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Interviewing VS. Recruiting

By Frank Keefer

The competition is fierce! Only about one in five are invited back for a second interview. Successful candidates continue the process for another five or six interviews. This is followed by a probationary period during which the candidate must demonstrate his ability to successfully move product. The prize? Earnings of \$100,000 a year within 12 months.

Does this sound like the interview process for a job as an IBM corporate executive? It could be, but it's the process that I've used to successfully build the most dynamic sales organization in the Network Marketing company I represent.

Successful duplication of this process has created more million-dollar earners, more high pin levels (based on earnings), more full-time distributors, and a higher revenue base for the company in a shorter period of time than any of my peers. I don't believe this is about me; I believe it's about posture. It's about teaching leadership and instilling the belief that we have the "cookie" and don't need to beg people to come into our program.

"Green Beret Networking"

As a military officer, I learned that the theory of war has always been mass. The theory of achieving success in Network Marketing has always been numbers, but with the advent of technology, things are changing. Quality is replacing quantity.

I found during my stints as a small unit combat commander-- first as a non-commissioned officer in the Marine Corps and later as a US Army Special Forces (Green Beret) Officer and Ranger-- that small, highly motivated and highly trained units can create a considerable positive impact on the strategic mission. Using the same leadership and team building techniques I learned in the military, I was able to help build effective sales teams in Fortune 50 companies who broke records by moving hundreds of millions of dollars of product.

My approach to the Network Marketing business is patterned after those techniques. It starts with the selection process. I am always looking for a few good men and women who are dedicated to extraordinary performance. Translated one step further, these outstanding individuals-- using comparable techniques-- build tight, effective marketing organizations which capture concentrated dollars through customer share (more dollars from each customer) rather than market share (fewer dollars per capita, but with many times more customers).

In the high-tech world of today, quality is simply a more efficient way of doing business than quantity. The overhead is kept to a minimum, but the results are maximized. The by-product of this approach is enhanced professionalism within the industry.

Selective Sponsoring

The days of taking names off tombstones, of signing up unsuspecting friends and household pets, of overzealous distributors and recruiting hucksters using assembly line recruiting to get in anyone who can fog a mirror are rapidly drawing to a close. As we strive for professionalism and more favorable public acceptance as a legitimate business, we can no longer afford to litter the countryside with MLM casualties and failures.

Every distributor that fails hurts us, by association, as an industry and collectively indicts us all as scam artists. Success for many, not just a few, will do more than anything else to enhance the industry image and place us in the forefront of product and service distribution where we belong. Attrition should not be accepted as a necessary part of the package.

Selective sponsoring makes good business sense. The most important asset of any business professional is time. Critical to success is effective time management-- productivity rather than just plain activity. Bringing in folks who have little desire for or chance of success, just for promotional volume to cut a pay check, is not only unethical, it means that more time resources will have to be expended to replace those folks who drop out. Continual distributor replacement is ineffective time management.

I look for folks who will succeed with or without my help if I can just point them in the right direction. With a little support, their achievements prove to be stellar.

The past 30 years have been a protracted pioneering phase in the industry. From the days of distributor warehousing, before the advent of common carriers, to today's high-tech business mechanisms, one fact has remained constant: This business is still fundamentally built on belief-- belief in the industry, the company, the products and in one's self. "Can I do it?" is the question of paramount importance to every potential distributor.

My process is designed not only to satisfactorily answer that question in the mind of the prospect, but to instill in them the confidence that their success is a foregone conclusion. Just as the day has come when prospects are starting to interview for the most effective sponsor they can find, as the public wakes up to the emergence of the industry, the day will come when prospective distributors will wait in line to join quality companies. Let it begin now! Within my organization it has already begun.

How Does This Process Work?

I always use the third-party approach: "Who do you know that . . ." (would like to be their own boss, spend more time with their family, earn unlimited income, etc.) My first step is setting an appointment when the prospect asks, "What is it?" I never give any more information than necessary to set the appointment.

Most new distributors, and even some who have been around awhile, blow their best leads by giving the prospect enough information for the prospect to disqualify the opportunity in his own mind. "I know all about that and I don't know anyone who would be interested," is his mental reply.

If I can't get an appointment without giving away "disqualifying" information (it rarely happens for experienced leaders, but it is a common occurrence with novice distributors), my mental reply is "Next!" I'm not in the business of convincing folks to sit down with me to find out how they can earn a six-figure income if they're not interested. I'm in the information-dispensing business, not the convincing business. If I have to sell someone on the business today, I'll have to sell them again tomorrow when their coworkers tell them that they're nuts. Having a little ambition and a desire to improve his or her life is the first quality that I look for in a prospective distributor. Without ambition and desire, everything else is moot.

The first appointment is scheduled for the prospect to evaluate the opportunity to determine if he knows anyone who is qualified for an interview. At that appointment, I set the stage by casually telling the prospect, "I know this isn't for you." This takes all of the pressure off him. He is no longer concerned that he might be setting himself up to be talked into something. Once relaxed, because he has nothing to fear, the prospect is more inclined to listen with an open mind.

