

Europe – here we come!

Six years after taking Britain by storm, BNI has marched into mainland Europe, launching its first five chapters in Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland, and attracting unprecedented interest from their local business communities.

Three of the five chapters were launched at the end of last month – one of them in the German capital where 164 members and visitors gave BNI a noisy and rapturous welcome at Berlin's Intercontinental Hotel, setting the scene for the group's rapid growth. And, in the southern city of Stuttgart, 114 visitors and core group members gave their new chapter a lively start.

Berlin's Regional Director Tom Jaeger told SuccessNet: "We have got off to the best possible start. The launch was a superbly impressive event in a prestige venue and it undoubtedly made a big impression on our visitors."

He added: "We felt proud to be flying the BNI flag at the launch, where our professionalism and enthusiasm stood out, and the quality of our referrals made a big impact. It was a perfect start and will lead us to a lot of success in the coming months. We already have other core groups being developed in the city and I'm sure it will not take long to establish BNI's reputation in Germany."

Stuttgart's Regional Director Gunther Verleger was equally optimistic. He said: "Even before our launch, the group had passed referrals worth at least €40,000 and we added to this significantly on the day. It was especially pleasing to generate such a



BIG IN BERLIN! More than 160 members and visitors took part in the launch of the first Berlin chapter at the Intercontinental Hotel.

great atmosphere and high energy levels. I am sure BNI will work very well here."

Meanwhile, it was the same picture in the Netherlands. After launching the new Haecinia Chapter in Alphen (just south of Amsterdam) with 120 people in attendance, Regional Director Jos Essers told SuccessNet: "We knew the event would be well supported because, even before launch day, we had a strong core group of 20 people."

"Our first chapter has only been running since July, but it is very reassuring to find BNI becoming established so quickly in West Holland business circles. I am confident we will achieve our target of 20 chapters in just over a year's time, mainly located in the Netherlands' key business triangle between Amsterdam, The Hague and Rotterdam," he added.

The location of the Netherlands' first chapter – Merquess in The Hague – has attracted a significant number of business consultants, including IT, HR, training, call centre and communications specialists, but Jos Essers said the Alphen Chapter and other core groups now being developed, had a more traditional mix of trades and professions. "The business community is already taking notice of us, and I am sure the next 12 months will see BNI become a major force."

Judging by the success of BNI's first Swiss chapter – at Sevelen (near Liechtenstein) – he is likely to be right. Launched at the end of May, Sevelen has already reached 37 members.

Preparations are also being made to launch BNI in Spain, France, Italy and Austria.

For more information about BNI in Europe, visit our website at www.bni-europe.com

In this issue

- BNI encourages prompt payment
see page 2



- BN-Eyes give Christine her business insight
see page 4

- BNI Membership leads to major MBO
see page 3



- Who's in front? Why, BNI, of course
see back page

- Good business manners means more business!
see page 11



- Greenock takes to the hills
see page 13



STANDING ROOM ONLY: Energy levels ran high at the recent launch of BNI's new Stuttgart Chapter attended by well over 100 people.

Prompt payment is key for all members

BNI is urging its 10,000-plus members in the UK and Ireland to ensure they pay promptly for the services they have received – whether from chapter colleagues or third parties.

The reminder, from National Director Martin Lawson, comes as an increasing number of UK companies report that bad debt is their single biggest problem in everyday business life, and debt chasing is the least rewarding of their business activities.

He said: "Good business practices benefit everyone – buyers and sellers – and, in promoting these principles to our members, we have always recognised that prompt payment for goods and services received is a vital element.

"I believe the majority of BNI members already pursue good business practice, but it seems timely to encourage every member that paying their bills within the agreed term is important not only to their suppliers, but also to the success of their own business. Those who ignore such principles will find it is only a

matter of time before suppliers and clients take their custom elsewhere, and when that happens, any business will suffer."

To reinforce the message, BNI has put its weight behind a novel scheme to promote prompt payment of all business invoices, by joining The Prompt Payer Partnership which requires member companies to pay all their bills within a short, specific period – ranging from just one to a maximum of 45 days.

In return for a binding promise to honour their agreed payment terms and an annual fee linked to the size of business turnover, member companies are licensed to advertise their rating and carry the appropriate PP logo on all their stationery and marketing materials. The BNI National Office and several BNI franchisees around the country have already signed up and they are in good company. Among PP's first 50 members are commercial giants like Zurich Insurance Group and BarterCard, and there is substantial interest from other major national institutions.



TM

PROMPT PAYER

BNI National Director Martin Lawson said joining the PP scheme made an important statement for BNI. "We hold ourselves up as a beacon of business excellence and spend most of our time training and educating our members to acquire more skills and greater professionalism. So naturally, we were keen to sign up to something which shows the business world that BNI 'walks the talk' and follows the high business standards we set for our own members. I am sure the scheme will promote trustworthiness, efficiency, honesty and credibility – and everyone in business respects these values."

For more information about the Prompt Payer recognition scheme call Peter Jenkins on **0845 069 7000** or visit its website at: **www.promptpayer.com**

BNI 'marches' on across UK

Another three months gone, and another 30 new chapters launched! That's our continued success as BNI consolidates its presence in the few remaining parts of the UK where it is yet to become a key part of the local business community.

The late summer and early autumn saw BNI strengthen its position in the North East with the opening of four new chapters - Armstrong in Swalwell, Northumbria, Collingwood (Newcastle-upon-Tyne), Hadrian at Hexham and Osric (Hartlepool), while the arrival of the Red Wulf Chapter in Kendal, Cumbria is a milestone in linking BNI's stronghold territories in Lancashire and southern Scotland.

Meanwhile, another of BNI's new regions - South Wales - saw two new groups open at Bridgend, (the Bevan Chapter) and in Cardiff (Quinnell Chapter), while we continued to expand along the North Wales coastline with the launch of the Llandudno group.

And, if further proof were needed that wherever BNI goes we're greeted with smiles, take a look at the photo (above right) of the new **Marches Chapter** leadership team - taken just before the launch of Shropshire's latest chapter at seven in the morning!

Happily, BNI's traditional early start

did not deter more than 70 business guests who converged on the newly opened Lion Quays venue alongside the picturesque Llangollen Canal near Oswestry, eager to learn how joining the

new group could help grow their businesses. The new Chapter meets on Wednesday mornings at the Lord Moreton Hotel, Gledrid, Chirk.

Other new chapters launched during the summer include Aylsham (Kenton Park), Bicester, Black Pear (Kidderminster), Bradman (Bristol), Emmanuel (Cambridge), Central (Nottingham), Craven Tuesday (Leeds), Culture (Liverpool), George Eliot (Nuneaton), Hadlee (Bristol), Heart of Sussex (Haywards Heath), Business Class (Heathrow), Hermes (Lancaster), Holmes Chapel (Cheshire), Hutton (Bristol), Ilkley Craiglands Thursday (Leeds), Long Eaton (Trent), North Staffs (Stoke), Trailblazers (Glasgow), Tetbury (Gloucestershire) and Wisbech in Cambridgeshire.



MARCHING ON: Members of the new Marches Chapter pictured left to right; Stephanie White, Andrew Hall, Ted Hewitt-Symonds (Chapter Director), Allison Timmins, Tracy Pound and Malcolm Banks

100th marks 4th with huge 3rd

Dublin's Fitzwilliam Chapter - the 100th chapter in Britain and Ireland when it was launched – recently celebrated its fourth anniversary by rewarding one of its five remaining founder members, quantity surveyor Andrew O'Kelly with his third major referral worth €150,000.

Having netted fees amounting to €450,000 from just three referrals Andrew quipped: "That's why I still get up early every Friday morning!"

Major MBO follows BNI membership

The first-ever management buy-out from the UK's fastest growing chain of printing stores has just taken place in Newcastle Upon Tyne - and its three new directors are happy to admit it might never have happened without BNI.

