



SuccessNet

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ISSUE 46 | SUMMER 2008

EDUCATION *and* INFORMATION BULLETIN *for* BNI MEMBERS



**Girls undress for business?
Find out why on back page!**

**Growing...
growing...
won!**

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Referral Slip

"The" Business Referral Organisation™

Date: 23/5/2008

From: BNI

To: Chris Carroll, Torsion Creative

Referral: e-commerce website

Comments: would like to sell products
worldwide

Contact Phone: 0845 6300603

☐ GIVEN YOUR CARD ☒ TOLD THEM YOU WOULD CALL

WHITE - RECEIVER / PINK - CHAPTER / YELLOW - YOUR REFERENCE

HOW
IS TH
REFER
(TICK ON

PHOENIX RISES AS IRELAND'S FIRST LUNCHTIME CHAPTER

Aptly named and aptly located! That's Cork's Phoenix Chapter which recently became Ireland's first-ever lunchtime chapter - launched almost 10 years to the day that BNI opened its first Irish group, Cork East Chapter just down the road in 1998.



STANDING PROUD: BNI Assistant Director Chris Bresnahan (left) with Andy Hart (Executive Director for South & West Ireland) outside Phoenix's lunchtime venue in the heart of Cork City. (Photo courtesy of Claire O'Rourke Photography on +353 21 439 8181)

Unlike its 10 sister chapters in the Greater Cork area which all meet at BNI's traditional 7.00am start time, Phoenix caters for the city's business people who are unable to attend a breakfast meeting, by starting at 12.15pm and finishing at 1.45pm.

With a healthy 22 members generated in just three weeks as a core group, Phoenix attracted more than 90 eligible visitors to its launch event, when no fewer than 18 membership applications were submitted - now making the group the second largest in BNI's South and West Ireland Region.

Assistant Directors Chris Bresnahan and his daughter Samantha Rathling ran the launch meeting, and they are well accustomed to working together, since both are directors and co-founders of Expect Recruitment, a well-known Cork-based father and daughter business. Chris said: "The very strong support for Phoenix right from the start just shows the huge interest there is in networking and business referrals in the Cork area." ●

Contact Chris on +353 87 2711155 or Samantha on +353 87 2711166.



ALL SMILES: Members of Cork City Chapter - second oldest in Ireland - have plenty to feel pleased about after marking their 10th year of success.

IRELAND'S OLDEST CHAPTERS TOAST DECADE OF SUCCESS

While Phoenix's launch grabbed the headlines, its two oldest siblings - Cork East and Cork City chapters were both marking 10 years of success by staging events destined to further swell their numbers. Cork East Chapter and Cork City (which launched just a day later) are still going strong and are amongst the country's best performing and most vibrant groups, having retained several founder members.

To mark 10 years of dynamic referral giving, one of Cork East's original members, solicitor Patricia O'Brien was presented with the results of the chapter's latest charity fundraising effort - a cheque for €1,100 which she donated to the Marymount Hospice in Cork.

Meanwhile, after holding their 10th anniversary breakfast meeting, Cork City members treated themselves to a half-day off work, first taking part in an anniversary golf match, followed by a fun horse-riding social event in the evening. ●

Contact Patricia O'Brien on +353 21 2300800.

North Yorkshire web design agency, Torsion Creative are breaking all their targets and boundaries - thanks largely to their membership of Leeds' Network Central Chapter.

"BNI referrals make up over 70% of our existing client base, and each referral we've received has led to another which means that we're constantly bringing in new business," said Managing Director Chris Carroll, whose Harrogate-based company has grown so dramatically since he joined BNI that it recently exceeded the business plan turnover target he'd set for 2011!

"It's been a phenomenal last 12 months for us, growing at an exceptional rate and really flourishing thanks to BNI," he added. "And this substantial growth has benefited more than just our sales figures. We've taken on six new members of staff in as many months and, having moved to larger premises only six months ago, we are already planning further expansion and another move before the end of this year."

Torsion's success with BNI doesn't even stop there, because through his Leeds chapter, Chris has been able to pitch for national accounts that are traditionally out of range for most regionally-based agencies. He said: "The creative industry is especially big in London where regionally-based agencies have always found it hard to break into the market, but thanks to BNI we're building up our client base there too. One referral gave us

HARROGATE'S TORSION ENJOYING THE BNI PRESSURE!

the opportunity to pitch for the development of a global social networking site - which we won of course! - beating a number of big London agencies by a substantial margin.

"BNI has helped us break through some tough business and geographical boundaries and opened up so many doors, enabling me to surpass even my own ambitious expectations and regularly putting me in front of people I wouldn't meet any other way," said Chris.

With Torsion's client base continuing to expand, the agency is planning to open offices in London & Dubai, prompting Chris to add: "To have grown the business so rapidly that we've exceeded turnover targets set for more than three years hence, is a reflection of the support we've gained from BNI, to whom we owe a huge debt of thanks."

One way in which Chris has demonstrated his appreciation, is by creating a large BNI referral slip encased behind a perspex screen, that is now proudly - and permanently -

BIG BUSINESS: Torsion's Managing Director Chris Carroll alongside one of the huge BNI referrals which, he says, have made his business soar.



displayed on the wall adjacent to the main entrance of his company. "No-one who visits us can fail to recognise the impact that BNI has had on our business," he added. ●

Torsion Creative specialise in web, marketing and brand development. Contact Chris on 0845 630 0603 or 07901 527828.

Miracles DO happen with BNI

Members rally to turn grand opening fiasco into a triumph

When your main contractors disappear two days before the grand opening of your new health and fitness gym leaving the premises looking like a building site, you are entitled to have a mini nervous breakdown.

But, when you then discover that the roof leaks, there are problems with both the electrics and the plumbing, there are building materials and debris strewn everywhere – and even the caterers who you arranged weeks ago, call up to cancel their booking just 24 hours before your guests are due to arrive, you might think your new venture is well and truly jinxed from the outset!

That was Katy Spragg's plight when, barely 48 hours before her new Fitness From the Heart health club was due to open in the centre of Twickenham, everything that could possibly go wrong, did. For a brief moment, it seemed that the personal trainer's dream of having her own fitness centre, was about to disappear before it had become reality.

Luckily, despite her unfortunate choice of suppliers and contractors, Katy HAD made one very sound decision. She'd joined BNI's Business Class Chapter just three months earlier. And, what happened next, proved not just an inspiration to her – but a classic reminder that, no matter how depressing society becomes, moments of pending disaster bring out the very best in human kind.

It was Tuesday morning and Katy had just received the bombshell news from her builders, when the phone rang. It was her chapter colleague, Steve Hagsey, who had called simply to offer the use of his van on her launch day. Inevitably, Katy blurted out her terrible news and said it seemed there would be no launch after all. "Oh yes there will," came Steve's instant response. "You WILL be opening on Thursday...."

Steve, also a builder, then set something magical in motion. Within the hour he'd

KATY'S ANGELS: A beaming Katy Spragg with Steve Hagsey (front right) and his colleagues who led the remarkable last-minute rescue operation to save her fitness studio launch. (Photo courtesy of John Frye, Tudor Chapter, Teddington).



pulled five of his staff from Bloc Developments off other projects and arrived at Katy's York Street studio, having already shared her problems with another chapter member, landscape gardener Gareth Miller from The Open Living Company who also arrived with his team shortly afterwards. Together, the dozen men worked until 9pm that night finishing off the major building and structural works.

Incredibly, that was just the start! The following morning at the chapter's weekly breakfast, chapter director Gareth and Steve

shared Katy's story with the rest of the group, nearly all of whom – including two visitors! – immediately offered to help with the huge clean-up operation still required, along with numerous items on a growing snagging list.

The result? Another 20 pairs of hands clearing and cleaning, while other members from both her own and neighbouring chapters applied their professional skills to fix problems, including plumber Lee Campbell (who even delayed his own holiday to help out), gas fitter Don Lynch and electrician Kevin Eastwood. And of course, Steve's building team were back in action carrying out last minute repairs, with everyone working until 10 that evening.

It all seemed little short of a miracle – especially when, with less than 24 hours to the opening, Katy's caterers pulled out. No problem for BNI's rescue team! One of her Business Class helpers was tiler Christian Smith who, in his previous career had been a qualified caterer and chef. "Don't worry," he said. "Just tell me what sort of food and drink you were planning, and leave it to me....". So he finished his work on the flooring and turned his attention to the kitchen where, with the assistance of the chapter's medical herbalist Bergitte McGovern, a superb launch reception buffet was conjured up in just hours.

Launch day dawned with various chapter members arriving early to put finishing touches to what was now a pristine studio, with the final licks of paint barely dry as Katy welcomed the first of 50 guests. "I never, ever thought it would be possible," she said. "Two days earlier it seemed that my launch plans were in ruins, but a truly amazing and generous effort by all my BNI colleagues saved the day in a spectacular way. I will never be able to thank them enough." ●

Contact Katy on 020 8973 1601.

