



SuccessNet

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EDUCATION *and* INFORMATION BULLETIN for BNI MEMBERS



The Professionals hit £1m

(See page 15)

ALPHA TEAM TURN ON THE POWER

When members of an Aberdeen chapter's power circle drew up plans for a modest event to promote their combined services, they had no idea it would become one of the city's best-ever IT conferences.

But that's what happened after Alpha Chapter's IT power circle members announced their 'Integrate 08' initiative, a two-day technology conference which proved a hugely successful collaborative venture between BNI and Aberdeen's Chamber of Commerce.

The event took off when Alpha's IT power circle - Sharon Park from Sunnyside Consulting, Sean Thomson (Indigo Technologies), Peter Major (West End Business Systems) and Ron McGregor (a director of Emerge Communications) - shared their plans with Chamber directors who promptly offered to back the conference with their own resources.

Meanwhile, other Alpha colleagues - Aberdeen Football Club's community relations officer Isla Stewart, photographer Doreen Stewart, and PR consultant Brett Jackson, - used their combined expertise to gain maximum marketing and publicity for the event.

After seeing hundreds of visitors attend the conference, Brett Jackson said: "This was the ultimate example of power circle members proving that the sum of the parts can produce a very big outcome. It was a fantastic shop window for chapter members and BNI."

Our photo shows Alpha Chapter's participating members with the event's logo.

Contact Brett on 07808 727167.



Sandwich is real Deal as members rule the waves

Kent members found themselves all at sea in flying the flag for BNI, after being challenged to compete in the local Chamber of Trade's annual raft race.

Despite having no idea how to build a raft, and even less how to sail one, members of Deal and Sandwich's Business Leaders Chapter decided the opportunity to promote BNI on the Kent coast was too good to ignore.

Chapter Director Nigel Stevenson said: "The regatta raft race is a well-publicised event, so we couldn't say no. We were given a £100 budget to design, build and launch a six-person raft. Luckily one of

our members Shaun Hopper is a carpentry expert, so he project managed the design with help from colleagues Alan Jones, Stewart Loder and Jamie Thomson."

They launched their raft just minutes before the start and finished a respectable sixth place behind more seasoned sailors. Nigel added: "One of our objectives is to raise the chapter's profile, so this was a great opportunity to make local people aware of BNI. We got even more publicity when our raft was stolen and pushed out to sea the following night - being rescued by the RNLI !!"

Contact Nigel on 01304 369440.



How's your appetite for a 'Big Breakfast' extravaganza?

It may still be more than two months away, but if you haven't yet started to plan your chapter's involvement in our third annual 'big breakfast' event, then it's really time you did!

From Monday 2nd to Friday 6th February, chapters throughout the world will be participating in a host of activities to mark BNI's commitment to International Networking Week which, in the past two years has attracted huge support for multi-chapter big breakfasts and collaborative regional events throughout the UK - staged with chambers of commerce and other local business networking groups.

In keeping with last year's theme of

raising BNI's profile among local and regional business communities, next February's event will again feature high-profile events aimed at forging closer links with other local business partners.

National Director Gillian Lawson said: "When we launched International Networking Week, we always felt it would quickly be adopted by other business organisations around the world, and this has happened. The event gives members the chance to participate in extended networking sessions and explore business opportunities with colleagues from different chapters they would not otherwise meet. A vast amount of new business will be generated."



BRAVO! BNI MEMBERS GET A TASTE OF GOVERNMENT

Members of Scotland's largest BNI chapter have been getting a close-up taste of real power – by sitting in on a session of the Scottish Parliament at the personal invitation of First Minister Alex Salmond.

Aberdeen's six-year old Bravo Chapter has 40 members, some of whom used the opportunity of sharing a recent fundraising dinner with the First Minister to update him on BNI's progress.

As our picture shows, Mr Salmond (in blue shirt) and Bravo's members got on famously. But the best was still to come when he invited them to be his guests for a day in Parliament. Chapter Director Hazel Arnold said: "We were delighted the First Minister showed such a strong interest in BNI."

In a letter to BNI's Area Director Sid Grant, Mr Salmond commented: "I've noted BNI's progressive work in the Aberdeenshire area, and must acknowledge the positive role it has taken in helping create a friendly and competitive business environment."

With Bravo's members passing over 2,000 referrals a year, generating more than £1 million worth of new business, secretary treasurer Tim Waters added: "It's indicative of the chapter's strength and solidity that every member has renewed his or her membership, confirming the value they place on their seat." •

Contact Hazel on 01224 312100.



Maidenhead's **Mark** strips for business **difference!**

At a towering six feet seven inches tall, Mark Roach cuts an imposing image. But as if this wasn't enough to make him stand out from BNI colleagues, he came up with a novel way of making an even bigger impact at a recent chapter meeting - by stripping off!!

As commercial and community manager for Maidenhead United Football Club (who play in the Blue Square South League), Mark joined the town's Thames Chapter to help raise the Club's profile in the local business world.

He said: "I quickly learnt that your 60-second slot needs to be both visual and memorable, so while I was extolling the merits of the Club, I started peeling



Mark, who has just become Thames' new Chapter Director is pictured, stripped for business at the Club's ground by fellow Thames Chapter member, photographer Piers Thompson. Mark can be contacted on 07970 399256 and Piers on 07870 239657.

off my jacket, tie, shoes, trousers and finally my shirt - to reveal a Maidenhead United strip underneath!

"I'm not sure if anyone remembered what I said, but it made an impression," said Mark, who staged a repeat performance the following week while subbing at nearby Maidenhead Chapter. "Now every time I stand up, people wonder what I'm going to do next!"

Although still in his first 'season' with BNI, Mark has made an impressive start - but his goal is to receive a referral to a potential sponsor of United's famous York Road ground. "I'm hoping someone in BNI will know someone out there who'd like our historic ground named after them or their company." •

LAWSONS' LORE

Recession? What recession? While the doom-mongers would have us believe the economy is in melt-down, at BNI we take a more positive view of recent global financial events.

In order to thrive in any economic downturn, getting back to basics is surely the starting point so that, if things do go wrong in your business sector, you'll be in a stronger position to cope. Word-of-mouth referral marketing makes perfect sense during the good times, but it is of even greater benefit when the going gets tough – making the trust and confidence that accompany personal referrals more important than ever.

