

“The Three A’s”

By Rich DeVos – 1986

Announcer:

Action, attitude and atmosphere can change your life and the lives of those around you. These three words formed the basis of a message delivered in Ada, Michigan, by Amway president, Rich DeVos, at a meeting of international Amway distributors. Mr. DeVos cited fellow speakers, Paul Collins and Paul Kahn, as examples of how people can change by paying attention to the three A's: action, attitude and atmosphere.

Rich DeVos:

Paul Collins is talk to you about the art. Paul Kahn has talked to you today about promises to keep that are involved in this business. And I really can't say enough about these two gentlemen. Paul Kahn came along as a doubter, not only about us as individuals, but about the whole capitalist free enterprise idea. And came to be an advocate, a supporter, a promoter of the idea. Paul Collins as an artist, a black, a minority in this country, came along with also some grievances and chips on his shoulder about equal opportunities, not only in this country, but in the world. Paul Collins also became a believer in the concepts of freedom and free enterprise that you have seen.

And it's easy, of course, for them to talk about that because in a sense, they have beat the odds, from not being in the group of achievers, they were underachievers, they have become achievers. And as an achiever, it's always easy to speak about how you can pull up your boots and overcome problems. But out there in the world, as you and I know, are millions of people who don't believe it at all. And of course, that's our biggest single challenge is how we convert more and more people like that to becoming believers, not in Amway per se, but how they can become believers in themselves. Because that's the essence of what you do and what I try to do, and that is our life work. Well, we hope they become successful in Amway.

And of course, you are evidences of that, because some of you like Paul, the Pauls here, also at one time, were down there struggling, justifying, trying to figure out whether there was any fairness in the world. And why there were always the rich up here and we were always the poor ones down here. That disparity, the class warfare that exists in the world. And so, we are the force in the world that is closing that gap between groups of people.

And that doesn't mean we always understand each other or agree or think the way to get there is my way or your way, but we have different ways we get there. My key I guess is that, to me, when I look at Amway's years in the business, that comes down to what we're all about, is to make sure we close the gap so that millions of people know they may not achieve it, they may not strive for it even, they may buy the kit and never do another thing with it. But at least they could never say they never had a chance.

Well, how do we achieve all that? Well, all of you have individual ways in which you go about that. How you get somebody to come to a meeting and listen to you, how you make an appointment and you have methods of doing all of that, and you know those things far better than I do.

Our goal, however, is to get people to make decisions that we think are good for them or best for their lives. If we had our way, we would say to somebody, and we'd grab them and say sign this application, get those customers and bring all your friends over and we'll tell them about Amway and we'll sign them up and make them sign up. Now that's wonderful power, except we don't possess it. We keep looking for the shortcuts to that, don't we? We keep looking for the quick way to do it so that we can bring them in by the hundreds and not by the onesie, twosie route. We keep looking for the way. And maybe there is one, I am not here to talk about the way.

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But I really want to talk about, and Paul was talking to you about three things that Amway is to him. But in the attainment of those things, let me see if I can give you three ways in concept how we make that happen. The first one of the three A's is action or decisions. The second of those is attitude. And the third one is atmosphere, or the air that surrounds us. All the things we breathe in and breathe out, that's the atmosphere. When we look out in the sky, we see the atmosphere.

Now, let me just take you backwards then. Our goal, therefore, is certain actions. We want somebody to sign up, get some customers, sell some product, sponsor people, and we would like to order it or demand it. That's the action we're seeking, that's the ultimate goal of what we want, isn't it? But when I look at life, or my life, I find I am unable to demand such action. I certainly can't demand it of you. I can tell you what I think is desirable. I can tell you what I hope you would do, but I have no power to tell you to go home and do this or do that. You're going to go home and do whatever you want to do. And you might say it's easy for him to talk, but I'm going to do it my way. Well, your way maybe better than my way, as long as it's legal and moral and all the other things. But it's your way and it's important that it be your way, because there's no reason it has to be my way.

