

Pyramid Nutrition

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Cycles are part of business. Recently, at least here in Southern California, there seems to be an increase in the cyclical business of multilevel nutrition companies. This is the type of operation that recruits the man on the street to become a nutritional expert. They will give the new distributor a spiel, and most importantly, emphasize how important it is to sign up as many people below them as possible, so they will be able to make a lot of money without working. These companies generally have slickly-packaged literature with a videotape and a cassette tape about how much money -- oops -- I mean, how great the product is. Here is a typical conversation with a person who, as they are instructed to say, has their own nutrition business.

Q: I'm glad I finally got to meet you, doctor. Are you ready for an exciting business proposition?

A: Nice to meet you, too.

(I'm thinking: So, you are the guy who has been hassling my office manager for the last three weeks.)

Q: Doctor, do you believe in vitamins?

A: Well, I guess so.

(I'm thinking: There is nothing to believe or not to believe. Vitamins are coenzymes and cofactors that the body requires for a multitude of biochemical reactions that occur 24 hours a day throughout one's lifetime.)

Q: Did you get a chance to review the literature?

A: Yes, most of it.

(I'm thinking: This guy does not have the cortex required to absorb and comprehend "real literature." I skimmed that packet of junk. It included a headline from a magazine or newspaper in bold print saying, "New research shows vitamins work." It also included the story of the visionaries who founded this company -- they were selling water filters last year -- as well as a large section on how much money you can make by signing up your family and friends and pushing the product on everyone you know.)

Q: Did you watch the company video?

A: Yes.

(I'm thinking: You mean the story of the unemployed shoe salesman who now lives ocean front simply by following "the program?")

Q: Did you listen to the scientific cassette tape?

A: Yes.

(I'm thinking: These companies always have to rent a doc for credibility. I think it is interesting that their nationally known experts never seem to have been published in the peer-reviewed literature.)

Q: What do you think of our products?

A: Very impressive.

(I'm thinking: Give me a break. This is just another vitamin that is way overpriced. It is also low potency and uses inexpensive nutrient delivery systems. But, why get into it with this guy? He has his little spiel, and quite frankly, if I discussed delivery systems with him, he would think I was talking about the UPS man.)

Q: Would you like to come to our meeting?

A: I really would, but I'm just too busy at this time.

(I'm thinking: The last thing I want to do is waste an evening listening to an evangelical bunch of hype.)

Q: Do you want our product.

A: No, thanks.

(I'm thinking: There is no way that I, or any health professional practicing for the right reasons, would ever try to take advantage of their patient population by getting them involved in a pyramid marketing scheme.)

Q: Why not, doctor

A: I don't want the hassle.

(I'm thinking: I am familiar with the local health food store and the products they carry. I refer my patients there when I can. For specific problems, I utilize products from companies who specialize in providing high quality nutritional formulas for the health care professional.)

Q: Doctor, I think you're making a big mistake.

A: It won't be the first time.

(I'm thinking: Actually, I made four mistakes recently. The first was reading your literature; the second was watching your video; the third was listening to your cassette; and the fourth was giving you 10 minutes of my valuable time.)

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