

# DIRECT SALES

Information and Tips For a More  
Successful Direct Sales Business

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# Direct Sales Businesses

Owning a direct sales business isn't for everyone. However, for some, it may be a perfect match.

Here are some points to consider about owning a direct sales business.

1. **You can be your own boss.** You've worked for others long enough. You're ready to strike out on your own and start your own business. Be sure you have done some research about what owning your own business entails before charging forward with your plan. Know how much your initial fees will be, how many other associates are in your area, and what kind of compensation plan is available with the company you choose.

2. **Success breeds success.** If you sign up under a successful person, this can help you become successful if they are willing to share their ideas and success tips with you. And a good leader **will** do that. You will have a company of people who have the same goals as you, so you can share ideas and encourage each other.

3. **Belief is important.** You have found a product that you feel is a real benefit. It does exactly what it was advertised to do, and it is something you can't see yourself doing without. In fact, you've told all of your friends about it because it's so good. If this describes you, you may have found the perfect direct sales company to work with.

You want to really believe in the product your company offers in order to be successful at selling it. This is the first, and most important, decision to make before choosing a direct sales company. If you don't love, use, and believe in the products you sell, it will be evident to those you approach.

4. If the direct sales company you are considering is associated with an activity or product, **is it something you're passionate about?** Having a passion about scrapbooking, cooking, or whatever the activity or product, will help your customers see that you're trying to share something with them rather than trying to "sell them something".

5. **How flexible are you?** Are your children at an age where they don't need you quite as much as they used to? If you have some flexibility in your schedule, direct sales might be a viable option. Not only can you choose the days and times that you work, you also have some degree of control over what you earn. If you are serious about growing a business, you are only limited by the amount of time and effort you use to do so.

## Do Your Research

When joining a direct sales company, it is crucial that you do your research. First, because you want to make sure the company is legitimate and that you will be selling a product that is beneficial and will sell. Secondly, you want to join one that matches up with your interests, strengths, time availability and income needs.

I am going to repeat the checklist of questions to make sure you can answer before joining a direct sales company.

- How long have they been in business? I recommend going with one that has been in business for at least 3-5 years.
- Are they profitable? Ask the leaders for past profitability information.
- Are they as concerned with selling the product as they are with recruiting new business owners?
- What is the compensation plan? In other words, know exactly what you need to do to earn money. Does this seem doable to be able to reach the earnings goal you have set? Can you explain it to others if they are interested in the opportunity? Look for a plan that isn't geared only for the seasoned consultant. If a new recruit isn't able to earn an income, they won't remain for long.
- What are the start up costs? Are there any monthly/quarterly or other quotas to meet or fees to pay? If you are required to purchase a minimum amount each month, you'll probably want to look elsewhere.
- Will you be given a website, and if so, what are the costs associated with it?
- Are the leaders accessible – can you contact them by phone if you need them?
- Talk to others who have been involved with the company for a while and glean all you can from their experiences. Ask them for the negatives as well as the positives about the company and the business opportunity.
- Are the products priced so people can afford them? Are they exclusive to the party plan company? If the products are exclusive to the company, make sure they are effective and competitively priced so your customer can purchase more in the future.
- Will the product bring repeat sales? Will the initial sale be the only one because the product isn't consumable? If the product you sell is worth

the money, provides great results, and is consumable, it is likely you'll have a customer for a long time.

- Is there a money back guarantee on the products? With the problems that have been reported recently, it's important to find a company that will offer a 100% satisfaction guarantee. People will be more willing to make the initial purchase if they feel the company will fix any problem they might have with a product.
- Check the company out with the Better Business Bureau. Make sure they have a satisfactory rating with them.
- Does the company value the same things that you value? If you cannot stand behind what the company believes in, it might not be the right one for you.

Doing as much research as you can will offer you a better chance at success.

Once you decide on a particular company to join, it is time to promote your business.

