

A ROUND OF 79? NO, IT'S £79,000 EACH!

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Breakfasts will never be the same again....

Members of The Potteries Chapter in north Staffordshire nearly choked on their breakfast after getting an unexpected 'dish' at a recent meeting.

Chapter members – including a number of the fairer sex – were startled when an attractive young female visitor from Stafford venue operator, Most Wanted, climbed onto their breakfast table and performed an impromptu and somewhat exotic dance as members bravely tried to continue eating their eggs and bacon.

When it came to the weekly 60-seconds

slot, rather than simply talk about what she did, professional dancer Kate Sylvester stood up, peeled off (some of) her clothing and danced among the breakfast plates.

Outgoing Chapter Director, Ed Marshall, said: "We always encourage members and guests to make their 60 seconds as memorable as possible, but Kate's presentation is something the group will never forget. I knew Kate was there to represent a new nightclub venue but I was still gob-smacked by her performance. It's not unusual for members to deliver their one-minute infomercials in a quirky way to help the rest of us remember their business, but this was definitely a one-off."

Fortunately members saw the amusing side and understood that their visitor's unique routine was simply a novel approach to promoting her company's new venue in Stafford. Most Wanted's owner Kevin Barnett said: "Our new club is an ideal venue for corporate entertaining purposes so we asked BNI if we could introduce ourselves to the local business community by attending a breakfast meeting.

"We knew what Kate was going to do, but I briefed her not to go too far and I'm pleased that BNI members appreciated our tongue-in-cheek approach. As a result, we made some good contacts and now hope to join BNI." **For information about BNI at the Potteries Chapter, contact Chris Wheeler on 01785 812250.**



BREAKFAST DISH WITH A DIFFERENCE! Members of the Potteries Chapter try to stay focused on business during Kate's table dance.

Make mine a bacon roll and a glass of claret

When you've sat through a few hundred members' presentations, you come to expect the unexpected – but nothing could have prepared members of Inverurie's Echo Chapter for what was to be a most bizarre breakfast meeting: being encouraged to drink a variety of different wines with their bacon butties!

The invitation to take an early morning tipple came from the Chapter's newest member, wine importer Gary Rankin who launched his

first-ever 10-minute presentation to colleagues by passing around seemingly endless bottles of quality wine for members to taste while he explained the subtleties of different grapes and wine-growing regions.

It certainly impressed laptop computer specialist Peter Grossi who said: "We'd had no warning of what was to come and nobody was expecting to be plied with alcohol at just after seven in the morning – but it was a thoroughly enjoyable experience and happily there were no complaints!

"It made a pleasant change from the usual cup of coffee – although cheese and canapés might have gone down better with the claret, than bacon rolls."

Our picture shows a somewhat bemused Chapter Director Ian Crighton (centre) testing a cheeky little white from Australia, flanked by Membership Co-ordinator Chris Wakefield on his right, and Secretary/Treasurer Gavin West.

Contact Peter Grossi on 01466 795304.



Staying

BNI worth over £70,000 annually after five years – London survey

BNI's new London survey has confirmed that members now receive business referrals worth an average of £27,000 a year – rising dramatically to more than £70,000 a year among those who have held their membership for five years or more.

The results of a two-month market research project conducted by The Murray Consultancy among members of 15 chapters in BNI's North West London region, show a remarkable consistency with the comparable study (see page 3) carried out in BNI's South West Ireland chapters during the summer, and with the original members' survey undertaken on Merseyside more than three years ago.

An unprecedented 80% response rate among North West London's members revealed that:

- **After the first year of membership during which referral generation is relatively slow (worth an average of £10,000), the rate accelerates markedly, producing business worth an average of £30,000 a year in a member's second year, rising to £37,000 after three years, and £73,000 after five years.**
- *Members receive an average of 26 referrals a year – or one every other week – with each converted direct referral worth an average of £1,700. In the survey region, each chapter refers new business worth £17,000 a week – equivalent to almost £600 per member. Half of all the new business comes from third-party referrals generated outside the chapter, and one in every two referrals received is converted to chargeable work.*
- **In North West London, BNI membership is worth a total of £12.4 million a year to its membership.**
- *No fewer than 14 members – almost one per chapter surveyed – gain up to £500,000 worth of business a year from BNI, with three more reporting annual income of up to £1 million from their membership.*

While the value of new business is impressive, the study's findings in respect of non-financial membership benefits are also significant, showing that:

in BNI is good for your wealth!

Two new independent studies of the financial benefits of membership have confirmed the huge value of keeping your seat at the average BNI breakfast table. In London's north-west region, a survey of all 560 members reveals that, on average, a member's chair is worth £27,000 a year in new business, rising to over £70,000 for those who stay in BNI for at least five years. And in Ireland's south-west region, a similar survey shows the average value of membership is £20,500 a year, increasing to £62,000 after four years' membership. The figures make stimulating reading....

- Members perceive the value of building long-term business relations as equally important to increasing their own turnover.
- Developing new skills – networking, presentational and general business expertise – through BNI training workshops, is also seen as being highly beneficial.

Martin Lawson, BNI National Director said the consistency of the results generated by successive surveys was especially pleasing.

"It is even more satisfying to find our latest UK study showing not only that the average annual value of membership has risen, but confirming what every chapter leadership team already knows – that the longer someone remains a BNI member, the greater the value of referrals they receive year on year. It is no coincidence that the findings of the new Irish survey are remarkably similar in terms of business value for members who have been in their

chapters for more than a year."

He added: "Recognising that the average value of membership is almost £600 a week, is enough to motivate anyone, but to know that by remaining committed to your chapter for five years, you can expect to receive business worth over £70,000 a year, is something special."

Martin said the research findings indicating members' views about the importance of building long-term business relationships, forming new strategic alliances and learning additional business skills, was a reflection of the substantial resources that BNI directors had invested in training over recent years.

"The fact that six in every seven members have attended at least one BNI training session, with more than half taking part in at least three workshops is one very good reason why these results are so good. What further proof could anyone want that BNI membership is truly invaluable?"

Year-plus Irish members receive £34,000 in referrals

South-West Ireland's survey of the region's 300-plus members reaches the same conclusions as the London study – showing that the value of membership is increasing and members' profits grow in direct proportion to the length of time they have been in BNI.

The results show that while the average new business gained by members in the past year was £20,500, the average annual value of referrals among those with at least one year's membership was £34,000 (€49,950), and the average figure for those with four years membership or more, was a remarkable £62,000 (€90,718).

Niamh Shanahan of The Pepper Group who conducted the survey told SuccessNet: "The figures are even more impressive than they appear, because we know that a large number of our best performing members declined to participate, resulting in an imbalance of newer, less experienced members who, historically, receive fewer referrals.

"What is particularly revealing is the relationship between length of membership and the value of referrals that members receive. By leaving out the figures from members who have been in BNI for less than a year, we found that on average each member gained almost £34,000 worth of new business, and this almost doubled in the case of members with four years BNI experience," she added.

- Each member achieved 21% of their new business through BNI referrals, rising to 26% among those members who have been in BNI for over one year.
- Over four in five members said they experienced an increase in business done across the BNI breakfast table, compared to the previous 12 month period.

John Shaw, a member of the Treaty Chapter in Limerick said: "The results will help every chapter attract more members because we now have independent proof of the value of membership, and the fact that the benefits increase with each successive year. I am sure that had more of our most experienced members taken part in the survey, the averages would have been even higher."

Everything's chipper in Barnet!

The latest 'membership value' surveys make pleasing reading for everyone in BNI, but the 40-strong Chipping Chapter at Barnet, in north London, is in a league of its own when it comes to doing bigger and better business by referral.

In the last year, Chipping's dynamic mem-

bers passed each other no less than £3,160,000 worth of business (equivalent to around £65,000 for every chapter meeting) – producing new business worth an average of £1,650 per member per week! So, while the regional average value of a BNI member's seat is a healthy £27,000 a year – seats around the Chipping Chapter breakfast table are worth almost three times more, averaging £79,000 a year!

