



SuccessNet

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EDUCATION *and* INFORMATION BULLETIN *for* BNI MEMBERS

A large, bold, yellow number '10' with a slight 3D effect and a glow, set against a background of a crowd of people. The number is the central focus of the lower half of the cover.

10

**WE'RE 10
YEARS OLD
IN THE UK!**

See Page 3



A PREMIER £1M CHAPTER...

Members of the retiring leadership team at Leeds' Premier Armouries Chapter had good reason to smile as they returned to the group's "back benches" last month - after seeing the chapter pass its target of referring at least £1M worth of business in under 12 months.

The aim of passing referrals worth a seven figure sum was first mooted by the previous leadership team when they took over last October, but when their successors took up the reins in April this year, new Membership Co-ordinator Liz Cussans challenged

colleagues: "Let's go for £1 million!"

She said: "We'd been using the 'Show me the Money' box for some time, and when we moved onto the top table, I totted up the slips and found that members had exchanged referrals worth just over £500,000 in the previous six months, so I thought it would keep everyone on their toes to go for £1m by the time we handed over to the new leadership team this month."

In fact, members passed the magical million mark with several weeks to spare, with referrals averaging around £20,000

worth of confirmed business every week - but climbing as high as £131,000 in one exceptional week last November!

Liz, who runs a computer software training consultancy, added: "Everyone is chuffed that we passed this milestone during the late summer, so it will be interesting to see if we can exceed the figure in the next 12 months. We're a very lively 33-strong chapter, so anything is possible." ●

Contact Liz on 01484 640283 or at:
liz@it-helpttrain.co.uk

...AND THE NEARBY PROFESSIONALS ARE CHASING HARD!



Meanwhile, a few miles down the M1, Sheffield's much newer Professionals Chapter has just hit its first major target, by referring over £250,000 worth of business between its members.

The chapter reached the quarter of a million pound target at the end of last month, two years after its launch, prompting Chapter Director Vin Maher to congratulate everyone for "a great achievement." He added: "It confirms the dedication we have of winning business for each other. Passing this key milestone shows that being a member of our group really can make a huge difference to your business."

The Professionals, some of whom are pictured holding a banner to highlight their proud achievement, meet at Greens Health and Fitness Centre and are currently looking for new members to fill their vacant interior design, accountancy, travel agency and advertising industry categories. ●

Anyone interested should call Graham Parker on 07977 448 306

Golden quarter for black badges

When it comes to bringing new members into BNI, it seems that Sussex chapters have a distinct edge over the rest.

Eight of the latest 19 recipients of black

badges (awarded for introducing at least six new members) are from the south coast county, including three female colleagues from the same Battle Chapter - Sabina Brown, Elaine Copeland and Linda Carr Taylor.

Sussex's other star performers are Paul Harper Smith (Mid Sussex Chapter), Steve Brocklesby and Lyn Lulham (both from Uckfield Chapter), Richard Dandy (Meridian Chapter) and perhaps, most notable of all, Karen Young whose spectacular solo recruiting performance saw her receive a black badge immediately after the launch of her Champions Chapter in Crowborough, Sussex.

Running hard on the heels of Sussex were Yorkshire members, five of whom

have gained entry to BNI's prestigious Gold Club after earning their black badges. They are Samantha Blindell (Leeds North Chapter), David Chafer (Phoenix, Rotherham), Carol Griffiths (Kaizen, Sheffield), Chris Jeffrey-White (Ilkley Moor) and Mark Hardy from Grimsby's Business Exchange Chapter.

Other recipients are: Rory Buchanan (Newry Chapter, Northern Ireland), Nicola Bury (Waterfront, Belfast), Heather Garrod (Vancouver, Kings Lynn), John Leggett (Chapter Director of Saxon Chapter, Durham & Cumbria), Adam Lloyd (White Rose, Harrogate) and Alistair Wright of Olympians Chapter, Lincoln. Our congratulations to each and every one! ●



WE'RE 10 YEARS OLD

And what a first decade it's been!

BNI will be 10 years old in a few weeks time – and members in our first UK chapters are gearing up to celebrate this very special anniversary in style!

It was on a dark, bitterly cold morning back on 10th December 1996, that would-be members queued up in sub-zero temperatures to launch BNI's first UK group, the Harrow Chapter (now aptly called Chapter One), and learn about a new business networking organisation which, over the ensuing decade has taken not just the UK but a large part of the global business world by storm.

On successive mornings, UK national directors Martin and Gillian Lawson launched both Harrow and then Concord Chapter in neighbouring Northwood, since when BNI has become a huge business success in the United Kingdom and Ireland (boasting more than 500 chapters), while consolidating its position as the world's biggest business networking organisation.

With 12,000 UK and Irish members now producing annual business for each other worth in excess of £180 million, and BNI expanding rapidly across mainland Europe, the organisation has transformed the way that thousands of companies, large and small, do business with each other, creating countless new business alliances and personal friendships in 34 countries worldwide.

Harrow IT consultant Phil Stanton knows as well as anyone just how valuable BNI is to a developing business, having given and received referrals across Chapter One's breakfast table worth over £1M during the past 10 years. He said: "Like most of BNI's early members, I was doubtful at the start. We knew BNI had become a resounding business success story in North America, but here it was an unknown quantity and many of us were

sceptical about the prospects of an American business system working in the UK.

"But it didn't take long to appreciate all the benefits BNI offered. Quite apart from bringing in substantial new business - probably 50% of all my business - it has been fantastic for my personal development and created a wide network of trusted business colleagues ever willing to give me support and advice."

Phil (pictured above with just some of his referral slips) admits he has not kept a record of every referral received for his company, EQ Systems, but added: "It must be over 1,000 so even a modest estimate of their value means I've gained at least £500,000 worth of business through BNI colleagues - and given even more."

Would the time ever come to part company with BNI? "Not likely," was his immediate response, adding. "Of course, there are those cold, dark winter mornings when the thought flashes through my mind as the alarm goes off at 6am, but I'd never relinquish my seat. If I did, we'd not just miss out on a lot of new business, but also lose some existing clients. It's just not an option..."

Phil and his Chapter One colleagues, who last month passed the chapter's 15,000th referral, will be marking their 10th anniversary by holding a special visitors' day on 6th December, to which both potential and former members are being invited, along with local business leaders.

Meanwhile, members of BNI's second UK chapter, Concord, intend to make their 10th birthday equally memorable. Despite being the only founder member to have completed a decade of breakfast meetings, IFA Steve Pursey says his 43-strong group has gone from strength to strength over

the years, and that he'd be "mad" to even consider resigning his membership.

He said: "Without BNI, my past 10 years would have been nowhere near as successful. I must have received over 1,000 referrals (and passed even more) but that doesn't begin to tell the whole story. BNI has given me a fantastic network of fellow professionals to whom I can turn for anything, brought me countless new friends, greatly broadened my business acumen, and done a lot for my personal development. Benefits like these are priceless and for me, BNI is simply brilliant."

National Director Gillian Lawson commented: "We were always totally confident that BNI would prove successful for UK and Irish business, and ten years on, the fact that the organisation is a valued part of business communities throughout Britain, is reward in itself for those of us who were there at the beginning. It is wonderful to see how BNI has come to mean so much to so many, and very satisfying to note the key role it has played in encouraging, supporting and nurturing thousands of business entrepreneurs to become successful." ●



RECORD REFERRALS IN CHAPTER ONE: Chapter Director Tony Harvie (right) receives his chapter's 15,000th referral from colleague Steve Dolden. Both have been members of BNI for over eight years.

Worldwide, BNI has more than 4,500 chapters and over 90,000 members who, last year alone exchanged 4,400,000 referrals, generating more than €1.5 billion worth of business.

LAWSON'S LORE

So, it's happened. In just a few weeks time, we'll be 10 years old in the UK - an anniversary that we hope will mean as much to thousands of our members, as it does to us.

