

# In the Beginning

1983. The economy is having the wind sucked out of it, and I'm finishing up my undergrad degree at Seton Hall. My dad was an electrician, and I had spent some of my summers working for him. The foreman was a nice guy, who figured that with my athletic background, I could carry pipe and get coffee. As it turns out, I was reasonably successful at remembering how the journeymen took their coffee, but I had absolutely no aptitude for anything mechanical. Christmas of my senior year in college, my own father fired me. He said that I'd better figure out some other way to make a living because it definitely would never be with my hands.

I was getting my degree in communications, so I thought I'd look for a job that involved writing—maybe in advertising or marketing. Not long into the job search, I realized that I was essentially qualified to do next to nothing. In the spring of my senior year, I was working part time at a health club and ran into Tom Husted, a friend I had wrestled with. I asked Tom what he was up to, and he mentioned a company I had never heard of in something called *network marketing*. He said that another recent college grad from our area had started with the same company a few years before and was already earning over \$6,000 a month. That guy's name was Mark Zuckerbrod, and he was doing a meeting a few nights later if I'd like to check it out. Six thousand dollars was a bunch of money for a broke college kid looking for his first real job. Tom told me that I could get started for thirty-two dollars, so I wrote him a “bouncy” check and begged him to hold onto it until payday at the gym.

My parents' reaction was less than enthusiastic. They insisted that I had been conned into a pyramid scheme. It was a big disappointment to them to think of their soon-to-be-college-graduate-son selling vitamins. But there I was, \$30,000 in debt from student loans, with no other prospects for a career. I figured I might as well see what these people could tell me about making money. That night, I read the career manual from cover to cover. I filled up a couple of yellow pads with notes, diagrams, and equations. I wrote out the names of all the people I knew and attached dollar amounts to each name. And by about 4.00 a.m., I had earned my first million, just on the people I already knew. I thought: This business is going to be a piece of cake. And wouldn't everyone see what I saw?

I guess it was easy to think that way before I had sponsored my first person or retailed my first nutrition program. The next day I called my brother-in-law, who had an MBA. I figured that he knew lots of people and would be a good prospect. He told me that he had joined one of those network marketing things once upon a time and that I'd see the error of my ways when I got older. For now, I should listen to my parents and get a regular job.

Needless to say, I was bummed. I called my friend Eric, who also said I was nuts, but he had a friend named Peter who might be interested because Peter wanted to lose weight. That weekend, Tom Husted and I met with Peter and Eric. Peter got excited, and both he and Eric joined—and Peter purchased \$800 worth of product. Even though I hadn't really earned any money yet, at that point I knew I was going to make it. Come hell or high water, I would make it!

## **IN THE GAME**

You see, over the past five years, I had been through the ringer: major spinal surgery, the death of two very close friends through automobile accidents, and the passing on of my Uncle James, who at age fifty-one had helped raise me. Making money seemed so much less complicated than dealing with those situations. I thought about the book my father had shared with me when I was hospitalized for the spinal surgery, *The Power of Positive Thinking*, by Dr. Norman Vincent Peale. I will never forget Dr. Peale's sage advice: If you think you have problems, go to a nursing home or funeral parlor. The great preacher couldn't have been more right. Earning a living has its challenges, but at least you know that you are in the game—alive and kicking—and eventually you'll figure it out.

The next defining moment came at my college commencement ceremony at Seton Hall. My academic education was ending that day, but fortunately for me, my *entrepreneurial* education was just starting. I'd grown up in a home where "business owners" were looked on with suspicion. My parents were strong advocates of unions and workers' rights, and the conversation was always about the wealthy versus the folks who worked for them. To say that my parents were staunch members of the Democratic party would be an understatement! My Dad lived by mottos such as, "Buy American, Buy Union" and "A fair day's work for a fair day's pay." So, when Seton Hall invited President Reagan to be our commencement speaker, I said flat out that they could mail me my degree. No way was I going to sit and listen to that union buster and turncoat who had once been president of the Screen Actors' Guild.

But my father said that I had to go, if for no other reason than to show respect for the presidential office. As it turned out, the "great communicator" had a life-changing message for me. He talked about how he'd graduated at the height of the Depression and how he had no idea what he was going to do besides being a lifeguard. He spoke about freedom in terms of what it meant to be a *free* person in a *free* entrepreneurial society. What former President Reagan said at the end of his speech is what got me. He quoted an old businessman who had survived the Great Depression and who told him, "Look, maybe I could get someone to give you a job, but they would only be doing it because I asked. They wouldn't have a real interest in you. Instead, go knock on a lot of doors and find someone who takes an interest in teaching you. It doesn't matter the industry or business. Find the thing that someone will teach you, and pursue it." *Get a mentor.* That was priceless advice.

