

BNI®

SUCCESSNET

- 
- **James Caan's tips for success**
TV's business Dragon talks to SuccessNet
 - **More visitors = successful chapters**
Sarah Owen on inviting great guests
 - **In the trade**
Construction projects - made easy!

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE ■ Power Team Drive results ■ Malaysia's decade of BNI growth



Welcome to your summer *SuccessNet*!

Our latest edition brings a host of great new ideas and developments to share.

We're delighted that leading entrepreneur James Caan happily agreed to give his valuable time and advice in an exclusive *SuccessNet* interview. James presents his own personal take on the value of building deep business relationships rather than spreading yourself too thinly. His valuable advice highlights the tremendous importance of carefully nurtured relationships with your chapter colleagues.



We're always on the lookout for other well-known and respected individuals who are willing to share their experience and expertise in a *SuccessNet* interview. All of our cover stars have come through referrals, so if you have connections with people like this we'd be pleased to hear from you!

In this 25th anniversary of BNI, we're also proud to have hosted several events in a very special celebration tour by our Founder and Chairman, Dr Ivan Misner. In a series of Members' Days in Dublin, Glasgow and London, more than 1500 attendees have gained new insights on maximising the return on their networking investment from the man dubbed by CNN as the Father of Modern Networking.

Last but definitely not least, we're very happy to announce that more than 60 chapters have collected their £1000 prizes in the recent Power Team Drive. These chapters are to be congratulated – but the real benefits for them (apart from the fun they'll have spending their winnings!) lie ahead in the extra business that their new members will help them generate for the group. It's interesting to note that the winners of the 2009 Power Team Drive increased their business by a total of more than £5 million. We're in no doubt that this year's victors will also see a significant upturn in their seat values. Well done to all the Power Team Drive winners – and keep up the great work!

Here's wishing you fantastic referrals, more quality visitors and business-a-plenty in all UK and Ireland chapters this summer.

Charlie Lawson and Tim Cook - National Directors, BNI UK & Ireland

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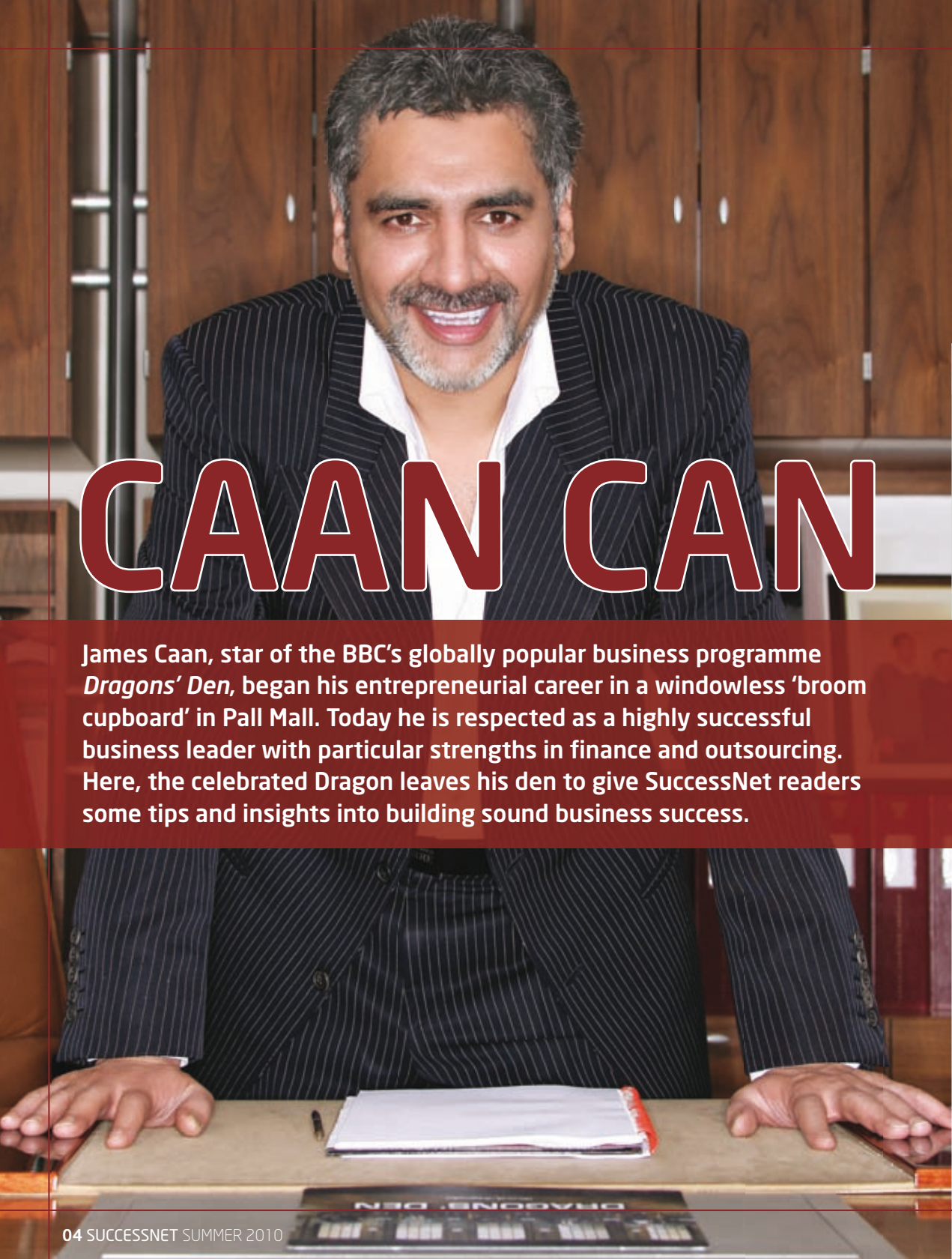
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A portrait of James Caan, a middle-aged man with grey hair and a beard, wearing a dark pinstripe suit jacket over a white shirt. He is smiling and looking directly at the camera. The background consists of wooden office cabinets.