## Uniqueness is Crucial with Online Direct Sales Promotions

Because you will be joining a company that has many other distributors selling the same products as you are, being unique and standing out from the crowd is essential.

One way to do this is to have a webpage associated with the parent company that you're working with. You may have already been given a company webpage, but everyone has one of those. The name of the game is being unique, and a company page doesn't help with that.

You can purchase a domain name for your business and create your own website.

**Before purchasing a domain name or creating a website, however, read up on your company's rules for online marketing. You don't want to do anything that will jeopardize your standing with them. If they don't have a problem with it, by all means, create your own web page.**

When choosing a domain name, don't feel locked in to having the company name as part of it. In fact, you can choose something different from the company name so you can keep the domain if you ever separate from them. Come up with some ideas and then see if they're available. Don't be afraid

to purchase more than one if you really like the name. If possible, try to find a name with a dot com extension - not that they're any more valuable, but they're more recognizable and easier to remember.

**Here are five factors to consider before deciding whether to purchase your own domain or not.**

1. **It's simple to remember.** As an associate of a direct sales company, "your" webpage will lead prospective clients to the company, using a URL similar to this: <http://www.parentcompany.com/yourname>. If you purchase your own domain name, your website address would look quite different: <http://www.yourdomain.com>. It is much easier for a prospective customer or team member to remember the second domain name.

2. **It sets you apart.** Choosing your own domain name allows you freedom to add your own personality to your business. You are not required to maintain the company's status quo if you have your own name. Your business reflects you and helps you stand out from the crowd.

3. **You know how you are doing.** If you have your own domain, you can track the number of visitors to your website, and you know how they have found you (you are provided with these statistics by your hosting company.) You can try different marketing campaigns and see which one is bringing in the most traffic. Having a company website doesn't allow you this option.

4. **Give them something extra.** Having your own domain name, as opposed to a company website, also allows you to offer your clients and team members (downline) extras. Do you want to provide content to help your team members? Consider writing articles that will give them tools to grow their business. As their business grows, so does yours.

5. **Who do you want to benefit from all your website traffic?** If you do spend a good deal of time marketing your business and people go to your company's website, who will be the one to benefit most from it? Your parent company, of course!

Having your own domain name, however, lets you have prospective customers and team members go to your personal website first. If they would like further information, you can link to your company website but they will go through you first.

While these reasons for having your own domain name for your direct sales business aren't the only ones, they are something to consider before you choose to "just" use the site your company has provided. The reasons for having your own domain name are varied, but ultimately the choice is up to you.

## Ok, I have my domain. Now what?

After you have your website domain purchased, you can create a website and begin to fill it with unique information. Don't use only the information provided by the company. Add other value to the site, as well. If your company sells cookware, why not include great recipes that can be made with that cookware. If your company sells toys, provide articles that extol the virtue of playing with those particular types of toys. The options are endless and are only limited by your imagination.

Once you have a domain and website, and it is filled with original content that compliments the product your direct sales company has to offer, what else can you do to stand out in the crowd? What else will make your online presence unique from the many other consultants or associates? Why not try adding audio or video to your website?

If you have spent any time at all on the internet, you have most likely seen the popularity of websites such as YouTube. Audio (podcasts) and video (webcasts) files haven't been added to very many business websites yet, so if you put one on yours you'll be seen as an innovator - someone to emulate as the popularity of the business tool expands. Besides, as well as being able to communicate with your team and prospective customers on a different level, podcasts and webcasts are just plain fun.

Regardless of the fact that you are running a direct sales business and have been given the same training and tools to do so, you don't have to be like everyone else in the company. There are ways to make your online direct sales business stand out. Create your webpage with your own domain name, provide great content that will drive people to your site, and then add audio or video segments for your customers and team members to enjoy. It will all help you to stand out in a sea of other distributors.

