

Buoyant mood for Oxford conference

When the wraps come off BNI's third annual European Members' Conference in a few days time, delegates will find a bigger, stronger and self-assured organisation, totally focused on one objective: helping members grow their businesses to increase their profits.

In just 12 months, BNI's presence in the

UK and Ireland has almost doubled, from just under 100 chapters with 2,000-plus members last April, to nearly 190 groups today, whose combined membership is well over 4,000.

Even more significant is the volume of additional business won last year by those members through their weekly breakfast meetings – up from £10 million in 1998 to over £30 million in 1999, and expected to top £50 million by the end of this year!

Against that backdrop, the theme of this year's conference, "Marketing for the Millennium: How to get more benefit by being in a top chapter" is designed to inspire all BNI chapters to emulate the dramatic progress of the best-performing chapters. Sponsored by Sapphire Computing and Consulting Ltd, the Conference takes place on Saturday, 15th April at the Oxford Belfry Hotel, near Thame, just off the M40. Delegates travelling from the south should leave at Junction 7, while those from the north need to leave the M40 at Junction 8A.

National Director Martin Lawson said: "People join BNI for one reason: to become more profitable, and the way they maximise their business potential is to be an active member of a thriving chapter.

"Those who belong to a busy, enthusiastic group – of which we have many – will get far more from their membership than others whose chapter is just ticking over.

"All the evidence shows that the number of new business referrals passed around the breakfast table increases dramatically – and far out of proportion – when a particular chapter nears its capacity 40-strong

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Lois waves the flag for BNI

Kenilworth Chapter member Lois Sparling (above) has plenty to smile about as she flags up her latest success – seeing thousands of would-be tourists flocking to her new web site. And she claims: "It's all thanks to BNI."

Lois reckons that BNI is her main marketing tool and provides the bread and butter of her business, Emphasis Graphic and Internet Design.

Her new venture is a web site –

www.learnington-spa.com – set up with local traders and tourist bosses to cash in on the town's re-branding as "The Fashionable Experience".

The site is attracting 1,000 'hits' a day from visitors as far afield as Japan, Scandinavia and Australia who prefer to plan their trips in advance. Lois says joining BNI is the best thing she ever did and recommends it as the "greatest marketing tool on the market". ■

INSIDE

Harry's a 'super sub'	2
Florist finds a rosy future	3
It's a small world with BNI	4
Early birdie gets referrals	6
Glasgow on the net	7
The art of public speaking	8
Fact-finding has a big pay-off	9
Memory Hooks 'bubbling' over ..	10
Talking business on the Net	11
The basis of networking	12



'HARRY'S GIRL': Harry's prize mare.

Stud farmer Harry is a 'super sub'

Stud farmer Harry Robertson has become something of a talking point in BNI's Oxfordshire chapters, for his unexpected role as a 'super sub' – standing in at meetings for unavoidably absent members.

Under BNI's attendance rules, anyone who misses more than three meetings can forfeit their position in the chapter, but Harry has come to the rescue of several members whose business commitments might have prejudiced their position at the breakfast table – popping up as super sub in the **Oxford (Summertown)**, **Thame** and other neighbouring chapters.

He told *SuccessNet*: "It started after my partner, Maggie Sorensen (retiring Chapter Director at Summertown) invited me to attend a meeting at Thame. In chatting to members, I discovered some had difficulty in finding the occasional willing substitute.

"I offered to help them if their own business interests genuinely prevented their attendance. After all, it enabled me to meet up with local businesspeople. But I would never cover for anyone who simply wanted a morning off," Harry added.

While he has not yet made up his mind about joining BNI in his own right, Harry has found BNI very helpful in setting up his stud farm business.

"I needed an insurance broker, a printer, a creative designer, a PR consultant and an embroiderer, and through Maggie I was able to obtain all these services through local chapters, saving me a lot of time and worry," he added.

His obvious reservation about joining BNI is that his services are unlikely to be in every day demand amongst chapter members. "That's why for the time being I'm happy to continue helping in the best way I can – as a super sub!" ■

If you don't ask, you don't get!

