



THE LITTLE BOOK OF COLOURED GEMS AND DIAMONDS

BY INTERNATIONAL GEMSTONES

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INTRODUCTION

The worst way to lose a sale is when you show a lack of knowledge about the product you are selling. It gets worse when it is a high priced profitable piece. This happens regularly with the sale of coloured stones and it is one reason why many more diamonds are sold than gemstones and coloured diamonds.

As part of my commitment to the jewellery community and the sale of coloured gemstones and diamonds, I have put together a short booklet on the advantages of selling coloured gemstones and fancy coloured diamonds. Take your time go through it and build your knowledge of coloured gems and diamonds and how to sell them. It is not a gemology course. It's a guide to put some tools at your fingertips and help you sell colour and to make your business more profitable.

WHO THIS GUIDE IS FOR

While coloured stones were used extensively throughout history, even documented in the Bible, in recent decades the sale of precious stones has shifted towards white diamonds. As a consequence people no longer understand the value and intricacies of coloured stones, failing to understand the underlying points of value between different kinds and colours of stones. As a result anyone in the position of selling coloured stone jewellery find themselves ill equipped to sell something possibly more suited to a customer, as well as being more profitable to the business.

This booklet is a trigger, its aim is to highlight the pros of adding colour to your collections. To show you, that by adding a little colour to your designs the jewellery you will then create will be even more individualistic and innovative. By regularly using coloured gemstones and diamonds may even go so far as to change your attitude to your business. This booklet will also aid you to educate and interact with your customers, and help them or steer them towards the beauty, practicality and quality of owning coloured stone jewellery. After all there is something truly marvellous about a piece of jewellery that contains a coloured gemstone.

With so much already written about the selling of 'white' diamonds the product now virtually sells itself. With this booklet we aim to readdress the balance, and to make the jeweller, the designer and the consumer aware of the enormous potential of selling, owning and wearing stones with colour. Not just coloured diamonds either but emeralds, sapphires and rubies too.



Knowledge

A lack of knowledge will lose you a sale, which is why so many of us opt for selling diamonds, or cheaper gemstones where the price wins the day.

We need knowledge to give our customers confidence.

You can expect that on the whole, that the customer will know a lot less about gemstones and jewellery than you. It is unlikely that you will ever be asked what the Mohs scale of hardness for emerald is. However, while many consumers may not be aware of the Mohs scale, many people are of the mistaken belief that emeralds are very “soft” and therefore many consumers steer clear of emeralds altogether. The same mistaken belief is sometimes held with coloured diamonds too – that there is something wrong with them and that is why they have a colour.

Unfortunately because of this miseducation many consumers by the time they have reached you have already ruled out coloured diamonds and gemstones, they probably won't mention it, they will just steer clear or ignore the coloured stones on offer.

The answer? Education and information, be aware of untrue the old wives tales of soft stones and coloured diamonds and tackle the issue head on. Inform your customer that while some stones are harder than others, if the jewellery that they are used within is cared for in the proper fashion then emeralds can be used in everyday pieces. And that coloured diamonds are just that – coloured. And that a coloured stone offers a unique beauty that is both supremely eye-catching and highly refractive.

Consumers are becoming more and more globally aware too, so there may also be questions on the sourcing of the stones, whether they are ethically sourced and if they are conflict free.

The answer again is of education. If the piece of jewellery in question is a vintage piece, then the sourcing of the stones will probably be unclear. However, on newly mined stones the answer could be that you make every effort to en-

sure that your products are sourced as environmentally and ethically as possible. Certifications that come with the jewellery can also show where the stones have been purchased from, which should put your customers mind at ease. Educate the customer of the differing ways that the diamond and gem industry have gone to avoid conflict diamonds ever reaching the market – such as the Kimberly Process which works globally with governments to track diamonds from mine to market.

It stands to reason that when a customer has confidence in you the seller, the jeweller or designer then they will much more likely to not only buy once from you but return for further purchases. When you and all your staff can demonstrate in-depth knowledge about the gemstones that you are selling, uncertainty and scepticism will no longer be a barrier to a sale.

How colour differs from ‘white’

While coloured stones have been used extensively throughout history, in recent decades gemstone sales have shifted towards colourless diamonds or “white” diamonds.