But that's the goal I seek is that you will do things that are good for you. Helen and I have four children. And while they were young up until they became teenagers, let us say, I could demand an action. I could say, you will do this, you will do that. You will run this errand and I could get it done. But somewhere about the time they became teenagers. Forget it. You can't demand anything from your kids. You hope and pray they do some of the good things. But that's also true in the enterprise. You've all got organizations of hundreds and thousands of people, and you are helpless in the sense that you can't force action. It's the attempt to run it as a dictatorship and say this is the way you will do it.

And the reason it is, of course it goes against all normal human desire to be respected as a person and as an individual having some control of their life. I say just therefore take action and just accept it that you don't have the power. The United States doesn't have the power to tell the French what to do or anybody else. It has enough problems here. And neither do you, and neither do I.

Well, if we can't do that, then what do we do to get the job done? Well, we work on the second of the A's, which is attitude. We have a little better control on forming the attitude that they will have. And you put out books, you put out tapes, you take them to meetings, you talk to them personally, and you talk to them about having a good positive mental attitude. And you're trying to reinforce an attitude of: We're the greatest and we're superb, our group is outstanding. Not better than anybody else, our group is outstanding. That's okay, and that's a very fine point. Nothing wrong with promoting your group, or what you do. The problem is only when you put somebody else down, understand.

So you build all of those things so they have an attitude of: We're with the right people and doing the right things, and we can do anything. We can conquer the world. That's the kind of an attitude you're trying to instill in these people. But it all begins with trying to give them a sense of confidence about who they are, that they have the means and the capability to accomplish things. So, attitude is fine. But I cannot impose my attitude upon you. I can't go up to you and say, Arthur, you will think positive about Amway. He says, I'll think about it anyway I want to think about it. And I can't make any of you think positive about Amway. I can tell you you should or you must, or I hope you will, but I can't do any more than that.

I try it with my kids. I can't say to Dick, you will think favorably about your old man. You will always think he's fantastic. But he knows too many things. And when he is forming his attitude, he's got to think about all those other things that he knows that I'm not always so good or consistent at. So his attitude finally is the creation of his own mind, and so is yours. And so are all your people. And so, some of your people have favorable attitudes towards you. Some have unfavorable attitudes, some are mediocre,

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some are medium, and some are, Woo! They think you can walk on water. And only you and I know we can't.

But we do have people who feel that way. They have that kind of an attitude. And we want that kind of an attitude, don't we? We want everybody to think we're great. But the fact of the matter is, we can't demand a positive attitude either. Now, if action is the result of attitude, and it is, because finally how our attitudes are determines what we will do. If we have a good attitude about ourselves and about our business, we overcome our fear of talking to a stranger about getting in Amway. If we have a marginal question about Amway, we say, well, they're pretty good. And the moment we go to talk to somebody, we're afraid they might find our weakness, and so, we don't have the courage to go out and talk to them. And so we just stay home because our attitudes have a problem.

Well, there's only one part of the equation left then, and that's atmosphere. The atmosphere is the thing we control. And once you understand that it's the atmosphere, then you'll stop beating your people over the head on attitude. You'll stop trying to demand action because you can't anyway. And you will do what you all do already so well. You will work at the creation of a favorable atmosphere. And when your people come into your room, your home, your business, they feel that atmosphere. That atmosphere gives them the attitude and that's how they take the action, of course, when you get all through, that's how you got here, even though sometimes you thought you were really doing the other thing.

If atmosphere, and I'm convinced it is, is the key, at least in a free world, in a voluntary world like we live in, where people can quit, walk away, come when they want to, work when they want to, show up for a meeting, not show up for a meeting, with no threat or penalty, because you can't do that, all we can work at is atmosphere.

What are the things then that we do or can do to create the atmosphere? Well, let me just talk about us as individuals because all of us grew up in different atmospheres. But where we grew up is an uncontrollable. Wherever you were born, whatever family you were born into, whatever that environment was is there. You can't do much about that. Some of us grew up in favorable atmospheres. Some of us grew up in terribly strained atmospheres. I think of atmosphere as the air we breathe and the air we let out. And so, every moment, I'm sucking in air and I'm exhaling air. But if I walk into a smoke-filled room, then I am sucking up a lot of bad air, which might make me cough, which could give me cancer or lung disease or heart disease, all of which are the direct result we know today of inhaling smoke. That's a part of the atmosphere that you live in.