This column, quite correctly, has never been used for personal reflection or self-indulgent observations. But we trust all members will share our absolute delight about one simple but hugely rewarding fact: namely, that in a single decade, BNI has built the most powerful and successful business organisation of its kind in Britain - an organisation which each year sees our members create a truly remarkable hundreds of millions of pounds worth of business for each other. And this magnificent achievement is entirely due to you, our members!

With well over 500 UK and Irish chapters boasting more than 12,000 members, BNI is here to stay and you will see it playing an increasingly significant role in the growth and success of those business communities where we are represented, which now means almost every region in Ireland and the UK. Thanks to the tireless efforts of our support team of BNI Directors around the country, there are now very few parts of the UK where, if someone wants to join BNI, there isn't a chapter within easy travelling distance, and of course, in many of our major towns and cities, we're building further chapters as existing groups near their optimum membership.

In striking contrast to the highly sophisticated organisation we now are, those early days when we spent the winter of 1996 launching our first dozen chapters in North West London, made us feel rather like the fabled early European settlers in America's Midwest - full of confidence that this brave new world would bring business aplenty for all, but with no first hand experience to call on.

Happily, BNI is as strong and as influential here today as it is in the USA (where it has existed for more than twice as long) and the next few years will see the organisation complete its global reach, having already become established in no fewer than 34 countries around the world and now gaining a strong foothold on mainland western Europe.

We've all come a very long way in 10 short years, and the huge financial and personal benefits that BNI now affords countless UK and European businesses, speaks volumes for our success - something that has been achieved by fantastic teamwork, shared faith and mutual trust between ALL of our members. So thank you, each and every one of you - and here's to the next 10 years! ●

Martha Egan



NEWS

"I'D RATHER SWIM THE ENGLISH CHANNEL THAN..."

When health food specialist Liz Chandler arrived in BNI barely one year ago, she decreed she was so scared of speaking in public that "I'd rather swim the English Channel than address a roomful of people."

Within months, Liz had not only gained the confidence to become Chapter Director, but also agreed to become Chairman of her industry's professional body, The Health Food Institute, recently addressing a large national audience of her professional peers! "Given my fear when I did my first 60 second slot only 12 months ago, I never thought I'd be able to address a business meeting, let alone chair one, so it has been a remarkable journey of self discovery," she said.

It was a fitting triumph for the woman who has just completed her term in the 'chair' of Jack o' Newbury Chapter, Berkshire, having willed herself to accept the position, "not because I felt ready for such a high-profile job, but because it was an honour, and I did

not want to let myself or the chapter down."

In the event, Liz's personal development and growing confidence through BNI has assisted the growth of her successful retail health food business, Nature's Corner in Newbury, where she is pictured (above right) with sister and business partner, Caroline Withers, holding the Thames Valley Best Small Business Award which they won, before recently opening a nearby healthy-living café and delicatessen.

Liz added: "Launching a new venture is normally stressful, but thanks to BNI it was a delight. As well as using the professional services of several chapter members, no fewer than 15 of my BNI colleagues gave up their bank holiday to help us move into the new premises. Where else could I have found such fantastic support? BNI has been an unbelievably good experience for me." ●

Contact Liz on 01635 33007 or 07769 595598

BNI HELPS TERRY'S BUSY LIZZIE TO BLOSSOM

Doncaster florist Terry Ward would probably have been quite happy breezing along in his 'Busy Lizzie' flower shop until his retirement - until he was introduced to BNI.

But within months of joining the town's Diamonds Chapter and observing the enthusiasm and enterprise of colleagues around the breakfast table, Terry realised that he'd been treading water in his business for too long.

"Thanks to the support and encouragement I received from chapter members, my confidence quickly started to grow. First I decided to give my shop a total makeover and I also introduced a new marketing strategy to boost turnover," he said.

"Then this year I entered the National Flower Shop of the Year Awards and to my

pleasant surprise, we recently gained a Silver Award of Excellence, after being visited several times by mystery shoppers to watch how we ran the business and treated customers. Since we're the only one of Doncaster's 50 florists to have won a silver, I'm pretty pleased with the result - at least part of which is down to my joining BNI and looking at the business very differently" Terry added.

As SuccessNet went to press, Busy Lizzie was competing with 200 other florists shops nationwide for the prestigious Gold Award and title of Flower Shop of the Year 2006. "I'm not expecting to win, but it's nice to be among the finalists. Just a couple of years ago I'd never have been in this position," he said. ●

Contact Terry on 01302 349818

NEWS IN BRIEF

BNI's Founder & Chairman, Dr. Ivan Misner, is one of the first 'stars' of a new UK online business TV channel launched by Bristol member Mark Sinclair and his marketing company, Hubbub.

Dr Misner has given two candid and lengthy interviews to 'yourBusinessChannel.com', whose content can be viewed online free of charge, and the resulting programmes contain some of his latest material, including his top tips for getting the most out of business networking events and what you should do when you first arrive, networking with the 'right' people and - revealed publicly

most highly-qualified expert we could have interviewed for this subject area, and we know the shows will be a hit. People who have already watched the interviews have given us excellent feedback and said they've got great value from them. And obviously, as a BNI enthusiast myself, I was delighted when Dr Misner agreed to help launch this series. It has given yourBusinessChannel the best possible start."

Visitors to the channel's website can watch a variety of shows including content on word-of-mouth marketing, sales (featuring another top BNI expert, Andy

BNI FOUNDER SHARES NETWORKING TIPS ON NEW TV BUSINESS CHANNEL

for the first time - the benefits of becoming a 'gatekeeper'.

His two interviews are a fitting prelude to yourBusinessChannel.com's brand new business series featuring some of the world's most renowned marketing experts and business leaders, and the programme makers who interviewed Dr. Misner said that they were amazed at how much brand new material Dr. Misner had felt willing to contribute.

Mark Sinclair, Hubbub's Managing Director commented: "He's obviously the

Bounds) and a 'this is how we did it' section, containing interviews with successful business entrepreneurs.●

To learn Dr Misner's latest word-of-mouth networking secrets, and view the channel's full content, go to: www.yourbusinesschannel.com/networking

THE VIKINGS ARE BACK IN TOWN!

Nearly 1,000 years after they were routed at the Battle of Clontarf and banished from Ireland's shores, the Vikings are back in Dublin!

This time however, their arrival heralds no rape and pillage, nor even a threatening word against the locals, because the 2006 Vikings are BNI members, who chose the name after being reminded of a gruesome discovery.

Viking Chapter meets in the grand surroundings of the Royal Dublin Society and, when members were looking for a suitable name they learnt that 130 years ago, workmen unearthed a burial mound just yards away, containing 700 bodies of their Celtic ancestors believed to have been murdered in a savage 10th century Viking raid.

Membership Co-ordinator Anne O'Hara said: "The Vikings stayed here for over 200 years and left plenty of evidence that despite their more unpleasant side, they were an advanced society - so we felt it was appropriate to name ourselves after a race that had a major impact on our country. But there will be no pillage when we're doing business."

Not that our modern-day Vikings have

been slow to make their mark on Dublin's business community. Within months of their May launch, the group had created plenty of business, with lifestyle and relaxation coach Roy Griffin in line to become the chapter's first recipient of a notable networker award.●

The Vikings meet every Wednesday and anyone interested in joining their 'army' should contact Chapter Director Jim Booth on +353 (1) 662 5199 or Anne O'Hara on +353-86-8115772



THE NEW VIKINGS: Standing proud outside their Royal Dublin Society home.

NEW CHAPTERS - AT HOME AND ABROAD

New additions to BNI's chapter ranks in the UK in the past few weeks include: Badger Chapter (Blandford, Dorset), College (Harrow, Middlesex), Eastleigh Flyers (Hants), Exchange (Fulham), Larwood (Avon & Monmouth), Lowman (Tiverton, Devon), Melton Mowbray (Leicestershire), Morning Glory (Norwich), Romsey (Hants), Sapphire (Milton Keynes), Tulip (Spalding, Lincs), Turbine (Worksop, Notts), Viking (Thanet, Kent) and the Warriors Chapter in Hartlepool.