Helen picks winner at the Races... It's BNI!

When your chapter colleagues have been helping to find winners for you throughout your first year in business, there's no more appropriate way to thank them than take them to the Races!

That's what Helen Lacey of Red Berry Recruitment did a few weeks ago, when she invited members of her West Mendip Chapter to accompany her and 40 of her clients to a day's racing at Wincanton Racecourse.

After working for other recruitment agencies for many years, Helen decided she could do much better running her own business, so she established her venture at the start of last year, joining BNI the following month.

She said: "I heard about BNI while living in Devon, but it was only when Lesley Kennedy at NatWest Bank invited me to a meeting of the West Mendip Chapter, that I discovered what it was all about. I was instantly taken with the positivity and enthusiasm and saw how it could benefit my fledgling business so I signed up - locking out another HR agency that was also keen to join."

Helen recently celebrated Red Cherry's first anniversary, having achieved sales of over £500,000 in her first year, with some 10% of this business coming through referrals from chapter colleagues. "It's been an amazing first year in which we really raced ahead, so I thought it was very appropriate to take some of my BNI colleagues and clients to a real Race Day as a way of thanking them for our success." ●

Contact Helen on 01749 330 630 or 07973 623 868.



LADY IN RED: Recruitment boss Helen Lacey can afford to smile, as she is pictured at Wincanton Racecourse with BNI colleagues and clients who have helped give her business a winning start.

LAWSON'S LORE

There's an old saying that any organisation is only as good as its members. It is equally true that without the satisfaction of its membership, no organisation can feel totally assured that it is performing at the optimum level.

Happily, as our recent members' survey established, we now have confirmation that the vast majority of BNI members are very satisfied with the effect BNI is having on their business growth and profitability. So let us be the first to recognise that this very pleasing outcome is the direct result of the growing quality and performance of our individual members, whose commitment to the Giver's Gain philosophy is producing ever more pleasing rewards.

Nonetheless, there is always scope for even the best-run organisation to improve its service delivery, and the survey highlighted two areas where you'd like even greater support – in generating more external referrals and in the range of practical help given to new members within their own chapters. Consequently, we are developing a new training workshop (to be launched later this year) to help members build the strong relationships that lead to increased external referral business. We are also reviewing our in-chapter mentoring structures with a view to ensuring that every new member can be fully effective in the shortest possible time.

Meanwhile, just one indication of the growing business success our members are enjoying, is the rapid rise in popularity and scale of our regional members' days, which are some of the most productive networking opportunities in the BNI calendar. So much so, that directors organising next year's regional members' days are now looking to find much larger venues, with hundreds of members having been unable to obtain tickets for some of this year's earlier events.

Of course, while attending members' days is now a 'must' for our determined networkers, it is still through the weekly chapter meeting that the vast majority gain most of their extra business. Here, we are constantly humbled by the team spirit, camaraderie and mutual support that exists, not just in finding referrals for each other, but in the spontaneous gestures of help that manifest themselves throughout our chapters – typical of which is the wonderful story (on page 3) from one of our Middlesex chapters. Giver's Gain? You bet! ●

Martha Gillian



Instant chapter for Limerick

They don't do things by half measures down in Limerick. The town's newest chapter, Sarsfield, has just launched with a record 45-strong membership! The 25-strong core group knew they were onto a winner when the first of their 110-strong group of visitors started arriving at 6am – a full hour before kick off, by which time nearly 140 people were crammed into the venue.

Two hours later, the chapter's leadership team were sifting their way through an incredible 37 applications from the visitors, barely half of whom could be accommodated within the Sarsfield group, which not only ended its launch day with a huge 45 members, but was also able to pass on the remaining 17 membership applications to other neighbouring chapters.

It was Ireland's biggest and most successful chapter launch, prompting Assistant Director Brian Moore to comment: "Members couldn't believe their eyes when guests started turning up at six o'clock. There was a tremendous buzz in the room and local business people were genuinely excited about the launch.

"Quite remarkably, we received so many applications that even after referring some of them to other existing chapters, we had enough left to start a further core group in the area. Meanwhile, it seems Sarsfield is destined to become one of Ireland's most successful and dynamic chapters." Our photo shows part of the launch day crowd. ●

Contact Brian Moore on +353 65 6843392 or +353 87 8100333.

Survey leads to more member support

An all-new training workshop designed to help members generate more external referrals, and a greater emphasis on the introduction of mentoring schemes for new members, are two of the key outcomes from the first BNI nationwide members' survey.

The survey, designed to ensure BNI continues to deliver maximum business opportunities and increased profits to its 12,000-plus UK and Irish members, produced a remarkably high 42% response rate – a significantly better return than most comparable surveys – and showed a reassuring consistency across both the UK and Ireland regardless of membership category, geographical location and length of membership.

In general, the huge number of responses gave a clear indication that the vast majority of respondents are happy with their overall BNI experience, but there were two areas in particular where members called for more support – in learning how to find a greater proportion of external referrals, and in the amount of help and training available to new members at chapter level.

National Director Gillian Lawson said: "One of the ways to generate more external referrals will be by members carrying out more effective one-to-one sessions with chapter colleagues in their individual

workplaces, and we recognise that these sessions need to become more focused, so we are already developing a new training workshop. This will be rolled out across every region in the near future and address these issues, strengthening relationships between all members of an individual chapter.

"It is obviously in everyone's interests to ensure new members can get up and running effectively within the shortest possible time, so we will be refining existing mentoring schemes and looking at other ways in which we can maximise support for new members," Gillian added.

"All forward-looking organisations need to periodically review their effectiveness and a members' survey was one of the best ways to check how satisfied our members are and what, if anything, we could do to give them even better value. Having received very positive feedback, we are now working to do just that – and make the overall BNI experience even better." ●

The lucky winner of the survey's prize draw was Nigel Lack from Bentley Chapter in Stanmore, who won travel vouchers. A further 100 respondents have received a copy of 'The Jelly Effect', written by one of the UK's top business trainers and motivational speakers, Andy Bounds.

UTOPIA'S FLYING START

with some feathered 'members'!

Every new BNI group likes to take off in style, but in the case of Skipton's Business Utopia Chapter in North Yorkshire, its members have a weekly reminder of the need to give their businesses a flying start – after adopting a pair of inquisitive peacocks as honorary members!

Utopia members meet in a new purpose-built business venue located in 3,000 acres of rolling countryside that comprise the 900-year-old Broughton Hall Estate and, given the abundance of wildlife in such rural surroundings, it did not take long for resident peacocks Percy and Priscilla, to show more than a passing interest in the weekly breakfast sessions of Utopia members.

Chapter Director Duncan Hartley said: "We're privileged to meet in one of the most picturesque venues of any BNI chapter, and we soon noticed the peacocks taking an interest in our proceedings, wandering about outside our glass-fronted conference room and occasionally tapping at the glass, trying to peer in. It seemed appropriate to make them honorary members, and we hope they'll encourage us to achieve the flying start we want."

In fact, Utopia has already made its mark, setting a record for new chapters in Yorkshire by taking just five weeks to reach its launch date, when it already boasted an impressive 28 members. ●

For more information, contact Duncan Thorne on 01274 299319.



CAN I COME IN?: One of Utopia's feathered visitors.

Meanwhile, other recent UK and Eire chapter launches include what is now our most westerly-based group, the Atlantic Chapter in the small coastal town of Westport on the tip of County Mayo, along with Beacon (Wolverhampton), Blaze (Hitchin, Herts), Burrell (Glasgow), Clocktower (London), Empire (Sunderland), Endeavour (Llanelli), Golden (Dublin), Great Expectations (Chatham, Kent), Iolanthe (Osterley, West London), Leeside (Cork), Progress (High Wycombe), Silk (Macclesfield), Springfort (Mallow, Co. Cork), Tara (Ashbourne, Co. Meath), Thomond (Limerick), Tyne Bridge (Gateshead), Utopia (Skipton, Yorks), Verdant (Dundee), Waterloo (London) and Whisky (Westhill, Aberdeenshire). Three further chapters were also launched in the Netherlands: Agaath (Hilversum), Apeldoorn Vivaldi (Apeldoorn) and De Bezige Bijen (Hoogeveen).

BNI keeps Les's wheels moving across Ireland...

"Where has BNI been during all of my demanding days as a salesman!?" That was the immediate reaction from courier company sales manager Les Dunne after he – very reluctantly – went along to his first ever chapter meeting.

Just two years later, and with his company having merged and grown to become one of Ireland's largest and best-known courier firms, Les gives much of the credit to his BNI colleagues in Dublin's Marketwest Chapter for playing a key role in his company's growth and developing brand awareness.