With just over 60 outlets, Printing.com is making major inroads into the 'on-demand' print market which, it is estimated, is now worth more than £1 billion a year. The decision to allow the Newcastle trio to buy-out their thriving business represents a major development in its expansion philosophy.

Heading the buy-out was the store's general manager David Wootton (a founder member of Newcastle Falcons Chapter) who has become managing director, while the new Sales Director Mark Moore (from the city's Collingwood Chapter) and Creative Director Neil Robinson fill the other Board positions.

Mark told SuccessNet: "I know that various members claim their business success could never have been achieved without being part of BNI, but in our case it is absolutely true. It has taught us so much and introduced us to so many other business professionals whose help has been invaluable in our MBO negotiations.

"This has been a very exciting few months for us, but I am quite sure that had we not

joined BNI when we did, we would not be standing here today, owing our own major printing business with the potential for huge growth over the next few years. We relied on so many other BNI members for advice, practical help and services, and really, they have made it happen for us," he said.

In particular, Mark said the financial advice of the Falcons Chapter's RMT Accountancy firm had played a vital part in making the MBO so successful, while another Falcons member, David Streather from Lloyds Bank had arranged the all-important funding, and Collingwood's IFA Terry Harvey had provided invaluable advice on the team's personal finances. "We also used a variety of other members' services - from photography to cost man-



STANDING PROUD: Newcastle's new management team outside their city centre store. From left to right Mark Moore, David Wootton, Neil Robinson

agement - so it was a genuine BNI team effort."

David Wootton said: "Our priority is now to expand quickly from being one printing store to territory mode. We are already in discussions with several prospective bolt-on companies. We are very excited about the future. Our goal is to build the store to a £750,000 business over the next two years, and BNI will have played a substantial role in our success."

Contact Mark, David or Neil on 0191 261 8700 or visit their website at www.Printing.com



1000 up at Cannock

Members of Cannock Chapter have just celebrated their first birthday in style - toasting their 1,000th referral passed in 12 months!

Louise de Waal, Membership Co-ordinator said: "We are delighted to have reached this first milestone. It has certainly proved the power of Givers Gain which we practice every week at our Chase Golf Club venue."

As part of Cannock's current membership drive, the Chapter would like to hear from florists, graphic designers, IT consultants, builders, plumbers and electricians who want the opportunity to expand their business.

Contact Louise on 01902 731 848

WebRing now even better business value

Already attracting an average of 5,000 'visits' a month, BNI's year-old WebRing has been given some exciting new features, making it even better value for chapters to tap into its unique business services.

The Internet-based WebRing has created a borderless BNI web community, opening up national and international networking opportunities by enabling members to instantly communicate with colleagues in any UK, Irish, European or US chapter, as well as pass eReferrals™ across regions or even country borders, and obtain latest details about the members, businesses and leadership teams of any other chapter.

Among the latest WebRing developments are the addition of a weekly Chat Room, and the facility for individual members to create their own 60-second infomercial to accompany written details of their company's products or services, enabling prospective clients to not only

read about a member's business, but watch a video clip promoting the company.

Another useful new feature is the addition of an "Email my Chapter" button, allowing members to email all their chapter colleagues simultaneously or select relevant individuals, such as the leadership team or the membership committee.

Many of the WebRing's original features have also been enhanced to provide faster and easier access to its facilities.

National Director Gillian Lawson urged UK and Irish chapters which have not yet joined the WebRing to do so quickly. She said: "Nearly 100 chapters are enjoying the many extra business benefits it offers, but the WebRing will only achieve its maximum potential when the majority of our chapters have subscribed, making it easy to do business with any BNI member."

You can register your chapter's subscription now at www.BNIWebRing.com

Lawsons' Lore

Gillian and Martin Lawson, National Directors of BNI, write:

Concluding our worldwide theme for 2003 : "BNI – More than a meeting", the topics for October, November and December are Reliability, Relationships and Results. On page 10 these key issues are addressed in more detail, but we might reflect on the following perspectives:

Reliability: Just as the proof of a pudding lies in the eating, so the key to receiving more referrals from any fellow member lies in how well the last referral that you were given was carried out. Unless you are known to be utterly reliable, others will not risk their reputations to refer you to their business contacts. In this context they need to be able to rely on you promptly to follow up the referral they have given you, just as much as being able to rely on you to do the job professionally and on time for the price quoted.

Relationships: The key to getting others to refer serious business to you, lies in your ability to build good relationships with your fellow members. The more business you would like to have from your chapter, the more time you need to invest in building the all-important relationships, that will in time, lead to people starting to like you. When they start to like you, they will start to trust you, and when they trust you they will be happy to refer you. The keys to building such relationships are, firstly, giving as much help to others as possible, and secondly, spending as much time as possible on a one-to-one basis with them, so that you each gain deeper insights into each others' skills and target clients.

Results: It will not surprise you to learn that the results you are looking for from BNI will flow from a combination of all the elements of the BNI system that we have been discussing as part of the BNI 2003 theme in these pages during the year. Referring back to the past three issues of SuccessNet, you will find ideas about Planning, Referrals, Teamwork, System, Experience, Opportunity, Professionalism, Knowledge, and Resources, which all demonstrate that BNI is truly "More than a Meeting"! In short, the surest formula for successful results in BNI is to follow the proven methods of the BNI system. We wish all BNI members all the results they deserve.

Martin & Gillian

BN-Eyes give Christine business insight

Members of Aberdeen's Bravo Chapter have been working overtime to network with a very special newcomer – Christine Ferreyra.

Christine is believed to be one of only three blind members in BNI, and one of the problems she experiences at meetings is not being able to see or find the members she wants to talk to and network with.

"However, my chapter colleagues have been wonderful," said Christine. "They make sure I'm not left on my own and they're quick to respond and find people for me if there's someone specific I need to talk to."

Her accountant Alan Moir introduced Christine to BNI in May, only months after she arrived in Britain from Argentina. "I left South America with my family because we were not happy with the political situation, and decided to make a new life in Britain where we had dual nationality," she explained.

"We had no experience of the business world. I had been working in computer science with the Argentine Government and in university research, so we had a lot to learn and many problems to deal with. A franchise seemed a good idea so we invested in Cartridge World, re-filling printer cartridges and selling consumables."

Christine and her husband opened their shop in Aberdeen last December and set about marketing their services. "We had no idea that networking organisations like BNI even existed, but then Alan described the concept and it seemed right for us. My husband Ricardo and I went along to Bravo Chapter and we decided I should join, since I spoke better English!"

Being blind entitled Christine to introduce her golden Labrador guide dog 'Sweep' as BNI's first canine member, and he made his chapter debut on Christine's second visit, and hasn't missed a meeting since. "He's a firm favourite with members," Christine added. "He gets a lot of fuss and attention, though to his disappointment, he's not allowed to eat breakfast with us!"

Christine has adapted to the British business world remarkably well and has

found very few things that she is unable to cope with. "Most of my work is computer-based. I've got a very reliable system – JAWS (Job Access With Speech) – enabling my computer to talk me through every move – and you don't need to see, to touch-type."

Her ten-minute presentation is due shortly, but even that is being made easier for Christine. "My colleagues have been giving me lots of ideas and they've said they will be happy to assist me on the day. More importantly, BNI has helped us in every area of our business development and, being new to the UK, that has proved invaluable."

Christine can be contacted on 01224 633 111 or 07739 082 487



PERFECT PARTNERS: Christine and her Labrador Sweep make the ideal BNI partnership

Another six join the Gold Club

Another half dozen members have joined the exclusive Gold Club in the past few weeks, following their success in attracting new members to their respective chapters. They are: Bill Philips (Zeus Chapter in Clayton-le-Moors, and Lancashire's first black badge recipient), Hugh Green (Alba Chapter in Glasgow), Geoff Marsom (Sutton, Surrey), Michelle Moore (Potteries, Staffs), Eddie Strengiel (Bailgate, Lincoln) and Jim Young from Abbey Chapter in Paisley.