This drastic change of direction was due to a very clever marketing campaign by De Beers in 1938 “A Diamond is Forever”. And as De Beers at that time controlled the world’s diamond supply and those diamonds were white, the marketing campaign was centred around those colourless diamonds. In subsequent years this campaign remained so strong, that there are many people today that don’t realise that diamonds come in colours other than white. But let’s not vilify De Beers completely, it was after all they, who turned the diamond into a symbol of love and romance, and the diamond engagement ring- even though the concept has been around since medieval time - was also made hugely popular through this campaign. And, as engagement rings are the corner stone to many a jeweller’s bottom line, we can only thank De Beers for their contribution.

However, as a consequence people no longer understand the value and intricacies of coloured stones understand the underlying points of value between different kinds and colours of stones. But times are changing back, more and more people are asking to have coloured stones in their engagement rings, perhaps due to the trend of vintage jewellery where the use of coloured gemstones are the norm. Or perhaps it is due to the glitterati donning the latest top end jewellery designs, which have historically used coloured diamonds and gemstones in their jewellery designs. The resurgence may even be down to the likes of Heidi Klum, Kelly Clarkson, singer Adel and Jennifer Anniston choosing yellow diamonds for their engagement rings. Or our own royalty, most recently Catherine Duchess of Cambridge’s engagement ring being a 12-carat oval blue Ceylon sapphire. Whatever the reason, coloured diamonds and gemstones are back in vogue and certainly look to stay that way.

So the demand is there already, it just needs to be tapped into by us in the industry to capitalize upon it. The first step in marketing and promoting coloured

gemstones and natural coloured diamonds needs to be creating an understanding of how these stones should be valued.



The 4 C's

Thanks to the many millions of advertising pounds spent by De Beers/The DTC and other diamond marketers, most consumers have some understanding of the 4Cs. This is the basic framework for judging the value of white diamonds. The 4C's are:

- Carat (weight)
- Cut (shape and proportions)
- Colour (colourlessness)
- Clarity (lack of inclusions)

With this framework, even a novice consumer can understand that the larger the carat, the better the cut, the cleaner the stone and 'whiter' the colour, the more the stone is worth. Further, with judgement at 10x magnification (common for diamonds), all of these elements can be verified to the nth degree for even the most nervous of clients.

However, coloured gemstones and diamonds don't depend on the same criteria as white diamonds to sell. While Cut, Clarity, Colour and Carat weight are still important, as with other coloured gemstones a coloured diamond's value is most heavily weighted against its colour, as opposed to white diamonds, where the cut proportions and clarity are other primary indications of value. As a general rule, the more intense the colour, the rarer and more valuable the diamond.

With coloured gemstones, the principles are the same, but not so easily quantifiable. This is not to imply that there are no standards. On the contrary, there are several basic points which are used to discern quality for coloured stones. These points are:

Colour

As mentioned above in coloured diamonds the 4C's are important, but there is a different order of that importance, and colour in a coloured diamond is no.1. With coloured stones, the uniformity, beauty and quality of the colour is a pri-

mary determinant of quality and value. Colour is graded on strength of tone, with a stronger tone commanding a higher price, unless it goes too dark and the value is then severely diminished. Colour can vary sharply depending on the origin of the stone and this in turn affects value.

When you are selling the concept of using a colour to your customer, rather than blinding them with science, use terms such as Vibrant, Fiery, Deep, Unique, Warm, Exceptional and Lively. It is much easier to build the image in the customers mind when using these emotive terms. It will help them visualise how it will look in the environment that they will be wearing it. These terms also appeal to the egocentric side of the buyer, Vibrant, Fiery, Deep, Unique, Warm, Exceptional and Lively are all positive personality attributes, who wouldn't want to buy a stone or piece of jewellery that is a reflection of their personality?

Carat

Bigger stones are consistently considered more valuable than smaller ones. This is true to a point. If all the other elements are at their maximum, best colour, fantastic cut, exceptional clarity, then smaller stones can be more valuable than those that are not.

Cut

With coloured stones, the intricacy of the cut does not affect the beauty and the reflection of light of the stone in the same way that it will for a 'white' diamond or coloured diamond. Coloured stones have their own natural "glow", which is only enhanced by the quality and style of the stone's cut. A simple cut can showcase the high points of a coloured stone just as well as a complex cut. Unlike diamonds, a higher number of facets will not influence the values of the stone. In fact sometimes it may detract from the potential beauty of the stone.