CAAN CAN

James Caan, star of the BBC's globally popular business programme *Dragons' Den*, began his entrepreneurial career in a windowless 'broom cupboard' in Pall Mall. Today he is respected as a highly successful business leader with particular strengths in finance and outsourcing. Here, the celebrated Dragon leaves his den to give SuccessNet readers some tips and insights into building sound business success.

As a school leaver you chose not to go into your father's leather clothing business. What was the biggest lesson that you learned as a result of setting up your first successful business in 1985?

From the age of 12 I saw my future in entrepreneurship. I went to school in one of my father's jackets (a different one every week) and I would sell them for a profit. My father cottoned on to the fact that I was taking a cut but, to my surprise, he was absolutely delighted that I was showing a bit of initiative. The greatest lessons I've learned are to go with your instincts, don't give up and make sure you know exactly what is going on in your business. My father told me: "Observe the masses and do the opposite". I do – and it works.

BNI has seen business networking grow among UK entrepreneurs by more than 20% in the last year. What part did networking play in your own development as a very successful entrepreneur?

When you first start out, networking is extremely important in building up your contacts. Early in my career I attended many events in an effort to be in the right place at the right time, but as I grew in business I started to be more strategic and realised that you can plan those 'chance' moments. You need to identify the experts in your chosen industry, find the opportunity to meet them and ask the right questions. Having a good network of people takes years of patient building, but if you create a good rapport with your contacts and nurture the relationship it will indeed flourish year after year.

What advice would you give to small business owners who have still to make their big breakthrough?

You need to have the conviction and belief in what you are doing in order to be successful, and the business acumen to ensure you stay successful. Join professional organisations and networking groups to meet potential business contacts and spend time nurturing your business relationships. It's important that you identify your own weaknesses and then ensure you hire the right people around you with the expertise you need: get it right and your business will flourish. Also, you need to continually develop your business knowledge and skills. You can engage in training courses or alternatively, a good mentor will be able to help you and you can turn to them for advice whenever you need it.

Since BNI members present their businesses to each other every single week, we appreciate how demanding it must be to present to five Dragons on national TV! Which three qualities of a good presentation most impress you?

i. Know your numbers – or bring someone else who does.

You must demonstrate a good grasp of realistic forecasts. I invest in people, not ideas – and if you approach me or any other investor without proper preparation, then you immediately indicate either that you're not serious, or that you're far from ready to run a business. Even if your idea is good, you'll undermine your chances of securing a deal.

ii. Research well. It's so much more appealing to listen to an entrepreneur who's done their research. Know your market and be realistic about forecasts and market conditions. Also, use examples and relate your presentation to your audience. In the case of Dragons' Den, good research also impresses the viewers so even if the Dragons don't invest in your company, you're likely to attract attention from other investors.

iii. Make a good impression. Never underestimate the importance of your personal presentation. A pitch is not a fashion show but it is important to make a good impression. By dressing appropriately and making an effort you will earn respect from your audience. You wouldn't go to an interview with dirty shoes or an untidy appearance, so don't do it when you are presenting to a client or a potential investor (or at BNI meetings! – Ed).

You've recently set up the Entrepreneurs' Business Academy. What key skills must entrepreneurs develop in order to succeed in today's economic climate?

The economy is extremely tough territory at the moment (far harsher than when I first started out), but having been through a recession I believe in being resilient and not giving up when the going gets rough. If people gave up in the face of every major challenge there would be no businesses at all.

Stay motivated and most importantly, look for ways to motivate your team. Have realistic expectations: it's better to be an expert in your field and build a good team which has the expertise you don't have yourself.

However, there are resources out there to help you improve your skills. The Entrepreneurs' Business Academy offers business owners bespoke programmes to develop new skills and entrepreneurial thinking. I'd also suggest being technologically savvy and knowing which technologies can benefit your business, even if you don't fully understand them. British entrepreneurs need to 'think globally' so that they understand market pressures as well as take advantage of the opportunities in emerging markets.

Entrepreneurs' Business Academy
www.the-eba.com

CHAPTER AND VERSE

WHAT'S NEW AND HAPPENING IN CHAPTERS THROUGHOUT THE UK AND IRELAND

GOING GREENER

In the last eight months, Leeds-based Network Central has seen a dramatic change in fortune. Climbing up the chapter Traffic Light rankings from number 464, the group now sits as the number one in Yorkshire and 5th most successful in the country. With a strong base of 38 members and an average seat value of £40k, the group is fast on its way to invoicing £2 million of business in less than 18 months.

How do they do it?

