



Crow River
Animal Hospital
& Dental Clinic

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MLM's and Natural Health Care

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MLM's or Multi-Level Marketing. What is the deal? Why are so many companies focused on natural health, an MLM?

I get this question a lot, and usually accompanied with a genuine look of disgust, almost to the point of nausea. All I have to say is "Thank you Amway" – for ruining everyone's perception of multi-level marketing.

So why does the natural health industry rely on this method so heavily for their products? Here are my thoughts and theories.

One, when many of these companies were incepted, MLM's were popular and widely accepted. People were hungry for their own businesses, independence, and being "rewarded" for purchasing products they needed.

Two, word of mouth marketing. This is by far the most effective method of advertising. It is how we grew our own business. For the first six years of creating Crow River Animal Hospital, we weren't even in a phonebook! Still, to this day, we track how new clients come our way. The vast majority (90-95%) come by referrals from other clients! So, why am I paying over \$2500 per year to be in phone books?! People tell me that they "never knew we were here" – and I feel so bad when they have had a bad veterinary experience elsewhere, and they wish that they would have know about us sooner.

So, by MLM's putting the marketing and advertising into the hands of their distributors – they get cheap to free advertising (which trust me, is not in the budget for starting companies) – which is rewarded "on the back side". How nice would it be for me to only pay the phone book AFTER I get a client from one of those ads?! VERY NICE!

Three, education. Many natural health systems do have a bit of a learning curve. Picking the correct regimen is often key in getting results. We all want a magic pill, but they are not out there. Even in Veterinary Medicine – the better I

educate my clients, the more value I bring to my services. If I think you should microchip your pet, but have no good reasons for doing so, why should anyone want to do it? The days of blindly desiring a 'magic pill' or a quick fix is over. Good health requires some dedication for ALL animals; human, four legged, feathered, furred, and finned.

There are good companies and bad companies out there. Just like there are good and bad over-the-counter products as well. We have likely bought just as many bad products on an infomercial as we have been approached by someone trying to "sign us up". I have met so many people, involved in so many things; Vibe, Mona Vie, Shaklee, Quixtar, Daisy Blue Naturals, Mary Kay, Avon, Tahitian Noni Juice, Life's Abundance Pet Food, Pampered Chef, Dr. Organix, Melaleuca, even wicker baskets and adult "toys"! They all have a similar theme, whether or not they are truly MLM in nature. A do-it-yourself business, in which everyone hopes to profit in some way. We all have to be smart – and evaluate everything for ourselves. If it costs a lot or sounds too good to be true – it is!

Have I tried two months worth of Vibe? Sure I have. What did I lose - \$80 and I drank something for two months, that didn't seem to do much. But, what if I could have gained health from this product. Would it have been worth it? I think so. But, I didn't give up on all 'super-juices' just because this juice didn't work for me. I still find that there are some things that work better for my husband and daughter, and others that work better for my son and myself. We are all individuals – and we shouldn't give up on trying, just because the one thing I tried wasn't a miracle for me. I firmly believe there is an answer out there for everything – we just have to find it.

So here is a rundown of all the companies I deal with – and their system of marketing and sales, and my honest account of their company:

Let's start with the least repulsive ☺

1. Standard Process – This is the company that makes the whole foods supplements that I love. They have been doing this since 1929. They are a basic wholesale company, who will ONLY sell their products through healthcare professionals. For the most part, these supplements are treated much like a prescription medicine, they are that powerful. Even though they are technically over-the-counter. They provide an amazing amount of educational opportunities to their "wholesalers". Some people really dislike the fact that you can only buy them from a healthcare professional. After personally being on these supplements, I think everyone should be on them. I feel so great – it is mind blowing. So, I tell everyone about these, just as passionately as I would if I "owned a share" in the company. When something works, you share it with passion, regardless of the monetary rewards.
2. Shaklee – This is an MLM type of company. I became a wholesale distributor to order Basic H2 for my cleaning supplies. I was not impressed by their vitamins and supplements, even though I do think

they are much better than your basic Centrum. I have known some people who have had amazing health benefits after adding an extensive vitamin regimen to their healthcare through Shaklee. I am more impressed with the Whole Foods Supplements – although something is better than nothing! Their membership was NOT WORTH the savings you get on purchasing, and their compensation plan was not very impressive to me. You have to order a ton of product to get any “rewards”. You are far better off just ordering the Basic H2 from them online and paying full retail price. I have one person who felt “hounded” by their Shaklee people to sign up and to buy –this is sad, because it is not how I have ever known Shaklee to be. For the most part, I have never been approached aggressively by these folks.