Coloured diamonds are affected by cut in a similar way as 'white' diamonds, but still the most important factor of the stone is how it looks.

Clarity

Clarity refers to the stone's lack of inclusions. It is worth noting that inclusions in coloured stones are exceptionally common and only influence the price of a stone to a degree. Unless the stone is eye clean, or loupe clean, which can fetch a much higher price, conversely opaque stones will be a lot cheaper.

Generally, clarity is measured with the naked eye, unless looking at very fine natural stones where the inclusions (or lack thereof) can tell you a lot about the origin. While emeralds almost always have inclusions, especially larger stones, these do not inherently devalue the stone.

Try to avoid using diamond talk when selling jewellery with gemstones and be quick to explain to your customer that gemstones are generally more included than diamonds and that is why we don't describe them in the same way.

Treatments

Disclosure

Whether the gemstone is natural or not, all information pertinent to any enhancement process done to a natural gemstone must be disclosed when:

- a. the treatment is not permanent and its effects are lost over time (eg oil in emeralds); or
- b. the treatment creates special care requirements for the gemstone to retain the benefit of the treatment (eg oil in emeralds); or
- c. the treatment has a significant effect on the value of the gemstone (eg heat treatment in rubies and sapphires, or oil, or resin in emeralds, or irradiation in diamonds).

Generally speaking, most gemstones undergo some treatment process. I would go so far as to say that it is normal for rubies, sapphires and emeralds to have undergone some treatment or another and is quite acceptable.

For rubies and sapphires the most common treatment is heating. The stone is still 100% natural, but inclusions and colour impurities have been removed or reduced, or in some cases enhanced through heating at high temperature. Any further heating, especially on rubies, involves a glass like material being introduced this will melt at extremely high temperatures and fill any surface reaching cracks in the stone making it more stable, bright and clean.

On the whole emeralds undergo an oiling process. This is generally done using natural or synthetic oils and is used to fill any surface reaching crack (very common in emeralds). Natural oils will tend to dry up over time, whereas synthetic ones are permanent.

All treatments that artificially enhance colour must be declared!

Stones that have an amazing look, but have not undergone any treatment at all, are extremely rare, very expensive and are usually accompanied by at least one certificate to prove this fact.

For Natural coloured diamonds, there should be no colour or purity enhancements. If there are, this must be made clear from the beginning.

Origin

The origin of a gemstone can greatly affect its value. It is more important in rubies, sapphires and emeralds than in coloured diamonds, with the exception of pink Argyle diamonds.

This will be discussed at greater length with each gemstone.

Being able to quickly and succinctly explain the value of these points will give your customer confidence in your understanding of the product and may win you a sale.

GEMSTONE FACTS

Ask the average consumer to name a precious gemstone and diamond will typically be the first stone mentioned. However, there are four stones that are generally given the gemstone designation, diamond white and coloured, Ruby, Emerald and Sapphire, by mentioning this to the customer, the white diamond is intermingled with the other coloured diamonds and gemstones which then naturally widens the imagination for the customer, by doing this it makes it far easier to then introduce the idea or concept of using a coloured gemstone in the place of the white diamond.



Ruby



The ruby is the red variety of the mineral corundum (aluminium oxide), with its red hues caused by the traces of chromium. It is the second hardest naturally occurring gem. Rubies are generally treated and cut before they are mounted and sold, with heat treatments being the most common method used. However you must be comfortable and trusting of your supplier as synthetic enhancements are widespread. As a rule of thumb: if the price of a stone is too good to be true, get a second opinion.

Rubies are primarily graded on colour, cut, carat and origin. Natural rubies have imperfections known as rutile crystals, which separate them from synthetic rubies. Although rubies have shading variations and underlying tones, the 'pigeon's blood' red colour of Burma is considered the most valuable.

Rubies have traditionally been mined in Southeast Asia, especially Thailand, Burma, and Cambodia and more recently in central and eastern Africa, in Tanzania and Mozambique.

Ruby Facts

Hardness 9

Red and bright red, also with secondary hues of pink, orange and violet and brown.

Pure red rubies and red rubies with some secondary hue are most desirable.

Flawless rubies are extremely rare. Small amounts of typical rutile inclusions can improve the colour of the stone by breaking up and scattering the light throughout the stone.

Eye visible inclusions are acceptable. Heating to improve colour; very common and accepted.