Now, therefore, that means that the very presence of the people that surround us have created the ultimate attitudes, and therefore, the kind of people we are and the decisions we make. In my case, I grew up in a poor home. I lived in my grandparents' attic when I was young, because my parents could not afford their own home. I grew up under the rafters, under the eaves of the roof, no big problem. A lot of people were struggling in those days. But the fact that I grew up there never had an impact on the air I breathed because the air in the home was always one of: You can do it, things are going to get better, good times are coming, and we're all going to get ahead in life.

My mother and my father, my grandparents always talked that way. My grandparents came to this country with nothing. And therefore, they knew what you could do when you are willing to work hard. Well, you all have stories like that also. And if you look back, you may find you came out of such an atmosphere, a belief in yourself.

Now, when we look at our organizations, we're dealing with people who came from atmospheres totally different from that. Some of our people, we wonder why they can't get going in this business. They came from an atmosphere where their parents abandoned them or their parents said to them, you're

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not any good, you're never going to amount to anything. Look how terrible things are in this country, or all sorts of things that denied them that early atmosphere.

Now a lot of us in this room came from that good atmosphere. And therefore, we have a little hard time adjusting to others. But our goal, therefore, if they didn't come from it, is that we are the first time for many people they've ever had a breath of fresh air in their life. And that's the revolution that happens. They suddenly walk in with you and, Woo! Fresh air. There's a whole wonderful world out there, and you're the one who opened up that world to them.

Now you don't clean out 30 years or 20 years of bad air on one contact. That takes years to purge the lungs. And in this country, if you've had an evidence of smoking and they talk to you about cancer, they say, you've got to be off cigarettes for five to 10 years before the lungs begin to clear themselves again. They say that to you because so often we become impatient with our people. We don't understand why they haven't caught on. What's the matter with them? Why don't they do what I told them? Well, they haven't had enough fresh air.

And so, sometimes you just have to – and that's what you do so well. I'm not trying to tell you anything new. I just want you to understand, really, the magic of what you're doing every day is pumping some fresh air into people whose lungs may not have good capacity anymore. And so, you love them and you encourage them for years.

Now, how you do those things? Now, I started positively, poor, but positive. Well, some of us picked it up in school. In my case, I went to a Christian school, again, a positive reinforcement environment. And all I say, those are things you don't control. But from that point on, you began to have had a control. And the control point began, at least with me, I had a teacher and he wrote something in my yearbook that was like a breath of fresh air. It blew me away. I was not a good student. I took Latin once. I took one semester of Latin and I passed on the condition I would never take it again. My marks were that bad. She said, if you don't take it again, I'll pass you, but don't ever come back here because you'll never be able to move forward. I just wasn't that good a student.

But out of the midst of that, the teacher wrote in there, simple words, “With talents for leadership in God's kingdom.” Now, that's quite a statement. And for a kid who wasn't such a good student, all of a sudden, some teacher who is highly respected by you writes words like that. I believe in you. Wow. Revolution. I was just a poor kid. I wasn't smart. The smart kids were the kids who got all the A's in school. They were going on to college. And you know how it is in school, we kind of divide. There's those of us who are going to go out and get a job someplace, and then there's all the bright kids. They're going on to the university, they're going to get college educations, and we sort of divide at that point. They're the ones destined. Well, they are moving into that fresh air zone, and down here, we're still be breathing bad air thinking we're going to have to settle for whatever we get out of life.

Well, that's where a lot of our people come from, not all of them, fortunately. Many of them were given that good air. And then they got some bad air once they got out into the real world. But nevertheless, the key here is the words, the few words that to me opened me up.

I saw that teacher again 40 years later at a class reunion. And I said to him, I said, "Dr. Greenway, you wrote something in my yearbook 40 years ago, and I want to tell you how important it was, and I wanted to tell you what you wrote." And he said to me, "Don't tell me what I wrote. I know what I wrote in your yearbook 40 years ago." And he quoted it to me. A teacher who had hundreds of students still remembered what he wrote. Maybe he wrote it in everybody's yearbook, I don't know. That's possible. And I never bothered to ask. The key, however, is if he wrote it in a thousand yearbooks, it didn't matter. To me, it mattered. And you see, that's the magic of what you do every day. That's really where

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you live every day. That's why you're here today because you write in people's yearbooks every day: With talents for leadership in God's kingdom.