There's nothing wrong with being specific when it comes to telling chapter colleagues what sort of referrals you want. Colin Larter, new Chapter Director at **Ashford, Kent**, did just this and was rewarded with a potentially lucrative piece of business.

Colin, who runs a specialist recruitment consultancy, ASP, had encountered problems in trying to 'break into' a major ICI subsidiary whom he knew was experiencing difficulties in recruiting accountancy staff. "The company had an agreement with a national agency and weren't keen to talk to me," he said. "So I thought, if you don't ask, you don't get. I took a deep breath and asked chapter colleagues for a specific referral into this company. To my surprise, a fellow member announced that he acted as their accountant, and another member's wife turned out to be their training manager.

"Eureka! I had an appointment arranged two days later and, as a result, I now have the opportunity to recruit for the company," Colin added. ■

Sponsorship is a real gem for Sapphire!

This year's conference is being sponsored by Kenilworth Chapter member Sapphire Computing and Consulting Ltd, whose founder Mike Farmer sees it as a 'jewel' of an opportunity to promote his company's enterprising software solutions.

Mike and his son Jason, another Sapphire director, have a stand at the conference and will use their ten-minute slot in the agenda to highlight their computer solutions services – one of which is a topical software programme called 'Big Number Inquisitor', which will detect 'old' BT telephone numbers in any PC-based database with ODBC capability – such as Sage and Pegasus – and automatically update them with the new dialling codes and numbers taking effect this month.

Sapphire, which has a strong reputation for creative software solutions and IT consultancy services, is one of the first businesses to sponsor a major BNI event.

Mike, a member (and founding chapter director) of the **Kenilworth** Chapter said: "We're delighted to be sponsoring this year's conference, having found last year's event extremely useful."

Sapphire can be contacted on 01926 779700. ■

One conference is not enough for the Irish!

Not to be outshone by their UK colleagues, BNI's Irish directors have again organised their own 'back to back' annual members' conference – taking place in Dublin on Sunday, 16th April, just hours after the European conference ends in Oxfordshire!

With around 100 delegates expected to attend the all-day session in Dublin's Green Isle Hotel, arranging travel itineraries proved one of the biggest tasks for joint organisers Mort Murphy and Patrick Guiden, both of whom will be spending the previous days in Oxfordshire at the European conference.

"We'll be dashing to Heathrow towards the end of the European event, and going straight to the Dublin venue to carry out a last minute check on our arrangements. Neither the Irish delegates who attend the Oxford conference, nor the Irish conference organisers will expect to get much sleep before we kick off our session on the Sunday," said Patrick. "But no-one will be complaining!" ■

Buoyant mood for conference

From Page 1

membership under dynamic leadership.

"So our main aim at this month's conference is to show all delegates how they can bring the business performance of their own groups up to that of our very best chapters."

As *SuccessNet* went to print, only a limited number of conference tickets remained available. Anyone still hoping to attend should call the conference organisers, Gavin Bain or Beverley Blandford on 01753 860301 without delay, for an update on availability. ■

Gavin said: "Last year's event was deemed a huge success by the 250 delegates who took part and it is a sign of BNI's growth that we will have substantially more participants at this year's conference.

"Quite apart from its educational purpose – teaching members how to be more successful in business – the event is probably the best opportunity in the entire year for delegates to network with other like-minded businesspeople. A tremendous amount of business has its starting point at the annual conference." ■

Florist Rosemary Halliday is living proof that when it comes to the tough world of business, it's never too late to learn!

Her old-established family business has really started to blossom since she joined BNI six months ago and now she's proudly boasting about becoming a "dot.com" as her services go onto the world wide web.

A member of central London's **St James' Chapter**, Rosemary and her sister Joan have been in the floristry and landscape gardening business for over 25 years, supplying the rich, famous and not-so-famous with magnificent blooms and bouquets from their 'landmark' shop in Belgravia's prestigious Holkin Arcade.