"When it comes to keeping the wheels turning, BNI has been in the driving seat – not to mention being instrumental in shaping my personal approach to business in recent years," said Les. "We joined BNI after being invited along on the back of a cold call I'd made to Alan Bell of Adnet in Dublin, and if I'm honest, I only went along to that early morning meeting because the venue was just 10 minutes from where I lived, so I thought: 'What have I got to lose?'"

"Two hours later, I knew exactly what a loss it would have been had I not gone. My initial reaction had been sceptical but after seeing the meeting in action, I kicked myself for not finding out about BNI during all my years in sales. Joining BNI on the spot was what I called a 'no brainer' decision," he added.

At that time Les's company was called Central Logistics, specialising in same day delivery of consignments throughout the Dublin area, but in January this year, the business merged with a larger company and was renamed 'Wheels Couriers.ie'.

He said: "Since then, with the constant help of my Marketwest colleagues, as well as those from other chapters in the Dublin area, I have seen our reputation grow consistently and we now service all 32 counties of Ireland, offering same day and next day delivery as well as a shipping service for documents and small parcels. We've come a long way, and I must thank all those people in BNI who have helped make this happen." ●

Contact Les Dunne on +353 1 855 0100 or +353 87 6128136, or visit www.wheelscouriers.ie

Super sub Adam finds himself in starring role

When IT consultant Kevin Alexander fell ill a couple of days before he was due to deliver his 10-minute presentation to colleagues in Thetford's Forest Chapter, he had no option but to advise the leadership team that he'd be relinquishing the key chance to promote his business.

SUPER BUG: Kevin Alexander who was struck down by illness.

"BNI is excellent for our business, but I was in a bad state and with no prospect of finding a reliable substitute, especially to deliver such an important presentation, I resigned myself to losing the opportunity," he said.

But Kevin had not counted on a remarkable rescue act by his own business partner, fellow director Adam Davies who, after hearing by chance about his colleague's illness, took it upon himself to make the 250-mile round trip from his home in Birmingham to act as a substitute for Kevin.

Even more surprising was that he made the arduous journey to Norfolk not even knowing it was Kevin's turn to deliver a 10-minute presentation – only finding out when he arrived just before the start of the meeting, to be told: "I hope you've got your presentation ready!"

Kevin said: "It really was quite something. I had no idea Adam was going to act as my substitute, let alone deliver what I'm told was a brilliant 10-minute presentation. It was only when I called him by co-incidence an hour after the meeting, that he told me he'd just been to my chapter's breakfast and done my 10-minute slot. It seems he'd decided to go along at the last minute – getting up at four in the morning to make the long trip to Thetford. Being based in the West Midlands, I never even considered asking him to sub for me, because it's such a difficult cross-country journey."

Adam, a co-director of IT consultancy Livingstone Solutions and a member of Sutton Coldfield's Elite Chapter, played down his starring role. "To be honest it was an impulse decision. When I heard Kevin was ill and wouldn't be at his chapter, I just thought I'd turn up on his behalf. I didn't



SUPER SUB: Adam Davies

bother to tell anyone else – although if I'd known I was going to be asked to give a 10-minute presentation, I might have had second thoughts," he joked. "Fortunately because we're in the same business, it wasn't too difficult to give an impromptu performance."

Commenting on Adam's contribution, BNI's East Anglia Director James Cruickshank said: "Not only did he make an eight hour round trip, but he gave a very impressive 10-minute presentation with no time to prepare. That makes him our super sub of the year – as well as raising the bar for other substitutes!" ●

Contact Kevin on 0845 900 2822 or 07788 144700 and Adam on 07770 551302

Pinner solicitor helps re-unite divided family



For almost eight worrying months, Middlesex businessman Mohammed Khan lived in two different time zones. By day, he ran his busy office supplies company in Eastcote, but by night he found himself acting as a human alarm clock to wake his five year old daughter – the victim of a bungled immigration application back in Pakistan – and ensure she got off to school on time.

"My daughter Ayra was living with relatives but she desperately missed her own parents and needed daily reassurance that we hadn't abandoned her," said Mo. "I had to be awake at 3.30 in the morning to call her and send her to school, then call her back after school to make sure she had her lunch, and of course when it was time for her dinner, I would call her again – finally reading her bed time stories over the phone until she fell asleep. It was a terribly difficult time for us all."

Having already instructed immigration lawyers who had failed to obtain the necessary passport and travel documents for Ayra, Mo was at his wits end when, at a routine meeting of his Bentley Chapter in late February, he mentioned his plight for the first time to the

group's own solicitor, Jeremy Garson who runs a long-established law firm in Pinner.

Although Jeremy told Mo that his own legal specialties did not cover immigration, he promised to find someone who could help – and within hours had located a female colleague whose expertise soon began to untangle little Ayra's problems. Three weeks later, she was on a plane bound for Heathrow to be re-united with Mo and his tearful wife Shermeen, who had been forced to leave her daughter behind in Lahore when she travelled back to the UK towards the end of last year to give birth to the couple's second child.

Mo told SuccessNet: "I only joined BNI at the start of this year, so I was hesitant even to mention my family problems to Jeremy, but with the political situation in Pakistan deteriorating all the time, being separated from Ayra was taking its toll on both me and my heavily pregnant wife."

"But from the moment I spoke to Jeremy, a big weight was lifted from our shoulders. I just couldn't believe how much he did for us, not just in finding a lawyer able to sort out the problems, but in the continuing personal interest he took. Solicitors are busy people and yet, while there was no business benefit to Jeremy in pursuing my problems, he kept a close eye on things until the day Ayra arrived in the UK, and continued to give me hope and encouragement each week."

As a British national, Mo (pictured left with Jeremy) had not anticipated any difficulty in obtaining a visa and passports for his wife and daughter to join him in Britain, so he was aghast when the authorities approved his wife's immigration, but declined a passport for Ayra. "I cannot thank Jeremy enough," he added. "It is solely thanks to him that my family is whole again and we shall never forget what he has done for us. I'm in no doubt that without his intervention, Ayra would still be in Pakistan. I'm his number one walking, talking ambassador – and I tell everyone I meet that he is a solicitor in a million."

Jeremy played down what he described as his "minor role" in helping the Khans, but added: "As a founder member of Bentley Chapter and a great believer in Giver's Gain, I was only too pleased to have played a small part in making such a difference to Mohammed and his family. He really was terribly upset at the time, and I'm very happy that everything has turned out so well." ●

Contact Jeremy on 020 8429 4111 and Mohammed on 020 8429 7538.

Christine takes a leap towards marriage

Romance has blossomed over the BNI breakfast tables for IT consultant Keith Todd and his new fiancée Christine Albani – but it took a Leap Year plunge by Christine to turn love into a marriage proposal!

She joined BNI nearly two years ago, becoming a founder member and first membership co-ordinator of the Thames Chapter which meets at the Coach & Horses at Kew Green. At that time she represented an IFA partnership whose director was a member of the neighbouring Harlequin Chapter, which meets in the same venue just 24 hours later.

Immediately hooked on networking, Christine quickly found her feet and was asked to substitute for her boss on a few occasions at his Harlequin Chapter – where Keith was one of the members.

She said: "When I first met Keith, I remember thinking what a courteous, friendly person he was, and how good a business contact he could be. I was about to launch my own new temporary office assistance company, Admin Ambulance, so I was keen to have as many useful business allies as possible."

"We became good friends and as I began to rely on him more, so we grew to be more than just friends, dining out, going to the theatre or cinema. Then by last summer it just seemed to hit me – that I'd fallen in love with him."

That may have been the easy part, because with Christine focusing much of her time and attention on her new venture, and Keith working hard to develop his KAT Computer business, thoughts of their long-term future together understandably took a back seat.

But Christine is no retiring wallflower and having ascertained that Keith's more unassuming disposition might see their status quo being



maintained, she decided to make the most of the calendar. "Since this is Leap Year, I thought I'd take the plunge by asking Keith to marry me, so on 29 February I did just that. "Will you marry me?" I asked, and of course – why wouldn't he? - he said YES!!"

Keith was to exact some form of poetic justice when it came to his next 10-minute presentation – on a morning when Christine was again subbing at his chapter. "We hadn't told anyone in the chapter about our engagement so, when Harlequin's Secretary/Treasurer Joan D'Ollier introduced Keith's slot by reading out his biography sheet and announcing: '...and now for something that no-one knows about Keith....' my heart missed a beat," she recalled.

"I was wondering what on earth I was going to discover about my fiancé and the suspense was killing me. But then Joan said: 'On the 29th February, Christine asked Keith to marry her – and he said yes....' Well, I nearly fell off my chair and under the table – but I suppose he'd got his own back on me, and we've had a good laugh about it ever since."

The happy couple are pictured above (in foreground) with chapter colleagues toasting their future. They are due to be married at the end of this month (photo courtesy of Martin Jason Photography). ●

Contact Christine on 020 8894 1935 and Keith on 020 8744 5116.



