



Timing Is Everything

**WHY YOU SHOULD CONSIDER STOCKING
THIS TIMELESS, YET PROFITABLE ITEM**

BY ROBYN VOLKE

Well, maybe timing isn't everything. But in a world where most folks are surrounded by their cell phones, digital displays in their cars and the clocks on their computers, it sure seems to count for something. Utilitarian—to keep your day on track—watches are now seen as self-adornment, a fashion statement, a gift or the right accessory to an outfit, whether it's a cocktail dress or jeans and boots. Especially for men, whose jewelry is a little more limited, watches are becoming a status symbol, collectible and even an heirloom to pass on to future generations.

Marketresearch.com reports that the watch market has successfully repositioned itself as a fashion category, driven by younger consumers who are purchasing numerous watches as wardrobe accessories. Montana Silversmiths, a leading western manufacturer, has research suggesting that over 59 percent of consumers wear different watches for different occasions, and most own an average of three watches. The research also suggests that 35 percent of folks purchased a new watch within the last year. If your store doesn't stock watches, you might be missing out on a profitable category.

According to cbsnews.com, Americans spent over \$5.9 billion

on watches in 2006. Why miss out on your portion of that market by letting your shoppers go to the mall for their watches? You can offer them the style they want along with a sense of their western lifestyle affiliation. No matter what clientele you attract, there is a watch style and price point to fit your product lines. From a luxury Swiss watch encrusted with diamonds to an artist-created, jewelry-style watch or a trendy fashion watch, manufacturers have an array of new models to entice shoppers. If your store isn't up to date on trends and selection, it may be time to add a new and lucrative item to your store inventory.

Bohlin

Bohlin is synonymous with classic western luxury watches. Many a successful businessman wears his Bohlin as a status symbol and sign of his success. This is no surprise, since the owner of Bohlin came from Cartier, arguably one of the most well-known luxury watchmakers in the world. Andrew Wilson, national sales manager for Bohlin, describes its pieces as "timeless heritage pieces, not trendy" and remarks that its designs are 18 to 24 months from idea to manufacture. Bohlin prides itself on creating pieces that are elegant and look just as great in a city boardroom as on the ranch.

Wilson says that while Bohlin's pieces are classic, he does see a trend toward more engraving on the bracelets and slightly larger cases for both men and women. For women, his bestseller is a mother-of-pearl face with diamonds, and Bohlin offers a popular chronograph style for men. All of Bohlin's watches are made in Switzerland by the highest caliber of watchmakers, and all their engraving is done by hand. This attention to detail and quality creates an heirloom luxury piece that definitely makes a statement about the wearer. Wilson sees the watches as being a gift for a milestone accomplishment such as a marriage or anniversary or even a reward for attaining a personal or corporate goal.

Catena

Catena has been creating equestrian-themed watches with fine Swiss craftsmanship for over 55 years. Recognized for its unique horse-shoe-shaped cases, Catena is now offering a stirrup-themed case as well. Bill Kraft, from Catena USA, says that the Catena watches allow wearers to "make a unique lifestyle statement" while owning a watch that can go with any outfit in their closet. Catena's classic designs can be accommodated with exotic leather or stainless bands and accented with up to 134 diamonds. Kraft sees trends in

◀ The men's Equis Automatic watch from Catena offers Swiss ETA movement, a crisp white dial and a sapphire crystal face on a genuine crocodile band for understated style your male customers will love.



◀ Edward H. Bohlin Company has released automatic and chronograph men's watches. Each hand-engraved watch is water resistant to 500 feet and features a 40-millimeter case, sapphire glass and brushed rosewood case back. Shown are the alligator band with a hand-engraved crocodile buckle and hand-engraved stainless bracelet.



larger watches for women and two-toned gold and rose gold watches for both men and women. His current bestseller is a white mother-of-pearl face with a two-toned gold bracelet for women and a chronograph style for men.

