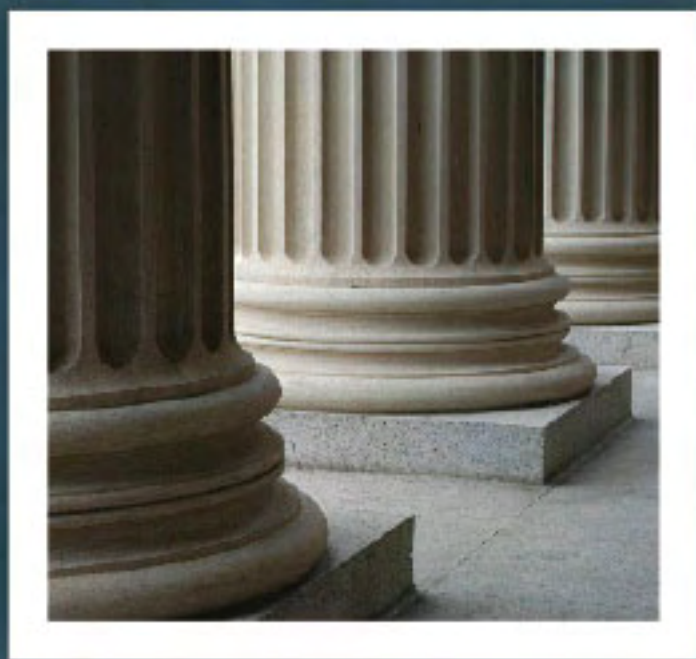


BUILT ON
SOLID
PRINCIPLES



The Melaleuca Story

Richard M. Barry



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The Power of One

*"I am only one. But still I am one.
I cannot do everything but still I can do something,
And because I cannot do everything
I will not refuse to do the something I can do."*

- EDWARD EVERT

The power of one person.

Can one person make a difference? Ask among your friends and no doubt they will think a little, and then the names will come: Einstein, Ghandi, Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King. Of course, the achievements of these famous people were enormous. But in looking at the principles with which Frank VanderSloot formed the foundations of Melaleuca, Inc., when he talks about the "power of one," he means it in a slightly different way. No doubt Mr. VanderSloot would be the first to applaud the achievements of these famous humanitarians. But when Frank VanderSloot talks about the "power of one," he isn't just thinking about important, powerful people; he is talking about you or me—all of us.

Throughout his writing and public addresses, there is a constant theme. Sometimes it is obvious, sometimes it lies buried in the core of

his address, not really seen but pulsing in every fiber of the speech. It is a theme that springs from his own humble origins—that ordinary people have great power and you don't have to be famous or incredibly gifted to make this world a better place. "We don't have to do great, newsworthy things to have a great influence on this world. We only need to live a life others can follow. It is impossible to measure the impact that one life can have on thousands of others."¹

There is a compelling strength behind these assertions of Frank VanderSloot—and it is the resonance of conviction. He is not preaching; that is not his way. Rather, he is sharing beliefs that were fundamental to his own personal formation. Despite his modest claims to the contrary, Frank is an extraordinary person and his tremendous faith

in the power of ordinary people adds to this. It's an odd paradox, but all his attempts to distance himself from the lofty position of "leader" have the opposite effect. "I don't see myself as any guru—I'm not. I accept the responsibility of making hard decisions... I accept the responsibility that sometimes

I need to say no...I will be worthy of your

trust...I promise you that I will put my whole heart and soul into this business, and keep it safe and prosperous for all of you and all of our families," he says.²

Therein lies the power of Melaleuca, the power of Frank VanderSloot, and the power of each one of the Melaleuca Marketing Executives—the knowledge that the average person can have an enormous effect on the lives of others. And no illustration could serve better than the example of Frank VanderSloot's own development.

In order to realize how Frank's lessons in life came to form the

mighty pillars of the Melaleuca principles, we need to turn to a story within our story. It began many years ago in a small farmhouse near the tiny town of Cocolalla, Idaho...