“Get yourself to casualty NOW!”

A 46-year-old Newcastle businesswoman has thanked BNI for saving her life – literally – after a major deep vein thrombosis was correctly detected by one of her new chapter colleagues, despite it being dismissed as ‘highly unlikely’ by hospital doctors and nursing staff!

“You could have knocked me over with a feather when Roz Cusack, the sports injury therapist in my new Falcons Chapter, told me to go straight to Casualty because she believed I had a serious DVT,” said Pummi Mattu. “But I was even more surprised when two doctors and a nurse then told me they were sure it was just a strain or torn leg muscle.”

In the event, Roz was right. “Fortunately, she’d told me to mention DVT and insist they give me an ultrasound scan, so when the doctors said it wasn’t too serious, I told them I’d been advised to have a scan. That’s when they discovered a six-inch blood clot that could have proved fatal,” said Pummi, pictured left with Roz.

A personal and corporate business coach, Pummi’s problems started when, after a workout at her gym, she felt an unusual pain in her left leg. “I dismissed it as a strained muscle, but over several days it got worse, so I phoned Roz and asked her to take a look. After examining the leg, she told me to put my feet up over the weekend and call her if I was no better by Monday.

“In fact it felt so bad that despite having a rare day off, I decided to go to my chapter breakfast that morning just to get further advice

from Roz, because I would never have gone to my GP over something I still thought was trivial. After the meeting, she checked my leg again and then ordered me to go straight to hospital, saying she believed I had a DVT,” said Pummi.

At the casualty unit, a nurse reassured her it was probably only a strain or torn muscle but when blood tests showed an abnormality, Pummi was sent to another emergency unit where another medical consultant dismissed Roz’s DVT concerns as ‘most unlikely’. “I told him I’d been advised to demand ultrasound scans and later, when this revealed a large blood clot, he was very shocked.”

Pummi was given immediate treatment to dissolve the clot, and she is now well on the road to a full recovery. “But I consider myself very lucky – especially since I’d only joined BNI a couple of months earlier. Had I not done so, I would not have met Roz, never gone to my GP, and could well have died,” she added.

Roz, whose Newcastle-based Blue Soul has become one of the region’s best-known sports injury clinics commented: “After examining Pummi’s leg, I knew there was no muscle tear and had a strong feeling it was a DVT. I also knew that her condition could easily be mis-diagnosed or overlooked, so I’m just glad she took my advice and demanded further investigations.” •

Contact Pummi Mattu on 07890 646894 and Roz Cusack on 0191 276 0210. Photo courtesy of Kevin Weatherly.

BNI HAS SAVED OUR LIVES

LITERALLY!

We know that BNI is good for members’ businesses. We know it can be very good in terms of personal and business skills development. But did you know that BNI can also bring dramatic benefits to your health. Here, two members explain why, and say: BNI has saved our lives, literally!

Trevor quits chocolate to enjoy BNI’s sweet success!

It’s not uncommon to hear a member say that “BNI has changed my life” – but in the case of Trevor Smith, Maidstone’s Invicta Chapter Director, he REALLY means it, because joining BNI just a year ago has not only brought him fantastic business gains, but also saved him from serious ill health that threatened his livelihood.

Trevor was a Type 2 diabetic whose illness was barely under control. His GP had warned him that unless he radically changed his lifestyle, he would be insulin-dependent within six months – a condition that would have forced him to give up his ‘second’ job as a part-time coach driver. He said: “My health was a mess, and my work was under real threat. Although I’d recently joined Travel Counsellors, I continued to drive coaches part-time and knew that if I had to depend on daily insulin injections, this would end.”

Fortunately, his decision to join BNI – encouraged by Travel Counsellors – brought immediate benefits. “My first one-to-one was with Andrew Vintern, the chapter’s hypnotherapist who soon learnt that I was a ‘chocoholic’ as well as diabetic – two things that don’t go together. He gave me a session of hypnotherapy which to my amazement, ended with my complete aversion to chocolate,” Trevor added.

Come his dreaded next visit to the doctors, Trevor was given good news. His condition had greatly improved, enabling his tablets to be almost halved to just eight a day! “This gave me new heart and in February this year, a one-to-one with Estelle Gillett (the chapter’s Herbalife wellness &

fitness coach) got me motivated to start a weight management programme. Five weeks later, I’d shed twenty pounds – and my GP reduced my daily tablets to only four a day!”

But Trevor’s best news came just recently when, having lost over three and a half stone, his GP told him: ‘You’re no longer diabetic, and if you maintain your new lifestyle, you should stay that way.’

Trevor’s personal improvements have been matched by a big upturn in his business fortunes, with his Travel Counsellors work attracting numerous referrals. He added: “Since joining BNI, my life has been transformed. In business terms, 70% of all my new clients come through BNI, but my health has been an even bigger success story thanks to my wonderful chapter colleagues. I was on a rapid downward spiral, but they have changed my life forever!” •

NO THANKS! I’m healthy now, says Trevor Smith (photo courtesy of Ciaran Oliver at www.oliverphoto.co.uk)



Tyneside duo on top of their trade!



A husband and wife team whose expanding Tyne & Wear photography business has been given a significant boost through BNI referrals, has won a prestigious national industry award.

George Chapter's Jan Weatherly and her photographer husband Kevin who run KW Photography in Biddick Village near Washington, are celebrating their success after gaining first place in the British Institute of Professional Photographers Portrait Photographer of the Year regional category.

The winning portrait (pictured left) earned the north-east title for their business, and Kevin's photograph will now be entered in the national finals this autumn. A former police officer, Kevin specialises in legal assignments as well as commercial, wedding and portrait work. He said: "Every photographer likes to think his or her work is special, but receiving independent recognition from your own professional institute is a great accolade."

Jan joked: "I've always told Kevin that he's the best flasher in the north-east, and next month he'll be presented with the trophy to prove it." She added: "We joined George Chapter over two years ago and BNI has been a significant factor in our growth, with roughly one third of our new business coming through BNI referrals. We very much value the role it has played in our overall success." •

Contact Jan and Kevin on 0191 416 6822 and view their work at: www.kwphotography.co.uk



Big win for

INDUSTRY AWARDS FOR BNI'S TOP PERFORMERS



BNI fosters major business award

A Mansfield-based marketing agency has attributed its recent winning of the town's Business of the Year Award to the volume of high quality referrals it has received since joining BNI.

A member of Mansfield's 2020 Chapter, Fresh Marketing Solutions beat a host of contenders to land the major Nottinghamshire business award, cited for its all-round achievement, a clear vision for the future, success measured against objectives and sustained growth.

Although not yet two years old, the business has an impressive portfolio of big brand names, some of which have stemmed from BNI referrals. Director Kirsty Cambers said: "We have turned our £500 investment in BNI into at least £30,000 worth of business, and enjoyed amazing start-up success. It has enabled us to surround ourselves with superior business partners, develop our business and interpersonal skills and generate tens of thousands of pounds worth of incremental business, so this award is recognition both for the effectiveness of BNI and our own performance."

Kirsty is pictured above (right) with her co-director Karen Rowe receiving the award from Asha Khemka, Principal of West Nottinghamshire College. •

Contact Kirsty on 07889 923854.

Bromley's rat-ca

Meet Daniel Steward, rat catcher extraordinaire! So good in fact, that he's just received a Royal Warrant from Her Majesty The Queen no less.

A member of Bromley's Churchill Chapter, his South East London company Shield Pest Control UK Ltd have undertaken work for the Royal Family over a number of years and Daniel's 20-strong team are routine visitors to Buckingham Palace, St. James' Palace and Kensington Palace where their expertise keeps any problems firmly under control.

Just turned 27 (he was 26 when the Warrant was granted), Daniel admits his chosen career makes him the butt of jokes from colleagues and friends, and he expects the banter to increase now his vans and stationery carry the Royal Arms and the magic words 'By Appointment to Her Majesty the Queen.' He is pictured (right) proudly admiring one of his new royal crests.

"I was a trainee quantity surveyor and never intended going into the pest control business started by my father more than 30 years ago, but I was getting fed up with the daily grind of commuting into central London, so when a vacancy arose in the family firm, I decided to give it a go," he said.

It was clearly a good decision, because under Daniel's leadership as managing director, Shield has expanded rapidly, with turnover trebling and their contracts becoming ever more substantial.

He added: "We'd been doing work at one or

A mother and daughter who transformed their tiny 'barrow business' into one of Newcastle Metro Centre's most popular stores, have won a top category in the North East's Women Entrepreneur of the Year awards.

Jan Massey and her daughter Melanie Crow (pictured left) won the Entrepreneur of the Year Trophy for the retail sector after being nominated for turning their Photography for Little People business into one of the region's best-known specialist stores offering baby gifts and personalised items – just three years after the couple started trading from a barrow stall in the Metro shopping centre.