Not that this came as a huge surprise to Chapter Director Barrie Linch. Asked what made Chipping so special, he said: "I could say it's just because we are very good and totally committed, but I think what really creates more business is the atmosphere we generate. Member and visitors simply enjoy taking part, and visitors always comment on the 'buzz' at our Friday morning sessions. It produces referrals of real quality and value."



FEELING CHIPPER: Chipping Chapter members in playful mood at the annual BNI Golf Day after learning their BNI seats are worth £79,000 a year.

Lawsons' Lore

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

In this issue of SuccessNet, there are two articles in particular that you should read. Whether you are new to the BNI family, or a seasoned practitioner of the Giver's Gain philosophy, the article on Pages 2&3 will give you considerable satisfaction.

Two separate new surveys have confirmed, with remarkable consistency, BNI's true financial value to its members. The figures are impressive and significantly, they are almost identical to those drawn from a similar BNI study - albeit in a different UK region - conducted over three years ago.

When you've looked at these reassuring statistics, turn to page 12, and remind yourself of a few of the many hidden benefits of BNI membership; in other words, the non-financial gains that every member enjoys, but sometimes forgets about when evaluating BNI's strengths.

Put the two together and even the biggest sceptic might concede what most members discover very quickly: that BNI has become by far the largest, most successful business networking organisation in the world for one reason - it delivers big and tangible benefits to its members!

Of all the surveys' powerful statistics however, the most pertinent figures relate to BNI's continuously increasing value in direct relation to the length of membership. While you should feel a sense of fulfilment just by knowing that, on average, each member gains new business worth almost £600 a week (representing a profit on your annual subscription after just seven days!), isn't it rewarding to know that, year on year, you can expect your membership to bring you ever greater financial returns?

If BNI did nothing more than introduce you to additional business worth £30,000, £60,000 or in a growing number of real cases, well over £100,000 each year, you would consider your membership to be the best business investment you ever made. But when BNI offers you so many further benefits - providing you with a wide range of business and personal development training - not to mention the immeasurable value of an ever-growing circle of trusted business colleagues and friends, then that modest annual investment seems almost too good to be true.

*Martin Lawson
Gillian Lawson*

What a summer for BNI's unique duo!

Caroline and Gerry Swatton should have been looking forward to a well-earned break as SuccessNet went to press. As the only husband-and-wife act (we think!) among nearly 500 BNI UK and Irish chapter leadership teams, they've just had one of the most event-filled summers ever!

For the past six months, Gerry has been Bournemouth's Chapter Director, and Caroline has been equally busy as its Membership Co-ordinator, but their hectic BNI schedules have comprised only a small part of a dramatic year which has seen:

- The launch of a new division of their hugely successful Bournemouth swimming school in Antigua.
- Their local business having its busiest ever period, with over 1,000 pupils.
- Caroline almost winning a European Women of Achievement Award (she was runner-up in the Sports category), and then saving the life of a three-year old boy who had 'died' after drowning.

After such a hectic summer, you'd think they would want a rest, but not a bit of it! Gerry, who also has his own business coaching consultancy said: "We've always had busy lives and enjoy new challenges and competing pressures. When we started the swimming business 20 years ago, I don't think either of us realised how big it would become. Today we run swimming courses in Bournemouth for people from all over the world, and our Antigua School of Swimming already has more than 100 pupils."

It was following the completion of classes at her Swaling International School of Swimming in Bournemouth, that Caroline's quick thinking saved the life of little Peter Chesters. He and other youngsters had been returned to their parents after concluding their lessons, but shortly afterwards he was spotted floating face down in the water, blue and lifeless.

"I ran to the boy but there was no life in the child, so I gave mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and then started CPR. It took the paramedics 15 minutes to arrive but just as they did, Peter's eyes flew open and he started to come round," said Caroline. "Later, the hospital doctors said he would be dead had I not fought to revive him at the poolside."

While her life-saving feat is typical of her 'total commitment' strategy, it had nothing to do with her nomination for European Woman of Achievement Award, which was in recognition of her services to sporting excellence over many years. "There were over 2,000 nominations, so I guess I did pretty well to come second to Rachael Heyhoe-Flint, who is one of the biggest female names in recent sporting history."

As founder members of Bournemouth Chapter, Gerry and Caroline say they wouldn't begin to consider relinquishing their BNI places - no matter how demanding other pressures become. "BNI has been very good for us, not least in opening up a wide circle of contacts and friends in the local business community," Gerry added.

Contact Gerry and Caroline Swatton on 08707 10 10 12.

Growing all over

BNI's UK expansion has continued apace over the summer. Recently launched chapters include: Apollo (Birmingham), Diamond (Birmingham), Icarus (Clitheroe, Lancashire), Fakenham (Norfolk), Garden of England (Faversham, Kent), Bulman (Gosforth, Northumbria), New Forest (Hampshire), Gade Valley (Hemel Hempstead), De Montfort (Leicester), Westside (London South Central), Robin Hood (Nottingham), Paget (Penkridge, Staffs), Bede (Peterlee, County Durham), Invincible (Preston), Royal Victoria Chapter (Sheffield), Rotherham (South Yorkshire), Scunthorpe (Lincs), Charles Darwin (Shrewsbury), Thetford (Lincs), and John Laird (Wirral).



NON-STOP IN BOURNEMOUTH: Chapter Director Gerry Swatton with his wife Caroline, the Chapter's Membership Co-ordinator.

Blind faith? You *must* be joking!

Choosing a relatively new BNI member to become your Chapter Director takes good judgement as well as courage. So, picking a newcomer who is also blind could be seen as an act of faith – or folly – not to mention something of a gamble.

But don't even raise such concerns with members of Harlequin Chapter in Richmond-upon-Thames who, far from taking a risk by appointing 49-year-old Maurice Press as their new Director - the first blind person to lead a UK chapter - are unanimous that he is the best person for the job, and that under his enterprising leadership, their group will go from strength to strength.

By any conventional measure, Maurice is an extraordinary human being. Blind from birth, he has overcome his considerable disability to the extent that he has already achieved more in his personal and professional lives than most of us would ever hope to accomplish in our lifetime.

A talented professional musician and singer (he gained a masters degree from the Royal College of Music), an expert in computer technology, some-time politician, business and community leader, accredited disability trainer, ardent follower and shareholder of his beloved Leeds United Football Club and Middlesex Cricket Club and, in recent years, a highly successful businessman, Maurice's list of successes was impressive long before he'd even come across BNI.

He joined BNI just over a year ago after hearing about the organisation by chance while attending Richmond's Chamber of Commerce, of which he is Vice President. "I went to a meeting and instantly related to BNI's ethos and values. My own life is based on being organised and focused, so BNI was a breath of fresh air. I joined immediately but, if I'm honest, I only wanted to be one of the boys, giving and receiving as many referrals as possible. I had no desire to get involved in the chapter's leadership," he told SuccessNet.

Given his irrepressible zest for life, this was never going to happen. Like many others who have tackled and overcome a serious disability, Maurice acknowledges – not without reservation - that he is a driven man, always striving for perfection and never satisfied with his achievements. Within weeks of joining he was urged to take over some of the education co-ordinator's slots, and performed so impressively that he was chosen as Harlequin's secretary/treasurer earlier this year.



PLENTY TO SMILE ABOUT: Maurice Press, the new Harlequin Chapter Director - and the first blind person to hold the top post

Knowing his love for music would not pay all the bills, Maurice got himself a job in the early 80's with the Disability Resource Team, run by the then Greater London Council to provide disability training and transcription services for public and private sector employers. With the GLC's demise, the venture continued as a charity with Maurice becoming its assistant director. Ten years later, he became DRT's director and outright owner, ending its charitable status, turning it into a limited company and moving its base to Teddington, Middlesex. "As someone else once famously said, I loved the company so much, I decided to buy it, and we haven't looked back since."

Today, DRT is a leader in its field with an impressive client list including government departments, local authorities, banks and NHS Trusts. "We are successful mainly thanks to our fantastic staff, but also because of the wonderful communications technology I have at my fingertips and, I suppose, because of my own self-belief for which I am indebted to my mother, who fought hard to ensure I had a normal upbringing when the authorities wanted to put me in institutions. I owe my confidence

and independence to her, and it has never let me down."

