

MARY KAY: The Woman

Mary Kay Ash

When Mary Kay Ash “retired” from a successful 25-year career in direct sales in early 1963, she decided to write a book to help women survive in the male-dominated business world. She had grown tired of watching young men she trained be promoted over her time and again. Sitting at her kitchen table, Mary Kay made two lists: One contained things the companies for which she had worked had done right; the other included the things she felt they could have done better. When she reviewed the lists, Mary Kay realized that she had inadvertently created a marketing plan for a dream company – one which would provide women with unlimited potential to achieve personal and financial success. With her life savings of \$5,000 and the help of her 20-year-old son, Richard Rogers, Mary Kay launched her dream company on Friday, Sept. 13, 1963. From its meager start in a 500-square-foot Dallas storefront, Mary Kay has grown into an international cosmetics powerhouse. Today, Mary Kay® products are sold in more than 35 markets worldwide, and the company’s global independent sales force exceeds 2 million.

Mary Kay Ash’s founding principles were simple and time-tested. She adopted the Golden Rule as her guiding principle, determining the best course of action in virtually any situation could be easily discerned by “doing unto others as you would have them do unto you.” She also steadfastly believed that life’s priorities should be kept in their proper order, which to her meant “God first, family second and career third.”

Mary Kay Ash also encouraged the independent business owners who sold her products to be giving, supportive and recognize others’ accomplishments – no matter how small. It was through this recognition-focused environment that women began to achieve things they had never dreamed possible. She constantly encouraged both the corporate staff and the independent sales force to act as if each person they met was wearing a sign around his or her neck that read, “Make me feel important.”

Few companies can point to such simple yet poignant founding philosophies. Still fewer can point to the lasting impact of a founder like Mary Kay Ash. Today, Mary Kay remains true to the principles Mary Kay Ash jotted down at her kitchen table some 46 years ago. Countless business leaders, authors, politicians and academia have recognized the pure brilliance and determination of Mary Kay Ash. She received numerous prestigious awards during her lifetime and many more following her death on Nov. 22, 2001. Some of her honors include:

- “100 Greatest Women of 100 Years” by the YWCA of Metropolitan Dallas (2008)
- A&E Television produced “Mary Kay” which aired on the Biography Channel (2006)
- PBS and the Wharton School of Business’ “25 Most Influential Business Leaders of the Last 25 Years” (2004)
- Baylor University’s “Greatest Female Entrepreneur in American History” (2003)
- “Most Outstanding Woman in Business in the 20th Century,” Lifetime Television (1999)
- National Business Hall of Fame, *Fortune* (1996)
- Pathfinder Award, National Association of Women Business Owners (1995)

- One of "America's 25 Most Influential Women," *The World Almanac and Book of Facts* (1985)
- Horatio Alger Distinguished American Citizen Award (1978)

About Mary Kay

Mary Kay, one of the largest direct sellers of skin care and color cosmetics, realized another year of record results. In 2008, Mary Kay Inc. and its international subsidiaries achieved \$2.6 billion in wholesale sales worldwide. Mary Kay® products are sold in more than 35 markets worldwide, and the global Mary Kay independent sales force exceeds 2 million. To learn more about Mary Kay, log on to www.marykay.com or call 1-800-MARY KAY (1-800-627-9529).

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