BNI.....Got Their Number!

They say imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. So, when it came to promoting their new directory enquiries service to colleagues in Birmingham's Victoria Chapter, TelecomIT's directors Richard Bridge and Craig Busst knew exactly what to do: parody a certain high profile TV advertising campaign featuring a different directory enquiries number!

To publicise TelecomIT's directory enquiries number, which will be competing with the industry giants, Richard (wearing 118) and Craig (that's him in the 102 vest), ran around the Chapter's meeting room shouting their carefully prepared script while delivering clear messages about their new service – not least how it was cheaper

than most better known directory services.

Craig, a member of Victoria Chapter and Richard (from Shirley Chapter) knew that of all the new de-regulated directory enquiry numbers available, one in particular had captured the public's imagination through its clever advertising campaign. "We don't have a fraction of their budget to promote our 118102 number, but we hoped they wouldn't mind if we parodied theirs. It gave us a strong presentation," said Richard.

Phillippa Hart, Chapter Director said: "This was the most innovative presentation I have ever seen. The 10-minute slot should captivate members as well as educate them to feel confident in recommending your products. Craig and Richard achieved this and no-one will forget TelecomIT in a hurry."

You can contact Craig on 08704 111 102



Helen's Yellow Pages?

As a Personal Organiser, Helen Larkin has found that her business, 'Your Time', doesn't lend itself to conventional marketing or Yellow Pages advertising – but fortunately BNI's word of mouth marketing is paying dividends!

A member of **Brooklands Sale Chapter** in South Manchester, Helen says that her business covers a multitude of services making it difficult to tie to traditional advertising sectors. She said: "Basically, if a customer wants something organising, I'll do it for them. That could be anything from shopping or changing library books to arranging a house-warming party with a budget of £100,000, which was one of my recent high-profile projects.

"But when it comes to advertising my services, I wouldn't have a clue which category to choose, and equally people wouldn't know where to look for my services. So I was very pleased to find BNI, which is the perfect word-of-mouth vehicle for my work."

Helen's BNI colleagues have also helped her consolidate business by going that extra mile to please her clients. She explained: "One of my customers asked me to arrange an £11,000 holiday in Barbados, incorporating flights on Concorde, but despite my extensive contacts, I was just drawing blanks. Then, while acting as a substitute at the Altrincham Chapter, I met Ron Hollis of Salmo Travel and in no time he had found the ideal holiday.

"My customer was so pleased that I now have a client for life. It proves BNI is the perfect marketing medium for my kind of business," Helen added.

Helen can be contacted on 07764 171 117.

Champagne celebration for two

Five years of successful networking deserves an extra special celebration - and you can rely on BNI members to do it in style!

So it was out with the usual bacon, eggs and coffee and in with cakes and champagne at Stanmore and Cheltenham Chapters, where members of both groups marked their fifth anniversary.

At Stanmore, members ate their birthday breakfast around a huge mountain of referral slips to symbolise

the passing of 15,000 referrals during their first five years and, to make sure members did not grow hungry, caterer Anne Hoad wheeled out a huge cake crowned by a colourful BNI logo.

Special five-year ribbons were presented to five of the chapter's founder members – flooring consultant Phil Berg, solicitor Jeremy Garson, accountant Andrew Rhodes, IFA Paul Rodker and IT trainer Steve Schogger.

Meanwhile, not to be outshone in the party stakes, Cheltenham Chapter's caterer Ailsa Fleming, presented her colleagues with a grand birthday cake to celebrate their Founders Day, and five-year ribbons were presented to four original Chapter members - financial adviser Richard Levinge, Diana Beaver (NLP Master Practitioner/Trainer), Anthony Pilkington (BookCheck Accountancy) and property consultant Roy Smith.



STANDING (AND SITTING) PRETTY: Members of Cheltenham Chapter (photo above) and Stanmore chapter (below) celebrate five successful years of BNI business



Here's my card(s)-all 40 of them!

With more and more members finding themselves generating large amounts of business for their clients by passing on the business cards of appropriate chapter colleagues, BNI has developed the perfect vehicle to ensure that no such referral opportunities are ever wasted!

BNI has commissioned Peter Phillips, a member of the **Uxbridge Chapter** to produce and market an official BNI business card display board to members.

Each display has slots to accommodate up to 40 business cards and the aim is for individual members to place the cards of all chapter colleagues on their board, and display it in the foyer or reception area of their business premises.

Peter said: "By making an attractive business card display available at low cost to members, we hope they will fill up their board with colleagues' cards and display it in their reception areas."

"Each display carries the BNI logo and a simple explanation, and provides the ideal basis for introducing your customers to BNI, and the services of all your chapter colleagues."



The business card display measures three feet by two feet and comes with fixings for easy wall mounting. It costs £19.95 including packing and postage.

To order your copy or obtain further information, e-mail Peter Phillips at peter@phillipspp.com or call him on 07831 513 798

Bournemouth push boat out for anniversary

Members of two South Coast chapters were all at sea recently – and thoroughly soaked up every moment! That's because their evening trip around Poole Bay was a tribute to **Bournemouth Chapter's** second anniversary after Chapter Director Sue Hayward had decided such an important event should be celebrated in style.

With the help of fellow members Susan Cailles and Caroline Swatton, Sue (pictured front second right) arranged the evening trip along the Dorset coast, culminating with a spectacular fireworks display on Poole Quay and, in true BNI networking spirit, they also invited the local group of Women In Management and members of neighbouring

Poole Chapter to join in their celebrations.

"BNI has been absolutely phenomenal both for my business and my personal growth," said Sue. "I'm extremely proud to be a member of such a vibrant chapter and our second anniversary event was a truly fitting occasion."

If further evidence were needed of Bournemouth's camaraderie, it can be found in "My Ode to the colourful world of BNI" penned and submitted to *SuccessNet* by one of its members, Sharon Littlefair. Sadly Sharon, at 16 verses long we don't have space to reproduce it here – but we enjoyed reading it!

For information about BNI's activities in Bournemouth, call Sue Hayward on 07973 951 139 or Susan Cailles on 01202 536 424



MOPPING UP: Robert Loomes (left) receives his trophy as the UK's top carpet cleaner

Robert mops up

Harrow's Robert Loomes has just been voted the country's top carpet and upholstery cleaner, and he says his business success is all due to BNI

Robert, a member of Harrow's Chapter One, beat 130 major SafeClean franchisees, to be named UK Franchisee of the Year 2003.

"I won the award largely for the increase in my turnover and for my commitment to quality customer service," said Robert. "But one thing is certain, I could not have made my business such a big success without being in BNI."

"Through BNI I have learnt so many new business skills and developed my personal skills - like public speaking - so much, that my business confidence has just grown and grown, and this has enabled me to become the top performing SafeClean operator in the UK. I really do owe BNI everything for this award."

You can contact Robert on 07958 914 543



ALL SHIP SHAPE: Members of Bournemouth and Poole chapters prepare for their evening celebratory cruise. Photo courtesy of Noel White, Rowan White Photographic.

Deeside members visit blacksmith's forge

BNI membership can take you to some strange and fascinating places – but no chapter meeting can surely have ever been held in a forge?

Proving that BNI truly does cover all sectors of business and industry, North Wales blacksmith Peter Cade recently created a 'first' by extending his 10-minute breakfast presentation to a demonstration of his talents in the local forge – inviting all his **Deeside Chapter** colleagues along to a working lunch.

He said: "It's not easy to talk about my work at a breakfast meeting so I decided to supplement my ten-minute slot with a live demonstration. I put on some food, invited

members to come and see me at work, and asked them to make a donation to the Nightingale House Hospice in Wrexham. They learned a lot more, so I reckon it was a very good idea."