3. Noni Juice – Yes, this too is an MLM company. I love their original Noni Juice – and do think it is the best “Noni” on the market. However, to me, this company is a one-hit-wonder. We have tried many of their other products, and the quality is just not there for us. For example, their fruit chews, enhanced with Noni nutrients, contain CORN SYRUP! Really people – I am trying for a HEALTHY lifestyle!! If you order a lot of Noni Juice or will be using it for horses, you will likely benefit from a membership, and may even earn rebates back on your purchases. But for now, this one gets a no vote on “signing up”. I have met both aggressive and non-aggressive distributors in this company. The one thing that is consistent is that they have truly seen healing benefits from their original product. I personally know people who have cleared cancer with Noni Juice. They don’t even sell Noni it as a business, but you bet they tell everyone they meet.
4. Young Living – Also has MLM properties, however, they offer other ways of purchasing their products. You are not required to get a distributor account, but I find it the best value for most. Here is a rundown on their system.
 - a. Customer - You can just purchase things at retail prices, with a Customer account. No strings attached.
 - b. Preferred Customer - You can purchase items with a Preferred Customer account, and you will save 12% on all purchases. You are also required to enroll in monthly orders of \$50 per month and an automatic shipping program. There is really NO value in this division – Don’t Bother!
 - c. Independent Distributor – Here is where people’s stomachs start to turn ☺ Purchasing this way, you will save 25% on all purchases. This company is actually VERY good about this account. Yes, you will pay \$40 to enroll (much cheaper than other companies by the way). This is a lifetime membership – all you are required to keep a wholesale account active is to purchase \$50 per YEAR. I’ve paid more to be a member of Costco – every year and rarely used the membership. This is a pretty low commitment really, that most people will easily attain. This allows you to get the wholesale

pricing all of the time. Generally after purchasing about two items – you will make back your initial investment in savings.

Also, when you get this account – you get the Start Living Kit. This kit contains a 5mL peppermint oil, 5mL lavender oil, 3 travel packs of Ningxia Red, and a coupon for 50% off a diffuser! Add all of this up, and you are getting \$42.50 off the diffuser alone, plus the other free stuff – so you are money ahead.

I think everyone should have a diffuser. It is just invaluable when I need to treat an animal (or a human). So to me, this is the primary reason to open an account. Get your coupon, order your diffuser, and get your products at wholesale.

I also personally do not want to carry a bunch of products for retail sale. I would much rather have people order them for themselves directly – there are just too many individual oils to stock them all. You are NEVER required to sell anything. I know a woman who has been a distributor for over 8 years – and has never done anything but purchase oils for her own use.

- d. Professional Account – with this account, a business can order a very large amount of product at a discount. The minimum purchase is quite enormous, and you cannot order a single bottle here or there if needed. This is an unrealistic category in my eyes, and even businesses are far better off with an individual distributor account.

I look at most MLM's like being a member of Costco or Sam's Club. We pay a membership fee, in order to get lower prices. How much we save, will depend on how much we purchase. With these memberships, you will pay every year. With Young Living and some other MLM's it is a one time fee. I know Young Living the best, as I am a member – and there are no penalties if you do not order. You would just become inactive after not ordering for over 6 months. We recently had a client who had not ordered from Young Living in over 5 years. She re-activated her account during a special offer – it cost her nothing and she got a free roll-on essential oil as a bonus “welcome back gift”. Very easy going.

The only other major benefit people should know about with Young Living, is the monthly autoship program called Essential Rewards. If you are someone who ends up ordering monthly (\$50 or more) – then you definitely want to be on this program. You can change your entire order and date of shipping EVERY month. You get reduced shipping fees and preference for short stocked items. You will also earn 10% in product credit every month for the 1st six months, then 15% for 6-12 months, and after 1 year 20% product credit up to \$75. You'd be amazed how much this adds up – I had a great little nest egg of “points” to redeem for Christmas – without even realizing it.

We know many people making their way through the “own your own business world”. On a business level, very few of these companies have decent compensation packages. As it wasn’t a deciding factor for me in Young Living – I was not even concerned or interested in their compensation program. However, as I am learning, they really do have a great compensation plan – for those people who may want to approach this as a business.

