



**FTC Commissioners Confirmed**

Agency back to full force as two empty seats are filled

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# FTC Staff Challenges Status Quo on Pyramid Scheme, Income Disclosure Guidelines



Revised directives to DSA, DSSRC signal a major shift in Commission’s interpretation of existing standards

In a significant move aimed at refining its stance on regulatory compliance within the direct selling industry, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) staff issued two notable letters on March 15, 2024, signifying a shift in its approach towards the evaluation of pyramid schemes and income disclosure statements.

The letters, addressed to the Direct Selling Association (DSA) and the Direct Selling Self-Regulatory Council (DSSRC), BBB National Programs, underscore the FTC staff’s current

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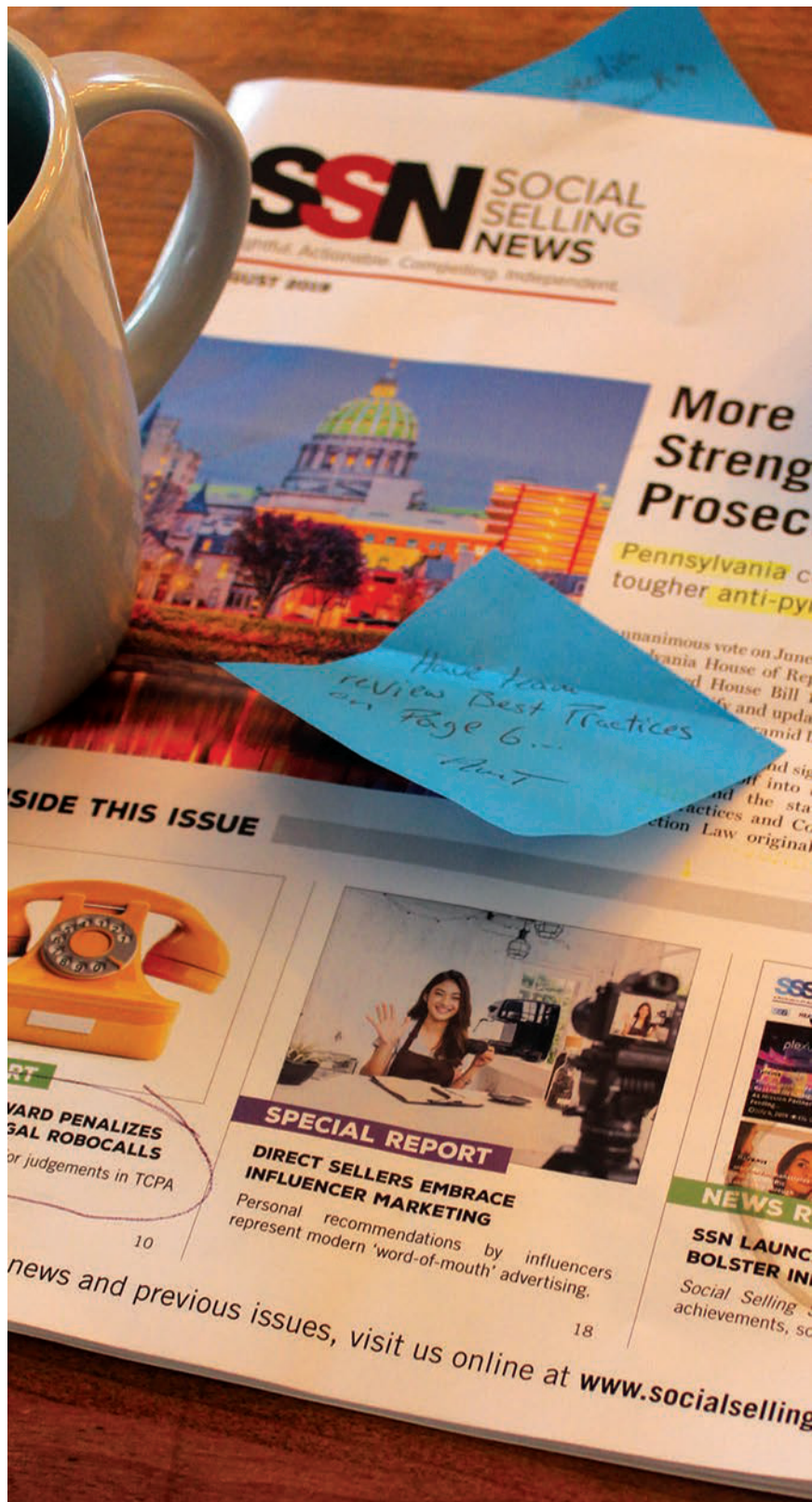
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**— PUBLISHER'S NOTE ►►**

# Providing the Personal Sales Touch in a World of Impersonal Commerce

Hello friends!

Have you ever had to buy a present for someone who was notoriously hard to shop for? I had this experience recently while visiting a small town filled with eclectic mom-and-pop shops. Each store I visited was filled with unique and interesting things, but I just couldn't find the *right* gift to give my dear friend.

I wandered into another shop specializing in leather goods and was approached by the owner. He was very friendly and his excitement for the collections in his shop was contagious. He engaged me in conversation and asked insightful questions about my friend after I explained what I was searching for. One of his questions made me remember my friend's extensive knife collection.

With this clue, the shopkeeper went into the back and returned with a beautiful leather strop, used in the final step of the sharpening process.

It was the perfect gift. The kindly owner even offered to monogram the piece for me for free using an old-style press. I left the store feeling great about my purchase and eager to return. I couldn't help thinking on my way out, "Imagine if all sales and commerce were this warm and personal."

An essential observation emerges: I was never 'sold' to. This subtlety is crucial, particularly in the context of direct selling, where the conventional public perception is often marred by images of pushy sales tactics and blatantly superficial personalization.

Today's consumers are increasingly fatigued by the relentless marketing ploys that are creeping into every aspect of their lives, surrounded by a constant stream of advertisements and sales calls that leave them yearning for genuine human interactions.

I believe this is the single greatest opportunity for direct sellers to set themselves apart from the impersonal marketing tsunami that floods nearly every aspect of our daily lives. With less "selling" and more personal authenticity, the great products offered by this channel will sell themselves. This strategy not only sets direct sellers apart but also aligns with a growing consumer preference for meaningful engagement.

I wish each of you an abundance of success as you strive to connect your products with customers via a field of associates who truly understand the power of personalization.

Thank you for reading!

Warmly,



**DAVID BLAND**

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interpretation of legal standards, despite a previous court ruling that rejected such a standpoint. The correspondence highlights the FTC’s endeavor to supersede older guidelines with new interpretations of the law.

**Revising Pyramid Scheme Criteria**

In a two-page letter to the DSA, the FTC staff addressed what it considers to be misconceptions about the “Koscot test,” historically employed as a benchmark to discern pyramid schemes.

Following discussions at the DSA’s Legal & Regulatory Seminar in September 2023, the staff letter aimed to correct the direct selling channel’s interpretation of a 2004 FTC staff advisory opinion that was sent to the DSA and had been widely cited to differentiate legitimate direct selling operations from pyramid schemes based on revenue sources.

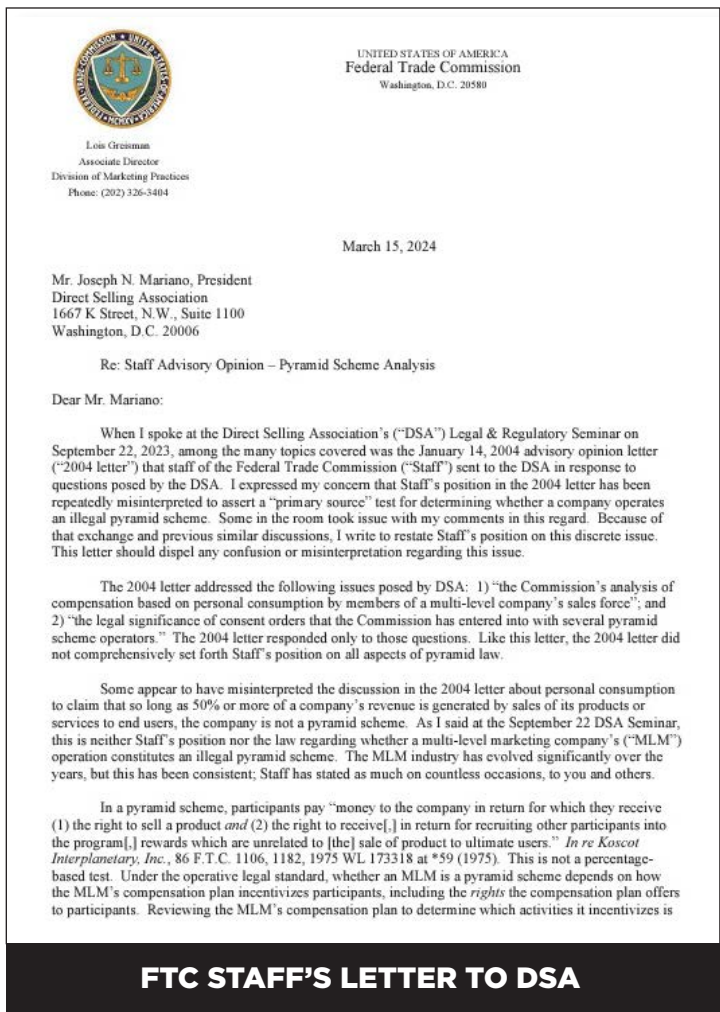
Signed by Lois C. Greisman, associate director, division of marketing practices, the March 2024 letter clarified the FTC staff’s belief that the legality of a multilevel-marketing (MLM) company is not determined by a simple “primary source” test—where the focus is on whether sales to end-users exceed recruitment-related income—but rather by the company’s compensation structure and its emphasis on recruitment over product sales.

