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Retaining What You Build: Nurturing Your Downline

by Mike Akins

The ability to create a residual income is a powerful and very attractive feature in network marketing. Geometric growth and a residual income are fundamental to success in this industry. Residual income refers to the income that is generated again and again from an original action.

When you sponsor a new distributor and that distributor goes into action, residual income is the result. Your first actions of recruiting and moving the marketer into action created an ongoing income. If the world was a perfect place, that could be all there is to it.

The reality is that the “seed” you plant when you sponsor a new distributor generally requires nurturing to continue to grow and prosper. During my 32-year career, I have observed a great number of talented networkers who could consistently enroll new members, but did not have a strategy for retaining them.

Strategy –

Don't leave retention to chance. Generally, lasting success is achieved by design. I suggest that you do not depend on a fantastic product line or a lucrative compensation plan to “hold” your organization together. The equation for success is more complex than that. A specific plan of strategy should be in place from the beginning of the building process.

This strategy should contain several steps that will encompass a long period of time for the member to become loyal to the dynamics of the program. I suggest that you have a one-year plan of action. The strategy and the tools to implement the strategy should be duplicatable. The duplication of the “retention” strategy is the key to its success.

Thorough Orientation –

One of the first steps in your strategy should be the thorough orientation of the new member in the dynamics of the program. Often, a distributor will respond to certain factors within the program. Their initial excitement may entice you into believing that they are solidly committed to the program.

In the journey to success each marketer will face obstacles and disappointments. As the individual proceeds further into the process commitment will require reinforcement. The initial excitement about a particular feature will not suffice. Educating the distributor on the full spectrum of factors involved in the program will be valuable during these “fragile” periods.

Personally Connecting –

“Connecting” is a vital key to the retention of your new downline members. There are three targets in the connecting process. First, you must personally connect with the member. Focus on the member as a person, instead of a tool to achieve your goals.

Learning to care first, for the individual, will assist you in the bonding process. The member will sense your genuine concern and develop a trust in you. That trust will be the foundation to developing a relationship is a “cornerstone” to retention in network marketing.

Connecting Upline –

It is important to connect the new distributor with other individuals in your upline and organization. Each “connection” serves as a lifeline to the marketer. There may be times that you can not ‘be there” for the member, and these other connections can fill the ‘gap”.

A broad foundation of interaction can serve as a reservoir of education, motivation, and assistance for new members. This wide range of interaction can help the new members find others whom he may relate to better than yourself. Developing a family of relationships is a powerful “lock-in” for new associates.

Connecting to “Sources” –

Immediately connect the distributors to all sources of assistance. You should start the new distributor off with a strategy session. In this strategy session, make sure that the marketer is aware of all marketing tools, support systems, sales aids, and of anything else that could be useful in their pursuit of success.

Don't limit the member only to “sources” that you relate to. The associate may relate to different factors than you do. You may suggest certain tools over others, but at least make him/her aware of all of them. In surveys that my firm has conducted, we consistently find that a great number of marketers are not aware of many available sources of assistance.

Keeping In Touch –

Keeping in regular contact with members within your first two levels of commissions is vital to retention. Teach each new member to do the same. Alternate the methods and avenues that you use to keep in touch. Personal visits, telephone calls, e-mail, faxes, letters, postcards, and tapes can all be used to accomplish this.

Make these items available to your downline members or direct them to a source. Make it very clear to members that you are only there to support their goals and not to pressure them into action. You are only making yourself available. Pressure will isolate them. Do not convey frustration, impatience, or expectations to your downline members. You will close the door to interaction if you “push or shove” them. Be patient; nurturing will generally pay off.

Listening –

Listening to the individual members in our downline is vital to lasting success. When you listen to their opinions, ideas, and problems, you are communicating the value and respect that you hold for them. Let each member know that his or her input is welcome. When they communicate with you, interact with them. A superficial attempt to patronize them will do more harm than good.

Problem Solving –

Problem solving is very important to retention. You do not always have a solution immediately. By listening and attempting to get the answer for them, you communicate that you care. Never share negativity with your downline. Always go upline in solving problems. Even mentioning negatives to

your downline can create a negative force that can be harmful to retention and success. When you empathize with the individual, be careful not to compound the problem by overly empathizing.

Encouragement –

People in general need to know they are appreciated. Speaking the words, “I appreciate you” can have a major impact on the associate. Be genuine and share from the heart. Verbal communication is the most effective, but reinforcing verbal communication with mailing, faxing, or e-mailing a compliment is a great idea. Rewards and recognition for achievement can be effective. Communicating appreciation on a personal level and on an achievement level are both very important.

Newsletters –

Newsletters can be an effective avenue to communicate with your downline. It doesn't have to be elaborate. Regular newsletters communicate a feeling of belonging as well as keeping the members informed. Solicit participation from your downline for information to use in the newsletter. Mention achievements, birthdays, anniversaries, and recognitions.

I suggest that you be creative in your nurturing efforts. From the very beginning of your building process, incorporate strategies that will solidify your success. Include this principle in the initial training process. Duplication of these principles is vital to long term success.

About The Author:

Mike Akins has been a successful leader in network marketing industry for more than 32 years. Mike is well known in the industry for his ability, not only to assist others in achieving success, but in maintaining it. Mike has downline members who have been with him for more than 20 years. He recently added a program to his portfolio in which he has developed an organization of more than 9,000 distributors in less than nine months.

You can **contact Mike** at 316-663-5233

Fax: 316-663-3152

Email: research@midusa.net

or visit his **website** at: <http://www.pro-networkers.com>