## Make Your Website Search Engine friendly ☺

It's time to "surf the web". What do you do? You go to a search engine and type a target phrase into the search box. Within seconds you receive a list of websites. You begin to click on websites that interest you. Before long, you've found what you're looking for. If you're wise, you'll make your direct sales website search engine friendly in the same way, so that you can be found when someone begins their search.

How do you make your website search engine friendly? Following are some hints to make your website easier to find.

1. Submit your direct sales website to directories. Go to google and type in your type of business + directories. Add your website to their directory,

which will help others find you plus give you a link back to your website, which is important with search engine ranking.

3. Choose keywords that are as specific as possible. If your direct sales companies sells educational toys, you'll do better by using "educational toys" than you would using "toys and games" as your keywords.
4. The more websites you have linking to yours, the better your site will rank on the search engines. To get links back to your website, consider a "link exchange" campaign. Find other websites in your same niche and ask them if they would exchange links with you. If they do, both websites should benefit. This will also help the search engines to find you and index your site. Link exchanges are beneficial, however, getting one-way links is better. You can do this by submitting to directories that do not require a link back to them. Also, by leaving comments on blogs in your niche gives you a one-way link back to your site.
5. Your title page tag is the first thing a search engine displays, so you'll want yours to be good. Take your time and come up with something that will explain your website.
6. Search engines, while important, are not the only way to drive traffic to your website. Consider adding a signature line to your outgoing email that includes your business email address. Write articles and submit them to various free article sites; make sure to include a bio box with your URL at the bottom. Find and post at related forums, posting your link in your signature line, if it is allowed.
7. Don't forget about offline marketing. Have pens, business cards, and flyers printed with your direct sales business email and website. Bumper stickers might be another good bet, as well as magnets.

Creating a website isn't that hard to do. Take some time, think things through, make a plan, and then follow it. If you have problems, you can always ask at different forums for ways to improve your search engine results. People are generally willing to help make your direct sales website search engine friendly.

## How a Blog Can Help Grow Your Direct Sales Business

Having a website for your home based business is almost a necessity in today's high tech world. In addition to having a website, you may also want to consider starting a blog.

A blog is another way to market your business. You can use it to promote your products, help generate leads and possibly recruit new members. You

want to use every available option when promoting your direct sales business, whether offline or online.

**Before you jump on the blog bandwagon, however, you need to read and understand your company's policy about using the internet for marketing. If they do not allow personal internet advertising it would be better to set this idea aside. Use whatever means they allow to do your marketing. (see section below.)**

Consider your goals for having a blog and write them down. Know what you want to accomplish with your blog before you write your first sentence. Think about the people that will be reading your blog, usually your prospective customers or downline, then design your blog with them in mind. Find an area to focus on – whether sales, recruiting, or training – and build your blog around that focus area.

Blogging about your direct sales business gives you an outlet to discuss new products and specials that will be coming up, and gives your team members and customers a sneak peak at new items before they are available. Blogs also allow you to share things that may be related to your business but not a direct part of it. For instance, if your products relate to cooking, use your blog to post recipes for your readers to enjoy. Try to remember who your target market is and provide them with things they will find valuable.

Blogging is also interactive. If you allow it, your visitors can leave comments on your blog. This helps you get to know your target market better and allows them to get to know you.

It is easy to see why blogging has become so popular. Millions of people use their blog to express themselves every day. Why not take advantage of this tool and use it to help your direct sales business grow?

## Check Rules about Online Marketing with Direct Sales Companies

Many direct sales companies have rules about how you can advertise and sell online.

Some companies may not allow their distributors to sell online. Most sales take place face-to-face during a home party or demonstration. However, some people may not want to wait for a party to order what they want, so they turn to the internet.

How do you know what a direct sales company's online sales rules are? Of course, the easiest way to find out is to ask, but not all companies may be

forthcoming with their information. You may have to ask for additional information by signing up on their website, but be prepared to be approached and encouraged to “sign on the dotted line”.

