

Making Everything Easier!™

Direct Selling

FOR
DUMMIES[®]
A Wiley Brand

Learn to:

- Navigate the Direct Sales industry to pursue independent success
- Set your goals and manage your time effectively
- Book, sell, and recruit to increase your income
- Harness the power of Social Media to grow your business

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Introduction

Welcome to *Direct Selling For Dummies!* I have been a direct sales trainer for the last 20 years (after 15 years as an independent representative), and for the last 20 years, people have been asking me to write a book. Well, something always held me back, and I never did it, until ... the Dummies folks approached me to write a book on direct selling. I jumped on it. I had already written many guides for individual companies, but I knew the direct sales industry needed a step-by-step, plainly written guide to navigating direct sales and building a successful business.

Despite what you may read on Facebook, creating and maintaining a successful direct sales business involved a lot more than posting product shots and pleading with people to “join your team.” Direct sales is like any other business — it takes work. But the benefits of increased income, flexibility, recognition, and personal growth all make it worth it.

If you picked up this book, I assume you have been bitten by the direct sales bug and are ready to take a chance on *you*. Just know that even though you are looking to go into business for yourself, because you bought this book, you are not alone. I am here for you every step of the way.

About This Book

Direct sales companies do their best to provide their representatives with relevant information about the industry and training guides to help them succeed. But until now, there’s been no book or guide out there like

this one, simple and comprehensive. No other book on the shelves will take you from the beginning of your direct sales journey all the way through to success. This book is full of my training on every aspect of the business, from your very first party or appointment to building a multimillion-dollar organization.



Keep this book on a shelf in your office or somewhere close by. It is perfect to reference whether you are struggling with filling your calendar, recruiting new team members, increasing sales, or working with a team member.

Anyone can succeed in direct sales, but the fact of the matter is, the industry is currently very female, and I acknowledge this in my use of feminine pronouns in the book. Rest assured that even though I may be using *she* and *her* all over the place, the industry does have its share of men, especially in the Network Marketing and Hybrid end of the spectrum (see [Chapter 3](#) for more on these models). That said, the bulk of this book is aimed at the Party Plan model of direct sales, and I made the decision to allow the language to reflect that.

Foolish Assumptions

I can't presume to know your hopes and dreams. What I do know is that you picked up this book, which means you are at least interested in earning income from home while running your own business and staying as busy as you want. If you decide to go ahead and take the plunge, get ready to change your life. Whether you're looking to pay for dance lessons for your daughter, buy your first car, or pay off debt, this industry can help you, and so can this book.

Now I don't know what company you are interested in, whether you prefer the Party Plan or Network Marketing models (see [Chapter 3](#) for more on those), or if you have any experience with this industry. If not, great — and if so, great. There is something here for you either way.

I do assume that you have a vision of a better life for yourself. That you want to chase your dreams, better your family situation, and experience personal growth. I assume that you're looking for a little something (or a big something) to finally call your own. And I assume that you are motivated and a self-starter.

Icons Used in This Book



Tips contain nuggets of useful, practical advice earned from years of experience in the field and training representatives.



Material next to this icon is stuff you should keep in mind for future reference.



This serves to alert you to things that could cause trouble or cost you time. It is meant to help you avoid common but costly mistakes.

Beyond the Book

Once you read this book, you will be hungry for even more content.

In addition to the material in the print or e-book you're reading right now, this product also comes with some access-anywhere goodies on the web. No matter how long you have been in the direct sales industry or how great your leader or company is, you'll likely come across a few questions where you require extra help. Check out our free eCheat Sheet at www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/directselling for some additional references you can bookmark to keep handy.

In addition, there's also some extra content that wouldn't quite fit within the confines of the book. Think of these as a kind of book version of "extras" that come on a DVD. At www.dummies.com/extras/directselling you'll find articles on promoting leaders and training your team, building out your skill set, running your business, and putting sales strategies into practice. You'll even find an extra "Part of Tens" chapter on using Facebook to promote and expand your business.

Where to Go from Here

You may be thinking, *if I can start anywhere, where should I start?*

This book wasn't designed to be linear. It's a friendly reference, not a tutorial, which means you can start or stop wherever you please. Take a look through the table of contents or index to discover the areas that interest you most. Or check for the sections that cover the topics you need the most help in.

