

# FALLING IN LOVE WITH IRAN

with **PAYAM** Moghim  
and **MARGIE** Aliprandi

By Dr. Josephine Gross

# Meeting PAYAM Moghim

One of our favorite topics to research and report on here at *Networking Times* is the powerful positive impact network marketing is making globally. Our mission is to inspire entrepreneurs around the world with stories of freedom, joy, growth, and transformation.

To see how we are doing, each morning I can't wait to go online and find out who else joined our community or subscribed to *Networking Times* "overnight" (relative to our local time zone).

One October morning in 2014, I noticed a new digital subscriber by the name of Payam Moghim from Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran.

I immediately welcomed Payam with a personal email and some burning questions:

*"Are you new to network marketing?"*

*Is your company domestic or international?"*

*Is network marketing popular in your country?"*

*Would you be willing to share your story with our readers?"*

Payam replied right away.

*"It's only been three years since network marketing became legalized in Iran. However, I have had some experience and studied the business for the past 10 years. My Master's thesis was on the feasibility of using network marketing in the distribution of cosmetics and personal care products in Tehran. I'm currently in a nutritional company. We only have 11 companies and all of them are local. We could say network marketing here is virgin. Let's work together to grow the profession."*



I asked Payam to stay in touch. A few days later, he sent me a letter, which you can read on the next page.

In 2015 Payam left his nutritional company to better serve the entire network marketing profession. He cofounded the Hadi Business Institute to promote entrepreneurship and network marketing education, hosting seminars with business leaders from all over the world.

Payam is also a cofounder of *Iranian Direct Selling News (IDSN)*, the first Persian publication devoted to direct selling and network marketing.

In November 2015 Payam and his colleagues at the Hadi Business Institute invited John Milton Fogg to speak at Iran's first generic network marketing training event. Payma knew John as the author of *The Greatest Networker in the World*, a book that was so pivotal to his understanding of net-

# How Network Marketing Is **GROWING** in **IRAN**

I remember in 2004, I was sitting on a bench at the university with my friends when one of them said, "Brother, I found an opportunity that will change our life!" The timing couldn't be better for me: it was my 19th birthday and I was looking for a chance to change my life.

That same afternoon we went to my friend's home and a girl showed me a catalog and presented the opportunity. It was the first time I heard the term network marketing. Just a couple of minutes of her 45-minute presentation was about the product and the rest was all about how to get rich.

She said, "If you sign up and buy, and find two other people who do the same, and they do the same... after 10 months you will earn \$100,000 dollars." Wow, what a chance! What an easy job! I went home and started playing with numbers on a piece of paper till the morning. The next day I went to my grandmother's home and borrowed the money to sign up.

After a short training I made an appointment with a couple of my friends—and they said yes. Again, "What an easy job!" Unfortunately, my two friends didn't find their two... One month went by, then two months, then three. It took me six months to finally sit down and ask myself, "What's the problem?"

I began reading books, watched videos, and studied the network marketing business model. By age 20, I had read *The Greatest Networker in the World* by John Milton Fogg and *Your First Year in Network Marketing* by Mark Yarnell.

As I grew my understanding of the business, it became clear that the company I had joined was a pyramid scam... After a little more research, I found out there were no legitimate network marketing companies in Iran.

Things in my country are a little different. We can't buy books or tools online. We don't

have credit cards. There are no American chain stores or big-box retailers. None of the network marketing companies on the Global 100 list operate in Iran.

Network marketing has been legalized here only since 2011. We currently have 18 local companies, and no international companies. As John Milton Fogg said from the stage when he came here in 2015, "It's the perfect time for Iran to grow up and show the world that you can be part of the network marketing profession."



Iran is the country of saffron, caviar, dried fruits, nuts, and hand-made carpets. We have many wonderful products to share with the world. We are a very hospitable culture and our top values are family and friendship. Being home, having parties, these things are in our bones. It's a perfect fit for network marketing.



*Families celebrating national holiday at the park*

However, to build a business, we have to focus on the basics. This starts with "the philosophy of selling."

Most people in Iran don't like selling, because they think that to sell is to lie. They think of salespeople who talk too much. But that's not the only way to sell. Why do we sell? The philosophy of selling must be based on satisfying the customer's needs. Then you are no longer a seller, but a mentor and advisor. Whatever your product may be, focus on how it can benefit people.

As a mentor, why, whom, and how do you advise? Start with "why," because if you know your purpose, you can face anything. When you know your why, who to talk to and how to do the job becomes clear.