Developing and maintaining strong relationships with BNI colleagues is therefore essential if you are really going to help each other find and win business. And, like anything of true value, building better business partnerships requires effort, training and practise, to which end we've created a new workshop (see panel alongside) to help you strengthen relationships with fellow members.

Difficult times present new possibilities and, as entrepreneurs, our task is to stay focused on solutions rather than be distracted by problems. This begins by viewing your chapter as the ideal forum for meeting positive people, forging good relationships, and identifying real opportunities. There is no better way to maximise the benefits from relationships you create among your colleagues, thereby ensuring your business thrives through this recession, rather than just survives.

BNI membership is even more vital to your business in a downturn – and, if you had even the slightest doubt about this, SuccessNet contains all the evidence to prove it! Meanwhile, on page 14, you'll find more good news about how BNI is working to help you. •



Pocket-size books to help you build a GIANT REPUTATION

Keen to become a better networker? Want to get more out of your BNI membership? Attended a recent training workshop and in a hurry to learn more?

Then you'll be needing to get your hands on BNI's new pocket guides to building better business – a series of slim, 60-page booklets designed to slip into your jacket pocket, yet crammed with most of the vital facts, networking advice and 'how to . . .' techniques that were previously only available in definitive text books on the subject.

Written by business guru Rob Brown and commissioned specifically by BNI to enable its 'cash-rich, time-poor' members to cherry-pick the most important networking and business development nuggets with



minimum effort, the series will eventually cover every aspect of networking and referral marketing.

The first of the mini pocket guides, called 'The BNI Networking Pocket Guide' will be widely available in the New Year at various BNI events including training workshops and members' days. •

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS IS NEW WORKSHOP FOCUS

So you think you know what it takes to build solid, lasting business relationships? Really? Well, after attending one of BNI's brand new 'Relationship Skills' workshops, you might want to think again!

As BNI's fifth training workshop, 'Relationship Skills', has been developed to maximise the value of 1-2-1 meetings, which all members are encouraged to adopt as a part of their membership.

Devised by Assistant National Director Charlie Lawson, it aims to show:

- How to build better, more productive relationships through 1-2-1's
- How to benefit from holding repeated 1-2-1's with the same BNI colleagues
- How to turn 1-2-1's into tangible business generation meetings
- Why 1-2-1 sessions are vital to growing your business through BNI



Charlie said: "Everyone acknowledges the importance of holding one-to-one discussions with their chapter colleagues but until now there has been very little practical guidance as to how members can make the most of these sessions. We want members to hold repeat 1-2-1s with all their colleagues, knowing that by doing so they are improving their prospects for gaining more business."

The new course complements other workshops covering referrals, presentational and networking skills and chapter development. Ask your leadership team for details of the first relationship skills workshops in your area, and be among the first to benefit from their content! •

The workshop was piloted in three BNI regions during the summer, involving more than 200 members and is now being rolled out across Britain.

Mark
Lawson

WE'RE TOPS! Chapter Director Antonio Falco holds the commemorative plaque presented by BNI executive director Robert French, watched by his Elmbridge colleagues.



TRAFFIC LIGHTS ARE GREEN in race to be Top Guns

A new system for measuring the overall performance of UK and Irish chapters has been welcomed by leadership teams as they compete to be officially named 'Britain's best chapter'.

Until recently, chapters that consistently out-performed regional rivals were happy to be recognised with a Founders' Award but, during the summer, a previously internal monitoring mechanism (the 'Chapter Performance Traffic Lights' system) was unveiled, producing a hugely enthusiastic response.

The system uses various chapter statistics - from the number of visitors and referrals per member per week to absenteeism, conversion, retention, growth and size - with each factor weighted and given a points score to rank all 580-plus chapters in the UK and Ireland. After correlating the resulting mass of information, BNI's head office now produces a monthly league table, available to leadership teams through their regional directors.

Introduced in June, the first group to be openly recognised as 'Best in Britain' was Kent's 11-year-old Canterbury Chapter, followed in July by near neighbour, Tunbridge Wells' Heart of Kent Chapter. August saw Surrey's dynamic Elmbridge Chapter become the third group to achieve the title while

JULY:

1. Heart of Kent (Tunbridge Wells)
2. Chipping (Barnet, NW London)
3. Faversham (Kent)
4. Edgwarebury (London NW)
5. Elmbridge (Walton, Surrey)

AUGUST:

1. Elmbridge (Walton, Surrey)
2. Chariots (St. Albans)
3. Faversham (Kent)
4. Chipping (Barnet, NW London)
5. Edgwarebury (NW London)

SEPTEMBER:

1. Ashford (Kent)
2. Nexus (Glasgow)
3. Chariots (St. Albans)
4. Elmbridge (Walton, Surrey)
5. Bravo (Aberdeen)

UK's 'Top Five' chapters

another Kent chapter, Ashford, gained the honour for September.

Business development consultant Antonio Falco, Elmbridge's then Chapter Director, confirmed how much the 'top gun' award meant to his colleagues. "It gave us a fantastic lift because we have worked hard to create a thriving business environment that generates business opportunities and also provides an enjoyable support network."

Elmbridge's 35 members meet at Hersham's Burhill Golf Club where its elder statesman, accountant Alan James, has maintained his membership based on excellent commercial sense. He said: "Time is my scarcest resource, so I minimise wasted time and expenditure. We spend very little on advertising because I continue to receive good quality referrals through BNI. There is also the bonus of great camaraderie within the chapter - most of whose members are now personal friends."

National Director Gillian Lawson said: "Previously, a chapter could only compare its performance with other groups in its region but the new system gives them a national rating and that is something they value. Whether your chapter is 5th or 500th in the table, everyone wants to improve their positions." •

Contact Antonio on 01483 854199.

NEWS IN BRIEF

TWENTY TWENTY VISION?

Business entrepreneurs throughout the UK and Ireland continue to join our ranks, constantly increasing both the number of members and chapters month upon month.