Embracing a Father's Influence

It's late afternoon on a country road. The shadows lengthen as dusk falls. A school bus draws up and deposits a boy on the side of the road. As it roars away, he waves goodbye and begins to trudge along the road. Ahead of him are the cheery lights of a small farmhouse. His pace quickens.

He is about ten, with an open, pleasant face and an upright stance. His clothes, purchased at Salvation Army and Goodwill thrift stores, are worn but neat, evidence of many washings. He walks with even strides, obviously a little tired.

The boy's name is Frank. His mind is busy. His mind is always busy—that's his character. In the isolation of the farm, he has little time or opportunity to share his inner thoughts.

Even now, he is thinking about the chores he has to do. It's been an hour-long bus journey home from school, but still there's a fence to be fixed, Mom will want help with the potatoes, and there's always cows to be milked and other animals to tend to. He sighs.

There's not too much time for anything else apart from work and sleep. He's glad it's Friday. Perhaps he'll have some time to himself over the weekend. He sees the old 1957 Rambler station wagon parked round the side of the house. Dad's back home! He's been away for a week. Frank's face splits into a broad smile and he leaps onto the porch as he runs to greet his father.

*He sees the old 1957
Rambler station wagon
parked round the side of the
house. Dad's back home!*

Later...

Frank sits down to eat with his two sisters and older brother. Father sits at the head of the table, obviously tired after a long week. The food, though simple, is nutritious. Frank is endowed with the healthy appetite of a growing boy. Hunger makes a good sauce. They begin to eat; there's little conversation, though the two girls venture a whisper here and there. Frank's older brother is largely silent. Eating is serious business. Mr. VanderSloot is a gnarled, wiry man with the hands of a

laborer and the tough, lean body of a man who has worked all his life. He, too, eats in silent enjoyment. Finally, with a sigh of appreciation, Mr. VanderSloot pushes back his plate and Mrs. VanderSloot ventures into conversation: Had he heard about the house

"Wow!" he exclaims, "I would love to see a house burn down!"

that had burned down in Sandpoint? The topic is immediately of interest to all at the table. This is rural Idaho and Sandpoint is the nearest town of any size. A fire is a top news item.

Frank, who as usual is fidgeting, his mind racing over a score of topics, cannot contain himself. He has always been fascinated by fire. "Wow!" he exclaims, "I would love to see a house burn down!"

The excitement in his tone makes Mr. VanderSloot turn to stare thoughtfully at Frank. He takes in the flushed face, the brightness in the boy's eyes, and a dark shadow comes over his own face as he remembers Frank's habit of playing with matches. He says nothing. Nor does he speak much for the rest of the evening. Bedtime comes very rapidly. Wake-up time is 5:30 a.m. the next day.

Next morning...

Frank walks across the yard, shivering slightly. The sun is not yet up. Though the pink fingers of dawn are edging up over the distant

horizon, there is a chill in the air. Frank has finished his chores. He pours the last bucket into the large milk churn and wipes the sticky remains of milk from his palms. He stops as his father beckons him and together they walk around to a little lot behind the chicken coop. Mr. VanderSloot is carrying a saw, hammer and some nails. Frank glances down at them, puzzled.

His father, a quiet, even man, catches the glance. "We're going to build a house," he says.

Frank is thrilled. They set about the task diligently. They work at it all day. By the time they finish, the sun is beginning to disappear over the horizon. Measuring about five by three feet, the house stands three feet tall with a chimney, windows and a real porch. It even has a tiny picket fence. To a ten-year-old country boy, it is quite a work of art.

As they stand admiring their masterpiece, his father says, "OK, son, burn it down." Frank looks at him, perplexed. Is he joking? "Let's burn it down, son," repeats the father. He is not joking. Frank, his mind racing, runs to fetch the matches, thinking about his own words of the night before.

As they stand admiring their masterpiece, his father says, "OK, son, burn it down."