Moreover, the letter marked a significant shift in the FTC’s position by rescinding its 2004 advisory opinion, indicating that it no longer reflects the FTC staff’s views due to its purported misuse and the evolving landscape of the direct selling industry.

This adjustment points to a new evaluative framework for the FTC that focuses on qualitative analyses of network marketing companies’ business models and incentivization schemes, moving away from previously held percentage-based criteria.

Donnelly McDowell, partner at Kelley Drye & Warren LLP, provides a critical perspective on the recent communications from the FTC, highlighting their significance beyond mere legal directives.

“The letters are more notable for what they symbolize than for any substantive legal point,” McDowell says.



**FTC STAFF’S LETTER TO DSA**

“We’ve heard the FTC say for years that industry has misinterpreted the 2004 advisory opinion letter, and disavow a ‘primary source test’ that looks at whether revenue is generated by legitimate retail sales to end-users to evaluate whether a company constitutes a pyramid scheme. The FTC attempted to distance itself from that language in Neora and other recent enforcement, and instead focus on whether compensation plans incentivize recruiting over retail sales.

“Of course, the FTC cannot make law by edict, and ultimately its attempt to move the law in this direction was rebuffed by the court in Neora. I see the letter to DSA as doubling-down on that position – and as a deliberate signal to industry that it does not intend to accept the Neora decision as settled law or to let it impact its approach to enforcement,” McDowell says.

**Scrutiny on Income Disclosure Statements**

In a separate communication from the staff of the FTC’s Bureau of Consumer Protection to the DSSRC, concerns were raised about the “Fall

2023 Guidance on Income Disclosure Statements” (IDS) issued by the DSSRC. The letter pointed to areas where the FTC staff believes that guidance appears to diverge from federal law, specifically regarding the substantiation of earnings claims by direct selling companies.

The FTC staff letter highlighted “only a few of the multiple thorny issues that the DSSRC’s Guidance on IDSs simply fails to address.”

One such issue is the DSSRC’s allowance for companies to make earnings projections based on limited data such as “some indication” of participant expenses or “an estimate of mandatory costs.”

According to the FTC staff, this practice does not align with the legal requirement that earnings claims are to be based on a solid, reasonable foundation at the time they are made.

This correspondence underscored the FTC Bureau of Consumer Protection staff’s broader initiative to ensure that MLM companies engage in transparent and honest marketing practices.

The staff’s critique of the DSSRC’s focus on “mandatory” costs rather than the full scope of expenses faced by participants suggests a concern for potentially misleading earnings claims. The letter expressed apprehension that the guidance could inadvertently facilitate deceptive practices, potentially misleading individuals regarding the financial outcomes of direct selling participation.

Peter Marinello, vice president of the DSSRC, BBB National Programs, tells SSN, “DSSRC acknowledges the importance of ensuring compliance with federal law and maintaining consistency with FTC regulations within the direct selling industry. The DSSRC is committed to upholding the highest standards of transparency and consumer protection.

“While we are disappointed with the Commission’s assessment of the Guidance which aligns with the foundational principles of advertising law established by the FTC, we appreciate the FTC staff’s commitment to consumer protection and value their input in this matter,” Marinello continued.

“DSSRC remains dedicated to promoting integrity and accountability within the direct

selling industry. As part of our ongoing efforts to enhance industry standards, we welcome continued dialogue and collaboration with regulatory authorities to ensure compliance and foster consumer trust.”

**Regulatory Stance Undeterred by Neora Ruling**

Notably, the arguments presented by the FTC staff in both letters echoed positions that were scrutinized and ultimately rejected in the Commission’s case against direct seller Neora. This trial, a landmark legal confrontation within the direct selling channel, critically examined the FTC’s interpretation of what constitutes an

illegal pyramid scheme and the requirements for substantiating earnings claims.

The court’s decision in the Neora case challenged the FTC’s revised approach to evaluating practices of direct selling companies, specifically questioning the agency’s shift away from traditional criteria including the “primary source” test and leaning towards a more qualitative assessment of a company’s compensation structure as well as its emphasis on recruitment over product sales.

Despite this judicial rebuff, the FTC staff’s recent letters to the DSA and DSSRC indicated a steadfast commitment to these contested

views, underscoring an ongoing effort to refine and assert these standards within the industry. This persistence highlights a significant tension between regulatory intentions and judicial interpretations, suggesting a complex landscape for future legal and regulatory actions within the sector.



David Bland is the publisher of Social Selling News.



NEWS FEATURE ▶▶

**FTC Regains Bipartisanship with New Additions**

Andrew Ferguson and Melissa Holyoak confirmed as Commissioners

By FTC Staff

The U.S. Senate has confirmed Andrew N. Ferguson and Melissa Holyoak as new Commissioners for the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), achieving a complete and bipartisan commission for the first time in over a year. The Senate’s confirmation of Ferguson and Holyoak, along with the re-confirmation of Commissioner Rebecca Kelly Slaughter, fills the FTC’s ranks, setting the stage for a revitalized commission that has had two empty seats since October 2022.

**New Expertise Shapes Commission’s Future**

Ferguson, previously serving as the Solicitor General of the Commonwealth of Virginia, and Holyoak, who held the same title in the Utah Attorney General’s Office, bring significant experience to their new roles. Ferguson’s background includes key positions such as chief counsel to U.S. Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell and

Republican counsel on the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee, alongside extensive work in private practice.

Holyoak has nearly two decades of litigation experience with a strong focus on consumer protection and antitrust issues. She has represented Utah in antitrust litigation against firms accused of anticompetitive behavior and worked alongside the FTC in the examination of merger proposals.

**New Commissioners Set to Influence Policy and Enforcement**

This infusion of new talent and perspectives into the FTC comes at a crucial time. The commission has been under the control of Chair Lina Khan and her Democratic colleagues, operating in a uniparty fashion since the departure of Commissioner Christine S. Wilson in March 2023. The arrival of Ferguson and Holyoak will not alter the existing Democratic

majority but introduces a dynamic that could foster more robust debate on the agency’s enforcement and policy priorities.

Both new Commissioners have indicated a strong commitment to vigorously enforcing antitrust and consumer protection laws. Their backgrounds in litigation and policy development suggest they will bring nuanced approaches to the FTC’s ongoing and future endeavors. This includes a focus on safeguarding children in the digital age and holding companies accountable for anticompetitive behavior, as advanced by Holyoak, and defending the free-enterprise system while respecting the limits of congressional mandates, as emphasized by Ferguson.

The confirmations were not without political maneuvering, with Senator Josh Hawley lifting a hold on the nominations after receiving assurances from Ferguson on his

stance towards robust antitrust enforcement. This event reveals the intricate connections between political and regulatory control, impacting the FTC’s strategic path and the overall regulatory environment for businesses in the United States.

The inclusion of new Republican Commissioners is poised to invigorate discussions around key issues such as antitrust enforcement against large companies, the balance of regulation and free enterprise, and the commission’s adherence to its congressional mandate. While the Democratic majority continues to set the agency’s agenda, the contributions of Commissioners Ferguson and Holyoak are expected to enrich the FTC’s deliberations and could influence the trajectory of its policy and enforcement actions. Their terms will expire in September 2025.



# How AI Can Change Your Social Selling Strategy for the Better

Leveraging AI and machine learning to enhance efficiency and growth

By Crystal Holtzendorff

Throughout its history, the direct sales industry has gone through a series of changes akin to a roller coaster with many ups and downs. Now, the introduction of artificial intelligence (AI) and automation is throwing the industry through yet another loop.

Advanced technologies are changing the strategy and methodology of direct sales—and it is helping fuel sales growth. In 2022, the industry grew 8%, accounting for \$40 billion in retail sales, and for the next three years, the industry is expected to grow at a compound growth rate of nearly 6%. Technology is playing a significant role in driving this activity.

AI isn't a new concept, but integrating the technology into existing processes certainly is. Large powerhouse direct sellers are finding challenges pivoting their processes to incorporate AI tools, while smaller companies are struggling to capitalize on technology efforts at scale.

Whichever bucket you fall in, there are essential tools necessary to adopt internally and to attract and support affiliates. To launch the most successful technology program, companies should also establish best practices and work with the right partners. Here is a play-book on how to implement an effective technology strategy for direct sellers.

## Best Practices for AI Adoption

Before committing to specific AI tools, it is equally as important to first establish a strategy and set of best practices. Companies of all sizes and market share are investing in AI, and it is important that companies remain flexible and open to innovation.

Early in the digitization of the industry, it was difficult for some large industry



mainstays to transition to email, and then years later, they had to make the same shift to incorporate social media. Those transitions proved challenging for some, and there is a lesson in that. There is routinely going to be something new, and companies need to stay nimble enough to adapt as the industry changes. Flexibility and adaptability are the cornerstones of technology best practices, not just driving engagement and efficiency but, ultimately, fueling significant sales growth.

AI technologies not only open a door for direct sales platforms to better engage with customers and improve customer service but also help to create back-of-house efficiencies that improve productivity and streamline operations, ultimately supporting field leaders and their downlines.

As such, best practices for any technology program include the adoption of both back-of-house and affiliate tools to support the complete pipeline of a sales transaction, from sourcing the customer to closing the sale. In addition, companies should outline actionable goals for adoption and include employee and affiliate training. Ultimately, technology adoption can't happen for the sake of adopting progressive tools; it should always solve a specific problem and pain point to better support the business.