Meanwhile across the North Sea, the past couple of months have seen a flurry of new groups launched in Germany. They are: Eule Chapter (Berlin), Fechter (Tauberbischofsheim), Hamatit (Munich), Jaspis (Germering), Lotus (Elst/Kan), Meteorit (Germering), Pluto (S-Vaihingen), Rilke (Bensheim), Saturn (Sindelfingen), St. Michael's (Siegburg), Winzer (Nussloch) and Wolf (Berlin).

In Switzerland, three new groups have been launched. They are the Birke Chapter (Hergiswil), Olivenbaum (Othmarsingen) and Stockhorn (Thun), while the latest addition to BNI in the Netherlands is the Lotus Chapter in Elst/Kan-Utrecht.●

PLAYING WITH BIG BOYS TOYS

Fancy playing with huge army vehicles, excavators, bulldozers and the like? You bet we do - and for the members of Faversham's Garden of England Chapter down in Kent, the dream recently became reality when they used the services of BNI's off-road driver training expert Kevin Leppard for an unusual chapter outing.

Kevin's True Grip driver training centre near Canterbury proved the perfect location for chapter members (and their partners) to let off steam and act like 15-year-olds, as they played with a variety of 'big boys toys' - but all in the interests of team-building, of course!●

BREAKFAST BONANZA

BEANIE WINS FOR BNI!



Every BNI member knows that you should take any opportunity to promote yourself - which is why Muswell Hill Chapter members in North London are grateful to a donkey called Beanie.

Thinking it would be a fun way to publicise their chapter, four members decided to sponsor Beanie in Muswell Hill Festival's much-heralded Donkey Derby, proceeds from which went to help children with cerebral palsy.

Chapter Secretary/Treasurer Martin Black said: "To be honest, he didn't look a winner, but our jockey - property agent Cheryl Cheasley - had entered the race before, and knew how to get the best out of Beanie, steering him over the finishing line first and gaining some great publicity. We're anticipating a good visitors day as a result."

Cheryl, Lettings Director with estate agent Prickett & Ellis (pictured with Beanie), added: "When my office colleague Darren Johnston asked me to be his substitute jockey for BNI. I was delighted to help, even beating my company's own race entrant in the process!" ●

MAYOR SEES GIVERS GAIN IN ACTION

When your local Mayor asks to be invited along to see how new business is conducted across the breakfast table, you can hardly refuse...

So members of Maidstone's Pioneer Chapter were determined to present a dynamic front when the town's Mayor, Councillor Mike Fitzgerald, started his official duties unusually early at 6.30am, turning up at the Russell Hotel to talk with Pioneer's 34 members before they set about their business agenda!

After the meeting, Councillor Fitzgerald said: "I was very impressed by members' support and commitment to each other's businesses. Their enthusiasm bodes well for Maidstone, where opportunities for business growth are improving dramatically and offer a very bright future." ●

Pioneer Chapter has vacancies for several trades and professions, which can be found via its website: www.bnimaidsstone.info

Derby members go speed dating with a difference!

It had to happen.....BNI members have turned the concept of speed dating into an effective business tool.

Observing that the latest social trend in forging personal relationships has proved something of a national 'hit', Derby 1 Chapter's Secretary/Treasurer Gaynor Booth offered to organise a variation on the theme - in the form of a speed networking evening for all her chapter colleagues!

And, following the success of their first attempt attended by a dozen members of the group, the Chapter attracted even more support for its second speed networking session, again hosted by Gaynor's Office Professionals at Derby's Parker Centre.

She said: "The evening worked just like a speed dating event, except the subject was strictly business, with members paired off and given exactly seven minutes to present themselves and their business to each other in the best possible light, before moving around the room to talk to every other member in turn. It was great to see so many people having fun and gaining business at the same time, and there's no doubt the events have helped by increasing mutual understanding of each other's businesses and strengthening relationships."

Gaynor said the chapter's newer members in particular had benefited, by gaining an insight

into everyone else's business activities much more quickly than would normally have been the case. "Obviously speed networking can't provide a comprehensive picture, but it has already proved invaluable to members by identifying those chapter colleagues with whom it would be most beneficial to hold one-to-one sessions. It can sometimes be hard to get to

know people better at busy weekly breakfast meetings, so these social events provided the perfect opportunity to do just that," she added. ●

Contact Gaynor on 0845 009 0488 or visit her website at: www.officeprofessionals.co.uk



WELCOME TO SPEED NETWORKING: Members of Derby 1 Chapter watch the clock before launching their first ever variation of speed dating! Clockwise from the left are: Paul Ashburner, John Popika, Max Anderson, Jenny James, Gaynor Booth, Kate Lee, Susie Vere, Paul Herbert, Taryl Dhillon and Cas Francis. Photo courtesy of John Sumpter.



CHAPTER'S 'BLONDE ON A MOTORBIKE' PROPELS JEFF TO FINALS

Looking to find a winning theme for his entry in a prestigious national portrait competition, Cheltenham Chapter's photographer Jeff Ellis knew exactly who to approach as an eye-catching subject - because she'd been sitting opposite him every week at his BNI breakfast meetings!

Which is how motorbiking enthusiast Angie Biddle came to be pictured (above) in full leathers alongside her powerful machine, parked up in a derelict corner of Gloucester Docks.

The resulting image has now propelled Jeff into the finals of the environmental portrait section of The Society of Wedding and Portrait Photographers national competition, for which he is also a finalist in the bridal portrait section.

"It was entirely thanks to BNI that I had

the right subject sitting at the same breakfast table. I doubt that Angie will ever get a more unlikely referral, but she proved a fantastic model," said Jeff. "I knew she had a keen interest in bikes and all the right gear, so I was delighted when she agreed to help out."

Angie, a commercial account executive with insurance brokers Jelf Group, said: "My interest in motorbikes goes back a long way, but I never thought I'd ever model with my bike for a top photographic competition. I was flattered when Jeff asked me to pose, and did it partly for a laugh - but now I hope it helps Jeff do well in the finals later this year." ●

Contact Jeff at Ellis Studios on 01242 580985 and Angie Biddle on 01242 223910

RUNNING BATTLE BETWEEN MIDDLESEX CHAPTERS

Rivalry was at its peak when members from neighbouring Middlesex chapters put forward teams of runners to take part in a charity fun-run around Bushy Park during the summer.

The run was organised by David Wimblett of Twickenham's Business Class Chapter to raise money for the National Benevolent Fund for the Aged and, to encourage support from other local chapters, he sponsored an award for the team whose runners recorded the fastest times.

Sadly, David's Business Class colleagues weren't any match for Teddington's Tudor Chapter whose team, led by Robert 'Speed of Light' Copping, ran out easy victors to help BNI's contingent raise over £300 from their exertions.



FAST MOVER! Tudor Chapter's top runner, Robert Copping (left) and Chapter Director Nick Taimitarha with their medals and the BNI Challenge Shield, presented to Tudor members for their top race performances.

Lionheads are kings of networking jungle

They're Lionheads by name, and now they're kings of the networking jungle - after pioneering a novel way to generate powerful interest in BNI from within their local business community.

Members of Lionhead Chapter based at Binley near Coventry found themselves playing host to more than 60 business visitors last month, when they staged the first-ever 'BNI Brunch' - an initiative masterminded by Membership Co-ordinator Tony Merrygold and Chapter Director Avril Mitchell.

A development of the successful 'BNI Twelve' lunchtime drop-in sessions launched in Merseyside three years ago, the event featured similar open networking over a buffet lunch with the added attraction of members' trade stands and keynote presentations from two of the chapter's top-performing members, explaining BNI's philosophy and the benefits of membership.

Tony Merrygold said: "It was a tremendous success and something we hope to repeat, especially since the feedback indicated that a lunchtime event attracted people who would not have come to a BNI breakfast meeting - even though many agreed to attend a normal chapter meeting in the light of favourable first impressions."