If you're new to direct sales, the beginning is a great place to start. You will learn a little bit about the direct sales industry, get some info on what type of company may be best for you and your situation, and check out my new representative checklist. No matter where you start,

I hope you have fun exploring the book and soaking up my 35 years worth of direct sales knowledge and expertise.

Part I
**Exploring the Direct Sales
Industry**



Visit www.dummies.com for great Dummies content online.

In this part ...

- ✓ Getting yourself oriented in the world of direct sales
- ✓ Figuring out which company, and kind of company, may be right for you
- ✓ Introducing the three main direct selling models

Chapter 1

Direct Sales 101

In This Chapter

- ▶ Understanding how direct sales works
 - ▶ Checking out the three types of direct sales models
 - ▶ Getting off to a great start with a checklist
 - ▶ Working on the right skills to succeed
 - ▶ Getting an overview on ways to work your business
 - ▶ Knowing a bit about the history of direct sales
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You may have been drawn to start your direct sales business for any number of reasons, or perhaps you're still conducting research before you move forward. Either way, I welcome you to direct sales, a distribution model that has changed many lives.

Direct sales or *direct selling* refers to the sale of products or services away from a fixed retail location. These products are marketed and sold directly through independent sales representatives, also known as consultants, presenters, distributors, and a variety of other names.

Direct sales reps are not employees of the direct sales company. Rather, they are independent business owners who enjoy all of the benefits of being self-employed with the added perk of being a part of a company that handles operations like shipping, product development, marketing, and more.



You are in business for yourself, not by yourself.

Direct selling gives both men and women the opportunity to be in business for themselves, add to their families' incomes, and create the life they have always imagined. The direct sales industry is filled with success stories from stay-at-home moms paying for dance lessons, women retiring their husbands, and families buying their dream home. Whatever your goal is, direct sales is probably an industry that can get you there.

Was your mother a Tupperware lady when you were a kid? Did your neighbor sell Mary Kay? Did your family know an Amway millionaire? Even if not, you're probably quite aware of some of the legendary companies that have used this network style of marketing their products. Direct sales companies include some major household names and global brands nearly as familiar as Coca-Cola, McDonald's, General Mills, or Kraft. Here are a few examples:

- ✓ Cutco
- ✓ Kirby Vacuums
- ✓ Avon
- ✓ Tupperware

You may have noticed friends on Facebook posting about making extra money, earning free trips, or perhaps even quitting their day jobs! Plenty of people have been successful with businesses like these. Regular people just like you continue to build thriving businesses in direct sales today.

You may be interested in starting your business to generate extra income while working part-time —or

maybe you aim to ultimately rely on direct sales as your primary income. Or you could be like a lot of people who have fallen in love with a product, and watched a friend or acquaintance work their business, and decided that you, too, would like to earn free product and some income by sharing something you're passionate about. If you're like the vast majority of people who join direct sales companies, your reasons may involve a combination of these possibilities.

The world of direct sales has been very significant in my life for more than 35 years. I am sincerely grateful for all it has provided me and my family. The income and rewards of direct sales companies have afforded me a lifestyle I couldn't have imagined and have led me to treasured lifelong friendships.



The direct selling industry can help you achieve what you want out of life. The details of what a *better life* looks like are completely up to you.

But how does direct sales work, and what does becoming an independent direct sales rep involve? Read on.

How Direct Sales Works

In direct sales, as mentioned, the products are sold by *independent representatives*, not employees. These salespeople purchase a business starter kit to join a direct sales company. A *business starter kit* typically requires a low-cost fee for materials, the details of which differ among companies. This starter kit often includes products that you can use to display at your parties and demonstrate for your clients. The kit also includes necessary paperwork and training materials that will

help you get your business off to a fantastic start. Your kit has everything you need to run a successful business. This purchase, along with signing the company's standard agreement, sets you up as a member, or independent representative.

As a representative (or consultant, or brand ambassador, or perhaps other title, depending on the company), you are an independent contractor who works on a commission-only basis, running your own small business. Because you are truly independent, you don't report to a supervisor. You set your own hours. You decide when, whether, or how often you will work. If you feel like it, you can increase your efforts and earn more money—in effect, giving yourself a raise—or you can pursue a more advanced job title. With direct selling, all job titles, promotions, and pay raises are based solely on production.

