

MLM 2036

Bold predictions for the next decade, and the ten strategic decisions that will determine which side of them you land on.

10 megatrends that will radically reshape network marketing

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Executive Summary

Here are the 10 Megatrends that will completely reshape network marketing as we know it. Each of these is a structural force already in motion. The rest of this report explains where I think each one lands by 2036, what it threatens, and how to get on the right side of the trend...instead of being eliminated by it.

- 1. AI Makes the Average Distributor Obsolete** The logistics go to the machine. Human work becomes the differentiator.
- 2. Side Gigs Become the Main Gig** Portfolio income becomes normal. The Total Addressable Market (TAM) of qualified candidates becomes the largest—but least patient—in history.
- 3. Trust Becomes the World's Scarcest Currency** Content is suspect. Credibility is expensive. The trusted human becomes a luxury brand.
- 4. Loneliness Becomes a Global Pandemic** Belonging becomes a defining human need and a business differentiator.
- 5. Healthspan Supersedes Lifespan** Consumers move from trying to live longer to living better.
- 6. Mass Marketing Dies. Hyper-Personalization Wins.** Technology matches your product line to your DNA.
- 7. Women Demand Ownership, Not Just Opportunity** The people who power the industry demand real equity.
- 8. Economic Power Shifts to Emerging Markets** The next leaders come from mobile-first markets. Exporting the American template fails.
- 9. Regulation Moves at Machine Speed** Hype becomes discoverable. Compliance becomes the daily operating system.
- 10. The MLM Industry Disappears.** The category itself dies and the models converge to social commerce.

MLM 2036

A Whitepaper

This Whitepaper you're reading now was incubated in 2012, when a puppy licked my face.

But not just any puppy. Lancy was a clone.

An adorable, frisky, playful pup like you'd expect to adopt from a shelter. Only this one was born in a test tube.

That experience led me to write *Risky Is the New Safe*, a book that became a bestseller on every major list and was translated into many languages around the world. Although I'm not a futurist, that process taught me the value of two things:

- 1) Peeking around corners to speculate on what's coming next.
- 2) Knowing the right questions to ask, to understand the best way to prepare for what's coming next.

Note: I'm not a psychic, nor do I own a crystal ball. What I do own is my entire adult life spent inside this business and a track record of successfully predicting the future before it fully arrived. When I did the media tour for the *Risky* book, the people interviewing me thought I was insane. The things I was suggesting back then like ridesharing apps, a major country defecting from the EU, cryptocurrencies, vacations on the moon, and underwater homes seemed too far-fetched to be true. But anyone reading that book today would likely yawn and think, well of course this was all so obvious.

Just like I believe in 2036 people will look back on this Whitepaper and think, “well thanks, Captain Obvious.”

But if what I’m writing here is so obvious, how come virtually everyone in network marketing is so desperately trying to protect a business model whose time has expired?

As we wind down 2026, we’re now accelerating into the most cataclysmic time in human history. I believe this is the moment for serious critical thinking about how all the significant changes taking place are going to impact the profession that has provided a higher standard of living for so many of us.

I’ve built massive organizations in network marketing, created growth strategies for the companies that run it, and written the books people used to train in it. For more than four decades I’ve watched it survive regulatory attacks, the fax machine, plug-and-play DVDs, the internet (and the dot-com crash), social media, and livestreaming.

Every one of those things was going to “kill network marketing.” None of them did. But every one of them killed the people who refused to adapt to it.

In fact, I’ve been in this industry so long that some of the dead doctors who lied have now been reborn and are back to life. (Inside joke for the OGs.)

Here’s how to read and process this Whitepaper...

The data points are facts or published projections, and I’ve footnoted them so you can know the source. The predictions and interpretation are mine.

The future is probabilistic, not promised. If I turn out to be wrong about a few of these, good. It means somebody in this industry did something smarter than I imagined, and I’ll be the first to say so.

But I'd bet the ranch I'm directionally correct. And direction is what you position for.

Deal? Then let's freaking go!

The Industry Isn't Dying. Its Old Operating System Is.

Ten years from now, network marketing will be larger than ever as a behavior, and essentially unrecognizable as an industry.

Read that again, because both halves matter. The next decade will not kill network marketing. It will kill the *average, existing* version of it.

Here's what that means...

The model most of us grew up in was built on a set of assumptions that felt like laws of physics. Information was scarce, so the distributor who knew the product and the comp plan had an advantage. People gathered geographically, so the hotel meeting and the living-room presentation were the delivery system. Duplication required standardization, so everybody got the same script. And the company owned the system, so the company controlled the message, the training, the data, and the relationship.

Every one of those assumptions is being dismantled right now...

Not by regulators. Not by the critics. By the same structural forces reshaping banking, medicine, media, retail, and every other industry on the planet.

Here's the snapshot. The World Federation of Direct Selling Associations reports \$163.9 billion in global retail sales for 2024, essentially flat from the year before, generated by 104.3 million independent contractors.¹ That is a big industry. But size is not momentum. Dinosaurs were big too.

¹WFDSA, Global Direct Selling Statistics 2024 (released December 2025). wfdsa.org/global-statistics

And “flat” is not the same as “stable.” In nature, stasis equals death. A cell either replicates or it dies. There is no maintenance mode in biology, and there is none in business either. Your team and your company are both organisms, and organisms replicate or die.

An industry that has been roughly the same size for years while social commerce, e-commerce, the creator economy, and AI-driven shopping explode around it is not holding steady. It’s being quietly subtracted from.

What a megatrend actually is...

A megatrend is not a fad, a platform, or a hot product category. Keto was a fad. TikTok is a platform. Collagen is a category. A megatrend is a structural force that changes consumer behavior, economics, power, and culture across every industry at once.

You don’t get to opt out of a megatrend. You only get to decide which side of it you’re standing on.

If you ask the wrong question, the answer is irrelevant...or dangerous. And most people in our business are asking the wrong one. They ask, **“Will this hurt network marketing?”** Every disruption hurts the people who refuse to adapt. That’s not insight. That’s just Tuesday.

The better question is different: **How do we position ourselves on the receiving end of this shift?** That question is the entire reason for this Whitepaper.