A blacksmith for 43 years, Peter works



mainly for customers across North Wales, the North West and Yorkshire. Amongst his prestigious contracts he has restored the main gates for some of our finest stately country homes. He is now honing his skills as a bladesmith to make ornamental swords, having discovered a big demand for them in some of the grand houses where he has worked.

Chapter colleague Tracy North who was one of a dozen members to take up Peter's invitation said: "Few people get the chance to visit a blacksmith's forge and see a real craftsman at work, but it was fascinating. We now have a very clear picture of what he does and the referrals he would like to get.

Contact Peter Cade on 01244 571 009

Breakfast at Rick's

When the time came for Rick Mackay's 10-minute presentation, he knew exactly what to do to make his talk a memorable one for his colleagues in Edinburgh's Pentlands Chapter.

As merchandise director of the city's well-known family furnishing business, Richard F Mackay, the solution was obvious: he'd persuade the whole Chapter to stage its weekly meeting in his own stylish furniture store.

After all, everything he needed was on hand - from huge boardroom tables and carver chairs, to comfortable sofas – and even waiters trolleys! And fellow member Chris Chirnside, who runs well-known catering com-

pany Arts and Media, was only too happy to add the finishing touches, cooking up a mouth-watering Mexican breakfast featuring spicy meat and scrambled egg with salmon.

Rick told *SuccessNet*: "It was a great success, and it proved a fantastic way to put my message across. Everyone enjoyed the change and it created a real buzz. The icing on the cake was that I received several referrals."

Meanwhile, Rick also gained strong support from his BNI colleagues for his sponsored head shave and 14,000 feet charity skydive in aid of two Glasgow schools for children with learning difficulties.

Rick can be contacted on 0131 313 8700



SO-FA SO GOOD: Rick Mackay (top right) with chapter colleagues Stephen Fradley (top), Sandra Lawson and Phil Gelling

Car park meeting is alarming success!

Members of the Milton Keynes Chapter proved recently that not even fire fighters could distract them from energetic early morning networking.

Fire alarms are a regular occurrence at the Chapter's breakfast venue – the Harben House Conference Centre in Newport Pagnell – and, while most are of no cause for concern, one particularly troublesome alarm during the late summer resulted in members being evacuated to continue their meeting in the conference centre car park!

"Despite the obvious disruption

we managed to carry on the important business of creating referrals," said Judi Whiting, the Chapter's wordsmith. "It was quite entertaining to watch members perform their 60-

second promotional slots outdoors, but most of them managed to find a connection between their business and the unusual venue. It resulted in some interesting referrals being passed as members discovered their colleagues had greater talents than they'd previously recognised."

Typical was John McGuire, a chartered surveyor who found himself right at home. Pointing out overflowing drains around the car park, he warned members about the hazards of ignoring blocked and damaged pipework – just one of the many areas in which he specialises!



ATTEN-SHUN!: Members of Milton Keynes Chapter fall in line for their unusual networking session in a local carpark

In Brief

Moortown raise more for charity

Hats off to the members of **Leeds Moortown Chapter** who have raised almost £5,000 for the NSPCC by staging a very successful charity casino evening.

Organised entirely by members who provided the venue, the catering, sponsorship and some valuable raffle prizes, the event was sponsored by Minster Jaguar, Air Unlimited, Leeds Graphic Press, Gary Caplan Solicitors, Smurfit Packaging and Roses Caterers, and participants enjoyed excellent food followed by Roulette & Black Jack.

Tetbury makes right impression

Gloucestershire exhibition and display services specialist John Wright made the best possible impression for his business even before the new Tetbury Chapter was launched – providing corporate graphic panels and signage for the group's inaugural visitors' day.

Andy Platts, Tetbury's first Chapter Director said: "The display impressed more than 50 guests. We may be based in a quiet Cotswold market town, but the launch raised a huge amount of local interest."

For information about the Tetbury group contact Andy Platts on 01666 502067. For details of John Wright's display services, call 01666 504 534.

To the point!

We are grateful to Bryony Bartlett, a visitor at the launch of Wisbech Chapter for the following verse which she used to describe the benefits of BNI membership:

*He who whispers down a well,
About the goods he has to sell,
Won't make half so many dollars,
As he who climbs a tree and hollers!*

Delightfully succinct, Bryony.

WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM MY (BNI) FRIENDS...

Hats off to Louise...

Why would four members from neighbouring Worcestershire chapters get together in a Black Country church hall, wearing Artful Dodger and Fagin hats, armed with swords and a keyboard?

Step forward Kidderminster Chapter's PR member, Louise Jew of LTA Communications, who arranged the unlikely event to promote a successful assignment by the town's Black Pear Chapter member Philip Cooper after his company - Crossguard Trade-Mark and Copyright Attorneys - had advised two writers of musicals on how to copyright their new works.

Louise was referred to Philip by fellow member, solicitor Gareth Thompson and briefed to produce a press release describing how Philip had been able to help the writers – fellow Black Pear member Tim Cutler and local journalist John Nash – protect their

two musicals, *The Story of Ebenezer Scrooge* and *Fagin's Tale*.

She came up with the idea of a photo shoot to accompany the press release, and wanted something that would illustrate the musicals' Dickensian theme. After locating the venue and finding the props, she commissioned chapter colleague, photographer Chris Bridgewater to take the photos.

"It was a little strange when Tim, Philip, Chris and myself all met in this rather gloomy church hall," said Louise, "but the hats, keyboard and a sword created some great shots which were used in several of our regional papers. It's a great example of how BNI members can work together to make things happen."

Meanwhile Tim, who writes scripts and music in his spare time, has appealed for any members who know a professional theatrical producer to contact him on 01384 443 044.

Louise can be contacted on 07974 102 381

Alpha goes to X-tremes

Graeme Duncan never really appreciated the full power of BNI until he quit his job as a cabling consultant with NTL in Scotland at the start of this year.

"I've been a member of Aberdeen Alpha Chapter since its launch nearly 18 months ago, but although I received some referrals for NTL, the results were quite modest until I set up my own company, Xtreme Business Solutions Ltd. But from that moment onwards, the referrals have really flowed," said Graeme.

Xtreme specialises in designing and installing fibre optic solutions and voice and data cabling for computers and telephones. Graeme added: "The business I've received through BNI has been staggering. Within a fortnight I had a referral to help install cabling for 660 computer outlets in Scottish Water's new headquarters - worth £25,000 - and other orders worth over £40,000 quickly followed."

He added: "I'm sure one reason for the sudden change was simply that members wanted to support to my new venture. Thanks to them my business has continued to grow, and I've now been invited to join other members in pitching for a major contract."

Graeme was also one of the finalists in this year's Enterprise North-East Scotland Award for the best small business up to £1/2 million turnover. "I didn't win, but it was great publicity for my business," he said.

Contact Graeme on 07739 132852

...Alison lets BNI e

Alison Vella was perfectly happy with her residential lettings agency which she had run successfully for more than ten years - then she joined BNI and everything changed!

Vella Associates was based in Alison's home in the Suffolk village of Great Cornard, Sudbury, where she could run the business while caring for her two young children. "It was a successful venture," said Alison, "but I had neither the confidence nor the inclination to take it that stage further which would have meant creating a presence on the High Street. That represented just too great a risk for me."

Then a friend, Andrew Gentle who is a member of BNI's Sudbury Chapter, suggested Alison might like to go along to a BNI meeting. "I reluctantly agreed. He did-



THAT'S THE SPIRIT: Alison Vella (centre) with some chapter colleagues who ha



IT'S HATS OFF TO BNI: (from back to front) Tim Cutler, Philip Cooper and John Nash.

Expand her estate!

n't tell me what to expect – and I'm sure he knew that if he'd mentioned the '60 second slot,' wild horses wouldn't have got me there! But once I'd got over that bit, I really enjoyed it and found it made me think more like a businesswoman. Against all my prior intentions, I decided to join."

