

## Lisa Wilber

*Are you old enough to remember the TV commercial with the "ding-dong" of a doorbell and, "Avon calling"? Lisa is, just barely, even though she started with Avon in 1981, when she was 18. Today the successful author of *Marketing Ideas for the Wild at Heart* and *Support Support Support*, her organizations sells just about \$10 million of products a year and she is the number three money earner in the country.*

plus AUDIO and ATTACHMENT

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### **Lisa, you were 18 when you began. That's pretty young to become a business person.**

Well, back then it wasn't really a business for me. I married a sailor when I was 18, that would be my first husband, and we had moved to Guam, where anything American was big business. So, when I was looking for something to do I thought, "Why not sell Avon?" because I remembered the Avon lady coming to our house.

I wrote Avon from Guam and they told me how much to send for the kit and they shipped it to me over there. I sold over there for almost three years. When I moved back into the states I sold over here part time while I went to business school.

It's funny that I didn't realize when I was on Guam that they didn't have all the benefits that we have here in the United States. I think they do now, but they didn't in 1981. We paid for shipping each box and here in the U.S. it's free shipping. We also had to pay for our orders upfront. So when I moved back here I thought, "Wow, this is great! All these extra things!" and the other Avon representatives were looking at me like I was crazy.

### **When you moved back, did you move back to a place you had been before?**

No. When my first husband and I split up I was only 20. I'm not one of those people who are good with authority, so when he said, "If you leave here, you have to go home to your parents", I defiantly said, "You know, I'm old enough to decide for myself!" So, he asked where I was going to go and I didn't know, but took out the map, covered my eyes, poked at the map and that's where I went... to Gulfport, Mississippi.

I had no money, no job lined up, and no where to live, I just went there.

### **What was that Lisa... a spirit of adventure?**

Oh no, more like a spirit of defiance. I guess I didn't want to go home where they had all told me I was too young to get married, because I guess I was. So, I just thought I'd strike out on my own and I didn't want to be too close to home.

***Looking back now it was such a crazy thing to do, but back then it was just something I did. I'm glad I did it, it made me a different***

***person and I can fend for myself now.***

**You did Avon part time and jumped into going to school for business. What was your aim in doing that?**

Actually, I never considered Avon as a full time job, because I'd never run into anyone doing Avon full time. I was paying for my books with my Avon sales and I just kept selling. I was going to school for data processing, which was writing computer code. Not something I'm good at but back then it was something I thought I wanted to do. I eventually moved to South Carolina and went to business school there for management. That was more up my alley. So, now I have two Associate degrees, one in Data Processing and one in Management. I did Avon the whole time and then when I did move back to New England, I got a job within a couple of days, as a secretary and still, continued to sell Avon.

**So, all this time your 'real' job was Avon and you just went to school and became a secretary as your other work?**

Sure... and I didn't know it. I thought the whole aim was to be a secretary and work in an office. I thought that's what I was shooting for— my mother was an office administrator, my father was a janitor, I guess I just didn't think I could have a *career* with Avon, that just never dawned on me.

**Well, it dawned on you at some point! When was that?**

Well, I got laid off of my secretary job in 1987. And that was a good paying job. I was still in my mid-twenties and I was earning \$20,000 a year plus a 401K and dental and health and the whole thing. My whole department got axed a couple of days before Thanksgiving, we called it 'black Monday'.

***Even the men were crying about losing their jobs so I came home***

***hysterical— really, really hysterically crying and my husband said, "Why don't you do more with that Avon thing you've been playing with?"***

And I said, "Yeah, right." thinking to myself, "You simple man", but saying, "I need to replace \$20,000! I don't even know anyone *selling* \$20,000 and there's a difference between what you sell and what you get to keep."

He said, "Just because you don't know anyone doing that, what makes you think you can't?"

That conversation changed how I went forward. It's funny, because later, when I was telling someone on the phone in my downline about him inspiring me to do this full time, my husband said, "You don't go around telling people that, do you?"

I said, "Well, yeah, that really changed the direction that my life went, actually." And he said,

***"Well I only said all that stuff back then because I wanted you to stop crying! I had no idea you were going to turn this into a big thing."***

**How did you change your mind, and what kinds of things did you do to turn this from a part time deal to full time?**

The day I found out I needed to make this my full time money, knowing I had to replace \$20,000; I stopped doing some things I had been doing. I was doing things in Avon like it was a club, like going and helping people do their stuff for free. I stopped doing all of that and said I wasn't going to

do anything for free in Avon until I had replaced my pay. That helped a lot. I concentrated on things that were profitable to do every day.

