



Jennifer Cook On Mary Kay Ash

11



Editor's Note: What if you could sit down with Mary Kay Ash's personal secretary? We were able to do just that. Jennifer Cook, who retires this month, has served in many roles at Mary Kay throughout her 45 years with the company, but certainly the most notable was as Mary Kay Ash's personal secretary for several years. We asked her to share her story with us.

Tell us a little about your beginnings at Mary Kay.

"When I started, I was 19 years old. You can just imagine how naïve I was, but I was also a hard worker and a very serious person. Mary Kay the company had been around for eight years. I started as a part-time employee and worked my way through college, then have worked fulltime for 43 years. My Mary Kay memory goes back to when we weren't at the Convention Center yet for Seminar, and we had 234 Independent Sales Directors and about 12,000 Independent Beauty Consultants.

I've seen Mary Kay grow from a little tiny regional company to an international organization. We had just opened Australia as our first international market and had opened our first U.S. distribution center in California. We were poised for success and growth, but were in the beginning stages.

I also saw Mary Kay Ash grow from Chairman of the Board of a small, regional organization to become an international cosmetic queen.

And I grew, too. The StrengthsFinder test shows my strongest strength is Belief, which is no surprise to me. I have to truly believe in what I'm doing and that I'm making a difference. I believed in Mary Kay. I believed in her mission—I still believe in the mission."

What should people know about Mary Kay Ash as your mentor?

"To have Mary Kay as my mentor that young was tremendous. The thing I was most impressed with about Mary Kay was the way she was able to interact with people. I loved to watch Mary Kay with people, and I was amazed by the way they would start crying when they met her. I didn't understand that at first, but she would calm them and inspire them to believe in themselves and in their dreams."

From all your Mary Kay event trips, do you have any fun stories?

"When I first started, staff stayed at the Fairmont in downtown Dallas for Seminar. My roommate and I thought we'd get a snack from room service, and the menu offered a dozen 'assorted cookies,' so we ordered them! When they arrived, they were thumbnail cookies! She was out of the room and I was hungry, so I ate them all!

Another time, in San Francisco for a different event and with a different roommate, we wanted to order dessert. The menu offered 'assorted desserts' and I knew what *that* meant! I explained that they were probably tiny petit four cakes, so we would need more than one. So we ordered 'assorted desserts!' We got *three trays* of desserts! We didn't know what else to do, so we took bites out of all of them and ate the ones we like the best!"

What would Mary Kay say today?

"One of the most powerful 'wow' moments happened several years ago when MK China President **Paul Mak** shared about the grade schools MK China supports in remote villages in China. He showed pictures of the schools and the girls in their little red uniforms. It was a 'wow' moment for me because I thought, 'Isn't it amazing that Mary Kay planted a seed in Dallas, Texas, in 1963 and that seed is now in a remote village in China?' Mary Kay would never have imagined it. The times I miss her the most is when I hear things like this. She would be so thrilled to know the influence that this company has had on lives."

**What's next for you?**

"I've got big plans. I've always wanted to do missions work, and I am taking steps to go to Haiti—including reviving my French from high school and college. I also want to work with Casa Dallas. And I recently met a delightful woman with a Christian networking organization here in the Dallas area. And with those three things, I think I'd better stop or I'll have myself busier than I am here at Mary Kay!"

What advice would you give to employees around the world?

"Mary Kay's lifelong habit of creating a Six Most Important Things to Do list is wonderful advice. It can keep you focused, whether the day is over crowded with activity or when you're discouraged.

In any career, you're going to have your ups and downs. I've had a fulfilling career, but after Mary Kay passed away, I had many bosses and worked in many departments. Even with Mary Kay—she was an idea person, so I would often change what I was planning for a particular day to do whatever she needed to pursue her ideas and *her* Six Most Important Things to Do list for the day. You've got to be flexible, adaptable, and believe in the mission.

And if you are a manager, my hope is that you will read—or re-read—*Mary Kay on People Management*. I watched her live those principles day in and day out. She really, really lived those values. I recently re-read the book. I think it is important for sharing how Mary Kay Ash wants our managers within Mary Kay to pursue their careers. It's up to everyone to live our core principles."

tagged: [Mary Kay Ash](#), [Jennifer Cook](#), [Mary Kay Mondays](#), [2017](#)

Comments

Dana Stelling wrote re: Jennifer Cook on Mary Kay Ash

on 07-04-2017 3:06 PM

This was so neat to read! Thank you for sharing this!

Cindy Harness wrote re: Jennifer Cook on Mary Kay Ash

on 07-07-2017 12:24 AM

Jennifer, Thank you for your love and service to our Lord through your work at Mary Kay! You have always empowered me and encouraged me in my journey and I know that you have for millions of others! You are loved by many and most by Him! May He richly bless you as you continue to serve Him through mission work! Hugs, Cindy Harness

Angela Matteoni wrote re: Jennifer Cook on Mary Kay Ash

on 07-09-2017 3:50 PM

It was so special meeting you June 15th in Orlando/Oviedo at Studio Pink! When our awesome Director, Mary Ippolito, told us you were coming, we couldn't believe it! It was amazing to meet you in person and hear your stories about Mary Kay! You really made her come alive to those of us who never met her! Thank you so much for blessing us with your visit! May God bless you in all you do!

Laurie Jackson wrote **re: Jennifer Cook on Mary Kay Ash**

on 07-11-2017 7:30 PM

I loved reading this article. I am fascinated to learn about how/who Mary Kay was when she was still with us. Who better than her assistant for so many years to share her fondest memories. Thank you for posting this!

Bryanna Kath wrote **re: Jennifer Cook on Mary Kay Ash**

on 07-12-2017 10:22 AM

I was blessed to spend some time with Jennifer in Pueblo, CO not too long ago, and I am blessed to have met this amazing woman! Her respect of Mary Kay and what she built is inspiring, as well as her love for God! I could see how Mary Kay truly changed Jennifer's life and how grateful she was and is for our beloved founder!

Ashay Mathieu wrote **re: Jennifer Cook on Mary Kay Ash**

on 07-18-2017 11:48 AM

This interview adds value to my business experience and confidence in the company. In today's world we need strong American based companies that creates community with values and morales that honor's God and diversity. It is soothing to know that I can help others by being a part of a strong tradition of hard work and Love.

Breanna Smith wrote **re: Jennifer Cook on Mary Kay Ash**

on 07-22-2017 12:49 PM

Thank you so much for this.

Angela Randall wrote **re: Jennifer Cook on Mary Kay Ash**

on 07-28-2017 9:47 PM

Hello Jennifer!! What a great article and fantastic picture! Thank you for sharing your stories!! I met you when you came out to AZ on one of your trips 2-3 years ago. You spoke at our Unit meeting (Renee Pierce is my Director.) I am now in a place where I have decided to become an ambassador, thanks to you!! I am here in Dallas for the Sapphire Seminar and just learned of your retirement. Congratulations and thank you for so many years of service with Mary Kay. If I don't get to see you while I'm here, perhaps our paths can cross again in AZ. You will be greatly missed and I am honored to have met you. Best wishes for a retirement that is exciting, fulfilling and just as rewarding as your Mary Kay career. Much love - Angela

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