Alison soon found her feet with BNI and gained confidence in public speaking and presentations. "Then a friend of mine in the Chapter suggested that I should think about expansion and renting offices on the High Street. This time the idea appealed to me immensely, because I'd quickly grown in confidence through BNI. Within six weeks, I had sorted out premises in a great location and I haven't looked back.

"The business has really taken off thanks to BNI – and inevitably fellow members helped make the transition from my home to High Street so much easier than I thought possible, not least Steve Gates who sorted out all my office equipment, Phil Roper who handled all my printing and new corporate identity, and Alan Havelock who handled all the electrics," she added.



ve spurred her on to greater success

**Contact Alison on
01787 373 658**

...Alvin finds a natural niche in BNI

A chance introduction to BNI has led Irish entrepreneur Alvin Cooney to achieve his top business ambition in record time: breaking into the UK health and beauty market.

Alvin's Dun Laoghaire-based company – Alvin Connor Natural Balance – already enjoyed commercial success throughout Ireland, where its range of beauty products was a big seller, but until he discovered BNI, he had been uncertain how to gain a foothold in the lucrative UK market.

"I'd never heard of BNI until I happened to purchase some land from a chap called Roy Smith who said he belonged to the Cheltenham Chapter. When I mentioned my UK expansion plans, Roy insisted I should meet some of his BNI colleagues whom he thought had the expertise to give Natural Balance a high profile launch in Britain." And that's exactly what followed.

Alvin was first introduced to the Chapter's James McGlashan of Autoroute who impressed him by travelling to Alvin's Merseyside base just 24 hours after Roy had contacted him. "I was amazed. Things don't normally happen that fast in the business world, but as a result, James was able to help me organise UK distribution."

James then recommended another member, Sandra Clarke of Smadar Strategies to handle product branding, and in turn she brought in another colleague Angie Petkovic, Managing Director of APT, to handle the marketing.

"I couldn't believe how quickly it all happened and how efficient BNI members were. I was so impressed I began to look for a chapter to join in Liverpool and was delighted to become a founder member and then first Chapter Director of the new **Eagle Chapter**," said Alvin.

Members of Eagle Chapter soon became involved in the UK launch, with Arthur Blake of 257 Limited producing the design work for new tooling, and hair stylist Steven Hamill stocking the entire range of Natural Balance products in his salon.

Alvin can be contacted on 07866 438032



PLENTY TO SMILE ABOUT: Alvin's business has taken off since he joined BNI

In Brief

Muswell Hill makes its mark

The new Muswell Hill Chapter, which meets every Thursday at The Village Restaurant, is rapidly making its mark on the North London business scene, attracting over 150 visitors in its first six months.

Chapter Director Anthony Klein said: "Our launch was widely featured in the local press. We're here to stay, and intend to make a big impact on the local business community."

Kaizen succeeds at Sheffield

Sheffield Succeeds Chapter members have renamed themselves 'Kaizen' which, we are reliably informed, is Japanese for "improvement", and a well-known business philosophy of continuously improving business practices.

Giving it away in Chesterfield

Chesterfield's busy Inspires Chapter recently joined the town's Business Link group to give away money. Business Link is marketing a new project called 'Valuable Skills' which gives grants to local business people to train employees.

If you feel your business might benefit, contact Lucie Andrews on 01246 207 207 or 077761 981 785.

Jeremy's 24 not out!

They must be putting something in the tea at Watford's Enterprise Chapter, such is the volume of referrals passed between members, the latest of whom, Unity telecoms specialist Jeremy Harbour, has just handed out 24 referrals at one meeting!

In fact there's an even better explanation: the Chapter is trialling a new one-to-one technique where two individual members (who trust each other implicitly) meet to go through their respective client lists and then telephone every client who their BNI colleague thinks he or she could do business with!

BNI-MORE THAN A MEETING!



Concluding our interpretation of BNI's international theme for the year, "BNI – More than a Meeting", we review the final three of the 12 crucial keys of membership, each designed to help everyone get the most out of their business networking.

In this article, Hugh Lee discusses the importance of Reliability, Beverley Blandford and Marian Way suggest methods you can use to build Relationships, both in your chapter and at networking events, while one of BNI's newest executive directors, Iain Whyte addresses the crucial task of getting the right Results.

Reliability:

By Hugh Lee, Executive Director for Scotland West

Why do some members receive substantial referrals fairly quickly, whilst others just 'tick along'?

There is a world full of business opportunities, yet members often fail to access them, receiving only occasional 'first-party' referrals from their chapter colleagues. So how can they break out of that spiral?

Much of it has to do with a failure to understand a fundamental principle of the BNI system – what we call the 'Confidence Bar'. For example, members find it easy to give referrals to printers but even these referrals diminish as we learn not to pass repeat business. The point here is that asking a printer to produce your own business cards is hardly likely to endanger your personal reputation.

Members who have attended BNI workshops on the subject will realise that there is a minimum level of confidence, below which your fellow chapter members will not endanger their personal reputation by recommending you to their outside contacts.

Rather than criticise your colleagues for not giving you access to their contacts, you must first adopt attitudes and behaviours that will inspire them to do so. So how can we prove our reliability and overcome that confidence bar?

First, adhere to the BNI code of ethics – it isn't there for window dressing. Second, treat your chapter like your best client. Would you miss, or turn up late for, a meeting with your best client, interrupt them whilst they were speaking, or appear disinterested in what they have to say?

Third, 'walk the talk' of Givers Gain. We join BNI for one reason – to gain business – but the way we gain business is by learning how to give business. Fourth, educate your chapter colleagues through well-prepared and rehearsed 60-second (and 10 minute) presentations. Share with them your goals and target clients, rather than merely tell them what you do. Show them how you add value.

Last, but by no means least, ask yourself if your level of service is likely to inspire confidence, encouraging people to refer to you as totally 'Reliable'.

Building Relationships:

By Beverley Blandford, Executive Director for Home Counties West and Marian Way, Fareham Chapter

Most of us, irrespective of our trade or profession, think that our business skills are at least reasonable. But, although we may feel relatively successful, how much better could we be, if we concentrated on building stronger and lasting relationships with our business colleagues – inside and outside BNI? While we each have different attributes that can be applied to forging better relationships, the following pointers offer some basic, common guidance we can all follow:

1. Organise your contacts:

- Update your card file so you can always hand a card to those interested in a colleague's services.
- Use contact management software.
- Note personal information: remembering details is an effective way to cement a casual introduction.

2. Follow up:

- Good and prompt follow up is essential. Hours spent at networking events can be wasted if you don't follow up your new contacts effectively.
- Keep in regular contact, stay in peoples' minds.
- Invite new contacts to other networking events.

3. Share information:

- Sending cuttings from newspapers or magazines or links to websites that someone else may find useful, is a good way of staying in touch.
- Learn all you can about your contacts' businesses.
- When someone you know mentions a need, tap into your pool of expertise and resources and offer help quickly.
- Sharing is a fundamental principle in networking.

4. Show you care:

- Saying thank you – preferably in writing – is an effective way to build strong business relationships.
- Recognise birthdays, bereavements etc by sending a card. Most people don't, so it will set you apart.

5. Be patient:

- Arranging a one-on-one meeting and then going home saying "I never got anything out of it," means you went with the wrong expectation.
- Take time to visit your BNI colleagues' work places. Get to understand their working environment.

BNI Membership:

The Results

By Iain Whyte, Executive Director for Scotland South & East.

BNI exists for its members to increase their business by networking, and priming their chapter sales force with the necessary information to help achieve this. While it is easy to measure BNI's success by the number of referrals a member receives, there are a number of other major results that members can expect to achieve – benefits that are not measured or collated by chapters, but are real all the same.

Perhaps the most obvious is the improved confidence that BNI generates. As a new member, it can be daunting having to make a speech in front of thirty or more strangers but, as the weeks go by, the task becomes easier and with the right preparation, something to look forward to.