"Dad bought us the shop and we've been here ever since," said Rosemary, who is proud of their achievements which include prizes at the Hampton Court Flower Show and for bridal work, and exhibitions at the Chelsea Flower Show and Olympia.

While their horticultural talents are widely recognised, Rosemary conceded that business had started to take a dive last year. "I knew I needed to try some more modern methods to give it a boost, but I wasn't sure what or how.

"Around that time, I came into contact with a lady (Associate Director Melanie Curle), who kept calling me up to tell me about this organisation called BNI, and suggesting I should join.

"To be quite honest I only agreed to go along to a meeting to stop her badgering me, but now I'm really glad I did!"

Rosemary became one of her chapter's core group members and soon found that BNI was not only an excellent source of new business, but effectively a new lease of life.

"I have to admit that business soon started to increase and after a few meetings I began to thoroughly enjoyed the social

Florist finds rosy future on the net



ON-LINE: James Bartlett helps Rosemary get set up for the Internet.

PICTURE: PETER GRANT

side of BNI. It was also just what I needed to increase my awareness of how businesses operate these days," she said.

One key development has been launching the family business onto the Internet, with a little help from fellow member, web site consultant James Bartlett of Level 5 – On-Line Solutions.

"Not too many florists advertise on the Internet," said James, "but I think it will

be the ideal medium for Rosemary's business, especially since she has tremendous energy and a rare appetite for utilising modern technology to help her business.

"Most people of her generation don't even want to understand the Internet, and choose to run in the opposite direction."

Small wonder then that Rosemary's new memory hook is: "When flowers are sent to Mars, they'll be ours." ■

Small business is transformed

While many members, if they're honest, quietly assess their membership in terms of financial gain, painter and decorator Mick Keeley uses a different yardstick to endorse his decision to join BNI.

Since joining **Slough Chapter** just a year ago his work has almost doubled. He's gone from a one-man-band to taking on another employee and he's currently looking to recruit a third tradesman!

Mick told *Successnet*: "It's not just the increase in revenue that makes it worthwhile.

"It's really exciting to watch my business expanding so rapidly. I had a referral on my first morning as a visitor and it has all taken off since then.

"In monetary terms it has been worth about £15,000 to me in the past 12 months, which is absolutely brilliant! BNI has transformed my small business in barely a year, and the opportunities for further growth are considerable." ■

Ger's 'L' of an idea meets its maker

A brilliant business idea struck driving instructor Ger Silke as he was guiding his student motorists around the highways and byways of County Cork: Why not produce a driving test video to help people understand what is required in order to pass their test?

The idea had particular merit for Ger, a member of the **An Gallimh Chapter**, because the cost of local driving lessons (around I£20 per session) coupled with the fact that, on average, learner drivers in Ireland take no more than five or six lessons in a lifetime, meant the average BNI referral he received was a modest I£100.

"While I thought it could work very

well, I had no idea how to go about making such a video, so I put the whole thing out of my head.

"Then one morning, a visitor to our chapter meeting introduced herself as working for a corporate TV company.

"I mentioned my idea to her, she was very keen and now plans are at an advanced stage for the video to be made, with the help of the Irish government," said Ger.

The couple hope to distribute the finished product countrywide at a cost of about I£15 each.

"Last year, a booklet on the driving test in Ireland sold over 70,000 copies, so we are hoping for big things from a video." ■

Lawsons' Lore

BNI National Directors **MARTIN** & **GILLIAN LAWSON** write...

With our third European members' conference about to take place, there is a welcome new ambience of maturity and growing sophistication around the organisation.

As we approach some key milestones in BNI's UK development – with our 200th chapter and 5,000th member not far distant – perhaps it should not be surprising that we are 'coming of age', and that the organisation has established a satisfying momentum of its own, reflected in the fact that BNI is now represented in most parts of the UK.

What is however both surprising and encouraging, is the pace at which we have grown BNI in the UK and Ireland. For instance, we can recall the first members' conference we held just two short years ago in Ealing. At that time, we were just over a year old and had barely 1,000 members, some 100-plus of whom took part in the West London event – hearing BNI's Founder Ivan Misner predict a bright future for the organisation in Europe.