## **READY TO LEARN, READY TO CHANGE**

Around this time, I heard about a meeting that the vice president of marketing for my new network marketing business was doing in Hartford. I invited four people to go with me, and because cash was tight, the five of us shared a hotel room. The passion of the event, the excitement of the industry, and the realization that maybe we had all found our better way in a tough economy made it easy to sleep on the floor and eat peanut butter sandwiches all weekend. We were young nomads on a mission to change the world and, most important, to change ourselves.

The information shared with us that weekend just kept getting better. After a few hours of speeches from local leaders, the man of the hour, Lawrence Thompson, was introduced. I have never seen Elvis perform, but I imagine that his concerts must have felt something like this. When they introduced “LT,” smoke started billowing out from everywhere, and balloons streamed from the ceiling. It was like a rock concert and political rally all rolled into one. Now, I can’t tell you everything that I learned that day, but three major gems have stuck with me to this day:

1. Anyone can learn this industry, as long as they apply themselves.
2. This is a benevolent business: What you learn is only valuable if you teach others.
3. “For things to change, you have to change, and for things to get better you have to get better” (This is the now-famous statement LT made that day.)

We made it back to New Jersey in what seemed like minutes, propelled by the message of change. I started to look at myself differently. “Change what?” I asked myself. Well, my attitude about money for one thing! I needed to realize that money is good and has immense power, as long as it is earned honorably and used to help others as well as myself. I also needed to change my attitude about my own ability to succeed—despite my parents and other well-intentioned people telling me that this crazy idea wasn’t going to work for me.

Most of the people trying to tell me not to go into direct sales as a profession also were *not* going to the meetings I attended, seeing the people I saw, and gathering the information I was getting on the network marketing business. I knew that I would need to make this business my own. I quickly realized that if I were to become more and get more out of life, I’d have to establish a few guidelines. I’ve applied them to my own business and have been sharing them with my downline ever since. Here they are:

### **The Leading Producers in Your Business Are Like Your Family**

They are the reason you have a check from your company. Always do everything possible to help them grow. Their success is your success, so make every effort

to support their growth. Focus more on your people earning income than on your own income, and you can't help but succeed.

### **Learn and Apply the 80-15-5 Formula**

About 80 percent of the people in your group are part-time people. Spend 5 percent of your time working with them. Another 15 percent of your group is in growth mode today. Spend 80 percent of your time working with them. The final 5 percent of your group are in maturity mode and are your top check earners. Spend 15 percent of your time helping them grow. Don't forget that the 15 percent in growth mode are today's new *growing* business. If you want your check to grow, focus on today's growing business.

### **Invest in Your Business**

Distributorships are not much different from traditional franchise businesses. The major difference is that the startup cost for a direct-sales distributorship is tiny by comparison. However, if you want to be successful, you need to acquire the attitude and commitment of a franchisee and invest time and some money in marketing to get things going. Remember that you are limited only by your vision of how large you desire to be.

### **This Business Is Not for Everyone**

One of my early reality checks was discovering that not everyone saw what I saw in this business. That's okay. There are enough people out there who will see what you see.

### **AIM FOR GREATNESS**

As I look back over my 26+ years as a high-income earner in the network marketing industry, I measure my success not in dollars earned but in the value of my life experiences. Earning money while visiting the Holy Land. Spending time in Israel, Jordan, and Egypt. Building downlines in Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Hong Kong, Germany, Belgium, Holland, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Italy, Spain, India, Trinidad, and Tobago. Meeting great people in great markets. The world gets much smaller under the umbrella of free enterprise!

And the friendships that grow out of this business are invaluable, too. Tom Husted, the guy who got me started in the industry, lives in San Francisco, and we keep in contact by e-mail just about every week. People such as Mark Zuckerbrod, Jeff Weisberg, and my first big-time mentor, Larry Thompson, are among my closest friends. And through this business, I met my wife and partner, Josee. After I had been through a painful divorce, a well-meaning distributor (not even in my downline) decided to introduce me to his girlfriend's best friend. Even though we were separated by 2,000 miles, Josee and I eventually married and now have three beautiful children. Now, I'm not suggesting that by getting into network marketing you'll find the love of your life, but you never know.

I'll conclude this chapter with an invitation: If you're willing to work hard and truly care about making a difference in this world, then I invite you to read on. I encourage you to let the ideas, strategies, and tactics in this book captivate you. I hope that some of my hard-learned business lessons will help you get to whatever level you aspire to. But I have to say that the best way to learn the network marketing business is to *do it*. This is the last bastion of free enterprise and the best place for average people like you and me to attain greatness.