Such qualities have enabled Maurice to succeed in nearly everything he has tackled. "Whatever I do, I try to do to 110 per cent. I'm always amazed when I meet people who just moan and complain about their business. Why do they bother running a business at all? I work – and play – 18 hours a day, I love life and I look forward to every day," he added.

"When I first joined BNI, my colleagues were worried they'd have trouble finding referrals for a niche business like mine, but I knew there'd be no problem. In the event I receive an average of two referrals a week, and in the past six months, I've passed over 80. It's all about energy, awareness and commitment."

One of Maurice's early initiatives as Chapter Director is to act as personal mentor to members struggling to find referrals or promote their businesses. "Inevitably, some members will find it harder than others, so each week I aim to target one person and spend time resolving any problems, enabling them to get the most out of BNI," he added.

On the day SuccessNet caught up with him, he'd been up since before six preparing for his chapter breakfast and wasn't expecting to get home until well after midnight. "It's like that most days," he confided. "It's a good job my wife has an equally demanding life, because she never sees me. That's because when I do manage to get away from work, there's always some other business or social engagement. I guess I'll never know when enough is enough."

Harlequin's members are in for a challenging six months!

You can contact Maurice on 020 8943 0022 or at: mauricepress@enterprise.net



PREPARING FOR A BUSY YEAR: Maurice (second left) finds time for a joke with his new leadership team colleagues, as they prepare the Chapter's demanding agenda for the coming six months.

Premier answer to property purchase?

If you are worried about buying or selling in the UK's increasingly uncertain property market, you might be interested in the strategic alliance formed by two members of South London's Premier Chapter in Clapham.

Solicitor Antoinette Taylor and Mariama Grant of Goldwaters Management Limited (a property information resource centre) are collaborating to provide independent advice on ways to make the purchasing and selling process simple and stress free. "Buying property should be a pleasant event, but it is frequently harrowing and stressful. We hope our service will make buying and selling an enjoyable, happy experience," said Antoinette.

Antoinette can be contacted on 020 7242 5031 and Mariama on 0700 393 2644.



TAKING THE PAIN OUT OF PROPERTY PURCHASE: Premier Chapter's Antoinette Taylor (left) and Mariama Grant

Bicester pampers small businesses

Bicester Chapter's triumvirate strategic alliance - Image Unlimited - have just staged a 'Pamper Evening for Mind, Body & Soul', bringing together small businesses to promote their products and services.



PROCEEDS FROM PAMPERING: Bicester's enterprising trio present Ben Jackson, a Parent Governor of Bardwell Special School, with the event's proceeds.

Strategic alliances formed between two or more members of a chapter, or even across more than one chapter, are an important part of the BNI mix. Many members have found their best referral opportunities have come from being part of an alliance with colleagues in complementary business fields. Here we feature four such initiatives that promise significant benefits.

Dublin quintet's creative 'Toolbox'

Five successful Dublin businesswomen who met through their membership of the city's Pembroke Chapter, have joined forces to create a powerful new, full-service marketing concept for Irish businesses.

The quintet - advertising agency boss Sharon Lawless, marketing expert Yvonne Boyle, hospitality and sponsorship organiser Julie Mantle, e-marketing specialist Maryrose Lyons and PR consultant Caroline Martin - developed the idea from initial discussions held after their chapter meetings, and launched The Marketing Toolbox a few weeks ago, to offer a cost-effective alternative to both large and small organisations.

Yvonne told SuccessNet: "In any large multi-discipline agency, their charges reflect the overheads incurred by all of their departments, whether or not they are of use to the client. With The Marketing Toolbox, our clients only pay for the elements they actually require in their particular campaign.

"They might need the resources of all our specialist services, or just one - but whatever they require it will be cost-effective.

She added: "We have years of experience

and serve our existing clients well. However, working together, we can offer a more centralised and efficient service to a wider range of businesses. It's a case of the sum of our parts being greater than the whole."

Contact Yvonne Boyle on +353 (0)1 824 3498 or Sharon Lawless on +353 (0)1 294 5847.

Ultimate alliance on Tayside

Members of Tayside Chapter in Scotland have taken to heart one of BNI's most basic philosophies - maximise your business opportunities - by forming a chapter-wide strategic alliance from which almost every member can benefit.

Led by Gary Torbet of Global Golf Holidays, they have put together the ultimate in corporate hospitality packages for visitors to next year's Open Golf Championship at St. Andrews, and the 2007 Open at Carnoustie.

Gary said: "It seemed so obvious that between us, we had all the resources necessary to offer visitors the perfect golfing holiday - not least plenty of local, high quality accommodation. When I discussed the idea, several colleagues told me they could benefit from being part of an alliance, and even those whose services are unrelated to golf, knew they had one great asset - their homes - which they could let out for substantial profits during the championships."

Now the Chapter's Grant Mackie is promoting his Storage4U services to enable non-golfing members to declutter their homes before heading off on holiday while their homes are occupied by golf aficionados, and another member, Graeme Scott of Scotts Wines, is gearing up to supply special picnic hampers for Open visitors.

If you are planning a trip to the Open, visit the Alliance's new websites at: www.open2005.co.uk

Contact Gary on 01382 308524.

BNI helps Julie blossom to greater success

For the second year running, North Yorkshire husband-and-wife plant display team Julie and Simon Dodsworth have won a prestigious national business award – and Julie modestly claims it could never have happened without BNI.

In fact their Boroughbridge-based business actually won TWO top titles at the recently staged north-east finals of the National Business Awards, to add to the one they gained last year.

This time, the Dodsworths took the award for Outstanding People Development, and Julie also received the Orange Award for Bright Business.

The company's strongest asset is its staff and throughout its 10-year growth, it has had

a zero staff turnover – producing a citation from this year's judges that said: "The Dodsworth staff have rewritten the rules on how they can help each other improve their learning and customer service skills..."



But, despite beating entries from many major corporate organisations, Julie insists that their success is due largely to her membership of BNI's Knavesmire Chapter in York. She said: "I owe our success to BNI for helping me have the focus and the courage to even enter the national business awards.

"Without BNI and the support of all my chapter colleagues this would most certainly never have happened," added Julie, who is pictured with her award.

The Dodsworth's business supplies living plant displays to many large companies including Premiership football clubs, Nestle and the BBC.

Contact Julie Dodsworth on 01423 360090.

Three 'misses' give Maldon a makeover

By the law of averages, the men should be 'in charge' of Essex's Maldon Chapter. After all, they outnumber their female colleagues by a factor of almost nine to one. However, the 34-strong coastal chapter has been entirely run by its handful of female members over the past few months – much to the delight of everyone concerned, and with some very healthy results.

Maldon's 'take over' by the fairer sex happened more by accident than design, but has led to a resurgence of its membership, an increase in the number of referrals being passed, and more vibrant meetings.

Education Co-ordinator Hayley Taylor explained: "It started when three female members, myself included, joined the chapter round about the same time a year ago. I think it's fair to say the group had lost its previous sparkle at that time. A few members had left, others were

losing interest and you could sense that something was needed to revitalise the chapter."

She added: "We all agreed it would be a good idea to get together away from our weekly meeting, so we ended up at an Indian restaurant and, as the drinks flowed and members began to talk frankly about the chapter, the women threw down the gauntlet and announced to all the men: 'We'll take over the leadership and you see what happens...'"

For reasons no-one can recall, that's precisely what ensued. Life coach Karen Pellow found herself being elected the new Chapter Director, and she chose travel agent Jan Walters as Membership-Co-ordinator and promotions company boss Hayley as the Chapter's new Education Co-ordinator.

"The Secretary/Treasurer post did stay in male hands for a while," said Hayley, "but he resigned earlier this year, so the permanent leadership team became all women.

"I wouldn't claim that our female influence has been entirely responsible for the chapter's regeneration, but I think our male colleagues have found it something of a pleasant novelty having the women take charge of the meetings, and everyone has responded very positively. There has been great enthusiasm.