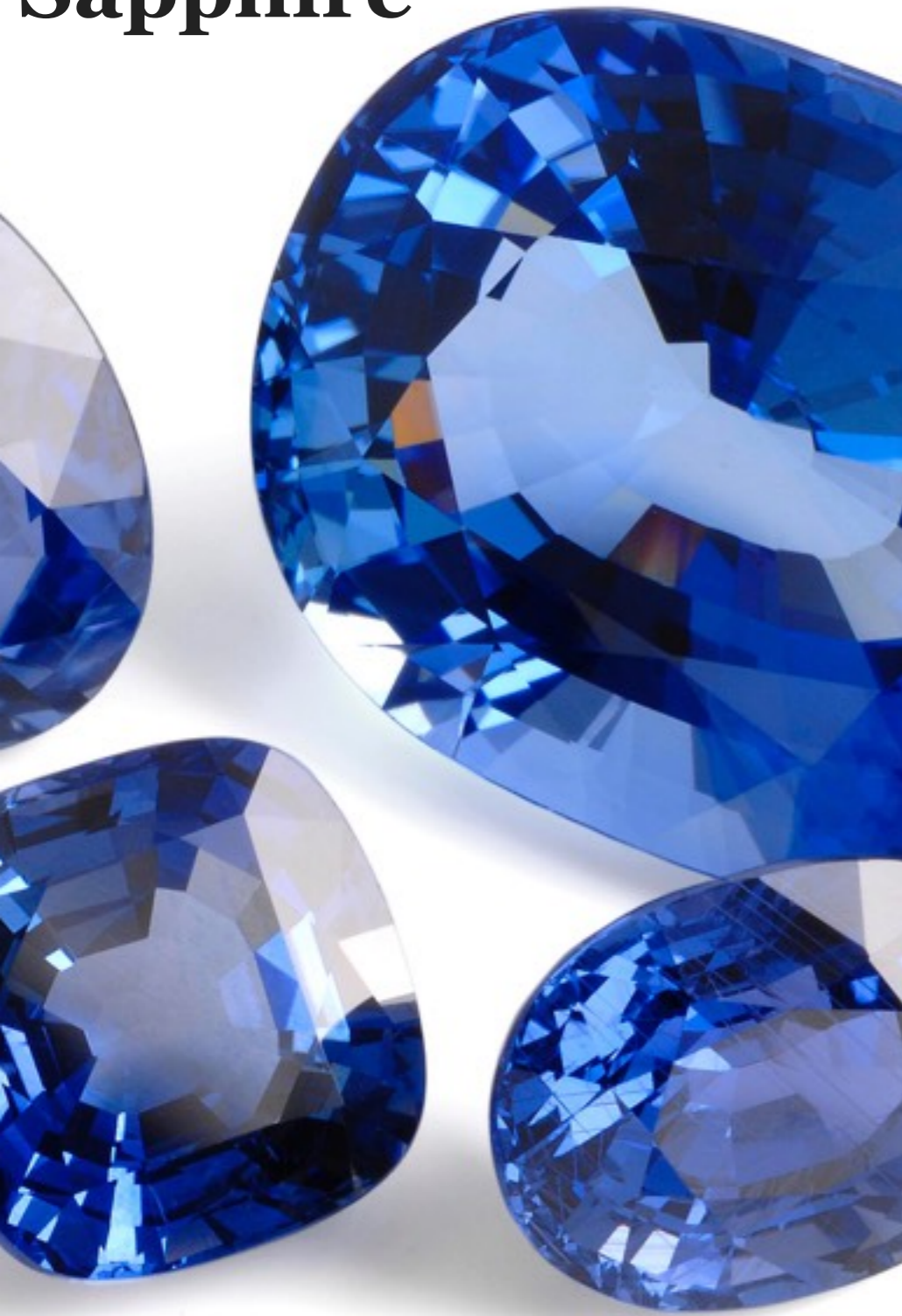
Fracture, fission or cavity filling with artificial materials such as glass. This type of treatment is very common and it helps, but must be disclosed as a heat treatment.

Ruby Origins:

AFRICA: Mozambique, Tanzania Madagascar

ASIA: Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, Sri Lanka

Sapphire



The sapphire is also a member of the corundum family, and in general any corundum that is not red will be labelled a sapphire. Besides blue, other common shades are yellow, pink, purple, orange and green. These shades are less highly valued than the truly prized blue form of the stone.

