

A Rare Gem

Network marketing might be one way to grow wealth but, as high-flyer Angie Somers-Nilsson reveals, it has a lot to do with creating freedom as well. She shares her story with Rebecca Spicer.

Growing up in a rough area in Sydney's western suburbs with new Australian parents, Angie Somers-Nilsson didn't have a lot of self-confidence as a child. "It was more survival mode," she recalls.

This is hard to imagine as a vivacious Angie bounds into the meeting room of Amway's Sydney headquarters for our interview. She's confident and so friendly we end up chatting for hours about her journey from humble beginnings to financial and business success.

Angie explains how she never had the opportunity to go to university or pursue a 'chosen' path. "It was never discussed. I just did what everyone else did and went to secretarial college."

Angie worked for the one company for eight years but always knew she had something else inside of her bursting to be revealed. "I just didn't know how or where to apply it," she says.

That 'something' presented itself when a truck driver spoke to her about a business project he was working on. "I ended up going to a meeting in his house to see what he had to offer. It was a group meeting with

about 10 people. I thought it sounded great and signed up straight away."

This was Angie's first introduction to the now global giant Amway Corporation. Even though she registered, she did not get started straight away, mainly due to lack of exposure. "This is quite common. Often people hear about the Amway business briefly and, like anything else, unless you research properly, meet people who have succeeded and, more importantly, take some basic steps to start, it's easy to miss the opportunity. This almost happened to me!"

A number of years later, Angie overheard a conversation between two of her flatmates discussing the need to diversify and set up a business. "I piped in saying 'I've got a business'. But when I tried to explain it they just ignored me." This was enough to spark some tenacity in this once shy secretary. "Determined to prove it, I rang the truckie and asked if he was still involved in Amway. His wife came over and explained the marketing plan again and that was when I registered for the second time, at age 25.

"This time, within two weeks, I attended a big seminar with thousands of

people and I heard success stories from people with all types of backgrounds and professions. This gave me enough confidence to take the first few steps to get the business going. A quote I always use is one I heard during a seminar, which is, 'Your past is not your future' – that was something that inspired me early on."

While preconceived and ill-informed ideas exist about what network marketing actually is and how it works, Angie admits when she went to that first presentation all those years ago, she'd never heard of Amway, had never used a product and didn't know what network marketing was. She had no opinion of it other than what was being presented to her, and it looked like a way she could develop something of her own. "I knew someone was going to help me and there was a system in place, so why not give it a go?"

Of course, not everyone had an open mind like Angie and many people had opinions. "I had to learn to handle and overcome their objections," she recalls. Angie is animated as she describes how excited she was by the opportunity in front of her at the time, so I'm not surprised any negative reactions were taken as a challenge to her, rather than a setback.

Objections generally came as people assumed Amway was a pyramid business, and this is something Angie stresses the company is not. By joining Amway she became an independent business owner (IBO) and essentially there were two ways she could earn income. Firstly, by selling the Amway products and services, of which there are now hundreds of products, from jewellery lines, cosmetics and skin care to health supplements, grocery lines, and services, such as insurance and home loans. And secondly, introduce other people who wish to develop their own business.

"Whenever people get involved in the business, they register to obtain an IBO number and become part of what we call a 'line of sponsorship (LOS)'. Within a LOS there are people who have succeeded and achieved a high level in the business. We call these levels Platinum, Sapphire, Emerald, Diamond, Executive Diamond, Double Diamond, Triple Diamond, Crown and Crown Ambassador. Each level is determined by how many Platinum and above groups they have developed.

"What's exciting is that it doesn't matter who you join or when you get into the



she needed to grow her self-esteem and belief in the business.

“In the first month I must have listened to about 30 CDs (or then they were tapes) about the business and other success stories, and I also tried all the products, so I could get some belief and confidence in the quality of the product. I also attended seminars and met quite a lot of successful people from all different backgrounds.

“Also, within our organisation – or LOS – we have principles of success (a strategy) on how to develop the business, so I really studied that.”