I follow up by stating, "I know that you're happy where you are. I'm looking for someone like you (highly motivated, good organizational skills, a self-starter, whatever applies) but who is concerned about. . . ." Then I list all of those things that I know he is concerned about himself, like downsizing, loss of pension, cut in pay, time away from the family, and concern for the future. This is called sticking the dagger in (between the ribs) and twisting it.

It's almost comic to watch as the expression on the prospect's face changes from one of curiosity to one of despair and anguish as the points that I make, referring to a third-party, cause him pain by hitting so close to home. They apply to him also.

Handled correctly, within 15 minutes, the interviewee will usually timidly profess an interest, "What about me?"

My response is a resounding, "You? You wouldn't be interested in this! You're happy where you are!" The more bellicose I am, the better it works. This is big-time take-away. I have now created fear of loss-- the only external motivation that works.

Once the prospect starts to explain that he really is interested, I nail him with the second most important question of the entire interview. That question, which I ask as if I don't believe it, is, "Why would you want to do this?"

This question starts a prospect on the process of selling himself on the concern that he

has about his existing condition or his future and gets him to verbalize it, thus reinforcing it in his own mind. This phase is extremely important. I just let him talk. The longer he rattles on, the more animated he will become. If he slows down, I ask questions about his situation which are designed to bring him back to the direction that I want him to go. The whole process is designed to bring the prospect to the self-realization that he is living his life like a caged rat.

I then ask the prospect the single most important question of the entire interview. A second interview rests on the conviction of his answer. "What do you really want to do with your life?"

Ninety-five percent of the time, the prospect doesn't have a clue. The trick is to trigger in him the realization that, regardless of his station in life, he has allowed himself to become like a mindless hamster on a treadmill. When that realization registers, you can see it on his face.

I'm looking for the tiny spark that says, "It doesn't have to be this way." I'm looking for someone with a desire to change his life. My determination of his desire to take charge of his life and be the architect of his own destiny is pure gut. It comes through practice.

If I don't sense desire and conviction, he's done. I accept that I probably won't get any quality leads from him because if he doesn't have the belief in himself to change his situation, he probably won't have the belief in the opportunity to recommend anyone worthwhile. Nor, as a rule, will he likely know or associate with people willing to step up to the plate and accept ownership of their future. I'm looking for movers and shakers, not drones.

At this point, I conclude the first interview even though I haven't even shown the plan. If I've sensed the desire for change, I'll end by saying, "I still don't believe that this is for you, but I'll tell you what-- try some product and if it works for you as well as it has for other people, we'll talk again. Let's schedule another appointment now, the sooner the better, otherwise I might get booked up and not be able to get with you for several weeks."

This has gotten a commitment even though he still doesn't know what "it" is. It's important at this point to find a product that he needs and can relate to, otherwise his chance of success is minimal. There's a reason why all companies preach being a product of the product. It's not just for revenue from internal consumption-- conviction in a personal testimony increases new business. If the prospect won't book a definitive appointment, (i.e. "I'll get back with you"), it's a signal that the interest level isn't where it should be, and mentally I blow him off.

The Follow-Up Interviews

At the second meeting, I show the plan. I strongly encourage the prospect to bring one or two associates with him to help him evaluate the business. Because I instruct the prospect in a fool-proof method of how to get his associates to come with him, his success in inviting shows me whether or not he is coachable. It also shows whether or not he has credibility with his friends, as well as the quality of his friends.

I am now employing leverage, because I am talking to three people instead of one. I

need only one of them to become interested and I duplicate the above process again. During the meeting, I validate the efficacy of the product through my prospect and offer his associates the opportunity to evaluate the product themselves.

The third step is to invite the prospect(s) to a group meeting, either in someone's home (preferably) or at a hotel. Picking them up is critical to assuring their presence. The purpose of the group meeting is not just to show them the plan again but for them to begin the process of their due diligence which is designed to help build their belief. I mandate that they talk with other guests, both prospects and existing distributors, and ask them the question, "What have you found during your experience in (or investigation of) this business?"

I reinforce with my prospects that they are meeting people who are starting to realize their dreams. I ask the prospects to sit down over the next few days and really think about what they want out of life. I ask them, if my business can provide what they want, would it be something they are interested in doing?

Once again, I'm getting a commitment from them. Even if they say yes, I remind them that I am interviewing and that just because they happen to be in the right place at the right time does not guarantee that I will select any of them. This posture is important because once prospects feel like the sponsor needs them, they lose interest. They must be kept off balance until their belief level and their commitment to their own future is high enough so they are going to be successful with or without me.

I explain to them that if I have their specific goals, I can formulate a detailed plan of action specifically for them that will help them to achieve those goals. I ask them if they would be interested in taking the process to that step. They always say yes, so we immediately book a follow-up appointment together.

If they are concurrently being prospected by one or more competitive companies, I encourage them to follow through with their investigation of those companies. I make it a point not to say anything disparaging about the competition, their products or their compensation plans. I believe that if my prospect is going to find an opportunity he likes better than what I'm offering, I'd rather have him do it before I've invested time with him. With over 280,000,000 people in this country, the prospect pool is unlimited, so I'm not concerned over losing a few. Different strokes for different folks. While I certainly believe that my company is the best, it may not be for everybody.