How each trend is built

For each of the ten megatrends, I'll do four things.

1. Name the shift.
2. Prove the direction with a little evidence (a little, not a lot; you're busy).
3. Expose the threat, because there is always a threat.
4. Suggest strategies to convert that threat into an opportunity for both distributors and the company execs. Because we're going to need collaboration between field and corporate more than ever before.

When you finish reading, you won't have ten predictions to admire, but ten strategic decisions to make. (So, finish reading as quickly as you can and get to work!)

*Here's the question to hold in your mind as you read:
Are you building a business designed for the next ten
years, or defending one designed for the last sixty?*

MEGATREND 1

AI Makes the Average Distributor Obsolete

THE PREDICTION:

By 2036, AI will perform most of the mechanical work distributors do today. It will not eliminate high-value distributors. It will expose, and then eliminate, low-value activity.

Think about what the average distributor's week actually consists of. Researching the product. Answering the same fourteen questions about the comp plan. Chasing after prospects who ghosted them. Repurposing a training into a post into an email. Translating for the cousin who speaks Portuguese. Tracking the numbers. Hunting down the autoship that lapsed.

All of that is mechanical. And machines are already better at it than you are. They don't get tired, don't forget, don't take it personally when a prospect ghosts, and they work in 40 languages at three in the morning.

The World Economic Forum projects that job creation and destruction between now and 2030 will touch 22 percent of all current jobs, with 170 million roles created and 92 million displaced. Roughly four in ten employers expect to reduce their workforce wherever AI can automate the task.² (You should know I think the displacement number is low by a factor of ten or more. But I'll use them to seem less of a doomer.)

Notice what that number describes. It is not the end of work. It is the end of *average* work.

Here's the part nobody in our industry wants to say out loud. For sixty years, the distributor's edge was information. You knew the ingredients. You knew the bonus structure. You knew the story behind the founder. Today your prospect asks an AI assistant and

²World Economic Forum, The Future of Jobs Report 2025 (January 2025).

knows more about your product than your upline does, before you've finished your first sentence. AI commoditizes information the way it commoditizes operational efficiency. What was once an advantage is now table stakes.

So what's left?

Everything that was always the real business. Judgment. Lived experience. Trust. Leadership. The ability to ask a better question than the one the prospect walked in with.

A machine can generate a testimonial. It cannot *be* one. When the mechanical work goes to the machine, human connection stops being the thing you squeeze in between tasks and becomes the premium activity. The moat is human.

The mind virus you have to kill first is the one that says, "I'm not a tech person." That's not a personality trait. That's a decision to become obsolete. So what's the game plan?

If you're in the field

- Baby Boomers: Stop building your system for people like you. We love the profession, we're willing to work, and we want the best for our teams. But we're dead or dying. (Seven out of ten corporate execs I talk with cite their distributor force aging out as their greatest challenge right now.) Gen Z is getting screwed in the current financial system. They need what we have more than anyone else. But they're getting sucked into dumb shit like forex, day trading, prediction-market gambling, and crypto scams. We have to show them our model is the best for them.
- Build your system so it works on a smartphone and embrace AI. If you can describe a task in a sentence, a machine can probably do the first draft of it.
- Stop competing on information. Compete by building a team culture based on character, integrity, and fellowship—a trust network. That is the only game a machine can't win.

- Spend the hours AI gives you back on *conversations, coaching, community, and customer results*. Those are the activities that were always the business. Now you finally have time for them.

If you're running the company

- Give every distributor a company-sanctioned AI copilot trained on accurate product, compensation, compliance, and market information. If you don't, they'll use an unsanctioned one that hallucinates miracle product cures and income claims.
- Replace the static training library with personalized, multilingual, just-in-time coaching. Nobody watches module 14 of 40. Everybody uses the answer that shows up the moment they need it.
- Stop bringing in trainers teaching manipulative closing and NLP techniques. Train your human moat on purpose: critical thinking, storytelling, ethical persuasion, emotional intelligence, and leadership. Those are now your curriculum, not your extras.

AI will not replace network marketers. Network marketers using AI will replace the ones who don't.

And when traditional employment becomes less secure, which is exactly what those WEF numbers describe, millions of people will go looking for another source of income. Which brings us to...

MEGATREND 2

Side Gigs Become the Main Gig

THE PREDICTION:

By 2036, the single-employer career will have lost its monopoly. In fact, I believe the majority of working adults will build portfolio incomes from some mix of employment, consulting, platforms, content, investing, and entrepreneurial ventures. Network marketing will have its largest prospect pool in history, and its least patient one.

For a hundred years the deal was simple. Get the job, keep the job, get the pension, get the gold watch. That deal has been dying since before most of you were born, but the body is finally cold.

The International Labour Organization counted at least 142 digital labor platforms in 2010. By 2020, there were more than 777.³ Upwork's research finds that 28 percent of skilled knowledge workers in the United States, more than 20 million people, now work independently, and that group earned an estimated \$1.5 trillion in 2024.⁴ The World Economic Forum now talks about "portfolio careers" as a normal part of how the workforce adapts to AI, not as a lifestyle choice for creative types in Brooklyn.⁵

Here's what most people in our business get wrong about this. They hear "the job is dying" and reach for the old script: "quit your job, fire your boss, live the dream." We never got that pitch right.

Because while that was true for the hyper-achievers, the much more common result was huge swaths of part-timers earning supplemental money. We treated the \$250 and \$500 incomes like they were a weakness, but they were actually our greatest strength. Instead of shouting out the fact that we were creating

³International Labour Organization, World Employment and Social Outlook 2021: The Role of Digital Labour Platforms in Transforming the World of Work.

⁴Upwork Research Institute, Future Workforce Index (April 2025).

⁵World Economic Forum, The Future of Jobs Report 2025.

wonderful side gig incomes at scale, we were sweeping them under the rug, so we could keep repeating tropes about Lambos and tropical islands. Now in a world where the prospect can pull up an income disclosure statement in four seconds, it's suicidal.

The prospect of 2036 isn't looking for an escape hatch. They're building a portfolio of income-producing assets. They want to know:

- What is the realistic second or third income?
- What transferable skills do I build?
- What assets do I own when I'm done?