"Membership has risen, we're passing some good referrals and have attracted more visitors, and there is a definite buzz around the breakfast table these days," she added.

For more information, contact Hayley Taylor on 01621 856504 or 07739 461355.

Gorgeous St. Georges in the pink!

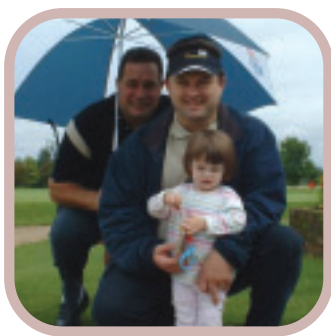
With 20 male-dominated chapter teams taking part in BNI Kent region's renowned Arena Pursuits outdoor social and networking event at Tonbridge during the summer, the sole 'all-girl' entry from Whitstable's St. George's Chapter could be forgiven for thinking they were only there to make up the numbers. But, as the Chapter's IFA Karen Wright was

quick to tell SuccessNet: "We weren't actually last! We beat the boys in building an old car and getting it around the course, and also beat another male team in making a raft and getting all five of us across a river. Sadly we let ourselves down in the shooting - and I was the only person who managed to crash a quad bike in quite spectacular style."

Our photo shows the girls relaxing - wearing pink T-shirts emblazoned with 'Gorgeous St. Georges' logos on their backs - before the going got tough. What it doesn't (quite) reveal is that one of their number was actually male colleague, Electrical/Fire security specialist Colin Crosby-Butler whom they dressed in a skirt and made up as a girl (well, sort of), when one of their team dropped at the last minute. But at least, we now know how the girls managed to win even two events!

Contact Karen on 01227 722922.





Ipswich initiative brings a bonus

Dozens of Ipswich business people swapped the tools of their trade for golf clubs to join a unique networking and charity golf day, organised by the town's Wolsey Chapter.

The event was the brainchild of Chapter member, furniture and office supplier Trevor Read who, with the help of fellow BNI golfing enthusiasts, brought together teams including cleaners, sign makers, furniture suppliers, printers and mechanics, to improve their business contacts and improve their handicaps, while raising funds for The Cystic Fibrosis Trust.

It held special significance for Chapter member Julian Elwood, pictured above with Trevor (holding umbrella) and 20-month old daughter Holly, who suffers from the incurable disease. Trevor said: "It was wonderful that so many people took part and enjoyed raising over £1,000 for a very worthy cause, while teeing-up lucrative new business relationships!"

Falkirk gives sight to the blind

The annual 'Race Night' held by members of Falkirk Chapter has raised £900 for Sight Savers International, a charity dedicated to combating blindness in developing countries.

Organised by the Chapter's social committee, Peter McAteer and Anne Morrison, the event's proceeds are sufficient to restore the sight of around 35 children, blinded by cataracts and disease.

While SuccessNet has focused on BNI's dramatic growth across the UK and Ireland over the past seven years, a quiet business revolution has been gaining pace across mainland Europe, with the first chapters being launched in more than half a dozen countries during recent months. Here we report on how BNI is spreading the Givers Gain message from Germany and The Netherlands to France and Spain. We hope to make it a regular feature.

NETHERLANDS

Some 18 months after its first Dutch chapter was launched in The Hague, BNI's expansion in The Netherlands is now gathering pace, with six chapters opened and five further core groups being developed.

There are currently three active chapters in The Hague, two more in Amsterdam and another in Utrecht and, says Amsterdam Regional

Director Lidia Pieternella-Afolalu, BNI is already gaining a name for itself.

"By the end of the year, we hope to have doubled our current numbers in key business communities such as Amsterdam and Utrecht, giving us a very sound base for more substantial growth next year," she added. "Although it is still early days, we are very optimistic."

SPAIN

Costa Blanca's looking good – now for Barcelona!

The beautiful Costa Blanca, with its regional business and commercial centres of Alicante, Benidorm and Murcia, has been the inspiring backdrop for the launch of Spain's first BNI chapters over the past 12 months.

Following BNI's arrival last December in Javea (between Valencia and Alicante), three more chapters have been launched along the coast in Benidorm, Denia and Torrevieja, providing what National Director Mark Trowbridge describes as "a very good foothold in southern Spain."

While the majority of BNI's first members in

Spain are ex-patriots (like Mark himself who moved from the UK nearly three years ago to open a telecommunications business on the Costa Blanca), a significant number in each chapter are local Spanish businesspeople, including solicitors, web designers and an award-winning car dealership.

Mark added: "Our first chapters are all English-speaking, led by British leadership teams, but this is simply to get BNI more quickly established in Spain. We are now turning our attention to other regions, including Barcelona, where I would expect the number of 'ex-pats' to be smaller, and the percentage of indigenous members to be much larger. By that stage I am confident that BNI will be sufficiently well known to foster the development of wholly Spanish chapters."

Our picture shows members of the 'El Mejor' Chapter (Torrevieja) with Modesto Crespo (of Automoviles Crespo SA - European Ford Dealer of the Year 2001) shaking hands with Iain Miller from Just Cool Air Conditioning, following his purchase of a brand new signwritten van.



FRANCE

Air of anticipation as BNI launches in Paris

France's first BNI chapter, Creteil, has just been launched in the Parisian business suburb of the same name. Some 120 visitors joined the core group of 20 members to celebrate the milestone event at the end of September and BNI's first regional director in France, Marc-William Attie con-

firmed that a significant number of new applications had been received as a result of what he described as "a wonderful and exciting occasion." He added: "Of course it is early days here for BNI, but there is every reason to believe it will become as successful here as it is in the UK."

Two further core groups in Paris expect to launch this autumn, giving BNI a solid foothold in the French capital.

BNI spreads its wings across Europe

GERMANY



GRAND VENUE FOR A GRAND OCCASION: Members and guests at the launch of Berlin's new Adler Chapter enjoying their sumptuous surroundings. Like other BNI chapter launches in the German capital, it attracted around 150 people.

Animal Magic? No, just healthy rivalry

BNI may be little more than a year old in Germany, but already it has all the signs of healthy growth - and good-natured rivalry - among its first Berlin chapters, which all take their names from proud members of the animal kingdom.

Four chapters were launched in Berlin during the first 12 months - the Berlin Baer (Bear) was the first, quickly followed by the Tiger, Lion and Eagle - and, as SuccessNet went to print, October launch dates had been finalised for the new Panther and Jaguar chapters. Significantly, every chapter launch to date has attracted more than 150 visitors, indicating the huge interest that Berliners have in BNI.

Regional Director Tom Jaeger said: "I chose animals as the link for all our chapter titles, because of their proud status in nature. That is exactly the way it has been with our first chapters. When members from our different groups have met each other, they have been proud to say: 'I am a Tiger' or 'I belong to the Eagles'. It has helped not only to bond each chapter, but to make members recognise that as well as being part of a particular chapter, they are also part of the worldwide BNI family. Our early results suggest this

closeness is motivating members to help one another, irrespective of their chapters, which is why we have had such a good first year."

Berlin's BNI-ers clearly believe in catching new members early! At its pre-launch meeting, the Jaguar Chapter found itself welcoming the youngest visitor ever to attend a BNI breakfast in Germany. Two year old Nicos Wolf wanted to know why his dad was always out for breakfast on a Friday morning, and pleaded with his lawyer father to take him along to his BNI meeting.

Tom added: "I'm told he showed special interest in the 60 second presentations, especially his father's contribution, and although he didn't pass a referral that day, he did promise to come back as a substitute for dad - in a few years time."

Meanwhile, last month saw the launch of Frankfurt's first chapter, Rembrandt, preceded by a second chapter, Step, in the southern German city of Stuttgart which, after just seven weeks had grown to 30 members, overtaking its older sibling. Core groups are also under construction in Bonn, Darmstadt, Ludwigsburg, Mannheim and Munich.

AUSTRIA & SWITZERLAND

Following the launch of its first chapter, Liechtenstein Werdenberg (on the Swiss-Liechtenstein borders) nearly a year ago, BNI now has two more core groups being finalised in Lucerne and Bern, while in Austria, the first BNI chapter - in Vienna - is under construction.

