

# peak

## What women want

From computers to cars, local businesses are going to the girls.

Mirek Havelka had been building computers for a long time, but it wasn't until his (business and life) partner, Georgina Kwei, pointed out how un-female-friendly the industry was that he found a niche.

"I realized that a big part of the market that wasn't being served was really women," says Havelka.

The couple's newly opened Kube Computers (2921 Cambie St., [www.kubecomputers.com](http://www.kubecomputers.com)) prides itself on cutting through nonsensical jargon such as "the size of the hard drive or this or that amount of RAMS," to give women what they really want.

"We just try to simplify the technical side of computers," he says, something women, who aren't interested in useless data, appreciate.

In fact selling to women is often easier than to men, says Havelka.

"Guys, because of their ego, often have to pretend they know a lot more than they do. Women just don't do that."

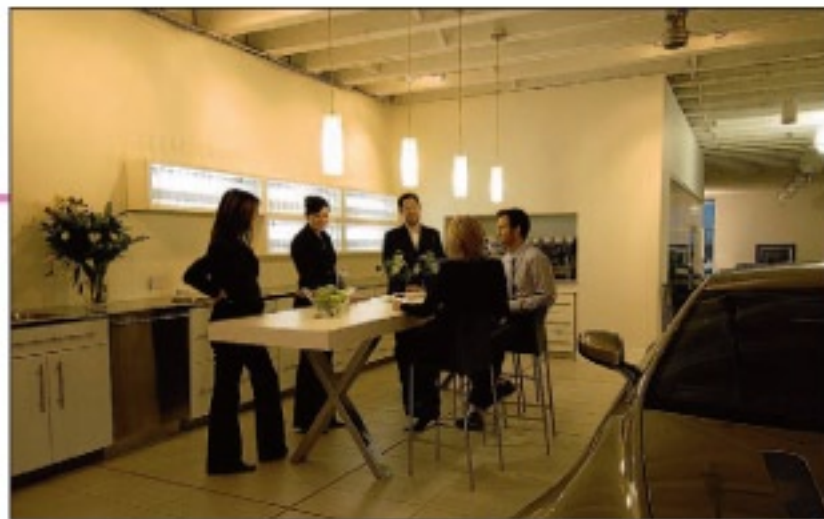
And while men see bigger (and flatter) as better, women are looking for small, cute and colourful. "Women prefer more stylish solutions than men," he says, and Kube accommodates this with

custom-built technology in almost any colour that's available.

But not surprisingly, what Havelka has really noticed females flocking to the shop for is accessories. Kube stocks stylish laptop bags and sleeves from such Oprah and InStyle-endorsed lines as Melissa Beth and Talene Reilly. More chic purse than black briefcase, many women come in not even realizing they're for computers, says Havelka, which really is the ultimate compliment.

Another company putting women in the driver's seat, literally, is Clutch, the self-proclaimed first female-focused car dealership in North America. (1755 West 3rd Ave., [www.autoone.ca/clutch](http://www.autoone.ca/clutch)).

"Statistics show that women buy more than half of all cars ... and probably influence about 80 per cent of every car purchase," but they're treated like



CLUTCH, THE SELF-PROCLAIMED FIRST FEMALE-FOCUSED CAR DEALERSHIP IN NORTH AMERICA.

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second-class citizens at most dealerships, says Clutch president Mike Wood.

"It's a male-dominated business ... if a girl goes in with a guy and the car's for the girl, nine out of 10 times that salesperson, male or female, in a traditional car dealership will talk to the guy." Clutch is trying to change that stereotype not by treating women differently, but the same, says Wood.

Clutch also looks more boutique than boy's club. The walls are covered in art, floors are Italian-tiled and a swanky espresso bar replaces the stale coffee and Styrofoam cups.

"Cars are expensive ... why shouldn't

that shopping experience be as pleasant as buying a new pair of shoes?" asks Wood.

While Clutch aims to treat the sexes equally, Wood says there are key differences in the way they shop. "Women will come in and have a list of things that are important to them. They will have done a lot of research. Guys will come in and fall in love with a car. They'll buy it more on desire."

And while women aim high with SUVs, men take the low road. "Women seem to like to drive high up. Men like sports cars. They like to be low to the ground and zip in and out," says Wood.

As for the clever name, Clutch, and the slogan, 'More than a purse,' Wood gives credit to his managing partner Karen Jamison. After all, you know what they say: Behind every great man, with a great business idea, there's a great woman.

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