Adding a touch of civic pomp to the occasion was The Lord Mayor of Coventry, Councillor Shabbir Ahmed who, as a friend of a Lionhead member and strong believer in business networking, was delighted to endorse the event's significance.

Contact Tony Merrygold on 0845 408 5960



KINGS OF THE NETWORKING JUNGLE: Pictured with Coventry's Lord Mayor, Cllr Shabbir Ahmed are members of Lionhead's leadership team (from left to right): Membership Co-ordinator Tony Merrygold, Chapter Director Avril Mitchell and Secretary/Treasurer Adrian Cure.

WINNER: THE MIDLANDS

Liam Lalley (Fosseway Chapter, Newark)

When mortgage broker Liam Lalley moved home from Yorkshire to the East Midlands, his biggest test came not from safely installing his family into their new home, nor the demands of opening a new headquarters for his growing company - but from BNI!

As immediate past chapter director of the dynamic Premier Armouries Chapter in Leeds, Liam found his joining Newark's smaller Fosseway Chapter to be a major culture shock and huge challenge.

"Basically, someone had either rewritten the BNI rule book or thrown it away, because when I arrived, it was more like a laid-back gentleman's club than a vibrant business group. The weekly meetings bore no relation to the BNI agenda and almost nothing was done correctly," was Liam's initial appraisal.

He added: "Worse still, while the chapter was really friendly, it was so relaxed and undemanding that we were ending meetings by 8 o'clock - an alarming contrast to my Leeds chapter where so much business was conducted, we always struggled to finish by the official 8.30am close."

Despite the chapter's problems, Liam knew he could not expect to impose his views when he'd just arrived, so he waited for an opportunity which came after six months when he was invited to become Secretary/Treasurer. "Initially, I spent all my time working behind the scenes to get us back to the BNI way of doing things, re-introducing the proper meeting agenda, and helping the new chapter director, Barry Starling, to re-educate members about the basics: cutting absenteeism, bringing visitors and passing proper referrals!"

He then took the brave decision to invite all of Fosseway's members up to Leeds to show them how his former chapter conducted its meetings, and how much more its members benefited from doing things 'by the book'. "Although only Barry accepted the invitation, it was enough. He was blown away by the high octane meeting and suddenly realised how far his chapter had strayed from BNI's proven procedures."

Between them, Liam and Barry convinced members that they had to get back to basics if they were to gain the full range of BNI's benefits. Liam added: "After following Barry into the director's chair, I was able to continue the changes he'd started. I kept reminding members that all we had to do was follow the rules and procedures, and everything would improve. I stressed the need to invite more visitors, attend BNI training workshops - and

to take personal responsibility for making the chapter more focused and effective."

Unsurprisingly, Fosseway is now more successful than at any time since its launch nearly five years ago, so much so that BNI's regional director Steve Jennings remarked: "When Liam arrived, the chapter was close to being suspended because of dwindling membership and loss of direction, but he has made all the difference. He is an outstanding member, with no equal in the region."

Now his chapter's Education Co-ordinator, Liam continues to keep colleagues focused. He added: "I've just spent four weeks covering one topic - 60 second presentations - enabling everyone to maximise their weekly impact. Isn't that what it's all about?"

Contact Liam on 0800 652 6125 or at: l.lalley@btconnect.com

WINNER:

SCOTLAND & THE NORTH

Malcolm Kyle (Surtees Chapter, Newcastle upon Tyne)

Invited to become his company's representative at a local BNI chapter, corporate telecommunications specialist Malcolm Kyle didn't just go along to one or two meetings before deciding; he borrowed some of the best business networking and marketing reference books and 'read' himself into BNI!

It was typical of Malcolm's thoughtful and professional approach, and one that has seen his Surtees Chapter in Newcastle upon Tyne go from strength to strength in just 12 months, for much of which he has been its quiet but persuasive enforcer as Membership Co-ordinator, getting colleagues to go back to basics to make the chapter more dynamic and productive.

He said: "When I first joined BNI, representing my company CCS, I thought it was too 'cliquey' and comfortable. The atmosphere was very informal - more like a social club than a business organisation - but I believed in the Givers Gain philosophy and thought I could help the chapter become better focused and more successful."

To do this, Malcolm realised he needed to become part of its leadership team and his obvious enthusiasm for improving everyone's performance soon saw him elected as Membership Co-ordinator. "I was determined not to dictate to colleagues, but I knew we had to change the meeting atmosphere and re-energise the group, which was unappealing to most visitors," he said.

Malcolm persuaded colleagues to attend more training workshops and unsurprisingly the group started to present a more dynamic image. "This enabled us to look for new members to fill key categories that could

SuccessNet is delighted to present BNI

and women whom we are proud to an

Quarter Awards - giving deserved re

performances and commitment. In e

achievers so, take a bow our final sup

Paul Lenton, each of whose success wv

benefit all of us and it soon worked, boosting our ranks with people we knew would add something to the group."

Needless to say, he was instrumental in bringing about other changes. No longer could members fail to turn up without sending properly briefed substitutes. No more could they fudge referrals - they had to provide real business prospects. And members whose weekly presentations lacked thought or effort were firmly reminded of their responsibilities to the whole chapter. The result? Referrals are up, both in quality and number, members are better trained, and the group's performance has never been higher.

"Some membership co-ordinators issue a weekly email to members, but I find myself sending almost daily bulletins to colleagues, addressing specific issues, chasing up their one-to-one sessions, and generally updating them on our progress," said Malcolm. "It's important that every member feels fully involved, as we work towards making Surtees the region's first chapter with a capacity membership - and a waiting list for admission."

Regional BNI Director Lynley Robb commented: "Malcolm has almost single-handedly re-energised the chapter, largely by setting simple goals and having a clear focus. He goes out of his way to find the introductions and referrals needed by other members of the group, and is always looking at new ideas and opportunities to improve the chapter."

Contact Malcolm on 0191 567 5555 or at: malcolm@csmobile.co.uk

WINNER:

WALES & SOUTH WEST

Matthew Johnson (Bute Chapter, Cardiff)

As a qualified lawyer specialising in investments and estate planning, it is perhaps no surprise that Matthew Johnson has applied the same eagle-eyed diligence to growing his own BNI chapter that he routinely uses to enhance his clients' personal wealth.

Although he became a BNI member only



s last quartet of shining 'stars' - four of our highest achieving men
 announce have become the final recipients of our Member of the
 recognition to those who have demonstrated great chapter
 each 2006 issue of SuccessNet, we have announced four top
 overstars - Liam Lalley, Malcolm Kyle, Matthew Johnson and
 e highlight here...

FINAL QUARTET EARN THEIR HONOURS

18 months ago, when invited to join the core group of Cardiff's Bute Chapter, Matthew has had a major impact on his chapter's early fortunes, first in his role as membership co-ordinator and latterly as chapter director.

He said: "Although we're known to be a highly irreverent chapter, quick witted and full of banter and good humour, our members never forget why they turn up before seven o' clock in the morning week in and week out. It's because we all want to do better business with and for each other.

"From the start, I took the view that to perform well, members needed to fully embrace the BNI philosophy, so I've made a point of almost religiously reminding colleagues of the importance of attending BNI's excellent training sessions not just once, but as frequently as they can," he said. "I also work very hard with individual members through one-to-ones, looking not only to learn more about their businesses, but also to improve all-round chapter performance. For the same reason, I also encourage colleagues to attend other chapters to broaden their networking skills," said Matthew.

As a result, the quality and number of Bute's referrals has slowly but surely improved and, with the passing of higher quality referrals, members have come to expect certain minimum standards of performance in the chapter. "We now have a solid 32-strong membership and, because I'm very persistent about inviting visitors, constantly urging colleagues to look for suitable candidates to fill our remaining categories, I'm sure we will continue to grow," he added - acknowledging his personal contribution in introducing no fewer than eight new members to BNI.