## Affiliate Technology Solutions

1. Chat GPT and similar AI-powered chatbots are able to write a variety of content for affiliates, including blog posts and sales scripts. With some experience, affiliates will be able to train the bot to speak in their own voice or the brand's voice to create personalized and targeted messages that resonate with prospective customers, but with very little effort from the affiliate. The technology has a big impact, allowing affiliates to reach more customers in a smaller time frame without forgoing personalization. In addition, Chat GPT can improve SEO standards and help to connect affiliates with prospective customers.
2. Automated post software is an essential tool for affiliates in a modernized direct sales program. Affiliates might use a program like Chat GPT to help generate

content and improve SEO, but automated posting helps level up by releasing that content at the peak time. This ensures that the post gets the most eyes and traffic, even if it is at a time when the affiliate isn't working or is unable to be online. Automated post software can also make recommendations on the optimal timing during any given day or even post automatically based on real-time site traffic data, which shifts daily.

3. Predictive analytics help affiliates make strategic and targeted decisions that drive more sales activity. Using historical data and machine learning, predictive analytics tools can model future behaviors and predict outcomes. In direct sales, the tool can target users that would best align—or shop with—a brand and it can even pinpoint the products that will best perform with a specific customer. This creates valuable efficiencies and improves transaction success. Rather than an affiliate showing an entire product line to a customer that might only purchase a specific product, the affiliate can show only the products that a customer is most willing to buy, creating a more efficient process and a more positive experience for both the customer and the affiliate.

## Corporate Technology Strategies

1. Compliance software and digital risk management software are possibly the most important tools for a direct sales company when adopting AI tools. Affiliates are representing the brand when they are selling in public and social spaces, but the corporate office often has limited control to review posts in advance, and the manual monitoring of posts is time-consuming and daunting. By using compliance software, companies can automate the compliance process to ensure that all posts from an affiliate are aligned with the branding and voice. Compliance software can be pre-programmed with the brand's standards and alert the corporate office any time a post falls outside of those guidelines.
2. Scaled automated analysis can deliver high-level data and deep insights into the performance of posts and sales activity. While affiliates can use data tools like predictive analytics to make more strategic and targeted decisions, corporate offices can use data tools and machine learning

“Flexibility and adaptability are the cornerstones of technology best practices, not just driving engagement and efficiency but, ultimately, fueling significant sales growth.”

to glean important insights into those decisions and track success rates at scale across affiliates, geographic markets, and demographic markets. Corporate can see at a high level what is working and where they are getting the best return on investment. With this technology, direct sales companies can develop more thoughtful and successful strategies and pivot to higher-producing markets as needed.

3. Automated, instant payments are essential for companies to attract and retain the best affiliates that will drive sales activity and remain committed to the brand. It is a competitive labor market, and every company is fighting for talent. In fact, since the COVID-19 pandemic, gig work has increased 170%, nearly tripling in size. Many direct sales programs still pay distributors once per month with a check or a standard ACH payment. But, independent workers are more frequently prioritizing work platforms that provide instant AI-powered payments following a shift that intelligently deliver a payment hours after work is completed. In PayQuicker's research, 83% of survey respondents said that speed of payment was important in choosing a gig. Direct sales platforms that provide instant payments create a better experience for affiliates, and they will gain a competitive advantage in the labor market.

## The Benefits of Outsourcing to Third-Party Vendors

When adopting new technologies, many direct sales companies believe that they should develop proprietary in-house solutions, but that is generally the wrong approach. An in-house program is expensive and requires a large experienced staff to maintain. It is also difficult to upgrade and maintain as

technology advances. Rather, companies should partner with a full-service third-party technology provider that can provide scaled solutions and experienced support staff from Day One. This is the most cost-effective and efficient way to adopt a complete technology solution instantly.

Outsourcing to third-party technology companies also helps direct sales companies avoid the pitfalls of tech debt, or outdated technologies that require a significant investment to either maintain or upgrade. In fact, some chief technology officers have reported that 40% of their IT balance sheet is dedicated to tech debt. Outsourcing to a third-party provider that uses cloud-based tools avoids this problem in the future, creating a technology program that can grow and adapt with the company.

And, of course, that is really the cornerstone of technology adoption: integrating tools and programs that support business growth and objectives. It should provide solutions, not create problems.

By creating a system of best practices, adopting the right tools for both the business and its affiliates, and forming the right technology partnerships, companies are able to gain the biggest benefits from AI today and into the future.



Crystal Holtzendorff is Vice President of Global Sales at PayQuicker.

# Creating and Sustaining Growth in 2024

## Strategic moves to capture market share and momentum

By Jenna Lang Warford

Seasoned direct selling executives believe there are plenty of reasons for optimism as the channel heads into the second quarter of the year.

Brett Duncan, co-founder and managing principal of Strategic Choice Partners, says, “I’m most optimistic about the creative way a handful of companies are approaching the channel, especially new companies.

“It’s always great to see successful business people who have not ‘grown up’ in direct selling enter it and learn from their fresh perspectives,” Duncan adds. “I think the more success these creative approaches experience, the more willing the majority of companies will be in embracing creative approaches moving forward.”

Creativity may be key during this U.S. election year. In its 2024 Q1 report “Insights,” Deloitte—one of the big four accounting firms—notes what has traditionally meant growth for the direct selling channel: the rising cost of necessities causing changes in how U.S. households spend on other items. Historically, that has often meant a rise in the number of people looking for “side gigs” and other means of supplemental income.

Crucial to creating an uptick in direct selling’s appeal is how companies within the channel address the known attitudes and expectations of the market. Remaining entrenched in what worked in the past or sitting on the sidelines to “wait and see” for

“When you insist on control, it typically means there’s a scarcity mindset.”  
— Shellie Sullivan, Senior Vice President of Sales, OneHope Wine

this season could be the difference between growth and stagnation—with some companies at risk of even shutting their doors.

Shellie Sullivan, senior vice president of sales at **OneHope Wine**, believes that the economic conditions offer an opportunity for the channel to proactively demonstrate what it has long purported to do: allow people to be in business for themselves, but not by themselves.

Sullivan says, “I think it excites me that we are in an age where we have the opportunity to right-size our normal again, to do something different, something significant with this business. To do it looking forward, not looking back.

“We have to be innovative, to pave a new path,” she adds. “That includes figuring out how we reconcile the affiliate world; how we reconcile omni-marketing—which is allowing (distributors) the freedom to represent any and all brands. And the reality is that not very

many people are fully representing more than one brand. But giving our field the freedom to do that reduces friction.”

### Scarcity Vs. the Omni-Market Opportunity

Judging by the lack of omni-market companies, as well as by dialogue at channel functions, there is widespread resistance to the practice. Sullivan’s take on this is strong. “When you insist on control, it typically means there’s a scarcity mindset. I think allowing the field to do what they need to do to take care of their families, to be healthy, thriving and happy, means that we do that.”

This isn’t idle chat for Sullivan, who handled **Urban Retreat’s** devastating distribution center fire in 2023. She helped by partnering with a couple of direct selling companies to give distributors a home while the company rebuilt its inventory and distribution center.

“We have to be okay with the fact that maybe they won’t be thriving with us, or maybe not just us. Look, I know it’s not without risk. But I think we have to take that leap to trust our field to do what’s right for them, that the benefit outweighs the risk. Can somebody poach? Yes. But you know what, with social media, they can anyway.”

Jana Kennedy, senior vice president of sales at **Kleo Kolor**, agrees. “I’m optimistic to see veteran direct sales leaders diversifying revenue channels by embracing omnichannel revenue streams.”

Kennedy says, “The opportunities are numerous for companies willing to build to the reps of the future who want choices, and direct sales companies are starting to see the power in offering more than one way to become a brand advocate.”

Mindy Reimbold, MBA, vice president of sales for **Younique** in Canada and the U.S., says there are numerous reasons she’s optimistic about the channel this year.

“In today’s world, there is a growing desire among individuals to explore opportunities for earning multiple streams of income, embracing flexible work arrangements, and receiving recognition for their contributions. Direct sales uniquely fulfills these aspirations, serving as a platform that seamlessly integrates these elements into a fulfilling and rewarding experience for participants.”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12



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She continues, “At its core, this channel thrives on the power of connection and the limitless potential for personal growth and achievement. As innovation and technology continue to evolve, they enhance these fundamental aspects, opening up new avenues for development.”

New avenues for development have captured the attention of Tony Solis also. “I think if there is one thing that makes me optimistic about the direct sales channel today it is the amount of transparency companies are having with their peers,” says Solis, who was previously senior vice president of strategy at **Vollara**.

“Over the last year I have seen more and more established successful direct sales companies get on a stage and share mistakes they have personally made and the game plan(s) they are putting in place to right them.”

He adds, “This dynamic is relatively new in our industry as in the past companies always wanted to put on a good face amongst their peers even when the room was aware of their current troubles. Now there is an open discussion amongst companies as to their biggest opportunities and how they plan to address them. This is very healthy for our industry.”

**Key Areas to Focus Effort**

Duncan says, “It seems like the biggest opportunities belong

to those who build brands with products and services that resonate with certain audiences, who happen to use direct selling as their sole or one of their channels of distribution.” He also acknowledges this can seem heretical for executives who have spent their entire career in direct selling.

“Having gone through this opportunity with several clients, it’s amazing how some of our biggest problems aren’t nearly as big as we thought they were when we don’t stake our entire identity in being a direct selling company,” Duncan says. “It’s part of who we are, not necessarily all of who we are. For anyone who feels stuck or hopeless, I challenge you to really dwell on this idea of direct selling being a channel, not an identity.”