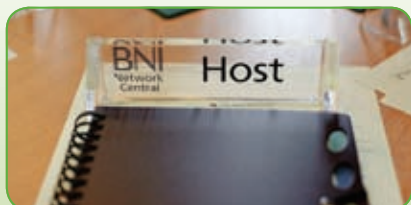
- Visitors attend every single week
- All members bring as many referrals as possible each week
- Use a structured format for welcoming visitors featuring tailored BNI visitor and host signs
- Encourage audience participation and maintain energy in the room
- Have members who hit the headlines and offer networking tips to local businesspeople



News of the group's strength reached Leeds North West MP, Greg Mulholland, who visited the chapter to see the business generating machine in action.

Chapter Director Marcos White says, "We're delighted with the growth of the group over the last eight months and members of other chapters have come to our meetings to find out what helpful ideas they can take away for themselves. We have a phenomenal number of visitors and I'm sure this is down to the positive and welcoming vibe that is experienced."

“The clear, professional signage demonstrates a structured approach and helps to ensure visitors sit next to someone who can readily answer their questions”



So, where does this successful chapter go from here? With at least one new member signing up every month, the group is all set for the mighty 45 by the end of the year. What's more, with 60 seconds featuring backing music, kettle bells, poems and props, neither members nor visitors can ever be sure just what marvels they'll uncover at a Network Central Chapter meeting!

Marcos White - marcos@courtyarddental.co.uk

POWER TOOL

Dublin's Grosvenor Chapter is seeing the remarkable fruits of a very strong and committed Construction Power Team.

The team members began working together in May 2009 at a time when the Irish construction industry had hit rock bottom. Grosvenor's architect, interior designer, builder, landscape designer, painter and decorator, window and door specialist, electrician, plumber and leaded glass artist all pooled their resources to offer a comprehensive service.

Architect Fintan Keenan comments, "As individuals, it would have been difficult to tender for major development opportunities, but together we can present as a large, multidisciplinary contractor. Because we know each other so well through BNI, we work together very effectively indeed and offer excellent service."

Every referral received by a Power Team member is reviewed like any project in a regular office environment to see which services may be required. The proof of the pudding is of course in the eating – and this pudding is proving to be particularly tasty! Since the Power Team began, members have fulfilled contracts worth a massive €650,000 – not bad during a deep recession!

Their success is now driving other Power Teams in the chapter to adopt a similar model, realising even greater ROI from their BNI investment.

Fintan Keenan - okeenan@esatclear.ie



LEGAL MOVE

Sharan Hassett, the family lawyer in London's Velocity Chapter, was a sole practitioner bogged down with client files and at a point in her business where she knew she should consider taking on a trainee solicitor. She was concerned at the prospect of a long and arduous interview process and the risk of introducing an unknown individual into her business.

However, help came from an unexpected source. During a 1-1 with fellow chapter member and travel agent, Michelle Clifford, she learned that Michelle was actually looking for a change in career and was considering law. The two women already got on famously and after some careful thought, Michelle decided to quit her life as a travel agent and begin training as a solicitor, working alongside Sharan.

"I know I've made the right move and I'm truly happy," says Michelle. "It was only because I knew and trusted Sharan through our BNI membership that I had the confidence to make this huge and rapid life change."

The benefit of course is two-fold: Michelle has found career fulfilment and Sharan now has a dependable "right-hand man". "It would have been so much more difficult to find the ideal candidate via a normal interview process," says Sharan. "Michelle gets on so well with my clients and she's a real asset to my business."

The added bonus is that Hazelwoods now has a member and a willing sub who are each well known, liked and trusted by the members and able to represent the firm around the Velocity breakfast table.

Michelle Clifford - michelle.clifford@hazelwoodsolicitors.com



THREE'S A COMPANY!

Members across the country are developing exciting new strategic alliances which add enormous value to individual memberships.

In the Belfast City Chapter, a new partnership targets the marketing needs of the hospitality and service sectors under the banner of Eat Drink Stay Marketing.

The new company comprises Evan Morton of Concept Advertising and Marketing, Margaret O'Hare of Fine Art Imaging (commercial photography) and David Cunningham of Truska Enterprises (web services). Having worked together for a few months, the three colleagues understood the potential of pooling resources on a more formal footing, particularly when economic times are tough. Huddled meetings between the trio after the chapter's weekly gatherings aroused much interest. Eventually they launched their initiative with a collaborative Ten Minute presentation, supported by their new website and colour brochure.

"It's so simple," says Margaret. We have the strength of a large, multi-skilled agency without the big price tag. Between us we have 20 years' BNI experience and know each other and our businesses very well. That means we communicate effectively with each other, allowing our clients to concentrate on their customers."

Not surprisingly, the three colleagues are keen exponents of both BNI and the strategic alliance dynamic. They hope to use the new partnership to generate further business for other chapter colleagues, supporting the true spirit of *Givers Gain*.

Evan Morton - evan@edsmarketing.co.uk



HOT WHEELS

On the morning of April 19th when the volcanic ash cloud was wreaking havoc on air travel, nine BNI Ireland Directors urgently needed an alternative route to the European Directors' Conference in Warwickshire. Having made it to England by ferry, they now needed to beat the crowds at Holyhead.

The directors naturally called on the BNI network and soon, private hire specialist Hywel Evans of Dee Valley Chapter (Llangollen) came to the rescue. He'd been on his way to a family holiday in Devon, but when he got the call he turned back, transferred his family to another car and drove the directors safely to the conference venue. He also picked up another stranded passenger who wanted to get to London. Eventually Hywel rejoined his family and enjoyed a well-earned holiday break.