Gerald gets his 'Baer' necessities

When Gerald Schramm, owner and Managing Director of Graffiti Frei Incorporated, attended his first BNI breakfast back in August 2003, he immediately knew that he was onto something that could change his life.

Gerald had come to Berlin seeking to improve the fortunes of what has proved to be a hugely successful business concept - the removal of graffiti from any type of house wall with a guaranteed 24 hour call-out response, coupled with a low maintenance fee.

He said: "In my first three years in Berlin I did nothing but work, and was only able to visit my family every two weeks in beautiful Oberfranken (part of Bavaria). But then I heard about BNI and since joining its first German chapter - the Berlin Baer - both my business and private lives have changed very much, becoming so positive. I still work long hours but, thanks to BNI referrals, I now have a private life and my own accommodation in Berlin so I can see my family more often.

"In my first year as a BNI member, I was given business referrals worth 148 times the cost of my enrolment and membership fee which is why, whenever my BNI director calls me, I tell him: "I'm busy now at 148! I'm sure he used to think I was always working at the same house."

Having turned over a healthy €100,000 since joining BNI, Gerald expects his colleagues' referrals to account for more than 50% of his gross revenue over the next year, while his reputation as the Chapter's stand-up comedian has also brought him many real friends as well as new customers.



CAN WE GO YET, DAD? Two year old Nicos Wolf was more interested in the food than the proceedings when he persuaded Dad to take him to a meeting of Berlin's Jaguar Chapter.

Eddie the Eagle drops in to support Games

Remember Eddie (the Eagle) Edwards – Britain's beloved first and only Olympics ski jumper? Probably not, unless you're over 30, because Eddie's brief flirtation with



HAVE NO FEAR, EDDIE'S HERE: The UK's first and only Olympic ski jumper Eddie 'The Eagle' Edwards (wearing reversed baseball cap) with members of Inverurie's Echo Chapter.

sporting fame took place in 1988 when he finished 56th out of a field of 57, but won the hearts of the British nation.

These days Eddie spends much of his time on the lecture circuit, but he found time to support Aberdeen's recently staged Highland Games - a none-to-serious fundraising day of sport, with events ranging from an obstacle race to tossing a (lightweight) caber - organised by Activity Mix, a member of Aberdeen's Bravo Chapter.

Businessmen and women from across the city took part, battling to win the fifth event in Aberdeen Corporate Decathlon, in the process raising thousands of pounds for SPARKS (SPort Aiding medical Research for KidS) through sponsorship and donations.

Our photo shows Eddie (fifth from left wearing a reversed baseball cap) with members of Inverurie's Echo Chapter, for whom he naturally had some none-too-expert coaching advice. Unfortunately, Echo's eight-strong team, led by Chapter Director Ian Crighton, fared only slightly better than their 'coach' – finishing 12th out of the 18 competing teams - but still had a thoroughly enjoyable time!

BNI smoothes full-time path for Sam

For 15 years, certified hypnotherapist Sam Weller had run his practice on a part-time basis, lacking both the client base and the confidence to put all his eggs into one basket.

Award for Alpha-man

Aberdeen technology specialist Graeme Duncan has won a top business award - barely a year after launching his new venture.

His cabling and network services firm, Xtreme Business Solutions was named Young Business of the Year in this year's Grampian Business Enterprise Awards. A member of Aberdeen's Alpha Chapter, Graeme said: "As well as giving me moral support, my BNI colleagues have already referred at least £70,000 worth of business to us, which undoubtedly helped give us an edge to clinch this award."

Our photo shows Graeme (centre) holding the Young Business Award Trophy, with Cameron Murray (Contracts Manager) and Martin McCarthy (Glasgow Manager).

Contact Graeme on 01224 744666.



While an accredited member of the National Council for Hypnotherapy and an expert in his specialties, Sam needed a greater incentive – and some practical support - if he was to achieve his ambition of creating a thriving, widely respected consultancy.

Enter BNI whose Banbury Chapter Sam joined only six months ago, but already acknowledges that it has changed his life. "Networking through BNI has been a godsend to me. In my first six months I have been given more than 50 solid new client referrals. This is well above my expectations and I can only see it getting better," he said. "Until I discovered BNI, I'd worked on a part-time basis, but BNI has given me the confidence to go full time."

And how! Some 70% of all Sam's business now comes through BNI colleagues and he is so pleased with his membership that he is an enthusiastic substitute and visitor to other Oxfordshire chapters.

"It's not just about referrals either," he said. "Equally important has been the number of new contacts I have developed – people that are out there looking for business for me. The beauty of BNI is that it provides a disciplined, structured framework for expanding my business, and one that is very cost effective.

"Networking used to be a case of going to the pub, the club or restaurant - all very time consuming and likely to leave you worse for wear in the afternoon! This old style of networking is surely dead."

Contact Sam on 01608 645445.

Cross-country link leads to USA Job

A Bristol-based company boss has demonstrated the power of BNI networking by helping to win major international business for a member of a central London chapter whom he met by chance three years ago.

Mark Sinclair, founder and joint partner of fast-growing marketing and PR consultancy, Hubbub (UK) Ltd was introduced to Pauline Amphlett of Brand Guardians when he visited her Tower Hill Chapter in London back in 2001. Then a member of neighbouring Hampstead and Highgate Chapter, he relocated his business to Bristol but, in true BNI style, still remains in close touch with his London contacts, including Pauline.

A few weeks ago, Mark's long distance networking turned up trumps for Pauline's company. He said: "During the summer, I was able to get Brand Guardians onto the pitch list for a major piece of re-branding work involving one of our key clients, based in the USA. Pauline came up with a great solution and her consultancy won the business, against stiff competition from the USA."

He added: "I am not allowed to divulge the contract value but it amounts to an impressive consulting fee and I was obviously delighted that my cross-country referral produced such a sizeable piece of international business for Pauline. It just shows the benefits of staying in touch."

Contact Mark on 0870 041 0459.

Winchester celebrates third with its 7,000th!

Members of Winchester Chapter celebrated its third anniversary in style during the summer, enjoying Bucks Fizz and birthday cake along with their usual cooked breakfast – before making the event even more special by passing the group's 7000th referral!

Fittingly the milestone referral was passed to founder member Ian MacDonald of The Wine Cru by Anita Parratt from the Brook House Gallery in nearby Bishops Waltham.

Chapter Director Jonathan Grant said: "For our Chapter to have passed 7,000 pieces of business between members is a tremendous achievement and is purely due to the support they give to each other. We are very excited about the Chapter's future and have some very specific new goals for its continued growth, one of which is to expand our membership to 40 during the next few months."

Meanwhile, all seven of Winchester's founder members - Steve Foot, Jane Harris-

Bland, Jenny Bird, Kit Finney, Lynne Wardale, Anthony Arkwright and Ian MacDonald – were on hand to blow out the three candles and toast the Chapter's continuing success. They are pictured (right) with Jonathan and fellow member Emma Pirie.

Jonathan added: "It is brilliant that we have such a strong core of founder members whose support and guidance are keys to our overall success. Our third anniversary may be special, but every week is a celebration in our group when we are able to refer so much business between members."

Anyone interested in helping swell Winchester's ranks to 40 should **contact Membership Co-Ordinator Lynne Wardale on 01962 878000.**



Kevin gets a kick-start in Suffolk

Starting your own business after years of working for other companies can be a worrying time - and fraught with unexpected setbacks – as Cambridge teacher Kevin Higgins found out when he launched his own tutorial centre for children earlier this year.

Having bought the Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk franchise from the well-known education group, Kip McGrath, Kevin's immediate concerns were how he could find reliable local business services to help him set up the centre, and how he could promote his new tutorial services – teaching maths and English to youngsters who have fallen behind at school

or suffer learning difficulties - in an unfamiliar town where he did not know anyone.

He said: "I opened my centre in April, but did not learn about BNI until a few weeks later. As soon as I went to a meeting, I immediately felt this was something that could help my business, so I joined the Magna Carta Chapter in June, and it has been a great success for me, kick-starting the business to the extent that I broke even a month later."