During the last quarter, no fewer than 20 new chapters have been launched, stretching from the South Coast to Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The full list of our latest groups is: Alchemy (Stormont, N. Ireland), Alderman (Aldermaston), Blakewater (Blackburn), Bosard (Tilsworth, Bedfordshire), Bury Vision (Bury), Cannon (Barnsley), Cathedral (Canterbury), Chopin (Ealing), Enterprise (Littlehampton), Garnet (Milton Keynes), Illustrious (Mill Hill, NW London), Limes (Solihull), Oracle (Chorley), Platinum (Linlithgow), Quaker (Darlington), Salt (Middlewich), Southend Peers (Thorpe Bay), Storm (Glasgow), Tennyson (Lincoln) and Wyvern (Derby). •

OUR LATEST GOLD CLUB TEAM

BNI's prestigious Gold Club has welcomed its latest influx of high performers – members who have earned their black badges by making significant contributions to growing their chapters and boosting referrals.

So congratulations to the following new Gold Club members: Valerie Apps (from the Foundation Chapter, Croydon), Will Briggs (The Royal Chapter, Eastbourne), Jeremy Garson (Bentley), Michele Green (Wulfrun, Wolverhampton), Claudette Hall (Isis, Ealing), Roy Harris (Darwin, Beckenham), Derek Hornbuckle (Wellingborough), Paul Lewis (Sixfields, Northampton), Debbie Lock (Churchill, Bromley), Madeleine Morgan (Granta, Cambridge), Edwin Snapper (Forest, Nottingham) and Brian Whitehouse from the Terriers Chapter in Huddersfield. •

They say a picture is worth 1,000 words, but in the case of Cork chiropractor Ben Martin, one particular picture has proved to be worth significantly more in business terms!

A member of Cork City Chapter, Ben was approached by BNI colleague, photographer Roger Overall, who wanted to obtain a series of striking images of different professionals at work, with a view to entering them for a prestigious photographic award.



A picture with real business backbone?

"I was happy to oblige, so Roger came along and took some photos," Ben recalled. "I thought no more about it but, at a chapter meeting a few weeks later, Roger passed me a referral from a fellow photographer who'd seen one of his photos taken at my practice, and was looking for urgent treatment. Roger had recommended me and it led to my giving his colleague a course of treatment - hardly the outcome I'd expected from a photograph!"

There were two further happy twists. Firstly Ben realised he'd found an ideal creative photographer and promptly gave Roger a referral to undertake the creative imagery for his new corporate and sales literature. And then Roger learnt that the photo he'd taken of Ben (see left) - the same one that had resulted in the referral - had won him a top Gold Award in the photograph competition! •

Contact Ben on +353 21 487 8465 and Roger on +353 21 451 8000.

Two heads better than one in Amazon win

Collaboration between two Cork-based recruitment consultancies has resulted in them winning an account worth well over €500,000 – after beating off competition from much larger HR firms.

The contract to provide more than 100 multi-lingual staff for mail order company Amazon, was won by Expect Talent, whose boss Samantha Rathling is a member of Cork City Chapter, and Shane Hanrahan – from the neighbouring Phoenix Chapter – who runs Oak Recruitment.

Their joint bid for a share of Amazon's seasonal staffing increase arose because Samantha is also a BNI assistant director, responsible for supporting four of Cork's chapters including Phoenix – where she met Shane and discovered their recruitment businesses were complementary, hers dealing mainly in permanent placement, and Shane's primarily involved with temporary staff.

She said: "Although we had an

existing relationship with Amazon, we needed to demonstrate our ability to handle the different requirements of placing temporary staff, which is Oak Recruitment's specialty. Shane and I prepared a joint bid which saw us win a substantial share of Amazon's pre-Christmas recruitment programme, beating bids from some of Ireland's largest recruitment firms."

Shane said that having created a strategic partnership with Expect Talent, he was confident their two consultancies would bid jointly for other accounts. "We'd previously held a couple of 1-2-1s and referred small pieces of business to each other, but this was the first time we'd pitched together for a large account. I hope it marks the start of a long and fruitful business partnership," he added. •

Contact Samantha on +353 (0)21 420 9050 and Shane on +353 (0)21 450 5916.



QUEUEING UP FOR BREAKFAST

Would-be members of one of the UK's largest chapters may soon be queueing up to join its ranks – knowing that even if they get through an intensive interview, they might have to join a waiting list!

Such is the success of Bromley's Churchill Chapter in south-east London, that competition to join its elite business entrepreneurs around the breakfast table has seen the 'no vacancies' signs go up, with every new applicant being interviewed by the leadership team as the group maintains one of BNI's strictest member selection processes, ensuring that only the most committed applicants are accepted.

The Chapter reached its 40-member target during the summer (for which it received a Founder's Award) and currently numbers 47 - with several approved applicants waiting to join, and others having already been rejected! Not surprisingly, the result is a magnificent average of two referrals per member being passed every week – twice the national average!

Recently-retired chapter director, IFA Brian Davies explained: "My incoming leadership team was determined to make it the best-performing group in the UK, so two months before we took up office in April, membership co-ordinator Edith Maskell, secretary/treasurer Bill Kenny and myself held '3-2-1' sessions with each of our chapter colleagues, to identify how we could help them be more productive and get more from their membership.

"We were very open and direct about our intentions. Knowing that we needed to lead from the front, our

leadership team was consistently among the highest performers every week. We wanted triers and winners in the chapter and, if individuals felt our expectations were too high, we either needed to help them improve their performance or encourage them to leave. The outcome was that we lost a few people but, more importantly we significantly improved the performances of other colleagues who for various reasons had not reached their potential but whom we knew could become very good members."

Having announced they would take membership past the 40-mark within six months, the leadership team ensured chapter development was the constant priority by including a "Life begins at 40" Powerpoint update in every meeting. Brian added: "We made it clear that every member shared responsibility, not just to grow the chapter but to get the right new people in."

The response could not have been better. A visitors' day attracted over 50 guests and membership soon passed the 40 mark. As a result, the three-strong leadership team continued to interview all applicants, selecting only those they felt sure would enhance the group, even though in some cases, there was no immediate vacancy.

Brian added. "If we can maintain this momentum, we might need a formal waiting list, but that's a positive thing and it works both ways. A vibrant chapter whose members are doing a lot of business is attractive to applicants – and in turn we can select the best people." •

Contact Brian on 0845 013 5800.

TEN STEPS TO SUCCESSFUL LEADERSHIP:

Churchill's leadership team examined every aspect of developing a successful chapter before setting its targets for a hugely successful term of office, based on the following priorities:

1. SET CLEAR GOALS:

We set 10 aims, seeking excellence, inspiring and motivating by example, while pursuing a £2M new business target by the end of our term.