In reality, I rarely lose prospects to competition. In fact, I believe that because I encourage them to look at other opportunities, the prospect doesn't feel pressure. I particularly enjoy an advantage when the competition trashes everything about my company and follows up by either slobbering all over my prospect, hustling him or coming across as self-serving by arm-twisting or accosting him with a hard sell. My approach of "prove to me why I should invest my time with you," places the focus on my prospect and what my opportunity can do for him rather than what it can do for me. It shows that I respect the competition, the prospect and his or her decision.

Next comes mandatory attendance at a regional or national convention where my prospect has a chance to see the big picture and also satisfy himself that everyone who follows the system is successful. I can instill more belief in one weekend at a major rally than I can with six months of one-on-one meetings. It allows me the opportunity to off-load to others who will "sell" the opportunity for me.

At our next appointment, I spell out the specific requirements necessary to work with me. My reputation as a successful sponsor is on the line. I can't afford to fail. If I am not up front about the type of commitment necessary for success, I am doing a disservice to the prospect and myself. I want everyone that I work with to be successful. I drive right to specifics that guarantee success. As a result of my approach process, without realizing it, the prospect has already demonstrated the ability to complete the most important of these success tasks and has the self-confidence necessary for success before ever inking a distributor application. He knows that he can move product, invite to events and commit to attending trainings and seminars. My other requirements, administrative things like voicemail and three-way calling service, he can get with a simple phone call.

Getting Them Started

I have found that many distributors are reluctant to explain to the prospect the commitment necessary for success. They fear that they'll lose the prospect once the prospect finds that he or she has to do something to be successful. After all, the Great American Dream is "something for nothing." Why rock the boat by telling them anything different? Wrong! Often the prospect is told "you don't have to move product" or "you don't have to attend meetings" or "I will build your business for you." All of these statements are ludicrous, but far too often, they are standard prospecting fare.

Success-oriented individuals want to know what they must do to maximize their success as quickly and as efficiently as possible. The amount of work involved is never an issue with success-oriented types. My purpose is to give them the track to run on. My intent is to support them in meeting or exceeding their current income within one year so that they will go full-time. That may take putting six figures in their pocket and helping them get out of their job. It may mean giving them back the time that their business is sucking out of them while maintaining their current standard of living if they are business owners. In either case, my total focus is on having them make the decision to become career Network Marketers. When that happens, they've achieved their dreams and my income is secure.

By this point, they are ready to sign the application, but I'm not quite ready to take them on. I usually make them move (notice that I said move, not just buy) one more case of product. They are already a success. They just don't know it yet.

Belief First

In conclusion, it's important to remember that this business is built on belief. The best bet is to build the belief in the prospect before he comes into the business. It's too hard to do afterwards. Many distributors are too quick to grab the prospect's check when they should be focused on checking the prospect's belief and commitment. Too often folks are slammed into some company because they get dragged to a hotel meeting where they're schmoozed, hyped and excited. They go home on cloud nine, feeling that they've just found Aladdin's lamp. Then one of three things usually happens: Their mother-in-law tells them that they have two heads, their wife sends them to their room or their husband gives them the Ralph Kramden treatment. Their bubble is burst. They're humiliated. Mentally, they're out of the game. The following month, their sponsor will have another line of zeros on his print out. Whose fault is that? Clearly the sponsor's.

It is verboten to sponsor anyone into my organization at a group meeting. I don't want someone caught up in the emotion of the moment and brought in before they have a legitimate understanding of the business and what it takes to succeed. This can't be done in one evening. When folks brought in like this drop out-- as industry statistics show that they will-- those failures hurt everyone. I don't want to be responsible for anyone in my organization contributing to a negative image of my company or the industry. The sooner everyone realizes that we are all hurt by this, and does those things necessary to prevent rampant attrition, the quicker we will be respected as professionals.

Sponsoring is a process rather than an event. Success is based on belief. By developing and nurturing that belief system through a series of appointments where I have the prospects go through those tasks necessary for success-- using and moving product, sharing the opportunity, promoting and attending events and making continual personal commitments to success during the process-- I build successful distributors before their application is ever filled out. Through these small success steps, a sense of self-confidence and self-motivation that has, in many cases, been dormant for years, surfaces.

The new distributor becomes bullet-proof to criticism and ridicule from dream stealers. His intestinal fortitude is reinforced because he is surrounded by other distributors who have been through the same process and have become successful. I have learned that no one who associates only with positive, successful people ever quits the business. The more successful people available, the easier it is to compound success and keep that new person headed in the right direction.

What you set in motion continues in motion. I'm not in the business of making money. I'm in the business of developing self-reliance, building leaders and creating duplication of the process. My income is a barometer of my effectiveness. One hundred percent of the people with whom I have personally worked, who have followed my system, have hit \$100 grand annualized within 12 months and have gone on to build their own successful organizations. Now you know why.



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