

FREE ENTERPRISE



U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Amway's Steve Van Andel Elected Chamber Chairman



Steve Van Andel is more than chairman of Amway, the family-owned Ada, Michigan-based direct sales giant with more than 20,000 employees globally and millions of independent business owners around the world. He's also a global ambassador for free enterprise and entrepreneurship and, more recently, the new chairman of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce for a one-year term beginning in June 2013.

"Like his father before him, Steve is a friend, confidante, and adviser," says U.S. Chamber President and CEO Tom Donohue. "More important, Steve and his family embody the free enterprise system that the Chamber works so hard to protect and advance. Steve's personal experience, his leadership, and his international profile will be invaluable to the business community as we continue our work to limit the role of government and elevate job creators, entrepreneurs, and innovators."

Van Andel is familiar with his volunteer Chamber role—he served in the same position 12 years ago. He is driven to give back to the business community, an ideal instilled in him by his father, Jay, who started Amway in 1959 with his best friend, Rich DeVos. Jay Van Andel served as U.S. Chamber chairman in the 1970s.

"Dad always said that it's important for us to share our experiences, share our knowledge with the business community,

and support the business community in the different ways that we can," Van Andel says. "I think the Chamber probably does that better than most any other organization."

Says Doug DeVos, Amway president and Steve's friend since childhood, "Steve grew up surrounded by a sense of duty and character that our parents shared with us, which is evident in his life and work. His commitment to bringing the Amway opportunity to markets across the world is tireless. He's a steady leader whose ability to inspire, influence, and encourage is not just a competitive advantage in business, but it's truly helping people live better lives around the world."

Van Andel has served as Amway chairman for 20 years, and during that time, the company has expanded its global footprint and adapted to changing market demands, embracing both old and new economy methods.

While U.S. sales accounted for 70% of Amway's business into the early 1990s, 90% of its business today is outside the United States.

The development of new Amway products has grown right alongside its increasing presence across the globe. Once thought of as a soap company, according to Van Andel, Amway has become a health and beauty company and is the world's largest

seller of NUTRILITE vitamins and food supplements and one of the top five sellers of ARTISTRY premium skin care products.

Known for distributors who work out of their homes, Amway first opened brick-and-mortar stores in China as a condition for doing business in that country and now has more than 650 shops around the world. “We found that distributors like being able to take customers or distributor prospects to a physical store to show them our products. It makes the business real to a lot of people,” Van Andel says.

Amway has also leveraged e-commerce and mobile technology; 80% of U.S. orders are conducted over the Internet. “We’ve taken the concept of maintaining person-to-person relationships, which is what we think gives us a huge advantage in the market, and wrapped it around technology.”

A frequent worldwide traveler, Van Andel takes every opportunity to tout the benefits of expanded trade. “I’m a very strong proponent of more businesses getting involved around the globe. It doesn’t matter the size of the business—small, medium, or large. Promoting trade in any part of the world is a top priority as Chamber chairman.”

Jim Payne, Amway executive vice president and president of the Asia-Pacific Region, says that Van Andel is a powerful advocate. “Steve’s integrity, sense of personal worth, responsibility to and for others, and high ethical and business standards serve as a beacon for many to aspire to as he travels the world. We can be confident that he will continue to be a strong advocate in supporting the sound economic policies needed in the United States and globally.”

Ever the optimist, Van Andel sees tremendous economic potential in the United States, but he adds that uncertainty surrounding health care, financial regulation, and tax policy is restraining that potential.

“Businesses invest when they have some level of comfort as to what the future is going to look like. It’s not that they expect no risk. They just need to know what the playing field is going to look like. If there is uncertainty about that, then the risk becomes very high,” he says.

In addition to ensuring that Amway remains competitive in the global environment, Van Andel devotes much of his time and energy giving back to communities around the world, but especially to his hometown of Grand Rapids, Michigan, where

he has been instrumental in a downtown renewal project.

“Steve Van Andel is a true leader with a record of success in the business world and in his community,” says Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder. “He’s a dedicated volunteer who devotes his time and talents to a number of boards and organizations focused on making Michigan a better place to live and work.

I’ve always been impressed by his vision and his ability to bring people together and inspire them to work toward a common goal.”

Van Andel serves on a number of boards, including Business Leaders for Michigan, the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Foundation, Grand Rapids John Ball Zoo, Hillsdale College, and the Metropolitan Health Corp. in Grand Rapids. He was the founding member of the Grand Rapids University Preparatory School and has given to a number of charitable organizations across West Michigan through his personal foundation.

The cause perhaps closest to Van Andel’s heart is Amway’s One by One Campaign for Children. Celebrating its 10th anniversary, the company’s corporate social responsibility arm has touched the lives of 10 million children worldwide by providing education, health care, nutrition, and a safe and nurturing environment, among other needs. According to Van Andel, it goes far in helping the Amway business truly fulfill its vision of improving lives.

Van Andel’s low-key style and modesty belie his outsize impact. “He’s quiet and doesn’t like to draw attention to himself,” says Marty Allen, chairman emeritus of the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Foundation. “But he shows his true colors in the time, talent, and money he donates to education, health care, and a variety of other community causes.”

Van Andel says that the power of free enterprise to transform lives energizes him every day. He tells the story of his encounter with an Amway distributor in Mexico who spoke quickly in Spanish and kept tugging at the collar of her dress. An interpreter explained that the woman wanted to communicate that she was able to buy a new dress after having

started her own business.

“Stories like that, knowing that they’re happening around the world, keep me coming back into the office each day,” says Van Andel.





U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is the world's largest business federation representing the interests of more than 3 million businesses of all sizes, sectors, and regions, as well as state and local chambers and industry associations.