Answer those questions candidly and you have the most compelling opportunity in the portfolio economy. Dodge them and you're just another hustle in a feed full of hustles.

The prosperity frame is this: you are not offering someone a way out of their job. You are offering them the income that eventually gives them the *choice*. Choice is sovereignty. Sovereignty is what people are actually buying.

If you're in the field

- Position the opportunity first as a credible supplemental income and skill-building vehicle. Not an instant escape from employment. The escape, if it comes, is earned later.
- Build transferable assets: real customer relationships, the ability to build Signal, AI fluency, and leadership capability. Those travel with you no matter what happens to any single company.
- Design a 5-hour, 10-hour, and 20-hour weekly operating plan so a prospect can see a realistic entry point that fits the life they already have.

If you're running the company

- Create viable success tracks for customers, affiliates, part-time builders, creators, community leaders, and full-scale entrepreneurs. One-size-fits-all was always a lie. Now it's an expensive one.
- Lower the friction, cost, and complexity of starting part time, without inflating what part time can produce.
- Measure skill acquisition and customer creation, not just recruiting activity and meeting attendance. You get what you measure. Most companies are measuring the wrong thing and wondering why retention is ugly.

Stop asking people to quit their job. Help them build the income that eventually gives them the choice.

A larger recruiting pool does not mean an easier sale. Because the prospect is becoming more skeptical, and for good reason...

MEGATREND 3

Trust Becomes the World's Scarcest Currency

THE PREDICTION:

By 2036, content will be effectively free and credibility will be brutally expensive. Consumers will assume by default that any claim, testimonial, before-and-after photo, or burst of enthusiasm can be manufactured. Because it can.

The 2026 Edelman Trust Barometer found that seven in ten people are unwilling or hesitant to trust someone with different values, backgrounds, or information sources. Edelman's headline for the year was "Trust Amid Insularity." People aren't just distrustful. They're pulling into smaller and smaller circles of people they already know.⁶ The OECD flags generative AI as a key emerging risk to information integrity, which is a polite way of saying the machines can now fake anything.⁷

Now think about what our industry has historically run on. Before-and-after photos. Testimonials. Lifestyle imagery. Stage enthusiasm. Every single one of those can now be generated in 30 seconds by a teenager with a laptop.

The tools of the old model just became worthless as proof, because they are indistinguishable from fabrication.

Here's the part the doom crowd misses. The same Edelman research shows that people still trust the brands they personally use, at 80 percent, more than they trust business, media, government, or even their employer.⁸

⁶Edelman, 2026 Edelman Trust Barometer: Trust Amid Insularity (January 2026). 33,938 respondents, 28 countries.

⁷OECD, Facts not Fakes: Tackling Disinformation, Strengthening Information Integrity (March 2024).

⁸Edelman, 2025 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: Brand Trust (June 2025).

Trust hasn't disappeared; it migrated. From institutions to individuals. From the mass to the personal. From claims to relationships.

In other words, the world is moving *toward* the thing network marketing was supposed to be all along: *a trusted human recommending something they actually use to someone who actually knows them*. In an economy drowning in synthetic persuasion, that trusted human becomes the ultimate luxury brand.

The catch is you have to actually *be* trustworthy. Not perform it. Be it. Make fewer claims. Trust compounds the moment you remove the hype, because hype was the thing eroding it.

If you're in the field

- Be the example. Be the product of the product and live the lifestyle of the lifestyle. That's Signal. Proof you can't fake is the only proof that's worth anything now.
- Borrow less credibility from the company and build more of your own through consistency, expertise, and candor. Borrowed trust evaporates the day the company stumbles. Earned trust travels.
- Make fewer claims and only ones the company can substantiate. It is astonishing how persuasive a person becomes when they stop overselling.

If you're running the company

- Create verifiable systems for testimonials, product testing, ingredient sourcing, income claims, and distributor credentials. If it can't be verified, it can't be used. Period.
- Make transparency a marketing advantage. Publish what works, for whom, under what conditions, and with what limitations. Your competitors won't. That's the point.

- Reward the leaders who protect brand trust, not just the ones who generate short-term volume. The volume king who torches your reputation is not an asset. He's a liability with a Lambo.

In an economy drowning in synthetic persuasion, the trusted human becomes the ultimate luxury brand.

The trust crisis is unfolding alongside another human crisis. People have never been more connected and felt more alone...

MEGATREND 4

Loneliness Becomes a Global Pandemic

THE PREDICTION:

By 2036, social disconnection will be recognized as one of the defining health and cultural problems of the era. Genuine belonging will be both a human need and a business differentiator, and companies that engineer it honestly will win.

The World Health Organization now reports that one in six people on the planet is affected by loneliness, and links it to an estimated 871,000 deaths a year. That's about 100 deaths an hour.⁹

Gallup's latest global workplace report puts employee engagement at 20 percent worldwide, the lowest reading since 2020, and pegs the lost productivity at roughly \$10 trillion.¹⁰

We built a world where you can order dinner, see a doctor, close a deal, and end a marriage without ever being in a room with another human being. And then we're surprised that people are starving for the room. Now here's something I've believed for a very long time...

One of the most valuable products this industry ever sold was never listed in the catalog. It was belonging.

The Saturday training. The recognition on stage. The upline who called when your father died. *The team of people who believed in you before you believed in yourself.* Strip the products out of network marketing and you'd still have one of the most powerful community engines ever built. Strip the community out and you'd have a mediocre e-commerce site.

⁹World Health Organization, Commission on Social Connection, "Social connection linked to improved health and reduced risk of early death" (June 30, 2025).

¹⁰Gallup, State of the Global Workplace 2026.

That engine is about to become the most valuable thing you own. But there's a line here, and I want to be blunt about it.

Community creates prosperity. *Dependency* creates lawsuits.

The industry has a long, ugly history of turning belonging into a leash: shaming people who leave, making the group the only source of identity, manufacturing emotional highs to mask financial lows. That's not community. That's a cult with a comp plan, and AI and regulators will both find it faster than ever.

Real belonging is organized around growth, wellness, contribution, and shared experience. It makes people bigger, not smaller. It survives someone deciding to walk away. Build that, and you're building something no algorithm can replace.

