

IN NETWORK MARKETING

Everyone has heard of this cosmopolitan woman involved in direct selling and active in all the most important markets: Gabi Steiner, from Germany. Many know her book "From Person to Person", a bestseller in the industry, which can be ordered on her website in English, German and Spanish. More than 200,000 copies have been sold of this book, which explains marketing through personal recommendations in such simple ways, that everyone can understand the system and be ready to start. Throughout the whole book, however, you will be looking in vain to find a reference to her own business. This explains many people's reactions: "Gabi Steiner, yes I know her. But which company is she with?" It is Life plus, the scandal-free US company with impressive growth rates. A Goliath in the industry, with the self-conception of David, a giant on the dietary supplement market which spares us the idle talk and promises of healing, and instead just shows steady, sustainable growth – thanks to Gabi Steiner and her international team of leaders.

With the
Lightness
of a *Butterfly*



Mallorca, October 2008. Gabi Steiner, with her principal residence in Switzerland and Spain "likes it best" living here. Her house is close to Santa Ponca and comes with a stunning sea view, an overflow pool and stylish white interior. The rather small villa on the mountain slope does not appear pretentious or showy. It is almost an understatement for Steiner, who has been ranking among the top ten earners in the European network marketing sector for years.

Here on "my island", as she likes to say, she spends a lot of time. Now and again she returns to her old home Germany, "but these days for less than three weeks per year." She can often be found in Arbon, Switzerland, too. In her penthouse, of course, which boasts a 180° view overlooking Lake Constance towards the German side, with Lindau showing in the distance. When she is in neither of the two places, it is quite likely that she is on a cruise through the Caribbean and around the Bahamas with her most successful top-leaders, or on an ayurveda retreat in Sri Lanka. She might also be at training courses for her downline somewhere in Germany, Sweden, Norway or England – anywhere in Europe really. This downline consists of approximately 50,000 full-time and part-time active partners together with more than two dozen top-class team leaders. Speaking of which, Gabi has "well, sponsored no more than 50 frontlines in the last nine years." The motto of "not putting all your eggs in one basket" is not relevant to her. She works time-efficiently and is very target-oriented. The charming leader pulls people's old dreams back into the daylight and gets people running, once they have been tickled by Gabi Steiner's technique of "deliberate unintentional actions".

Let us go back to the beginning. Gabi Steiner was born in Germany, where, after graduating from secondary school, she started an apprenticeship as management assistant in wholesale and after further training, qualified as certified specialist for marketing. She describes herself during those years as "very bright, but also very lazy". She has always had an interest in sport and healthy nutrition, and then fate knocked on the door in her local fitness studio: a Herbalife distributor, the owner of the sport club, told her about impressive results concerning weight loss with product X and juice Y. She was interested and told her friends about these products – and after her first six months as distributor she had earned more than 14,000 marks (approx 7,000 euros). This was quite a bit of money, considering that Steiner, since 1970 owner of a flour mill, only wanted "a bit of extra cash for things like nice clothes and shoes." Consequently, she quit her old job and started working full-time in direct sales.

Her career at Herbalife was steep, and all this while, as a single mother, she was raising her son



Tim. "Her womanizer", as she likes to call him, is almost 23 years old now and on his way to becoming a personal trainer for sport and nutrition. "He is following in my footsteps at Life plus", the proud mother reports. But back to Gabi Steiner. Her knowledge about the close connection between nutrition and health, but also her talent for public speaking, helped her with her amazing take-off in network marketing. After only a few months, she "took over all the product parts" at the big distributor meetings. Eight "intensive years of learning" followed, during which she studied the tools of her new trade, drawing on trainers such as Markus Lehmann or Gerd Kelm, whose strategies she "soaked up like a sponge". She spent innumerable weekends at seminars with top-leaders. "My backside is still hurting, when I think of these times", she laughs. "You need to be where the successful leaders are. I was always where the action was happening," she remembers: "we learned to be disciplined and professional. Whining and negative attitudes were a clear no-go on our seminars."

1999 was a year of change, the only change in her whole MLM career. She had met her husband Manfred Wissman and there was not enough time for their relationship. Something had to change – and Gabi Steiner was drawn into Don Failla's frontline at Life plus. Until then, the

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... company specialising in premium dietary supplements had only been active in the USA. "I made the decision to change, also because I did not want to deal with people any more who did not want to listen to what I had to say." The new network really worked without distributing thousands of products individually, but still sold a lot. It combined everybody's individual strengths and qualities into one concept called "recommendation-based marketing", which fascinated her back then as much as it still does today. She simply followed the routine of "meet a friend and start talking to his friends". Putting adverts into papers was taboo from then on. Turning customers into promoters to refinance their own purchases – this easy principle set loose an avalanche of new customers and distributors so big that Gabi Steiner could hardly believe it. "We bought a camper van and toured all over Germany to support our partners", she remembers about the first years. A communications infrastructure that almost seems to be made especially

for networkers, such as mobile phones, internet, and phone conferences with several partners at the same time, had all not been established yet. Therefore she just went where her partners needed her. And no way was too far, no hour too late, no conversation too long. All this she managed with the lightness of a butterfly.

This does not mean that Gabi Steiner somehow forces her ways to success onto her partners. She simply just spends more quality time with the people in her downline: going for hikes, having dinner together, playing tennis, going on a boat cruise, and just exchanging ideas in relaxed environments are Gabi Steiner's favourite teaching methods. "Once you have been walking through the country together for 15 kilometres, you build a relationship with someone that can open every door with trust", she explains. In other words, the charming Gabi Steiner sneaks herself into people's worlds of thoughts and dreams, without any pressure and merely by having a good time with them. Skilfully she uncovers their wishes and sweeps old ballast from their souls. Often these people then approach Gabi Steiner by themselves and want to work with her, as they feel that she respects them as equals.

Someone who has made the decision for themselves and convinced Gabi – not the other way around – when saying "Yes, I want to do this" and who sticks out from the crowd is going to be welcomed in her organization with open arms. Making the contacts list, calling the best friend, making an appointment... "There is no question that I have not been asked yet and that I could not answer now", she says with a smile.

Distributors in Steiner's organization, especially in their starting phase, work with the many tools she has developed throughout her years of experience. Her book, a CD about nutritional supplements, and huge amounts of interesting books and digital audio books from other authors can be found in her arsenal of material. She knows from experience that "most of the time at the beginning you simply mess things up". New distributors, she knows, are either much too eager or too slow – in any case not easily duplicable and unlikely to be successful in the long run. Twice a year she organises "action weeks" on Mallorca, where she invites distributors, their friends, families and children, as well as completely new people (we remember her system of "deliberately unintentional actions") to seminars and workshops. They are all product and company neutral, of course. She invested months of time into her Diamond leaders of today, went for hikes and played tennis with them. She also talked about her work at "Networkers for Humanity", but never, not even casually at the margins of her conversations, about her actual Life plus business. You want to know Gabi Steiner's secret to success? Well, this is it! (dm) 