Kevin added: "I live 30 miles away in Cambridge, so it was important to find local businesses who could support the centre. Through BNI I have now found a solicitor, a carpet cleaner, an IT company to look after the computer system, and even a good mechanic to ensure my car gets me to work on time.

"I've only been in BNI for a few months but already I'm getting 10% of my new business directly from chapter referrals. My one regret is that I wish I'd known about BNI before I launched my business because, apart from the referrals, membership has introduced me to a great support group. Running my own business for the first time, it is reassuring to know that if I hit an unexpected problem, I can seek help and advice from my chapter colleagues. Had I discovered BNI before going out on my own, I'm sure things would have been a lot easier and a whole lot less worrying."

Contact Kevin on 01284 752272.

Bubbling success at Collingtree

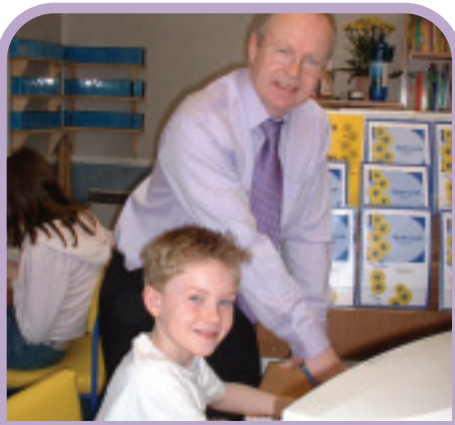
It's amazing what people will do for a few bottles of bubbly – or so it seems in Northampton's Collingtree Chapter which has hit capacity membership after a hugely successful champagne membership drive.

In less than two months, the chapter has grown from 28 to 40 members and become such a hive of activity in the local business community that several former members have even asked if they can rejoin its ranks!

"We decided to split our existing membership into three groups, offering a case of champagne to the team who turned the most visitors into new members," said Chapter Director Chris Horsman. "Everyone knuckled down to bringing some very good guests to our meetings and it worked wonders because, in just two months our membership rose by 30 per cent."



BUBBLING OVER: Collingtree's winning membership drive team



GETTING DOWN TO THE LEARNING BUSINESS: Kevin Higgins with one of his students at the new Bury St Edmunds centre.

The Hidden Benefits of BNI Membership

Most members have only one thing in mind when they join BNI: "What's in it for me in terms of referrals." And that's all right, because let's face it, this is the reason why the vast majority of people join BNI.

But, ask members who have been in their chapter a year or more what they get out of BNI, and although the majority will start off by mentioning the business they are receiving, many of them will also go on to list numerous other benefits that they enjoy from their membership.

Chapter meetings are very focused, in that we get together with each other primarily to pass referrals. We follow a structured agenda each week, and don't deviate from it. We don't have secondary agendas at these meetings, and the results we achieve, in terms of referrals passed and business conducted, are the envy of every other networking organisation in the world.

However, to achieve these results we have to follow a programme that requires us, as members, to do a lot of different things. This programme is the system that we follow, to produce the end result - more business being conducted. Being successful in BNI is not about doing one or two key things correctly. It's about doing a lot of small things correctly that will lead to the desired results and, it is while doing all of these different things that you are going to start to see the many other benefits of membership.

Cast your mind back to the first time you had to stand in front of your chapter members and give a presentation. If, like most new BNI members, you'd never had to deliver

By Gillian Lawson, National Director



a presentation to 30 or more people, you were almost certainly nervous, your knees were probably knocking a little, and the fear in your voice could be heard by everyone in the room.

We were all like that when we first started doing presentations. But how do you feel today when you stand up a year or more later to do that presentation? How much more confident are you? How much more professional do you appear?

I remember being at one meeting when a member stood up and announced that it was the first anniversary of his membership and, for the first time he wanted to tell his BNI colleagues why he had really joined the chapter. I had seen this member deliver presentations before, and it was almost painful to watch. He was shy, nervous and wouldn't even look any of the members in the face. His 60 second presentations rarely went over 10 seconds, and the relief in his face when he sat down was palpable.

On this particular day, he stood up confident and smiling, and told the group that one year ago, his daughter had announced her engagement, and he knew that he was going to have to give a speech at her wedding. The thought of that had absolutely terrified him. So he had decided to join a networking group that would give him the opportunity to speak every week and help him gain confidence in the one activity he dreaded so much.

Last week, he said, was his daughter's wedding, and he had been able to give a 10-minute speech in front of over 200 people. That was the only reason he had joined BNI, and he thanked the members from the bottom of his heart for helping him achieve his goal. He received a standing ovation from the members. (Incidentally, he was a car mechanic, and a very good one, and had received a lot of referrals from his chapter).

The hidden benefits, those extras that we get from our membership can be many. Strong friendships abound in BNI chapters; we have even seen a few BNI friendships turn into marriages! These friendships can last long after one's BNI membership ends. We build relationships and find things in common with other members that enable us to sustain strong relationships.

Many members are small, independent business people. For them, a huge hidden benefit of BNI is the opportunity to network with, and get advice from, other like-minded independent business people. This is especially true for people who work in small offices, or in home-based businesses, often on their own, who will tell you how important this aspect of membership is to them.

Similarly, when you need the services of a professional or tradesperson - either in your business or personal capacity - BNI membership gives you such an advantage. To be able to deal with a person in confidence, rather than taking a chance with a random stranger whose name you picked from the Yellow Pages, is a major benefit for most members.

So when your membership is coming up for renewal, and you are looking at what you have been getting out of BNI, or somebody asks you whether or not it is worth joining their local chapter, think about all the hidden benefits that accrue to the members, and not just the referrals we receive. BNI truly is awesome value for the small annual membership that we pay.

Julie leads black badge seven

Most members aspire to gaining their black badges after a year or two in BNI. But printer Julie Mole from Hemel Hempstead doesn't believe in wasting time. As a founder member of the new Gade Valley Chapter, Julie earned herself the badge - and admission to BNI's prestigious Gold Club - by recruiting six new members within just five weeks of the Chapter's launch.

Other proud recipients of black badges in the past few weeks are accountant John

Hewson, a member of Scunthorpe Chapter, electrician Keith Evans (Conwy-Denbighshire Chapter), energy consultant Kevin Horlock (Flagship Chapter, Gatwick), quality control consultant Peter Mendez (Bevan Chapter, Bridgend), promotional products specialist John Wray (Quinnell Chapter, Cardiff), and data services consultant Alan Higham (Premier Chapter, Liverpool).

Our congratulations to each of them.

Introducing...The BNI Chapter plc

In the continued effort to reach and maintain an optimum 40-strong membership for their chapter, some leadership teams put quantity before quality. The results, as Scotland West Executive Director Hugh Lee (pictured right) reveals, often do untold damage to a chapter. Drawing direct analogies with recruitment in the harsh commercial business world, he says that if every chapter was a PLC, the approach might be very different....

Imagine you are a company director about to interview a prospective new sales person. As well as wanting to ensure that he or she has the right credentials for the job, can provide excellent references and displays a positive attitude, you will also want to assess if that person is likely to make a positive contribution to your business.

Every company has two types of employee – those who incur costs, and those who generate income – but both must contribute to the success of the company in some way. The receptionist or telephonist can make or break a company's reputation by how they deal with customers, while a good sales person can keep a client happy by ensuring that their needs are fully satisfied.

BNI chapters should be run on the same principles but sometimes, they take on new members purely on the basis of what a visitor writes on the membership application form, or because they are desperate to build their numbers at any cost. Be warned: the wrong type of member can have a negative impact on the whole chapter.

Here are some of the classic signs to look out for in members who should never have been accepted onto the BNI chapter 'payroll':

They tend to roll in at 7.00am, or just after, never prepare presentations and try to sell to their BNI colleagues. They always have an excuse to cancel one-on-ones, never take any officer position in their Chapter and never appear at workshops or social events. They pass 'leads' and/or repeat referrals, don't bother to identify reliable substitutes, and they never bring visitors.