2. THINK BIG:

You are what you THINK. Rise above the little things and be BIG THINKERS. Let's all be big achievers.

3. HAVE SOME GOLDEN RULES:

Like building relationships through weekly 1-2-1's, arriving by 6.30am and staying to the end. If anyone leaves before 8.30am, mark them absent!

4. ATTRACT GOOD MEMBERS:

The membership culture should be 'Who can we LET into our chapter?' not 'Who can we GET into the chapter?' And you must retain good members. Hold 3-2-1 sessions with all members to ensure BNI is meeting their aspirations.

5. GOOD MOTIVATION:

We sent regular emails to keep members motivated. Gain all-member support for your goals and update them weekly. Give members incentives and reward good contributions.

6. DON'T STOP AT 40:

To retain a dynamic 40-strong chapter, you need at least 45 members on the books. Maintaining demand means all members have to work hard to keep their seats.

7. RATE YOUR CHAPTER:

Make sure you receive feedback from visitors and members. We gave questionnaires to each member, to identify whether the chapter was meeting their needs.

8. STICK TO BNI POLICY:

This is where strong and fair leadership comes into its own. Follow policy to the letter, treat everyone the same, and encourage every member to attend training workshops.

9. ACCEPT ADVICE:

Throughout our term, we had regular meetings with our Area Director, Regional Director and head office, taking advice and support on key issues.

10. SHOW APPRECIATION:

Recognise members' achievements, say 'thank you' for the business you gain, and remember to smile. It's catching.



BIG BUSINESS: Kathryn with Graham (left) and Andy

When you've just handed over a referral worth over £50,000, you expect to be your chapter's top performer - but after doing just that, Hertfordshire IT consultant Graham Lane still found himself playing second fiddle!

That's because the recipient - St. Albans' Chariots Chapter colleague Kathryn Sagers, who runs StageHouse, a home decorating consultancy - had chosen the same day to pass a whopping £278,000 referral to another chapter member, kitchen specialist Andy Ward, for the installation of 24 kitchens in a new residential development.

She said: "I felt sorry for Graham, because in any other week, handing over such a large referral would make you the

A £3 million account? That'll do nicely!

A casual glance across the street during a meeting with a customer, has resulted in a Yorkshire chapter director handing his group's bank manager a referral that led to one of the biggest business account switches in the region.

Alan Terry, Managing Director of Connoisseur Wines, was visiting his client when he noticed a building society branch across the road and remarked on the poor service offered by many banks.

"It prompted my customer to tell me about one of his business colleagues who, he said, was fed up with his bank and wanting to move his £3 million business account. I immediately thought of Matthew Jones, the excellent banker in my New York Chapter, described his qualities, and was then given the name

and phone number of my customer's disillusioned chum," Alan recalled.

The outcome saw Matthew (a senior Barclays relationship manager) receive a referral into one of the country's largest agricultural contracting companies and within weeks he'd landed the multi-million pound account.

Matthew said: "When you join BNI, you are told not to expect significant referrals during the early months while colleagues get to know and trust you. But from the launch of New York Chapter a year ago, I was fortunate to receive good referrals, culminating in this excellent business we won through Alan's efforts. •

Contact Alan on 07971 538720 and Matthew on 07825 377779.

BIG REFERRALS...YOUR BIG REFERRALS...YOUR BIG REFERRALS...YOUR BIG REFERRALS

chapter's best performer - but at least it's a sign of our group's success."

Graham commented: "I know Kathryn works closely with property developers on big projects, so her referral wasn't entirely surprising. It's just a shame it coincided with mine, which followed a one-to-one when I realised she was ideally placed to handle the office refurbishment for my company, Cheeky Monkey." •

Contact Graham on 07771 866458 and Kathryn on 07787 113333.

Chariots charge to record referrals!

Mark copies his way to biggest order

There's nothing wrong in copying your way to business success - especially when you are following BNI's tried and tested procedures.

That's just what office equipment supplier Mark Eddison has done - and it has landed him a £250,000-plus contract supplying photocopiers and printers to a major commercial group.

As immediate-past chapter director of Two Valleys Chapter in Long Eaton, Derbyshire where members recently passed their 10,000th referral, Mark attended a BNI workshop on generating better referrals and, on applying his new-found knowledge it produced almost instant results.

He said: "I'd gone to sub at the neighbouring J25 Chapter where I asked for an introduction to three specific local companies, one of which was Tenon, a nationwide group of business accountants and consultants. To my surprise, I discovered one of J25's members, Nita Benson, worked there - and needless to say she gave me a great referral which led to our becoming the group's preferred supplier for its office equipment account."

Mark, a regional sales manager for CSL Ltd added: "I've been a member of BNI for two years and have picked up a lot of good referrals, but nothing to compare with this one. Having gained £400,000 worth of new business through BNI in my first year, I'm now looking at a £600,000 turnover from BNI referrals in my second year, which just goes to show that if you are prepared to follow BNI's training and adopt its proven techniques, success will follow." •

Contact Mark on 07976 409963.



EVEN BIGGER BUSINESS:
Bank Manager Matthew Jones (left) with Alan Terry who handed him a seven-figure referral!

Driving boss in the fast lane

The boss of a Somerset driver training company has found herself in the fast lane to business growth, after receiving her biggest new referral from a colleague in Wells' West Mendip Chapter.

Sandra Pennyfather, who runs 'Driving Ambition' in Shepton Mallet, signed a prestigious contract with South West Highways (SWH) covering a three-year self-funding driver training programme for all its occupational drivers, after following up the referral from IT specialist, Harley Brown.

Her contract includes the provision of training to raise awareness of road risks and driver responsibilities among nearly 650 SWH staff, as well as providing one-to-one training for a small team of staff assessors who will carry out ongoing driver risk assessment throughout the organisation.

Sandra said: "The contract's success is being measured in various ways, from reducing the number of collisions involving SWH vehicles and a reduction in fuel consumption through better driving, to cutting down wear and tear on vehicles. The aim is for the aggregated savings to cover the programme's costs." •

Contract Sandra on 01749 345636.



REFERRALS... YOUR BIG REFERRALS... YOU

Together with excellent personal development and business skills training, good referrals are the life blood of BNI membership and, right from our earliest days in the UK, big referrals have been plentiful. On these pages, Successnet highlights just a few recent examples of Givers Gain in action – with some spectacular results.