You are independent, yes, but you also have a built-in support system from the company and from your team. You are part of a team of other independent representatives who have a vested interest in your success—your *upline*. Your upline includes your *sponsor*, the person who helped you join the business (whom you get placed directly under in terms of organizational structure), along with other experienced people whose businesses are connected to your business through a sponsorship line. These upline mentors can really help you. They know how to create success in the business and have sponsored many other independent representatives. They can show you how to do the same. Your access to this mentorship is built in to the direct sales business model.

In addition to being taught how to sell products, you will be trained on how to meet people outside your own

personal circle to sell products to and how to introduce people to the benefits of becoming a representative as well.

You can feel comfortable turning to your upline for support because the business model pays them commissions based on the success of the people in their sponsorship line. They are eager to see you succeed and they understand the details of your business better than anyone. Your success contributes to their success, so they have an incentive to provide you access to the tools and information you need to run your business well.

With a very low starter kit purchase, direct sales offers the average person a way to earn income with an established business model and a marketable product line. It works almost like a mini-franchise without the initial investment. It can cost a new business owner tens of thousands or even millions of dollars to open a brick-and-mortar franchise like a donut shop or fast-food restaurant. With direct sales, you benefit from your affiliation with a company that has created the concept, conducted research and development, incurred the manufacturing costs, and invested the money in starting the larger business and brand. This provides you with a low-risk opportunity to earn more money than you could realistically by starting from scratch alone.

The company also absorbs the ongoing expenses of warehousing the product, developing new products, creating marketing materials, complying with government regulations, and taking care of a number of other high-ticket costs that you'll never even have to think about, let alone be responsible for. This arrangement removes some headaches for you and eliminates the need to hire a staff of your own or become an expert in these other areas. When things work well,

representatives can focus solely on marketing the products, taking great care of their customers and teams, and recruiting new people into their teams.

So, what's in it for the company? Independent representatives are the sales and marketing arm of the company, and the company only pays commissions for actual sales. Instead of paying for advertising and other expensive marketing, the company only pays the independent sales force after a sale has been made. That is appealing to companies, especially when they have products they believe will do better with word-of-mouth advertising and in-person demonstration.

Understanding the Three Different Direct Sales Models

Within the direct sales business model, there are three main kinds of company structures. They are called Network Marketing, Party Plan, and Hybrid. [Chapter 3](#) goes into a lot more detail on these, but this section provides a quick overview.

Network Marketing

Network Marketing refers to a company structure designed to move consumable products through a network of independent representatives, through both personal use and sales to end consumers. When a Network Marketing company is building its sales force, it is focused on building a network of consumers. The company doesn't distinguish between those who join as independent representatives to earn money and those

who join merely for a discount on their personal products.

(Network Marketing has also been referred to as *multi-level marketing* or MLM, but that is a misnomer—actually, all of direct sales is structured with multi-level compensation plans to pay their representatives, and all direct sales companies are therefore multi-level marketing companies.)

One strength of the Network Marketing model is that companies can grow very large and sell huge amounts of products through a vast network of people who have, in many senses of the word, joined as members. Many members set themselves up for a subscription to receive their products each month — an arrangement often called *auto-ship*. These continuous re-orders through a network of people affiliated with the company by choice can lead to consistent sales growth, as long as people in the network continue to see the benefit of the product.

Examples of companies that use the Network Marketing model are Isagenix, USANA, and Amway.

Party Plan

Party Plan refers to a model focused on efficiently selling to groups of people who have been gathered together by a host they know personally, either in person or virtually (online). These types of gatherings are typically referred to as *parties*. However, some companies personalize the term they use for their parties in order to make the experience more unique. For example, jewelry bars, tastings, cooking shows, makeovers, and so on.

These parties are hosted at a customer's home, and this customer is known as the *host*. The host traditionally is rewarded with a series of discounted and free products as well as host-exclusive specials. The host invites her

friends over as guests to attend the party. The party usually consists of light refreshments, socializing, and a presentation done by the representative. The purpose of a home party is to create a fun, relaxing, home shopping experience with friends.

Toward the end of the party, the rep collects payment (usually through credit cards or cash) for the products the host and her guests want to order. These orders are placed through the rep's *virtual office* (which is provided to her through her company). [Chapter 9](#) discusses in detail how to conduct a successful party.

