

Norwex: Making the world a better place ... or just the world's worst party planner?

1. Introduction

Norwex is a cleaning company. Wait! Come back!

It's true, most people aren't going to include cleaning stuff in their top three fun and exciting things to do. Cleaning is what you do after the fun is over, right? (That sounds kind of ruder than I intended.)

I think Norwex is worth a closer look though for two big reasons.

Firstly, they sell indisputably good stuff. They have barely any bad reviews across the entire spectrum of their polishing and purification paraphernalia.

Secondly, and far more interestingly, Norwex is one of those companies which gets into people's heads.

The company is ridiculously good at making people believe in what they do.

The good folks at Norwex don't just sell space-age dish cloths. They also offer a big, golden Willy Wonka style ticket to jump on board with their enlightened world view of sustainability and peace through superior cleaning products.

They're like a cult for clean freaks, without the cool-aid.

As you'll see, this is a major strength of the company and it makes them a lot more interesting than any run-of-the-mill cleaning outfit.

Still here? Good. So, let's crack on and take a look at the vast Empire of Cleanliness that is Norwex.

2. Company Overview

Norwex sells a range of uber high-quality microfiber cleaning cloths which don't require lots of chemicals, or even water, to work.

This witchcraft is achieved by making cloths which are super-dense, intricately textured and infused with (wait for it) “microsilver,” a potent antibacterial agent.

But before delving any further into the wonderful world of cleansing wipes, I want to walk you through Norwex’s mission statement.

I’m not going to paraphrase here because their tone is important.

“Our Mission is to improve quality of life by radically reducing chemicals in our homes. We do this by creating Safe Havens in every home we touch as we help families live more sustainably and safer from the effects of harmful chemicals.

Whether it’s reducing chemicals, living more sustainably, or leading a team of like-minded people, it all starts with the understanding that every small, conscious choice we make makes a difference. Everything we do helps deliver on the promise for a brighter future . . . for everyone.”

Now, whether or not you threw up in your mouth a little bit just then is going to depend on how much of a cynic you are.

My soul happens to be as black and desolate as bad motel coffee so I’m probably not their target demographic.

Still, I have to give them props for immediately crystalizing a lofty set of goals.

There’s an immediate sense that Norwex doesn’t just want your cash in exchange for their crazily effective cleaning stuff. They want your belief.

As you read through their literature, this is the first example of many you’ll find in which the company deftly defines its demographic.

If you...

- love the world
- think chemicals are evil (side bar: don’t even get me started on [chemical paranoia](#)); and
- you’re drawn to the idea of making a difference in small ways for generations to come...

then Norwex’s vision probably just punched you right in the feel-goods with the precision of a very friendly and extremely well-groomed ninja.

The take home here is that their loftiness gives scope for the product itself to be more expensive than its competitors.

Norwex won't just help you clean your toilet. They'll take it one step further and help you clean away your rampant, consumerist guilt. That's a pretty good deal!

So now that you have a sense of the company's "big-idea" driven philosophy, let's get into the nitty gritty.

Here's what you need to know.

Norwex is a Norwegian company, but the company is now well and truly international in scope.

It has active operations in Australia, Canada, Germany, New Zealand, the UK, the US and a speckling of other countries throughout Europe and Oceania.

My detailed forays into the Googles also suggests that the company has plans for further expansion in coming years.

As at 2018, the company has a distributor base of around 40,000 agents making it a pretty small player in terms of heads (by comparison, Mary Kay is estimated to have 2.5 million consultants).

But still, it's no slouch and its distributor base is reflective of its business model.

As for the sales method, Norwex agents host cleaning product parties where they demo the goods, give an impassioned sustainability pitch and (theoretically at least) reel in the bucks.

Does it work, I hear you ask? And are these cleaning product parties as incredibly cool, edgy and interesting as they sound?

Sit tight. We'll get into all that in more detail in the compensation plan section. I promise.

3. History

The story of Norwex begins with one [Bjørn Nicolaisen](#).

A former high-powered attorney with the Norwegian Ministry of Environment, Bjørn spent a good portion of his life as a passionate advocate for green-living. He is what you might call a true believer.

One morning in 1994, Bjørn was attempting to dislodge squished bugs from his windshield when some mysterious good samaritan handed him a microfiber cloth.

Bjørn added a bit of water and damned if those flingin flingin bugs didn't come right off! His mind was blown and (so the corporate lore tells us) it was this moment that a cleaning empire was born.

By 1999, Norwex had transitioned from being a strictly local affair to an international entity, with burgeoning operations in the US and Canada.

Building on those successes, the company expanded rapidly both in its geographical scope and its product line.

By 2007, Norwex was active on three continents and selling a complete range of cleaning products, all built around microfiber technology and an anti-chemical ideology.

Today, punch the keyword "Norwex" into your Internet browser and you'll find reams of forums and sites hosting entire conversation threads about its product line.

