COLUMN

# The Big Picture

## Telling the truth

*If we believe in the value of this business, let's make a pact:  let's stop speaking fluent Hyperbolese, and give authenticity a shot.*

by **John David Mann**

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"Dad, when we can afford it, can we hire a misogynist?"

The request was reasonable enough; my son's seven-year-old shoulders were aching for a good massage. Heck, if he didn't have the right word at his disposal, why, some other word snatched from his environment would do just as well.

> ***However, here's the thing: when a seven-year-old bends vocabulary to his will, it's cute. Somehow, when adults do the same thing, it's no longer cute.***

"When I was a child, I spake as a child," says the apostle Paul sheepishly (at least, that's how I read it), "but now it's time to put away childish things." I'm with Paul.

Sometimes I think our beloved network marketing industry has gone through its childhood and awkward adolescent years, and seems finally to be entering adulthood — a new chapter, one of greater responsibility and maturity. The next moment, I hear more AWESOME!!-speak... and wonder. *"John, it's UNBELIEVABLE! The most unbelievable opportunity! I'm telling you, it's absolutely incredible!"* (As opposed to, what, *relatively* incredible?)

Oh, how I hope my grandchildren see the day when there is not a single network marketer using the words “unbelievable” or “incredible” in presentations. Both, of course, literally mean, “You ought not to believe what I am telling you” — surely not the speaker’s intention. (When you tell your friends about your “unbelievable opportunity,” are you then surprised when they don’t believe it? But isn’t that what you just told them not to do?)

*Oh, c’mon, you’re splitting hairs. That’s just the way people talk!*

Perhaps. But I think the language of grandiose gesture and sweeping superlative betrays a profound ambivalence.

> ***I think we have a fascinating love-hate relationship with our own business; perhaps it’s more accurately described as a belief-unbelief relationship.***

I suspect that underneath the exclamation points, many network marketers are privately insecure about whether or not this business really works. More specifically, about whether or not it is really going to work *for them*.

Have you ever heard a network marketer bemoan our bad reputation “out there” in the world? It’s practically canon — but is it true? From what I can see, most of the “outside world” has very little opinion about network marketing. (Most of the “outside world” is barely *aware* of network marketing.) There is plenty of poisoned opinion, though, *in here* — among network marketers! No wonder Mark Yarnell once quipped that this is the only business he knows where, when we are under attack, we bring our wagons round in a circle — and *shoot inwards.*

If I had a nickel for every time I’ve heard a network marketer say that his or her company *did it right* — “not like all those other companies” — why, I’d probably have enough nickels to earn that $300 that we always say would prevent the majority of US bankruptcies, but which we would never

want to acknowledge was what *our* people were actually earning.

Hmm.

One company has routinely boasted as one of their distinctions that they have created more millionaires than any other company. Another has lately been touting their goal of creating 100 millionaires in the next so many years. There's nothing wrong with millionaires, but is that really a responsible way to represent our business?

Who wants to be a millionaire? Just ask ABC. Truth is, though, millionaires is *not* what we do best.

***What we do best is create thousandaires and hundredaires.***

Sure, our top earners are worth millions. But it's our medium earners who are the true success story of our industry: hundreds of thousands of people who have been able to carve out a decent way of life, working at home, for themselves, with dignity, pride, and a sense of contribution. Frank Keefer puts it beautifully: "I had helped dozens of people cut the chains of economic bondage."

Jay Sargeant (of Essentially Yours) explains it this way: "This business rises and falls based on how well it serves the part-timers. At EYI, we intentionally don't use slippery or unethical words, like 'easy' or 'quick.' There is no such thing as *easy*. We emphasize words and concepts like *focus, work ethic,* and *professionalism*."

Hallelujah, amen. Let's put away childish things.

The word "hype" derives from the word *hyperbole*: unreasonable exaggeration. If we believe in the value of this business, let's make a pact:  let's stop speaking fluent Hyperbolese, and give authenticity a shot.

You know: tell the truth.

Who knows? It's so crazy, it just might work.

**John David Mann** is one of the most recognizable and well-respected names in network marketing. As co-founder (with John Fogg) and senior editor of *Upline®,* Editor in Chief of *Network Marketing Lifestyles* and the current Editor in Chief of *Networking Times,* he has been keenly observing and insightfully commenting on the Network Marketing world for more than 15 years. And... John has been one of the top-earning distributors with the same networking company for nearly 20 years.

***The Last Word*** is an i-book in process, an ongoing collection of short essays on the experience of network marketing. Each article is linked to an interactive forum for "reader comments" so now, you can have the last word. John says he may eventually *... finish...* and publish this book (on, you know, paper). For now (and maybe forever), it exists as a living, growing conversation on the Internet. Just click the link to visit John's website: **JohnDavidMann.com**