He was undoubtedly right, but we don't think even the greatest optimist could have foreseen how far we would take BNI in three years – to the point, today, where we are staging a major conference, attended by up to 400 of the most entrepreneurial businessmen and women from across Britain and Ireland, meeting to learn how they can make their businesses even more successful.

But of course it takes more than just big numbers to make an organisation inherently strong. It requires the sustained education, understanding, commitment and practical effort of its members, and these are the qualities, which have begun to stand BNI head and shoulders above the rest.

As you read through this issue of *SuccessNet*, you will come across many encouraging examples of how members have been able to use the resources of BNI to make a real difference to their businesses – and how in turn, they have been able to contribute to the growth and success of their chapter colleagues' business activities. Suddenly, BNI is 'making sense' to a great number of people and, as those of you attending this month's conference will be reminded, membership is to be prized and valued.





WORLD TOUR: Peter Reeves is pictured in Sun City during his travels

It's such a small world with BNI

Around-the-world trip prompted by a mid-life crisis has given retiring Tunbridge Wells Chapter Director, Peter Reeves, more than just a personal tonic.

He picked up some useful tips for his BNI colleagues – and several new business ideas for himself – after visiting other chapters on three continents!

Wanting to 'recharge his batteries', as well as look up old friends and places he had visited and worked in during the past 24 years, Peter organised a five-week world tour, taking in South Africa, Australia and America.

"I decided it would be a wasted opportunity if I did not meet up with local BNI members," he said. "It was a good decision, because being able to visit some very different chapters and chat with members, gave me a better insight into the way BNI works in contrasting business cultures."

Peter's first stop was Cape Town where he met Mike Levine, BNI's National Director in South Africa, and went to the Newlands Chapter breakfast meeting in the city. "I remember it well, because that night England's cricketers lost to South Africa night by one run."

His compensation was picking up a tip for finding new people to invite to chapter visitor days. "They told me to think of FROGS – Friends and family, Recreational acquaintances, occupational colleagues, Geographical (the people you know from the same area) and Social. I'm told it works, so I'll be trying it on my colleagues."

The next port of call was Sydney, where he spoke with Australia's National Director Ian Pendlebury, and attended a meeting of the Drummoyne Chapter, four miles from the city's main business district.

"It had only 15 members, but it was a vibrant group. We Brits tend to think of our Australian counterparts as being very laid back, but Sydney is a dynamic city and the breakfast was business-like as well as jocular," said Peter. "It was a good balance."

From New South Wales it was on to North America where he visited Los Angeles chapters and BNI's headquarters, meeting Founder Dr Ivan Misner.

"I found a treasure trove of good business ideas, with lots of audio tapes and books full of valuable marketing tips. Ivan kindly gave me various materials, including a copy of his latest book," he added.

"Ivan was very impressed with the way BNI has developed in the UK, and his feelings were echoed in every continent I visited, where people seemed envious of our progress.

"For once, I think we are teaching our overseas colleagues a thing or two about business dynamics."

Back home, Peter has the good fortune to love his work, running an outdoor pursuits and corporate entertainments company. He reckons his business has benefited to the tune of up to £20,000 a year from BNI membership. "Not bad for a £300 subscription, is it?"

Peter can be contacted on 01580-879614 or website at: www.arena-pursuits.com

Hilton plumbs new heights with referrals

New arrivals to BNI are frequently told to expect referrals from the most unlikely quarters around the breakfast table.

And, to prove the point, plumber Hilton Stoch has just landed his Chapter accountant colleague Andrew Rhodes with a most lucrative piece of new business!

Hilton, a member of the **Stanmore** Chapter, was carrying out a kitchen sink replacement in a North-West London stockbroker-belt home, when he heard his customer – a wealthy businessman – complaining bitterly about the performance of his accountant.