To build a sustainable business, you have to be ethical. You always want to serve people. You cannot lie. You cannot present the business as a get-rich-quick scheme. You cannot tell people this business is easy.

In the end, you have to become a leader. This requires you to do and acquire certain things, but first you must become a master of testimonials. In my country, when you talk about testimony in this business, everybody thinks about cars, houses, and luxurious vacations. I think the biggest testimony is who you become, your character and your personality. That's why we say, "Personal development is the key to making a fortune."

Dear friends around the world who seek a new market, this country (Persia) can be the land of opportunities, if you choose your steps carefully and put people first. If you come from integrity and not from greed. Yes, we are behind. But depending on your philosophy, this can be a challenge or an opportunity. You can make history here by promoting an ethical business.

Best Wishes and Welcome to Iran!

*Payam Moghim*  
*October 2014*



*Margie Aliprandi receiving a standing ovation in Tehran, May 2016*

work marketing that he translated it into Persian for his team. John spoke in Tehran and Isfahan to a combined audience of 4,000 students.

“We chose John as our first speaker because I knew from reading his book that his view of network marketing would resonate with the Iranian people,” says Payam. “When John came to our country, he immediately recognized and championed our entrepreneurial spirit, our ethics of working hard and smart, and our inborn sense of what is moral and fair.”

Payam believes network marketing is the most open and flexible business ever created. “Available to anyone regardless of their educa-

tion, past success or failure, gender, race, or age, it is the purest form of free enterprise,” he says, “rewarding people for becoming the best they can be, both personally and professionally. It does not tolerate self-serving practices or manipulative methods. Most of all, network marketing rewards servant leadership. That’s why I believe it was made for Iranian people.”

Network marketing arrived in Iran in the late 90s, but unfortunately the first companies were mostly pyramid schemes. For instance, a foreign company enrolled close to 4 million Iranians and took the equivalent of \$1 billion US dollars from



them without delivering any return. As a result, the government passed strict laws prohibiting multilevel marketing. In 2011 a law was passed allowing legitimate network marketing companies to apply for a license to do business.

Today the Iranian government recognizes network marketing as a potential solution to the country's massive youth unemployment problem and is not only tolerant but even supportive of the direct selling business model.

In May 2016 Payam organized a second series of events featuring John Milton Fogg, but this time he asked John to find another speaker who could inspire women. John reach out to his friend

Margie Aliprandi, a network marketing leader and legend in her own right. Both John and Margie accompanied Payam and his colleagues on a speaking tour, teaching seminars on entrepreneurship in Tehran and Isfahan. It was the first time in history that a Western woman took the stage to educate Iranians in business and success principles outside of academia.

The experience was life-changing for Margie as well as for some of the people she met. In our conversation below, Margie shares why she traveled to Iran, what she learned on her journey, and why she already agreed to go back there in January 2017.



## MARGIE Aliprandi's Travel Report

### What made you say yes to John Fogg's invitation?

**MARGIE:** I've always felt a draw to the Middle East. I feel the last phase of my life is about empowering women globally and being an example, as well as inspiring them from within to reach for that greater self-expression.

I was under the entire misconception that this was an area of the world where women were repressed, where their voice wasn't heard as pow-

erfully as it could be. I found out they are actually quite free, and that the men don't have the women under their thumbs, like we in the West tend to think. When I experienced life with the Iranian people, I was delighted to learn that I was wrong about one of the very reasons I agreed to go there.

The demographic that's most drawn to network marketing in Iran are the younger generation, average age being 24. They are about 60 percent male and 40 percent female. Women



Leadership panel at two-day seminar in Tehran

are graduating college with honors and in even higher numbers than men do, but neither of them have careers to step into. Youth unemployment is rampant, and network marketing is the answer for many, giving them a vision for their future.

It's a brand new business model for them, only five years old. Roughly one million people are involved, with 200 to 300 thousand actively building. Yearly sales volume is about \$100 million USD. It felt humbling to be there at a time when the business is so new, so unformed, yet so full of promise.

**It's as though you get to be a part of raising a young child.**

**MARGIE:** Yes, and you get this powerful impression that by helping to form it with the right perspective and core values, it can become a global force that connects people there with our world. I loved the feeling that by us being there and growing network marketing, individuals now have greater expression and fuller lives, with all of those abundances pieces falling into place.

