

CAREER PATHS

Home-Work: Direct Selling Spurs Increase in Home Business

(NAPSA)—One of the fastest growing ways to buy and sell products is also proving to be the most lucrative and convenient for many involved.

Direct selling has become a global phenomenon as consumers are drawn to the appeal of shopping from home—and the outdated image of the door-to-door salesperson has been replaced by that of savvy entrepreneurs managing profitable businesses from the convenience of their homes.

Nearly 50 million people comprise the global sales force today, 13.3 million in the U.S. alone, and it's estimated nearly half a million new independent salespeople join the ranks each week. In fact, direct-selling sales in the U.S. went up about \$1 billion in 2003, hitting \$29.6 billion. Overseas the increase was even more dramatic.

One reason may be that direct selling offers an unprecedented opportunity, says Neil Offen, president of the Direct Selling Association: "Two wonderful aspects of direct selling are that you can balance your family responsibilities in life with your business opportunity and you can set your own financial goals."

If you're attracted to a profession in direct selling, however, do a little research. The Direct Selling Association suggests you:

- Find a company and product that appeals to you
- Make sure your start-up costs are minimal
- Look for companies that offer cutting-edge support for their sellers. Online tools, in particular, can make purchasing products and running of the business much easier
- Find a company that offers education, training, support and incentives.



Trends in home shopping, coupled with the needs of people to balance their lives, are fueling the growth of direct-selling careers.

Rhonda Shasteen, senior vice president of marketing at Mary Kay Inc., adds, "We provide online programs that allow the Independent Beauty Consultants to manage their businesses. They can track sales, keep their customer information right at their fingertips, place orders and always have access to the most up-to-date company information. What's also great is that customers can conveniently purchase products from their consultants online 24/7 and have them delivered right to their door."

One Mary Kay independent sales director describes her career: "I was able to grow my business at my own pace without having to sacrifice time with my family or my friends. Now, it's my full-time career and not only has it been lucrative but it's flexible and I have a lot of fun." There's no "glass ceiling," she adds. Direct sellers enjoy success limited only by their own time and effort.

The industry is greatly expanding as new independent salespeople recognize what direct sellers have known all along: When this opportunity knocks—open the door.