This model lends the power of the host's personal recommendation to the products and facilitates *social proof*, which means the weight of influence carried by a group of people. Once one person decides to buy, it increases the likelihood that the rest of the guests in attendance will also buy — that's social proof in action.

The model is called Party Plan, but many companies who use this structure prefer different terminology. Some companies refer to the gatherings as *parties*, whereas others will call them *shows, demonstrations, classes, mixers, tastings, trunk shows, or showcases*. Some direct sales companies even actively discourage the use of the word *party*. Regardless of what they are called, Party Plan parties are quite effective in generating sales, attracting recruits, and teaching others how to sell.

One clear strength of the Party Plan model is the easy-to-understand emphasis on selling products to customers. This structure can include one-on-one sales and a variety of other ways to sell, but the majority of training conducted by these companies focuses on the most efficient and enjoyable method of sales — which is, of course, the party. New independent representatives can easily grasp the concept of this fun method of commerce,

and that makes it a very accessible business model for the average person.

Examples of companies that use the Party Plan model are Jamberry, The Pampered Chef, Scentsy, and Stella & Dot.

Hybrid

This is the new kid on the block. As you might guess, it blends the practices of Network Marketing and Party Plan. In Hybrid companies, as with those in the Party Plan model, independent representatives have hosts gather their friends and family to experience a product demonstration, in-person or online. But with Hybrid, the emphasis is as much on the business opportunity as it is on sales of the product. The structures of the compensation plan tend to borrow traditional elements from both Party Plan and Network Marketing.

One significant difference is that with Hybrid companies, it is common for the representative to encourage the host to have an *impromptu* gathering, rather than scheduling it weeks in advance. They might say, "Sure, I'd love to demonstrate how this product works. I absolutely love it and I think you will, too. You can get it for free, too, and I can show you how. Why don't you and a few friends come over and watch while I show it to you tonight or tomorrow?"

Hybrid companies typically represent tangible products that are consumable, such as health and wellness or beauty products. As in Network Marketing, these products lend themselves well to auto-ship, the subscription order model where independent representatives and customers get monthly replenishment orders shipped to their homes automatically.

In Hybrid companies, auto-ship usually offers a price break for the customer, (sometimes referred to as a *preferred customer rate*). You will see programs that offer *vanishing auto-ship* or *free auto-ship* for customers who refer other customers through referral programs. These referral programs can also include free auto-ship for independent representatives who have a certain number of customers on auto-ship, meaning that the representative's own monthly consumption of product is covered. These referral programs, which attractively combine the customer-focused Party Plan outlook with the Network Marketing-style auto-ship approach, have been very successful and have led to significant growth for the companies and leaders involved.

Examples of companies that lend themselves to a hybrid model are Nerium, ItWorks, and Thrive Life.

Who does best with each model?

Direct sales appeals to people interested in earning extra money outside of a traditional job. Some choose to work part-time with a direct sales company as a way to pay for the extras that challenge their budget, often in addition to a full-time job. Others are looking for a way to make additional money while still attending to priorities in their lives like parenting, caregiving, school, or charitable work and appreciate that they can control their calendar and plan events, parties, and *one-on-one appointments* (where you meet with clients individually instead of in a group setting, like a home party) around their schedules.

According to the Direct Selling Association of the United States, 83 percent of representatives in direct selling are women. In the past, generally speaking, men tended to be drawn more to the Network Marketing model, with

women feeling more comfortable focused on the Party Plan style of business.

Perhaps sharing products they are passionate about comes more easily to most women. In any case, there's no question that Party Plan selling is very popular among females. In general, women enjoy gathering with other women and tend look for reasons to do so. Having a Party Plan business or hosting a party provides an excellent excuse to get together.

In recent years, with the growth of the Internet, the increase in dual-income families, and product lines that are more appealing to modern women (weight loss, skincare, and energy products), there has been a noticeable increase in Hybrid and Network Marketing companies targeting a female salesforce.

In addition, busy people of both genders see the benefit of Network Marketing's reputation for ongoing *automatic* income (also known as *residual income*) from a business that can fit into the nooks and crannies of their schedule and be handled by phone and keyboard, instead of with a schedule of home parties. This could explain why many married couples choose to build a business together in the Network Marketing model.