### **What were those things, Lisa?**

It didn't dawn on me to knock on doors... I don't know why. I thought to myself, I live in a town of 8000 people, there are 15 Avon reps in my town, the only way I have a snowballs chance of replacing my pay is if I convince everyone in town that I'm the only one!

So, I started making a list of things that I could do to convince everyone that I was the only person. I looked at what other businesses were doing in town, so...

***I decorated my car, I put vinyl letters on it that said 'Buy or Sell Avon". I got a light up sign for the roof from the pizza guy and took 'pizza' off and put 'Avon' on it.***

Those two things, right there, made me pretty noticeable, because we don't even have taxi's here, so it was pretty outrageous.

I put signs in my yard and some down on the road. I listed myself in the phone book under Avon. I ran ads in every newspaper within 10 miles of me. I joined the Chamber of Commerce under Avon; so I tried to do everything I saw the other businesses do.

### **How did people respond to you?**

Regular customers loved it, the other Avon reps weren't too happy with it. As a matter of fact, the first car that I lettered was a Yugo and it wasn't a very nice car, but you have to start with what you've got. I never had customers complain, but I had other reps write to the company saying I shouldn't be allowed to letter such a crappy car. I thought that was funny. Actually, I earned a trip from Avon— it was after a couple of years of going full time— for the idea of lettering the car, so they certainly weren't against it.

***The customers actually were great, they would say things like, "Maybe if we buy an extra lipstick from you, honey, next year you can buy a real car".***

So they were really good about it... even when they had to help me push start that thing.

### **So, how did your business grow?**

It seems like from that time to this it's just been the same thing over and over and over. I continually make my list of ways to get people to know that I'm here. I call that marketing. I just try to find ways to get into the press with my name and Avon's name. I upgrade the things that I've done, like lettering the car. I recently had my new PT Cruiser wrapped; when I was in a meeting in Las Vegas, I saw a taxi wrapped with this giant vinyl sticker that covers your whole car. They produce it on a computer, so you can put anything you want on it. So, I had them scan pictures of the products and they put it right on the car, really big, it looks 3D and includes the word Avon and my 800 number.

The amount of publicity I have and the orders I get from having the car all decorated like that is just big! Besides, people believe that I'm the Avon expert, just because of the car. It brings your business credibility to a whole different level.

Avon didn't have a multi-level option until 1990, so I was doing full time selling in '87, '88 and '89, those three years, and when it came out I didn't immediately jump right on it. They came out on the west coast with a multi-level pay plan in 1990, and on the east coast we were allowed to join it in 1992, but I didn't do it for another year.

### **What was your thinking with that?**

I thought it was bad. Really, my first thought was, "Oh, no, it's going to wreck the company!" because the only experience I'd had with multi-level

marketing was when a couple had invited us over to their house for dinner. Then we got there and saw other couples and they did a recruiting presentation. What upset me about that was this— I saw myself as a business person and couldn't figure out why he didn't just tell me that he was going to give a recruiting presentation. I felt like I got tricked.

So, I finally decided I needed to study the industry, because I was open to the possibility that my experience was just the way of one couple in one company, so maybe there was more to it. I looked and found Upline®, actually, and I looked and read things about the industry that I hadn't done before. And from my reading I thought, "No, that's not the way the *industry* operates", so that made me feel better and made me want to try it, when I knew I could do it my way.

### **And how did you start out doing it your way?**

Marketing! I ran ads in the newspaper and, actually, I get 80 percent of my new business partners that way still. I don't think that will work that way for every company but Avon's name is so big that a lot of people who are already considering selling Avon will look in the newspaper to find someone to connect with.

### **What's the nature of your approach? What do you say to them?**

In my ad I put,

***"Career or pocket money— you decide" and 'up to 50% profit'.***

I put regular stuff there, I don't run blind ads, and I don't do any come-ons. The way I look at it is I'm trying to weed people *out* not weed them in.

### **Lisa, please say more about that.**

I'm looking for people who want to do this as a business, because with Avon, the reps I sponsor have to sell so much before I earn anything on them, so I don't necessarily want personal shoppers.

I also want people that have some credentials in their background, for instance, driver's license, checking account, a credit card in their name, and those kinds of things. They just make better business people when they have those credentials since these are the minimum things that make a business operate.

### **What has changed for you when you moved from being predominantly direct sales to a multi-level?**

Well, I didn't want to recruit people before; I was more interested in offering a discount to someone who wanted to be a helper for me. When I had to switch it made me realize how selfish I was. I wasn't doing what was best for the other person. It really made me realize that when I put the other person first I really end up getting my reward in the long run. I think that was a rude, and overdue awakening, because I should have been doing that all along, as a business owner if nothing else, but being in the multi-level made that crystal clear.

### **What are some of the organizational things you do, training and leadership things?**

I try to provide service.