I believe in you, I love you, I'm proud of you. You can do it. Those are your stock-in-trade. And sometimes you think they're idle phrases, but those are the phrases that people clutch and hold on to for a lifetime. And maybe long after they leave Amway, they still remember the phrases you whispered in their ear one day, or wrote on a piece of paper. That's the core of life-changing experiences. It's not all the big things you do, it's those little things where you breathe that fresh air into some soul who'd given up and you impact their life.

Now, if that's the business we're in, then you see when you put a tape out for your people, that's not just something you put out. You're pumping out air, life-saving, life-supporting air. And it's not: Well, I have to get a tape out this week, I guess I'll see what I can throw together because I need the volume, or because the due date is here. And I've seen a lot of bad tapes put out, because somebody had a tape of the week program and needed a tape this week. And they grabbed one off the shelf or whatever they could find. I'm not quarreling with the tape for the week, I'm saying you got a duty. When you are creating that kind of an atmosphere, you better not put one out at all unless you understand the impact you're making.

Then you realize how to delicately impact people. So, when you do that, tapes are a form of atmosphere creating. They better be good because they can lift up or they can cause doubt and a problem. Sometimes you have to address the problem because sometimes you got a lot of bad atmosphere out there and you got to start to get some fresh air in there too. So they're a wonderful form of communication used correctly and in balance. Well, every time you put on a meeting, you're in the atmosphere creating business. And those who are scared and downtrodden come in.

And so, when somebody says wrong things or gets negative, they're scared out or they're encouraged. Or when they get a big dose of religion thrown at them at an open meeting that they've come to for the first time. Or when they come to a meeting and the whole meeting is on my viewpoints on life instead of how it relates to my Amway career and what I can do, which is why I came there. Then you set up a series of bad atmospheres and you might just as well have gone up and blown smoke in their mouth because they never come back.

But everyone, every event, every meeting, every tape, every book, every statement you make, is creating a favorable or an unfavorable atmosphere. You say Amway's great, but I don't like him. That creates an atmosphere. A new element of doubt creeps in when you make public statements. And so, just as surely as that guy I heard, you are far more important than he ever was because you touch more lives than he was ever able to do working with a handful of people in his classroom. And so, the lives that we touch are almost unbelievable. And therefore the potential for greatness is unbelievable.

Now, I put together a list of things that I think—I know all the things you do, most of what you do are fantastic. But as a company, we also try to do things that create a favorable atmosphere for you. I sat on the airplane one day, I forget where I was going. And I said, what are we doing today to create a favorable atmosphere for this business? In no means is this a list of all of the things. You can add more. And this is a little horn-tooting. These are things this company, this organization does. And then there's all the other good things you do for each other that you can add to that. But let me just go down the list. And this was 50 reasons why you ought to be in the Amway business. No apologies needed. We don't have to apologize for this business. We don't have to back into somebody or sneak up on them. We've got plenty to talk about right up front.

Number one, things you all know. Business of your own. Number two. You say a lot of people want a business of their own. Number two is a low investment to start. That means anybody can get in the

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Amway business. Number three, unlimited income potential, no upper limits. Most of you all your career have worked at where there's a ceiling on the job. I don't have to draw you pictures of that, you know that.

Family type business, where families can work together instead of each going off in different directions. Number five is you can start in a part time basis. You don't have to give up your career. Income security, it goes on even when you're sick. If you've got a nice Amway business and you're laid up for a year, we don't shut you off. Say well, your year's up, so long, cut the paychecks off. We don't even cut it off when you die. You just put them all together. Passes on to the next generation. I don't know any other business in the world that automatically transfer to your children the income potential that this one does.