If you're in the field

- Create small, high-trust communities organized around growth, wellness, contribution, and shared experience. Not constant pitching. The pitch is what's killing the community.
- Add one meaningful offline gathering, service project, or learning circle to your monthly rhythm. Analog is the new premium.
- Become a connector. Introduce people to resources, mentors, customers, and each other, even when there's no immediate transaction. Especially then.

If you're running the company

- Treat community as part of the value proposition and act accordingly. Live events, mentoring, recognition, and service.
- Measure belonging, participation, retention, and customer progress alongside sales volume. If the only number on the dashboard is volume, you'll optimize for the wrong thing every time.
- Set up service projects for your nonprofit foundation that distributors can participate in.

- Install safeguards against coercive belonging. Write them down. Enforce them. The day a former distributor testifies about your “culture,” you’ll wish you had.

One of network marketing’s most valuable products was never listed in the catalog: belonging.

And the demand for connection intersects with another massive desire. Not simply to live longer, but to live *better* longer...

MEGATREND 5

Healthspan Supersedes Lifespan

THE PREDICTION:

By 2036, consumers will have shifted decisively from adding years to life toward adding energy, cognition, mobility, independence, and performance to those years. The wellness fortune of the next decade will be built on measurable outcomes, not bottles.

The numbers are not subtle. The WHO projects that by 2030, one in six people on Earth will be 60 or older, with that population growing from one billion in 2020 to 1.4 billion.¹¹ McKinsey sizes the global wellness market at about \$2 trillion and finds that up to 60 percent of consumers now call healthy aging a top or very important priority.¹² The Global Wellness Institute puts the broader wellness economy at a record \$6.8 trillion and forecasts \$9.8 trillion by 2029.¹³

But here's the shift inside the shift. The question people are asking has changed. It used to be, "How long will I live?" Now it's, "How many of those years will I be able to think clearly, move freely, and do the things I love?" I'm still playing softball at an age when most of my peers are picking out recliners, and I promise you I care a lot more about my next at-bat than my life-expectancy table.

That's healthspan. And it's an outcomes business, not a promises business.

Which is a problem for the way most of our industry sells wellness. Vague claims. Miracle stories. "Ask me how." Bottles stacked on a kitchen counter. The healthspan consumer of 2036

¹¹World Health Organization, "Ageing and health" fact sheet (updated October 2025).

¹²McKinsey & Company, "The \$2 trillion global wellness market gets a millennial and Gen Z glow-up" (May 2025). Survey of 9,000+ consumers in China, Germany, the UK, and the US.

¹³Global Wellness Institute, Global Wellness Economy Monitor (November 2025).

will have a wearable on her wrist, a biomarker panel in her inbox, and an AI that knows more about her sleep than her doctor does. She will not buy a promise. She will buy a protocol, and she will *measure* whether it worked. That's not a threat.

That's the greatest opportunity this industry has seen since the first nutritional product.

Because the human distributor is perfectly positioned to be the accountability layer that makes a protocol actually stick. The pill doesn't work if nobody takes it. Adherence is a relationship business. We know something about relationships.

And something else: There are millions of people getting sick from the stress of living someone else's calendar. The agency our business offers to people belongs somewhere in the healthspan conversation too.

If you're in the field

- Sell outcomes and daily practices, not bottles and miracles. Talk about energy, recovery, mobility, sleep, cognition, and adherence. That's the language your customer is already using.
- Develop legitimate fluency in the science while staying firmly on the education side of the line between education and medical advice. Fluency builds trust. Playing doctor destroys it, and it's illegal.

If you're running the company

- Invest in differentiated, science-backed solutions across functional nutrition, healthy aging, recovery, diagnostics, and behavior change. Me-too products in a crowded category are a race to the bottom you won't win.

- Design product ecosystems and measurable protocols instead of disconnected SKU collections. Twelve products that work together beat two hundred that don't.
- Fund substantiation before marketing. In the healthspan economy, evidence becomes part of the product. If you can't prove it, you can't sell it. Soon, you won't be allowed to.

The next wellness fortune will not be built by promising more birthdays. It will be built by improving the years between them.

And once consumers measure their own health that precisely, they will stop accepting the same generic prescription as everyone else...

MEGATREND 6

Mass Marketing Dies. Hyper-Personalization Wins.

THE PREDICTION:

By 2036, consumers will expect the product, the message, the bundle, the timing, the coaching, and the purchase experience to adapt to them personally. Anything generic will read as spam, and it will be filtered out before a human ever sees it.

Capgemini found that 71 percent of consumers want generative AI integrated into their shopping experience, and that 58 percent have already replaced traditional search with AI tools for recommendations, up from 25 percent two years earlier.¹⁴

Salesforce reports that 39 percent of consumers, and more than half of Gen Z, are already using AI for product discovery.¹⁵ During the 2025 holiday season, Adobe measured AI-referred traffic to U.S. retail sites up 693 percent year over year, and those visitors converted 31 percent better than everyone else.¹⁶

Let that last one sink in. The shopper is no longer browsing. She's asking an assistant, and the assistant is choosing. Yet we still have network marketing companies that can't build a decent mobile app.

When an AI is doing the choosing, the AI can only recommend what it can categorize. If your message is generic, the machine can't place you. If it can't place you, it can't retrieve you. If it can't retrieve you, you simply don't exist in the conversation where the buying decision is being made. A weak Signal used to make you hard to find. Now it makes you unindexable.

¹⁴Capgemini Research Institute, What Matters to Today's Consumer 2025 (January 2025). 12,000 consumers, 12 countries.

¹⁵Salesforce, Connected Shoppers Report (July 2025).

¹⁶Adobe Analytics, 2025 holiday season data, reported January 2026.

The old model was product dumping: here's the catalog, here's the starter pack, here's the same autoship everyone gets. The 2036 model is diagnosis: What are you trying to accomplish? What's in the way? What are you actually ready to do? What's the next best step? The distributor who can run that conversation is a curator. The one who can't is a catalog reciter, and the catalog is now online, personalized, and free.