Refrain from joining any direct sales company until you’ve had ample time to thoroughly read over their materials. Know ahead of time what their compensation plan is, how they help you succeed in a business, and also what online marketing you will be able to do. What do you do if they won’t give you this information? Thank them for the opportunity, but tell them you’re not interested and you’d rather not be contacted again.

If the company will allow you to have an internet presence, think about creating your own website and using your own domain name, as we mentioned earlier in this report. You can create a separate website which will link to the main company page. Having a personal website gives you much more freedom in meeting your prospects’ needs, as well as those of your team members.

Remember, if you’re looking into a direct sales company, don’t be afraid to ask questions - particularly about their rules for running your business online. If you don’t get the response you would like, consider a different company. You want to find one that will support your interests and success as much as their own.

## Promote Your Direct Sales Business with Giveaways and Contests

People love to get something for free. We all do. They also enjoy contests. You can use both of these facts to promote your direct sales business.

### **Giveaways: What can give away to promote your business?**

Pens – Wherever you go, someone asks to borrow a pen to write something down, and then forgets to give it back to you. Why not take advantage of this “natural” tendency and use it to your advantage? Check to see if your direct sales company has pens with the company name on them that you can purchase.

Better yet, spend a little bit of money and have them printed with your business URL. The next time someone asks to borrow a pen, you can give them one with your name and website on it. They will see this web address each time they use the pen and it might help generate a sale. The pens aren’t that expensive, so why not give them several? They can give them

out, and in that way they'll have done advertising for you.

Mouse pads – If you work on a computer, you use a mouse pad. What better thing to give away than something that will be useful and that you know will be used? People sit at computers all day long with their hand resting on their mouse pad. If you have your website address printed onto mouse pads, and give them away, you're keeping the name of your business before potential customers. Choose something that's visually appealing, as well as functional. This again, can be advertising for your business when others see it.

### **Use Contests to generate Leads**

Choose a contest that people will be excited about participating in. Choose an item to give away that people really want, such as an mp3 player. Clearly state what the rules are so people know what to expect and how a winner will be chosen.

To enter, they will need to leave their name, address, email address and phone number. Use a press release to advertise the contest (as well as announcing it on your blog) and you will get more entries.

Using giveaways and contests to bring traffic to your website accomplishes two things:

- 1) It promotes your business by giving people a reason to come to your website.
- 2) By providing these items, not only will you bring potential customers to your website, you can also take the price off of your taxes as advertising costs.

Using contests and giveaways can really help in promoting your business and getting the word out.

### **Ways to Book More Direct Sales Parties**

For your business to be successful, you need to continue to be able to book parties and demonstrations so you can showcase your products. Here are some suggestions on ways to book more parties.

1. Exchange shows with another direct sales rep – if you know others who run direct sales businesses, ask them to book a party for you and you do the same for them.
2. Ask your kids' school if you can leave a catalog in the teacher's lounge. This would especially be appropriate if you are selling educational books and materials.

3. Ask your dentist/doctors offices if it's ok to leave a catalog in the waiting room.
4. Check with your local Chamber of Commerce to see if there is a Welcome Wagon for new people moving into the area. If there is, ask if you can put a flyer or business card in the welcome package.
5. Begin your demonstration by mentioning to the guests that the hostess will be receiving free gifts for having the party. Also tell them what the hostess is working toward and exactly what she needs to receive that item. Don't be afraid to boldly ask them to book a party to help the hostess reach that goal.
6. A fairly new concept is holding an "online" party. Check with your direct sales company to see if this can be done. If so, they should be able to give you tips on doing this.

## Ideas to Make More Sales and Gain More Team Members

Most times, sales will come through person-to-person contact with people who are interested in what you are selling. Home parties and demonstrations are effective ways to make sales. However, there are some online strategies you can use to make sales also.

