



Features

Positively Fabulous

Gloria Mayfield Banks' success in Mary Kay is the stuff of legend. Many women have dreamed of selling their way to a million dollars but Mayfield Banks has done that and more.

By Ronda Racha Penrice

Mary Kay is not the typical career move for a Harvard Business School grad but Gloria Mayfield Banks is far from typical. In Mary Kay circles, Mayfield Banks' performance is legendary. She earned the use of her first car in five months when she was just a part-time Independent Beauty Consultant. Eleven months later, she became an Independent Sales Director. Two months after that, she earned her first Cadillac. During her first year as an Independent Sales Director, her unit sales totaled half a million dollars. Fourteen months later, she became an Executive Sales Director. Widely acknowledged as one of Mary Kay's all-time top moneymakers, Mayfield Banks has netted more than \$1 million in annual gross revenue at least



seven times. Reportedly only 200 other “Company” women have even accomplished this feat once.

Although Mayfield Banks never envisioned anything but success for her life, Mary Kay never factored into her game plan. Like so many other Mary Kay members, past and present, the Detroit native found herself at a meeting simply because a friend asked her to come. “Honestly,” she says, “I didn’t know much about Mary Kay other than I saw this woman retail \$350 in 2 hours. So I tell people all the time I joined Mary Kay for the money. I fell in love with the career because of the recognition and I personally grew because of the challenges I needed to overcome to succeed. And I love it now because of the lifestyle and the lives I’ve changed.”

First, she changed her own life. When the mother of two began Mary Kay, she was going through a bitter divorce. As a result, she needed to bolster her income. And while it is reported that her mother questioned the sense of pursuing a career with Mary Kay when she possessed a Harvard Business School degree, the Detroit native wholeheartedly applied those skills to Mary Kay. “The skill that I transferred from Harvard Business School was goal setting,” she says. “I understood the strength of the company. I think, at Harvard Business School, they gave me an incredible ability to look at a company, see its strengths, see its weaknesses, understand where it’s going, you know, on the bigger picture, not where it just affects me. If I was going to be with Mary Kay for a while, I wanted to know that they were able to carry me as a company.”

And while they have carried her, Mayfield Banks, who once worked for IBM, has many innate skills that work in her favor. Number one is probably her bubbly personality, which has always been a trademark. “I worked at a grocery store when I was in college,” the Howard University alum shares. “I worked in the express line and my line would be like aisles deep and the other cashier had a real short express line because people liked my style. People liked my energy. People liked my just ‘everything’s okay with life’ type of thing. So I think those are the things I grew up with.”

But a cheerful personality is not her only strength. “Growing up I embraced challenges,” she adds. “I was a cheerleader. I was a motivator. I brought that to the table. I was a leader. I was a head cheerleader. I took them [the school] to the state competition and they had never been there before. I brought to the table wanting for others even more than they might want for themselves, at the beginning.”

As a motivator, Mayfield Banks’ skills are unsurpassed. There is just something captivating about her. She credits some of that to her mother, a teacher whom she says is “a great affirmer of people.” But she does know that some people just see that aspect of her and discount her total package. “When people see me at a sales meeting, they see me on stage, they know me as a motivator,” she says.

“What they don’t see are the hours of pen and paper and calculator and studying and reading and thinking and changing myself and fixing my habits.”

Mayfield Banks is the consummate businesswoman and she takes that title seriously. “I believe I have a strong amount of clarity and I understand where emotions belong,” she explains. “Emotions belong in the sale but they don’t belong in the strategic part of the business. I understand how to mix the hype with the strategic part of the business. Sales, of course, is about hype. Marketing is about hype. Advertising is about hype.”

The business hype that Mayfield Banks does not fall for is the myth that women cannot work together. “Women often are not in an environment that supports a lot of women,” she explains passionately. “So when we hear that all the time, ‘women are catty,’ ‘women are trying to put each other down’ that’s because there are 20 men and two women. There’s only room for one of us because those 20 men only want to pick one woman superstar so you must pit yourself against her because there’s only room for one person to grow. So that automatically is an environment where women become catty, women become mistrustful, they are just fighting for one place. In this environment of Mary Kay, number one, it’s all women and number two, and most importantly, there’s room for everybody at the top.”

Besides, she adds, “There’s no problem with women working together. Women have worked together for years. Women worked together in families. They work together in church. They work together in all kinds of environments.” But just being female does not automatically translate into a successful working relationship, especially when, as in Mayfield Banks’ case, the Sales Directors and Independent Beauty Consultants she supervises live in different parts of the country.

“Even though there is a lot of room at the top, there are key characteristics that go into Mary Kay,” explains Mayfield Banks. “I’m looking for people who can embrace the Mary Kay philosophy. Either who can embrace it or want to embrace it. Some people want to embrace it and never had the opportunity because of their other circumstances. But the philosophy of faith first, family second and career third and people understanding how that really does work [is important].

“Then they can embrace the philosophy of treat other people the way you’d like to be treated. It’s not always the philosophy they grew up with professionally. Because we are independent beauty consultants, independent sales directors, independent national sales directors, for us to operate as a team and to move forward when we’re not working for anyone, it’s got to be based on a culture that is inclusive of team spirit. Without trust, without a common goal, there’s no team spirit.”

And, yes, cultivating team spirit is a Mayfield Banks’ specialty. As a result, she is

an in-demand motivational speaker. For many Mary Kay members, she is the ultimate inspiration. To become a National Sales Director, for example, 18 Sales Directors are needed. Mayfield Banks had 101. For the superseller who lives just outside of Baltimore, what constitutes success evolves. “My definition of success has changed over the 16 years [I’ve been in Mary Kay],” she says. “When I came into Mary Kay, my definition of success was survival. I wanted extra money to keep my kids in daycare. I was in the midst of a tenacious divorce so my level of success meant that I needed cash to take care of my legal situation. I needed to be recognized to increase my belief that I could be successful because I had been in a bad marital situation where my confidence was stripped. So what I needed 16 years ago was a powerful, positive place and a place of security which said ‘if you do this, you’ll get that.’ That was important to me. If I sell, I’ll get 50%. That was important to me.”

Successfully fulfilling that mission opened up other goals. “Five years from where I started, I was driving a pink Cadillac,” she continues. “I was top director. My survival mode was not the key. I had left a bad marital situation. I was in an extremely successful personal relationship with a person who is now my husband. My kids were secure in a private school. I had changed my lifestyle so now what I needed was the challenge of ‘how far can I go?’”

The answer to that question is easily “to the top.” Gloria Mayfield Banks has been phenomenally successful even by Mary Kay standards. Sources say that she and her team have generated as much as \$74,000 in sales in just one month. One year, she even earned 11 vacations. When you’ve gotten the Cadillac’s, taken the trips, made the money, what keeps you going? What more can be achieved?

“Now 16 years out, I am extremely motivated to show other women how to get it,” shares Mayfield Banks. “That’s my challenge. Can I take this rosebud and turn her into a flower? Can I show her that she too can make \$50,000 a month? Can I really show her that she can provide private education for her kids, [that] she can pay for their college tuition? . . . That it’s okay to be a single mother, to be happy, to have income, to look sexy, to be fly [stunning], to have her makeup done.”

While Mayfield Banks relishes her past, these days, she is even more delighted by her future. “I’ve really been working on my life purpose and I got it. It is to greatly impact others to get what they want and to become who they’ve imagined,” she says. “That’s what pushes me now.” **TP**