Having helped Bute to set the highest standards, Matthew's one remaining concern is the imbalance between tradespeople and professionals in the group. "The fact is that we're all professionals, and we're trying very hard to persuade some key tradesmen and women to join us. Ironically, the trouble seems to be that in this area, most trades are enjoying a very busy, profitable time, and several 'trade' visitors who have come along, have said that while they like the BNI

concept, they already have too much work... but, we'll keep trying," he added.

Matthew, who also carries out freelance family law and matrimonial legal work for other law firms in South Wales added: "The key to Bute Chapter's present success is finding that happy balance between business and pleasure. Most members will tell you that our breakfast meetings are one of the social highlights of their week, but they never let fun get in the way of good business."●

Contact Matthew on 01633 222893
 or at: mjlegal2005@yahoo.co.uk



WINNER:
LONDON & SOUTH EAST
Paul Lenton
Ruby Chapter
(High Wycombe)

Having just completed his six month stint in the director's chair of High Wycombe's Ruby Chapter, estate agent Paul Lenton is one of BNI's most enthusiastic and hard-working advocates.

A partner in local estate agency Christopher Pallet, he joined BNI two years ago and says it was one of the best decisions he's made - both for his business and in terms of personal development.

"I first heard about BNI through the printer who produces our business stationery who invited me along to one of his chapter meetings, and I might just have ignored it had I not also been urged to try BNI by the chap who came to value my house. I thought then that there must be something very worthwhile about the organisation, and as soon as I saw it for myself, I was hooked.

"Quite apart from being a hugely entertaining and jolly group which has provided me with some lasting friendships, the chapter is working hard to improve both its referrals performance and the number of visitors we bring along," he said.

A key factor that Paul has been instrumental in fostering, is his members'

attendance at one or more BNI training workshops. He said: "We're fortunate in that one of the region's training venues is also our chapter venue - the Wycombe Heights Golf Club - so it means that members have no excuse for failing to take advantage of the personal business development opportunities that BNI offers. And already, the value of this training - which some three-quarters of our members have completed - is showing through, in the form of better quality referrals and better presentations."

And when it comes to identifying valuable business for colleagues, Paul is currently one of Ruby's champions, having recently handed the chapter's membership co-ordinator, telephony solutions provider Mike Love, with a referral estimated to be worth an initial £120,000 per year!

Paul added: "I heard that one of my own business associates was looking to completely replace their entire fixed and mobile telephone infrastructure, and I'm delighted to say that Mike's company, IDN Telecom, has not only gained this very valuable piece of business but also saved my colleague at least £25,000 a year in telephone charges. That is what makes BNI special - and why my only regret is that I didn't learn about it sooner."●

Contact Paul on 01494 465111 or at:
 paul.lenton@christopherpallet.com



FOCUS ON THE EMERALD ISLE

It is said there are few things that cause more domestic upset than a burglary. However, when the burglars not only steal your valuables, but trash your house and then set fire to it, the emotional distress is extreme - as Dublin mortgage broker Aoife Gaffney recently discovered.

Ironically, intruders struck her home when she might least have expected it - having gone out with her son for an early evening meal at a local restaurant. "We got back at 8.30pm to a scene of devastation," she recalled. "They'd not only lit a fire in the laundry basket at the top of the stairs, but also started a second blaze, so you can imagine the sorry sight that greeted us."

For most householders it would have been heartbreaking, but Aoife is made of sterner stuff - and she knew she had brilliant

co-ordination needed to sort everything out," she said.

It's at times of such crises that the camaraderie and team spirit of BNI shows through. As the real impact of fire and burglary damage started to hit home, Aoife realised to her huge relief that she would not have to take a chance with her property's restoration, by choosing unknown and untested trades people from the Golden Pages (Ireland's equivalent to the UK's Yellow Pages).

"I simply turned to my network of BNI colleagues for help. The structural work was organised by Glenn Richardson, the chapter's builder from G&M Construction, all the painting and redecorating was managed by Dara Melinn, while the new alarm and security fittings were installed by

Every cloud has a BNI lining

BNI colleagues in the city's Airport Chapter to call on for support.

"It must be easy to go to pieces in such circumstances but, instead of throwing my hands up in despair, I grabbed my BNI business card holder and rang my chapter's insurance broker, Paul Reid from Rooney Insurance Brokers, who dropped everything on a Friday evening and raced to my assistance, ready to take charge of the major

Brian Smith from ESP Security," said Aoife.

The extensive cleaning operation was then carried out by Paul Mooney of CSC Environmental Services, her furniture replaced by John Gorman from Executive Interiors, and the all-important computer equipment and communications was restored by Chris Stephenson from Datacomms Technologies. "To cap it all, Maria Egan-Cowman from 'A Better Day Recruitment' donated clothes and cosmetics, which was a lovely gesture," she added.

"Being able to use tradespeople and suppliers who all knew each other and were used to working together was a big advantage. And, while it's hard to acknowledge that anything good came out of my burglary, it did at least enable me to generate lots of warm referrals, putting me in the top three in our 'Show Me The Money' initiative - even if I did turn up at the following week's chapter breakfast wearing my pyjamas because they'd taken all my clothes!" said Aoife.●

Contact Aoife on +353 87 8072540



PYJAMA GIRL: Aoife Gaffney attended a chapter meeting in her pyjamas before being 'rescued' by BNI colleagues.

Not only is Dublin's Airport Chapter Ireland's first and biggest BNI group with nearly 40 members but it has also bucked a trend in terms of gender balance! For many months, the fairer sex has comprised one third of its membership and, no fewer than six of the chapter's eight newest additions have been women!

Airport Chapter shows its feminine side!

Hardly surprising then, that the Chapter has just ended a successful session under the guidance of an all-female leadership team - Chapter Director Mary Eastwood, Membership Co-Ordinator Aoife Gaffney and Secretary/Treasurer Paula Stapleton - whose dynamism has brought praise from their male colleagues.

Add to this two female visitor hosts with more women on the Membership Committee, and it's easy to see why Airport reckons it has more female members than any other Irish or UK chapter.

Mary said: "Although it is purely coincidence that we have such a healthy female membership, there's no doubt the chapter has been more dynamic through having a good balance of the sexes. I've been to a few all-male chapters which, while achieving good results, have resembled a gentleman's club. Anyone who visits Airport will be impressed by its vibrancy."

She added: "When we first took over, there were a few chauvenistic remarks but we expected that, and were determined to prove our worth. Acknowledgement of our success came at our last meeting, when one of the group's longest-serving men said he and many male colleagues were sorry to see our leadership come to an end."●

Contact Mary at Albrite Training on: (+353) 87-222 8202 or visit www.bnaiairport.com

PHILIP TREACY - EAT YOUR HEART OUT!

While they might not have been quite up to the creativity of the world's most flamboyant milliner Philip Treacy, members of Dublin's Airport Chapter reckon that for a first attempt at hat-making, their designs weren't half bad!

Faced with the challenge of making headwear to represent their respective individual businesses, Airport members were determined to make the chapter's recent Hat Day a colourful affair.

Everyone rose to the occasion, utilising an array of household and business props, but the winner - by a short head - was Damien Mahon of Apollo Blinds and Curtains, pictured right with his creation featuring his finest Venetian blind slats, which just pipped Naomi Garden from Absolute Office, whose spectacularly eccentric hat comprised only a fraction of the product range she usually carries!●



BNI's presence in Ireland has grown steadily but surely over the last 10 years - and nowhere more so than in the capital, Dublin, where membership is buoyant and its chapters are fiercely proud of their ability to mix great camaraderie and 'fun' with excellent business performances.

It's a combination that shines through in the articles on these pages...

€14 million worth of business? That'll do nicely!

High value referrals are by no means a rarity at BNI breakfast tables, but few members can claim to have received two multi-million euro pieces of business from chapter colleagues at the same meeting!

