



**BUILDING**

*great  
Teams*



FOR FOUNDER & CEO MARK PENTECOST,  
THE STORY OF IT WORKS!® IS ONE OF VISION,  
LOYALTY, AND HUGE LEAPS OF FAITH.

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Walk through the front door of Mark and Cindy Pentecost's Florida home and the first thing you'll notice is the view: Beyond the glass that frames a sprawling rear patio, a broad river of blue expands in all directions, showered in sunshine and dotted by watercraft of every size and shape. Just beyond the foyer, a wide, welcoming kitchen bustles with conversation and laughter as family and corporate team members gather to discuss the day's activities—reviewing agendas, making calls, scheduling meetings, joking with each other.

Grand and spacious while at the same time warm and inviting, it's a home befitting its owners. While the Pentecosts have built It Works!<sup>®</sup> into a billion-dollar global brand, they're still every bit the down-to-earth Michigan couple who first felt the allure of entrepreneurship and direct sales some two decades ago. And in an industry where so many millionaire CEOs aim to dazzle with tailored suits and sparkling sales figures, today Mark Pentecost charges down the staircase sporting shorts, sneakers, baseball cap, and one of the eye-catching black-and-green jerseys that have become the calling card of his company and culture. The front is adorned with the company name and a giant "1;" the back proclaims the company mantra in all caps: ONE TEAM, ONE MISSION.

Guiding his guests into a large den lined with bookshelves, souvenirs and sports memorabilia (this is Michigan State territory—Go Green!), Mark makes sure everyone feels at home before the meeting gets underway. The mood is casual and comfortable, but once he's prompted to share the story of It Works!, Mark leans forward in his chair, the baseball cap gets turned around backward, and the passion, heart, and grit of a high school basketball coach come through.



"CINDY AND I RECOGNIZED THE POTENTIAL OF THIS BUSINESS TO HELP PEOPLE BREAK FREE OF DEBT AND LIVE ON THEIR OWN TERMS."

—MARK PENTECOST, IT WORKS! CEO



### "IF I COULD DO THIS MYSELF..."

"Our story started before we came into this industry," Mark explains, referring back to his family's time living in Allegan, Michigan. "Cindy was at home with three young kids. I was teaching high school math and coaching the varsity basketball team. Coaching and teaching—that's what I knew. But even then, I had big dreams.

"Cindy and I wanted more for our family. We were introduced to the direct selling industry and joined our first company. I remember standing in the back of the room, listening to one of the top earners of that company. That's where I had my first 'a-ha' moment. This guy was a teacher and basketball coach, just like me. I realized right then and there: If he can do this, I can do this.

"Cindy and I went to work in our business, and we soon earned a spot among the top ten earners with that company. There is no feeling in the world like achieving your dreams. And as Cindy and I would reach one dream, we would keep dreaming bigger.

"Unfortunately, that company didn't keep up with the times and didn't have that key ingredient: a product that people wanted, no matter what. It made me think, 'If I could do this myself, I would do things a little differently.'"

That spark of thought quickly led to action. "Cindy and I recognized the potential of this business to help people break free of debt and live on their own terms. We started to position what it would be like to own our own company. At the time, I already had a mentor and investor. We were looking and ready when the opportunity came to own our own company. It was not by chance; it was by choice. We were prepared."



## “YOU HAVE TO HAVE THE VISION”

Mark and Cindy started the company with the determination to help others win. Reflecting on that early period, Mark cites the principle of persistence he’s preached his whole life, from halftime locker rooms to corporate board rooms to conference mainstages: “When the going gets tough, you have to make the choice whether you’re going to stick it out or quit. The first five, six years was a battle, but we were focused on the vision. If you said to someone on our team, ‘In fifteen years, we will be a billion-dollar company,’ would they have believed it? Some did; some didn’t. No matter whether or not others see it, you still have to have the vision to work hard and see it through.”

## “IF ONLY THIS WOULD WORK”

A key ingredient in the young company’s vision was that “must-have” product, the search for which led south of the border. “I went down to Mexico to meet (Product Formulator) Luis Mijares,” Mark recalls. “Luis and I hit it off, and we soon started manufacturing and marketing the Ultimate Body Applicator™—more famously known as That Crazy Wrap Thing™. That’s also how the company name became

what it is today—whenever we introduced the product, the immediate reaction was, ‘If only this would work...does this work?’ Yes, that’s our name: It Works!®”

## “THE RIGHT FIT, THE RIGHT HEART”

Even when the subject is the company’s product line—which has grown to include more than fifty items in eight categories, all of which produce results—Mark talks in terms of who rather than what. Like all great leaders and coaches, for Mark it’s always about the people, and when the topic turns to how he’s built his team, he explains there’s always been more to it than simply filling positions: “We’ve always looked for people who fit our culture. The right fit, the right heart—that’s more important than what’s on your resume.

“The family coming together was a big part, too,” Mark recalls. “Cindy worked in the shipping room and in customer service. My mom and dad even worked customer service while we hired people. They answered phones and worked a table at our first convention. When our daughter Kami came into the company, she paid for her kit and got her small group from church involved. From that small group came the Black Diamonds we have

today. Our son Kyler is also now a top-earning distributor, and our daughter Kindsey recently relocated to our Dublin, Ireland office as our Vice President of Business Development and Brand Strategy.”