BNI Director Brona Cloonan, one of the 'rescued' delegates, said, "We were also delighted to learn that the week before this happened, Hywel had taken out an additional taxi licence on the strength of all the new business he was receiving from his chapter. Time and time again, it's the givers who gain!"

Hywel Evans - enquiries@acidtravel.co.uk

ROLES OF HONOUR

The Leadership Team at Southgate's Acorn Chapter wanted to give their new management team an especially warm welcome, making sure they felt really good about the new roles they were about to take on.

Chapter Director Tony Blyth came up with an idea that both fitted the bill and also generated lots of interest and enthusiasm. For every team member he prepared a framed, custom-designed certificate which named and described each person's individual role. The certificates also described the outcomes and benefits for the chapter that would measure the success of each team role.

Tony attached the BNI ribbons to each certificate and presented them to the team members in a short ceremony within the chapter meeting.

Tony reflects, "The presentation ceremony gave every member of the team a chance to be properly recognised by their fellow members for stepping up to the plate and getting involved. Every member who was called up to receive their ribbon and certificate felt a million dollars as their chapter colleagues stood and applauded. I know from the feedback that this made them feel valued and appreciated.

With all the enthusiasm that the certificates generated, we're hoping that members will be fighting for team roles at the next changeover!"

Tony Blyth - info@flooring-solutions.co.uk



THE LADDER TO SUCCESS

For Kent-based painter and decorator Spencer Dolman, business networking used to mean Friday afternoons at the pub with other local tradesmen complaining about the lack of work. Five months after joining BNI, Spencer is now fully booked up throughout the summer and has cancelled his costly press advertising campaign.

"Like most tradesmen, I knew nothing about business networking," he recalls. "However, one day I was discussing workloads with a local mechanic. He mentioned that although he had a decorating job coming up, he'd be giving it to a member of his BNI breakfast networking group. I was intrigued, but didn't do anything about it until a year later when my accountant told me that her mother was finding real success with the same network. I decided it was time to join up!"

Thanks to a strong Trades Power Team at his chapter (BNI Bluewater), Spencer found it easy to generate referrals for fellow members. He's also discovered a new confidence in approaching people and in talking about his chapter colleagues' businesses as well as his own.

"A few weeks ago I'd just finished painting the outside of a client's house and a neighbour was out in the garden. I took the opportunity to start a conversation and before I knew it I was contracted to work for my client's neighbours on both sides! I was also able to refer them to the plasterer and builder members in my chapter. Before BNI, I would never have had the confidence to talk about my company like this, let alone promote other people's businesses."

For Spencer, his Power Team works so well that BNI now accounts for 70% of his turnover. He reflects, "It's great to be part of a larger business network, meeting excellent new clients and finding out just how *Givers Gain*."

Spencer Dolman - spencerdolman@hotmail.com



Photo by Martin Hobby, BNI Bluewater's photographer, www.martinhobby.co.uk

From: Colin Stacey

To: Dave Walker

Referral: Refurbish a house as a Learner Centre

Value: £100,000

Premier league referral

In BNI, referrals can come from far and near. This story features a referral between BNI members based 200 miles apart and who had never even met.

Vancouver Chapter's Colin Stacey, of Evergreen Building Services in Norfolk, is a project manager for *Red Balloon*, a national charity helping bullied children to recover. *Red Balloon* wanted to refurbish a large Victorian house in Liverpool as a safe Learner Centre for youngsters traumatised by bullying. The Centre was to be named James Bulger House in memory of the Liverpool toddler murdered by two young boys in 1993.

The refurbishment, worth around £100,000, demanded local, reliable and professional skills, so Colin turned to the online directory of BNI member businesses, Network Central, for help. He soon found a listing for Liverpool builder Dave Walker and his company, Armistead Building, and invited Dave to tender for the work. Dave's bid was successful, and he also involved several of his Lima Chapter colleagues in the project to help with decorating, electrical and tiling services.

If it hadn't been for our Network Central entry, this fantastic referral would never have happened



This great referral had additional benefits for Dave and his team. Liverpool FC's Steven Gerrard was to present *Red Balloon* with a Barclays Premier League donation of £20,000 at the Learner

Centre's opening day. Dave and his project team were delighted to give the top footballer a tour of the house - and to feature in all the TV coverage of the event!

"If it hadn't been for our Network Central entry, this fantastic referral would never have happened," says Dave. "I'm very grateful to Colin and heartily recommend that you use Network Central to broadcast your services and to find good suppliers nationwide."

Dave Walker - davewalker@armistead-bldg.co.uk

The greatest referral I ever had...

Dream team

Interior designer Luci Roper's best ever referral came from her BNI Bury colleague Russell Pritchard of Phoenix Home Solutions. Russell had secured an exciting refurbishment contract at Tao's, a contemporary Chinese restaurant in Manchester.



Already busy with the building works, Russell introduced Luci to Tao's with the interior work. He wanted Luci to design, fit out and finish the lighting and artwork. The total value of the referral amounted to a major project.

The project also needed the skills of a reliable joiner and following a recommendation from Russell, Luci was happy to recommend his services. JDL Joinery translated Luci's vision into reality with window covers, wine storage and other features.

Bringing together excellent Power Team colleagues from two chapters attracted accolades from the local press.