Jan said: "During that time, we have inspired and motivated each other to overcome all the odds to make our dream a reality, creating something very special that our customers seem to love. Our photography studio is now a paradise for parents and their children alike."

Not content to rest on her laurels, Jan decided to further boost her business by joining BNI's latest Tyneside group - the Tyne Bridge Chapter - earlier this year, and she is now tapping into her colleagues' collective expertise to help develop the family business into a national franchise by the end of 2009. She added: "Having formed many alliances across the north-east with schools, hospitals and nurseries, and gained widespread recognition for the creativity and passion that goes into our products, the time is now right for us to step up another gear – and I'm hoping BNI will provide not just new opportunities but also become a source of expert business advice to support our plans." •

Contact Jan on 0191 460 5000.

the Little People!

A beautiful outcome for Lesley



Newcastle-upon-Tyne beautician Lesley Caster has more reason than most to be standing proud, after her City Retreat Salon & Spa was voted the very best in Britain in the British Professional Beauty Association's national awards.

It pipped literally thousands of competitors to land the industry's most prestigious title – and she says thanks are due in no small part to BNI which she joined three years ago at a time her then fledgling venture was struggling.

But soon after becoming a member of Surtees Chapter, the business took off and today it is one of the North-East's premier beauty salons attracting clients from all over the region. Lesley said: "BNI brings us at least 20% of all our business – enabling us to recently open a second hair and beauty salon in the Teme Valley at Gateshead. We could not have done this without BNI."

With six treatment rooms and even its own private 'wellbeing suite' complete with sauna, steam room and every conceivable beauty aid, City Retreat's Best Salon award is the second major success in 12 months for Lesley (pictured above). A year ago, her business was runner-up in the regional finals. •

Contact Lesley on 0191 230 1055.

It's no co-incidence that BNI's most dedicated members continue to pick up prestigious industry awards. On this page we feature half a dozen colleagues who have received industry recognition in recent weeks – three of them from Tyneside chapters - and our congratulations go to all of them.

Teacher snares Royal seal

Other of the palaces for several years but in 2006 we were awarded the main pest control contract and then, at the start of this year I received notification that I'd been granted a Royal Warrant. We have other accreditations, but nothing beats being able to use the term 'By Royal Appointment' and I feel very honoured."

He joined BNI 18 months ago after resisting numerous invitations from his company's software support consultant to visit the Bromley Chapter. "In truth, I didn't fancy the idea of such early meetings, but when I eventually succumbed, I found that I liked the vibes from the group and joined after just two weeks. Since then I've had quite a few referrals, but more important to me is the camaraderie and fun we have at our weekly breakfasts. I'm sure I'll be on the receiving end of a lot of jesting from envious colleagues now that I hold the seal of Royal approval," he quipped. •

Contact Daniel on 0208 690 4481.



The boss of a Cork recruitment consultancy has won a Special Merit Certificate in the city's Enterprising Business Women of the Year Awards, just two years after launching her venture.

And no sooner had she received the award, than Samantha Rathling, managing director and co-founder of Expect Recruitment singled out BNI colleagues in the Cork City Chapter (of which she is currently chapter director) for helping her to grow her business substantially in a very short time.

She said: "A great deal of the credit for this award goes to my fellow chapter members. It would not have been possible without BNI, so my colleagues share this recognition."

Her company places candidates in the multilingual sector, working with multinationals in Munster, and finds English-speaking candidates for small to medium sized companies in Cork. Samantha added: "The award scheme is part of the Enterprise Board's bid to encourage female entrepreneurs in Cork, focusing on those who have made a real difference to the local business community and local people, so it's great to be able to say BNI has played a key part in this success." She is pictured above (centre) with Orla Linehan, president of Network Cork (left) and Elaine Geraghty, CEO of Newstalk Radio. •

Contact Samantha Rathling on +353 21 4979810

Samantha credits BNI for her merit

Team-building, dull? You must be joking!

When it comes to finding more interesting ways of getting to know – and work with – your business colleagues, sometimes helping local charities in the process, then nobody does it better than BNI chapter leadership teams. Here we highlight just a few of the most recent teambuilding initiatives that are helping chapters to maximise their members' business potential.



Flour power gets messy in the West End!

Determined to be different, members of central London's West End Chapter recently swapped their swanky meeting venue at the Royal Institute of British Architects for a bonding session in the kitchens of an Italian restaurant – making bread dough.

Armed with yeast, flour, water and plastic bowls, 30 members and friends had a riotous time kneading, pummelling and stretching their dough – and their imaginations – into the most incredible shapes, some even managing to create a whole new range of edible clothing.

West End member Stevan Alcock commented: "It was a chance to let our hair down and get to know our colleagues better over a few glasses of wine, although with so many sticky fingers on display, not many business cards were exchanged! At the end of the night we even got to keep our dough to bake at home, although mine expanded so dramatically in my bag, I thought I might get stopped by security."

The session was the latest in an unusual line of teambuilding activities organised by West End's Event Co-ordinator, Sharon Waxkirsh, whose previous 'surprises' included a visit to a circus and dinner at a cabaret show featuring an opera singer! "I like having fun," she said, "and I like to make sure all our BNI events are memorable. It's good for business as well as the soul." Our photo shows West End members hard at play making dough.

Contact Sharon on 07738 872038

Exeter's wayward paddlers net bumper catch

Who needs the safety of dry land for personal development challenges, when you've got the English Channel on your doorstep!? Certainly not the members of Exeter's Rougemont Chapter who recently found themselves all at sea in the name of teambuilding.

Organised by chapter director and part-time canoe instructor Jim Thomson, the event provided new experiences and entertainment in equal measure, as Rougemont's intrepid explorers bobbed around (and in one case, under) the waters of Brixham Harbour in their multi-coloured canoes.

Deciding it would be somewhat risky to allow his novice seafarers to venture beyond the harbour limits, Jim kept the wayward paddlers in buoyant spirits for two enjoyable hours – so much so that immediately they were safely back on solid ground, the group set a date for their next water-borne expedition.

Jim, who is managing director of South West Colour Laboratories, said: "We've had a very good start to the year, with all our members growing their businesses considerably through BNI. Part of the reason for our success is the team spirit between members, and their understanding of each other's business needs, so events like our canoeing exploits are vital to maintaining this camaraderie."



North-East chapters race to speedy £8k for hospice

More than 80 speed demons from nine North-East chapters recently took to the track to raise vital funds for a local children's hospice, enabling them to pass a 'dream referral' to a fellow member.

BNI's would-be Lewis Hamiltons, comprising both members and teams from their companies turned out to tackle the demanding outdoor track in Sunderland, battling in pouring rain and fierce winds for over three hours in a closely fought Go-Karting endurance race where the emphasis was most definitely on survival!

Organised by Durham Dunelm's Chapter members Graham Meikle of Mortgages of Choice, and Damon Millar, fundraiser for the chapter's adopted charity, Butterwick House Children's Hospice, the event provided chapters with both a team-building activity and a great networking opportunity. Each driver was sponsored by friends and colleagues and BNI's racers raised over £8,000 for the hospice – the latest 'dream referral' to be received by Damon, and a major step towards the £50,000 target set by north-east chapters from a series of funding raising events.

Damon, who was Dunelm's chapter director added: "I don't know of any other networking organisation that could bring together such a range of professionals, with a shared passion for helping each other. People often ask me: 'Does BNI work for you?' Since I've received £20,000 through BNI in the last six months alone, my answer is a resounding 'yes'."

Contact Damon on 01642 628930.



... If in doubt, have a glass (or 3) of wine!



Tired of rock climbing and watersports? Fed up with trips to the races, bowling alley and other corporate events? Fortunately, when all other ideas for team-bonding fail, you can always fall back on that good old reliable British social activity – getting together over a glass, or three, of wine!

Members of London's Gateway Chapter in Notting Hill, combined fine art with fine

wines when they took part in a wine-tasting (provided by Phoenix Chapter's Paul Raymonde from D'Vino) at the adjoining studios of two chapter colleagues, painter Henry Liam-Ward and architect Quintin Hinxman, where they got to know each other better while sampling fine Italian wines and admiring Henry's amazing portraits and the impressive 3D modelling of Quintin's exciting building projects. They are pictured above enjoying their cultural tippie.

Meanwhile, a similar event in Leicester, saw both the wine and the referrals flowing as members of the city's De Montfort Chapter gathered to celebrate six months of success for the fast growing group, enjoying a night sampling fine wines from Burgundy and Rioja, followed by Madeira and Port. Under the leadership of David Tomlinson (at 25, one of the country's youngest chapter directors), the group has grown substantially, inducting five new members at the final breakfast meeting of his term. We'll drink to that!

Members' Days are tops for BIG business

BNI's regional Members' Days have become the biggest attractions of the year, with several of this year's events proving a sell-out – leaving literally hundreds of members disappointed.

