company got its start with the "Composable" modular bracelet, and excited about the new launch of the "My Bon Bon's" personalized line of jewelry.

TJAMag: Do you carry any watch lines besides Charles-Hubert Paris?

Alan Lodinger: Yes. Hadley-Roma has a rep agreement with the Geneva Watch Group, which allows me to rep their brands, including the Kenneth Cole and Tommy Bahama Watches. These brands have proven to be extremely popular with my customers, and in 2013, I received an award from Geneva for the highest expansion of a territory since taking on the line.

In 2013, I also took on Armourlite watches, which was a very unique product. Actually Armourlite watches began as an alternative to Luminox, and initially, retail jewelers weren't interested in selling the product so the target market for these watches were gun stores and tactical stores. Today, Armourlite watches, because of their glow in the dark Tritium tube technology, are highly successful in the retail jewelry industry.

TJAMag: What other products round out your lines?

Continued on Page 20.

10 Minutes with ALAN LODINGER

Continued from Page 18

Alan Lodinger: I carry Lavish Jewelry cleaner, and I personally think it's the best jewelry cleaning product on the market. It not only works great on standard jewelry items (gold, diamonds, silver and gemstones), but also on pearls and porous materials. The fact that jewelers can have the product branded with their store logo, and the unique, fast-acting foam formula make this product an easy one for me to sell my customers.

I also carry a great product called Universal EZ back. It's a patented earring back that comes in 14K Gold or Sterling Silver and encased in silicone which gives a very secure hold to any style of earring. It's a product that every store sells, it comes in 3 sizes, and it's a high margin, high demand item, because it fills an everyday request for my retailers and it is affordable. As a bonus, this company now offers freshwater and Akoya pearls, as well.

The Ande Jewelry product line rounds out my selection, and the ultra-contemporary, fresh look of that line has been a fabulous addition for my retailers. I actually approached Ande Jewelry because I went into a customer's store and saw a Citrine and diamond 14K gold pendant that I thought was really unique and beautiful. I found the company, and asked them if they had any sales reps in my territory. They said they didn't have sales reps, so I was the first one they hired. Within the first 3 weeks of carrying their line, I opened up 13 new accounts, and it just continues to grow.

TJA Mag: What are the biggest changes you've seen over the 30+ years you've been in the jewelry industry?

Alan Lodinger: I'm glad you said "Changes," because I couldn't just name one. I think the first big change I really paid attention to was the transition from yellow to white metals, and now, of course, we're seeing the resurgence of Rose Gold. And of course a big change in merchandising came when gold skyrocketed and jewelers had to source alternative metals to fill the "under \$500" price point.

Branded jewelry brands such as ELLE now play a major role in most stores, and with the high demand for colored stones, the Ande line is a great fit that gives showcases a nice pop of color at affordable prices.

As far as changes in the watch industry, when I started, 18 mm bands for men and 12 mm bands for women were standard. Now the standards have moved to 22 mm for men and 16 mm for women. I'm also seeing a huge increase in rubber and silicone styles, which used to be exclusive to diving watches, now being used in fashion.

I hear a lot of talk about watch sales dwindling because of smart phones, but that isn't what I am seeing, at all. Watches aren't just a timepiece, they are a status symbol, and as long as people are still interested in "Keeping up with the Joneses" watch sales will keep on ticking.

Alan Lodinger is the principle of Alan Lodinger Sales. To find out more about Alan, visit his website at <http://www.AlanLodinger-Sales.com> email him at ALodinger@aol.com or call him at (713) 553-5666.

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