There are no favorites in this business. Not from the company's standpoint. There better not be from your standpoint. But if there's no favorites, then it doesn't matter whose group you're in, does it? Then all people have an equal chance no matter where they are in the world of Amway. And the moment you violate that and say I'm better than you, then you violate a principle. Oh, it depends on who you're under as to whether the business is good or bad. No, that's not what I say to you. I say there are no favorites.

Recognition. Pins, awards, pictures in the newspapers. Equal opportunity regardless of race or religion. By the way, that's number 10. It doesn't matter what your religion or where you come from, doesn't matter what your race doesn't matter your color, doesn't matter your education. Number 11, a selling opportunity, a lot of people do want to sell. And number 12 is a sponsoring or management opportunity. We have both of them. Number 13 is a whole range of outstanding products. You're into cosmetics, you're into health and fitness, you're into household, you're into housewares, you get a whole range of merchandise. You know, when Jay and I started, we had one product, one category. You've got a wholesale marketing opportunity that touches almost everything that's worthwhile to sell.

Number 14, you have a warehouse of tested, tried and proven products. You have an organization that represents you with complete product guarantees. Any person in the world that's come to our attention who isn't happy with a product, they bring it back, we give them their money back. That's pretty good to work in an organization that does that. The international opportunities, it's not just in your country. Then look at all the alternative ways of earning money in this business. There isn't just one way or two ways. You earn it by selling, you earn it by sponsoring, you earn it by depth, you earn it by width. You pick the way. Alternative forms of earning income, not just one paycheck like most of you got before you got into this business. Alternative ways of working.

We have an experienced group of field leadership because everybody in this business has grown up from the bottom and earned their place in the business. So you have experienced people running the field organization. Number 19 is no educational requirement. And number 20 is there's no forced retirement age. I'm comparing this to most average jobs that most people have, in this country say, oh, you're 65 and out. You can't work here anymore. You're done. You're too old. You're a discard, you're a reject. I tell you, it's great to be with a business where you're never discarded and you're never rejected. You're always in it as long as you want to be.

Women pay the same as men. In most parts of the world, the women are not paid as well as men. And suddenly, you're in a business where there's absolute equality. It's a social issue all across America. There's demonstrations, organizations pleading for women to be treated as well as men. Here, we've been at this for 25 years, and they've always been treated that way. What's so new? What's new is that most cases it's not true. Twenty-two is the complete training you give available to people and you make available to people. Twenty-three is husbands and wives working together. Twenty-four is you take a

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vacation when you please, not when the company pleases. You decide when you want to go away. And they say well, I'm sorry, the two weeks in July are taken, you better go some other time. You say no, I'm going to go now.

And number 25, there are no set hours. Nobody tells you when you got to work. And if you want to work nights and goof off in the morning, go ahead. You can set your own hours. Number 26 is the love factor that's involved in the Amway business. For many people, this is the first love relationship they've ever had in their life outside of their marriage. They have found people who love them and care for them. There's a loving factor. There are people who remain in this business because of the love factor. They don't do anything in the business, but they're around because they love to be around you because you create a favorable atmosphere and you love them as an individual.

Number 27, it's a cash business. At least it is here. And all of you have gambled with giving credit and you found out how good it works. And you got back to a cash business. That may not seem important until you start to look at most businesses in the world that spend most of their money on borrowings because they don't get the cash in the door. And they are jeopardized. You sit around the banks of this country, you'd discover how that kills organizations.

Number 28, there's no territorial limits. You don't have this part of the country or that part of the country, you got the whole country. And you got the whole world of Amway. Number 29 is you can see the world in the Amway business, it's an available thing. And number 30 is all the government relations and support mechanisms we perform on your behalf with your governments to make it possible for your businesses to function and keep functioning, which is a continual battle throughout the world.

Number 31, the research and development facilities that stand back of you, so that because we know of continually changing things, we got new products all the time. The world changes, it's rolling. And new ideas, new concepts are vital. Five years from now, half of everything you sell will be brand new. Just as everything you sell, half of what you do is brand new in the last five years. There are a lot of companies come around, they go, oh, we got this nice little gadget. They have nothing back of them. They don't know that gadget will be dead two weeks from now. I watched ex Amway people get into some little hot item. They're going to sell some new weight reduction plan. And by the time they get into it, the company's broke because they don't even know where they're going. So you've got to be working. We're working five years out all the time on products we're going to have.