As colouration of the stone varies greatly, sapphires are primarily valued based on carat weight, hue and then clarity and origin. Depending on the market and the client, the level of value assigned to a given shade will vary. Sapphires can be natural (simply extracted from the ground and polished) or colour enhanced, with natural stones obviously commanding the higher price tag.

Origin of a sapphire can greatly influence the value of it, especially if they are rich blue and clean. Kashmir sapphires fetch the highest prices in this form and are exceptionally rare. Burma is next followed by Sri Lanka.

It is wise to explore colour trends of the sapphire. Lighter colours alternate with darker stones for market preference. At the moment, Vivid Royal Blue, both heated and not, command the highest prices generally speaking. Cornflower blue is the colour used to describe the colour of a sapphire from Kashmir and in fancy coloured sapphires, a rare colour shading of salmon-

pink with orange undertones, known as Padparadscha, is commanding high values in its natural and untreated state.

Most sapphires, regardless of hue, will receive heat treatment. Diffusion treatments can enhance the hue, but are not universally accepted as a good option. If diffusion is used it must be disclosed and this can reduce the value of the sapphire.

Sapphires are traditionally found in South-east Asia and Australia. Lesser mines exist in Africa, China, and the United States.

Blue Sapphire Facts

Hardness 9

Blue, also with secondary hues of violet and green. Pure blue sapphires and blue sapphires with some violet hue are most desirable.

Colour in Blue Sapphire occurs in zones: rich colour alternating with colourless areas. Sapphires that show zones with the loupe, (x10 magnification) may be perfectly eye clean. Stone cutters try to reduce the effect of zoning and thus stones can appear uneven, although this can be masked in the setting. Symmetry faults in sapphire are accepted, especially if they are below the girdle.

Heating to improve colour; common.

Fancy Coloured Sapphire



Blue Sapphires with the very best of all three: colour, clarity and cut are rare.

An unheated Blue Sapphire is more desirable and commands a higher price.

Origins of Sapphire

Kashmir: Exceptionally Rare

Burma: Very rare

Sri Lanka: More Common

Africa: Madagascar Nigeria, Tanzania

Fancy Coloured Sapphires

Facts

Hardness 9

Usually more inclusions than other sapphires

Usually heated.

The factors that influence price for fancy coloured sapphires are depth and desirability of colour, clarity and the general appearance of the stone.

Pink, Purple, Orange and Green Sapphire

Pink Sapphires usually have more inclusions, Padparadscha Sapphire (pinkish orange)

Yellow Sapphire: Colourless and pale yellow sapphire may be irradiated to produce a deep yellow colour. This can fade in sun-

light. Treated yellow sapphire is difficult to distinguish from natural yellow sapphire.

Again, stress the romanticism behind the sapphire to aid the sale. Sapphires are the birthstone for September. Sapphires have been prized as great gemstones since 800BC. Rulers of ancient Persia believed the sky was painted blue by the reflection of sapphire stones. The sapphire symbolises purity and wisdom and was traditionally a favourite stone for kings and priests.

Emerald



Emerald is a member of the Beryl family, given its green hues primarily by chromium in the stone. Emeralds are one of the more highly included of the precious stones. For this reason, consistent strength of the stones can be an issue and they should be carefully cut and mounted.

Emeralds are primarily valued on hue, clarity, size and origin. Colombian emeralds are more desirable than Zambian emeralds and tend to fetch a higher price on a like for like basis.

While emeralds may have a number of colourations for an undertone their primary green generates the highest value. Additionally, emeralds are not graded at a loupe magnification but rather by eye, so an emerald without flaws visible to the naked eye is considered flawless even if fissures appear under magnification. An emerald that is flawless under the magnification is exceptionally rare and very valuable

Due to fissures, inclusions, and tonal variations, emeralds are almost universally treated prior to marketing. Generally, an oil treatment is used, with cedar oil being the most traditional, although a number of synthetics compete with it at present as they tend to be permanent, while natural oils will dry out. Treatment can have a dramatic effect on the look of a stone, but discerning

consumers will insist on a treatment report. Heavily treated stones will be worth less than one that has not, all other things being equal.

Emerald Facts

Hardness 7.5

Almost all Emeralds contain inclusions. Inclusions are important and help to determine where the stone is from as well as to confirm that it is natural.

Colour Green, also with secondary hues of yellow or blue. The purer the green the finer the stone.

