

04.11

TRICKLE UP

A View from the Top



The Siner Side of Resale

- Siner was inspired to open a high-end resale shop after visiting a consignment shop while on a business trip in Texas that she says was "dark, dirty and dingy."
- My Sister's Closet first opened in 1991, My Sister's Attic began in 1999, and Well Suited opened in 2001.
- Whenever possible, Siner opens one of each of the three businesses in the same shopping complex.
- Best-sellers are designer handbags and accessories, St. John knits, trendy label jeans, current designer clothing and designer jewelry.
- Siner and her staff look for items that are no more than four to five years old, have a retail value of at least \$40, and are in like-new and clean condition.

Ann Siner Gives First-Class Appeal to Second-Hand Shops

by Alison Stanton

IF THERE IS one thing Ann Siner has learned in her almost-20 years as chief executive officer of My Sister's Closet, it is to never rest on her laurels. "We can have a good year, and sales will be great, but we will not take it easy. I am always looking ahead," says Siner, who founded the company that will celebrate its 20-year anniversary in August.

My Sister's Closet is a high-end resale shop that features what Siner calls "better items," including men's and women's clothing and accessories, and home furnishings. Between 2,500 and 4,000 new items come in every day, and Siner says most sell within about 30 days. "We take what is cute, current and clean," she says. "Nothing tends to be more than four to five years old."

Siner explains that her company is, technically, made up of three separate stores: My Sister's Closet features clothing for women, My Sister's Attic stocks furniture and home furnishings, and Well Suited carries men's clothing. Siner followed up the opening last year of a 12,000-square-foot My Sister's Closet at Scottsdale and Lincoln roads in Scottsdale with a My Sister's Attic and a Well Suited at the same shopping center, bringing the total number of stores to 10, all in Scottsdale, Phoenix and Chandler.

Over the years, Siner has weathered her share of economic storms. She says she's been through "at least two recessions" but, although the one in 2001 was tough for her and her business, 2007's didn't really register as a blip on her company's financial radar. "In fact, in 2007 we had 20 percent growth, and then last year we were also 20 percent over the previous year, and in 2009 we were 20 percent above 2008."

Opening her business in 1991 tested Siner's philosophy of "keep trying until you find a way to reach your goals." When

she attempted to open her first store, she learned that second-hand clothing shops were classified as pawn shops. "So, according to codes, we couldn't go into all the shopping centers we wanted," she says. "I said 'We're just selling used clothing here!' but we couldn't do it." Undaunted, Siner kept trying to find a suitable place in which to set up shop. But her first lease came with a caveat from the landlord. "I had to put a clause in the first lease that they could close us down if they wanted to," she says. "But I had so much faith I could make it work better, and now we are in great areas like Scottsdale Road and Pima Road."

Siner, who worked as director of marketing for PetSmart before opening My Sister's Closet, says her company is "very much a local thing." She employs 170 area people, and, if an item does not sell within 60 to 90 days, she donates it to a local charity, with the receipt going to the customer. "We donate to really good organizations, like Sojourner Center, which helps battered women and children, and Friends of Animal Care and Control, and HALO animal rescue."

Another bonus of her business, Siner says, is that it helps give people what she calls "easy found money" for items that they might otherwise have given away or sold at a garage sale.

"They can arrange to have a moving truck come to their home, or they can stop by the store anytime with their items," she says. "We try to make it easy for them." Once items sell, customers can receive 55 percent in store credit or 45 percent in cash. "In theory, you can sell your furniture and then buy a whole new wardrobe," Siner says, laughing. "What sets us apart is that we pay when you want to get paid. If you come in, we will pay you in cash on the spot."

Siner says she loves the way customers who used to come in "with their heads down" and not wanting people to see they were browsing in a resale store, now praise My Sister's Closet as their favorite place to shop. "We have definitely changed the face of consignment stores." ■



The newest My Sister's Closet, at Scottsdale and Lincoln roads