They are the ones who have often had a 'hard night' and couldn't manage to get up for their chapter meeting the next morning; file their Member's Manual on the shelf as soon as their orientation is over, and become a 'BMW' (Bitcher, Moaner, Whiner) – they don't like the early start, the venue, the rules, the other members, or the toast. They don't bother to read any of the BNI learning materials, let alone set any goals.

Their motto seems to be 'Taker's Take'

rather than 'Givers Gain'. After a few months, they are usually 'found out' by other members, and they eventually leave thinking: 'BNI doesn't work.' The chapter then has to go through the process of identifying replacements, and so the cycle continues. All of this can be avoided by following the BNI system. Visitor hosts, membership committees and leadership teams are trained to interview prospective members and look beyond what they write on their application form.

During the visitor information session after every breakfast meeting, the three main aspects of commitment required of all members – Attendance, Timekeeping, and Participation (giving referrals and inviting visitors) should be clearly explained. It should also be made clear that BNI is not a 'get rich quick' scheme, and that the reason we are so successful is because of our unique 'Givers Gain' philosophy.

From the moment that visitors (prospective members) arrive until they leave, it is essential to determine their attitude, and here we should not under-estimate the value of using our instincts.

We are all aware that no chapter should have fewer than 25 members, but the need for growth should never take precedence over the need for good quality members. Far from



being mutually exclusive, these needs are complementary. Good members will bring good quality visitors, enabling the chapter to grow in a qualitative way.

Far better that chapters, having recognised the need for quality, 'drop the dead donkeys' and refuse to take on new members who lack the right attitude and commitment to contribute to the group's success. Sometimes this may mean dropping below 25 members for a while but, in the longer term this will be to everyone's benefit. Remember, staff or member turnover is expensive and time-consuming. New people need to be trained, and it takes time to build relationships that will form the sound foundation required for generating quality referrals.

Like highly-salaried sales positions, membership of BNI chapters is a privilege that should not be granted lightly. At this time of year, members have a real opportunity to make more money by taking a team leader role and helping to ensure that their chapter prospers. Consider your chapter as you would regard your own PLC, and I'm fairly certain the choices you make will be the right ones....

And now - Speed GAINing!

First there was speed dating. Now, welcome to Speed GAINing, BNI's own business version of the getting-to-know-you game. Following similar rules to those of speed dating clubs, the idea of Speed GAINing is to familiarise every member of your chapter with each other's business Goals, Accomplishments, Interests, Networks and Skills (GAINS) in the shortest possible time, with the aim of accelerating referrals.

A natural development of BNI's established GAINS protocol, Speed GAINing is the brainwave of Chris Sanger, Education Co-ordinator in Thetford's Forest Chapter, who

recently led the first-ever session for his members in a Norfolk pub.

"We paired people together, gave them three minutes to get key messages about their business across to the other, and then repeated the process to give each member one-to-ones with everyone else, helping everyone get to know each other's businesses more quickly, making them more confident about giving referrals." he said. "With a little refinement, I think this idea would be of great use to other BNI chapters."

Contact Chris on 01362 691864.

Feel the pulse, and take your chapter's temperature



Says Mike Punter, Director of Compton Chapter, Bristol

Most of us have good days at work, interspersed by the occasional one that's less than perfect. But, whatever your day, going to work feeling positive and energised is undoubtedly the best way to start each day.

In the same way, a BNI chapter needs to demonstrate positive energy if it is to provide an invigorating experience for its members. That's why I believe one of the key responsibilities of the chapter director is to keep a finger on the pulse of the group's collective energy level during the meeting, and intervene if the 'temperature' needs to be raised.

Let me give you a few examples. We feel

it is vitally important to get our meetings off to a strong start so I begin with an enthusiastic 'Good Morning' greeting and insist on an equally energetic response. We really don't want the meeting to start on a 'down'. Similarly, we like to make sure that our visitors and substitutes are welcomed personally, so we applaud them warmly for getting up early to come and enrich our meeting. It makes them feel special, and we are instantly warmed up and ready to go.

There are other parts of the agenda where the chapter needs to be highly charged. Take the 60-second presentations. By ensuring that each member receives a proper introduction, an attentive hearing and the added incentive of a small prize for the week's best presentation, we make this item something that members look forward to. And to ensure everyone pays attention to each one-minute slot, we invite the recipient of the door prize to nominate and award a prize for the most memorable presentation.

Giving and receiving referrals is at the heart of the meeting. We see it as a celebration of success and a reward for all the investment that members have put in over the weeks. We tackle the process with pace, energy and enthusiasm. Members get out of

their seats, walk over to their relevant colleague(s), greet them warmly and present their referrals with pride. After all, whether we are giving a referral or a testimonial (which we call a song of praise), we should want to sing it out loud, not whisper it! It keeps energy levels up and promotes understanding of each other's business.

Finally, even when we reach the close of our meeting, it is important to maintain energy levels. We want members to leave feeling they have enjoyed a great event and are looking forward to coming back the following week. So we finish with a positive call to action, encouraging members to applaud themselves as a tangible indication that they have had a good, successful session.

So energy is crucial to the success of meetings because it sustains everything we do. And, while it can be energy-sapping to constantly check the chapter's pulse, I like to think members feel it is well worth the effort.

Mike Punter is a Director of Bristol information technology company, Innovecom, which provides clients with an outsourced IT department service to maintain computer, network and telephone systems.

Contact Mike on 01934 519541

Fun and humour are important aids to good business

You may not find it mentioned in your average reference handbook, but members of Concord Chapter near Rickmansworth (North West London) provide weekly proof that we need an ample serving of fun and humour, if we are to get the most out of our breakfast networking.

We believe that Concord is one of the most successful chapters in our region and while this is largely due to our having an ideal mix of motivated, committed members, it would not be quite the same if it weren't also for the fact that our meeting is one of the most enjoyable events in the week for everyone.

As a chapter director, I am in no doubt that a key to BNI's success is adhering to the weekly agenda but, while this provides a firm basis for doing business, it is also important for members to have fun at meetings. We are lucky to have some strong and witty characters in our group but, irrespective of personalities, isn't it so much more pleasant for your chapter to have a reputation for being a source of enjoy-



Says Diane Mark, Director of Concord Chapter, North West London

ment as well as business dynamism?

Over the last six months we have passed 260 referrals a month and there is good-humoured rivalry between members as to who can give the most referrals. When individuals are putting in so much hard work to help their colleagues, it needs to be fun as well as being profitable, which is why I am happy to allow a little round-the-table banter and high spirits. Teamwork among members is all-important, but it shouldn't always be serious. I feel we

have an ideal balance between work and play.

Our other great strength comes from our relative longevity in BNI. As the second oldest UK chapter, we have a number of founder members whose experience is invaluable in providing both stability and guidance for our newer colleagues. This combination of fun and humour, professionalism and a genuine interest in each other's business keeps everyone on their toes and ensures that each individual member stays focused on our real purpose.

It means everyone makes the effort not only to find good referrals, but also to attend training workshops, develop their networking skills, participate in plenty of one-to-ones and contribute to the energy that every chapter needs. Having the right members is of course the starting point; maintaining the right spirit for Givers Gain to flourish, is the longer aim.

Diane Mark is a human resources specialist, who runs The People Business in Hammersmith, London. Contact her on 020 8866 3304.

Are you a 'Top 10 Networker'?

By Steve Lawson,
BNI UK Training Director

So you think you are a top networker? This first 'Top Ten Tips' Column reveals, in ascending order of importance, the 10 most important characteristics that define the best networkers. It is based on the findings of a worldwide survey carried out by BNI's Founder Dr Ivan Misner. See how many you share – and then decide how good your networking skills really are....