With knowledge in hand, Angie then had to jump in the water and swim. “When you take action, that’s when you learn the most,” she says with raw conviction.

“I got out there and started showing presentations straight away. I would invite a

of Amway’s Platinum qualification. Platinum these days equates to earning approx \$2,000 to \$3,000 per month, plus an invitation to a free leadership trip and some extra cash bonuses. She left her job after she replaced her income and continued to develop her Amway business, “and sleep in until 9am each day”, she laughs.

Within six years Angie had built her business to a point where she had six people in her organisation who had reached Platinum. This gave her ‘Diamond’ status within Amway, meaning she was earning anywhere from \$160K, plus business class trips each year and cash bonuses. This, Angie says, was one of her biggest milestones because not only was she beginning to feel financially free, she was also able to consider a lifestyle balance as well.

Going Global

The same year Angie achieved ‘Diamond’, Amway were looking to expand into different countries and she decided it would be a good time to reinvest and expand into overseas markets.

“Amway would say they were going to open in X, Y, Z countries that year, and we would start introducing people to the business here in Australia who had that cultural background. They would learn the system and get involved here, and some of them chose to move back to those countries. They would talk to their friends about the business, and we would go there when the company opened, have a seminar and talk on stage to show them that it’s real.

“Over the next eight years, every few months I was on a plane travelling to three countries in 10 days and that was really exciting. Amway then became more established in those markets and the organisation I’m a part of developed training systems to support our network globally. This then gave us, as Diamonds, more time to personally mentor our key leaders in Australia and globally.”

Growing the international side enabled Angie to reach the Double Diamond level in Amway 11 years ago, which is a huge achievement in the industry. While she is still a Double Diamond today, the size and success of her business has continued to grow. Asked how many people she now has in her global organisation, Angie isn’t able to say exactly, “but it’s hundreds of thousands,” she offers humbly. What’s more surprising is she is able to manage all this from her >

Angie’s Keys to Success

- Seek mentors and positive role models.
- Associate with other successful women for inspiration. Remember, we become like those we associate with.
- Set short-term, medium- and long-term goals in all areas of your life.
- Develop a good work ethic.
- You can change your life – the secret is in our daily habits. Read daily from a positive book, or magazine like *EMPOWER*.
- Listen to motivational CDs.
- Start thinking and realising that anything is possible.
- Learn to bounce back quickly from setbacks and disappointments.
- Everyone has self-doubts, stepping out of your comfort zone builds your self-esteem.
- Start a simple savings plan and become financially astute.
- Above all, love life and cherish your relationships.

business, you can build a bigger business and earn far more than the person who introduced you. You don’t make money by bringing people in, you only make an income when you develop turnover within your organisation by helping others succeed. It’s a win-win and a really fair system, the person who does the work earns the rewards.”

Going for Growth

In the early days, Angie had two key goals: replace her income as a secretary and stop having to get up at 6am. This was good motivation but she knew that to get started

number of people around to show them the business concept and products.

“As people join the business, we spend a big part of our time helping them get started, depending on what they want to achieve. Some register purely just to buy the products at wholesale or retail them. The beauty is that they have the option.”

Angie learnt early on that good leadership and people skills would be crucial to her success and just spending a couple of hours with her I realise how engaging and contagious her excitement and positivity can be.

Within just four months she had achieved her first goal of ‘21 percent’, which is the start

Sydney home with one part-time assistant. “The only reason I’ve been able to do that is because we’ve set up the infrastructure, and a lot of it now takes care of itself,” she credits.

While there are higher bonus levels to aim for in Amway – in fact some of the people Angie has introduced have reached the same level as her or higher – Angie’s strategy has been to help her existing groups succeed and move them to the next level, rather than just keep introducing more groups.

“There are people in my business earning more than \$1 million a year. So by helping others achieve Diamond and beyond, your business becomes extremely secure and continues to grow and that’s how it’s duplicated. It is a leadership-driven business.”