“Pam Sowder, now our Chief Networking Officer, was part of the group who first introduced us to the Ultimate Body Applicator,” Mark explains. “In the beginning, she worked from the Compensation Plan, just like our Distributors. We still joke about her asking, ‘What am I going to tell my husband if I don’t make money?’ Many people join this type of business with a group, and everyone wants to reach the top, but not everyone does. Only Pam stayed out there working hard when it wasn’t easy, which is why today we call her ‘the Queen of It Works!’”

And Pam has literally been “out there.” In the early years of the company, she virtually lived out of a suitcase, travelling the world to spread the word about That Crazy Wrap Thing and build up the It Works! Distributor team.

“There would be long stretches when she wouldn’t see (her husband) Dave or her kids, but she kept going because of the vision,” says Mark. “She saw what this could become. She never gave up.” Today, Pam is a partner in the company, and she’s still travelling the world, but now as The Queen and Chief Networking Officer of It Works! “And helping others to change their lives—one Wrap at a time!”

“Mike Potillo, our Chief Sales Officer, and I met at an industry event. We talked about our vision and what we wanted to accomplish: building a company that could help folks live debt-free lives while having lots of fun. Mike and I clicked and our strategies aligned, but it was much more than that. I wanted a young couple who could work with our field team, who had the same beliefs as us. Mike and his wife Tiffany’s values matched ours, and they continue today, leading as a couple.”



## ONE TEAM. ONE MISSION.

It began as a core team assembled by Mark Pentecost: a small group of big dreamers united behind a common mission. They started off with little more than a shared passion for building a life-changing company, and the kind of persistence that has led to a billion-dollar brand. As the company grew, so did this core group of leaders, most of whom demonstrated their unwavering commitment by moving their families south as the company migrated from Michigan to Florida in 2011. Today, known simply as The Leadership Team, they work together, play together, and continue to dream together, continually striving to reach higher for the company and their Distributors.

**"WHEN YOU COME TO OUR OFFICE, THE TEAM IS A GROUP OF PEOPLE WHO WANT MORE THAN JUST A JOB."**

—MARK PENTECOST, IT WORKS! CEO

## "A DEBT-FREE COMPANY"

Today, Mark and Cindy share a tight bond with the team members who've been with them since the beginning. It's a bond built on an unwavering loyalty that has endured through the years, tested and strengthened by what Mark calls "defining moments."

"Doug Nooney, our Chief Compensation Officer, was working a full-time job while waiting to start full-time with us. I remember one year, Doug and I bought a house. In the afternoons, we fixed it up and sold it in order to be able to pay salaries that year."

"One day, back in the early days when the company was still in startup mode, Doug called me into his office," Mark recalls. "He said, 'I'm wearing my friend hat, not my CFO hat. I need to know when enough is enough. When to tell you to stop putting more money into this company.' I had just taken a second mortgage on our house. That was a defining moment: Do we walk away?"

"We took a leap of faith," Mark says. "Soon after that meeting, we had our first two Double Diamonds. And although we had some lean years early on that really tested us all, a big part of our vision was to become a debt-free company—and by 2009, we were."

## "MORE THAN JUST A JOB"

In 2011—ten years after starting It Works!® and introducing the Ultimate Body Applicator™, and two years after paying off the company's

debts—Mark and Cindy took their most courageous leap of faith yet: moving the company from Grand Rapids, Michigan to Bradenton, Florida. "It was so unusual; I had people telling me it would hurt the company," Mark remembers, "but we wanted to be in a destination area where we could entertain our distributors. We moved to Florida and took 25 families with us."

Chris Burns, now It Works! Chief Information Officer, and his wife Carla, a top It Works! Distributor were one of those families. "Chris had a good job making good money for a different company. He used his flex day to come work with us once per week, donating his time. He came with us, he's kept working, and helped make this opportunity we all have today."

That original group of 25 families were soon followed by others, including Mark's former personal accountant, Don Klein. Now Chief Operations Officer, Klein "sold his own business in Michigan to move his life to Florida to come work for us."

In the years since relocating to Florida's famous Gulf Coast, Mark and Cindy have continued to fight for their dreams. As those dreams have grown bigger, they've led to the purchase of several new properties where they regularly host and entertain Distributors, including Stoneybrook Golf Club, Pentecost Ranch,

and the 104-acre Little Bokeelia Island, once home to inventor Charles Burgess and frequented by another visionary—Thomas Edison. And while these sites exemplify Mark's oft-repeated catchphrase of being "more Jimmy Buffett than Warren Buffett," the hub of It Works is its magnificent waterfront headquarters, complete with indoor slide and rooftop putting green. Here, the vision and values that sparked the company's birth live and breathe among an ever-growing corporate team – one of which Mark and Cindy are extremely proud. "When you come to our office, the staff is a group of people who want more than just a job," Mark declares. "They work hard, they have the same values. I believe our team is one of the greatest in the industry. They're people in whom we saw something special."

As they continue to build It Works! into one of the world's most unique and thriving direct sales companies, changing thousands of lives along the way, Mark and Cindy Pentecost remain that courageous couple from Michigan who dared to dream big. And as Mark looks out upon the expanse of blue beyond his balcony, just a short boat ride down the river from his company's headquarters, he's both grateful and proud: "Looking back, certain things have happened that were big blessings to this company. But it's also the decisions you make. Defining moments. It's the choices you make that will determine your success."