Emeralds are also a brittle stone and usually contain fissures and are easily chipped. This brittleness should also have an influence on design and setting.

Most emeralds are treated with colourless oil or polymer resin. This improves the appearance of fractures.

Dyeing is also a common treatment in some areas, but it is much less acceptable and should be disclosed.

Emeralds are brittle so care is needed. Avoid: Sudden temperature changes and heat, which can cause fracturing in included stones and evaporation of fillers and colours. Detergents and chemicals. Ultra-

sonic and steam cleaners. Knocks and bumps. Cleaners will remove oil coatings and also dyes if these have been used.

Fine emeralds are rare in any size.

Eye clean Emeralds over 1 ct are very rare.

Main Origins: Colombia - More Desirable. Zambia - Made more popular by Gemfields. Afghanistan - Supplies very small stones to the market

Yes emeralds are not as hard as the other gemstones, but they can still be used in creating and adding style to jewellery. Like with the other gemstones paint the picture of the emerald so that the customer buys into the romantic virtues of the stone, thus making it easier to sell. Emeralds are the birthstone for May. Since ancient times the emerald has been viewed as a symbol of rebirth, as was believed to grant the owner foresight, good fortune, and youth. To the ancient Romans, emeralds were dedicated to the goddess Venus because the green emerald symbolized the reproductive forces of nature. Early Christians saw it as a symbol of the resurrection of Christ. In the Middle Ages, emeralds were believed to hold the power to foretell the future.

Fancy Coloured Diamonds



The diamond is considered to be the ultimate precious gemstone for many consumers. It is carbon, stable, and one of the hardest substances known to man. While they do come in a variety of colours, the colourless diamond is the standard bearer for this category of stone.

Diamonds are graded on the 4C's as mentioned, and their value is enhanced by the desirability of the stone in business (demand for) and romantic (desire for) settings. Exclusivity in the trade, processing and marketing of diamonds also increases their price.

This exclusivity creates a market for imitation, fraud, and trickery, so certificates of authenticity, and assessment at 10x magnification are common for the stone.

N a t u r a l F a n c y C o l o u r e d D i a m o n d s

While white diamonds certainly have the spotlight when it comes to consumer demand, stepping outside the mass market opens up a glittering display of natural coloured diamonds. Reserved for the connoisseur consumer, these stones have been making quite a comeback.

Natural coloured diamonds come in every colour imaginable, but the market leaders

at the moment according to the Natural Coloured Diamond Association are:

Brown Diamonds

Brown diamonds have generally been re-branded to the more consumer friendly colours chocolate or cinnamon. Nearly £9 billion worth of stones in this shade are sold annually. The largest cut natural diamond, the Golden Jubilee, was a 545 carat present to the King of Thailand that took three years to polish. Brown is a very versatile colour and goes with most skin tones. It is also a colour that works very well for men. Brown diamonds are at the more reasonably priced range of the spectrum.

Yellow Diamonds

Pure, rich yellows are more valued than the lighter hues, although all tones are credited with enhancing the wearer's aura. Yellow diamonds are primarily found in Africa, and the first diamond ever authenticated on the continent was a yellow stone. Fashion designers, and celebrities are all fans of yellow diamonds. Yellow diamonds are more expensive than browns and the more vivid colours can cost more than colourless diamonds.

Pink Diamonds

Pink diamonds are quite rare, the best pink diamonds, and in fact more pink diamonds originate from the Argyle mine in Australia. Dwindling supplies have led to very high prices. Full-bodied pinks are more precious than paler hues. Red diamonds are amongst the most expensive in the world.

Blue Diamonds

Blue diamonds are produced mainly from the Cullinan mine in Pretoria. The famous Hope diamond is a lovely example, and the stone gained mass market awareness when a blue diamond necklace was featured in the movie Titanic. Both light and dark hues are valued, as long as there is good lustre in the stone and a minimum of inclusions.

Diamonds come in reds, oranges, greens, and black.

Colour Grading Of Fancy Coloured Diamonds

Grading fancy coloured diamonds requires skill and expertise. Stones are graded from the side and face up, looking through the top of the diamond. Reaching instinctively for the rules of the 4Cs will not work as well as one might think. As fancy coloured diamonds are inherently just that - coloured - there are a number of factors

related to hue and tone that go into the judgement of the stone's value.