He returns, walking slowly, his mind in a turmoil. It is a fine house... they had made it together, he and his Dad. Now... burn it down? It seems such a waste.

"OK, burn it down," says his father.

Frank hesitates, torn by emotion. His father motions toward the house with his hand. Frank lets out a sigh and, kneeling down, begins to heap some twigs and leaves near the fireplace inside their beautiful house. With mixed feelings, he sets it on fire.

Frank and his father stand silently and watch their work slowly go

up in flames until it is rendered to ashes. It is a silent, wordless lesson, more compelling, more memorable than a statement.

As they walk away from the pile of hot ashes—all that is left of their creativity—Mr. VanderSloot puts his arm around the boy. “Well, son, you’ve seen a house burn down now. Is that kind of what you wanted? Do you feel that you need to see any more homes burn down?”

“No, Dad,” says Frank.

“Great, son,” says Mr. VanderSloot.

The lesson, imposed with humility, kindness and understanding, had left its mark—permanently.³

And that was the way of his father, Peter Francis VanderSloot. With only a third-grade education, he worked up to sixty hours a week on the railways, sometimes away a week at a time. His life was spent solely in feeding his kids and supporting his home. And yet, Mr. VanderSloot was possessed of that quiet wisdom about things that matter. Such is the

“If I had not had the influence of my father in my life, . . . it’s doubtful that Melaleuca would exist as it does today.”

way of all those who tend horses, love animals, till the soil and work hard for a living.

To this day, Frank VanderSloot holds up his father as an example of a great person, a naturally wise man. So much so that, in one public address, he said, “If I had not had the influence of my father in my life . . . it’s doubtful that Melaleuca would exist as it does today.”⁴

In his President’s Message given in September, 1996, Frank explored the theme, “the power of one.” He said, “My father’s life is a great reminder of the power of that principle. A single person can make a difference—a tremendous difference.”⁵

VanderSloot’s father died in 1982, before Melaleuca was founded, so

he never saw how far his son had taken these principles. Mr. VanderSloot had done a fine job. Though he said little, it’s obvious he never missed much. In his quiet way, he had planted the seeds of his own wisdom in Frank. A thorough man, he’d done a thorough job. But, of course, it would take time for these seeds to grow.

“I Just Wanted to Be the Garbage Man”

Mr. VanderSloot’s contribution to Frank’s development cannot be underestimated. The qualities he instilled in Frank were so deep that they became the mainstay of the Melaleuca culture—honesty, understatement, living within your means, and above all, being free of debt.

Though these values were implanted deeply in Frank, at first, they did not flourish. Frank’s story is not of a shooting star, brighter than all its peers, zooming to a crescendo of stellar success. On the contrary, when Frank first ventured into the public arena of school, he was a shy, retiring boy with no desire whatsoever to take initiative. Initially, he was a lackluster student with no leadership skills. But due to the intervention of a few key figures, the wisdom implanted by his father did flourish.

To appreciate this transformation from shy country boy to resilient leader, we have to pick up the story again when Frank was a freshman in high school.

The adolescent years are often a time of emotional turmoil and moody introspection. It is a time when teenagers are beginning to actively question themselves. It is the stage when they begin discovering who they are, sometimes with a dreamy awareness, sometimes with

One day, Frank was called to his office. The principal was concerned about his response to a test.



Since its inception in 1985, Melaleuca, Inc. has been one of the fastest-growing businesses in America, with annual sales that grew to \$850 million in little more than two decades. Behind its phenomenal success lies the story of president and CEO Frank VanderSloot's personal growth—a country boy once rated as lacking in leadership qualities who took a failed business and transformed it into an American dream.

Adhering to the basic principles he absorbed from his beloved, hard-working Idaho father, Frank's achievements show that a business based on principles and integrity can flourish, and his concept of Consumer Direct Marketing™ is setting the pace for a new style in American business. *Built on Solid Principles* is informative, captivating, and truly inspirational.

—
“We have a
story to tell.”

Frank L. VanderSloot,
Melaleuca President & CEO

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