Angie attributes her success to being good with people, staying motivated and focused, and having a thick skin. “It’s being able to relate to people. If you become more impressed with them, rather than trying to impress them, that’s what works. People really don’t want to know how great you are or what you’ve accomplished. It’s nice to hear a success story but it’s about empowering other people – that’s the only reason I’ve reached the level I have.

“On the other side of the coin, to this day I still read motivational success books and listen to CDs. It’s like food, you’ve got to keep replenishing yourself, because it doesn’t matter who you are, life happens to everybody at any level of success. So it’s about keeping yourself fuelled, especially when you don’t feel like it.

“Work ethic is also really important. It’s like anything, if you want to be successful, you’ve got to put the work in. And don’t be too concerned what other people think. Learn to have a thick skin and a soft heart.”

An Investment Choice

Asked why she thinks this type of wealth creation has worked for her, Angie says, “I think it’s about lifestyle. Everybody works so hard in their normal careers and we’re all trying to juggle family and kids. With the economy the way it’s just gone, we’re not as secure in shares and property anymore, so the whole idea is to diversify and develop a secondary source of income, and that’s what attracts most people to this business. The biggest plus is Amway’s 50-year global success



Name: Angie Somers-Nilsson

Role: Global business owner and leader in the Amway business

Biggest Inspiration: I’ve always been inspired by listening to people’s success stories and how they overcame adversity and succeeded anyway. There are so many outside our industry too, such as Oprah and Lance Armstrong who are amazing.

Charities: We personally sponsor 10 children through World Vision and the organisation we are part of is one of their largest corporate sponsors, with more than 6,000 children in Africa, Asia, South America and Europe sponsored monthly by IBOs. There are other projects like the Ambassador School in India where hundreds of street children now have a home and school. Amway also support many charities globally, in Australia our local charity is Freedom Wheels. You think you can’t do a lot as an individual, but collectively we can really make a difference.

Most memorable moment: Speaking to an audience of 45,000. I used to break out in a sweat just presenting a report to my boss at work. It’s a huge fear I had to overcome but I think you change when you’re helping other people realise what they can do too.

Fact File

backing us. There’s minimal capital to start, it’s home-based, part-time, with unlimited income potential and you can develop a willable business asset.

“While this has afforded me a lot freedom, at different stages I’ve had to put the time in. When I had a full-time job I treated it like a tech course and just turned the TV off and did meetings at night. So initially I didn’t have a lot of balance.

“Once I reached Diamond, I realised I’d never have to work for anyone else, but then I did reinvest into the business to set up the international side, so I was travelling, doing meetings and reaching new levels, but at the same time still able to have a quality lifestyle – going to the gym, having eight hours sleep and keeping healthy.”

As a Double Diamond, Angie has enjoyed the luxury of all-expenses-paid first-class business seminar trips to exotic locations each year, with limos to the airport, all paid for by Amway. “So for me personally, and I’d say for the majority of Diamonds in the Amway business, it’s not really as much about wealth, it’s more about lifestyle, quality of life and having great relationships. And I think, ultimately, that’s what we’re all looking for.”

An eye-opening moment for Angie was when she was able “at a moments notice”

to take her mother to a cancer clinic in Mexico. “Having the time, money and freedom to just book a business-class flight and take that journey together; that was eight years ago and mum is doing great! At that time the news was devastating and the prognosis very bad. I would never have been able to do that if I wasn’t in the position I’m in.”

In order to grow her wealth Angie has dabbled in shares, property and some other projects as well, and while she’s had some wins, she’s also had some losses. She believes it’s much better to focus on your core business and diversify in a sensible way. “And I think if you’re going to do anything that’s high risk, only ever do that with money you’re happy to lose.”

Having just married her partner of six years, Carl Nilsson, Angie has also become an official “bonus mum” to his two daughters and the couple are now partners in the business.

“Now I have a family, we’re setting up for Triple Diamond, Crown, and Crown Ambassador. So we are continuing to support the growth of our existing leaders and at the same time are in the process of developing new leaders here in Australia and globally.” **em**