This newfound confidence is then transferred to our personal and business lives. That wedding speech suddenly seems so much easier; the pitch to the bank or prospective clients becomes a dream instead of a nightmare. The confidence we gain through regular public speaking allows us to present ourselves more effectively in other areas of our life.

Going hand in hand with increased self-confidence is increased professionalism. Knowing we have only sixty seconds to impart the week's targets, and remind our BNI 'sales force' of the services we offer, forces us to be more focused.

Similarly, the networking sessions before and after our meetings remind us of the need to use the opportunities presented to us. How often do you see new members hiding in the corner for their first few meetings? Then they start to emerge and their networking skills improve. These new skills carry the member forward in his or her business life, bringing a greater focus and desire for success into all their dealings.

Being a member of a large BNI 'sales team' also gives us experience in teamwork. The "Givers Gain" philosophy equally applies outside our chapters, allowing us to develop better working relationships with business partners, staff and clients, while also giving us a sound basis for our social circles.

While these results are subjective and not easily measured, long standing members will readily tell you that they have seen one or more of these results in every member they watch come through the system. BNI means better business and self-improvement in a weekly dose.

Good business manners mean more business!

Most of us continuously hone our selling and marketing skills. We go on sales training courses, product knowledge courses, listening skills courses, professional development courses – if you can think of it, somebody somewhere is putting on a training course to teach it! But how many of us give much thought to our manners and etiquette when we are dealing with other business professionals or potential clients?

Here are a 10 points to keep in mind when building quality relationships with other BNI members, staff, clients and potential clients.



By Steve Lawson,
European Training Director

1. Use common courtesies:

Thank people (including your staff) for their efforts; compliment people at every opportunity you can; respond to invitations, even if you are saying 'no'; never embarrass other people; treat everyone respectfully, regardless of whether you like them or not.

2. Defer to clients, guests, and those more senior:

Many people in senior positions have worked long and hard to get where they are. They have earned and expect to get respect from those who are still climbing the ladder. Many older people grew up in a more restrictive and formal business environment than the one you take for granted today. By deferring to their seniority, you will stand out from your competitors, and these older people will feel more comfortable dealing with you.

3. Schedule time with others:

In today's fast paced business environment, we tend not to do things unless we absolutely have to. Take time to spend a little time with your business associates even though you don't have to. An unexpected lunch or drinks invitation sends a powerful message to somebody that you care.

4. Get people's names right:

How did you feel the last time somebody pronounced your name wrong or worse still called you by the wrong name? The message this sends is: 'you are not important to me, I could not even be bothered to remember who you are'. There is one thing above all else that people like to hear, and that is their own name! Imagine how good (and impor-

tant) you would feel if everywhere you went, from the butcher to the petrol station attendant, you were greeted by name.

5. Develop gracious hosting skills:

When people come to see you, treat them like royalty, and they will remember you favourably. How did it make you feel when you walked into an office and somebody took your coat from you and hung it up or, when you went into someone's office for an appointment, and they walked around their desk to shake hands with you, and pulled your chair a little closer to their desk?

6. Observe and practice appropriate behaviour when you are a guest or visitor:

Show the same courtesies and respect to your host that they are showing to you. If your host makes you feel a little special, do the same for them. Show them that extra bit of warmth in return, and you will be amazed at how easy it is to get along well with them.

7. Polish your table manners and dining skills:

If you want to be successful, you need to look and act the part. Good table manners are part of the skill set of successful people. If you are unsure in this situation, and don't know which fork to pick up first, there are many books available to help you with this.

8. Apply good telephone skills:

For most of us, the telephone is often the first contact that we have with a person. First impressions are lasting, and therefore very important. How do you sound on the

phone? This is something that is easy to practice. One noted motivational trainer says that if you want to make an outstanding impression on the phone, you have got to look the part at the same time. If you are going to make that vitally important call, wear your best suit or dress, brush your hair, and look good before you dial the number. Then put a mirror behind the phone, and make yourself smile while you are talking; if you look good and feel good about yourself, this will project in your voice to the person on the other end of the line!

9. Apply all of your best interpersonal skills at meetings:

When you are in front of more than one person, it is doubly important that your business manners are flawless. Think about how you will interact with people of different seniority at a meeting, so that when you need to address somebody, you will know whether to call them Bob, Mr Wilson, or Sir. There is usually a best way to interact with somebody, and if you get it wrong, both you and they will feel uncomfortable.

10. Polish your conversation skills:

If you want people to feel relaxed and comfortable with you, you need to be a good conversationalist. For most of us, the beginning of a conversation is the difficult part. If you are often at a loss for words when you meet someone, memorise a few key conversation starters, such as: 'Are you from around here?'; 'What do you do for a living?' or 'What do you like most about being a ... (their profession) ...?'. A simple question like that gets them talking, and then just follow the golden rule – the best conversationalists listen a lot more than they talk!

Good business manners reflect a deference to rank, status, position or hierarchy. They also put both genders on an equal footing, which makes for good business sense. Adopt them, and see the difference!

Steve Lawson was one of BNI's founders in Canada eight years ago, and he remains Executive Director for a thriving region on the outskirts of Toronto, Ontario. In recent years he has divided his time between Canada and Europe, where he is responsible for training BNI directors in Europe.

Seeing is believing



GOOD LOSERS! Paul Corrigan (left) and Marc Gordon (right) show off their new slim line figures with therapist Paul Titmuss

Few members can resist the temptation of a full English breakfast on BNI mornings, but in Gateshead, Ridley Chapter members Marc Gordon and Paul Corrigan have successfully trained their taste buds to give it a miss for the past few weeks – thanks to Chapter colleague Paul Titmuss!

Paul, a consultant with Lighterlife, has put the duo on a strict diet which means their sacrificing the traditional sausage, bacon and eggs for a mouth-watering packet of powder and a couple of litres of water.

"The diet is aimed at people who want to lose a lot of weight very quickly," explained Marc, a computer consultant, "so it seemed perfect for the Chapter's electrician Paul Corrigan and myself who were

keen to lose at least three stone each. In less than two months I reached my target of losing three stone, and my colleague did even better, losing nearly four stone."

Paul Titmuss, who had recently purchased a Lighterlife franchise, had been struggling to get his message across to fellow members, but that suddenly changed once he'd found colleagues willing to act as guinea pigs – especially when the duo proceeded to lose so much weight so quickly!

"The fantastic thing about it was that our colleagues could see for themselves the effects of Paul's programme," said Marc. "I feel a whole lot better these days - and Paul couldn't have had a better testimonial!"

Contact Paul Titmuss on: 0191 422 6317

I Know – it will be a success!

BNI's hoteliers and restaurateurs across the country are being offered the chance to advertise free of charge on a new web-site likely to become a major nationwide reference source.

The invitation comes from web-site specialist, Marcus Simmons, a member of Preston's Olympus Chapter whose new company, I Know-UK recently launched its first regional website, 'I Know-Yorkshire', featuring hotels and tourist attractions across the region.

The company was the product of a BNI meeting between Marcus and Sharif Khan of Unity Business Software, a member of the neighbouring Zeus chapter. "I met Sharif at his chapter a year ago, and at that time my com-

pany, 'I Make Websites', was busy working on a tourist website for Blackpool," said Marcus. "Sharif was the perfect partner to help us develop the site which turned out to be a huge success. During August alone, it attracted over 30,000 visitors and our subscribers took over £500,000-worth of booking enquiries. As a result of this success, we set up I Know-UK."

Naturally, Marcus involved several Olympus colleagues with the Yorkshire website launch, including Keeley Southworth from PR agency MTJ Associates, Linda Crabtree of Signarama and photographer Nick Robinson.

If you want to put the website to the test contact Marcus on 01282 683 123



TOURISM TRIUMPH: Marcus Simmons is set to make it big with his new website

Lichfield Trio proves three into one does go!

