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## A Big Space for Privacy, Please

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Lauren Kulchinsky Levison, like so many others in the industry, keeps reading all the stories about stores going out of business.

Just last week, I recounted the latest figures from the Jewelers Board of Trade; in the third quarter, **318 retail jewelers/repairers closed down**, for reasons that have been recounted multiple times here and in other publications: internet competition, changing consumers, the shrinking middle class and aging store owners among them.

**“If you just keep putting in the same old, you’re going to get the same old. There’s a big difference between routine and commitment.” --Lauren Kulchinsky Levison, Mayfair Jewelers**

Just today, we wrote about another independent jeweler shutting down--**Washington Jewelers**, a Main Street mainstay in North Carolina that opened in October 1962.

That makes it only slightly younger than Levison’s family’s store, Mayfair Jewelers, which is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year. (As an interesting bit of trivia, the store got its name from the first shopping center it was located in, the Mayfair, after the family moved the business from Manhattan’s Lower East Side to Long Island in the 1950s.)

Levison knows, however, that if they want to stick around for another six decades, they have to start doing some things differently. The retail landscape is changing, and her family's business has to evolve along with it.

"If you just keep putting in the same old, you're going to get the same old," she said. "There's a big difference between routine and commitment."

Levison said on these days, customers come in with their wedding or evening gowns and she helps them pair jewelry with their dresses. Her father, Dan Kulchinsky, and her brother, Justin, take private appointments too, and she also does at-home appointments in which she helps clients style their entire wardrobes with jewelry and accessories.

But her father recently started on a new line of thinking--collaborate, elaborate, liberate--that resulted in the retailer making a commitment to lease 3,000 square feet of industrial space.

Located not far from their store, Levison said they will build out the space to function as a private appointment and event venue, one that they can turn into whatever they want for their clients.

If it's a client who loves wine, then they'll be in their wine dream, she explained. If fashion is there passion, then it'll be a fashion dream; if they're coming in for an engagement ring or wedding-day jewelry, then the theme can be bridal.

She envisions the space, which can handles as many as three appointments at once, changing to accommodate each customer and to hold special events, like fashion talks or catered dinner parties themed around specific jewelry designers, like an amazing Italian meal to celebrate Antonini.

Kulchinsky said she expects the space will be open by April, and I am anxious to see it. (I'm angling for an invitation to the event that involves the Italian food, or any food really.)

Interestingly enough, right before I spoke to Levison last Monday, I was interviewing Susan Eisen, **a jeweler in El Paso, Texas**, for our **first holiday sales roundup of the year**.

Toward the end of the interview when I was asking about her store's holiday hours, she said that she currently was open on Sundays by appointment only, but would be opening up to all customers as Christmas get closer.

As a side note, she mentioned how much she enjoys her private appointments because they are just that, private. She can concentrate on the customer and her or his needs without being interrupted by a ringing telephone or questions from her employees about their sales or other activities going on in the store.

Levison feels the same way, and so do her brother and father.

Their hope is that his new space bridges the gap between what people like about shopping on the internet--comfort and privacy--and what it is that brings them into stores today--a wonderful experience that they can't get from sitting on their couch with a computer on their lap.

"It's our favorite part, the one-on-one," she said. "You can't sell romance and mythology and eternity in the public spotlight. You have to do it privately."