The combination of top-level motivational speakers, the chance to network with hundreds of other members, and the ability to generate often six-figure business from these high-octane conferences, has now resulted in member pressure on organisers to book larger venues for future events.

One example of their popularity was the recent Yorkshire Members' Day, held in Wakefield which attracted a capacity audience of over 400 members and guests.

However, with up to 200 would-be delegates unable to get tickets, Yorkshire's Executive Director Niri Patel has already switched the venue for the 2009 event to Sheffield's Magna Centre, to ensure a much larger audience can be accommodated.

So great is the interest level in next year's event that organisers expect to start selling

tickets this summer – eight months in advance – as soon as the programme of internationally-acclaimed speakers has been confirmed. Niri told SuccessNet: "Each year, regional members' days become bigger, attracting top calibre speakers and resulting in ever-higher volumes of new business being generated between members.

"This year, our event drew members from as far afield as Scotland and the south coast, from Ireland and even some from mainland Europe, resulting in a phenomenal amount of networking and numerous business referrals being passed, the total value of which will take months to calculate. Members now regard these regional events as crucial fixtures in their business calendars and from the testimonials and 'thank you' letters we receive for weeks afterwards, we know they have resulted in countless individual business successes" he added.

One of the 'lucky' members who did manage to attend the northern members' day, Huddersfield-based freelance copywriter Julia Hayes said: "It was a terrific event, with superb speakers, and I was overwhelmed to receive a ready-prepared referral to an excellent business owner as soon as I stepped into the hotel! In addition, the organisers were an enormous help in tracking down some much sought after contacts for my chapter colleagues."

Terry Hamill, BNI's Merseyside Executive Director led a 70-plus delegation of members to Yorkshire and said: "We had to turn so many others away, but when we arrived at 8am to find over 200 people already busy networking at the venue, it was easy to see why it was a sell-out. I've told my chapters that for future members' days they need to book tickets as soon as the event is announced!" ●



FULL HOUSE: Some of the delegates at the recent Yorkshire Members' Day (photo courtesy of Dan Dalton of www.beautiful-photography.co.uk)

Meet the RIGHT people at Members' Days



There's a saying in BNI that 'It's not who you are that matters, it's who you know...' and for one delegate at the Yorkshire Members' Day, the maxim came true as soon as he set foot in the venue.

Russell Belton (pictured above) runs 'Snail Homes' an estate agency with a difference in Stockton on Tees, and for the past two years, he'd been asking his own Durham Walworth Chapter colleagues to find him a referral that would introduce him to a medium-sized national housebuilder.

"The power of BNI is such that as soon as I arrived at the conference, something remarkable happened. I'd been there less than a minute when I saw another visitor juggling

her cup of coffee, handbag, and files while trying to pour milk into her drink, so I offered to help and we got chatting.

I learnt all about Suzie Mercer and her business, Poppy at The Garth - a day spa centre in Skipwith, York - and then I told her about my business. I said my ideal referral would be to speak to a director of a medium or large builder such as Barratt Homes or Persimmon Homes, because I knew I could save them substantial amounts of money by helping them sell their part-exchanged properties quickly.

"To my amazement, she said she used to be PA for the recently retired chairman of Persimmon Homes and that, while she'd now set up Poppy at The Garth, she still did some part time work at the building company when the current Chairman's PA was on holiday.

"She told me: 'I'll speak to the chairman and see if Snail Homes would be of interest to him and I will give you a call next week and let you know.' I was absolutely gobsmacked, having been asking for this type of referral for so long. Sure enough, a week later I spoke to Suzie who'd already had a positive contact with him. So now it is simply down to me and my team to make it happen." ●

Contact Russell on 08456 081707.

Forthcoming UK/Ireland Members' Days include:

3rd October:

Kent Region

*Brands Hatch Conference Centre
(off the A20 at West Kingsdown)*

18th October:

South-West Ireland Region

Cork International Airport Hotel

24th October:

London

Marriott Hotel at Heathrow

September (date to be confirmed):

Sussex region

Hickstead, Haywards Heath

BNI proves top investment for sceptic Heather



IT'S GOOD TO TALK: Heather Barnes develops the "know, like and trust me" theme with fellow member Allan Beadle of Systematic at a recent networking event. Photo courtesy of John Price, Photographer, Epcot Developments Ltd.

Like many first-time visitors to a BNI chapter, Heather Barnes was less than enthusiastic when invited to go along to a breakfast meeting. As if the prospect of a 6.30am start wasn't bad enough, she wasn't keen on having to make even a short presentation about her business.

That was just 16 months ago when, despite her reservations before visiting Stansted's Gateway-to-Business Chapter, she liked what she saw and joined, hoping it would give her brand new business venture a good start.

She need not have worried. Having just

switched careers from being an IFA to running her own overseas property investment company, Heather still managed to generate £750,000 worth of new property sales from BNI referrals in her first 12 months of membership – and business is now soaring.

"I've just had my record volume of sales, writing a huge one million pounds worth

of sales in the past 14 days alone, and this has all come through my BNI colleagues. It has been quite incredible," she said. "I always hoped that once my colleagues understood my business and learnt to trust my judgement and integrity, then the business would start to flow, but I never imaged the extent to which BNI would play such a key role in expanding my company."

Ironically, Heather was only prompted to launch her new venture, Heather Barnes Overseas Property Investment & Sales, because the IFA category in her new chapter was

already filled. "It seemed like fate was playing its hand. I couldn't join as an IFA, so it gave me the perfect reason to kick start my new business role," she said.

"For the first few months I received no referrals at all, but I wasn't worried because I knew members needed to get to know, like and trust me before they'd even think about referring their contacts to spend their hard-earned savings to buy a property on my advice. After all, it's not like giving a referral for a bouquet of flowers!" Heather added.

So, over a six month period, Heather made it her priority to prepare the best possible 60-second and 10-minute presentations about her business, and arrange one-to-one's with all her colleagues, giving her the chance to explain the benefits – and pitfalls – of overseas property investment.

Last November she started to see the first returns. She received first one, then another and then five referrals through BNI, all introducing purchasers of properties with an average value of £150,000. "In just two months, BNI membership gave me a £750,000 increase in my turnover, and with each passing month, I'm receiving more referrals from colleagues."

She added: "When it came to renewing my BNI membership earlier this year, I didn't think twice. Given how much it's helped me, I'd have been crazy not to. It seems ironic that barely a year ago, I'd have done almost anything to avoid attending that first BNI meeting!" ●

Contact Heather on 07905 899 084 or at: heather@heatherbarnes.co.uk

Barbados break brings big business for Barry

A family holiday to Barbados has led to a major beachfront property development deal for Twickenham Platinum Chapter's planning consultant Barry Sutton – with potentially lucrative spin-offs for a number of BNI's Caribbean members!

Having previously bought a plot of land on which to build an idyllic family retreat, Barry insists he had no intention of combining business with pleasure when he returned to the island but, in his own words, "a business opportunity arose that was just too good to miss, so once the holiday was over, I made plans to go back and tie up the deal."

The project involved him purchasing a significant strip of prime waterfront land on the west coast of Barbados where he intends to build beachfront apartments overlooking the Caribbean. However, despite the similarities between UK and Barbadian development regulations, Barry has needed all of his expertise to progress the scheme, which is now slowly going through the planning stages.

He said: "When I returned to Barbados, I had just 11 days to do a million and one things

including making contact with people in a whole range of different trades and professions. As a result, I covered over 600 miles in my hire car in one week – despite the island being barely 20 miles long and 12 miles across.

"I visited all but one of the four chapters on Barbados – a hugely efficient way to meet many of the people whose services I will need to complete this project. And of course, dealing with people from my own trusted business organisation rather than trying to find them through Yellow Pages or newspaper adverts, gives me far greater reassurance," he added.

Barry was given a warm welcome by the members of the island's Trident, Bridgetown and Hibiscus chapters and he is looking forward to meeting members of the Flying Fish Chapter during his next visit, by which time he hopes the project will be sufficiently advanced to start recruiting contractors, craftsmen and professional services. "I want the properties ready before the end of next year, so it is going to be important to choose the right people to work on the job. Being able to tap into BNI's fantastic global membership and its expertise



A WARM WELCOME: Trident Chapter's leadership team who gave Barry an enthusiastic reception.

makes this process a whole lot easier."

While Barry was struck by the similarities between the way chapters are run in the UK and Barbados, he is keen to see one particular practice adopted in the UK. "In Barbados, if you arrive at just one minute past seven, you forego your 60 second slot. No grumbling, no argument, that's the deal. Some of our own chapters might benefit from that policy," he suggested. ●

Contact Barry on 01784 880909 or 07740 605909.



train&gain

Attracting visitors the easy way . . .