Three members of Lichfield Chapter who work in related fields, have pooled their talents to net a long-term contract!



TERRIFIC TRIO: From left to right Jonathan Booker, Richard Brett, Keith Stendall are celebrating an increasingly profitable partnership through the Lichfield Chapter

Jonathan Booker, Keith Stendall and Richard Brett are all IT professionals in related but not competing businesses. Through BNI they have created a cycle of work for each other, as well as working very successfully as a cohesive business team.

"One of my customers, the Office Express Group Ltd which is involved in selling office supplies, was preparing to franchise its organisation," said Richard. "I was already running and maintaining their computer network and supplying their hardware require-

ments but their software was outdated and no longer met their needs, so I recommended Keith's services and he provided a perfect solution to replace their existing systems."

Jonathan was then brought in to advise on their Internet development and strategy, and the trio is now involved in an ongoing contract worth £25,000 in its first year. "Working with other companies has enabled us not only to share ideas and information but also work together very well as a team. BNI is proving very successful for us," said Jonathan.

Contact Jonathan on 0121 753 4753, Richard on 0121 605 6736 and Keith on 01543 677600



IN TUNE FOR BNI: From left to right are Helen Astrid and Micky James (back), Samantha Miller, Sally Gardener and Geoff Stilwell

Perfect harmony in Hampstead

"I'd like to teach BNI to sing, in perfect harmony...." A tall order? Not for West Hampstead Chapter's singing coach Helen Astrid who has had so many referrals from colleagues that she's just staged a unique "thank you" concert featuring her BNI protégés.

Some 24 newly trained singers, including Helen's chapter colleagues Wendy Jackson and Alan Johnson, took part in last month's concert at St Michael & All Angels Church, West Hampstead, staged as a tribute to BNI members who have dramatically boosted Helen's business.

She said: "Since at least 70% of

my new business comes through the chapter, I wanted to do something that all my BNI colleagues could benefit from and enjoy. Everyone who performed was either a BNI member or had been referred to me through the chapter. Joining BNI has been fantastic for me."

When she's not directing concerts, Helen gives one-to-one tuition and runs singing workshops for adults and children through her company, Harmony Works. She is also renowned for singing her way through many a 60-second infomercial, to her colleagues' delight.

Contact Helen on: 07710 245 904

Steven brings golden touch to Midas!

Liverpool's Midas Chapter can at last live up to its name, now that jeweller Steven Jones has become its undisputed 'gold' member.

Steven enjoys a reputation as a design wizard and had shown various jewellery creations to chapter colleagues, but he recently surprised everyone by producing a solid gold copy of the BNI members' badge, to bring an added sparkle to his 60-second infomercial slot.

He joined Midas Chapter only a few months ago, yet he earned a standing ovation from colleagues at only his second meeting when he delivered a powerful 10-

minute presentation showing how he made a gold wedding ring.

"Wedding rings are very special," he said. "After all you can't get married without one, and it's nice for couples to be able to share the moment they are created. That's why I always invite my customers along to my workshop, to watch their treasured rings being made."

Fellow member John Porter certainly agrees. He recently got married and both he and his bride are the proud owners of a matching pair of Steven's gold bands!

Contact Steven on 0151 236 0177



THE MIDAS TOUCH: Stephen Jones creating a solid gold copy of the BNI's members badges



HILLSIDE ADVENTURE: Members of Greenock celebrate a successful day of team building

Greenock team takes to the hills

Well, it does take all sorts to create BNI's uniquely colourful membership! So perhaps we shouldn't be too surprised to hear that some of our Scottish members have been participating in rather unusual outdoor pursuits – from defusing a 'bomb' to herding blindfolded colleagues into a hillside sheep pen!

These were just two of the curious but rewarding activities undertaken by members of Greenock's James Watt Chapter as part of an outdoor team-building event organised by chapter colleague Alison Minton of Business Training Services.

"We all had a brilliant time," said Fiona

Marr, Business Development Director for Thomas Auld & Sons Bakers. "Taking the events seriously was a task in itself as we applied our skills to 'everyday' problems such as walking uphill round an obstacle course on make-shift skis. I had a job to keep my face straight, but all the tasks had a serious element and we were constantly analysed and evaluated."

The event certainly paid dividends in strengthening their resolve, as a recent visitors' day proved – when the chapter's 26 members attracted over 50 visitors – several of whom are now joining BNI.

Contact Fiona on 01475 725 288

Dave's gone – but his business motors on...

When charismatic Kilburn garage boss Dave Saunders died suddenly earlier this year, he left a huge void in the West Hampstead Chapter – and more than 2,000 anxious customers wondering who would care for their cars in future.

Having started his Motortone Garage 22 years earlier, Dave was renowned for his firm's engineering craftsmanship across North London and, since helping to launch the West Hampstead Chapter five years ago, he had become one of BNI's best known advocates – a totally committed member who "walked the talk" and gained gold club membership within months.

But, as his colleagues rued their loss, Dave's life partner Liz Sollars and his daughter Emma Saunders pluckily announced they would pick up the Motortone

mantle, as well as taking over Dave's chapter membership – a decision which set the whole BNI London North Central community rooting for their success. And, barely six months after Dave's untimely death, Motortone is back in top gear!

"He had always been a team player and because his entire family and team of mechanics maintain his strong principles, the business is continuing from strength to strength. As well as myself and Emma, our twin 18 year old sons – Joe and Jake – are also involved in what is a true family-run business," said Liz.

She said that Dave's total commitment to BNI made all the difference. "He put a lot of time into it, going all over the place visiting chapters, but it was worth the effort. At one time 70% of our trade came through BNI referrals.



LIFE AFTER DEATH: Motortone is back in top gear thanks to Liz Sollars and her daughter Emma Saunders, pictured outside the Kilburn garage. Photo courtesy of Tom Langford, Camden Chapter

"He was a true champion of 'Givers Gain' and very few visitors to his Kilburn garage left without Dave seeing how he could add value to their visit by referring them on to his chapter colleagues. I think there will be many BNI

members who are relieved that his memory hook, "Care for your Car - You provide the car, we'll provide the care" still rings out every week in West Hampstead," she added.

Contact Liz Sollars or Emma Saunders at Motortone on 0800 0345 101

Merseyside quartet delivers business funding

Four Liverpool members have teamed up to supply business support services under a Government scheme which will save Merseyside companies 40% on the cost of almost any development project.

Ed Horwich (from Pacificstream.com), Ted Brightmore (Optima Resources), Joe Taylor (Health & Safety Management) and Steve Dickson (The Development Company) are all longstanding members of Liverpool's Delta

and Oscar Chapters who together have formed 'Business 2010' which has been given accreditation to deliver Government funding through Business Link helping local firms expand.

"The main reason we were able to launch this joint venture with confidence in such a short space of time is because we have been meeting each other at chapter breakfasts week in week out for the past couple of years, so we know and trust each other very well," said Ed.

"Not only can we offer Merseyside clients an incredible range of support services, but we have also been able to bring our respective disciplines together to make our own business consortium work very successfully."

Almost any development project is likely to qualify for financial and consultancy support under one of the categories available from Business 2010. Anyone interested should visit www.business2010.co.uk for contact details.

Jane 'steals' Terry from York City FC

Jane Tyler freely admits she's had her moneys worth out of BNI, but she reckons by far the best thing she has got from her membership to date is a new Finance Director for her growing computer company!

Managing Director of RedBlack Software, Jane joined York's Thursday Chapter just over two years ago, where she was introduced to founder member, chartered accountant Terry Doyle, a partner with Clive Owen & Co.

"At that time I was finding our financial administration quite a struggle," said Jane. "Terry very kindly offered me some informal advice, which proved so useful we decided to

appoint him as our company accountant. As a result of his continued support and excellent advice, we found ourselves in a much stronger position so, earlier this year I invited him to become our Financial Director and I was delighted when he accepted!"

