

Multi-level marketing legal?

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regulators.

In a pyramid scheme, the real aim often is not to sell products but to recruit "distributors" who pay to get in. The people who get in early are paid off with the money put in by later recruits. The new players recruit more people, until new participants grow scarce and the pyramid collapses.

The Federal Trade Commission can get involved under some circumstances, but there is no federal law defining an illegal pyramid. Most regulatory activity takes place at the state level. Some major multilevel marketing companies have been challenged under state pyramid laws and have satisfied the courts that they are legitimate.

Are MLMs right for you?

Besides the chance to supplement your finances with extra income, Multilevel Marketing has other attractions. The level of personal satisfaction can be high, with appreciation coming to each participant. The sense of "belonging" has strong appeal, too.

MLMs thrive in areas of the country where people are friendly, like in California and the South. They don't do well in the Northeast.

Distributors are encouraged to attend meetings and rallies where organizers use effective slogans, singing and testimonials creating the same electric atmosphere as is often related to a religious revival.

MLMs offer the entrepreneur the opportunity to start a business for as little as \$100.

Words of caution

If you're considering becoming involved in an MLM, get all promises in writing. Get information yourself from headquarters and not from a local dealer. Examine the company and its products.

Ask yourself: Is this a product I would buy? Is there a demand for the product? If not, will the company help create a demand? How much of the product do I have to keep in inventory? Less is better, since your money will be tied up in whatever you haven't sold.

Be wary of companies that charge a high fee to join. That could be the company's only way of making money. Talk to other distributors. Find out if the company has lived up to their expectations? How long do they have to wait for payment from the company?

Ask all the questions you can think of. This is the best assurance of a successful venture.

Churchs increasing ownership drive

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and Atlanta. He witnessed the first African-Americans assume Churchs ownership and, equally as important, inspire others by serving as role models in their communities.

"Everybody was provided an opportunity at Churchs. The company developed an employee-ownership program and I had never seen such a plan anywhere else," commented Siplin. Ten years ago, Siplin set his sights on ownership and enrolled in the program and in 1990, he acquired his first restaurant.

"The day they called me and

offered that restaurant changed my entire life," Siplin explained. "I was only 17 when I started working part-time at Churchs



Siplin

and never thought I would ever become a millionaire in my lifetime." Celebrating 28 years with Churchs, Siplin is distinguished among the 25 percent of minority franchisees throughout the country. While he acknowl-

edges several positive changes, some things he says, will always remain the same.

"We have an image that we are proud of and people are finding out once again that Churchs really cares," he concluded. "Everybody knows where to go for good southern fried chicken, peppers and strawberry soda. Everybody knows they are only at Churchs."

Churchs Chicken, the world's second-largest quick service chicken chain, specializes in Southern-style chicken and side items. Churchs has more than 1,200 locations in 26 states and seven countries worldwide.

How to finance business growth

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or line of credit: A good source of income for your business can be as close as home - that is, a home equity loan or line of credit or even the refinancing of your mortgage. Qualifying is relatively easy, and you can generally borrow up to 80 percent of the equity in your home. The downside is that you could lose your home if the business fails.

• Approach Your Suppliers: Trade credit from your suppliers

is a short-term source of funds that is often overlooked by small businesses. If you're an established firm that needs money for the short term, consider asking your supplier to ship inventory or manufacturing materials and to allow you 60 or 90 days to pay for them. Savvy suppliers may be more willing than you expect - they realize that if you grow, they will grow too.

• Try the Small Business Administration: The SBA offers several categories of loans, most of which fall under the SBA

Guaranteed Loan Program. Proceeds can be used as working capital or to purchase inventory or equipment.

• Reach For An "Angel:" The term "angel" is used to refer to a wealthy individual with excess cash to invest in new or growing companies. In addition to providing cash, your angel acts as a guardian watching over you and your business. But finding an angel can be tough. Start by getting word out through the help of lawyers, CPAs, bankers, and local business people you know.

Focus is still on leadership

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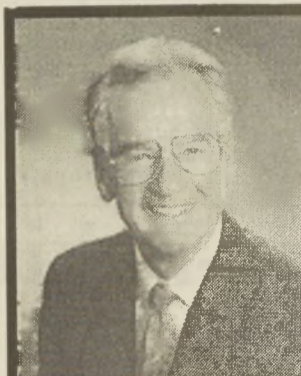
Topics include: the black family; oral and written communications skills; the history of Charlotte; city and county government, political awareness and economic development.

Focus on Leadership receives its funding from the community by having fund raisers throughout the year and a annual awards banquets honoring unsung heroes and sheroes in the community.

The group's annual pool party is planned Sept. 20, from 8-11 p.m. The affair, "A Last Daze of Summer Bash" will be at Davis Lake. Tickets are \$6 and can be purchased from any board member.

For more information, please call Cynthia Foster at 598-6985 or the Focus on Leadership office 559-4191 for an application.

The deadline for completed applications is Oct. 14. The course costs \$75.



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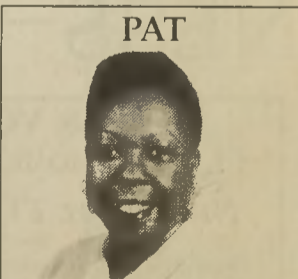
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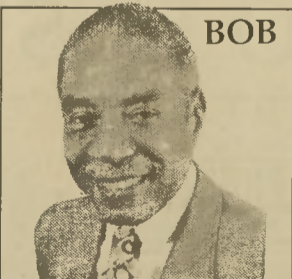
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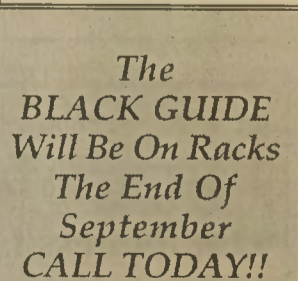
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