Party Plan is still going strong and continues to be the top choice of people interested in earning profits and creating cash flow from even the early stages of their business. Quite often, representatives in Party Plan get paid for some or all of their sales the night of each party. For people looking to alleviate day-to-day budget shortfalls, the Party Plan model is especially attractive.

With the changes in the industry through the Internet and social media, as well the globalization of the industry, direct sales is growing. And with multiple ways

to touch your business, all three models are becoming more appealing.

Your First Steps in Direct Sales

Much of this book is devoted to helping you work through the many details of direct selling, and I devote whole chapters to explaining the many facets and supporting you in making decisions.

Let's say for a second that you've picked your product and company and have decided to join up. What happens then? What are you in for? Here is a simple checklist you can follow as you take your first steps in your new business.

While waiting for your kit:

- ✓ Get a date book or calendar big enough to write in. This is where you will schedule your meetings, appointments, and parties.
- ✓ Mark all the dates that you want to work for the next two months and add any personal conflicts to your calendar. If your goal is to work Tuesdays and Thursdays, then put a star on each of those dates. This will help you offer dates to clients who want to set parties or appointments with you.
- ✓ Schedule your launch party. Your *launch party* is a party you host yourself that will launch your business to your family and friends. For best results, you'll schedule two launch parties within three days of each other. [Chapter 8](#) talks all about launch parties.
- ✓ Make a working list of people you know (50-100 names) and their contact info. (See [Chapter 7](#) for help

on creating your list of 100.)

- ✓ Post your plans on Facebook and tell your friends and family how excited you are about your new business. (For more information on how to utilize social media in your business, head over to [Chapter 11](#).)
- ✓ Invite as many people as you can to your launch party(ies) (check out [Chapter 8](#) for more information).
- ✓ Schedule four to five additional home parties (see [Chapter 9](#)) or appointments ([Chapter 12](#)) in a 30-day time frame. In this case, you will ask people who could not attend your launch parties to host parties of their own. See [Chapters 7](#) and [8](#) for more information.
- ✓ Invite a friend to start a business with you. Statistics show that when you start the business with a friend, your chances of success are much higher. (See [Chapter 14](#) for more on recruiting.)
- ✓ Set up your personal website that your company provides. Your company will provide you with step-by-step instructions on how to do this. This is a website you will be able to share with your customers and use for marketing purposes. Customers will be able to order directly from your website and find out more information on hosting a party or joining the business.
- ✓ Get to know your virtual office. Your virtual office is the portal your company will provide where you can place orders, access training, and get other company information. Don't get overwhelmed by your virtual office. Ask your leader to walk you through placing your first order and navigating your way.
- ✓ Set up a space that you will use as your personal office (see [Chapter 5](#) for tips on organization).
- ✓ Attend one or more of your sponsor's or leader's parties or interviews in your area. Learning from others

who are already experienced in this business is a great way to become more comfortable with the presentation, selling, and recruiting aspects.

- ✓ Create an outline for your presentation (see [Chapter 9](#)).

Once your kit arrives:

- ✓ Set up your kit display and take a photo. Post it on Facebook to show your friends and family.
- ✓ Familiarize yourself with the catalog and products.
- ✓ Place your first order.
- ✓ Order additional business supplies.
- ✓ Set up your kit and practice your presentation and invite someone to come over to help you get some practice. Your presentation will include your product demonstration as well as the other elements of a successful party, like the opening talk, booking talk, and closing. For more information on all this, see [Chapter 9](#).
- ✓ Open a separate checking/savings account for your business.
- ✓ Invite more friends to try the business with you. Recruiting or sponsoring new team members is usually a component of your company's "Fast Start" program. You should be able to attract new recruits from your launch party and other parties (see [Chapter 14](#) for more on recruiting).
- ✓ Familiarize yourself with your company's Fast Start program. This program is designed by your company to help you succeed in your first 90 days of business.
- ✓ Familiarize yourself with your company's compensation plan. Your leader will be able to walk

you through this.

- ✓ Learn how to coach your first host. Check out [Chapter 10](#) for more on host coaching.