There's just one downside for Jane: she has to share Terry's financial skills with Third Division York City Football Club – his life-long passion. "The club recently went through hard times," explained Jane. "They brought in Terry as Financial Director and things are looking better now. He's even asked me to sort out a database of supporters for marketing purposes, so it's nice to know I can help him this time!"

Jane can be contacted on 01904 561530 and Terry on 01904 784400



AS TOP SIGNING? Terry Doyle has made a big impact since his transfer to RedBlack Software

Keeping it in the family in Ruislip...

Designer Damon Segal has a simple formula for business success: join as many BNI chapters as possible!

His newly relocated one-stop studio in Ruislip is represented in three Home Counties chapters, and Damon knows it is so good for business that he's even got his father-in-law, commercial mortgage broker Ramon Lipton, to become a member of his own Enterprise (Watford) Chapter

As boss of the modest but rapidly expanding Action Graphic International in Ruislip, Damon insists that any new member of staff he takes on must be prepared to join another BNI chapter because, as he told SuccessNet, "I get almost two thirds of all our new business through BNI referrals from highly satisfied members, and I reckon that every new chapter we join is worth around £50,000 a year."

Since Damon was introduced to BNI nearly six years ago by osteopath Phil Arons (who

last month became part of the family when he married Damon's wife's sister), he hasn't looked back. Right from the start he ensured that his work colleagues belonged to other chapters. Currently, his senior designer Marc Schneider is in the Stanmore Chapter and relative newcomer Charlotte Pawley has joined the new High Wycombe Chapter.

"When we recruit any new member of staff, one of the key qualities we look for is their potential to get on well in a BNI chapter, because our business is now so heavily involved with the organisation. In the last couple of months alone, some 20 out of 30 potential new clients have been referred to us through different chapters, involving quotes for £80,000 worth of work.

"In the past year we've gained contracts through BNI valued at around £150,000, so you can see why I'm keen to get into more chapters," said Damon, two of whose recent projects

have been the creation of BNI's new corporate identity for Europe, and the development of the increasingly significant BNI WebRing™.

That would be justification enough for anyone to value their membership, but Damon says the personal friendships he has made through different chapters are equally important. "I've made some very good friends, so a fair bit of the family's social life now revolves around BNI colleagues."

There's a third good reason why BNI retains its prominence in the Segal family's everyday lives – its endless source of quality suppliers.

"Whatever we need, whether it's for my business, for the home or the family, I always turn first to my contacts book and find a BNI member to provide the products or services, and I've never been disappointed yet. The results have always been excellent," added Damon, as he surveyed AGI's plush new studios – designed, built, furnished and equipped entirely by his chapter colleagues, naturally!

For further information, contact Damon Segal on 020 8385 5050



EXPANDING NICELY: AGI boss Damon Segal (centre) with some of his team in the plush new Ruislip offices

...and, it's the same story in Hereford, Cheltenham and Worcester

Until 12 months ago, Hereford-based Beaverpark Limited was a small family-run stationery, office equipment and furniture company supplying a mainly rural community.

Then, last October, director Paul Merriman was introduced to BNI and today, barely a year later, the company has spread across three counties, opened up a second depot and is represented in three different BNI chapters!

"Our progress has been quite dramatic," said Paul. "The business had been operating for about eight years when I first heard about BNI, but we were largely confined to supplying customers in Herefordshire whose agricultural nature rather limited any expansion."

He added: "As soon as I joined the Hereford Chapter last November, I knew it would give us significant new opportunities, and I discussed

our growth potential with my wife Jackie and daughter Kirsty. Within a month, Kirsty had joined the Cheltenham Chapter as a result of which we now have a new depot there and a very strong customer base in Gloucestershire. It has been a very good move for us."

Then in June this year, the family decided to break into neighbouring Worcestershire, so Jackie took Paul's seat in the Hereford group, while he joined the Worcester Chapter. Jackie told SuccessNet: "Being able to join other BNI chapters was a key factor in deciding to expand into new territory.

"I don't think we would have had the confidence to move into two new counties so quickly, without knowing we had a great source of local referrals from our new chapter colleagues – and it has worked very well. After less than 12 months we get at least 10% of all new business



TRIPLE SUCCESS: Jackie Merriman (seated) with husband Paul and daughter Kirsty. Photo courtesy of Oliver Swann

through BNI and this figure is increasing every month. The support we've received has been tremendous and great value for a small family business in a tough industry."

You can contact Paul, Jackie and Kirsty Merriman on 01432 270 700

(Un)dress rehearsal at Elmbridge

SuccessNet has reported on some unusual 10-minute presentations in the past but, what's this – half naked members served up for breakfast?

Happily Christine Gladen's professionalism meant that her hands-on demonstration of reflexology and holistic massage therapy was all done in the best possible taste – with a little help from chapter colleague Phil Connelly of the appropriately named Flexible Catering Company who volunteered his body for the duration,

proving just how supple he is!

The moment was captured on camera by Elmbridge's creative designer Marion Bore who then invited colleagues to provide captions for her picture (see right).

"Most of the entries were unprintable," said Marion, "but we eventually gave the prize to photographer Alan Knox." His winning caption? 'Never mind funny handshakes. Wait til you see how Elmbridge BNI inducts a new member!'

Contact Christine on 01932 840 149



Photo courtesy of MazBoz Studios

Brains not brawn row BNI to victory



Members of the Harlequin Chapter are pictured celebrating an unlikely victory - having beaten teams of 'professional' rowers to win the Thames Dragon Boat Races, part of the annual week-long Twickenham Festival.

In scorching heat over two days, chapter

members swapped their business suits for lycra sportswear and took on all-comers, including semi-professional teams from local rowing clubs, to win the contest, beating Eel Pie Island in a close-fought final.

"This was no mean feat considering the Eel Pie team was packed with expert rowers and the Island is home to Twickenham Rowing Club - so it was a genuine case of teamwork beating athleticism," said Gavin Miller, Chapter Director and Captain of its Pond Pirates team. "None of us had any idea we could win, but the group showed fantastic spirit and communication to beat some very fit teams."

Contact Gavin Miller on 020 8255 3238

Trio create new buyers' market

Most of us have experienced the painful and frustrating process of bidding for a dream home, only to lose it at the last hurdle. But now a trio of members from Sheffield's Kaizen Chapter believe they have found the answer to gazumping and all the distress it causes.

Nick Todd, Peter Hill and Ray Drainville have created what seems to be a unique web-based estate agency, 'LiveOffer', through which potential buyers can make offers for homes online, cutting through all the waiting time and uncertainty of the usual process and speeding up the most difficult stage of buying a home in the UK.

"Buyers can browse through our online property brochure and then contact us to arrange to view the property," explained Nick, of chartered surveyors Ellis, Willis and Beckett (EWB). "Once a person has decided to make an offer, he or she can enter a secure area of the website to compare their offer to those of other bidders. Although offers are made anonymously, it is possible to identify which offers are made by the same bidder, so you can assess how serious the competition is."

Contact Nick on 0114 272 9667



SuccessNet is published quarterly and distributed free of charge by BNI to all members. We are delighted that with each successive edition, we receive more and more of your emails, letters and calls, asking us to include your news or picture item in the newsletter.

However, the advent of electronic mail is causing us a real headache, because more than half the emails we receive don't contain any contact details, other than the sender's email address. Since not everyone checks their email accounts frequently, this leads to considerable delays and extra work in following up your submissions.

You & SuccessNet

If you want your item to be considered for inclusion in SuccessNet, make sure you include your phone numbers (office and mobile) and your address! But note that, faced with up to 200 editorial contributions per issue, we cannot squeeze all of them into our 16-page publication. Some stories may be held over for a later edition, but it means some of your contributions may never see the light of day. Please don't be deterred from sending in your news and views because we DO want to hear from you.

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