One warning: Personalization runs on data, and the data is not yours. It's borrowed. Treat it that way. Consent, privacy, portability, and deletion aren't compliance chores. They're the price of being trusted with someone's life.

If you're in the field

- Replace product dumping with curiosity and empathy: goals, constraints, preferences, readiness, and the next best step. Ask more. Pitch less.
- Use AI to personalize education and follow-up, but keep consent, privacy, and human judgment in the loop. Automate the mechanics. Never automate the relationship.
- Become a curator who simplifies decisions, not a reciter who overwhelms prospects with options. The person who makes the decision easy wins the customer.

If you're running the company

- Build recommendation engines that create personalized product systems, onboarding paths, and communication cadences. This is now core infrastructure, not a nice-to-have.
- Accept that the days of selling the same multivitamin, mineral complex, or probiotic to every customer are about to be over. The time to start investing in testing and production capacity to create products customized for every customer is now.
- Move from rigid autoship to adaptive replenishment based on actual use, goals, feedback, and results. The monthly box

nobody opens is the single biggest churn generator in the industry.

- Remember: Customer data is borrowed property. Make consent, portability, security, and deletion simple and visible. Do it before you're forced to.

The company with 200 products may lose to the company with 12 products and one brilliant personalization engine.

Personalization changes what people buy. The next shift changes who controls the buying power...

MEGATREND 7

Women Demand Ownership, Not Just Opportunity

THE PREDICTION:

By 2036, women will control an unprecedented share of capital, purchasing decisions, enterprises, and generational wealth. They will demand pathways to assets and strategic influence, not merely another commission check. The companies that offer real ownership will get the best leaders. The rest will get the leftovers.

Start with a fact that ought to embarrass a few boardrooms. Women make up 72.1 percent of the world's 104.3 million direct-selling contractors.¹⁷ This is an industry built by women, sold by women, and largely led in the field by women. Yet the business is shockingly sexist and misogynistic. Look at who sits in the C-suite, on the board, and in the room where the compensation plan is designed. In too many companies, the answer is still: somebody else.

That gap is about to become untenable, because the money is moving. McKinsey projected back in 2020 that by 2030, American women would control much of the \$30 trillion in financial assets held by baby boomers.¹⁸ More recent analysis from Cerulli puts the great wealth transfer at \$124 trillion through 2048, with \$54 trillion going first to surviving spouses, more than 95 percent of them women.¹⁹ The single largest transfer of capital in human history is landing, disproportionately, in the hands of the people who already power this industry.

Here's what I see coming. A LOT of women in their 40s, 50s, 60s, and beyond—already accomplished, already capable—are

¹⁷WFDSA, Global Direct Selling Statistics 2024.

¹⁸McKinsey & Company, "Women as the next wave of growth in US wealth management" (July 2020).

¹⁹Cerulli Associates, "\$54 Trillion Will Transfer to Widows Through 2048; More Than 95% Will Go to Women" (January 2025).

choosing right now, on their own terms and with their own equity, to trade a jammed calendar for a designed one.

The best women leaders in this business are going to stop asking, “What’s the bonus?” and start asking, “What do I own?” They’ll want a personal brand that outlives any rank. A customer list that doesn’t belong to the company. Intellectual property. Investments. Owned distribution channels.

And on the corporate side, a real seat at the strategic table, not a spot on the “field advisory council” that meets once a year and is expected to rubber-stamp the decision the C-suite already made.

The conversation needs to move from monthly income to net worth, from opportunity to ownership, from participation to sovereignty. The companies that get there first will attract the best leaders in the world. The ones that don’t will train those leaders and then watch them leave.

If you’re in the field

- Use network marketing cash flow to build net worth: reserves, investments, intellectual property, and owned distribution channels. A check is income. An asset is freedom.
- Build Signal: a personal brand, customer list, and leadership capability that remain valuable beyond any single company or rank. If your business disappears when the company changes the comp plan, you don’t own a business. You rent one.
- Talk about wealth literacy, sovereignty, and ownership with your team, not just monthly income. You’ll attract a different caliber of person, and you’ll keep them.

If you’re running the company

- Increase women’s actual influence on boards, executive leadership, product design, field councils, and international expansion decisions. Not symbolic. Structural.

- Teach business economics and wealth creation, not just scripts, duplication, and recognition rituals. Your best people are smarter than the training you're giving them. One of the most powerful things I do for the companies I consult with is an annual leadership retreat where I teach financial literacy.
- Explore credible long-term participation models: profit sharing, equity-linked incentives where legal, advisory roles, and real leadership development. Ownership is the retention strategy nobody has tried.

Do not build an industry powered by women while keeping the real ownership and strategic authority somewhere else.

The transfer of power isn't only happening between genders. It's happening between regions...

MEGATREND 8

Economic Power Shifts to Emerging Markets

THE PREDICTION:

By 2036, the next wave of consumers, entrepreneurs, and field leaders will come disproportionately from younger, mobile-first markets in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The companies that develop indigenous leadership there will own the next decade. The ones that export an American template will get an expensive lesson.

A World Economic Forum piece put it plainly: by 2035, more young Africans will enter the workforce each year than in the rest of the world combined.²⁰ Meanwhile, WFDSA attributes less than one percent of 2024 global direct-selling sales to Africa and the Middle East combined.²¹ Read those two numbers together and tell me you don't see the biggest mismatch between demographic reality and industry footprint anywhere on the planet.

And the infrastructure is already there. The World Bank reports that 79 percent of adults globally now hold a financial account.²² Mobile money processed \$2 trillion in transactions in 2025, double the 2021 figure, across 2.3 billion registered accounts, with most new accounts opening in sub-Saharan Africa.²³ The phone in a 24-year-old's hand in Lagos or Nairobi or Manila is her bank, her storefront, her training room, and her team meeting. She doesn't need a hotel ballroom. She never did. (But she will do even better if there's an in-person community get-together.)

Now here's where our industry keeps stepping on the same rake. A company "opens" a market. The announcement goes out. A stampede of speculative recruiters from three other countries

²⁰World Economic Forum, "Africa's youth and global growth" (August 2023).

²¹WFDSA, Global Direct Selling Statistics 2024.

²²World Bank, Global Findex Database 2025.