By Alan Higham, Executive Director for Durham, Teesside and Cumbria

How many times have you tried to bring a visitor to your group but found it hard to do so without unwittingly 'selling' the merits of BNI, talking about agendas, 60 second presentations or the 'Giver's Gain' philosophy - and totally bemusing your contact in the process?

Well, I have started to invite guests, basing my invitation purely on the benefits to them and nothing else . . . and it works - like this. Start by asking yourself why any potential visitor would want to come to your meeting (notice I haven't mentioned chapters or BNI) and you should come up with plenty of very persuasive reasons, including these:

- It offers a great networking opportunity for making some contacts that might be useful.
- It gives them a chance to sell their product or services to willing buyers - even more likely if they are being introduced by a trusted contact.... ie you! (And don't forget to tell them that your business colleagues currently (the key word) don't have a good (plumber/solicitor etc) to do business with...
- They will have the opportunity to buy products and services from trusted suppliers. This may not be an obvious attraction to many potential visitors - but some will see the chance to avoid taking purchasing risks

as a genuine benefit, and if they know that you like and trust the people in the room, that's a good start.

- They might well pick up some useful new business ideas and tips; education slots can provide interesting food for thought, and there's always a chance to learn.
- They can start their day by having fun at your very friendly, dynamic breakfast meeting.
- Offer them a free meal - offer to buy them breakfast if your group charges its visitors.

If you agree that these are perfectly good reasons for someone to want to come along to your meeting - why not just say so? And why would you need to say anything else?

Remember, when it comes to inviting visitors, who is doing who the favour? Is it them - because if they come it will help get the Leadership Team off your back . . . OR, are you providing them with a massive opportunity to transform their business, by introducing them to a new concept they don't yet know about, while there is still a window of opportunity for them? I'm in no doubt it's the latter . . . so make sure they realise this! And invite them with a smile on your face, or in your voice!

Ah yes - that still leaves the issue of our

start time! 6:45.... But here, as ever, we do it for a good reason, so let them know, without any apology. The message is simple: "We meet over breakfast, and I will be there at 6.30 because that's when I get the most benefit from the group, but we always finish by 8.30 so we can get away to do our normal day's work. It doesn't interfere with anyone's day job, and we find good business people appreciate this because they are always busy". This leaves two appropriate impressions, firstly that the meeting will be full of good business people . . . and that if they (your visitors) are any good, they will appreciate it too.

Obviously, inviting visitors and ensuring they turn up is only the first of three key steps in the 'Visitor Process' - step two concerns the conduct of the meeting itself, while step three is the orientation and follow up - but by focusing on the visitor benefits I've outlined as part of the first vital stage, and without being distracted by anything else, you can improve your invitee/attendance ratio very significantly.

I don't believe any of this is new, but I find that by ensuring the focus is TOTALLY on the benefits to your visitors, you get their interest and commitment from the outset. Try it! •

Alan can be contacted on 0795 636 8899.

SIX OF THE BEST

Heading up the latest star performer additions to BNI's Gold Club is Jim Thomson, Chapter Director of Exeter's Rougemont group, whose achievements include introducing seven new members, serving two terms of office as chapter director and passing referrals worth more than £75,000 in less than six months.

Making up our 'six of the best' who each received their badges are Tony Kaye, a founder member of Salisbury's Spire Chapter pictured (right) receiving his badge, Alex Feigenbaum of Edgwarebury Chapter, London and three high performers from the East Midlands - Cas Francis and Karl Shatford, both from Derby 1 Chapter, and Adam Harris from Two Valleys Chapter near Long Eaton. Congratulations to them all! •



Without BNI I would not be where I am today!



SCALING THE HEIGHTS: Fabienne Alsing is glad she joined BNI (Photo courtesy of Paul Painter at www.paintercreative.co.uk)

By Fabienne Alsing, Director and Owner of The Well Natural Health Centre, Birmingham

Eighteen months ago, I was head-hunted to become the Director of The Well Natural Health Centre in Kings Heath, Birmingham – the flagship for complementary medicine in The Midlands and home to 30 highly qualified practitioners who improve the lives of numerous people every day, through natural health and personal development.

Taking on a large company set up by someone else is always a challenge but this one posed an added dimension, because no sooner had I taken over than the building came up for sale. So, to give us the best chance of controlling our own working environment and growing the business, I sold my home, moved into lodgings and bought the worn-out premises with a view to a total refurbishment and the creation of a beautiful, peaceful oasis of healing in the heart of Britain's second city. Only then could we look at expanding our trusted quality brand to other locations.

It was a huge task and the project threw up many unforeseen difficulties and problems, but I've always relished challenges and enjoyed responding to them. And then something unusual happened: a letter in the post literally jumped out at me, inviting me to a breakfast networking event in nearby Solihull.

I say 'unusual' because I'd always shied away from business clubs and networking groups, not wanting to feel obliged to refer my loyal and trusting customers to someone else just because I belonged to the same group. But one thing I have learned is to be flexible and make the most of every opportunity – and something felt different about this invitation. My intuition told me that this time I had to go along – and so it was that I had my first taste of a BNI chapter.

It was the group's educational speaker, John Wells, who convinced me to join. This guy knew what he was talking about – and he spoke my language. I immediately felt empathy

with the group's aims and with BNI's straightforward philosophy. So I joined and I haven't looked back since.

The support, guidance and help I have received from my Phoenix Chapter colleagues and also the wider BNI community, has given me the inspiration and strength to climb mountains. So much so that I really look forward to our meetings, the fun, the camaraderie and the tremendous support offered to me by my colleagues. I never thought I would ever feel like that about a business group!

BNI has made me reappraise my old attitudes about structured networking. For example, I found the quality of members far exceeded my expectations, which is why I've used the services of several trades and professions from my own and other chapters to help with The Well's huge renovation task. Not only are they good, but I could rely on them.

Meanwhile, BNI's business training in areas like presentation and networking skills has helped me develop and move to new heights, enabling me to excel. Hopefully, this is reflected in what I have been able to bring to my chapter.

BNI keeps giving me the confidence to find my way through new challenges, and I'm happy to acknowledge that had I not accepted that breakfast invitation just over a year ago, I would not have been able to achieve so much, and nor would our business now be in such a healthy position to move up to another level. BNI is a great way to do business and I wouldn't miss it for the world! ●

Fabienne Alsing is a qualified therapist with over 20 years experience of running complementary medicine centres. Contact her on 0121 443 1580 or 07985 933467.

Llandudno printer zips to 20 year milestone

“Bill, you're a great guy and you produce fantastic work – but you really do need to get out more!” Five years ago, that was a regular comment made to North Wales printer Bill Jourdain by his customers.

Many of them went on to tell him: “There's an ideal networking organisation you should join. We're all in it, and it's great for business too....” it, of course, was BNI – and after months of cajoling, Bill finally plucked up the courage to go along to his local chapter where, despite being a self-confessed quiet and retiring sort of chap, he liked what he saw and joined.

More than four years later, he has two big reasons for being grateful to those customers who'd nagged him. “While I'm not someone

who constantly tots up the value of business they've had from BNI, I must admit it's been very good to me. On the basis that an average referral is worth around £350, I must have received business approaching £100,000 over the years,” he said.

“But for me, the best thing has been the opportunity to network with other businesspeople. My customers were right. One can get very insular in my line of work and I did need to get out and about a lot more. I'm still hardly the chapter's livewire, but I really enjoy our weekly sessions which provide a lot of stimulation and motivation.”

In fact Bill was recently at the centre of Llandudno Chapter's thoughts, when his colleagues helped mark the 20th anniversary of his Bangor print business, Zipprint – now one of the region's longest established retail print businesses and the only one to provide full digital press facilities.

Bill added: “I'd moved to North Wales to help run a family hotel, but after visiting a franchise show, I got the idea of setting up my own printing business. I knew nothing at all about print, but after a one-week apprenticeship with a friend of mine at his Birmingham print shop, I went all the way down to Kent with a trailer and came back with a second-hand lithographic press and a whole load of darkroom materials. It was a very steep and challenging learning curve at that point!”

COLOURFUL CAREER: Printer Bill Jourdain with one of his colourful posters celebrating 20 years in the business.



His decision to invest heavily in digital printing completed Bill's two-decade transition from traditional printing methods to the latest technology. “People still think of printers as craftsmen up to their elbows in ink and hot metal – but it's all about high technology now and with the advent of new web-based media, we really have to be up to speed. I made a good decision to go into printing, and another excellent decision to join BNI – but I hope I will have retired before it's time to celebrate Zipprint's next 20 years in business,” he joked. ●

Contact Bill on 01248 355500.

Mohammed's delivery service in a class of its own

Some business people will always go that extra mile to keep their customers happy. But how many do you know who would spend over £1,000 of their own money and travel to the other side of the world - to ensure they didn't let down a customer?