It may seem confusing, or even overwhelming. Don't worry. That's why I wrote this book. Most people join a company and then ask themselves, *What do I do first? What does this jargon being thrown around even mean? And what do I really need to know, right now, to get moving so I can earn some money?*

That is where the list of steps comes in. Keep coming back to it if you begin to feel lost. You will have a shorter learning curve and feel more confident if you pay attention to the list, read the related chapters in this book, and seek additional guidance and training from your company — and especially from your sponsor and your upline.

My Introduction to direct sales

I was bitten by the direct sales bug at a young age. When I was 14, my mother was invited to a Mary Kay cosmetics party, and I really wanted to go. Most likely, she was looking forward to a nice evening spent with other adults, because she said I couldn't come. But as a teenage girl, I simply could not resist the appeal of makeup and a party, so I hopped on my bicycle and rode over to her friend's house. My arrival was perfectly timed — it was too dark for her to send me home alone on my bicycle.

The Mary Kay director (a top position in a direct sales company) quickly assessed the situation and graciously asked me to be her special helper for the evening. Apparently, she was pleased with my assistance, because at the end of the party she asked whether I would be interested in helping her a few days a week after school. Of course I said yes. At the time, I had no idea that accepting that part-time fun "job" as well as meeting company founder Mary Kay Ash a year later would lead to a 35-year-long career working in direct sales, as an independent representative just like you, in corporate roles, and as a sought-after-speaker, trainer, and expert.

I love this industry and it is my pleasure to share its power with people like you and help you experience as much success as possible by providing

practical training, specifics on how to grow a successful business, and tips on what to avoid on your business journey.

Why the Direct Sales Model Succeeds

Direct sales models are successful because they offer the company an opportunity to market products directly to consumers. In direct sales, as mentioned, the products are sold by *independent representatives* who are not employees. These reps are independent contractors who work on a commission-only basis.

Because the independent representatives are the sales arm of the company, the company only pays commissions for actual sales. Independent representatives are also the main way the company advertises and markets its products. Many traditional companies with ordinary sales channels utilize social media, for example, to help increase brand and product awareness. But direct sales companies don't use typical advertising strategies like radio or TV to market their offerings. Direct sales companies mainly utilize their representatives to help market their products because they believe the products will do better with word-of-mouth advertising and in-person demonstrations.

As you explore the different products available through direct sales, you will find that the products are often positioned as cutting-edge, unique, made from superior raw materials, and basically better than products that are available in stores. Although that may not always be the case, generally speaking the products do stand up to scrutiny and tend to inspire a type of "super fan" convinced of the supremely high quality of each product.

It is a fact that direct sales product lines often are the first to bring new ideas to market. The companies are often led by mavericks or risk takers who are looking to get out ahead of the pack and incorporate the latest research and the newest “miracle” ingredients. People in this distribution model who have been laughed at in the past are the same people who first brought things like super foods, vitamins, healthy energy drinks, and supercharged, nutrient-enriched shake powders to market. All of these things are now, of course, carried widely in health food and grocery stores around the country and are no longer considered *fringe*.

There is also a lot of truth to the cost-savings and cost-reallocation made possible by skipping the middle man and delivering your products direct to the consumer through *volunteer* sales people (independent representatives). Rather than pay a big portion of company revenue for advertising, which, studies show, continues to have less and less real impact on consumer decisions, these companies can and do spend a higher percentage of their budgets on creating high-quality products through product research and product development.

Combine products that are typically superior to what’s available elsewhere with a sales model that leverages social connections, and you have a social selling model that has been proven to be very effective and profitable over time, for both the companies themselves and the independent representatives who build businesses with them.

Today, you can find a vast array of products and services sold through direct sales. Here are some popular products:

- ✓ Cosmetics, beauty products, and skincare products
- ✓ Clothing and fashion
- ✓ Food and wine
- ✓ Home decor, including candles and fragrances
- ✓ Jewelry
- ✓ Kitchen items and cookware
- ✓ Nutritional supplements and diet aids
- ✓ Organizing and scrapbooking supplies
- ✓ Personal protection
- ✓ Romance and relationship enhancers
- ✓ Tools for home repair
- ✓ Weight management and workout supplies

And it's not just about products. Services sold through direct sales can include the following:

- ✓ Utilities and energy
- ✓ Financial planning
- ✓ Insurance products
- ✓ Legal products
- ✓ Personal business services
- ✓ Telecommunication

Those lists are just a sampling. There are hundreds of categories of items you can market or purchase through direct sales companies.