To me, business and marketing is just part of our world. As much as I hate to admit it, even veterinary medicine has to be marketed! If I don’t do a good job at educating you on the need for a blood panel – I am very unlikely to “sell” it. YUCK – I hate even phrasing it that way. However, there are real health benefits to running the blood panel, so it doesn’t “feel” like I am advertising or trying to “up sell” the procedure (hopefully!).

There must be real and true benefits in a product or a procedure for me to recommend it to our clients. And yes, just like Amway, there are bad vets out there that just sell products for profits and not for results. That is out there in EVERY market – so buyers beware.

I urge you to not let Amway or other past MLM (pyramid) companies, ruin your ability to try some great products. They are out there. Me, I try to wholesale everything – from Glee Gum, Dandy Blend Coffee Replacer, Dr. Bronner’s Soaps, and Nutiva Coconut Oil. If I can get a wholesale account through our business, I do. If I use it in the clinic, then it is fair game to order at wholesale prices, and sell at retail prices. To me, there is not much of a difference in this “normal” marketing practice and the decent MLM companies. Unfortunately, some individuals are more aggressive – and it feels like your grocery store just ran out into the middle of the road, trying to make you buy from their store!

The other thing I now consider – is that Amway would have never coordinated a way for me to get products in an emergency. Last year, our Young Living “family” coordinated to get hundreds of bottles of essential oils together and delivered, from all over Minnesota, on the 4th of July weekend. We were helping a horse farm with a contagious outbreak of strangles, and needed oils to treat over 100 horses! I guarantee you; no other company in this world has the camaraderie and passion that I have seen with the Young Living “collective”. We joke a lot about being assimilated (come on there has to be other Borg fans out there!!). But, the passion comes from seeing the healing miracles affecting the lives of horses, dogs, cats, birds, and humans. When you see something that can take away chronic pain, restore health, or heal a wound in record speed – you really want to share it with others.

The vast majority of everyone I have met in Young Living has been so educational, supportive, and giving of themselves. Their lives have all been touched by products that made a huge impact for them personally. And, they become passionate about sharing that information with others. Even Young Living people who are not “doing this as a business” are this way.

The same is true for veterinary medicine. When I find a great treatment, food or supplement – I share it with everyone. Regardless of if I make a buck on it or not. It is good advice that can bring good health to your furry family. Why wouldn't I tell you about it!?

We all need to share those “Ah Ha!” moments with each other. You never know how profound a simple recommendation can impact someone's life. Case in point. I have been emailing someone back and forth for a while – and as we were discussing her health concerns – she had a recommendation for me. This recommendation has literally improved my quality of life 100%!!!!!! For you ladies out there – it is called the Diva Cup – and I highly recommend it. We will get into this subject in a future “For Ladies Only” FFF.

Every business has some sort of marketing or way of operating that we don't like. Big pharmacies butter up the FDA, ads on TV cost millions of dollars, side effects kill people daily and it is all swept under the carpet. Huge profits at the expense of our own health and livelihoods are grossly accepted. However, we are turned off by an MLM to the point of revulsion. I say, just be wise, but get over it. Start to see the “evil” in all of the companies you purchase from – Chrysler, Toyota, Sam's Club, Wal-Mart, Pfizer, and Health Insurance – you won't feel so bad about an MLM anymore!

I TRULY welcome discussions on this. I am a VERY honest person – sometimes too honest. I tell it like I see it and I hope you do the same for me! We might not always agree with each other, but keeping an open mind and hearing what people have to say is very important. You never know when that information may save someone's life!

In an effort to document more essential oil case studies – I am offering free consultations (a \$50 value) for those enrolled under our sponsorship in Young Living (customer or distributor). In exchange for the consultation, you must maintain good treatment records, take pictures when indicated, and maintain a little “diary” documenting responses along the way. I hope this won't be a limited time offer – but I would recommend you take advantage of it soon. When spring hits – I usually have much less time!

As always, I hope you enjoy these tidbits! I certainly enjoy putting them together – and hope you can all start to appreciate my weird sense of humor. I have really enjoying emailing back and forth with everyone – and LOVE learning from all of you as well – keep it coming!!

Nature gave us the gift of healing. Providing our bodies the nutrients and care required to heal, lies in our own actions.

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