There's an Iranian company bringing in 30,000 people a month. How huge is *that*? Another thing that struck me is that being there at the very beginning took network marketing back for me to its simplest form—people who are sharing a product or service and getting compensated, while growing themselves and their teams.





People who choose to see possibility versus “What could go wrong?” or “How is this going to work?” It’s a moment-to-moment choice we all get to make. That’s our freedom. And building a team is about finding those who resonate and are ready to step into that.

**MARGIE:** Being there I felt such an energetic alignment. It has to do with my soul purpose of empowering people. I had to overcome some practical hurdles such as almost not getting my visitor’s visa on time. There definitely was a magnetic force attracting me there.



**Tell us a little bit about how you got invited. What was at the origin of this whole event?**

**MARGIE:** Payam Moghim whom you know had reached out to John Fogg who had been there in late 2015, and this time John reached out to me and said, “Would you be

We sometimes think there’s so much to learn. There’s getting started right and fast, the inviting language, following up, the duplication model, the compensation plan, how to leverage systems and tools, how to get people to events and train them well... It can be overwhelming! Being there helped me to re-embrace the simplicity and peel back the steps to the basics—people coming together to create a better life. They’re passionate about an idea, a product. They feel possibility from within, and they’re sharing that with others and getting paid. What a beautiful, simple business we have.

interested in going to Iran on a two-week speaking tour?” I knew none of the details, and just said yes—before I had time to consider whether it was safe to go there. Now I chuckle that I would even have that concern, because it’s *more* than safe.

I felt an instant resonance. As I began preparing and putting content together, and learning more about the country, the people, their history, the history of network marketing there and where it is right now, that’s when I started to understand better *why* I felt drawn. When I got there, it became really evident.

## Did you tour around the country? How many events did you speak at?

**MARGIE:** We had two sold-out events in Tehran, both with 750 really passionate people, and several events in Isfahan. A couple of ad hoc events got added after we arrived. Then the hunger for some leadership training and guidance was so strong that we scheduled a few four-hour pow-wows with specific leaders. All told, we spoke to several thousand people.

Despite the business being so new, there are amazing people making \$30, \$40, \$50,000 a month, just like in the United States, and yet they're doing it in such a pioneering way without even the most basic tools. The raw energy of the rightness of our business model has propelled them to this point, and now they can glean so much from the historical perspective we bring them.

For example, learning from somebody like me who's been doing it for a really long time, who has seen what works and what doesn't, how to fine-tune their approach. One of the most interesting aspects of my time there was a segment I did toward the end of my presentation on ethics. I knew full well from the input I received that many of the teams were more or less in violation of some of the concepts I was teaching.

## How did it go over?

Very well. They were hungry to learn and ready

to raise their standards of professionalism, and what it means to build with integrity and grow a business that stands the test of time. It was so meaningful to catch them at a time when they can form, by the decisions they make and the actions they take and the ethics they adopt—that are loose right now—how network marketing is viewed in their region of the world.

It's in their hands to change things, because 15 years ago there were some real money games, and people lost a lot of money, and then it was banned from the country. The general public is still a little suspicious, wondering "Is this a legitimate business?" The leaders recognize they can be a beacon of ethics and morality in business for the entire Middle East.

To be there and witness their hunger to do it right and be of service was extremely exciting. I was a little apprehensive talking about ethics and integrity, having no idea how it would be received. To my surprise the audience burst into a spontaneous standing ovation—a feeling I will never forget.

## What other lessons did you come away with?

Before going there, due to my lack of education, like a lot of other Americans I kind of lumped the whole Middle East together. It all feels like an area of unrest to us. I learned that there hasn't been any uprising or any car bombs, none of that

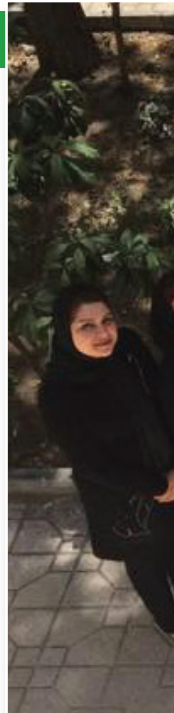
### Ethics

- Build with integrity
- Truly care about people
- Speak positively about competitors
- No poaching

- Your reputation is your most valuable asset
- Your actions reflect on the entire NWM profession



With Mina (Payam's wife) in Istanbul



stuff, in the past 10 years. I began viewing these Iranian entrepreneurs as a pivotal force for the entire Middle East that is using network marketing as the platform for unification.