Not all of it is favorable (we'll get into that more in the pros and cons section) but it's instantly obvious that Norwex products are seen as primo quality.

In fact, it's weirdly hard to find a negative review of the product from a cleaning point of view.

The very fact that so many conversations can be found about *cleaning cloths* shows that the company has been ridiculously effective at building brand recognition and customer loyalty.

4. Products

OK, OK. I've been dangling the promise of introducing you to the full rainbow of Norwex products since the beginning of this review.

I sense your ravenous hunger to know more and shall tease you no longer.

First up, you need only glance at their [online catalog](#) to see they have more stuff than you could swing a cat at in a month of Sundays.

It falls into two broad categories.

Firstly, you've got your [household stuff](#).

Here you'll find a bunch of "chemical-free" liquids and accessories, but it all centers around microfiber cloths.

These miraculous little wipers are reputed to have the ability to remove 99% of bacteria with water alone, thanks to a secret ingredient: microsilver.

The idea of silver as an antibacterial agent does sound strange, but the mineral's bug-conquering proclivities actually have a solid basis in science. Boffiny types, you can read more about that [here](#).

Then there's the [personal care](#) line.

Now these products still feature the occasional make-up removal cloth, but the bulk of the products are, to use a technical term, "lotiony."

There's an abundance of nice-smelling goop you can apply to pretty much any part of your body.

All said goop comes with a promise of being earth-friendly, ethical, chemical-free and generally the kind of thing you'll want to smear on yourself if you aren't an unethical, dried up husk of a human.

You'll also find microsilver cropping up again, this time in hygiene related products like [toothbrushes](#).

Across the board, the emphasis is on durability, simplicity and spending more moolah now to save money in the long run.

Take this snippet from [one review](#).

"You should also know that this is no cheap dollar store microfiber. ... In my normally-very-frugal opinion, the Norwex cloths are actually worth the money because they last so long and are total workhorses."

It's a sentiment you can find echoed again and again in cleaning blogs (yes, those are a thing) across the board.

It costs more but it's safe, good for the environment and will last forever. Therefore, buy it. That's the general gist.

The thing about all these products is, they all seem to review ridiculously well. And I'm not just talking about the fakey reviews written by Norwex acolytes. Actual consumers with no vested interest tend to rave about this stuff.

This may simply be because the products are just that good.

I suspect though that the almost universal glowing reviews also have something to do with how accomplished Norwex is at the messaging.

Everything about Norwex's pitch, from their mission statement to their bacteria-eating toothbrushes, is about telling you that they're the good guys.

More importantly, if you buy their stuff some of that goodness will rub off on you.

If you're into ethical and sustainable consumption (and you don't think too deeply about their claims about the universal nastiness of chemicals) Norwex is likely to have magnetic, dare I say cult-like appeal.

5. Pros

With some reluctance, I'm going to have to put their ethical stance down as an advantage of the Norwex brand.

You've probably gathered by now that I'm skeptical about the whole "chemicals are bad for you" schtick. Chemicals are everywhere. We're surrounded by the things. Water is a chemical for Gandalf's sake!

That said, I honestly do think you can argue that their ethical consumption angle is genuine and may even be pretty good for the world.

Do I buy every single claim about how harmful and deadly their competitor's products are? That would be an emphatic no.

Is it generally good to avoid introducing detergents and the like to our already polluted earth? Yeah, I guess so.

In any case, their do no harm sustainability ethic does have a certain classiness to it, and it's certainly a lot better than selling depleted uranium fidget spinners to orphans.

Which brings me to the quality angle. There is just no doubt that Norwex makes excellent stuff. If finding bad reviews of Norwex products was a drinking game it'd be a pretty dry night.

Everything they make comes with a 60-day guarantee and you only need to look at the product pictures to realize their product is made with care and an eye for detail.

They're trustworthy. Everything about their messaging and optics exudes "nice."

I mean, just take a look at [Bjørn Nicolaisen](#). He looks like a cross between Yoda and Bernie Sanders. He's the absolute archetype of the kind grandpa and that mesmeric believability permeates Norwex's entire branding.

As an agent selling their product, you'd have that force of believability behind you. You're selling an idea. You're selling a philosophy of leaving a light footprint on the Earth.

Most importantly, you're selling a way for conspicuous consumers to sleep better at night.

From a sales point of view, that has to be a huge advantage.

6. Cons

I'm just going to come out and say it. There is just too much "[woo](#)" going on with their messaging.

I know I'm contradicting myself slightly here, but (for me at least) I find they cross a line with this whole "chemicals are bad" malarky. It's OK up to a point but it is regularly taken too far.

It makes me cringe, but more importantly I also think it borders on being unethical marketing.

Here's an example of this woo in action, from the same reviewer I mentioned earlier:

"Detoxing your cleaning supplies is one of the easiest baby steps to take toward a more natural, toxin-free lifestyle, and may I just say: Norwex is my ultimate favorite non-toxic cleaning product."

Wait. Now I need to "detox" my cleaning supplies? Really? Really?