Strength of colour

In general, the stronger the colour, the more rare and expensive the stone is perceived to be. The industry generally uses six levels of colour strength rating. The strongest colour is Vivid, then Fancy Deep, Fancy Intense, Fancy, Fancy Light and Light.

Dominant colour

The dominant colour is the most obvious colour visible in the diamond. This will affect the price category the stone is considered under. Even though a stone may appear one colour it may only be a secondary colour you are identifying.

Secondary tones

There is also the issue of secondary tones – for each colour, some secondary shade is usually present, which can enhance the uniqueness of the stone, or detract from it. How valued the secondary tone will be is dependent on both the rarity of the tone and its perception in the eyes of the buyer. For instance, a brownish pink stone will be much more than a pinkish brown.

Clarity

As with colourless diamonds, the clarity of the stone and its colour dramatically affect value.

The standard Diamond Clarity Grading Scale is used, but for large stones independent certification is often demanded by consumers.

Consumer perception

This is the least quantifiable of the colour gradients, yet it is a factor in final sales. Whatever the colour of the stone, it must be treasured and valued by the consumer for a transaction to take place.

Treatment

As with all stones, there are treatments and enhancements that if you are aware of, you might be happy about (treated blues, pinks and yellows are not uncommon), but if you are not, the treatment can be very deceptive. My advice would be to ask for a certificate, if only to show it is natural. For smaller stones you should trust your supplier and hope they work through a trusted network.



GEM REPORTS AND LABS

When working with coloured gemstones and diamonds, it is important to be able to have the stones independently evaluated, principally to tell you if the stones have undergone any treatments that may affect their value. Naturally, as a jeweller, or a retailer one must protect against fraud and maintain a high quality stock. Consumers also frequently demand certificates and lab verifications of value points on stones, especially for larger or more expensive pieces. Thus, familiarity with the major laboratories and certificates issued is key for success.

Laboratories generally use their own proprietary methods to evaluate stones. Some discrepancies do exist between lab ratings, especially on fine colour evaluation work. However, the top seven laboratories worldwide are currently in partnership on a Laboratory Manual Harmonisation Committee (LMHC), which aims to reduce differ-

ences and move toward a true international standard. These laboratories are:

- American Gem Trade Association – Gem Trade Lab (AGTA – GTL)
- Gemmological Association of All Japan (GAAJ)
- Gemmological Institute of America (GIA)
- Gemmological Institute of Thailand (GIT)
- Gübelin Gem Lab, Switzerland (Oft considered the definitive on coloured gemstones)
- Swiss Gemmological Institute (SSEF)

The International Gemmological Institute (IGI) is another well-reputed independent evaluator for diamonds and the Gem Research Swisslab (GRS) for coloured gemstones are not affiliated with this group, but held in high esteem like the Gübelin for definitive judgements.

Which Labs to Use

In terms of reporting, for coloured diamonds, there is one main laboratory that issues reports on over 95% of the world's certificated diamonds and that is the GIA. The other lab commonly in use for diamonds and coloured diamonds is IGI and there is an Argyle issue a certificate of authenticity on pink diamonds to show their origins are bonafide (there is an additional premium for pink diamonds with Argyle certificates). Their main job is essentially threefold for a coloured diamond. The first is to tell you if it is natural or treated, the second is to offer you a colour description and the third is to give you a clarity description.

There are two main reports which can be issued following an evaluation of a stone by a laboratory. "Colour Only" merely evaluates the tones and strength of the colour, or a full report which adds clarity and cut grading.

For gemstones, it is slightly different. Most of the testing falls to the Swiss who have made a name for themselves in this field.

The main labs to consider here are GRS, by far the biggest, Gubelin, essential for very high value stones, SSEF, good for emeralds, AGL and GIA essential for the United States. There are lots more local laboratories, that can generally tell you whether a stone is treated or not and might have an opinion on the origin of a gemstone, but any stone over a certain value will need to be accompanied by one or more of the labs listed above.

Whilst cut is secondary in a gemstone, the purpose of a Gemstone reports is to tell you a. where the stone is from, b. what treatment it has undergone and c. offer a colour description. There are now a

few colour descriptions for coloured stones that will enhance the value of a stone dramatically. They are pigeon's blood and vivid red for rubies and vivid royal blue and to some extent cornflower blue for sapphires. For Emeralds it's the presence of oils, or lack of that will have a big influence on price, especially for Colombian stones.



