

(submitted by H.M (M.D.) - Pennsylvania

To Whom It May Concern:

My wife and I were Amway distributors for approximately three years, from 1996 thru 1999. We were shown the Amway plan by a friend from church who told us that we could retire in 5 years with essentially unlimited income if we built an Amway business. We then went to many "Amway opportunity meetings" where many different people told us how they had successfully built the business and that anyone could do it.

We made a commitment to "our business" but soon found out that we were out most evenings of the week and at least one Saturday, often the entire weekend, a month. We were regularly "taught" at these meetings that if we were winners who loved our family, we would be "out building the business" as an investment in our future, at the expense of time with our families.

We were also told that to be serious commitment to the business necessitated subscription to "tape of the week" and "tape of the week plus one." These were two tapes of various people; the vast majority were Amway distributors who would tell us their rags to riches story with the great money that they were making through their Amway business. They would talk about the BIG checks that they would run to the mailbox to get from Amway. They would also talk about how every day was Saturday since they had "freedom" as a direct result of their income from Amway.

We were told to listen to our "upline" because they had our best interest at heart. Their success was dependent on our success. We would go for "counseling sessions" with our upline who would tell what to do in matters of business and non-business. In fact, we were regularly instructed to ignore and avoid any family members, not building an Amway business and categorized them as "losers" and bozos." We were expected to regularly attend special weekend meetings (two of which fell consistently on family holidays such as July fourth (Family Reunion), and Labor Day (Free Enterprise). Some were as far away as Michigan and cost about \$400, not including lodging.

These meetings were life changing in several aspects. First, a positive self attitude coupled with a "dream" were encouraged. However, self esteem was equated with success in the business and the "dream" revolved around the desire for luxury often defined by the business. For example, much mentioning of "walking on the beaches of the world," in reality meant an incentive trip (a business trip ... hosted by the leaders/"diamonds"), in attendance of meetings lasting into the early hours of the morning (5:30am). This was all part of staying "plugged into the system," which would nurture and produce a flourishing business. Included in the "System" were many types of mandatory "tools." These were videos, tapes, books, even an white board and easel, and other items (which were available through Internet Services) required at our "business" expense. This was also considered a reflection of our loyalty to upline and commitment to our business.

Another premise was 100% loyalty to "our business." This included using Amway products as well as listening to our leadership and attending all meetings, which costs money. We were reminded that the leadership did not make any significant money on these meetings and they were offered because they cared for us. A frequent statement was that the speakers "could be anywhere in the world (due to their riches from the Amway business), but they chose to be with today because they cared for us. We were never told that they were paid for speaking.

This is not a pleasant letter to write. I believe that we were given unrealistic expectations, and that the truth is that very few people who became Amway distributors were ever profitable.

H.D.M, (MD)