

# Web of deceit



By Susan  
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## Sales pitches for discriminating genealogists

In the last few months I seem to be dodging quite a few sales pitches, i.e. strong-arm tactics, by well meaning friends, acquaintances, and even strangers to start my own little side business, selling everything from food containers to products that they claim will eradicate every disease or potential disease from one's body.

Now, this is not to say that all direct sales products are bad. It's just that the reason I avoid selling is simple. The last thing I want to do with my free time is sell when I work full-time in a sales environment. However, all the home parties and catalog sales of late did get me wondering if there were any business opportunities in genealogy. Thanks to the Internet, I didn't have to look far.

"Imagine getting from \$20 to \$100 for each new customer you refer to us...with a few referred customers that's like getting your next genealogy software or next genealogy conference for FREE." Yes, at [Rewarding Genealogy](#) you can earn genealogy bucks by simply helping them stop criminals from stealing your ancestor's identities. I know how much it would pain me if someone stole the identities of a few of my Fricken relatives from the 1700s, so being the concerned genealogist that I am, I decided to read on.

According to the site, identity theft is a "spiritual & temporal epidemic." Since I had no idea that identity theft made the bubonic plaque seem like a head cold, I was driven more than ever to learn how I could get peace of mind from this terrible affliction. All I had to do was visit and view a four-minute video. Perhaps it was the divine hand of Elizabeth Fricken, or my Norton 360, but I never did get to see the video. Guess it was time to find another genealogy business opportunity.

Did you know that you could earn a six-figure income as a family reunion event planner? Well then, it's time you became an official Fimark Legendary Heritage Heirlooms Family Reunion Planner and Genealogy Research Coordinator. (Now *that's* a mouthful!) For only \$329 you can order the [Family Genealogy and Reunion Planner Career Kit](#) and be on your way to earning oodles of money capitalizing on this rapidly growing industry. Pardon me. I shouldn't have said earning oodles of money. Scrolling down the list of what is included in the kit was info on "making a killing" in regards to booking genealogy cruise events. One word of caution—just make sure you don't book your first cruise on something like the Titanic. It would be a little bad for business, you know.

The company does offer a deluxe edition planner that also includes "access to free genealogy resources" and templates for family pedigree charts and family group sheets, but nowhere on the site did it list how much this particular planner costs. Since I'm from the mind-set that if you have to ask, you can't afford it, then I guess I'll have to forego the deluxe planner and get my access to free genealogy resources elsewhere.

Now, if you really want to make a killing in genealogy, you just have to get yourself set up selling surname histories. At [Hall of Names](#) you can purchase a one-time distributor fee of \$5,000 to purchase the rights to use its database and sell various name histories and associated products. Because there are no protected territories or quotas to fill, the licensee can literally name his/her income!

# Genealogy Career Kit

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promoting genealogy research and coordinating family reunion events

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Think of how wonderful life would be, sitting at a little kiosk around Christmastime for twelve hours a day, seven days a week, listening to the umpteenth version of Mel Torme's "The Christmas Song," and having people pay you to discover where their surname came from. Of course there's a catch. According to Hall of Name's licensee agreement, "...there are still names that we don't have on file... We don't know where they came from—nobody does..." About now I can hear my father saying, "Give me \$5,000 and I'll gladly tell you where your name came from."

But if sitting at a kiosk isn't your thing, perhaps you would rather seek your fortunes in genealogy by filming family tree videos. At [Family Tree Video](#), you have the opportunity to purchase "proprietary equipment" for only \$69,500 to allow you to preserve precious memories and transform them into a heartwarming music video on a DVD that will last forever. No offense, but with that kind of money, I could be preserving my own precious memories, traveling around Europe, seeing and documenting my own family history.

And while I was on the hunt for a genealogy-based business opportunity, I stumbled upon a site that made me realize our wonderful little hobby has somehow become associated with multi-level marketing. If you are not familiar with the term multi-level marketing, perhaps the word Amway will help.

## HOW ARE GENEALOGY AND MULTI-LEVEL MARKETING ALIKE?

The [Consumer Awareness Institute](#) has a very informative site that provides the background on this strange coupling. The site is not very attractive, but sometimes truth can be ugly and you will learn far more about the world of genealogy and multi-level marketing (MLM), including why Utah has the largest concentration of MLM firms, than can be discussed in this column. Incidentally, when the site said to do a Google search on "MLM and genealogy" and see how many sites come up, I did. The query produced 607,000 hits.

Just today while driving a friend home, she was discussing with me the benefits of some new product she was taking and how great it was to be on the ground level of this wonderful opportunity. I knew where the conversation was headed, but then suddenly my car died! Certainly I now had a perfectly good excuse why I couldn't sign up as one of her distributors, but that just means tomorrow I'll have to listen to another sales pitch—from the auto mechanic. **DG**

*[Susan Zacharias](#) is the layout manager of the NGS NewsMagazine and the past editor of the award-winning publication, OGS Genealogy News, for the Ohio Genealogical Society. Her writings have appeared in several genealogical publications. Susan is a member of NGS, OGS, and the International Society of Family History Writers and Editors.*