SELLING GEMSTONES AND COLOURED DIAMONDS

All the information about coloured gemstones and diamonds is worthless without sales. To move coloured gemstones and diamonds, it is important to be mindful of the consumer's needs, the value points of the stone, and the overall relationship. Below are a few points to consider as the next sales opportunity approaches.

The first thing I would try to ascertain in any sale is a budget and a preference to any colour or size. Once this has been established you can find a stone for your customer.

How to Fit a Stone to a Budget

Unlike 'white' diamonds, coloured gemstones have a wide variety of price points for even large sizes. There are also more possibilities for substitution of similarly shaded stones of different mineral families. Thus, fitting a coloured stone to a budget can be an easier prospect than it may seem. This could be a top selling point from you the seller to the consumer.

1. Adjust the colour saturation

A Fancy Vivid is much more expensive than a Fancy, but the difference to a consumer's eyes may not be worth the difference in price. Colour variations may mean much more to a gemologist than to the final recipient of the stone.

2. Monitor secondary tones

The undertones can make the stone more attractive to the buyer for reasons completely unrelated to value. Indifference to undertones can also help one move a reluctant client to a more affordable range with no loss of honour.

3. Offer different stones of the same hue.

A champagne diamond is much more expensive than a champagne tourmaline, while preserving the look of the piece for the client. When colour is more important than the trade name of the stone in question, it can be quite simple to make a match between budget

and stone. Tell the customer it's up to them if they want to let anyone in on the secret of using a slightly cheaper stone as the naked eye would never be able to discern the difference.

4. Same stone, slightly different size.

While the customer may not appreciate the difference between a 6 or 7mm stone the price difference between one and over one carat is huge. Check with your customer what they value and where they are prepared to compromise. A clever setting of the stone can also make the stone look slightly bigger too.

Why Selling Coloured Stones Helps Profitability

Including coloured stones in your retail offerings is an excellent way to preserve and improve profitability.

There are four main ways coloured gemstones boost one's bottom line:

1. Buying Opportunities

Colourless stones, for all their prevalence, are considered rare occasion items by the general market. Engagements, weddings, and anniversaries are the dominant themes. Even jewellery lovers regard them as limited items, and they are worn more predominantly by women than men.

Coloured stones, on the other hand, are popular with both genders. Furthermore, they are not bound by romantic connotations to be limited occasion items. As all occasion items that can be freely exchanged between genders and age groups, coloured stones provide consumers with more buying opportunities.

As we have mentioned above, many coloured stones have cultural annotations. As birthstones, symbols of friendship, and health enhancers, they provide a broader market for sales. Experienced marketers will find many reasons to show potential clients trays of coloured stones where a traditional diamond piece simply wouldn't do. The more you find out about your customer the easier it will be to pick and tell a certain meaning or tradition that surrounds a particular coloured stone.

2. Variety

Coloured stones provide infinite variety for the consumer. They can be matched to outfits, serve as accent pieces, or simply be sold in multiple shade of the same favoured pattern.

Unfortunately for this industry, there is no 'De Beers' pumping in millions of dollars into marketing coloured stones, although Gemfields is attempting to take this slot. There are pluses and minuses to this situation that create opportunities on the one hand and difficulties on the other.

The principle opportunities are that coloured stones cannot be priced (specifically) and therefore are not easily comparable. This gives you an opportunity to make selling coloured stones a more profitable element of your business. The downside is that because no one is spending millions of pounds marketing them, you have to become educated and motivated into selling them yourself.

3. Done well, it is very worthwhile.

The variations in colour also provide opportunities for sales, especially for those clients who like to have "all" of a given style. The

stones can become collectors' items or conversation pieces. Creative types will rise to the occasion.

4. High Value Pieces

Carat by carat, rare coloured stones command exceptional prices. Moving only a few pieces each year can provide good income as a primary revenue stream or as a supplemental income stream. At the higher end of the market, the upper limits remain undefined and margins are quite healthy for those who can match the perfect stone to an eager client.



CONCLUSION

Thank you for taking the time to read this guide. I hope it has helped you better understand the world of precious coloured gems and give you more confidence in speaking about them and selling them to your customers.

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If you have any comments or suggestions relating to this or any of the other guides, please email me personally at richard@thegembank.com

This guide is one of a series of guides designed to help people in the jewellery trade gain confidence in selling coloured gems. Go to www.thegembank.com/guides to see a full list.