



by Tony Jeary

**I**n the aftermath of the horrendous financial problems and prophecies made public in October 2008 and the tough political challenges that remain ahead, a haunting question hovers in the minds of direct selling executives. What's really ahead? Unfortunately, the only thing that is certain is uncertainty!

Truthfully, no person can confidently predict what is ahead in a business climate that is influenced by so many global factors beyond the control of any single group. However, the vibrancy of the American spirit and the entrepreneurial dreams we all share still exist. The challenge is to determine how we will direct our energy and how we can best present the opportunities that exist—even in troubled economic times.

As large companies and other businesses trim fat and prepare for a possibly long siege of economic challenges, one reality will be an increase in unemployment numbers. For the direct selling world, this actually means there will be a greater number of people seeking alternative opportunities to support their financial needs. New prospects will be willing to hear what your business opportunity has to offer them. What your organizations have to do is be prepared to communicate your opportunity to these people, so

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they can see the positive possibilities and opportunities that exist for them also.

What are the points of an opportunity message that will resonate? I think a short list would include the following: We all live in the most unique time in history! There has never been a time when opportunity and technology have come together so perfectly. The competitive playing field has been leveled to the extent that a small business—or even an individual—can compete and win at almost any level, and direct selling opportunities are in this sweet spot. You have powerful tools and processes to offer that your not-so-distant ancestors would have considered items from a science-fiction novel. You have powerful tools available to help people present your opportunities in ways not possible even 10 years ago. These are the concepts your organizations must communicate to those considering your opportunity.

### Living in Solutions or Problems?

The challenges ahead are very real, but there will be more opportunities than problems, if people choose to look for and take advantage of them! Every day, people

will make choices—shaped by what they believe—about their attitudes. If people believe life is just going to be a big pile of problems, they will be less-than-optimistic about their future. On the other hand, if they believe life is just a nonstop joy ride of unending bliss, they are going to get a rude awakening when some real problems darken their door. The truth is, life is a combination of problems and blessings, and we all are going to experience both from time to time. The far better view of life is one that recognizes both conditions, but is committed to the importance of living in solutions rather than problems. Direct selling organizations that do the best job of communicating optimistic solutions will be the most successful.

When I conduct strategy sessions with my clients, we begin the process of building clarity. Frequently, a mindset about living in problems must be overcome. For some reason, the human mind seems to gravitate to all the reasons that something *can't* be done. It happens over and over again, and it is caused by beliefs that make it difficult for people to think in terms of solutions. When someone casts a vision for something new, the knee-jerk response



is to think of all the reasons it won't work. The focus is on living in the problems and the obstacles that will block doing the new thing. When you are not clear about what you really want, your natural tendency will be to emphasize problems rather than solutions. The first job for direct selling executives is to become clear about what they want and push the "solution" side of life to their teams and prospects.

If you choose to live in solutions, the world eagerly awaits your dreams and provides every tool and opportunity you need to turn them into reality. However, if you choose to live in problems, you will see little opportunity. This is where clarity can make such a huge difference in results. When you lack clarity about what you really want, you will find yourself being pushed toward living in problems. When you have clarity about what you really want, you will be pulled toward living in solutions. Living in solutions allows you to become more effective in all that you do, and that results in success!

## What Is Your Strategic IQ?

There is one last piece to the opportunity puzzle—what I call "Strategic IQ." Frequently, we get so caught up in the daily grind and pressures of living that we forget the need to step back and look at what we are doing from a strategic perspective. What I'm talking about means understanding the difference between the words *strategic* and *tactical*. Let me explain why this difference is important.

The word *strategic* deals with *why* issues, whereas the word *tactical* deals with *how* solutions. The core things you believe (the "why" behind your actions and choices) are actually a set of strategic beliefs. When your strategic (why) beliefs become muddled, your tactical (how) solutions diminish. Once the *why* issues are settled, the *how* solutions become obvious. Therefore, the degree of clarity you have about your strategic beliefs is what gives you the ability to focus and execute. This is what Strategic IQ is all about.

*Why* is clarified by understanding purpose and value. Most important, it relates to the positive perceptions people have about purpose and value. If there is a negative perception of purpose and value, leaders will have to *push* the team, rather than permit the vision to *pull* people toward it. For this reason, *why* becomes the critical issue of value. If the vision is not based in reality, it will be difficult to support. Reality is always found in

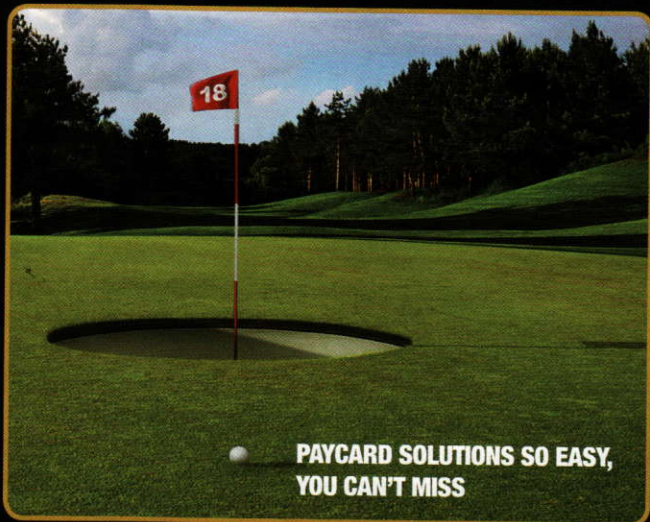
how far we can see, and strategies that attempt to go beyond that point are questionable.

Even before the recent downturn in the economy, we lived in a rapidly changing world that limited how far any of us can see with certainty. Now, the economic and political times we are experiencing have further reduced how far we can see! Even so, the first step in strategy creation is to rethink your vision and get clear about it. When you do this, you must evaluate the value and purpose of what you are doing within the context of today's realities. In the direct selling world, value and purpose are all about opportunity. Direct sales is a solution for people who may be displaced in the months ahead. That solution must be communicated as a powerful vision, and you can bring that level of clarity to those in need of it. **DSV**


Tony Jeary is author of *Strategic Acceleration—Succeed at the Speed of Life*. To learn more, visit [www.strategicacceleration.com](http://www.strategicacceleration.com).



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