Nothing artificial about £550,000 deal

Essex software developer Matthew Bell has good reason to be glad that web designer David Hinds recently joined his BNI chapter – after the newcomer not only handed him a referral worth £550,000, but then helped him win the business by 'explaining' Matthew's complex artificial intelligence IT solutions to the client through simplified web designs!

David had been a member of Ilford's John Andrews Chapter for only a few weeks when he learnt that one of his own customers - a specialist management consultancy - needed a sophisticated 'artificial intelligence' software system to run change-management programmes for its clients.

Thanks to Matthew's excellent weekly presentations summarising his expertise, David realised that a solution to his own client's requirements lay close at hand – so

after getting the go-ahead, he gave Matthew the referral and personally introduced him to the consultancy.

"The problem was that although Matthew's expertise was exactly what they needed, the technology involved was so sophisticated that it needed simplifying, enabling the client to understand its potential – so I worked with him to 'translate' complex proposals into simple web-based imagery," said David.

Matthew, who has twice been chapter director and also membership co-ordinator during his seven year stint in BNI, paid tribute to his rookie colleague and confirmed that David's ability to break down his software proposals into easily understood constituent parts, had helped him win the business.



He said: "Most people don't understand software development, so I always include practical examples in my presentations. I'm just glad David recognised that we might be able to help his client, even though he didn't realise the value of the business until after we'd won the contract. At over £550,000 it's the best referral I've had, requiring us to take on four more staff."

Matthew is pictured (seated left) receiving his £550,000 referral from David, watched by chapter colleagues. •

Contact David on 020 8220 5275 and Matthew on 0870 011 3664.

Beating all the odds with BNI



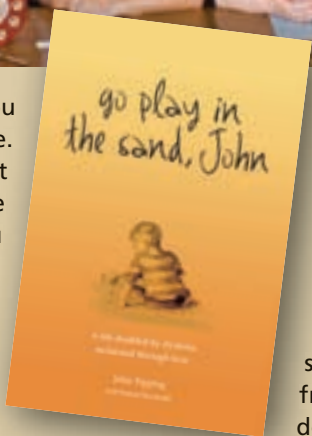
Approaching 40, you cannot read or write. You could never get any job you would have liked and, for as long as you can remember you've suffered depression, low self-esteem and often felt life was not worth living...

Sounds horrendous? It was, and it still might have been, had Kent businessman John Tipping not finally plucked up the courage to accept an invitation to join a BNI chapter.

John is profoundly dyslexic, yet the story of how he finally turned his life around should be an inspiration to anyone with a disability. Now running his own successful glazing protection business in Dover, his life has been transformed by a series of events during the past three years, including:

- Joining BNI's Sandwich and Deal Business Leaders Chapter.
- Publishing his life story - ('Go Play in the Sand, John') - with help from a ghost writer!
- Starring in Channel 4 TV's 'Can't Read, Can't Write' documentary series.
- Battling his dyslexia with help from a new learning system.

"It's hard to describe how everything has changed so radically," said John, now 42. "Five years ago, my life felt worthless. For decades I'd just existed, wishing I'd go to sleep and not wake up. Then two things happened. I went on a life-changing personal development course, and I was persuaded to go to a BNI meeting. My wife Jill had been a chapter director at



Canterbury and often said BNI would do me good but, when you can't read or write and you dread the thought of public speaking, you'll understand why I was petrified when I finally went along.

"Standing up to address strangers was one of the most frightening things I'd ever done, but I got through it, and it was like a light being switched on in my brain. Over the following weeks, I started to see my dyslexia as just part of my character instead of a ball and chain. The transformation after joining BNI was so powerful."

His self-confidence grew by the week and, while John has received substantial business through chapter referrals, it is the personal development and support from BNI that he most values. "Even after two years, I still have to step out of my comfort zone every time I go to my chapter meeting, but that's a good thing. I've gained numerous contacts and now regularly work with colleagues on joint ventures. They're extremely supportive – right down to writing out my referral slips for me!"

John, who now wants to become an after-dinner speaker in the hope of persuading society to treat dyslexics with greater respect, added: "Last night something wonderful happened. I was able to read a story to my 17-year-old daughter Katie for the first time. It was a very emotional experience for us all. Who knows, one day I might even be able to read the book I've written!" •

Contact John on 01227 723227.

Golden team makes riverside dream a reality

Most members use the services of BNI colleagues at one time or another, but commercial interior designer Patrick Lavers has set a record by involving no fewer than 18 members of Wetherby's Golden Triangle Chapter in a major building project.

Patrick's business overlooks the River Ouse in York, based in a Victorian townhouse that he'd long contemplated turning into a luxury holiday home. In 2006 he took the plunge and started the complex conversion. "It could easily have gone wrong, because I needed many different specialists," he said, "but within my chapter there's a wealth of expertise so I was able to turn to colleagues whom I knew and trusted."

The resulting collaboration started with solicitor Stephen Knowles and accountant Mark Grewer, with financial specialist Ian Smith raising the necessary finance, Alan Beardmore arranging insurances, Joanne Taylor drawing up Patrick's new Will and Mark Homer organising business protection. Meanwhile, the refurbishment was completed with design advice from Zena Bentley, bathroom specialist Irene Winter and flooring expert Gary Schulze. Electrician Tony Ward carried out rewiring while outside, the period railings and terrace were transformed by landscape gardener Tim Jackson.

Pat Stanton and Tim Sedgewick then handled the new business equipment and telecoms, with Diane Greenwood's cleaning company providing maid services, before Patrick turned to promotions expert Grant Ashworth for branded merchandise, printer Alan Goodall for business stationery, and web design expert Peyton Martin and photographer Damian Bramley to assist with the launch of 'The Riverside, York' – which received its first paying guests this month! •

Contact Patrick on 01904 675007.

TEAM EFFORT: Patrick (left) with his team



Networking through BNI has been more than just effective for Edinburgh's longest-established carpet retailer – it has literally saved his business.

Graeme Veitch had been planning 50th anniversary celebrations for his Carpet Bargain Store when instead, his flourishing business was brought to its knees by construction work on the capital's new super-tram system, causing a dramatic loss of customers.