In my opinion, this is fear-mongering at its most rank and pungent. I wouldn't sell a product by leveraging its appeal on such [pseudoscientific claptrap](#).

That said, I don't think you *need* to invoke such nonsense to sell these products, which is why I wouldn't define this anti-chemical rhetoric as a deal-breaker per se.

With a bit of research and due diligence it's entirely possible to come up with a sales pitch which extols Norwex's benefits in an ethical and factual way.

That said, it does give me pause.

Moving to more pragmatic matters, let's look at sales. As I mentioned earlier, the company works by equipping its agents to run "Norwex parties". This, I feel, is a colossal problem with their model.

I won't give you the painful blow by blow of how these events are run (although a perverse part of me would love to link you up with a two-hour YouTube clip of a Norwex party in action).

But I think most sound-minded and non-sadistic people would not wish a cleaning products party on their worst enemy.

I mean picture it. Sitting around, sipping a G & T while talking about how amazing a cloth is at soaking up those annoying kitchen spills.

That has to rival [Vogon poetry](#) for sheer, soul-destroying horror. All hyperbole aside, I'd sooner literally gnaw my own leg off.

But even if you could stomach such a thing, unless you've got serious party-organizing chutzpah, it's going to be a really hard way to sustainably make money.

Once you've wrangled your close friends to sit in on your first party and squeezed some sales from them, who do you approach next?

That is the sixty quazillion dollar question.

Of course, Norwex offers resources to help you figure out an answer to just this conundrum, but anyone who tells you it's easy needs to look up 'easy' in the dictionary. Anyway, we'll go into that in more detail shortly.

This difficulty in lead generation flows on to the next difficulty you're likely to encounter: securing and maintaining agents who'll buy and sell for you, boosting your profit.

Hitting up the MLM sites, a common refrain I found with Norwex was that its attrition rate is high.

The party thing takes serious energy to maintain, so conscripting friends and family members to go forth and consistently multiply your profits is not going to be easy.

7. Compensation Plan

It actually took a bit of hunting to find primary information on Norwex's compensation plan. It's there. You just have to sniff about.

Allow me to save you some time by dropping a link [right here](#).

Before we get to the money, what perks will you get as a Norwex consultant? Well, as they point out in bullet point one, you get to feel like you're making a difference. OK sure, what else?

You'll get a juicy 35% discount on retail sales, \$300 worth of free product for every new recruit you bring on, and the chance to win gifts and awards.

Scroll down a bit and you'll find a neat column introducing you to the meat and potatoes of what you're actually likely to make as a Norwex consultant.

What you'd actually make will depend on how spendy your friends are feeling. But basically, you get a 35% commission on every sale you make.

The examples they provide indicate that one party per week might typically net you \$175. For those of you who despise math, that means you'd need to have sold \$500 worth of product.

Five parties per week, the site enthusiastically goes on to inform you, will net you an average of \$875 per week. That sounds marvelous but again, it's important to ask yourself if you could sustainably make that many cleaning product parties happen.

But there's some incredibly well-connected and energetic people out there. If you could make that happen, I doff my cap to you! Just please don't invite me to one of your parties.

But of course, this is an MLM company and rank has its privileges. As you recruit new people into the company, additional commissions will come.

It's hard to find ranking and commission data on the Norwex website. Fortunately, a friendly Norwex agent has produced this [Youtube vid](#) which breaks it down.

The vid comes complete with a bitching guitar soundtrack, so you might want to crank up the volume.

As you'll see, the commissions on recruit sales start at 3% *if* at least 3 make \$250 worth of sales. As you move up, inevitably the rewards increase, as do the number of people you must rely on to continue their push for more parties and more sales.

Can it be done? Anything is possible. But anyone who tells you that recruiting and maintaining such a massive downline while leveling up in rank should be easy is lying, delusional or an interesting combination of both.

8. Summary - So is Norwex the real deal or something you want to avoid at all costs?

So, where does all that leave us?

Norwex is undoubtedly legit from a business standpoint. They sell a strong product which competes on the basis of its premium quality coupled with a potent and compelling ideology.

For all that, to get consistent sales on cleaning products you're going to need to be persuasive, determined as all get out and in possession of more networking tentacles than an industrial sized bucket of squids.

The viability of selling this way is going to boil down to who you are as a person, but I personally don't see it. Once you exhaust that "warm market" of family and friends, getting more parties on your calendar on an ongoing basis just seems like la la land.

Maybe it's my tired, jaded cynicism doing the talking but I'm far more interested in finding a business idea with more momentum, a greater degree of control and a whole lot less reliance on hitting up my social circle to throw me a bone.

Here's [one option](#) to consider if you're of like mind.

On the other hand, if you believe in the product, are blessed with a ton of enthusiasm and have the right networks to leverage, you could do worse than to put your energy behind the Norwex brand name and philosophy.

I hope this has been a useful review. May your profits ever increase and your household bacteria ever dwindle.