Luci comments, "This project is testimony to the tremendous power of restaurant refurbishment referrals, so being specific really does work. We were very clear about what each other did and felt confident in referring work to each other."

I am hugely grateful to Russell for this wonderful referral. He's a terrific business. It was a dream job for us and brilliant to work with his team.

Luci Roper - luci@lucilivingdesign.co.uk

Every chapter has its 'great referral' stories. If you've given or received a referral that arose in an unusual or interesting way or perhaps one that turned into spectacular business, then we'd like to hear about it. Here we feature a small selection of excellent referrals from recent months...

From: Julian Lewis

To: Dave Pincott

Referral: Online fire compliance dashboard for landlord with 450 properties

Value: £95,000

Tweet all about it!

Julian Lewis of Reading Central Chapter knows from experience that social networking can be a powerful generator of quality referrals.

In a recent blog, Julian suggested that a comprehensive management tool would be a great idea, taking the time, worry and hassle out of legal compliance. He explained that the concept was inspired by the online fire compliance dashboard that his chapter colleague Dave Pincott had installed for Julian's IT business. Julian's blog therefore not only presented his idea but also provided a testimonial to Dave's excellent product and service.

However, not content with simply hoping that surfers would notice the blog, Julian used a variety of social online channels to signpost people towards it. Indeed, he promoted it across the globe using Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.

The great thing about this approach is that it's a very soft sell

One of the many subsequent visitors to his blog was a landlord with more than 450 properties who invited Dave to provide him with a quote. Dave successfully won the business and was thrilled to gain a new client who, without Julian's online networking, he would never have accessed. Equally, Julian was delighted to pass the contact as a genuine, warm referral – even though he'd never actually met or spoken with the new client in person. That one referral has since led to around £95,000 worth of business.

"The great thing about this approach is that it's a very soft sell," says Julian. "The focus is the blog, not my services, or Dave's or anyone else's – so no one need feel they are being sold to. You must have the credibility, but the online channels can add the visibility: it's a third party referral just waiting to happen! The blog also acts as great search engine optimisation (SEO) for the person you're recommending. If all members used testimonials in this way, I reckon that chapter seat values would go through the roof!"

Julian Lewis - julian@positivecomputing.com

From: Russell Pritchard

To: Luci Roper

Referral: Interior design work for a contemporary Chinese restaurant

Value: £250,000



owner who asked her company, Luci Living Design, to go ahead with the restaurant including its flooring, seating, furniture, washrooms, and lighting. The project cost £250,000.

1-1 with Ian Smallwood, neighbouring BNI Zeus Chapter's joiner, who integrated Luci's designs into quality joinery for the new bar, lighting units, and kitchen equipment.

As a result, the project resulted in a stunning new restaurant that's already

of BNI membership. In my 60 seconds I'd particularly asked for 1-1s to play a major role too: recent 1-1s meant that Russell, Ian and Luci were able to work together on this project.

Luci is a BNI member, a weekly referral giver and runs an excellent interior design business. We now work regularly on joint projects – a great result all-round."

ARE YOU GETTING ENOUGH...

Visitors really are the VIPs at your chapter meeting. Sarah Owen, Master Franchisee of Referral Institute UK, explains why... and reveals the secret to inviting lots more.

...visitors to your BNI meeting?

Successful business leaders agree that the VCP Process™ underpins successful referral marketing. It builds sound network relationships and achieves proven results.

V (VISIBILITY) + C (CREDIBILITY) = P (PROFITABILITY, IE REFERRALS)

BNI's structure provides an ideal environment for implementing the VCP Process™. As a member, you develop your visibility through regular attendance, active networking and good, clear presentations. You can grow your credibility in all that you say and do and by the quality and quantity of the guests and referrals you contribute. Build the V and C elements carefully and you'll achieve profitability through the referrals that result.

Visitors and VCP

One of the easiest ways to give and gain the most value from the VCP Process™ model is to bring a visitor to your BNI meeting.

Inviting quality visitors increases your visibility and credibility with the person you invite and with the members. It increases the chances of moving ALL these relationships into profit.

For example:

- your visitor meets a great supplier
- a member wins business from or via your visitor
- your visitor meets a prospective client
- your fellow chapter members see you in a new light
- your chapter colleagues speak highly of you to your visitor
- the person you invite can't attend but is touched you would think of them
- your guest becomes a member bringing value to themselves and to the chapter
- ... the opportunities are endless.

Inviting visitors – made easy

If visitors are great for everyone's visibility, credibility and profitability, inviting more of them should be a top task for every member!

This simple conversation is one of the easiest ways to get people to accept your invitation – and it seems to appeal to a wide variety of people, whether they take a fast-paced or more measured approach and whether they focus on tasks or people.

"I would like to invite you to a meeting: it is results-focused, we have some fun, you'll meet a group of my most trusted contacts and you will see a highly efficient and proven system which will increase your revenue."

So there we are: bringing visitors adds significant value to your reputation, your membership and your BNI chapter. Why not share the success that other members enjoy using the VCP Process™ to invite guests? It's got to be worth a try!

Sarah Owen - Master Franchisee of Referral Institute UK
sarahowen@referralinstitute.co.uk

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Best overall social networking campaign -
Hogarth, Chiswick

Best Twitter campaign - Tonbridge Castle,
Pembury

Best professional video - Riverside, Putney

Best amateur video - Hogarth, Chiswick

YouTweet Challenge: the results!