²³GSMA, State of the Industry Report on Mobile Money 2026 (March 2026).

pours in to plant flags, sign up their cousins, and lock in positions before anybody has sold a single product to a single local customer. Six months later the market is a smoking crater of unpaid bonuses and burned relationships, and the executives blame “the culture.”

The culture wasn’t the problem. The template was. Translation is not localization. Pricing, pack sizes, products, incentives, fulfillment, and compliance all need to be rebuilt for the market, and the leaders need to come from the market.

The opportunity was never exporting products to emerging economies. It was developing leaders who build movements inside them. (Read that again three more times.)

If you’re in the field

- Develop cross-cultural intelligence and real partnerships before chasing flags on a compensation map. A position without a relationship is a liability.
- Use AI translation to accelerate communication, but rely on local leaders to interpret culture, trust, and buying behavior. The machine translates words. It does not translate meaning.
- Build relationships in a market before the launch announcement creates a speculative recruiting stampede. Be the person who was already there.

If you’re running the company

- Design mobile-first enrollment, training, payment, customer service, and low-bandwidth experiences. If it doesn’t work on a three-year-old phone with a spotty connection, it doesn’t work.
- Localize pricing, pack sizes, products, incentives, fulfillment, and compliance. Translation alone is not localization. It’s only the appearance of it.

- Develop indigenous leadership, local manufacturing where viable, and market-specific field systems. Stop trying to export an American template and calling it expansion.

The opportunity is not exporting products to emerging markets. It is developing leaders who build movements within them.

As the industry crosses more borders and more channels, its regulatory exposure multiplies. And the regulators just got a very powerful new tool...

MEGATREND 9

Regulation Moves at Machine Speed

THE PREDICTION:

By 2036, regulators, platforms, and companies will all use AI to discover, document, and act on prohibited claims in something close to real time. Compliance will move from an occasional legal review into the daily operating system of every distributor and every company. The hype era will not end because the industry grows a conscience. It will end because hype becomes discoverable.

Let me give you the recent history, because it matters. In September 2024, FTC staff analyzed the income disclosure statements of 70 multi-level marketing companies. The finding: most participants made \$1,000 or less per year, often before expenses, and in at least 17 of those companies, most participants made nothing at all.²⁴

Then, in April 2026, the FTC did something the industry should have seen coming for a decade. It went after individuals. In separate actions, it charged a top-level recruiter for two companies over claims that recruits could earn “five to seven figures” in a year, when the company’s own data showed that more than three-quarters of active participants earned nothing. It charged a husband-and-wife team at another company over “\$25,000 or more a week” claims, when 0.035 percent of participants ever hit that number. And it obtained an order against a company and its two top executives directly.²⁵

In June, the agency’s own business blog spelled out the lesson: back up your earnings claims, a handful of unusual success

²⁴Federal Trade Commission, “FTC staff report analyzes 70 MLM income disclosure statements” (September 2024).

²⁵Federal Trade Commission press releases, April 13, 14, and 27, 2026, regarding actions against high-level MLM participants and Forever Living Products.

stories doesn't justify a claim, and companies can be held liable for their distributors' deceptive marketing.²⁶

Personal exposure. Corporate exposure. And the technology to find every one of your posts in seconds. Here's the uncomfortable truth I've been saying for years, and now the machines are going to say it for me:

Regulation is not the industry's greatest threat. An industry that keeps handing regulators evidence is.

Every exaggerated lifestyle post, every "quit your job in 90 days," every stage story that leaves out the expenses is a deposit into an account the regulators will withdraw from later. With interest.

The distributors and companies who thrive in this environment won't be the ones with the cleverest lawyers. They'll be the ones who decided that ethical persuasion is simply what professionals do.

Compliance isn't the enemy of your business. It's the thing that lets your business still exist in 2036.

If you're in the field

- Assume every post, message, livestream, testimonial, and stage presentation is permanent and discoverable. Because it is.
- Every time you're on a stage, assume the FTC, the FDA, and the Attorney General (or the equivalents in your country) are sitting in the front row.
- Keep a personal claim discipline: use approved language, cite substantiation, disclose typical results, and delete unsupported lifestyle implications. The Lambo photo is not a marketing asset. It's Exhibit A.

²⁶Federal Trade Commission Business Blog, "Back up those earnings claims, and other lessons from the FTC's Labor Task Force work" (June 16, 2026).

- Make compliance part of your professionalism, not an obstacle to it. Ethical persuasion increases trust, and trust is the currency of the next decade.

If you're running the company

- Deploy AI monitoring, in-workflow warnings, multilingual claim libraries, and rapid correction systems. The regulators are using AI to read your field. You'd better be reading it first.
- Redesign income disclosures around clarity, expenses, typical outcomes, and realistic participation paths. A disclosure designed to be ignored is a disclosure designed to be litigated.
- Stop building comp plans to create a few poster boys or poster girls making million-dollar incomes. Design a plan built for the middle, not the multi-millionaires—a plan that empowers an ordinary person to create an extraordinary income through dedication to the movement, leverage, and work. Get rid of outdated elements such as binary balancing, flushing volume, breakaways, and front-loaded incentives. Replace them with performance-based leverage—driven by subscription customers and intelligent compression. I've created a new type of compensation plan called **the Lev-Com plan** and made it completely open source. Study it and implement what you like.
- Audit your compensation plan for genuine retail demand and reward leaders for clean growth, not volume created through reckless claims. The FTC just told you what it's looking for. Listen.

Regulation is not the industry's greatest threat. An industry that keeps handing regulators evidence is.

And that pressure will help erase the old industry boundaries. Because the model is already escaping the category...

MEGATREND 10

The MLM Industry Disappears.

THE PREDICTION:

By 2036, network marketing will no longer be visible as a separate category. Referral economics, creators, affiliates, communities, and direct selling will have converged into one ecosystem of social commerce.

