

Following the Signs

Some are born who never need them, others still who never read them, signs.

Neil Diamond

I was born and raised in the Bronx in New York. Growing up in a rough urban neighborhood did not offer much in the way of opportunity to a child. My role models were mostly drug dealers and hustlers. They seemed to be succeeding and it appeared that they had it all.

When I became a teenager I began to run with the wrong crowd. I made many mistakes that ultimately landed me in jail. In the confines of the gray cement walls of a cell, I realized that behind their plastic smiles of ill intent, the dealers and hustlers were never genuinely happy. It became clear to me that I needed to change my life's direction.

Shortly after this personal wake-up call, and a few days in "the slammer," I took a subway ride to clear my head and really figure out what I wanted to do with my life. Before I knew it, the train pulled in to Manhattan Station. I got off and I walked the streets, deep in thought. I asked myself, *where do I want to be in the next 5 years?* Ironically, at that moment, I was standing in front of a Barnes & Noble bookstore. I saw this as a sign. I had never been inside a Barnes & Noble before, nor had I bought a book in my life. But there I was, poised at the doors of this beckoning behemoth. I followed my instincts and entered the store.

Looking around at the blur of books, aisles, and people, almost instantly I saw a book, clear as day, standing out from all the rest. The book's name was *Awaken the Giant Within* by Anthony Robbins. With only reading the back cover, I bought it.

While browsing through the book on my way home, a card popped out of it that said "Make \$5,000 - \$10,000 a month with a home-based business!" and there was a phone number to call. I became excited! When I returned home I immediately called the number and was invited to my first opportunity meeting. I attended without hesitation and got my first glimpse of Network Marketing.

As soon as I returned home, I asked my father for \$500 so that I could sign up. After some convincing that I wasn't going to use the money for questionable things, my father agreed to lend me the money and I enrolled with that company. My family supported me in this venture, but eventually the company went out of business.

I knew this could work if I were to just find the right company. Having the conviction to stick with this industry and succeed, I joined a second MLM a few months later. Over time, I worked hard at self improvement and leadership skills.

One afternoon, while attending an opportunity meeting, a gentleman from MCI WorldCom approached me and said, "You'd be great in our company." Corporate America seemed like the way to go. *I would have everything I needed.* So I thought. I decided to put my network marketing business on the backburner and enter Corporate America.

I became the #1 sales manager in MCI WorldCom and my team produced the most revenue in the region. I had a great salary, all the perks, and a matching 401(k). Then MCI sent all of the top sales managers on an all-inclusive trip. *How much better can this get?* I thought to myself. I was on top of the world.

When I returned Monday morning from the trip, my boss came in and told me that they needed to lay me off. I was devastated, completely caught off guard. I had worked hard, done all the right things, made myself indispensable, yet I was being ousted. Just like that, based on an arbitrary decision made by someone else. I was faced with the reality of having to start all over again. If that weren't bad enough, my brother-in-law asked me if I rolled over my 401K. I hadn't, and he explained that I had just lost all of it. Corporate America, for me, was truly the biggest pyramid scheme in the world. After all of this, I'd had enough and decided to pack up and move to south Florida.

The transition was not easy for me. Brandon, my 9-year-old son from a previous relationship, was not able to come and live with me due to my finances. My stepdaughter, Tylia, who has cerebral palsy, was not getting the therapy she needed. I found myself becoming depressed. My fiancée tried her best to cheer me up, but nothing was working at the time. I expressed to her that I wanted to give our family so much more. Feeling like I was up to my neck in failure, I kept my sights on my goal and made a promise to myself that, whatever it took, I would be successful for my family.

After being in Florida for a couple of months, I received a phone call from a very excited old friend of mine. He explained that he'd found a great MLM company and their product could help my stepdaughter. Now *that* got me excited. I thought it was interesting how, out of the blue, he called me. *Is this another sign? The last one I followed got me into a huge mess.* Though in a quandary of mixed emotions, I decided to pursue it and wanted to know more about this opportunity. I listened to his presentation. As a result, I wanted to join, but I didn't have the funds, even on a credit card, to pay the enrollment fee.

The money we had was barely enough to pay the bills, but I still told my friend I would join. I was determined to make it happen. I took \$300.00 from the rent and bought a prepaid credit card at a nearby gas station. I waited a week for this credit card to arrive and I joined the company.

I'm glad I chose to make that decision even though it was rough in the beginning. This was truly the turning point in my life. I look back at those rough years and I have come to the conclusion that I needed to grow as a person before my finances could. And I know that experiencing failure and hardship was my sort of boot camp for building up the horsepower I needed. The one thing that I did most correctly in every case was to notice the signs, and I followed them. There were many stops, detours and dead ends, but, instead of sitting still and doing nothing, I was able to figure out my path to success.

I may have gone down many wrong paths and alleyways. But I took those experiences and learned to make better roads toward the place I wanted to get to. I never gave up, though I came close a few times. The key was to take those leaps of faith and follow the signs. You won't know whether they're good or bad until you test them. But test them you must, as doing nothing will *never* produce success.

Today I am able to live the kind of life that most people only dream about. I am able to spend time with my wife and children, and travel the world. I also have been fortunate enough to teach others how to build a business from the comfort of their own homes, and ultimately accomplish their own goals and dreams. Network marketing is the ultimate lifestyle if you're willing to stay the course. In any case, no matter how rough it gets, strive to improve, and *never* quit.

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