Becky Launder, founder of Modern Direct Seller Academy, says, “It’s essential to recognize that while there are businesses that have been around for generations with what seems to be a tried-and-true way of doing that business, it’s not the same way the newer direct sellers are coming into and growing in the industry.”

She adds, “That’s a disconnect. And sometimes it’s easiest to listen to the loudest voices or maybe focus on the opinions of established leaders who have been there forever who created success in the past, but to be frank, they don’t have the same skill set that the new people need.

“I’m seeing a lot of companies layering in affiliate programs so they can still continue to serve those that have been there for a while, while looking to pivot and be relevant and make it easy for the new people that really just want to sell. Because that’s the other pivot.”

Launder continues, “People are stepping in because they want a few hundred dollars extra a month. They’re not thinking about earning a car and building a team of 5,000. In fact, they don’t want to do that at all. So companies that are growing are addressing how to take those new people, give them success and make it profitable with perks and incentives that get them hooked into the business.”

Doing a deep dive into the numbers to know who and what is driving current success is key, Solis adds. “There is usually a group within the whole that is playing a key role in your success and/or your struggle. And once you know where the root opportunity is, you are more apt to be successful developing COA(s) to address problems and/or leverage success.

“Do a deep dive analysis into the numbers behind the daily dashboard, the weekly scorecard, and the Monthly KPIs, and especially do it when they are positive,” he says. “Dig down on a successful promotion or incentive, a recruiting event, or even a leader’s personal business. Break it down by length of association,

rank, geography, demographics, leadership team—everything you can think of, to replicate the results you want.”

**Keeping It Simple**

Once you have identified the key components, simplicity is crucial, Sullivan says. “It’s wise to focus on keeping messages simple to drive successful field behaviors. Often there are consultants that love the brand, love the product, are committed with a high level of loyalty, which is nice, but they don’t know how to maximize this business; they don’t necessarily have the skills.

“I don’t want to say they need the fundamentals, because I think ‘fundamentals’ implies methodology that’s going backwards,” she continues. “Instead, I think this is about equipping and empowering our fields to earn what they’re worth in our compensation plans. So they need specific behaviors that are necessary to succeed in today’s market.”

Sullivan adds, “We need to teach, coach, mentor and shape them, not expecting that just because they’re not interested in doing business the way we’ve done it for years means that they know how to effectively do business in the new ways that appeal to this market.

“So we’ll need to identify these activities and specifically tie them to the programs and incentives we offer, those that we know will move the needle in the business,” she says.

“Simplicity also means removing obstacles, clearing the clutter and being very intentional as we curate what directly supports them—reducing the noise.”

Launder also emphasizes simplicity, advising to avoid processes exceeding five steps and to pivot from outdated methods.

She suggests that businesses reassess their online strategies, as success in the digital landscape has evolved significantly from practices that were effective three years ago.

“For some companies, that means focusing less on getting a host and focusing more on building an audience to attract new customers,” she says. “While teaching distributors to build personal brands might seem like a bit of a disconnect from the corporate side, the reality is that if they can build their brand online, then they have an audience.

“We can’t overcomplicate and over-engineer this, but we can train them in the basic skills of building an audience through personal brands and teaching them that it isn’t the social posts, it’s the social conversations, being intentional about what is shared on social media and said in direct messages.”

**Especially Don’t Do This**

Sullivan says, “Most importantly, we have to commit and execute, not launch and abandon or launch and shift. This is committing, executing and being willing to see it through. It may seem tough because it’s difficult to know what works and what doesn’t because of the uncertainty we’ve had in the past few years.

“I think the only way to do that is to really make some commitments,” she continues. “Is that risky? Yes. But so is constantly changing plans, constantly reacting because sales aren’t where they need to be on the 10th of the month, so you’re going to throw something new in there.”

She adds, “So yes, we can constantly look for ways to sell and recruit more efficiently and more effectively, but we have to understand that if we put something out on the first of the month and we don’t see the

“**Many companies rely almost entirely on... short-term tactics to address the bigger issue. This approach inevitably loses its impact, and it can be hard to recover from.**”

— *Brett Duncan, Co-founder and Managing Principal, Strategic Choice Partners*

traction we’re expecting by the 10th of the month, then we need to fortify the messaging. We don’t need to change.”

Duncan, too, suggests leaning away from relying on short-term tactics to address long-term challenges and exploring modifications before overhauls. “One common red flag for a company that lacks clarity is too many sales promotions. Yes, we need product specials and incentives, but so many companies rely almost entirely on these short-term tactics to address the bigger issue. This approach inevitably loses its impact, and it can be hard to recover from.

“Also, I think companies need to look at repositioning some of the things they have before they completely redo it. There are definitely times when big wholesale changes are necessary, but not always. An example would be affiliate programs.

He continues, “I’m a big fan of affiliate programs and have helped several companies launch them. But in so many cases, direct selling companies already have an ‘affiliate program;’ it’s called retail commissions. So maybe

the opportunity is not so much in launching a whole new program, but rather in repositioning a part of a program you already have. Lean first into exploring ways to reposition what you have, then move on to considering a complete redo when necessary.”

**The Nitty Gritty of Growth**

Kennedy says that there are three key components to growth during 2024. “First, assess whether you have the right team behind the strategy, the one that can execute correctly. Hire people that understand how direct sales is working today and for the near future.

“Next, make sure all departments align on the strategy and are actually working together. This requires buy-in from the teams that are responsible for execution; otherwise it’s going to be difficult—or impossible—to reach the revenue goal for the year.”

She’s also in favor of simplicity, saying it’s crucial. “Get rid of the distractions when it comes to the programs, simplify everything so your field can be successful. Our industry has become extremely

fast-paced and with social media word travels fast. This can be a good thing or can create massive distraction for your field. Simplification will create growth if executive teams will let the strategy work.”

Duncan says growth priorities begin with e-commerce. “Start identifying as an e-commerce company that leverages a direct selling model. Start paying attention to things that e-commerce companies pay attention to as core indicators of success.”

But above all, he urges boldness. “Most executives know the times call for bold moves, but most executives are also bound to delivering results right now. Those two things tend to work against each other, and most companies never truly take the bold steps that are needed to remain relevant.

For most direct selling companies, the gap between where they are and where they know they should be is pretty wide. Taking baby steps in the right direction is still a wrong move.”

Sullivan’s final thoughts are: “There has to be an absolute alignment on the mission and an agreement on how that’s going to be executed. Make sure there’s clear ownership of components by your corporate team, and then you have to let people do what they’re there to do. Agree on the mission, align on the tactics, and then allow everybody to do their jobs.”



“**We can’t overcomplicate and over-engineer this, but we can train [distributors] in the basic skills of building an audience....**”

— *Becky Launder, Founder, Modern Direct Seller Academy*



Jenna Lang Warford is a *Social Selling News* Contributor.

# 10 TOP STRATEGIES FOR GROWTH IN 2024



## 1 Money Matters

Who are your prospective distributors and what do they want? This varies drastically according to their age bracket. In fact, according to 2023 research by the Bridgehead Collective, Millennials and Gen Z will believe your opportunity is a scam if it's touted as more than \$500 a month, while Gen X isn't interested in any opportunity that will earn less than \$1,000 a month. Now that you know this, create your collateral and train your distributors accordingly.



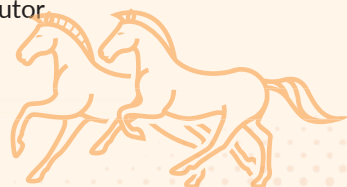
## 2 This Hasn't Changed

The majority of potential distributors are interested in sharing products they love. What they aren't initially interested in is recruiting others to do the same. Yes, quite a few will "catch the vision" and build a team, but keep in mind that most will start their career with you based on a passion for the product (and its commission) rather than the potential payout of a multilevel comp plan. Design your recruiting material with that in mind.



## 3 This Has: One Way Influencers Have Influenced

"You can't ride two horses with one rear end" is rendered obsolete every single time a potential distributor logs in to TikTok or watches a Reel on a Meta site. Influencers are earning commissions on products they are excited about, regardless of brand. Brand loyalty is the exception (like Nascar drivers with lucrative sponsorship deals) not the rule; people share what they love.



## 4 Understand What the New Distributor Faces

Legacy leaders helped get our companies where they are today, and modern compensation plans ensure they remain active and relevant. While it's important to acknowledge their contribution to the success the company has, the health of the company depends on having the pulse of active new distributors. Ensure your sales team is connected with the new front line, understands their biggest obstacles and is engaged in equipping them for success. Consider using surveys to understand why distributors quit.



## 5 Simplify Everything for the Field

**KISS: Keep It Super Simple** by getting rid of distractions in programs, incentives, trainings and the compensation plan. Ruthlessly edit whatever doesn't add significant value to your programs, what doesn't drive the essential activities and the directions that aren't crucial to the skills being taught. What does the field need to succeed—and what is the quickest, simplest way to provide that?



## 6 Invest in Training for Today's Marketplace

"Hey girl, hey" scripts for jumping into social media direct message apps will earn scorn, not customers and certainly not recruits. Talk with the sales team, whose conversations with distributors getting results can propel the entire company forward—that is once it's analyzed and suitably replicated. Know which channel experts are engaging with a variety of fields and can adapt the information gleaned across the board to suit your company and culture.