Look at what's happening on the platforms. Pew found that 62 percent of adult TikTok users go there for product reviews and recommendations. The number is 44 percent on Instagram and 37 percent on Facebook. Among 18-to-29-year-olds on TikTok, it's 74 percent.²⁷ U.S. social commerce hit an estimated \$87 billion in 2025, growing more than 21 percent, and is projected to cross \$100 billion in 2026. TikTok Shop alone roughly doubled to nearly \$16 billion.²⁸

Now hold that next to the WFDSA number from the opening: global direct selling essentially flat.²⁹

Here's what those two facts say when you put them in the same sentence. The world has fallen in love with the core *idea* of network marketing (a trusted person recommends a product and gets paid when you buy it) and it's doing it everywhere *except* inside the industry that invented it. Every creator with an affiliate link is a distributor. Every referral program is a comp plan. Every brand community with ambassadors is a downline with better branding. The model won. The category didn't.

Most of the industry's response to this has been to protect the label. Defend the term. Explain why what we do is different from what the influencers do. That's exactly backward.

²⁷Pew Research Center, "A majority of U.S. TikTok users are there for reviews and recommendations" (November 2024).

²⁸eMarketer, U.S. social commerce forecast (December 2025).

²⁹WFDSA, Global Direct Selling Statistics 2024.

The label was never the asset.

The economic advantages were: low-friction entrepreneurship, trusted recommendation, community, and shared upside. Protect those and you can wear any label the market prefers. Protect the label and you'll be the last person standing in an empty Marriott meeting room.

For the individual, this is the most liberating trend of the ten.

The distributor of 2036 is a creator, a curator, a customer advocate, a community builder, and a niche authority, and she's loyal to a company without being identity-dependent on an industry. She owns her audience through email, community, events, and direct relationships, so that no single algorithm change can erase her business. She's platform-flexible and company-loyal.

That's not a betrayal of the model. That's the model, finally free.

If you're in the field

- Evolve from distributor to creator, curator, customer advocate, community builder, and niche authority. Pick the ones that fit you. Go deep.
- Build an owned audience through email, DMs, communities, events, and direct relationships, so one algorithm can't erase your business overnight. Rented audiences get evicted.
- Become platform-flexible and company-loyal without becoming identity-dependent on an industry label. You are not "an MLM person." You are an entrepreneur who uses a powerful model.

If you're running the company

- Modernize attribution so compensation can recognize discovery, education, referral, conversion, customer care, and community leadership. The comp plan built in 1994 can't see most of the value being created in 2026, let alone 2036.

- Integrate affiliate, creator, retail-customer, and team-building pathways without forcing every participant into one identity. Let people be what they are.
- Stop protecting the label. Protect the economic advantages: low-friction entrepreneurship, trusted recommendation, community, and shared upside. Those are the moat. The name on the door is not.

The industry may disappear because the model becomes too useful to remain trapped inside the industry.

The question is no longer whether change is coming. The question is what you'll build before it arrives.

Choose Which Version of the Industry Survives

Ten trends are a lot to hold in your head. So let me collapse them into three shifts I believe are irreversible.

- **From information advantage to trust advantage.** The information is free now. The only thing left to sell is whether people believe you.
- **From selling an opportunity to helping people build ownership.** The prospect of 2036 doesn't want an escape. She wants assets, skills, and the sovereignty that comes with them.
- **From a separate MLM category to an AI-enabled social-commerce ecosystem.** The model is escaping the label. Go with it.

The fork in the road

The way I see it, the industry is about to split into two versions, and you're going to have to choose which one you belong to.

Version One	Version Two
Keeps the hype, the imitation, the exaggerated claims, the dependency, and the recruiting theater. Protects the label. Measures volume. Treats compliance as an obstacle and community as a leash. AI and regulation accelerate its collapse, because both are very good at finding exactly what it's hiding.	Becomes AI-enabled, community-powered, flexible, transparent, and genuinely entrepreneurial. Protects the economic advantages. Measures customers, skills, and belonging. Treats compliance as professionalism and community as the product. It grows right out of the old category and into everything.

Version One doesn't need your help to die. Version Two needs your help to be born.

You don't get to stand in the middle. The middle is where the average lives, and I've already told you what happens to the average.

Your 30-day mandate:

Don't leave this Whitepaper with ten ideas and zero actions. Understanding a trend is not the same as operationalizing it. Pick one move in each of these three domains and execute it in the next 30 days.

- **Automate one mechanical activity with AI.** Follow-up, research, translation, content repurposing. Pick one. Do it this week.
- **Build one deeper human connection or community ritual.** An offline gathering. A learning circle. A service project. Analog is the new premium.
- **Remove one outdated practice that depends on hype, friction, or control.** You know which one. You've known for a while.

The final landing...

Don't wait for certainty. Certainty is a luxury the herd waits for, and by the time a megatrend is obvious to everyone, the leverage has already migrated to the people who acted early.

That's not a prediction. That's how every single one of these shifts has played out, in every industry, every time.

The people who prospered in the last sixty years of this business weren't the smartest people in the room. They were the ones who moved first while everyone else was still debating whether the thing was real.

The future does not reward the people who predict it best. It rewards the people who position for it first.

So here's the question I want you sitting with tonight. Not "Will network marketing survive?" It will. The question is...

Which version of it will you be standing in when it does?

The Ten Decisions

I promised you decisions, not predictions. Here they are, one per trend. Print this chart. Put it where you'll see it. Then check one off only when it's actually done, not when you've agreed with it.

#	The Megatrend	The Decision
1	AI makes the average distributor obsolete	Build an AI operating stack this quarter, and move every hour it saves into human conversation.
2	Side gigs become the main gig	Retire the "quit your job" pitch. Offer a credible 5/10/20-hour path and the assets that travel.
3	Trust becomes the scarcest currency	Make fewer claims, substantiate every one, and build Signal nobody could fake.
4	Loneliness becomes a global pandemic	Add one real community ritual to the monthly rhythm, and watch the line between belonging and dependency.
5	Healthspan supersedes lifespan	Sell measurable protocols and adherence, not bottles and miracles. Fund the evidence before the marketing.
6	Mass marketing dies	Replace the standard combo with a custom protocol. Sharpen the Signal until a machine can categorize you.

