

Book Review for 02/02/03 by Julie Johnson

Title: "Pro-Sumer Power"

Author: Bill Quain, Ph.D.

Copyright: 2000

Publisher: INTI Publishing

ISBN: 1-891279-04-1

Length: 309 pages

Price: \$10.95

Reading time: 1 ½ hours

Reading Rating: 10 (1 = very difficult; 10 = very easy)

Overall Rating : 2 (1 = average; 4 = outstanding)

Subject areas: consumer, e-ferral, network marketing

The premise of "Pro-Sumer Power" is that producers make money, consumers spend money, while pro-sumers make money while they spend money. The author maintains that a classic example of pro-suming is owning your own home. Rather than paying rent, you buy a product (i.e. your home) that appreciates over time. Additionally, homeowners build equity in their home as they pay their mortgage. Dr. Quain asserts that individuals should view buying every day products in the same way they view buying a home. Rather than focusing on buying products at a discount rate from a retailer (or e-tailer), individuals should buy products from a business that they own. The author argues that most people who buy products at discount are focused on how much money they "save." However, consumers don't really "save" money, they "spend" money on products which depreciate or are consumed. Dr. Quain maintains that buying cheaper is not always better. The hidden cost associated with buying discount is often spending precious time. The author suggests the solution to this problem is to buy products from your own business. While the point is never made clear, the author is suggesting that network marketing (a.k.a. multi-level marketing) is the way to become a "pro-sumer."

Dr. Quain refers to network marketing as "e-ferral" or referral-based partnerships. Individuals feel very comfortable telling a friend about a great deal they got on a product. The author maintains that people should feel just as comfortable telling friends about a great business opportunity that provides the opportunity to make money while they spend money. While this is an interesting point, the author doesn't really go far enough in describing e-ferral opportunities or how they work. Providing more examples and more detail on e-ferral businesses would have improved the book.

Overall, "Pro-Sumer Power" is an entertaining book that is easy to read. It is filled with amusing anecdotes that makes reading an enjoyable experience. In summary, this is a good book for someone who is interested in examining an alternative way of examining their spending habits and is open to an e-ferral business as a way to purchase products and make money.

Julie Johnson is an Associate Professor of Marketing in the College of Business at Western Carolina University and the DeSoto Family Faculty Fellow. She spent 7 years in sales and marketing with AT&T before becoming a faculty member.