## 7 The Fun Factor; or at Least the Weighty Why

You've said it for years: your competition isn't another company per se, it's the softball league committee, must-see TV and discouragement from "no." Create regular and enjoyable engagement with the field; offer value beyond the products and paychecks. Traditional companies don't cut advertising and marketing when sales are down, direct selling companies mustn't cut or reduce the crucial field connections; i.e. field development/regional managers.



## 8 Evaluate Your Team; Hire Accordingly

Assess whether you have the right team behind your company's strategy and who can execute skillfully in each area. When you're hiring, find people who understand how direct sales is working today and for the near future. There are seasoned veterans who understand the shifts that have occurred and have adjusted strategies accordingly; and there are those who want to double down on what worked in 2015 – or even 2020.



## 9 Create a Cohesive Corporate Whole

If the company strategy doesn't get buy-in from the teams that are responsible for execution, it's going to be difficult to reach the revenue goal for the year. All departments have to align on the strategy and work together. If not, departments are working in silos and playing the blame game when quarterly goals are not achieved.



## 10 Get Your E-Commerce Up to Par

If recreation league committees and television shows are what's competing for your distributors, then every website with a product in your category is competing for your revenue—and Amazon is usually bookmarked in your customers' laptops and its app is on their phone. So solid e-commerce is essential for surviving and excellent e-commerce is required for thriving. Remove all roadblocks for making a sale: don't require the selection of a distributor before purchase. Send abandoned cart emails. Have automatic pop-ups that suggest additional product.



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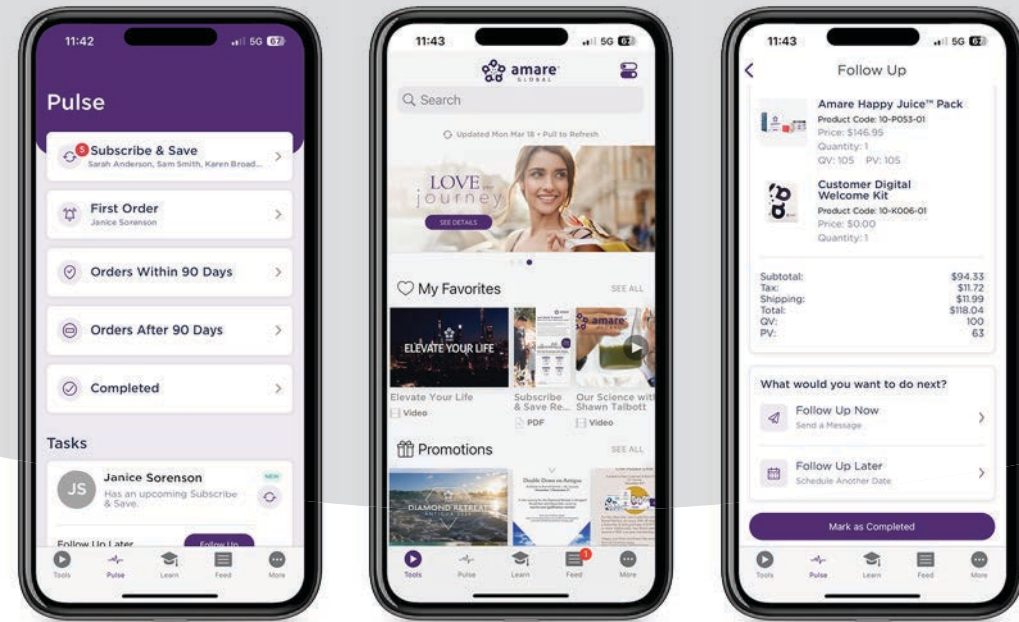
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# THE RANKS

## COMPANIES THAT PROVIDE APPS

RANKED BY NUMBER OF DIRECT SELLING CLIENTS INVOICED IN LAST 12 MONTHS

Each month, *The Ranks* spotlights companies, people or trends that are important to the direct selling channel. This month, *The Ranks* lists companies that provide apps, ranked by the number of active direct selling clients. Companies that did not provide data are listed in alphabetical order. *The Ranks* will vary monthly in type of information and in number of items included. *Ranks* client data is not audited and relies on the good faith responses of the participants.

| RANK     | COMPANY NAME & LOCATION        | NUMBER OF CLIENTS INVOICED LAST 12 MONTHS | KEY CONTACT   | 3 REPRESENTATIVE CLIENTS                     | WEBSITE                 | TYPE OF APP   |
|----------|--------------------------------|---|---|--|-------------------------|---|
| <u>1</u> | Rallyware<br>Mountain View, CA | 214                                       | Dan O'Marra<br>801-441-8499<br>Dan@rallyware.com      | Plexus<br>Nu Skin<br>Tupperware              | rallyware.com           | Distributor onboarding and training; Field engagement and retention; Incentives and recognition; Sales enablement   |
| <u>2</u> | Hussle Technology,<br>Lehi, UT | 106                                       | JJ Oswald<br>801-518-4466<br>jjo@hussle.tech          | IT WORKS!<br>Arbonne<br>PartnerCo            | hussle.tech             | Sales enablement  |
| <u>3</u> | Krato<br>Scottsdale, AZ        | 58  | Matt Lind<br>336-395-4947<br>matt@krato.com           | Color Street<br>Bravenly Global<br>SwissJust | krato.com               | Dashboards, Shopping, Enrollment, Gamification, Custom Development  |
| <u>4</u> | NOW Tech<br>Plano, TX          | 42  | NOW Sales<br>214-572-9256<br>sales@now-tech.com       | MONAT<br>PPLSI<br>Lifewave                   | now-tech.com            | Prospecting, social selling, sampling, training   |
| *        | Blookanoo<br>Chicago, IL       | Did not provide                           | Ryan Kell<br>866-943-2869<br>bksales@blookanoo.com    | Did not provide                              | blookanoo.com           | Livestream Shopping, Shoppable Videoconferencing, Shoppable Video   |
| *        | Cheddar Up<br>Denver, CO       | Did not provide                           | Nichole Montoya<br>855-524-3332<br>info@cheddarup.com | Did not provide                              | cheddarup.com/<br>brand | Home Office-controlled sample and inventory sales   |
| *        | GenieChat<br>Las Vegas, NV     | Did not provide                           | Jessica Kane<br>360-991-2625<br>Jessica@geniechat.com | Did not provide                              | geniechat.com           | AI-Powered Sales Enablement for Corporate and Field; Pre-loaded conversation prompts, reminders and content library |
| *        | Penny AI<br>Vancouver, CA      | Did not provide                           | Mark Hughes<br>778-919-6670<br>mark@pennyapp.com      | Did not provide                              | getpenny.com            | Social Sales Enablement and Learning Platform   |

## COMPANIES THAT PROVIDE APPS



**George Elfond**  
CEO, Rallyware  
rallyware.com

“2023 was an exciting year for Rallyware. The company again proved the power of our platform with direct sellers worldwide and expanded clients’ omnichannel presence. In terms of demonstrable gains, Rallyware’s all-in-one Performance Enablement Platform shows an average of +53% sales growth among active users, providing clients critical support during this interval of slow industry growth. As Rallyware continues to drive revenues for direct sellers, we take great pride in empowering every distributor at scale to execute their business-building journey.”



**JJ Oswald**  
Co-Founder & VP of Sales, Hussle Technology  
hussle.tech

“We have proudly served the direct sales industry for more than 35 years. We help drive activity and grow revenue for our customers with behavior-driven tasks. From onboarding and training to customer acquisition and retention features – we provide one place for your field to run their business. Call for a demo.”



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avalara.com

**BlooKanoo**  
blookanoo.com

**ByDesign Technologies**  
bydesign.com

**Dion**  
eadion.com

**DirecTech Labs**  
directechlabs.com

**DSA**  
dsa.com

**Exigo**  
exigo.com

**Hanna Shea**  
hannashea.com

**Nexio**  
nex.io

**Nuvei**  
nuvei.com/en-us

**Rallyware**  
rallyware.com

**Serendipity Executive Search**  
serendipityexecutivesearch.com

**Strategic Choice Partners**  
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# Getting Real with Novae's Reco McCambry

From humble beginnings to charting fintech frontiers



**SSN:** Tell us about your road to leading a direct selling company and why you chose this marketing model.

**Reco McCambry:** I started my journey in direct sales as an independent sales rep for Excel Communications back in 2001 at the age of 20 years old, while I was in college. I was recruited in the most classic way: A guy walked up to me at a car wash, asked if I was interested in starting my own business, handed me a few flyers with a business card, and told me about a meeting over the weekend that I was invited to.

Prior to that point, I had never been recruited for direct sales, nor knew anyone who was doing direct sales, at least to my knowledge. After leaving the car wash, I went to his website, the first time I'd ever seen a lead capture page and an opt-in form. I watched the video, put my information on the site, and received an email a few minutes later. I ended up attending the meeting a few days later. My first year, I was able to leave my job. I was working with the Georgia Power Co. as a design engineer at the time as a co-op student. My second year, I was able to do six figures, and by my fifth year in the industry, my organization was producing millions of dollars.

**Reco McCambry** is founder, president and CEO of **Novae**, a direct selling company focused on financial services and education. A member of the Forbes Business Council and an industry expert on Forbes.com, McCambry also serves on the National Small Business Association Leadership Council in Washington D.C. He was honored by his hometown of McDonough, Georgia, with a proclamation naming Jan. 19, Mr. Reco McCambry Day. Novae has been recognized by Inc. magazine, Inc 5000, as one of the Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America, three years in a row—2021, 2022 and 2023. In 2022, McCambry was named Innovator of the Year and received the Outstanding Leadership Award, and in 2023, Coles College of Business at Kennesaw State University named him Graduate of the Last Decade.



