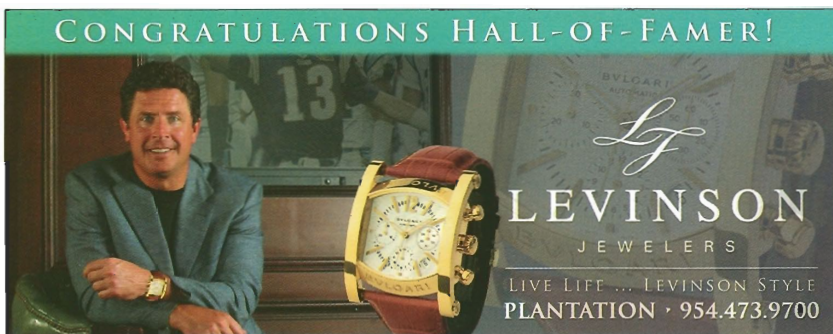


# The Fame Game

Celebrities bring instant excitement to your store. But how to get a piece of the limelight?

**POPULARITY BY ASSOCIATION.** It's a big reason why brands have become such a hot commodity in modern jewelry stores — if you've got big names your customers recognize, your store automatically gains cachet. But while being associated with jewelry brands can be impressive, nothing brings your

store more recognition than a connection with celebrities, be they local (a professional sports team) or national (actors or sports stars). The principle is simple ... but how to build that relationship? It's no walk in the park, but here are a few retailers who have done it — each in their own inimitable way.



## 1 LEVINSON JEWELERS PLANTATION, FL

Hall of Fame quarterback Dan Marino, NBA superstar Dwyane Wade, actor Paul Sorvino... for Levinson Jewelers, having celebrities like these in the store is almost old hat. But owner Mark Levinson appreciates every one of them — and he knows there's no magic wand to make them appear. "You can't just pick up the phone, call their agent, and make a deal," says Levinson. "That's for Coca-Cola. We don't have that kind of money."

Moreover, says Levinson, celebrities like these don't need anything material that an independent jeweler has to offer. "They have the money to buy anywhere they want. They don't need you for that. They don't need you as a friend."

So how did it work for Levinson's? Community involvement. Mark and his wife, Robin, have been involved in

many different South Florida charities for years. Through their efforts, they came into contact with many like-minded celebrities — people who wanted to cross-promote their own foundations with the Levinsons' efforts.

"To build a lasting relationship with any celebrity, you have to bond with them first," explains Levinson. "That comes through networking with them as customers or charitable involvement."

And sometimes, a little luck doesn't hurt. Way back in 1984, during his rookie season, Dan Marino brought his fiancée, Claire, into the store to purchase wedding bands.

They've supported Levinson Jewelers ever since, even serving as spokespeople for the "Live Life Levinson Style" campaign since



2001. The Marinos appear on billboards, print ads, television ads, and events in the store. "The PR value is immeasurable," says marketing president Kip Hunter-Epstein.

## 2 ROBBINS DIAMONDS PHILADELPHIA, PA

With five locations in the Greater Philadelphia region and 57 years in business, there aren't many folks in Philly who don't recognize "the man with the diamond in his beard," Jerry Robbins. Especially since he became a cartoon character.

In March of this year, 69 year-old Jerry Robbins, the face of the company for decades, was transformed into an animated character named "Li'l Jerry" for use in TV commercials and Internet advertising. Shortly thereafter, Robbins turned the character into a full-fledged mascot costume. He then struck a deal with Comcast Sports Net to have a major presence at the home games of both the NBA's Philadelphia 76ers and the NHL's Philadelphia Flyers, both owned by Comcast.



"We specialize in the bridal business, so our market is men aged 18 to 35," says

Robbins. "Our new media buyer advised us to capitalize on the sports market. We decided to go the extra mile and have our own mascot at the games."

Li'l Jerry has been a huge hit, although he missed most of the basketball and hockey seasons this year. "This isn't just a guy in a suit... there's a professional entertainer in there," says Robbins. "He can dance, he's got great moves and great rapport with the crowd." The Flyers don't have their own mascot, so Li'l Jerry sometimes took the ice, to the crowd's amusement. But Robbins didn't stop there. A video ring runs around the interior of Wachovia Center, home of both the Flyers and the Sixers. During commercial breaks, the Li'l Jerry cartoon runs around the ring kicking up animated diamonds.

The huge success of the new campaign already has other local teams ringing Robbins' line. "We've been approached by the Phillies and the Eagles now, but it would be too expensive to do them all," says Robbins.