Personal Attributes and Skills Needed for Direct

Sales

Succeeding in direct sales calls for a certain combination of personality traits and skills. Despite their apparent differences, the same personality traits and skills come in handy with all three of the business models:

- ✓ Resilience and persistence
- ✓ Strong work ethic and discipline
- ✓ Ability to accept rejection and work outside your comfort zone
- ✓ Enthusiasm

Beyond those generally applicable traits, you'll find that possessing or cultivating many other skills and talents will be of immense help to you in direct sales. This section discusses those and why they are important.

Belief in the product

It is imperative that you authentically and completely believe in the product you represent. Without that, your skills will fail to convince others, and the experience will be so lacking in satisfaction that it will all feel like hard work.

Vision and goals

You need a clear and specific vision of what you want to achieve with your business. And you need to define, in writing, your income goals, production goals, progress up the company ranks, and what having this business will do for your life and how it will feel (read more about this in [Chapter 5](#)). You'll hear people refer to this as your *why*. Having this strong *why* will help you overcome the challenges you will inevitably encounter.

Superior communication skills

If you're naturally a great communicator, you're in luck. But even if you're not, if you're determined, it is possible to significantly improve your communication skills and reap the benefits in your life and in your business. This includes becoming a better listener who asks questions to gain clearer understanding; a better connector, because people do business with those they know, like, and trust; and presenter, because being able to demonstrate your products or explain your opportunity with confidence is essential.

Patience

Rome wasn't built in a day and regardless of the model you choose (see [Chapter 3](#) for a rundown on the three different direct sales models), gaining mastery and building your business so that it provides a steady, reliable income take time. In Network Marketing, people often give up too soon, because their small initial checks make them feel unsuccessful. In Party Plan and Hybrid, a lack of patience often leads to frustration because achieving a rhythm of parties booked and getting better at consistently running them will take time, as well. People do get better at the activities of their businesses, but there is no substitute for practice — and practice takes time.

Patience is also helpful in your interactions with customers and prospects. Statistically speaking, it takes seven exposures before someone makes a buying decision. Learning to feel calm during this process can be a great help.



The *yes* you're looking for can feel like it takes a long, long time. The more you practice some

detachment to the outcome and just stay the course and maintain patience, the more enjoyable your business will be.

Interpersonal skills

You should have a desire to build relationships with others, including your new contacts, party guests, hosts, team members, and recruit leads. The better you are at working with others and building relationships, the farther you'll go in any business, and the better results you'll experience.



When you put relationships first, business follows naturally — sometimes directly, and sometimes through referrals.

Presentation skills

In Party Plan and Hybrid, you'll do not only product presentations, but also presentations designed to encourage others to become party hosts and team members.



The key to great presentations is *to be brief*. The primary reason people attend an in-person home party is to socialize with their friends — shopping while they do it is an added bonus.

You can review a standard party plan presentation in [Chapter 9](#). Practice is key when it comes to presentation skills.

And though it is true that the Network Marketing model relies on tools to make these presentations, as you build a team you'll be called on more to present to groups. You'll also present over the phone to your team

member's prospects. Developing solid presentation skills is valuable in that model, too.

Ability to recognize buying cues

To succeed, it helps greatly if you're able to recognize small, tell-tale signs that someone is interested in exploring opportunities to purchase, join your team, or host a party. Often, people won't directly ask for more information on hosting or joining the business. Instead, they may simply *lean in* to listen intently as you mention a benefit. Or they may ask you about how much time you spend on your business or how much money can be earned. Sometimes, the clue is as subtle as offering to help you collect your demonstration products and put them in your car, connect with you on social media, or even just sit next to you at a luncheon.



In general, when someone gives you a conversation opener, they are exhibiting interest. And, as tempting as it is to let all your enthusiasm show, you'll find that your best results occur when you give small pieces of information in an upbeat manner and avoid overwhelming them.

Customer care

More of a scheduled habit than a skill, this is crucial, nonetheless. Each month, or at least every other month, you should contact your customers and ask how you can serve them. What you're also doing is reading their temperature. Start these conversations by asking how they're enjoying the products they purchased. In following months, offer them products they may be interested in for themselves or for upcoming holidays. At least twice a year, offer them the opportunity to earn free