He explained: "Since 1960, our Leith store has thrived on passing trade, but over the last year the tram works right outside have killed this. Fortunately, I'd joined Edinburgh's Festival Chapter just months earlier, hoping BNI would provide the jam in my business sandwich. Instead, it has become my bread and butter."

Thanks solely to BNI referrals, Graeme has more than replaced the £20,000-plus income lost from passing trade, and admits the support he's



BACK ON TRACK: Graeme Veitch's business has been saved by BNI, after its future was threatened by Edinburgh's new tram system. Photo courtesy of Festival Chapter photographer Gareth Easton.

received from chapter colleagues has been equally valuable. He added: "When my father and I invested our life savings in the business three years ago, we had high hopes, but then the city council announced its tram plans, since when networking through BNI has become our lifeline.

"Referrals are now the mainstay of our business. BNI will be increasingly important in the years ahead as networking becomes our primary means of finding customers. I'm just relieved I joined when I did." •

Contact Graeme on 0131 554 7337.

BNI puts carpet shop back on track after trams drive trade away

BRING AND BUY – WITH A BIG DIFFERENCE!

YOUR 60 SECONDS STARTS NOW! Herts of Oak Chapter Director Brian Alexander (second left) checks his watch as investment consultant colleague Susie Bewell (standing) gets her full minute's worth, watched by a glum colleague - offered just 10 seconds!



Members of a Hertfordshire chapter recently found their breakfast meeting being turned into a 'Bring and Buy sale' with a big twist: they had to bring a visitor in order to buy their regular 60-second presentation slot!

The brainchild of Stevenage's Herts of Oak Chapter leadership team, newly returned from an intensive BNI leadership training course, the event's twin purposes were to increase the chapter's membership by boosting visitor numbers while highlighting the need for all members to play an active part in the chapter's development.

Faced with the prospect of having their weekly 60-second infomercial reduced to a mere 10 seconds (the penalty for anyone who failed to arrive with at least one visitor), nearly all Herts of Oak members responded positively, with the result that the chapter witnessed its biggest and best visitors' day.

Afterwards, the Chapter's Nicola Cameron said: "Strong chapters are the result of strong leadership teams, and we felt there was nothing wrong with requiring members to find visitors, or risk being 'shamed' by losing their usual

60-second slot. It worked brilliantly, attracting enough visitors to potentially double our size."

She added: "The energy generated during the meeting was fantastic and enabled us to emphasise that for a chapter to be successful, all of its members need to be committed and motivated. No chapter can afford to carry passengers and we took the view it would be a useful wake-up call to a small minority who perhaps were not pulling their weight. Being shown up in front of guests by losing your 60-second slot isn't what most people want."

Brian Alexander, the new Chapter Director and a tax accountant commented: "Sometimes it can be too easy just to turn up and hide behind colleagues whose performances keep the group moving. This was a successful attempt to involve the whole chapter and make each member instantly and publicly accountable, and our chapter will be the stronger for it. I will be aiming to repeat this sort of event during my time in the chair." •

Contact Nicola on 07772 320501 and Brian on 01438 340111.

Are you a franchisee? We want to hear from you!

Among our ever-expanding UK and Irish membership, there are hundreds of franchisees who have joined BNI to give their businesses that extra boost!

Well now we'd like to hear from our many franchise members who tell us that thanks to BNI, their business targets have been surpassed.

In future issues of SuccessNet, we'll be featuring some of the best examples of how BNI has helped its franchisee members grow their businesses so, if you reckon yours is a success story worth shouting about, please send some basic details (including contact information) to: successnet@write-angle.co.uk - and we'll be in touch with you early in the new year. •

train & gain

Do you break out in a cold sweat at the prospect of a networking meeting? All those unfamiliar people, thrusting their business cards at you and making small talk? Do you go to these events, but hide by the food? Or do you always seem to get lumbered for the whole event backed into a corner with someone who just has to tell you everything they know about the paper distribution business?

If this sounds familiar, then don't worry. I felt the same way when I started networking. And joining BNI seemed at first to be a daunting step, until I realised that I wasn't alone. I'm a naturally quiet, introverted person. I am happy with my own company, and don't need to be around lots of other people to be happy or stimulated. There, I've said it! And what I've discovered is that introverts like me can network just as effectively, but not by pretending to be an extrovert.

What is an introvert? We all vary in how much we need other people's company. Some people need to be with others practically all the time, whilst others can take it or leave it. There is a spectrum from extreme extroverts ('party animals') to extreme introverts ('hermits'), with most people falling somewhere in between.

Now let me clear up a couple of myths. Introverts are not necessarily lacking in social skills – a "party animal" extrovert can be a back-slapping, hand wringing bore! Introverted people can sometimes let their social skills slide, but they can be great conversationalists and fun company, when they put in the effort.

Natural introverts are not unfriendly or lonely. They like other people, but just don't need lots of company in order to be happy. Being introverted is not a disease, a disability or even a weakness. In fact, introverted people are usually

Networking for Introverts

by Dr Philip Zack, Spirit of Business chapter, Loughton, Essex



better at solitary tasks, like writing, designing, planning or researching, since extroverts often find it hard to focus when they're alone.

So if you are a natural introvert, how can you feel more comfortable networking? I'd suggest five top tips (see panel alongside). Finally, if you find you need help, use your BNI contacts for advice, feedback or to find an appropriate professional counsellor. Remember networking is for everyone, so find a style of doing it that lets you present your best asset to others – yourself! •

Dr Philip Zack, BSc, MBBS, MRCP, MBSCH, MBAMH, GQHP, is a clinical hypnotist with clinics in the City and Essex Borders. He can be contacted on 07796 573587.

Philip's Top Tips

1. Accept your natural tendencies and don't pretend to be someone you aren't. Networking is about getting to know people, and letting them get to know you – the real you.
2. Don't use your introversion as an excuse. You can network as well as anyone, but you won't necessarily do it in the same way as more extroverted types.
3. Plan a few small talk lines before the event, for example:
 - a. Openings: "Hi, I'm Phil, may I join you?"
 - b. Extenders: "Really, that sounds difficult! It reminds me of..."
 - c. Closers & escape lines: "It's been great meeting you, but we really need to circulate" or the classic "If you'll excuse me, I need to visit the bathroom"
4. You may prefer a 'quality over quantity' approach to networking – meeting fewer people, but spending longer and making deeper connections to each one, before following up with a personal call or email, rather than just spamming everyone you met at a specific meeting.
5. Feel free to experiment with different approaches to find one that suits you. One week you might try 'working the room'; next time talk to all the wall-flowers; another time hang out at the bar.

