

Leading by Example

Donna Reid-Mitchell: Building a Business on Family Values

By *Stephanie DuPré*



When Donna Reid-Mitchell of Frisco, Texas first entered the networking space, the upline representative who recruited her implicitly dismissed her.

"I had been with the company for just a little while, when she called me and told me she was quitting because she couldn't find any good people," Donna recalls. "I had to wonder what she thought of me—wasn't I a good person?"

The pain of that dismissal could have crippled the fledgling networker, but for Donna, it only strengthened her resolve to build a successful career helping others find their own greatness. It was an ambitious dream, since Donna was new in her town with very few acquaintances, but she was also driven by an even greater purpose: her children. She craved the flexibility networking offers so that she could stay at home with them.

She got to work, her children in tow, and embarked upon a journey that would lead to the creation of the "High Achievers," a group of entrepreneurs working together for networking greatness.

"Achievement is what we're all about," Donna says, and the group's results prove her point. The High Achievers collectively generate annual sales of several million a year, all the while celebrating together the many victories of teamwork.

"I consider every recruit a partner. We work together, as close as a family," she says. "We work for the benefit of the individuals and for the benefit of the team as a whole. Our whole is much greater than the sum of our parts."

Beginner's Enthusiasm

It took two years to reach their current level of success and if her personal goal to stay home with her children hadn't been so powerful, she might not have had the strength to hold the team together long enough to get there.

"When I first started, my goal was to earn \$100 a month. I thought that would be a good paycheck for work you could do at home," she laughs. "I didn't fully comprehend the



business or the opportunity it offers. I just knew it gave me what I most cherished—control over my own schedule.”

She found inspiration within the covers of her company’s sales brochure, and she advises all who are considering entering the networking space to sign up with a company that sells products they love and use themselves.

“I pored through those brochures from cover to cover, filling up my order forms with items I wanted to buy for myself and my family,” she recalls. Resisting the urge to become her own best customer, Donna started to use her enthusiasm for the products to help her sell. “Even though I was shy about asking for the sale, it was easy to win new customers because I knew the brochures so well and talked about the products with passion. Your enthusiasm is the greatest sales tool there is! If you want to be truly successful, you’ve got to embrace the products your company offers.”

Neighborhood Recruiting

Donna started her business the old-fashioned way: going door to door. She left brochures and recruiting flyers at homes in her neighborhood and then waited for orders to come in. This tried-and-true method worked well enough to far exceed her original goal of earning \$100 month. In fact, she earned recognition for distinguished sales in her first year and built a downline of thirty recruits, all of whom lived nearby.

However, even with the close proximity to her team, Donna eventually lost many of her recruits to inactivity. Her business collapsed, and as it did, her hopes wavered. Her children were again the catalyst that helped her carry on.

“My son said to me, ‘You can do it, mom! You are the best networker I know. I’ll help you,’ ” she recalls. “And from then on, my kids were in the business with me, making our success a family affair.”

Donna took her children out on sales and recruiting calls, and quickly found out that, contrary to her initial fears that they might inhibit her business, her children proved to be her secret weapon.

“Having my children with me made it easier for people to talk to me,” she explains. “People who wouldn’t take a brochure from me would take one from my daughter because she was so cute!”

Donna and her children established a sales route that they covered after school on Tuesdays and also integrated the business into the family’s daily routine. Donna carried brochures, business cards and samples with her everywhere they went—to the park, to the supermarket or to Little League games—and she and the children shared the opportunity with the parents and children they met.

Family Business

“When people say ‘I could do so much more if I didn’t have children, I tell them, ‘You need to do more, for your children’s sakes,’” she says. “Let your children be your motivation for doing even better, not your excuse for underachieving.”

In addition to her biological family, Donna says that her business family has been critical to her success.

“The fact that my original upline quit was a blessing in disguise,” she says. “My account rolled up to the number one leadership representative in the company, who happened to be the embodiment of the idea that success comes from helping others succeed.”

Her new upline leaders invested not only time in Donna's success, but also money. They purchased recruiting flyers and sales tools for her and funded her participation in career fairs and community events. Their gesture touched Donna and inspired her to make a similar investment in all of her recruits.

Under the tutelage of her upline, Donna also acquired the business skills she needed to establish the long-term health of the High Achievers. She teaches her team to utilize myriad marketing items, from magnetic signs for the car to business cards attached to sales brochures, as well as motivational DVDs.

Finding a Model

Company training materials were key for building the High Achievers, and Donna encourages every networker to utilize the materials offered by their company.

"You will find a nugget of inspiration and brilliance in every training opportunity if you approach it with that goal in mind," she says.

Donna found additional inspiration from a kindred spirit she discovered in a training video featuring the most successful networkers in her company.

"One of the representatives illuminated the dream for me because I could relate to her so well," Donna says. "She is a legend at the company. More importantly, she says that her priorities are God, her family and then her business—which are my priorities exactly."

Donna watched the video every day, becoming more committed to her goals and more passionate about the business with every viewing.

"I give that video to everyone who comes to this business," she says. "There are people from all walks of life in it, so everyone finds someone with whom they can identify."

Donna says the personal connections she felt to the representative in the video and others in her circle were critical in deciding whether to make networking a career. She also believes that a lack of personal connection to the business is the primary reason people do not succeed in the networking space.

"Everyone dreams of earning more money and having more freedom," Donna says. "That isn't specific enough to create the energy you need to succeed. Networking requires a lot of effort—you need the dream to live inside of you, to exist in your every breath, to keep you going when times are tough."

Winning Hearts

Discovering the dream that will sustain a new recruit is the first thing Donna does when bringing someone into the business.

"I was surprised to find that money and flexibility are not always the things that drive a networker," she explains. "You cannot underestimate the power of recognition for many people. There are a lot of people who make good money at work, but get no recognition. For them, the emphasis on results and the numerous incentives we offer are what wins their hearts."

Donna begins a prospecting discussion by finding out what it is about a networking business that appeals to a potential recruit. She then centers the conversation around what a home-based business can do for the prospect. Framing the conversation around the needs of the individual allows for creating the vision of success and ignites the spark that it takes to embark successfully on the networking journey. It also demonstrates to the prospect that the opportunity is presented in a spirit of service, not of self-service, Donna says.

"I learned early on how important it is to get someone to like you, trust you and respect you. If you are able to build a relationship with a prospective recruit and she knows that you are there for her, everything else will just fall into place."

Powerful Incentives

Donna gathers her recruits on weekly conference calls to establish the group's business agenda and monitor its progress and help form solid relationships within her downline.

"Every member of the team feels a sense of ownership for the business and works together to move it forward," Donna says. She believes that a little competition can inspire greater teamwork, and she creates incentives to complement her company's recognition program. She awards designer jewelry for advancing in the leadership ranks and holds a special celebration every summer for top sellers in her organization. "Incentives absolutely work," Donna says. "They touch upon two very important motivators—money and pride. Incentives can keep your team fired up year-round."

Even more than incentives, Donna says her own example ultimately determines her success in both career and at home.

"I tell my son he has to earn straight A's in school, so I have to earn A's at work," she explains. "The same goes for my downline. If I tell them to sell aggressively, then I have to sell aggressively. If I instruct them to schedule three activities a day to move the business forward, then I have to do that too. This is a business built on role modeling."

Under Donna's leadership, her network and career are also built upon family, which continues to guide the High Achievers towards their next victory.

"The most meaningful thing you can do is to spend quality time with your family. As a networker, I have been able to do that while supporting us comfortably. In the networking profession, I discovered the joy of seeing others succeed while making my own dreams come true."

STRAIGHT TALK

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