In 2009, I started my first direct sales company, selling e-commerce sites and a few other retail products. My mother got sick, and unfortunately, I sold my interest in that company around a year prior to her passing away, but I was able to spend a little more than a year with her—almost every day—because of the success I had gained in the industry. Her dying wish was for me to go back to college and finish my degree. After selling my interest in that company, I went back and graduated with an industrial engineering degree. Then I got back into the industry, initially coaching a few young top money earners and launched a consulting and training company and started training their organizations.

A few years later, in 2014, I founded Novae. After a few years of offering several different types of products and services, I decided we should focus on financial education and financial literacy. In 2018, I decided to get my MBA. I started reading up on fintech and the potential for someone to get into it. We started to develop some APIs on our own, started doing more research, got the right partnerships, and completely transformed our model. Inc. magazine recognized us as being on their Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list in 2021, 2022, and 2023. We've been doing relatively well, after that pivot. So, super excited about the people we're impacting and about what we're doing out here.

**SSN:** What drove your early success as an independent rep?

**RM:** No. 1 is being coachable. I thought I was a pretty smart guy; I was going to Georgia Tech on a full scholarship, majoring in physics and electrical engineering. However, when I went to some of these training events and looked at the information, I was overthinking a lot of it. But one of the things that I had the benefit of having was some great mentorship and a great sponsor. They explained to me early on that if you just follow the system and if you're coachable and follow a process, you're going to be able to make money. And I was smart enough to listen to that because a lot of the information I was given on the front end was so simplistic.

If I would have done it my way, I probably would have had no success and quit early on. But I followed the system to a T. And I duplicated that. So that would be the next thing, not only being coachable but making sure that you're following a system that can be duplicated. Because everything I was able to do, I made sure it was so simple that I was able to teach other people to do it. And then over time, it just multiplied.

The third thing is staying hungry and maintaining strong faith. Because at the end of the day, if you're hungry and you're motivated, but don't have that foundation of faith and have some core values and morals, you're not going to have longevity. I've seen a lot of people make a lot of money in a short time, and then the next year they're broke again, or



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they're worse off because they've lost it all. Having that foundation of faith and staying hungry and humble definitely gets you where you need to go.

**SSN:** With the intense regulatory scrutiny of direct selling and financial services, how does your executive team maintain company and field compliance without sacrificing the boldness and grit that direct selling leaders are known for?

**RM:** We focus on compliance in three main ways. No. 1, we use compliance as a competitive advantage. We ensure our corporate office and top leadership embrace regulation and position compliance as a core value and strategic advantage. This approach, being upfront about regulatory requirements, builds trust with distributors and regulators, so we embrace it rather than shy away from it. Additionally, we're proactive with our compliance culture, developing it from the top down. Whether it's myself, the CEO, our CMO, COO, director of operations, VP of marketing, or other directors and leaders in the field, we ensure consistency in messaging, providing ongoing training and resources to understand relevant regulations.

The second aspect involves empowering our distributors within that compliance framework. We focus on the "why" by clearly communicating the purpose and benefits of compliance, ensuring they understand how it protects them, the company, and the customers. This protection is crucial for safeguarding their income and the opportunity. We provide clear guidelines, developing concise sales scripts, marketing materials, and compensation plans that comply with regulations. Additionally, we integrate compliance into the compensation plan, rewarding consistent adherence to compliance standards.

The third aspect is leveraging our strengths through careful partnership vetting and tech-

nology. As a fintech company, due diligence is key, so we partner only with reputable financial institutions that are compliant, simplifying our compliance efforts. Our technology enables us to offer services to consumers and small business owners efficiently, while our marketing is limited to regulator-approved content, ensuring consistent messaging and minimizing compliance risk. We also have a team monitoring social media to maintain compliance.

**SSN:** What does this channel need to do to improve its reputation and quiet the noisy detractors?

**RM:** I believe leadership is crucial. It starts with leaders continuing to lead and uphold high standards in running our organizations and what we permit within our companies. Achieving this collectively could transform the entire industry. The most beneficial aspect of my involvement in this industry is not just the money I've made but the person I've become through the process. I've become a better father, son, businessperson, leader, and human being. My mother raised me well, but this industry elevated my personal development. I see it as a personal responsibility to pave the way for others to achieve success by doing things the right way.

We must model the behavior we wish to see, both in how we run our businesses and in how we live our lives. This kind of accountability should extend from our corporate offices down to the organizations of direct sellers. However, many owners in the industry allow distributors too much leeway, sometimes even when it doesn't align with the company's core values. This distorts the company's mission and affects the reputation of direct selling overall, making us all look unreliable. We must do a better job of recreating the narrative around direct selling, ensuring this effort reaches every level of the organization. As we do so, we'll see the in-

dustry and the world change. Light will always drive out darkness, eliminating detractors and distractions as the light becomes brighter. If we all do our part collectively, we will succeed.

**SSN:** What are your thoughts on crypto? Should fintech direct selling companies steer clear of this controversial investment vehicle?

**RM:** Novae has never offered a crypto product and for the foreseeable future, never will. We strive to avoid controversial products and services to steer clear of regulatory issues. Novae has never offered such a product, and I don't anticipate it unless there's a significant shift in the marketplace toward greater acceptance. Moreover, we do not offer any investment vehicles or investment advice. My view is that individuals interested in investing or crypto should consult with someone licensed to provide guidance on these matters.

Regarding the involvement of companies in this space, I believe they should remain cautious until there's clear regulation surrounding the product, ensuring they understand what they're getting into. We have been approached by companies for white-label programs and co-brand partnerships, offering a fintech platform for integration. However, some partners that have offered crypto had to pivot or cease offering it due to the industry's volatility. If anyone were considering starting a company with crypto as one of the products, my advice would be against it.

**SSN:** What are some of the unique challenges you face in the financial products sector that other direct selling companies may not encounter?

**RM:** In our sector, we offer credit products such as loans, business funding, lines of credit, and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

credit cards. We are at the mercy of the economic climate, influenced by interest rates—whether high or low—as determined by the Federal Reserve, and the varying willingness of banks to fund deals, whether in a tightening or more accommodating market. Conversely, when the economy suffers, we also offer products and solutions that help consumers find relief in areas related to their credit and debt loads, which significantly increases our revenue. Therefore, when the market is thriving, we do very well, but even when the financial climate is poor, we still perform strongly. We are fortunate to be in a position that allows us to navigate these fluctuations. While some challenges may affect us differently than other direct sellers, especially in downturns, we have developed ways to address these issues with additional services we provide.

**SSN: What are your thoughts on utilizing network marketing for product segments that most people wouldn't normally associate with direct selling?**

**RM:** I believe the opportunity lies in verticals where direct selling has not yet penetrated. If you can identify and fill a need while remaining compliant, that's where the opportunity is. When I started Novae, I aimed to fulfill a need within the industry that was lacking, not only in certain communities but in the industry as a whole. I've always learned, as many of us have in our initial direct sales training, that if you want to be wealthy, you should observe what everyone else is doing around you and do the opposite.

Growing up, we were poor—something I didn't realize until I reached college and saw that we didn't have much. Becoming an adult and starting to have more made me appreciate it more because I had so little growing up. I realized there were many people, myself included, who could have been further ahead in life if they had had more opportunities, information, services, mentorship, and guidance. I thought, what if there were a way to fulfill that need and also monetize it? For me, it's a blessing and a godsend in what I do every day because I'm passionate not just about making money but making history—what we're doing. And hopefully, anyone looking to start a direct sales company could feel excited about that. Whatever need you're trying to fill may be related to how you grew up.

**SSN: How will AI change, or improve your company?**

**RM:** I am deeply connected with many individuals in the financial technology sector. With AI being a significant trend across various industries, it naturally holds a prominent place in fintech. We receive weekly inquiries about different



opportunities involving AI. Fortunately, we have already been utilizing AI in our software, revolutionizing the credit-building industry. In 2022, we introduced the first AI-self-driven credit repair software, launching it right at the end of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Credit repair has been a controversial topic and service over the years but has also helped millions of people better address issues on their credit reports that were holding them back. Many states prohibit charging individuals for credit repair services. To navigate this, we developed software that allows individuals to pull their credit reports from all three major credit bureaus, identifies issues immediately, and, through machine learning, suggests ways to address these issues with the bureaus to clear up any errors with just a few clicks. Consumers can then print out the letters and mail them to the bureaus themselves, eliminating the need for a human to be involved or for consumers to pay a credit repair company to do the work. The AI enables them to handle everything independently.

Our approach bypasses traditional credit repair services or direct interactions with clients. Instead, the software empowers users by providing a clear view of their credit information, enabling them to make informed decisions.

**SSN: How does Novae promote financial health and responsibility among individuals and small business owners?**

**RM:** As I mentioned earlier, the primary reason we started our company was to offer financial literacy. Initially, our financial education comprised mainly YouTube videos and documents. Over the years, it has evolved signifi-

cantly. We now feature many drip campaigns that offer free financial education through our marketing funnel products for distributors. This enables them to provide prospects with reports or courses aimed at helping them transition from poor credit and debt to homeownership and business ownership.

Additionally, we offer ongoing live online training, conducting several webinars weekly. A training library is also available to new customers and distributors, providing them with access to a wealth of resources right from the start. Distributors receive free services as part of their membership, allowing them to work on their personal financial situations through videos and emails.

We host live events to delve deeper into financial education, offering workshops where attendees can develop plans and programs for their advancement. Moreover, every newly enrolled customer and distributor receives drip campaigns that furnish them with financial education, further supporting their journey toward building their business and enhancing their financial literacy. Financial education and empowerment are at the core of what we do and are our greatest passion.