#	The Megatrend	The Decision
7	Women demand ownership	Shift the conversation from monthly income to net worth, and put real strategic authority where the field power already is.
8	Power shifts to emerging markets	Develop local leaders before launch announcements. Localize everything, not just the language.
9	Regulation moves at machine speed	Treat every post as permanent and discoverable. Make compliance part of professionalism, and monitor with AI before the regulators do.
10	The industry disappears; the model goes everywhere	Stop protecting the label. Protect the economics, own your audience, and modernize attribution.

A Note on the Research:

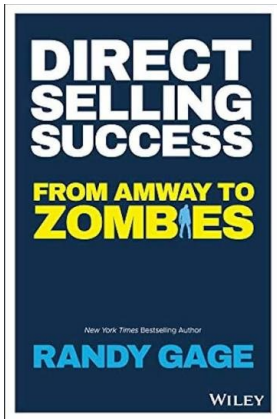
Every statistic in this report is footnoted to its source so you can check my work. A few things worth knowing: the WFDSA figures are the most recent available (2024 data, published December 2025). The McKinsey projection on women and boomer wealth dates to 2020, and the World Economic Forum line on Africa's workforce comes from a 2023 commentary on the Forum's site rather than a formal report. Where the numbers were dated, I said so. Where the interpretation is mine, it's mine. That's the deal.

About the Author:

Randy Gage is a true American success story, transforming his life from a jail cell as a teenager to the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *USA Today* bestseller lists. He has arguably trained more network marketing millionaires than anyone alive and is the only person on Earth to be inducted into both the Direct Selling Hall of Fame and the Speaker Hall of Fame.

Randy has spoken to over two million people in more than 50 countries and authored 16 books which have been translated into more than 25 languages.

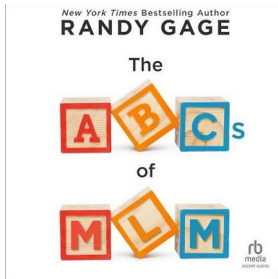
Recommended Resources:



[Get it on Amazon →](#)

Direct Selling Success: From Amway to Zombies

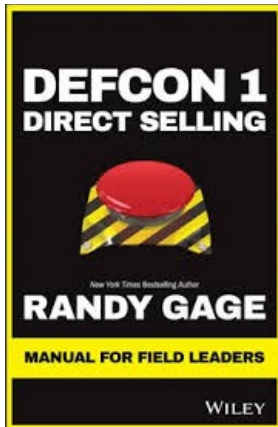
Most people don't fail in direct selling because the business model is broken. They fail because nobody ever taught them how to actually run it—so they wing it, burn their warm market, blame the comp plan, and quit one month before the compounding would have kicked in. *Direct Selling Success* is the sequel to *How to Build a Multi-Level Money Machine*, the book that's been translated into more than 20 languages and built more six-figure earners than any other in the profession—and it's the full textbook for the modern era: prospecting and inviting, sales and duplication, social media without becoming a spam bot, building depth, developing leaders, and creating an organization that keeps producing whether or not you show up. This isn't hype and it isn't hope. It's the operating manual for turning what you're doing part-time and sloppy into a real business you run like a pro—and yes, Randy names the zombies, the myths, and the tired practices that are quietly killing your check.



[Get it on Amazon →](#)

The ABCs of MLM

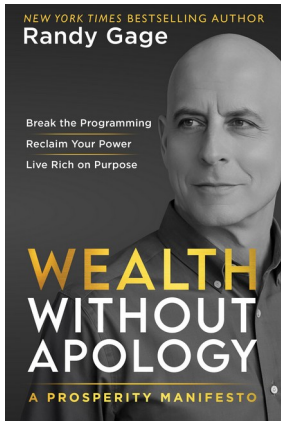
Your new distributor's first 30 days determine everything—and right now you're handing them a startup kit, a Zoom link, and a prayer. *The ABCs of MLM* is the little book that fixes that. In a fast, funny, read-it-in-one-sitting format, Randy Gage gives brand-new people the three things they need before they talk to their first prospect: belief that the business model is legitimate, confidence that they can actually do it, and clarity on what real success will require of them. It answers the doubts they're too embarrassed to say out loud, shuts down the objections from their brother-in-law, and gets them moving instead of marinating. Put it in every new-member kit and watch what happens to your 90-day retention. The most expensive distributor you'll ever have is the one who joined excited and quit confused.



[Get it on Amazon →](#)

DEFCON 1 Direct Selling: Manual for Field Leaders

Everybody teaches you how to build a team. Almost nobody teaches you what to do when it's on fire. Your top leader gets recruited away at midnight. A rumor rips through your group. The company changes the comp plan. Someone posts income claims that could take down the whole organization. That's DEFCON 1—and how you lead in those 48 hours determines whether your group survives or hemorrhages. This is the manual for senior field leaders on the situations the trainings never cover: handling defections, managing conflict between big producers, navigating compliance landmines, holding the line through turbulence, and building an organization with enough culture and spine to absorb a hit and keep growing. If you lead more than a few people, you will face these scenarios. The only question is whether you'll face them prepared or improvising.



[Get it on Amazon →](#)

Wealth Without Apology: A Prosperity Manifesto

We've spent generations programming people to believe that wanting more makes you greedy, that being broke is somehow noble, and that the right way to be a good person is to shrink, settle, and call it humility. That programming is a prison—and most people are busy decorating the cell. *Wealth Without Apology* is Randy Gage's most direct assault yet on the scarcity conditioning running underneath your calendar, your ambition, and your results. In 142 unapologetic pages, he dismantles the false choice between making real money and being a good human, exposes the self-sabotage hiding inside your "integrity," and hands you a way to build genuine prosperity—wealth, health, relationships, peace of mind, and freedom—without the guilt tax. Read it in one sitting. Then go look at what you're charging, what you're tolerating, and what you're telling yourself, and try to keep a straight face. Warning: this book will make some people deeply uncomfortable. Those are usually the ones who need it most.

Electrify Your Next Event:

Bring in Randy to keynote your convention or high-level leadership training and see what a difference a Hall of Fame speaker can make for your team. Randy is booked far in advance, so [check dates early](#).

Work Directly with Randy:

Randy helps founders, CEOs, and entrepreneurs build Signal to create Market Gravity. Hire him as your strategic coach, to consult with your company, or become a member of his [Breakthrough U Entrepreneur Accelerator](#).

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