- 1. You actively 'work' your network:** If you don't have regular contact with those in your 'network', then you don't have a network – just a list of people you once knew.
- 2. You are sincere:** When the best networkers say they will do something, they do it.
- 3. You enjoy helping other people:** Good networkers make it a way of life, wanting to help others become successful.
- 4. You appreciate people who give referrals:** No-one will want to give you more referrals if you don't thank them.
- 5. You network anywhere, anytime:** Good networkers always look for opportunities to network. Don't just think about it during your BNI meeting!
- 6. You have good listening skills:** Ask questions, and listen carefully to the answers. Good networkers listen twice as much as they talk.
- 7. You are totally trustworthy:** The best networkers are reliable and trustworthy. When you refer to them, they will protect your reputation.
- 8. You are enthusiastic and motivated:** Good networkers are motivated within, and don't need to be encouraged to network.
- 9. You have a positive attitude:** Nobody wants to mix with a negative person. Be positive, and successful people will want to know you.
- 10. You follow up on referrals:** Nothing will stop people referring to you more than your failure to follow up the referrals you are given – and those you give!

This is the first of a series of Top Ten Tips which will be published in future issues of SuccessNet.

Craig saves job of overstressed salesman

Elmbridge Chapter's Craig Goldblatt already had a reputation as one of Britain's top sales training gurus when he joined BNI nearly three years ago. But, thanks to an unusual 'referral' from a chapter colleague, he is now also one of the best-known trainers in Britain, after featuring in a top TV documentary.

BBC1's 'The Stress Test' showed how Craig used his expertise to transform Chingford car superstore salesman Tony Bascombe from a stressed-out, under-threat operator into a relaxed sales professional – securing his job in the process! But, to satisfy the programme's

producers that he was the right man for such a high-profile task - Craig first needed some excellent testimonials from his BNI colleagues.

"I was told the BBC was interested in using me, but the producers wanted to check out my credentials with independent third parties. Because my chapter colleagues know me so well, I gave the BBC some of their names and contact details and waited to see what happened. I later heard that they had spoken to our own car salesman, Chris Methold who, I'm told gave them a great referral on my behalf," said Craig.

"The power of BNI networking is fantastic.

Some 80% of our clients are large companies who you might think we couldn't reach through BNI, but in fact a number of our major clients have come through BNI referrals, including our largest client to date. But I've also had great fun and look forward to the camaraderie of meetings."

**Contact Craig on
01932 895777**



MAKING THE GOING EASIER: Training guru Craig Goldblatt (left) with under-pressure car salesman Tony Bascombe, whose job Craig helped to save by teaching him a new sales approach.

....and a Mad Hatter rescues a rival!

When you've been an ardent supporter of your home town football club all your life, the last thing you are supposed to do is go to the rescue of your closest rival – but that's what Stockport County fan Adrian Stores has done, helping to save Oldham Athletic from extinction!

His 'dilemma' resulted from a most unusual referral - inviting Adrian, a leading sports and leisure industry consultant, to meet economic advisers involved with the North-West's urban regeneration. One of their projects was rescuing Oldham's 108 year old football club from financial meltdown.

"I've been a Hatters (Stockport County) fan all my life, so it came as a shock to find I was being asked to help save The Latics (Oldham Athletic)," he said.

After spending weeks working for the Club without any promise of business or reimbursement, Adrian's firm, Acrobat Consulting & Marketing Ltd, was given a contract to establish

Trust Oldham and, in little more than 12 months, the Trust has raised £300,000 for The Latics, in return for which it has acquired a 3% share in the Club for supporters.

Adrian added: "We've won important new contracts through BNI, like our work for Premier club Blackburn Rovers, but this was definitely the most unusual and most challenging!"

Contact Adrian on 0161 286 6564.



A MATTER OF TRUST: Adrian Stores (left) signs up Manchester United soccer star Paul Scholes to help raise funds for Oldham Athletic FC - whose future he has secured.

Secret life of A Mail Box man

While many BNI members have hidden talents, few can match Elmbridge Chapter's Peter Petersons who, when the sun goes down, transforms himself from a quietly successful Surrey businessman to international rock star!

Peter is bass guitarist with UK-based Latvian Band 'Arvids un Mursiteji' (the name translates as Harvey and The Wallbangers) who were formed in 1979 and quickly became one of the most popular Latvian bands, playing reggae, punk, rock & roll, funk and classic rock.

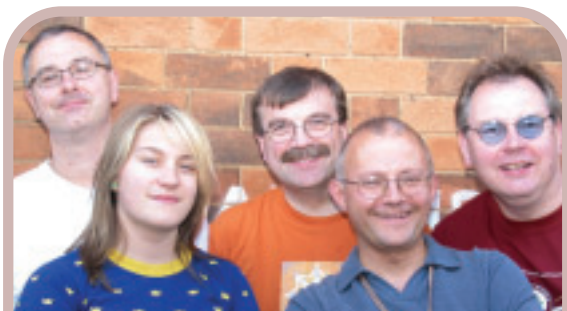
After breaking up in 1982, the group re-

formed three years ago and is now enjoying a major renaissance with gigs at top London venues and an imminent tour of Latvia.

It's all still a little surprising for Peter who owns the Weybridge franchise of Mail Boxes Etc (MBE), a one stop shop for a vast range of business support services. "I really enjoy playing with the band," he told SuccessNet. "It's a great contrast and excellent way to unwind after working all day in a conventional business environment. Our music is English style rock, and we write all our own material."

While music provides the ideal escape from business, BNI has proved his perfect business partner. He said: "I joined two years ago and I've found BNI is a fantastic way to get a new business off the ground. My membership has been profitable and I have gained a lot of new business through it – so much so that in one month, I received more referrals than any other member of my chapter."

Contact Peter on 01932 842248.



LATVIAN CONNECTION: Arvids un Mursiteji - from left to right (back) David Petersons; Riamonds Dale; Peter Petersons; (front) Linite East and Aivars Sinka.

That'll do nicely!

New members accept that it takes time before referrals start to flow, but for Suffolk engineer Shaun Fitzpatrick, joining BNI has seen him strike an instant seam of business gold.

Shaun's refrigeration and air conditioning servicing business was only two years old when he decided to join BNI 12 months ago, since when he has landed new contracts worth more than £600,000 through his colleagues in Bury St. Edmunds' Magna Carta Chapter. "We have gained several long-term contracts through BNI, the biggest of which is a three-year contract to test 235,000 appliances. It's worth £530,000 a year – and I only wanted enough to pay the bills," he said.

After barely a year in BNI, Shaun is already a great example of Givers Gain. "While working at a US air base, I was asked if I knew anyone who cleans ovens. I promptly recommended a fellow BNI member. As a result of this, I was subsequently asked about my own business and to my great surprise, it led to my securing contracts worth £80,000."

Contact Shaun on 01842 760448.

Now you see me – now you don't!

One of cricket's enduring spectator frustrations could soon be over - thanks to the creativity of one Kent BNI member, and the farsightedness of a chapter colleague!

By an unlikely quirk of fate, Ashford-based Medash Signs Ltd have produced the answer to the problem of spectators' views of the pitch being blocked whenever the sightscreens have to be moved.

The solution? A see-through sightscreen whose one side appears solid white to the players, while the other provides a relatively clear view for spectators seated behind it.

The innovation has just completed its first trial season at Middlesex Cricket Club's Lord's ground where it was greeted with unanimous



THE WONDERS OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY: One of Medash's specialists demonstrating the new "see through" screen at Lord's. Pictured left, what the players see. On the right, a spectator's eye view.

enthusiasm, and yet it almost didn't happen. Medash's Managing Director John Hobbs explained: "I'd taken the new material along to a meeting of Tenterden Chapter, to use in my sixty second spot. Hugh Blenkin, the chapter's security advisor, came to me afterwards and said it could be the answer to cricket's

sightscreen problems. The next week he passed me a referral to meet the Head of Cricket at Lord's, and things took off from there."

Lord's is delighted with the results. MCC Chief Executive Roger Knight, said: "The old sightscreen caused real problems for spectators, but the new one meets everyone's interests. I think we've found the right answer."

Medash is also a founder member of Kent's Ashford Chapter and John added: "BNI has been great for us, providing many quality referrals, but in 30 years of business I've never had so much publicity from a single job. I am truly grateful to Hugh for seeing the potential of our product."

Contact John on 01233 625383.

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

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

You & SuccessNet

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

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