Reco McCambry was interviewed by David Bland on behalf of *Social Selling News*.

Periodically *Social Selling News* interviews a person connected to the social selling phenomenon, asking them to share their experience and insight into the channel.

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**More States Strengthen Laws to Prosecute Bad Actors**  
 Pennsylvania could be 26th state to pass tougher anti-pyramid law

passed in 1968, and bring the total number of states with anti-pyramid protection laws to 26. The bill promises to provide tougher law enforcement to prosecute "bad actors" as well as provide better guidance for direct selling companies to apply best practices.

unanimous vote on June 24, the Pennsylvania House of Representatives passed House Bill 1534—designed to update the state's anti-pyramid law.

signed into law, the bill will update the state's practices and Consumer Protection Law originally passed in 1968, and bring the total number of states with anti-pyramid protection laws to 26. The bill promises to provide tougher law enforcement to prosecute "bad actors" as well as provide better guidance for direct selling companies to apply best practices.

*Have you reviewed Best Practices on Page 6...*

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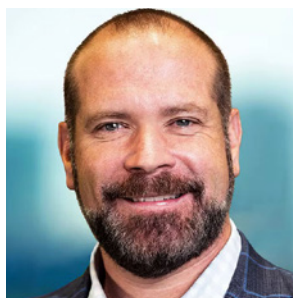
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# People on the Move



**LANDEN FREDRICK, MANNATECH**  
Mannatech has promoted **Landen Fredrick** to president and CEO following the retirement of Al Bala. Fredrick joined Mannatech in 2006 and previously served as president and chief marketing officer. He has experience in sales, marketing, operations, and business development. Bala will now be a company advisor.



**MURRAY SMITH, dōTERRA**  
**Murray Smith**, former executive vice president of international, is now president of **dōTERRA**. With over 30 years' direct selling experience, Smith has overseen operations in Europe, Middle East and Africa prioritizing growth and relationships with Wellness Advocates. Before **dōTERRA**, he worked with **Young Living** and **Nu Skin**.



**MICHAEL LEVITT, HERBALIFE**  
**Michael Levitt** has returned to **Herbalife** to serve on its board of directors. He was previously lead director from 2011 to 2014 and will now serve as a director. Levitt is chairman of Irradiant Partners LP and has worked with investment firms as well as led his own, Stone Tower Capital LLC.



**JENNIFER KNOTT, SCOUT & CELLAR**  
**Scout & Cellar** has named **Jennifer Knott** as chief communications officer. Most recently serving as chief of staff, Knott joined Scout & Cellar in 2017 as director of business development. With over 17 years' experience as a complex business litigation attorney, she will now head communications, marketing, and human resources.



**KIM DRABIK, PLEXUS WORLDWIDE**  
**Plexus Worldwide** has appointed **Kim Drabik** as vice president of corporate affairs. She joined Plexus in 2019 overseeing government relations. Now Drabik will lead strategic corporate affairs initiatives, communications, government affairs, and more. Drabik has over 28 years' experience, with most of her career spent at **Amway**.



**CHRIS STUHLAK, SCOUT & CELLAR**  
**Scout & Cellar** has promoted **Chris Stuchlak** to chief sales officer. Stuchlak joined the company in 2023 as vice president of leadership development and has spent more than 16 years serving as a sales executive for **BeautiControl**, **Tupperware** and **Celesty**. He will now lead Scout & Cellar's strategic planning and field KPI growth.



**EMILY WRIGHT, dōTERRA**  
**Emily Wright**, a founding executive of **dōTERRA** in 2007, will now transition from president to chair of the company's board. There, she will prioritize growth strategies, support **dōTERRA**'s independent distributors, and promote philanthropic efforts. Wright will remain active in daily operations.



**PATHAMARAT (AIM) TONJUNPONG, 4LIFE**  
**Pathamarat (Aim) Tonjunpong** has joined **4Life** as general manager of Thailand. In her new role, Tonjunpong will oversee the country's sales and operations from 4Life's office in Bangkok. With a background in business administration, she has worked in sales and marketing for **MonaVie** as well as built a distributor business of her own.

# People on the Move



**KIRK JOWERS, dōTERRA**  
**dōTERRA** has appointed **Kirk Jowers** as CEO. Jowers returns to the company after two years co-founding **ADDAX Overland**. He joined **dōTERRA** in 2015 and helped guide its expansion as EVP of Europe, Middle East and Africa and corporate relations. He later became president of North America. Jowers is also a political consultant.



**KURMANTO, 4LIFE**  
**Kurmanto** has been named general manager of **4Life Research's** Indonesia market. He has spent over 20 years in direct sales working with **Kyani**, **Sunrider** and **Zija**. With a background in business administration and financial management, he has experience in operations, marketing, sales, leadership training, and more.



**CARLA HERNANDEZ, MONAT GLOBAL**  
**Carla Hernandez** has been promoted by **MONAT Global** to vice president global marketing. She joined the company in 2022 as vice president marketing and communications. Hernandez has 25 years' experience in television marketing, brand development, social marketing and digital media. She joined direct selling in 2019.



**MÉLANIE SALDIBOURE, PARTNER.CO**  
**Mélanie Saldiboure** has joined **Partner.Co's** Wellness Council. France-based Saldiboure has been a research chemist in pharmaceuticals for 10 years. Having a passion for research and development, she has worked in several labs including pharmaceutical, oenological and those of the French National Centre of Scientific Research.



**JULIE DELRIU, PARTNER.CO**  
**Partner.Co** has appointed **Julie Delriu** to its Wellness Council. Delriu is a dietician with more than 20 years of experience. Learning about supplementation and its impact on the health and wellbeing of diverse groups, Delriu will contribute her knowledge and expertise around proper diet to product concepts and consultant education.



**MARIA LONG, PARTNER.CO**  
**Partner.Co** has added **Maria Long** to its Wellness Council. Long is a family nurse practitioner with expertise in holistic health-care. She has also focused on evidence-based practices and patient-centered care. She is currently a health promotion disease prevention program manager for veterans and lead clinician for tobacco cessation.

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## Beautycounter Moves into Fragrance Market

**Beautycounter**, a clean beauty pioneer, has moved into the fragrance market continuing its mission of bringing safer products to customers. The entrance is part of its effort to close the “fragrance loophole” that started in the 1970s. The provision allowed companies to legally hide many harmful ingredients under the generic label of “fragrance” or “parfum.” Those ingredients included known allergens, endocrine disruptors, carcinogens, skin irritants, and chemicals toxic to the reproductive system, according to the company. Beautycounter’s new fragrance line, Clean Eau De Parfum, features full transparency of its ingredients list for all five clean fragrances. The collection has also gone through safety screening and third-party testing and is Leaping Bunny certified for sensitive skin. Beautycounter will continue its advocacy in beauty as well as support updated fragrance laws later in the year lobbying Congress to require more supply chain transparency; ban harmful ingredients such as PFASs and other forever chemicals; and provide protections for overexposed communities.

## Avon Contributes \$2.4 Million to Support Those Affected by Major Disasters

**The Avon Co.** and its parent company **LG H&H USA** have partnered with humanitarian organization Global Empowerment Mission (GEM) to donate \$2.4 million worth of products to support those impacted by major disasters. The donated products include hygiene essentials and personal-care items that will be provided to communities affected by natural disasters, humanitarian crises, and other emergency situations. Offering some relief in “overwhelming conditions,” is a meaningful endeavor for Avon and its parent company, according to Hyeyoung Moon, CEO of LG H&H Americas. The hygiene products include personal-care items such as shampoo, soap, body lotion, makeup, skincare products, and fragrances. In addition to essentials, GEM shared that providing other items contributes to self-care and wellbeing for those experiencing challenging times, which matches Avon’s own mission to support causes that empower women.

## UK DSA Rebrands, Welcomes D2C Retailers and Affiliate Marketers

The **U.K. Direct Selling Association (UK DSA)** has decided to rebrand in a major way, shifting to include direct-to-consumer (D2C) retail in the United Kingdom. The UK DSA has opened membership to D2C retailers and affiliate marketing brands, as well as its current 50 direct selling company members. As the organization witnessed a shift in retail trends, leaders saw an opportunity to provide a home to the broader range of D2C market, according to Susannah Schofield OBE, UK DSA director general. Existing and new direct selling companies have already joined the trend of building omnichannel aspects to their businesses, including D2C. The evolution of the channel is reminiscent of the time when the UK DSA was founded in 1965, Schofield says, with D2C pioneers such as Tupperware and Avon. With the expanded D2C wave, the organization wanted to further demonstrate its commitment to meeting the needs of the moment, adjusting for innovation and consumer protection, per Ayo Olaseinde, chair of the UK DSA and global president, **Saladmater**.

## Nature’s Sunshine Reports 2023 Net Sales Increase to \$445.3 Million

**Nature’s Sunshine Products Inc.** has reported its financial results for the fourth quarter and full-year ended Dec. 31, 2023, with full-year net sales of \$445.3 million, an increase of 5.5% over the prior year, which was \$421.9 million. Gross margin in 2023 went up 110 basis points to 72.1%, compared to 71.0%, and adjusted EBITDA was \$40.4 million, up 26%. Fourth quarter net sales also saw an increase, with an improvement of 6% to \$108.9 million, compared to \$102.7 million. Adjusted EBITDA went up 21% to \$9.7 million, compared to \$8.0 million the fourth quarter of 2022. As of Dec. 31, 2023, Nature’s Sunshine had cash and cash equivalents of \$82.4 million and no outstanding debt. The Company expects full-year 2024 net sales to be between \$455 million and \$480 million and expects adjusted EBITDA to range between \$42 million and \$48 million.