1. Run a contest. People love to receive free items. Make it so they have to leave their contact information to enter the contest. You can then stay in touch with them. You may find a customer for your products or a new recruit for the business this way.
2. Establish relationships. Whether you are establishing a relationship with a customer or a recruit for the business, you want to treat them like you would want to be treated. Be available and answer their questions. Develop a relationship built on trust and you may find you have a faithful customer or even your newest team member.
3. Have an online party

Instead of using the traditional home party approach, consider throwing an online party. The benefits of an online party are that they take much less time than a home party, the potential customer can purchase the item they're interested in without feeling pressured to purchase more, plus they can come back and purchase something else if the deadline for orders is a few days away.

4. Write an article

The suggestion might sound odd but it might be just what you need to generate leads for potential recruits. Create articles that will capture a reader's attention by presenting your product in a non-sales way, and you'll come across as a friend rather than someone only trying to make a sale. Give potential customers and team members a reason to believe that you are knowledgeable. You'll be surprised how people will listen to someone who sounds like an expert.

#### 5. Use message boards

Be careful how you approach someone on a message board. Get to know the person by finding out their interests. Befriend them and they will likely visit the link in your signature line. Don't send emails or private messages unless you have been asked. Unsolicited emails and private messages will get you branded as a "spammer", and you don't want that. Reply to a request for information only if your opportunity meets the person's stated interests.

#### 6. Better communication

In this day and age, people are constantly on the go. By using the internet you may be able to stay in contact with your potential team members. Don't forget to use email and newsletters to alert prospects of upcoming deals.

## Ten of the Most Popular Direct Sales Companies

Direct sales companies have been around for years. Historically, a direct sales associate was expected to demonstrate their products at home parties. What are the most popular direct sales companies today? The following list gives companies to consider if you are curious about starting a direct sales business at home.

1. **Tupperware** was created in 1945. A year later Tupperware was born as a direct sales company. They are credited with pioneering the party plan currently used in direct marketing. There are approximately 1.9 million consultants in almost 100 countries.
2. **Avon** began as the California Perfume Company in 1886. By 1928 the company had changed its name to Avon. Today, Avon is one of the best known direct sales companies in the world. There are 4.9 million representatives selling products in 143 countries.
3. Mary Kay Ash founded the **Mary Kay Inc.** in 1963, hoping to give women an opportunity to change their lives for the better. There are approximately 1.6 million associates vying for the many company incentives.

4. **Discovery Toys Inc.** has been developing and selling quality educational toys since 1978. Their belief is that a child's work is play. Discovery Toys uses the party plan method and is currently available only in the United States and Canada.

5. **Home Interiors & Gifts, Inc.** celebrates 50 years in 2008. There are currently over 100,000 associates. They use party plan and face-to-face meetings to market their products.

6. **Pampered Chef**, one of the more recent additions to direct sales companies, was started in 1980. There are currently over 60,000 Pampered Chef consultants around the world. They use the party plan, or "Kitchen Shows" to market their products.

7. **Arbonne** International uses person-to-person marketing rather than the party plan. A relatively new company, Arbonne International was started in 1980. They offer quality skin care products around the world.

8. **Usborne Books**, which was started by Peter Usborne in 1973, offers quality children's books to customers. They use both the party plan and person-to-person marketing strategies.

9. **Creative Memories** has been selling scrapbooking books and supplies since 1987. They use the party plan marketing strategy and have "tens of thousands" of consultants around the world.

10. **Melaleuca, Inc.** began selling "green" products long before they were so popular. Founded in 1985, the company sells personal, skin, and home care products containing tea tree oil. They use person-to-person marketing and have consultants all over the world. They are said to be the "fastest growing" direct sales company in the United States.

These ten direct sales companies are but a few of the many companies to choose from. **Do some research on any direct sales company that you might consider joining. Know ahead of time what their compensation plan is, what type of marketing strategy they use, whether or not you can use online marketing, and if their corporate goals are compatible with yours.** After you have checked each company out thoroughly, you will be able to make an educated decision about which is the right one for you.