That was the recent good fortune awaiting Dublin financial broker Gerry Bradley who was presented with consecutive referrals for €8 million and €6 million worth of business – landing him his biggest commissions in eight and a half years membership of the city's Fitzwilliam Chapter.

Gerry's company, Financial Decisions, specialises in sourcing the best asset finance for major property development schemes and commercial projects, so he's no stranger to handling large value referrals. But he says it's no co-incidence that the size and value of his referrals has grown in direct relation to his increasing time as a BNI member.

"These two pieces of business represent the biggest referrals I've received through my chapter colleagues, and I like to think they reflect the growing trust and confidence we share. As a financial broker, one-to-one rapport is vital, and BNI has created the ideal environment for helping me develop excellent relationships with a cross-section of professionals around Dublin," he said.

"When I've worked hard to build a strong bond with valuable clients, I need to have total confidence in my fellow members before I refer them business from those clients. Fortunately, BNI's philosophy and structured approach helps create this degree of mutual understanding so, when I introduce colleagues to my best clients, I know they're not going to prejudice all the work I've put in. Being able to trust your business colleagues is so important – and reassuring," Gerry added.

The €8 million finance deal was handed to Gerry by Fitzwilliam's architect Paul Keenan of the Keenan Lynch Architecture Partnership, whose own property developer client had expressed dissatisfaction over the terms of a financing deal for a major office development.

"As soon as I heard my client was unhappy, I knew Gerry would be able to come

up with something better," said Paul. "In fact he put together a whole new financing package for them within 24 hours, creating a perfect example of 'givers gain' because his professionalism meant our client also viewed us in a very positive light for solving the problem."

Gerry's second big referral, worth a cool €6 million, came from the chapter's corporate insurance broker Declan McDonnell, a director of McGivern Flynn & Co. Ltd, who wanted to find the best asset financing for a client's acquisition of a large property portfolio.

"I've regularly referred business to Gerry for a number of years, but this bumper referral meant everyone gained," said Declan. "It was certainly a lot bigger than the first one I gave him eight years ago which I recall was worth only €2500 but, very clearly, led to much greater things."

Fitzwilliam's retiring chapter director, accountant Colum Whelan said it was no co-incidence that all three members involved in the multi-million euro referrals were BNI stalwarts. "One of our greatest strengths is the continuity of our membership with nearly

half the chapter having been members for more than five years," he said.

"It fosters trust, knowledge and integrity between the members, all of whom use each other's services and expertise so often that everyone knows everyone else's telephone numbers off by heart. While these big deals are impressive, they are typical of the quality of business we pass every week." ●

Contact Gerry Bradley on +353 (1) 843 9373, Paul Keenan on +353 (1) 662 0944, and Declan McDonnell on +353 (1) 632 1321

ON TOP OF THE WORLD - well, Dublin's Quality Inn actually, where big referrals demand a big referral slip, passed by Paul Keenan (right) to Gerry Bradley for business worth no less than €8 million!



BIG FIGURE: Insurance broker Declan McDonnell has plenty to smile about after passing Gerry Bradley a referral for €6 million worth of business.





train & gain



HOW GOOD ARE YOUR CHAPTER'S CONTACT SPHERES?

By Steve Jennings, Executive Director for Nottinghamshire & Lincolnshire

At a recent chapter meeting in my region, I asked the members: "What is a contact sphere?" Of course, there was a variety of answers but the common perception was that it comprised those people with whom you have regular contact.

Naturally those members who had attended one of our skills workshops, or newer members who had listened to the explanation given by BNI Founder Dr Ivan Misner on the CD in their orientation packs, came up with the correct answer. In setting out the tried and tested nine-part formula for success in BNI, Dr Misner refers to contact spheres (sometimes known as power circles) as the first vital element of that formula, describing them as "the types of profession that can help you the most" and "professional circles that commonly refer business to one another".

He offers two examples of classic business contact spheres: firstly, the lawyer, accountant, financial planner and banker, and then the so-called 'wedding mafia' - comprising caterer, florist, photographer and travel agent, pointing out how individual members of such spheres often achieve their best business in BNI by working with one another, and referring each other's services.

The concept of the contact sphere is not difficult for most people to grasp, but

not everyone appreciates its real significance, or why we put so much emphasis on it. We must start with the reasonable assumption that members of your contact sphere are more likely to generate referrals for you than those who are not.

Consequently, it follows that unless the membership of your particular chapter includes a representative of every potential business in your optimum contact sphere, then you are not maximising the potential of your membership. Think about it.

How do you identify who is - or should be - in your contact sphere? In very simple terms, it is those who share the same target market(s) but offer a different product or service. So, having identified where the gaps lie in your own personal contact sphere within the chapter, your priority should be to target these business categories when it comes to inviting visitors. This also gives you a stronger pitch when extending your invitations, because you can genuinely claim that you are looking for someone within that vacant category with whom to do business on a regular basis.

Within the broader context of the chapter as a whole, look at the groupings that already exist. Inevitably, some contact spheres will be stronger than others. As a

group, you should all work hard to find new members to grow the weaker groupings - providing a good example of Givers Gain!

In my region, the members of some of the most successful contact spheres in a number of my chapters, have started to hold their own supplementary meetings, perhaps monthly, to identify potential new clients and opportunities, and this in turn is leading to more business for everyone in their group and the development of powerful strategic alliances. One significant benefit of this is the way that members have acquired the confidence to bid for larger projects than they would previously have sought, knowing they can call on the support and back-up of fellow members, often those in their own contact sphere, and I am delighted that there have been several successful examples of this happening in recent months.

From this, you'll appreciate that the term 'contact sphere' is not just management-speak. If properly understood and developed, having your own strong contact sphere within the chapter can make a significant difference to the amount of business generated - and isn't that what BNI is all about?●

Contact Steve on 01832 710565

Getting value from a visitor

By Andrew Hall, Executive Director for Sussex



You may not realise it at first glance, but each week when you come to BNI, the people who hold perhaps the greatest immediate potential for your business may not be the members at all.....but rather the visitors. It is an opportunity that can be realised by any member - all it takes is a couple of simple actions each week.

I joined BNI as a member some 9 years ago in one of the first chapters in the South East. Coming from a core group of just 10 members, we hit 29 straight from launch. At that time, it was hard enough working out who the members were, let alone worrying about the guests. If I am honest, for the first six months, we pretty much shunned the visitors. Visiting our chapter at that time must have been a less than rewarding experience.

It was only when I started working with BNI in Malaysia that I came to fully appreciate the value of our visitors. Chatting to a member at the Subang Chapter whose business was writing wills, I asked: "How is BNI working for you? Are the members passing you a lot of business?" She hesitated before replying: "Yes, but actually, I am getting most of my business from the guests. You see, I follow up every visitor to my chapter and I've managed to turn a few of them into clients." Impressive perhaps, but her most important message was still to come. She added: "The funny thing is, I don't think anyone else is following up the guests at all."

If that rings true for your chapter, remember that the average chapter receives no fewer than 120 genuine visitors through its doors every year. And you will never know the potential of each of those guests to your business, unless you make it your business to find out.

Consider this. It was almost 80 years ago that an elderly couple walked into a motel in the United States. Standing behind the reception desk was a clerk called George Bolt. There was a

convention on in town and every hotel was solidly booked. It was pouring with rain and, as the old man approached the desk, the clerk said: "I am very sorry but we're fully booked."

Dejected, the old couple turned away. As they reached the door to leave, the clerk called them back. He said: "Look, you won't find a room anywhere in this town tonight, but why don't you have my room?" He went upstairs and prepared his own room. Next morning, when the old man came to pay his bill he told the clerk: "Give me your card. One day, I might just have something for you."

Three years later, George Bolt received in the post a ticket to New York. Days later, he found himself on Park Avenue, standing in front of a magnificent new building. Alongside him, the old man lent forward and said: "This is the hotel that I have built for you to run. I hope you like it." The man's name was Henry Waldorf Astor, and the hotel was the world's first Waldorf Astoria.