## The Body Shop Files for Bankruptcy in the US and Canada

**The Body Shop** has filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy in the United States and Canada, following comparable actions just weeks before by the United Kingdom-based segment of the business. The U.S. also had to close operations on March 1, including 50 outlet locations, and 33 of 105 Canadian stores were planned for closure as well. Per the bankruptcy filing, the U.S. had no forewarning about the U.K. business insolvency filing, stating it occurred “with no advance notice to, or pre-filing discussion with, the company and/or the company’s management.” The U.S. filing also claimed that its business was left with no cash on hand to continue operations as usual “or to conduct an orderly winddown.” In late 2023, The Body Shop International had been sold by Brazil’s Natura &Co to private equity company Aurelius for \$261 million. However, the purchase was not enough for the company to overcome its difficulties. Per Yahoo Finance, it was in a “much worse financial position” than had been previously known. Since the acquisition, Aurelius had also already sold off its Body Shop business throughout Europe and parts of Asia.

## Congress Takes Steps to Repeal Independent Contractor Final Rule

On March 25, the House Education and Workforce Committee passed H.J.Res. 116, the Congressional Review Act resolution, in an effort to repeal the Department of Labor’s Independent Contractor Final Rule. The vote was 21-13 with all Republicans in favor. The final rule had gone into effect March 11 with the purpose to protect the rights of workers at risk of exploitation by combatting employee misclassification. However, many leaders across a variety of industries have been opposed to it, calling it government overreach. Some have shared it could eliminate the livelihoods for independent contractors throughout the country. The **Direct Selling Association (DSA)** led a lobbying committee to pass the resolution for repeal in both the House and Senate. The DSA shared in a statement that in its opinion “the rule threatens the ability for millions of direct sellers to operate their businesses as independent contractors.” The association also pointed to the rule’s language as “vague and complicated” saying it “creates uncertainty for direct sellers” and “would have a disproportionate negative impact on populations the rule seeks to protect.”

## Mannatech Announces \$132 Million in Net Sales for Full-Year 2023

**Mannatech Inc.** has reported financial results for the fourth quarter and full year ended Dec. 31, 2023. Fourth quarter 2023 net sales were \$32.7 million, compared to \$34.3 million in the prior-year period, which was a 4.7% decrease. Gross profit improved for the quarter to 75.4% year over year, compared to 69.0%, benefiting from reduced supply chain shipping costs. Net loss was \$1.8 million, or 94 cents per diluted share, for the fourth quarter 2023, vs. a net loss of \$6.5 million, or \$3.50 per diluted share, for the fourth quarter 2022. Full-year net sales for 2023 were \$132 million, a decrease of \$5.2 million, or 3.8% from \$137.2 million in 2022. Operating loss was \$1 million for the full year, compared to \$400,000 for the prior-year period. The company launched **Trulu**, a tiered affiliate program, in June 2023, through a separate wholly owned subsidiary, **NEMO**, apart from the company’s network marketing business. The new entity incurred an operating loss of \$1.1 million. Excluding NEMO’s startup costs, the company would have generated an operating profit of about \$700,000 in 2023.

## Mary Kay Makes Global Impact in Support of Women Entrepreneurs

Coinciding with Women’s History Month in March, **Mary Kay Inc.** released its special report, “Advancing Women’s Entrepreneurship: from Commitment to Action.” The report serves as an update on its progress to promote women’s entrepreneurship and global economic participation through a partnership with six United Nations agencies. Founded in 2019, that partnership, Women’s Entrepreneurship Accelerator (WEA), has engaged more than 600,000 women in programs and activities that support and celebrate their entrepreneurial drive with the goal to empower 5 million women by 2030. Mary Kay embraces a holistic approach to its support of entrepreneurs by offering access to education, networks, capital, advocacy, policy and markets. Through the WEA partnership, Mary Kay was able to help launch the Women’s Entrepreneurship Regional EXPO with satellite events in Central Asia and Europe. Other achievements include reducing poverty rates in a pilot village project focused on sustainability in rural China and implementing monitoring and training programs such as the Women’s Entrepreneurship Certificate Program.

## SAVVI Joins MyDailyChoice’s Marketplace Platform with New Products

With **MyDailyChoice (MDC)** launching an online marketplace, **SAVVI**, a direct seller of activewear apparel, skincare, and wellness products, is set to join its platform. As of March, SAVVI enters the MDC Marketplace as the only activewear apparel brand. SAVVI Affiliates will continue to be able to purchase products from SAVVI, but they now have access to more of the brands’ new products and digital products available to sell in more than 200 countries. MyDailyChoice’s new marketplace has established many collaborations and partnerships with similar brands. In addition to hundreds of products in a variety of categories brought to market, brands will participate in its compensation plan and have access to its platform technology. A unique aspect of the alliance is that SAVVI will keep ownership of its company, products, community, and culture while leveraging the platform built by MDC. MyDailyChoice was founded by entrepreneurs Josh and Jenna Zwagil.

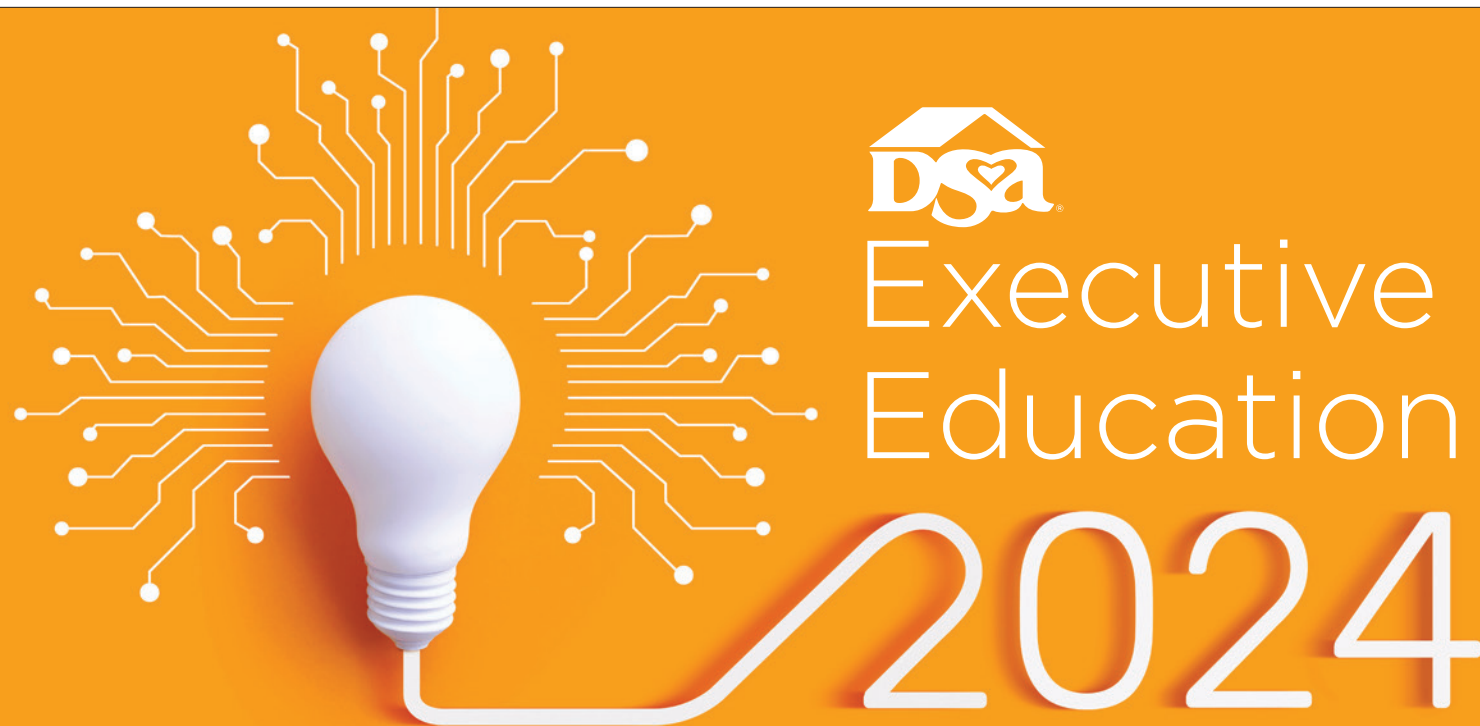
## Urban Retreat Expands Operations to Australia

**Urban Retreat by Acti-Labs** has taken next steps in its strategy for global expansion by launching business in the Australian market. Already having a significant presence in Europe, the United States, and Canada, the company expressed the move to Australia was the next logical step for the brand. Urban Retreat sees Australia as “a tremendous opportunity” with consultants offering ethical beauty and wellness products through an expanded business network. Urban Retreat has made additions to its executive team as well with Brigitte Moore joining as chief revenue officer to support international expansion and CJ Summers as director of sales and leadership guiding the field globally. Urban Retreat by Acti-Labs is a family-run business based in France that started out as a manufacturer of skincare products developed for spas in 2009. Dealing with world financial difficulties in the mid-2000s, the company saw an opportunity to market its own products and rebranded as a direct seller in the U.K. market. Expanding its range of products, the company has now evolved to what it is today.

## MEET OUR PARTNERS

Below is a listing of all of the suppliers who placed display advertising in this month’s issue. We are grateful for their participation and support in bringing news and information to the social selling channel.

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|------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|-----------|-----------------------|-----------|
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