

# Review of the article "now you are in business for yourself" by katina l. manko

[Business](#), [Marketing](#)



Katina L. Manko in “ Now You Are in Business for Yourself” analyzes a particular business model that innovated the direct selling model. The company in question is California Perfume Company, which would later become Avon, rethought how a direct selling sales force could be organized. The key innovation was the use of an all female sales force in the sale of perfume and other household products. This article examines how this gender based distribution model was developed and the role gender played in driving the growth of this iconic brand.

The analysis is relevant, as Manko points out, because it highlights the relationship between corporate and social culture. As both a manufacturer and distributor, smaller companies such as CPC were tasked with producing product and finding methods of distribution while competing with larger operations that controlled the retail shelves. Door to door sales were an established alternative distribution method for smaller manufacturers. The use of an all female sales force, however, set CPC apart, and the reasoning behind it was the fact that door to door salesmen would not come across as “ suspect schemers” and “ itinerant peddlers.” Female salespeople would also work within the community appealing to existing social networks that, in the case of small towns, females would have access to, and lend “ middle class respectability.” For women, the appeal would be that they would be business owners who would be able to start-up without capital overlay, low overhead, and a flexible schedule. Women who were targeted by CPC were generally older, above 50 years in age, widows, women in economic distress and unemployed, and “ ambitious” married women. They were expected to work 4-6 hours per day and were responsible for a territory that could be

withdrawn for poor performance. Instead of direct supervision, CPC chose to utilize and manage their independent female sales force by appealing to their sense of moral responsibility and motivational technique. This is where the CPC model significantly departed from other sales forces, by creating a culture of motivation and implementing a wide array of motivational techniques. It marketed, in other words, not only to the consumer but to their “ independent contractors” the sense of independence for women who were otherwise excluded from the business world.

The article is a historical record that provides insights on how the model was developed and as such, is balanced and largely objective. She concludes that there was an element of exploitation in using women as “ independent contractors,” cheap low maintenance labor sold as a “ business opportunity,” which would lead to scrutiny by the government about this relationship. She also observes, however, that the sales model did bring income to women who otherwise had very limited opportunities to participate in the economic life of their communities, especially during the depression when production increased with the influx of unemployed and the distressed became willing participants. The case of CPC offers insights into various elements that are characteristic of capitalism. It shows first how innovation goes beyond changing or differentiating a product or utilizing new technologies. CPC was able to capitalize on aspects of American society and culture, in particular the role that women played in the economic life of a community and the country, and harness that energy in the furtherance of a commercial enterprise. It also, however, reveals how social conditions, the status of

women in the community and country, could be exploited in such a model. These women were not brought into the economy through meaningful and secure employment, but in a model that only rewarded its salespeople if a sale was made.

Manko is careful to present how the model was able to bring opportunity in this context while also bringing attention to how “ gendered values” implemented in rhetoric and techniques were used to draw women in to business organizations that has since become more “ radical.”