From a global perspective, I learned that the freedom this business provides is *phenomenal*. Nothing compares to being able to live life on your own terms. The relationships that occur are just beyond words, crossing any political lines and different ideologies and religions and races. Network marketing just cuts through all of that.

It creates a unity and a oneness that is unparalleled in any other business I know, and still with all of that considered, the best thing that comes out of it is *who we become*.

**It allows us to create such connectivity that nobody can tell us we're separate. No one can feed us that lie.**

I'm a firm believer in "the biggest idea always

wins." Being there, I got the sense that this region is so ready for network marketing. The hearts and the minds of people are ripe for growth. They're hungry to know how to do it the right way, to make a bigger difference, to grasp onto whatever they can to move forward.

It's a region of the world for us in the United States where there is a lot of misunderstanding, and probably some generalizations that have us drawing conclusions that in my opinion after being there are grossly inaccurate. I truly believe network marketing can be a platform to bring us together and closer to world peace. It feels like this is what's in our hands as network marketing expands in that region.

I know this from personal experience. I have people in my business who are like family to me in the Ukraine, and when a crisis happened there a couple of years ago, the first thought I had was, "Are they okay?" I'm not disassociated from any



Private leadership meeting with top producers at Payam's office

region of the world where I have team members.

These alliances we form create unity and oneness. That's the big idea: *we are one*.

**We are ready for healing, and the Middle East is a tender spot on Mother Earth. It's hurt. There's a wound there. Network marketing can be a vehicle for starting to heal that, and we all have this desire for healing and wholeness.**

**MARGIE:** The fact that they are open to our influence is touching and powerful. I met people there whom I hugged, and we just cried. We could feel the warmth, the strength of the connection. No one can deny that. I came home different. This has changed me and my perspective. They are changed, too. It was just a freaking love affair.

People in the Middle East view Americans in a very friendly way. The problems and issues we have are between governments, and the media is

fueling it, but the country is not the government. A country is its *people*.

**We all know that, and when you mention a big idea will always win, that's it. The glue that holds us together is our connection, our empathy, our yearning to heal what hurts, in ourselves and each other.**

**MARGIE:** Exactly, and recognizing that for any slight differences we may have, there are way more similarities, such as the human longing to make a difference. Finding the network marketing platform that enables that to happen, starting right in our own homes with our own selves, and our own lives, uplifting those, and then reaching out to others, and eventually creating a global family. I'm beyond honored that I was the first Western woman to bring this message of network marketing, entrepreneurship, leadership development and personal transformation. It just makes you want to cry. ■

"When you look at ancient Persian poets, such as Rumi or Hafez, they are all about sharing love and friendship. These are the highest values in our culture, over money and material success. This makes 'relationship marketing' a perfect fit."

—Payam Moghim



### RUMI—13<sup>th</sup> century

"Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing, there is a field.  
I'll meet you there."

"Oh my friend, all that you see of me is a just shell,  
and the rest belongs to love."

"If you are irritated by every rub, how will your mirror be polished?"

"Wherever you are, and whatever you do, be in love."



### HAFEZ—14<sup>th</sup> Century

"And still, after all this time, the sun never says to the earth,  
'You owe me.' Look what happens with a love like that,  
it lights up the whole sky."

"Your heart and my heart are very old friends."

"I've learned so much from God that I can no longer call myself  
a Christian, a Hindu, a Muslim, a Buddhist, or a Jew."



### SA'ADI—13<sup>th</sup> century

"Have patience. All things are difficult before they become easy."

"Deep in the sea are riches beyond compare.  
But if you seek safety, it is on the shore."

"Human beings are members of a whole, in creation of one  
essence and soul. If one member is afflicted with pain,  
other members uneasy remain. If you've no sympathy for human  
pain, the name of human you cannot retain."



## Teachable Moment

When I was invited to speak in the Middle East a couple of years ago, like Margie I was eager to connect with the women and grow my understanding. Among many other topics, we discussed one cultural difference in particular: women in public have to cover their bodies (from neck to ankles), their heads, and in some cases their faces except for the eyes. One woman explained to me, "We don't want men to be distracted by our physical appearance. We want them to connect with our soul through our eyes. Our men are not dominating, they are protecting us, in this case from the 'unclean' glances of strangers." I found out that far from being repressed, these women are revered. And their men love and respect them deeply.—**Josephine Gross**