Thirty-two is the quality control support mechanism you have on this one. Thirty-three is the legal support. We employ 25 lawyers in this place to say nothing of the law firms we engage throughout the world to keep this business on a legally acceptable basis. Number 34 is the partnership arrangement. The Diamond forums, the EDC forums where we communicate. You talk to us and we talk to you about what's going on. Number 35 has to do with our stands and promotions of the free enterprise system. The best alternative hope for the world of getting people free.

Just to remind you of that, every society in the world that practices free agriculture eats well. And every society in the world that practices socialist agriculture is hungry. If you don't think that's a fundamental fact, Africa—every nation that is socialistic or communistic is hungry. Every country that's free has an abundance of food. Free societies eat well and others starve to death. Fundamental fact of life.

Number 36 is you have behind you a company that's financially strong, able to withstand adversity, and has the means to recover from it. So it doesn't quickly run out of the ability to pay the bonuses next month. We have an expert management staff in place that's been trained and experienced throughout the world. We have 1000s of years of experience in the operation of this kind of business. And number 38, we've never had our strike or an interruption in our ability to deliver a product to you in our history.

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We have never closed this place down because of labor unrest, which means we're doing a pretty good job with our employees as well as with all of you. That's a very significant point.

Number 39 is various forms of advertising. Advertising in our business can only support you indirectly, but it will not change your business. It just will not do it for you. Do we do some of it? Yes. Is it important? Yes. In modest forms. Will it make your volume go up? I don't think so. But it will make your distributors feel better. It creates an atmosphere. But it sure doesn't deliver the merchandise.

Number 40 is public relations programs that we carry on. Number 41 is that we are a giving and caring group of people. All of you support various causes and various things that you give money to, you give time to to make your country, your city, your community, your church, or whatever it is, a better place in which to live. And Amway people are people who do give and share in their communities. And I can tell you, Amway does that as well.

Number 42 is that when you get in the Amway business, you're surrounded with positive people. Negative people don't survive in our business very long. Well they hang around for a while, but eventually they get out of the way. So you're getting into a proper environment. Number 40, through all the self-improvement programs you guys offer to people, you help them learn how to speak, how to get up on their feet, how to participate in life, how to think better. We probably run a better self-improvement program than anybody in the country. And I don't mean us, I mean you.

Forty-four, you can buy your products wholesale. That's not bad. Number 45, you can help your friends to help themselves. You got friends who come up to you and moan and groan about how things are. You've got an answer for them. You can tell them how to solve their problem and shut them up. And you can help your enemies to help themselves is the next one. As you can see, I'm getting close to 50, and I had to add lib a little. Number 47, you can have fun in this business. You don't have to go to work like you used to dreading it and moaning and groaning and putting up with some supervisor you don't like or some boss you don't like or something else. You're involved in a business that can be fun. And you're going to make that.

Forty-eight, you're involved in the cause of freedom and free enterprise. I said that before, but I really was getting desperate now. Number 49, you're involved where you are rewarded based on what you do. I think it's great to be in that kind of a business. And number 50 is you. You're the real reason that Amway exists in the first place. And so, I guess all I would say if I was telling somebody new about all the reasons they ought to get in Amway is do not apply unless you're willing to work. Therefore, atmosphere, attitude and action. And I welcome you and I salute you for all the fresh air you have breathed on this world. And especially, you know it, in your own communities and in your own countries, where you have been a life-saving breath of air for many people who had given up.

Recently at a symphony program here, they had written on the program a statement, which I ad-libbed, and I will share it with you, because they had put it this way, "Because we cannot hear the planets evolving or the sun ascending, the seasons blurring. Because these and a billion other sites have no sound, music was born." And I added to that, "Because you cannot hear the hopeless, the discouraged, those who have given up. Because these and a billion other persons have lost hope, Amway was born, because we offer that hope to those people." And so, I'm honored to be in partnership with all of you who are creating that favorable, exciting, dynamic atmosphere throughout the world. And that's why, you see, we have to grow together because our mission is so great.

Announcer:

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