

Mary Kay: A Leader in the Beauty Product Industry

今回は、家庭と仕事を両立させた女性起業家、メアリー・ケイのニュース記事です。彼女が考案した販売代理店システムは、今でも多くの女性に支持されています。17歳で結婚し、3人の子供を育てながら起業した彼女のストーリーは、現代の働く女性に大きなヒントを与えてくれるかもしれません。ちなみに、本文に登場する「sales representative (販売担当者)」は、日本でいう営業職のことを指します。文脈によっては、ある組織の「代表者」という意味にもなり、ビジネスの話題ではよく使われる単語なので、ぜひ覚えておきましょう。



1. Article

Read the following article aloud.

Mary Kay Cosmetics is an international company that sells beauty products.

One woman started the business in the 1960s with an [investment](#) of \$5,000.

Mary Kathlyn Wagner was born in the state of Texas in 1918. For much of her childhood, she cared for her sick father while her mother worked long hours at a restaurant.

Mary Kay married Ben Rogers when she was 17 years old. They had three children before he left home to [serve](#) in World War Two. When he returned, their marriage ended. Mary Kay looked for a job so she could support her children.

She began selling different kinds of products. One night, Mary Kay was showing products at the home of Ova Heath Spoonemore. Ms. Spoonemore began giving her guests some homemade skin care products. The products were developed by her father, J.W. Heath, in Arkansas. Mary Kay tried the skin care products and liked them.

She bought the rights to Heath's skin care products and started her own company. She paid \$500 for the legal rights to the products. And in 1963, The Mary Kay Cosmetics company began operating in Dallas, Texas.

The idea was to sell skin care products through demonstrations in homes and offices. Independent sales [representatives](#) bought beauty products from the company and sold them at higher prices.

Mary Kay decided that each representative who brought other saleswomen into the company would receive part of the new person's earnings. That way, experienced sales representatives would be willing to train new ones.

By 1965, the company was selling almost one million dollars in products.

Mary Kay Cosmetics became one of the most successful direct sellers of skin care products in America. It continues to have sales offices and representatives in many different countries.

Mary Kay aimed to grow sales based on the idea that it is best to [compete](#) against yourself. That means every individual is trying to beat their own sales records. Prizes for high sales marks included special paid holidays and jewelry. Until a few years ago, a pink Cadillac was a top prize.

After her third husband, Mel Ash, died of cancer in 1980, she wanted to help find a cure for the disease. At first, she helped organizations raise money for research.

Later, she started the Mary Kay Ash Charitable Foundation, a nonprofit group that provides money to support research on cancers affecting women. In 2001, the company and foundation expanded their goals to help prevent violence against women.

Mary Kay Ash also wrote three books. She worked in her business until she suffered a [stroke](#) in 1996. She died in 2001.

Sales representatives say Mary Kay developed a way for women to earn money and still spend time with their families.

I'm Anna Matteo.

Nancy Steinbach wrote this story for VOA Special English. Anna Matteo adapted it for VOA Learning English.

2. Key phrases and vocabulary

First repeat after your tutor and then read aloud by yourself.

1. investment (n.) money, time, or effort that is used to start or improve a business

It took us an investment of about two million yen to start our consulting business.

2. serve (v.) to be a member of the military

I served in the Navy for twenty years.

3. representative (n.) a member of a company or organization who visits people to discuss business related to that company or organization

The 193 representatives of member countries gathered for a meeting at the United Nations.

4. compete (v.) to try to be better than another person or group at a skill or ability

Our high school marching band competed against thirty bands from around the world.

5. stroke (n.) a condition in which a blood vessel in the brain is blocked or broken

My neighbor had a stroke when she was 47 years old.

3. Questions

Read the questions aloud and answer them.

1. What was Mary Kay's early life like?
2. Describe the system of representatives that she used to run her business.
3. What kind of volunteer work did she do later in life?
4. What other female entrepreneurs do you know?
5. Are you interested in starting or running your own business?