The BNI YouTweet Challenge, launched in the Autumn 2009 edition of SuccessNet, inspired fantastic entries from all over the country and proved yet again the creativity and resourcefulness of BNI members.

With fabulous prizes to be won, there was never a better time to promote your chapter to a wealth of potential members with a cannily crafted online campaign. We had an amazing time going through all the entries which included news-style items, Charlie's Angels challenges, 'the first BNI chapter on the moon', original songs and a chapter overtaken by the members' children! We're delighted to announce the worthy winners who have earned prizes worth a total of more than £10,000.

Well done to the winning chapters – and to all those who entered and now enjoy the chapter benefits of online social networking!

One way for chapters to generate more business is to host a steady stream of quality visitors.

BNI Gold Club was established to recognise those members who go the extra mile in building their chapters by introducing six or more visitors who subsequently become members.

Gold Club members are easily recognisable because they wear a black name badge instead of the usual grey one. At the time of writing, there are over 540 Gold Club members, who now also enjoy the privilege of a raised profile on the BNI website.

Why not visit the Gold Club page at www.bni.eu/goldclub - and make sure your details appear there too very soon!



Upwards and onwards

BNI has a long tradition of generating business and we are rightly proud of our success. 2009 saw record business levels of £230 million passed between members of our UK and Ireland chapters, and all indications for 2010 look set to exceed this total significantly.

We've also been working hard to ensure that members nationwide receive fantastic support and training. In the last year we've run more training events than ever before.

With all this extra value in place, we wanted to let you know about a small increase in membership dues which will take effect from 1st October 2010, the first such increase in over five years.

Dues will increase as follows:

One-year membership: £435 + VAT. Two-year membership: £780 + VAT

We feel sure you'll agree that this small increase still represents fantastic value.

The good news for you is that you can avoid the increase for up to two years by submitting your renewal application with payment at current rates any time before 30th September 2010, thus avoiding the price rise.

We continue to wish you great success in gaining tremendous amounts of new business from your chapter – into 2011 and beyond.



GET IN TOUCH

Here's your chance to share ideas, views and information with the BNI community across the UK and Ireland. Simply send a letter or email to the *SuccessNet* office and we'll publish a selection in every edition.

You can say what you think: constructive criticism is just as valuable as a well-founded compliment. Or perhaps you have a suggestion that's worked for you or your chapter – something that could work for other members too?

What's more, there's an iPod shuffle for the Star Letter, so let's get those emails and letters flowing.

Email: successnet@jmhcopy.co.uk **Post:** SuccessNet, BNI House, Church Street, Rickmansworth, WD3 1BS

■ I just wanted to say how much I like the new-format *SuccessNet*. The layout is clean and fresh and avoids an American or 'franchise' feel. I like the compact format and the stories are concise and bite-sized – after all, we're all far too busy for long, rambling digests.

It's good to hear about other business groups' successes and to pick up hints and ideas on how to improve our own groups.

As for my own novel idea to throw into the pot, I've wondered about the possibility of introducing a BNI passport that introduces you to others when you're in other regions, or even abroad... What do other members think?

Graham Jenkinson
Kingstown Bevan Chapter (Hull)



■ During the last recession in 1989, I lost my successful interior design business. After recovering from the initial trauma, I set out on a personal journey that continues to this day. I resolved that if ever I was given the opportunity to build another business I would do it differently.

On 1st January 2000 I started a new job, establishing and running the UK office of an international firm of architects. I felt that good relationships would be crucial to sound business so I decided to get involved in BNI and joined the Oxford Circus Chapter. I aimed to sharpen my networking skills and get our firm known in a new city. I threw myself into the early mornings and over a period of time took on every role from Visitor Host to Chapter Director.

One week I was delighted to win the door prize, a book, *Time To Think* by Nancy Kline. The book was life-changing and I subsequently met Nancy and attended her training courses. I also sent my company's leadership team on the courses, with amazing results. She has even helped me to write my own book, *Love At Work*, with the help of her publisher Fisher King Publishing.

So next time it's your Ten Minute Presentation, put some thought into choosing a door prize. You simply cannot imagine the positive effect it might have on the recipient and in 'Thank You For The Business' terms, it could be worth a fortune!

Nigel Cutts
BNI Hoebridge

STAR LETTER

■ I joined BNI in May 2009 and, like every other new member, received a whirlwind of information all aimed at bringing better business opportunities for myself and the other members of my chapter.

I readily confess that I failed to read it all.

Since then, I have been on courses and attended the fantastic BNI Regional Members' Day at Heathrow - all good stuff. I've got to grips with what membership is all about and I've benefited from many great referrals which have helped to grow my business. It's no surprise therefore that I've renewed my membership. However it's taken until now for me to sit down and read the *Member Success Training Manual* from front to back (only a year late!). And what did I find? It's stacked full of very readable and extremely valuable information.

My message to others who have, like myself, rushed ahead without taking the time to stop and take in all the help that's available is this: Life's busy. Work, family and the general pace of life can make us think we don't have time to do things that could save us time and effort. Take a tip from me and take a really GOOD look at your New Member Manual and listen to Dr Misner's CD. I've already found it to be well worth the time and I'm willing to bet you will too.

Paul Williams
Premier Chapter, Eynsham

You too could be the writer of a Star Letter and win a cool iPod Shuffle. Enjoy your prize, Paul!