Founder offers the perfect 29% solution!

A new book that strips networking down to its basics and offers numerous techniques for building any business through word-of-mouth referrals, is set to become one of the best-used reference sources among BNI members.

Early reviews of "The 29% Solution" by BNI's Founder and Chairman, Dr Ivan Misner, suggest it will become one of the most valuable sources of practical advice for networkers - and required reading by every education co-ordinator!

Setting out 52 separate strategies for more effective business networking, the book leads readers through a series of practical exercises, gradually incorporating each networking technique into their weekly business routine until they have learnt to win business solely through word-of-mouth networking.

Where does the title come from? Dr Misner explained: "Urban myth would have you believe that on average there are just six degrees (third party connections) separating you from anybody else on earth that you would like to meet.

"It isn't true. Even in the most successful study, it was found that the 'six degree' rule applied to just 29% of participants. It is true however, that there are some people who are better connected than others. With coaching, people can increase their connections and become part of this 29% of the population who are in fact separated from the rest of the world by just six degrees."

Copies can be ordered online at www.bni.eu or through your chapter. •

By Simona Rusnakova,
Chapter Director of Trinity Chapter, Dublin



During any economic downturn, while everyone wants more business they are naturally far more cautious about spending money on marketing and promoting their products or services.

So what can you do today to survive and even prosper, using techniques that cost you nothing? Well, we all know that networking represents a highly cost effective means of marketing any business, and one that's far more likely to make the best use of your time, creativity and energy.

But how can you maximise the effectiveness of your networking referral strategy so that you win more business? Well, you could start by reminding yourself to follow BNI's seven "Be's".

1. **BE CURIOUS.** You enter a room full of strangers and approach them not because you want to tell them about your business, but because you are truly interested in THEM and in what THEY do.
2. **BE OPEN.** If you ask a question to which you expect an honest reply, be ready to offer the same when asked. Don't hide anything, be approachable and happy to share your knowledge.
3. **BE HELPFUL.** When you learn what they do, find a link between you and them and, if they mention a problem they are facing, do everything you can to help them. If they need advice about something you specialise in, offer them a free consultation.
4. **BE TOLERANT.** Sometimes you'll meet people when they are not feeling positive. They might be tired, a little shy or worried. Don't dismiss them from your networking plans; instead, find out if anything is wrong and try to help them.
5. **BE RELIABLE.** When you offer help, even just a follow-up call or email, make sure you keep your word. People will then rely on you and feel able to refer their friends and colleagues to you.
6. **BE SPECIFIC.** If you are seeking referrals, be specific. You need to ask for a company, a person in the company, a specific name.
7. **BE YOURSELF.** Affectation gets you nowhere. Be yourself, so people will feel at ease talking to you. Your gestures, words and ideas must be natural. So, before you start to find out about other people, find out who you really are, what you do, how you help people and then speak about your true self.

BNI's Giver's Gain philosophy is the good news of networking, because you don't have to be pushy, nor oversell yourself. Instead, with Giver's Gain, you help people by giving them referrals or delivering good quality services, with the result that they will want to find ways to give something back to you. The key is: you give first.

You cannot master all the techniques of successful networking overnight, but over time you will, purely by practising. This means you will make mistakes and need to correct errors, but in doing so you are polishing your skills on the way to becoming a respected networker. Good luck! •

Simona Rusnakova is a Marketing Executive with 3R Sales & Marketing in Dublin, and a past education co-ordinator in her chapter. Contact her on: +353 1 201 7102.

Network your way through recession - with BNI's seven 'Be's

Chorley's singing solicitor is Elvis hit in 60 seconds...

It's not every day that your chapter director sings to you across the breakfast table, but solicitor Karl Wilson recently went one better for colleagues in Lancashire's newest Oracle Chapter in Chorley, by swapping his gavel for a ukelele and performing his 60-second infomercial in song!

A partner with law firm Marsden Rawsthorn, Karl had been secretly practising in readiness to step out of his comfort zone one Friday morning, when he stunned Oracle members by accompanying himself in a heavily modified version of Elvis Presley's hit, 'Love me Tender', gaining enthusiastic applause from his surprised audience.

Afterwards he said: "I decided to embrace BNI's core themes of personal challenge and development with the aim of making my presentation more attention-grabbing than usual. It did the trick – but I don't think they'll let me sing and play too often. I won't be giving up my day job any time soon!"

A founder member of the new 30-strong Oracle Chapter, Karl is pictured (courtesy of photographer Steve Clifford) warming up for his impromptu presentation. Sadly, space doesn't permit us to reprint his clever lyrics, but he'll happily email them to anyone who contacts him on 01772 799600, or at: kwilson@marsdenrawsthorn.com •



Referrals at knifepoint in Olympus Chapter

Our photo, courtesy of Martin Toole shows (left to right), Olympus members Ian Hirst, Mike Gelder, Roger Peet and Jan Richardson, handing their referrals to a machete-brandishing Mark.

What's this then - a new way to extract business from your BNI colleagues? That's certainly the way it looks in this picture, as Chapter Director Jan Richardson hands over her latest referrals at 'knifepoint' watched by colleagues at a meeting of Lancashire's Olympus Chapter in Leyland.

In fact the group's excellent business record has nothing to do with machete-wielding threats, but is simply a reflection of its members' enterprise – demonstrated here by security specialist Mark Prendergast who wanted to make sure his colleagues got the point during his 10-minute presentation about the need for businesses to be more security conscious.

And Mark should know. As business development manager for Kudos Security Group, he was recently confronted by a knife-wielding job outside the night club where he was helping out as a doorman, as a result of which he insisted all of his company's staff working in high profile locations – such as casualty departments – be issued with stab-proof vests.

Although he only joined Olympus in the summer, Mark has already enjoyed a significant business boost thanks to several of his chapter colleagues, whose expertise has seen Kudos gain extensive media and PR coverage, a smart new website, creative photography and re-branding of its vehicles. •

Contact Mark on 07515 711370.

Fed up with the current doom and gloom? Here's some GOOD news!