You'll notice when I answer the phone I always say, "How can I help you today?" and it isn't because I want you to hurry up with the phone call; it's because my mindset is that I'm trying to add value to the people I deal with everyday.

In my downline, that's how I get paid, it's when my interactions with them are valuable for them.

***I wake up to the day asking, "How many of the 2000 people can I provide value for today?" knowing the more people I provide value for the more money I will earn at the end of the day.***



We do a lot of different things, Mailings and email blasts are a couple of them. My people are all over the country, so it's my job to figure out how I can get information they will use, into their hands, so I do a newsletter, reminder postcards, award certificates every two weeks for the top sellers and top recruiters and we also offer a lot of individual incentives, too, for people that are active.

### **Can you give me an example of the individual incentives you're speaking of?**

Sure, every year Avon does an award trip, last year it was Hawaii and this year it's Cancun. I pick something like 12 people that have a really good opportunity to earn it and I'll send them something every month, something about the vacation. Like I sent the *Honolulu Daily News* to them last year, just to keep their interest piqued every month. I actually got that idea from an article in INC. magazine that was talking about Coca Cola doing that kind of thing for their sales people.

It's just something to get the top people to shoot for something they haven't shot for before. The big trip is a little hard for us to get. About 2000 people throughout the country earn it out of about 600,000 representatives and I want to make as many of my people as possible *believe* that they can earn it.

***I think that's the biggest stumbling block, believing you can do it. Once you earn the first one it seems so much easier, so I want to help others over that first stumbling block.***

### **What's been the best thing about network marketing for you, Lisa?**

At first blush I want to say the money, because the money has changed my life, but I really think it's the stories. Peoples stories are wonderful and I'm so glad I could help add value to their lives, I'm proud of the fact I

could help add value, whether it's in building a business or whatever. I love their stories and of course, I didn't do it for them, but I appreciate that I had a little piece in their story. That seems to be the best part.

We were talking the other day about something: I think in our industry the growing as a person thing is so important and I wish everyone, when they first come in, realized it.

***I think they would get a better start if they could realize that the amount of money they are going to earn is going to depend on how much they can grow as a person.***

I think they would approach things differently. Of course, I don't know how you can teach people that in the beginning because they have to grow and find that out for themselves, too.

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*Lisa Wilber, a Senior Executive Unit Leader with Avon, a company she's been with since she was 18, lives in Weare, New Hampshire with her husband Doug and their newly adopted five month-old daughter, Lydia Mae.*

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## ATTACHMENT

CLASSIC | CUSTOMERS | RETAILING | TOOLS

### **20 ideas for finding new customers**

*A number of year's ago, Jim Preston, Avon's CEO, created a "New Customer Idea Pool" contest to generate ideas for finding and keeping new customers. The winning entries from the President's Club members across the country were included in this collection and produced as a booklet. "When it comes to new customers, no one knows more about it than you", Preston told his representatives. Look and see how you can use these ideas from some of the most successful direct sales professionals in America to help you build your business.*

a 12 page ebooklet in downloadable PDF

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## AUDIO

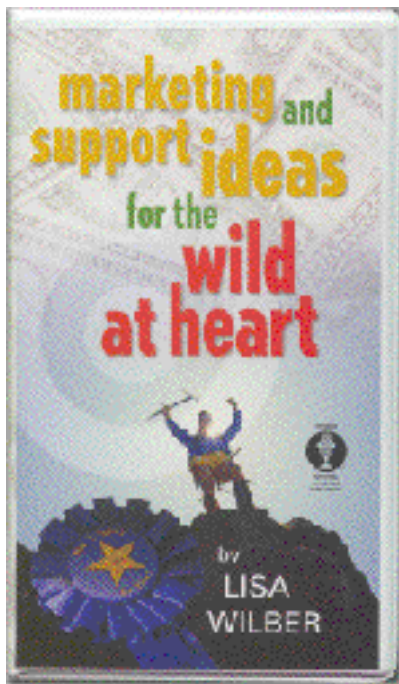
MARKETING | SALES | SKILLS | TRAINING | TOOLS

### **Marketing and support ideas for the wild at heart**

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by **Lisa Wilbur (with Jerry Clark)**

approximately four hours in downloadable MP3



Lisa Wilbur has been written about in the *Upline Journal*, *Home Business Connection*, *Wave 4* and *New Hampshire Business Review*. This four audio cassette program (which retails for \$49.95) features innovative business-building ideas and stories told in Lisa's down-home, conversational style that can help you find more customers, recruit more partners, increase your earnings and help you build and maintain your growing downline.

1000's of people have come to Lisa's seminars to hear this presentation. This program includes Lisa's own compelling personal story in an interview with Club Rhino's Jerry Clark.