■ When osteopath David Haynes scooped me up one morning at 6.25am for my first BNI breakfast meeting, I wasn't too sure what might be in store. However David seemed trustworthy and sincere, so I thought, why not?

I signed up that morning, and I have not regretted my decision. This is networking based on trust, on integrity, on tangible results ... What's more, our chapter's not short on the humour front either! We have a great laugh together, and we also do good business.

Paul, Joanne and Martin are running for my charity in the London 10k while David, Martin and others are supporting and helping them in their efforts. Talk about teamwork!

I've used the services of the chapter photographer, Alex, and our printer and merchandise guru, Craig, for my charity NACC which supports people with inflammatory bowel disease (Crohn's and ulcerative colitis). A new member, Fiona, is quoting for furnishing our new boardroom.

On a personal level, I've passed my tax problems to Richard and my financial affairs to James. It's only a matter of time before I ask Paul about a small extension and I get David to look at my teeth!

The key to all of this business generation is trust, which is built through weekly recommendations, testimonials, presentations and so on. For those who are serious about business networking, BNI membership is a boon.

Suzi Clark
North Orbital Chapter

■ Elite Chapter has many reasons to be grateful to our recently deceased member Tony Rooney and to remember him with affection. Since he joined us in early 2005 Tony's contribution has been very significant. He was immensely supportive to his colleagues, offered a warm welcome to every new member and personified *Givers Gain*.

In business Tony was a gentleman. As a customer he was loyal, honourable and simple to please. As a service provider he was honest and respectful. He was a great networker, an excellent Chapter Director and at the time of his death a diligent Membership Committee member – all in all, an exemplary BNI member.

In the best BNI tradition Tony's business practice constantly demonstrated to us 'the fun in the fundamentals'. We, his friends and colleagues in Elite and many other BNI members who had the opportunity to work with him will continue to gain from his life and example.

Rest in peace, Tony.

Gerry Maguire and the members of Elite Chapter, Dublin

Word of Mouth

Every edition of *SuccessNet* now features a topical article written by a member. Each Word of Mouth article aims to share the great reserves of knowledge and good practice that abound in our organisation.

Working with the trades



Top tips for successful projects (and how to avoid the cowboys!)

When we invited contributions from the trades for this edition's *Word of Mouth* feature, we were delighted to receive a number of articles from members in various trade categories across the UK and Ireland. We decided to combine their insight and expertise in the following Top Trades Tips.

Value for money is important to us all, especially in times like these when cash flows rather less freely. The Office of Fair Trading estimates that 'cowboy builders' cost UK householders a staggering £1.6bn in bad workmanship! So say you need a loft conversion, a new kitchen, or a whole range of work on a new home. What are the top tips from the trades?



Follow these Top Trades Tips and you'll not only enjoy a successful, hassle-free project, you'll probably also have trusted new suppliers and friends. If they're not already members, they could make ideal visitors for your chapter!

This article features words of wisdom from some great BNI tradespeople:

Alan Kavanagh (Darjac Technical Services Ltd, Co. Kildare), **Tim Robson** (Boiler & Degreasing Services Ltd, Co. Antrim), **Mark Bailey** (PG Bailey & Son, Suffolk), **Mike Vickers** (Leverage Solutions Ltd, Cheshire), **Andy Norman** (Thoroughbred Construction, Norwich), **Chris Devenney** (The Building & Maintenance Company, Lancashire) and **Colin Dunne** (Custom Furniture Design, Co. Dublin).

1 Be clear about what you want

Prepare a full and clear drawing or a list of works and materials so that you can compare quotes on a like-for-like basis. That way, you'll avoid tradesmen who give a low upfront price but then charge you for extras that should have formed part of the core job. Larger jobs will benefit from a good project manager to ensure everything is done on-spec and on-time.

2 Research your suppliers

As every BNI member knows, word of mouth referrals are the best way of finding the right suppliers. However, it's always advisable to check out fine details such as accreditations, statutory certification and membership of professional bodies (if you're unsure about this, ask your local Environmental Health or Building Control departments). Ask for at least three verifiable references from existing clients – ideally for similar projects to your own. If a contractor is at all hesitant about giving references, **FIND ANOTHER CONTRACTOR!** Naturally, BNI tradesmen with their valuable reputations are likely to be excellent choices – and even if you don't have the right trade in your chapter, your local BNI Director will know who can help you.

3 Specify payment procedures

Agree with your suppliers in writing who pays what and when. Pay by cheque or card, so payments are traceable. For larger projects, staged payments triggered by specified times and targets are an excellent idea. It's also a good idea to retain up to 5% of the total cost until at least one month after completion to ensure that suppliers deal properly with any minor problems that may arise.

4 It's good to talk

Communication is king. Be crystal clear from the start about what you expect and arrange contracts which clarify all key details such as the scope of the works, timescales and payment plans. You can still ask for additional items or services after the contract is signed, but make sure you agree with your suppliers in writing exactly what extras will be provided and how much they will cost.

5 Check and check again

Keep a close eye on the details and tell your supplier about any faults or problems as soon as possible. If you don't tell him, he can't do anything about it – and 'later' may be too late!

6 Complete with care

Stick to the contractual process throughout. When the work is done, obtain all sign-offs, guarantees and certification as specified in your contract. Reputable tradesmen will always honour their agreements and respect your rights, particularly if you've respected theirs!