Don't switch on the TV news for fear of hearing more gloom and doom about the global meltdown? Fed up with all those newspaper headlines about the recession, falling house prices and job losses? Well, here's some GOOD news! BNI is to freeze its membership fees for a fifth consecutive year!

As SuccessNet went to press, BNI's national directors announced the decision to postpone a subscription increase scheduled for next Spring, and to peg prices at their current level for a further year, until at least 2010.

National Director Gillian Lawson said: "In view of the economic downturn

and the obvious extra pressures this places on everyone in business, we believe it is the best interests of all our members to freeze price rises for the fifth year in succession.

BNI had planned a modest rise next Spring in line with inflation but, in the light of recent economic events and an increasingly tough business environment, BNI is determined to do whatever it can to ease the financial burden on members."

To this end, BNI is currently examining a range of other initiatives aimed at helping members get even more value and benefit from their membership over the coming months. •

CHAPTER MILESTONES

Fortune by name ... and by nature!

When you call yourselves the Fortune Chapter, you're either very confident - or perhaps a little foolish! Happily (as our photo indicates) members of this Hendon, North London group have more than earned their name, generating £500,000-worth of business for each other in just six months!

With 31 members, Fortune may be only medium-sized but, as new chapter director Mark Curtis explained, their ambitions are anything but average. "One reason we do well is because we have

created strong power circles where new business often comes from involving several members in a pitch, resulting in successful bids being shared among colleagues," he said.

The leadership team's priority is to reach a 40 members and Mark added: "Even if we don't quite get there, I'm confident we'll continue to increase the value of business generated. After all, we've got a name to live up to!" •

Contact Mark on 020 8371 3286.



When the going gets tough ...

Like most people in business, members of Dublin's Grosvenor Chapter have found the going tough during 2008 - in their case reflected by a sudden membership decline a few months ago.

But BNI members are made of strong stuff and, faced with the prospect of fewer referrals when their numbers fell to just 15, the remaining members set about turning the chapter around.

Chapter director Eoin Bedford, who led the group's revival said: "We were determined not to fail and worked hard to

maintain the chapter's vibrancy, as a result of which we've attracted some good new members and really turned the corner."

So much so that Grosvenor Chapter was recently able to announce its members had passed referrals totalling over €1 million during the last 12 months. "To have achieved such good business despite our difficulties, shows the passion that exists - and confirms the faith members have in each other," Eoin added. •

Contact Eoin on +353 1 490 5772.



Kirklees produces the brass - even without the muck!

In keeping with that famous old Yorkshire saying, 'Where there's muck, there's brass', members of the Kirklees Chapter in Cleckheaton have demonstrated their ability to make big money - even without the muck!

Kirklees' members were able to celebrate the chapter's first anniversary watching Chapter Director Ian Anderson receive a huge symbolic cheque for

£261,424, representing the value of referrals in their first 12 months.

Ian (pictured right, receiving the cheque from bank manager colleague Michael Roper) commented: "This is an excellent achievement considering that for much of our first year, we had only 16 members. Happily, we expect to reach 30 members by January, so next year's 'cheque' should be even bigger!" •



Sheffield's Professionals hit £1 million jackpot!

They may be one of South Yorkshire's smaller BNI chapters, but members of Sheffield's Professionals have a million good reasons to feel pleased with themselves - having generated this amount of business (in pounds) for each other.

Retiring Chapter Director Russell Bluff said: "Passing the £1 million mark was a key milestone and gave everyone a real boost, but we aim to go much further in helping our members' businesses grow and prosper. We know the benefits of having a larger chapter and growing our

numbers is a key priority. I hope we'll pass the next million pound mark much faster."

Membership Co-ordinator Marc Stokes-Denson added: "By next Spring, we want to be the most successful BNI group in South Yorkshire, so we're working hard to find the right new members with strong business ambition."

To recognise their achievement, members donated £500 to Sheffield Children's Hospital to help fund the first free-access education and entertainment system in any UK hospital. •

PROFESSIONALS GO INTERACTIVE: Professionals' members Patricia Hayward and Mark Walsh (right) check out the new interactive IT patient system, while handing over their cheque to Peter Storey, a fundraiser at Sheffield Children's Hospital. (Picture & cover photo, courtesy of Graham Parker).





IN THE FAST LANE: Brandon, with his BNI-funded car (photo courtesy of Great Western Chapter's photographer John Doherty).

BRANDAN GETS A SLEEK NEW MOTOR - THANKS TO BNI !

Devon computer specialist Brandon Dobbs is feeling pretty pleased with his BNI membership these days. And so he should, because the money it has saved him on advertising has more than funded a fabulous new £35,000 Audi A5 sports car!

The IT expert whose firm, Brandon Computer Solutions, is in its fourth year of membership with Newton Abbot's Great Western Chapter, was shocked when he compared the business he'd picked up through advertising in business directories with the value of customers

he'd attracted through BNI referrals.

He said: "For several years I'd spent our advertising budget with Yellow Pages and Thomson Local, accounting for over £20,000 last year, so when my BNI membership renewal came up, I gave it some serious thought. In three years I'd received business totalling more than £250,000 through BNI, but the database confirmed that our directory advertising had delivered only £38,000 worth of business during the same period."

So Brandon was faced with an easy choice. Should he carry on advertising in

media that wasn't working, or renew his high-performing BNI membership - and buy a luxury car with the money he saved.

"The advertising agents were lost for words but couldn't argue when I told them: 'Face it, what would you rather have? Lots of business and a new car, or little business and no car?' I even have some budget left over, so I'm hoping to stage a barbecue to thank my chapter colleagues for all their help! •

Contact Brandon on 01626 333335.

Amusing swansong on the Waterfront

Visitors to Belfast's Waterfront Chapter must have wondered if they'd gone to the right venue when they turned up at the city's Malone Lodge Hotel to be confronted by a bizarre collection of 'props' ranging from saucepans to step ladders!

However, the reason for such a motley mix of items soon became clear, when members used the props to illustrate

their 60-second presentations - creating an entertaining send-off for retiring chapter director, Simon Smith.

His successor, Jackie Thompson commented: "We had a lot of visitors so there were a few surprised faces, but it provided a memorable swansong for the outgoing leadership team."

Our picture shows members with their tools of the trade outside the hotel. •



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