George Bolt earned the opportunity of a lifetime because he took the trouble to do something a little bit special. The rewards from our guests can be huge, but they come to those who just do something a little bit special. For the Malaysian member, it was taking the time to follow up, but being special can be as simple as making sure you get to your chapter meetings early, greeting the guests as they arrive.

Think back to the first time you came to BNI, when the meeting will undoubtedly have passed as a blur. Someone told you that you'd be asked to give a 60 second presentation about your business and from that moment on, you could think of nothing else. As you struggled with what you were going to say, the only presentations you noticed, came from those who had introduced themselves to you before the meeting began. And the only people you remembered by name after the meeting were

those who'd taken the trouble to meet you in person.

In my Sussex region, the person who stands out for taking time to make his chapter's guests feel at home is Freddie St George. Freddie is a member of the Heart of Sussex Chapter who runs a print and publishing business and, without doubt, he is the earliest to arrive at chapter breakfasts - never later than 6am! Ask Freddie why he does this, and he will tell you it is to give himself time to relax and prepare to make the most of the opportunities that the following two and a half hours will bring.

A year ago, a visitor attended his chapter for the first time. She arrived quite early, and there to meet her was Freddie. By the time it came to exchanging referrals, she felt confident enough to pass Freddie a referral involving the possibility of publishing a small magazine. Today, that referral has grown to publishing 400 magazines, worth around £3million a year to Freddie's business.

Now I cannot tell you for certain how much that visitor's decision was influenced by Freddie being there early and taking the time to make her welcome. But what I can tell you is that there are 700 members in the Sussex region and the person who has closed the biggest single piece of referral business in the region is Freddie - the person who still gets there first. ●

Contact Andrew at: Andrew@bni.com and Freddie St George on 01273 418100



EARLY BIRD CATCHES THE WORM: Getting to his Heart of Sussex Chapter meetings early may have resulted in Freddie St George winning business worth £3 million a year! He is pictured with Membership Team colleague Lynne Gadsden. Photo courtesy of Christina Chelmick.

In our Summer 2006 issue, we published a training article by BNI Executive Director Jeremy Thorowgood, titled "Winning business with the Golden Triangle" whose explanatory key diagram failed to reproduce correctly, and was therefore incomprehensible. We apologise for this error. Any reader wishing to see the correct version, should email Jeremy at jeremy@bni.gb.com who has kindly offered to reply, enclosing both the complete article and illustration.

Learning by degrees on Swansea's waterfront

The old saying about "taking coals to Newcastle" may have sprung to mind among BNI colleagues, when Swansea's Waterfront Chapter Director Marianne Pettifor announced she was studying for a university degree in business enterprise at the ripe young age of almost 60!

Aware that Marianne owned a string of successful companies - including a management consultancy that provides solutions to other companies in trouble - they wondered why their leader even wanted to gain such a degree, when she already enjoyed a reputation as an entrepreneurial businesswoman.

But as Marianne regularly points out to her chapter colleagues, you're never too old to learn. "Just when you think you know all there is to know about business, you

discover something new. I hope my gaining a BA at the age of 60 will be a reminder to my younger colleagues, that continuous development and an open mind are all important in business, broadening your horizons" she said.

"Joining BNI and gaining my degree have had similar effects, in that both have been highly motivating and taught me things that I now use in my own consultancy to help other businesses!"

Marianne (pictured right at her graduation ceremony) added: "The first time I went to a BNI meeting, I was blown away by the level of members' motivation and mutual support, and I knew instantly I wanted to be part of it. Obviously I've given and received new business, but it's the personal benefits that I've found most rewarding, like the proof - once again - that we never stop learning new business techniques." ●

Contact Marianne on 01792 290404





FROM THE CHAIR

Teamwork, quality... and a very early start!

By Colin Crosby-Butler, Chapter Director, Garden of England Chapter, Faversham, Kent

Anyone who struggles to arrive at his or her weekly breakfast meeting by seven o'clock wouldn't survive long in the Garden of England Chapter, where members penalise each other for turning up after 6.30am - even by 30 seconds!

But, before you start thinking this is a silly rule, let me explain how it came to be like this, and why the whole of the chapter's membership - not the leadership team - decided to adopt an even earlier start than most BNI groups.

One of my keenest business philosophies is that of TEAMwork; Together Everyone Achieves More. So, when I was invited to become Chapter Director earlier this year, I felt it was important that every member of the chapter understood the demands and expectations placed on a chapter's leadership team. If people did not understand, they would not know why it was crucial to follow the ethic of teamwork.

This involvement of the whole chapter started when I asked every member to undergo the same training normally reserved for the leadership team. Then I wanted everyone to attend BNI's excellent education and training workshops on presentations, referral giving and so on. That way, they would be better able to appreciate and respect what the chapter's leaders were trying to achieve, and understand why it was necessary to do things a certain way.

But it didn't stop there. Once everyone had gone through training, the leadership team called a meeting at a local restaurant and invited every member to attend. Why? Because I wanted to know from the members themselves, what they wanted and expected me to do for them during my directorship of the group, and how best we could achieve our objectives. Above all, I wanted a consensus and, with more than half the chapter turning out for the dinner, that's what we achieved.

Today, the chapter is highly efficient and

organised, because everyone knows what is expected of them, and all of our business proceedings are top quality, directly reflecting the high calibre of members and the training they've received. What we're now achieving in terms of high numbers of quality referrals is the result of teamwork - with every member pulling his or her weight.



Even better is the fact that the chapter is now performing fantastically every week and having great fun at the same time. If that sounds too good to be true, it isn't. It has been achieved simply by proper planning, involving every member in defining our priorities and providing constant reminders about what is expected of them - from the notices put up at meetings requesting them to produce at least two good referrals each a week and bring at least one visitor a month, to our weekly Oscar ceremony, where last week's winner of the best 60-second presentation, chooses and awards an Oscar to this week's winner.

We've grown the chapter to 36 members knowing that everyone is focused and committed and, while I would like to have seen us reach the 40-mark by the end of my leadership term, we will never accept someone just to increase the numbers.

So, why 6.30am? With such an energetic, busy group, our members need the extra half an hour to discuss work in progress, specific projects and potential business with each other. The 30 minutes before kick-off is now an integral part of our weekly meeting and, if you don't believe me, just be at Boughton Golf Club at 6.30am sharp any Thursday - and see what a hive of activity it is! We wouldn't have it any other way! ●

Colin Crosby-Butler is managing director of CB Services (Maintenance) Ltd, specialists in the installation and maintenance of electrical fire safety and security systems. He can be contacted on 01795 590751

Made redundant from his long-term job and losing the family's other income through marital separation, Mike McCoy felt his world was falling apart two and a half years ago.

"I felt rather sorry for myself and wore my redundancy like a cross on my back," he recalled. "But looking back, it was one of two very positive life-changing moments."

The other was joining the Falcons Chapter in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, a few months after he'd made the decision to launch McCoy Energy, supplying cost-saving fuel cards to the haulage and transport industry and other commercial organisations.

"There are no words to adequately express my thanks for the support BNI has given me over the past 18 months. Without it, my new business could not have survived, but my chapter colleagues have been fantastic, helping me find business and offering so much practical help and encouragement. I owe my BNI colleagues a huge debt of gratitude," said Mike.

BNI is the real McCoy for Mike

"Happily, I recently turned the corner, passing my initial income targets and looking to expand into new niche markets. That couldn't have happened without BNI which has given me two-thirds of all my early business and kept me going through difficult times."

Mike is passionate about the personal touch in any business. "I dislike the way that more and more companies are getting rid of their salesmen who meet customers, and replacing them with faceless telesales operations. That's why I'm determined to provide a personal service to all my customers - reflecting BNI's one-to-one business philosophy."

He is now seeking larger corporate clients, for which he has refined his business approach. "That's another thing about BNI. It made me think hard about business basics. I had to re-educate myself about my business in order to educate my chapter colleagues. And it's worked wonders, making me stronger, more confident and determined to succeed. Best of all, you're never alone in BNI."