What's making BNI news around the UK and Ireland?

If you have a significant snippet to share, let **SuccessNet** know and we'll put you on the map!

February saw the first ever BNI Lancashire & South Pennines Members' Day. The event included several top speakers, a video link Q&A session with Dr Ivan Misner, an awards ceremony and a James Bond-themed dinner.

Ilkley Moore Chapter celebrated its 10,000th referral with a fantastic Visitor Day attended by 30 guests. With six new members in two months and £1 million in business exchanged during the last year, Ilkley Moore proves that visitors really do make great chapters.

Within minutes of the election results declaration, MP Brandon Lewis called Yartoft's Chapter Director to ask if he might visit their morning BNI meeting. **Brandon hopes that Yartoft members can help him in his pledge to restructure Great Yarmouth station.**

On a chilly May morning, **six intrepid members of Birmingham's Sunrise Chapter set out for a particularly unusual 1-1 meeting - on Snowdon's peak!** The 2.5 hour climb and ensuing 'summit meeting' gave plenty of opportunities for cementing real understanding and good team skills.

When **Tony Rice**, a six-year member of Enterprise Bedford Chapter, **passed his 1000th referral on 11th March** he was presented with an engraved salver and a baseball cap embroidered with 'BNI - The 1k Club'. He also won the award for bringing in the most business for his chapter colleagues.

Cherwell Chapter was one year old on 1st June. With 36 members it's reached second place in the regional Traffic Lights listing. Referrals valued at £130,000 and £40,000 are just part of the reason it's thriving! Keep it up, Cherwell!

When **Barum Chapter's new member Magnus Ritzen** of Holiday Home Management **passed a referral** to interior designer Karley Fricker, **it led to a £189,000 contract** for apartment refurbishments as well as work on 60 more properties.

Philip Aarons, osteopath at Enterprise (Watford), **lent a healing hand when visiting director Ivo Heshusius from BNI Netherlands was in agony with back pain.** One coffee break later, Ivo rediscovered the spring in his step!

When he was elected as Eastbourne's MP on 6th May, **Stephen Lloyd became the first ex-BNI member to take a seat at Westminster.** His campaign meant relinquishing his Churchill Chapter seat but Stephen now hopes to raise awareness of BNI with his fellow parliamentarians.



BNI Malaysia: a decade of business growth

Around 6500 miles across the globe from the UK lies Malaysia, a land of diverse races, cultures, religions and geography. Most Malaysians speak two or three languages - Malay, English and their mother tongue (eg Cantonese, Mandarin or Hokkein). In the 1970s, Malaysia was primarily a producer of raw materials but is now known particularly for its expertise in medical and paramedical science and engineering. The global recession has hit this south-east Asian country hard, but it is fighting back - and BNI Malaysia members continue to find that *Givers Gain* is a robust recession-buster!



Established a decade ago, BNI Malaysia is vibrant and growing. Its current total of 49 chapters is constantly increasing. The country's capital, Kuala Lumpur, was the setting for the hugely successful BNI Worldwide Members' Conference in 2008 which brought together over 500 members from 23 countries. KL10 in July is set to achieve even greater heights, with world-class speakers such as Frank de Raffeale, Mark Garbelotto and Norm Dominguez, BNI's CEO.

Riyaz Mahendy, Area Director for BNI Malaysia says, "BNI has had a very positive impact in our country over the last 10 years. We have many members who have referred RM1million (around £210,000) and more in business transactions - and plenty of BNI millionaires too! We also have numerous members who have experienced a decade of partnership and business growth with BNI Malaysia. These individuals have developed a deep understanding of the referral process and *Givers Gain*."



Meet Dr Fauziah Yunus, a cosmetic dental specialist. Dr Fauziah learned most of her business skills through BNI, and although her practice is thriving she's never too busy to mentor her chapter colleagues in growing their businesses. Dr Fauziah believes in continuous learning and using technology to stay ahead of the game. Tools such as blogs and social online networking provide her with new sources of patients as well as referrals for her chapter colleagues.



Ken Chin owns an accountancy firm. He's a committed advocate of the Visibility, Credibility, Profitability (VCP) process which ensures he runs a profitable business. He often coaches new members to make sure they fully understand this crucial business success tool. Always ready to help run and motivate his chapter, Ken's enthusiasm brushes off on his fellow members who value and respect his endlessly positive approach. "Being part of BNI is tremendously worthwhile for me, both in terms of a steady stream of referred clients and the difference it makes to the quality of business life."



As pioneer members in BNI Malaysia, both Dr Fauziah and Ken also run regular brainstorming sessions to devise new ways of sharing their skills and experience with other members.



Want to learn more about BNI Malaysia?
Contact Riyaz Mahendy - riyaz@bnimalaysia.com



55% of BNI members have run their businesses for at least five years



It's a long way from BNI National Office to the World Cup Final Stadium, but 86,304,761 referral slips laid end-to-end could take you there!

There were 18 BNI member countries playing in the 2010 FIFA World Cup (including BNI's newest nation, Slovenia)



**There are just two vets in UK and Ireland chapters.
Pep up the Pet Power and invite a vet today!**

In the last 12 months BNI has delivered
79,433 man-hours
(or nine whole years!) of training



445 BNI® Directors
provide support
to chapters and
members across
the UK and Ireland