



**Mindy Thoresen-Sertich of The Body Shop at Home (center) does a "facial party."**

nies are banking on our need to be entertained while we spend our money.

The Body Shop, a retail skin and hair care company originating in the U.K., recognized this successful sales niche and began The Body Shop At Home. As the first retailer to enter the direct sales market, their new division was introduced in the U.S. 18 months ago. The transition has been smoother than bath oil. The company also capitalizes on the "Girls' Night Out" concept, with parties that focus on pampering and self-care. Hostesses and their guests relax with a glass of wine in hand and their feet soaking in peppermint oil.

Besides fulfilling a need to mix and mingle, the increase in direct sales parties offers women an opportunity to earn money in non-traditional ways. Working as a consultant for a direct sales company requires tenacity, organization and enthusiasm. It helps if you enjoy it.

"I really do love what I do," says Tracy Brooks, a demonstrator with Stampin' Up!, a company with \$200 million in direct sales. "But it takes setting goals and keeping your focus on those goals." Typically, most consultants balance their time between presentations and recruiting other consultants. "I strive for a balance," says Brooks.

Balance seems to be a key proponent to success in direct sales. "One of the most

# Direct sales

## Party your way to success

**By Lesa Knollenberg**

It's been a long week. Come Friday, you have a dozen girlfriends over; the wine flows, the appetizers inspire, the background music is invigorating and it's nice just to be together. In walks the sex lady.

Sex lady? "Well, I prefer to be called a passion consultant," laughs Cyndi Welbourne, a consultant for Passion Parties, which specializes in sensual adult products. Since 1999, Welbourne has been helping men and women pamper themselves and each other through tasteful in-home presentations. Previously a Discovery Toy consultant, her focus remains the same: having fun while making money. Her business has grown from an interesting sideline to a lucrative career with 49

recruited consultants.

Our mothers played bridge. We go to Passion Parties, or Pampered Chef parties or Tastefully Simple parties ... Why this popularity of home-based sales parties? As a form of socialization, the party sales approach began in the 1950s with the venerable Tupperware. Since then, the emergence of direct sales opportunities is stag-

**"...if you treat it as a business, it will pay you like a business. If you treat it as a hobby, it will pay you like a hobby."**

**— Mindy Thoresen-Sertich, consultant for The Body Shop At Home**

gering. According to the Direct Selling Association, 13 million people in the U.S. enjoyed the benefits of direct sales in 2002. As a culture, we're multi-tasking to the point that we want to socialize and shop simultaneously. Direct sales compa-

important things I had to learn," says Mindy Thoresen-Sertich of The Body Shop At Home, "was schedule control." Learning to prioritize, develop marketing plans and set schedules is paramount.

## Learn more about direct sales

Want to learn more about direct sales? Web sites for all of the direct sales companies we could think of follow:

**Avon:** [avon.com](http://avon.com)

**Amway:** [amway.com](http://amway.com)

**Body Shop at Home:**  
[usa.thebodyshop.com](http://usa.thebodyshop.com)

**Close To My Heart:**  
(rubber stamps and supplies)  
[www.closetomyheart.com](http://www.closetomyheart.com)

**Creative Memories:**  
[creativememories.com](http://creativememories.com)

**Discovery Toys, Inc.:**  
[discoverytoysinc.com](http://discoverytoysinc.com)

**Home Interiors:** [homeinteriors.com](http://homeinteriors.com)

**Jafra Cosmetics International:**  
[myjafra.com](http://myjafra.com)

**Lady Remington Jewelry:**  
[ladyremingtonjewelry.com](http://ladyremingtonjewelry.com)

**Longaberger:** [longaberger.com](http://longaberger.com)  
**Mary Kay:** [marykay.com](http://marykay.com)

**Pampered Chef:** [pamperedchef.com](http://pamperedchef.com)

**Party Lite:** [partylite.com](http://partylite.com)

**Passion Parties, Inc.:**  
[passionparties.com](http://passionparties.com)

**Southern Living At Home:**  
[southernlivingathome.com](http://southernlivingathome.com)

**Stampin' Up:** [stampinup.com](http://stampinup.com)

**Tastefully Simple:** [tastefullysimple.com](http://tastefullysimple.com)

**Tupperware, Inc.:** [tupperware.com](http://tupperware.com)

**Usborne Books at Home:** [ubah.com](http://ubah.com)

**West Bend Cookware:**  
[westbendcookware.com](http://westbendcookware.com)

Apparently it pays off. "When my kids bring their calendars home from school, I cross off days from my own calendar that I don't want to work," says Welbourne. Brooks took off the month of December to spend time enjoying the holidays and her family. A career in direct sales is enticing to anyone hoping to make money with kids in tow.

But then there's that pesky "down" side. Consider Mrs. R., who wished to remain anonymous for this article because her director is still a fond acquaintance. She invested time, start-up money and long nights to become a direct sales consultant. Ten months later, she had a net profit of a few hundred dollars. She had sacrificed time with her husband, lost focus at her full-time job, and was tired. "People think that you just work a party and that's it," Mrs. R. explains. "They don't realize the time that goes into preparation, handling freight issues, delivering product, handling returns." And some direct sales companies don't accept returns. "There are hidden costs. Buying new inventory that can't be returned to the company, mileage to out of town parties, training costs, and tax implications at the end of the year are just a few of the expenses that add up. I would caution anybody looking into this as a part-time job to research before you sign up."

If you're considering a venture into direct sales consultation, start-up costs, time commitments and company regulations are a few of the issues you'll need to resolve. Employee benefits such as insurance and profit sharing are usually unavailable to consultants, too. But



**Cyndi Welbourne, a consultant for Passion Parties**

choosing a career in direct sales can be rewarding with the right company and diligence. Thoresen-Sertich has this theory: "As far as direct sales go, if you treat it as a business, it will pay you like a business. If you treat it as a hobby, it will pay you like a hobby."

Welbourne agrees. "One of the best parts of this job is working with people. A network of women; what could be a better support system?"

*Lesla Knollenberg is a freelance writer with a drawer full of unused kitchen gadgets purchased at really fun direct sales parties.*

### **The Body Shop®.**

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