Contact Mike on 0191 217 1467 or visit: www.mccoyenergy.co.uk

THE REAL MCCOY: BNI has been crucial for Mike.





WHAT A REFERRAL! Belfast City Chapter's Scott Hay (right) hands John Kelly of Paint Pots (left), his unique wooden referral slip, watched by Chapter Director Stephen Salley from HBK Architects.

Scott 'guarantees' his wooden referral

When you're thirty feet off the ground repairing a chapter colleague's roof and your mobile rings with a potential piece of business, there's only one thing you can do: grab the nearest flat object and write down the referral as best you can!

That's exactly what happened to builder Scott Hay a few weeks ago, and it resulted in his presenting just about the most unusual referral 'slip' ever seen at a BNI breakfast, to his Belfast City Chapter colleague, painter John Kelly.

Scott, of Tradesman Inc., was working on the roof of fellow BNI member David Cunningham's house when he received a

phone call that promised a good piece of business for the chapter's painter. But, with no referral slips or any paper to hand, and the ground a long way below, Scott was forced to improvise, writing the referral on the nearest thing to hand - a large piece of timber.

Obviously unwilling to remove the whole timber joist, he proceeded to cut out a smaller section containing the key information - which is how Scott came to present John Kelly from Paint Pots, with his wooden referral at the very next chapter meeting!

He said: "Naturally I made good the missing section of roof, and the loss of this piece of wood will have no effect on the stability of David's property. So, while it was in a very good cause, I've been able to assure David that all Tradesman Inc's work is guaranteed for maximum referral impact!"●

Contact Scott on 02891 272 460

Introducing BNI's new stressbusters!

Ever had a great idea for a business and wondered what to do next? Two former chapter directors of Berkshire's Wokingham Chapter have pooled their networking skills and knowledge of complementary health therapies to develop a world-first 'stress e-learning solution'.

Their venture, Stresswise, was launched earlier this month, aimed at corporate business which loses huge sums each year through stress-related employee absenteeism.

With a background in telecoms and internet communications, Nick Forgham started a new career as a complementary health therapist in 2003, joining BNI a few months later where he met chapter colleague Stuart James who, as a WSI franchisee, was providing a range of internet services and education.

Nick took over from Stuart as Wokingham's Chapter Director 18 months ago and, through informal discussions after the weekly meetings, they spawned the idea to develop a worldwide e-learning service, offering stress education and therapies to multi-nationals, corporate organisations and the SME marketplace.

Stuart said: "Modern life is so stressful that the market is demanding this type of innovative product. We believe this service will help improve people's lives, and BNI is an integral part of our delivery strategy. From its concept and development to its launch, BNI has played a crucial role."

Among BNI colleagues who helped develop the business are Fleet Chapter's Alec Hall-Shaw (whose expertise created the video and MP3 clips that form an integral part of Stresswise's multi-media service) and Wokingham Chapter's accountant, banker and printer.●

Contact Nick Forgham on 0118 978 6410 or visit: www.haveahealthylife.com

STANLEY MATTHEWS SCORES FIRST 1,000 - IN LESS THAN A 'SEASON'!

When you've sought permission to name your chapter after one of the world's greatest footballing heroes, then you're pretty well obliged to be consistently top performers.

So it came as little surprise when members of the Potteries' Sir Stanley Matthews Chapter 'scored' their first 1,000 referrals less than nine months after launching the group at Stoke City's impressive Britannia Stadium, and marked their first anniversary earlier this month by passing the 1,200-mark.

In his quest to find a motivating title, chapter founder Tony Altham approached Sir Stanley's daughter to gain her blessing for the Potteries' newest chapter to be named after Stoke and England's most celebrated winger and, judging by their early achievements, its members have emulated Sir Stan's legendary spirit by becoming one of the region's most dynamic chapters.

Tony said BNI's rapid growth had become widely acknowledged in the region's business community. "One indication of BNI's strength came last month when we played a major role in a unique tripartite networking event with the Stoke Chamber of Commerce and another networking organisation, sponsored

through the Government's Business Brokers initiative at the Britannia Stadium, which was a huge success."

Ironically, BNI's expansion in the Potteries means there is no room at the stadium for members of the Stanley Matthews Chapter

who, despite their footballing links with Stoke City's ground, have had to move to a less illustrious home in neighbouring Newcastle-under-Lyme!

Contact Tony Altham on 01782 713177



FOLLOWING A LEGEND: BNI Staffordshire and Shropshire Assistant Director Tony Altham (centre left) with chapter Director Peter Keller and members of the Sir Stanley Matthews BNI Chapter, based in Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire. Photo courtesy of Roger Brightmore.



PERFECT CENTURY: The quality of John Finney's 100-plus education presentations saw him receive a notable networker award from BNI director Allison Timmins.

Notable networker hits notable landmark

For someone who swears he'd never have joined BNI had he known he would have to address an audience of up to 40 people every week, John Finney hasn't done at all badly!

In fact few BNI members have displayed their commitment to the organisation more than John, who recently delivered his 100th presentation as education co-ordinator to colleagues in the buoyant Network North Staffs Chapter.

John, a quantity surveyor and Principal of Newcastle-under-Lyme firm Holland Finney Associates reached his century during the summer - exactly six years after joining the chapter - and to mark the occasion, members from several neighbouring Staffordshire chapters turned up for the landmark breakfast, at which he was presented with a Notable Networker certificate by BNI director Allison Timmins.

It was a far cry from John's first foray into public speaking, and he openly admits he would have shied away from joining had he realised the commitment he was making in having to present his business to colleagues each week. "I was a very

nervous speaker when I joined BNI, and at first I used to dread getting to my feet and having to talk about myself and my business.

"But six years in the chapter, surrounded by such positive, supportive colleagues, has given me far more confidence. Now I can actually admit that I really love speaking in public, although I save my best for BNI meetings, where they struggle to get me to sit down these days, especially since I enjoy coming up with new ideas and angles for the education slot. You could say that I'm a very good example of how BNI can help you develop as a person, as well as helping your business," he added.

Allison Timmins commented: "For members of other chapters like Dove in Rocester, and Izaak Walton in Acton Trussell, to make the effort and travel a considerable distance to support John's 100th education presentation shows how well regarded he is in the area. I was delighted for him." ●

Contact John on 01782.614171 or email him at: john.finnay@hollandfinney.co.uk

NADINE SETS A 1-2-1 WORLD RECORD - VIRTUALLY!

When Education Co-ordinator Nadine Hill wanted to demonstrate the importance of members holding regular one-to-one meetings, she decided to set a BNI world record - by staging a one-to-one with ALL of her chapter colleagues in the same day!

To be strictly accurate, Nadine whose 'The Dream PA' company provides a range of virtual office administrative and PA services, only managed to create her record by conducting her one-to-one's 'virtually' - using the phone to chat with her Wakefield Wealthbuilders Chapter colleagues without leaving her own office.

After completing more than 30 one-to-one's in the space of barely five hours, Nadine said: "I staged the event to highlight the need to learn about each other's businesses. Obviously, everyone appreciated I could only speak to so many colleagues in my own and neighbouring chapters by using the phone, but I stressed to everyone that this was no substitute for a proper face to face meeting," she said. "Nonetheless, I was able to gain an overview of all my colleagues' businesses, and I now have an even more compelling reason to go back and finish off these one-to-one's in person over the coming weeks!" ●

Contact Nadine on 01924 899667



RINGING UP A RECORD: Wakefield Weathbuilder's education co-ordinator Nadine Hill is all smiles after ringing up a record number of 'virtual' one-to-one's with colleagues in just five hours.

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you and SuccessNet...

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 items in the newsletter - but please remember we don't have space for them all!

If you have an item you'd like us to consider for inclusion, please email it to: successnet@grosvenorassociates.com - making sure you include your phone numbers (office and mobile) and address as well. ●