Montana Silversmiths

Montana Silversmiths is a very familiar name to most western stores. Judy Wagner, director of marketing for Montana Silversmiths, says the company has between 80 and 90 styles of watches to suit any taste and has been successfully marketing western watches for over 20 years. Its classic watch style with silver on top of a leather band has been a perennial bestseller for both men and women since the company's beginning. While Montana Silversmiths continues to do well with its classic watches, Wagner says that the company is also offering a "bling" watch for women with a bit of sparkle to the face and is updating watch designs with new images on the faces, stone embellishments and bracelet watches for the ladies. Montana Silversmiths is also proud to offer a "Tough Enough to Wear Pink" watch to support breast cancer awareness.



▲ The women's gold leaf filigree cuff watch from Montana Silversmiths features a gold and silver electroplated filigree design with hand-painted details. The timepiece has quartz movement with gold-toned hour markers and hands and is accented with a gold-toned bezel. One size fits most.



▶ The classic timepiece: this silver engraved pocket watch from Montana Silversmiths features a stainless steel casing set with a silver- and gold-plated inset with a quarter horse head figure. Each is battery-operated with quartz movement and includes a chain.



◀ Cowboy Collectibles watches are made from finely woven horsehair attached to a genuine leather band. Each of the water-resistant Legacy watches is finished with handcrafted sterling silver end caps and buckle and contains a long-life battery. This ladies' model features a toggle closure.

▶ Still one of the most popular, the Original is Rocky Mountain Watch's first watch. Its traditional white enamel dial with luminous numbers exemplifies the true western style of the Rocky Mountains. The leaf and scroll patterns of single-point engraver Ernie Lytle highlight the simple elegance of this durable, time-tested watch.



Wagner feels that Montana watches are an easy integration into existing store offerings, and Montana Silversmiths has given extra thought to merchandising. Many of the watches are packaged in collectible tins showcasing artwork by Paul Cameron Smith, an artist best known for his pencil drawings and sculptures depicting cowboys and western themes. These tins are eye catching and draw attention to a watch display. While always a great gift idea, Wagner thinks that watches are often spur-of-the-moment purchases, especially when already conveniently packaged in a tin.

With a variety of styles available, there is sure to be a watch manufacturer that creates pieces that fit with your store and customer, whether you have a high-end luxury boutique or a local tack and feed store. Your customers are always on the lookout for great gift ideas or something special to add to their own accessory collection, and western lifestyle enthusiasts appreciate ways to highlight their interests in a subtle way, whether they spend their day in an ergonomic

desk chair or a saddle. By incorporating a new style of western watches or a whole new product category of timepieces to your store, you might be surprised that timing could be indeed be everything. ☞

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▼ The Snaffle Bangle collection from A Horse of Course is a classic for any season with stainless snaffle bit detail over a colorful leather-wrapped band. Other features include Japanese quartz movement, a scratch-resistant mineral crystal face and a stainless steel caseback. The watch comes in fuschia, pearl white, pumpkin, black or chocolate.



▲ This chic ladies' wristwatch from Vogt dresses up a smooth black leather band and hand-engraved sterling buckle with hand-set sterling beads and twisted rope accents. An easy favorite for the stylish woman.



RETAILER RESOURCES

A Horse of Course
Apex, N.C.
919-647-4583
www.a-horseofcourse.com

Bohlin
Dallas, Texas
800-823-8340
www.bohlinmade.com

Catena
Tioga, Texas
888-991-2277
www.catenausa.com

Cowboy Collectibles
Hungry Horse, Mont.
877-920-9961
www.cowboy-gifts.com

Montana Silversmiths
Columbus, Mont.
800-634-4830
www.montanasilversmiths.com

Rocky Mountain Watch Company
Livingston, Mont.
866-591-4828
www.rockymountainwatch.com

Vogt
Woodland, Calif.
800-344-7457
www.vogtsilversmiths.com