Mohammed Arif, the rather incredible boss of two 'Mailboxes etc' outlets in Harrow and Mill Hill in north-west London, recently made this dramatic gesture to fulfil a modest BNI referral - and save the wedding day of an Indian bride whose designer bridal gown had been accidentally sent to Dublin, instead of Bombay!

A member of Pinner's Broadway Chapter, Mohammed's extraordinary act of kindness began when one of his business colleagues, Imran Ali was handed a referral to arrange the urgent courier delivery of a parcel containing an expensive designer wedding dress, required just a week later for a lavish wedding ceremony 4,500 miles away in Bombay.

But when the 10 kilogram package had failed to arrive less than 72 hours before the huge ceremony was due to start, the bride's frantic relatives rang Mohammed's office from India, putting in train his amazing rescue act.

"I immediately contacted our courier, UPS, who told me the package had already been delivered to our customer - in Dublin! It seems the consignment labels had got mixed up at the airport, and UPS could not guarantee its collection and re-delivery to Bombay until the following Thursday - four days after the wedding," he said.

Mohammed decided the only solution was his personal intervention. "I persuaded a friend in Dublin to collect the dress from the very bemused lady who'd received it, and meet me at Dublin Airport that night. I managed to get a return flight, arriving back with the package at Gatwick at 1.30 on Friday morning. Meanwhile, I'd told another member of my staff, Ahmad Nawaz, to book himself on the first available flight to Bombay, but there were no direct flights so, after I'd handed the gown to him at Heathrow a few hours later, he took the first plane to Delhi and then another local flight to Bombay, arriving 16 hours later on Saturday evening."

Needless to say the bride and her family were overjoyed when Mohammed's assistant presented himself at their home barely 12 hours before the wedding ceremony, and they insisted he stay for the celebrations, which he filmed to give to his boss on his return to the UK.

Afterwards, Mohammed was philosophical about his efforts. He said: "I've been in business a long time and I could not let our reputation suffer because of someone else's error, so I knew the only way we could get the dress to Bombay was by taking it ourselves. We pride ourselves on customer satisfaction - and in this case, I have the video to prove it!!"



WORLD CLASS SERVICE: Mohammed Arif (right) with colleague Ahmad Nawaz who personally delivered the package to India!

Ironically, while Mohammed's commitment saw his company losing money from what was a small BNI referral, he attributes his rapid business expansion entirely to BNI membership. He said: "From the day I joined Broadway Chapter nearly three years ago, BNI referrals have accounted for a large proportion of our business - so much so that six months ago I was able to launch our second outlet in Mill Hill where nearly all of our initial business came through BNI. That's why I am now looking to place more of my colleagues in other chapters. It's been fantastic." •

Mohammed Arif is contactable on 020 8381 0023.

No pain - but plenty to gain?

East Anglian members have received one of the year's more unusual invitations: fly to Cologne for private dental care, and combine treatment with a sight-seeing break in the beautiful German city.

And to make sure they heard about the offer loud and clear, dental surgeon Hildegard Hass, a member of BNI's Nibelungen Chapter near Bonn, recently flew to Suffolk with her laboratory technician husband Jan, to present their proposals to intrigued members of Ipswich's Wolsey Chapter.



The visit followed an email from Jan to Wolsey's travel agent Andrew Soltysik, enquiring about a joint venture whereby Andrew's company, Non-Stop Travel could package short-break trips to Cologne for BNI members and their friends or family, for whom a questionable 'highlight' of the trip

would be pre-arranged dental treatment at competitive rates! Jan is pictured above (left) with Hildegard and (far right) Andrew.

Andrew said: "Flights from Stansted with budget airlines can be cheap, so a package like this seemed very enterprising. I invited Jan and his wife to visit our Wolsey Chapter, collecting them from the airport, entertaining them overnight in Ipswich, before taking them to our breakfast meeting where they were enthusiastically received and Jan's 60-second slot rapturously applauded - and finally returning them to Stansted."

SuccessNet is obliged to report that no BNI member has so far taken up Jan's introductory offer of a 25% discount for the first patient to fly over for treatment. But word has it that neither Jan nor Hildegard are down in the mouth - and still hope to welcome their first BNI patients later this year. •

Contact Andrew on 0845 450 7776.

Dead heat in chapters' race to 10,000 milestone

Having launched within six months of each other back in 2002, there has always been friendly rivalry between East Midlands' chapters Derby 1 and Two Valleys in nearby Long Eaton - and that same competition recently saw the two groups reach the same key milestone on the very same day!

Both chapters meet on a Friday morning and, in an amazing co-incidence, both passed their 10,000th referral within minutes of each other, although if there had to be a winner, the honours would have gone to two Valleys who launched six months after Derby 1, making their weekly referral rate just a little higher.

For their part, as a fitting climax to running the 'BNI Game' within the chapter, Derby 1's leadership team had offered a £200 prize to the



group who passed the landmark referral - and its members promptly agreed to donate their winnings to Derby's Royal School for the Deaf. Our photo shows the winning team with their oversized

milestone referral and, if they're looking particularly pleased with themselves, it may be because after hearing of their generosity, fellow member Mike Colman from the city's Novotel invited them all to his hotel restaurant for a celebratory meal on him! •

Breakfast may never be the same again down in the Forest

Any lingering (or should that be lingerie?) doubts that BNI chapters are devoid of fun, frivolity and, dare we say it, displays of the attractive female form, have been well and truly dispelled by the boss of a thriving Nottingham healthcare business.

Faced with the task of delivering her very first 10-minute presentation to colleagues in the city's Forest Chapter, Kay Franklin was determined to create an impact – and what better way to do so than line up a bevy of attractive girls whose participation was justified by the fact that they'd all benefited from treatment at her Nottingham Centre for Cosmetic Surgery and Dentistry.

She told SuccessNet: "For two or three weeks beforehand, a number of men in the chapter – especially the older ones – were getting quite enthusiastic about my presentation. I'd wound them up a little by suggesting I might even show them some of the results of our work, so when it came to the day and I arrived with five young ladies all wearing dressing gowns, I think some of them were expecting to see rather more of the girls than I'd planned!"

In fact, Kay's dynamic presentation had one final and memorable twist. "When it seemed that certain of my male colleagues could no longer contain their anticipation, I asked the girls to take off their clothes – but instead of showing naked flesh, they were all wearing long T-shirts whose collective message spelt out: "You dirty, dirty old men!"



THE TRUTH REVEALED? Kay's ladies finally revealed what they thought of Forest Chapter's over-enthusiastic male members! (Photographs courtesy of Stuart McIntyre - Forest's incumbent Chapter Director - who can be contacted on 0115 924 3995).

Kay added: "Although I wanted my talk to be fun, there was a very serious side to it, because more and more ordinary people are now coming forward for cosmetic surgery and dentistry, knowing that the results are likely to change their lives by giving them greater confidence about their appearance. We've been in business for just four years, using some of the country's top cosmetic surgeons, and every year our client numbers are increasing hugely.

"As I keep telling my BNI colleagues,

looking good and feeling good about yourself is not just for the rich and famous. It's for anyone and everyone – and despite having been a member of Forest Chapter for less than a year, I'm delighted that several colleagues have requested information about treatment for themselves or friends and family members, while others have already received cosmetic dental treatment." ●

Kay can be contacted on 07971 165411 or at: kay@thenottscentre.co.uk

3-year-old Archie gets 'Giver's Gain' habit

Hemel Hempstead photographer and designer Stuart Marsh has an extra BNI 'member' to help find him business, in the shape of his three and a half year old son Archie!

Stuart, who belongs to the town's Gade Valley Chapter, said the pre-school tot seemed captivated with all things BNI, especially his name badge. "Without fail, whenever Archie came by the studios on his way home from playgroup, he made a beeline for it, so I thought no harm could come from my adapting



one of my old BNI badges to give him his very own badge which he now proudly wears to school every day.

"In fact it's produced an unexpected benefit because his teachers, fellow classmates and even their parents now know all about BNI and several of them have talked to me about potential business as a result – so without knowing it, Archie has become my extra salesman."

While Archie will have to wait at least another 15 years to join BNI, for the time being he is happy passing 'referrals' between his playgroup chums for items like marbles, toys and sweets – but, as our photo shows, still taking Giver's Gain very seriously! ●

Contact Stuart on 01442 245555.

getting in touch...

UK & Ireland National Office
Business Network International Ltd,
BNI House, Church Street,
Rickmansworth WD3 1BS

Tel +44 (0)1923 891 999
Email bniuk@eurobni.com
Web www.bni.eu

Executive Editors: Tim Cook &
Charlie Lawson

Editor: Malcolm Grosvenor
WriteAngle Communications,
Tel: +44 (0)20 8541 0600
Email: successnet@write-angle.co.uk

Design: Alex Nicolaou
Origin 1 (UK) Limited
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Tel: 01923 269777
Email: tbatkin@alpine-press.co.uk

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