“Whenever I think the occasion is right, I always leave my BNI business card holder lying around on jobs, and invite my customers to help themselves to whatever cards they think they might use. This chap took a handful of cards, including Andrew’s, and I thought no more about it at the time.

“Shortly afterwards, Andrew told me he’d had a call from my customer, inviting him to look at his company’s books.” Hilton recalled.

“I knew my customer was a big businessman, but I had no idea that Andrew would be able to help him to such a degree. It turned out to be a pretty useful referral.”

In fact, Andrew was quickly able to address the business’s accounting problems, saving the company an estimated £1 million on its taxation and payroll administration costs, and earning what he described as “very substantial fees” for his own practice, Sobell Rhodes.

Andrew told *SuccessNet*: “Hilton is a very energetic and aware member of our BNI chapter, but in all honesty I never anticipated an occasion when he would generate such a significant referral for my business.

“It just proves what we are always told, that new business is referred to us from the most unexpected sources. In fact, BNI members have done us proud, bringing us around £250,000 worth of additional business in less than two years.”

Meanwhile Hilton, who after barely a year in BNI has already won a ‘notable networker’ award for his countless referrals to colleagues, takes it all in his stride.

“I’ve probably generated business worth several hundred thousand pounds for my colleagues, because my customers always like the fact that I can recommend other specialists at first hand.

“But it works both ways. I now get up to a third of my own business income as a direct result of referrals from my chapter colleagues.” ■

A heavy investment in training and education

The start of April saw the introduction of new leadership teams in BNI chapters throughout the world – following the most intensive training sessions ever held!

In Ireland and the UK alone, some 550 members each received five hours training from BNI’s national or regional directors last month before taking up their various new duties as chapter directors, membership co-ordinators and secretary/treasurers.

“With over 180 chapters changing their leadership teams twice a year, the amount of training we provide is vast, but necessary,” said National Director Gillian Lawson.

“The keys to BNI’s business success is

training and education, which is why we invest so much time and energy in these areas.

“In total, we reckon that our new UK and Irish leadership teams will have received a staggering total of 2,750 man hours of business training!”

Congratulating the outgoing leadership teams, Gillian added: “Running a chapter is hard work but it becomes easier as the group grows in numbers and success. Our outgoing leadership teams have done a remarkable job in helping to consolidate some highly successful chapters. Seeing your members gaining additional business makes all the hard work worth while.” ■

Winners off to the California sunshine!

Eight members from Ireland and the UK were packing their bags in readiness for the trip of a lifetime as *SuccessNet* went to press - winners of BNI’s first ever European membership drive prize draw.

Some 27 chapters fulfilled the minimum qualification requirement of bringing no fewer than six new members into their groups during the three month campaign which ended last December, with the result that the lucky eight and their partners are jetting off on a four-day action-packed trip to San Francisco after their names were pulled from the hat in a series of regional draws last Christmas.

California-bound are: Alan Solomons (Harrow Chapter); Elizabeth Hodgson (Eastbourne); Aine Walsh (An Gaillimh, Galway); John Shaw (Treaty, near Limerick); Nigel Dixon (Witney, Oxon); John Thomsett (Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire); Tony Stuart (Royal Spa, Leamington) and Terri Jackman (Altrincham, Cheshire).

For Terri, lady luck smiled twice because, although her name had gone into the original North West regional draw, she was initially unsuccessful - losing out to Bolton Chapter member, dentist Mel Rosenthal. But the San Francisco trip clashed with Mel’s business commitments, so his loss proved to be Terri’s gain.

Executive Director Laura Hurren who co-ordinated the membership drive prize draw said it had far exceeded expectations. “We were delighted with the results, but the real winners are all the chapters who took part, because by introducing more members to their groups they will have ensured that more business referrals are passed at future meetings.”

The party is based at the famous Hyatt Hotel on Fisherman’s Wharf where members of the San Francisco Bay Chapter have arranged an Anglo-American networking workshop at which the guest of honour will be BNI’s Founder Dr Ivan Misner.

Topping the itinerary is a six hour luxury sight-seeing tour of the city, culminating in an hour-long helicopter trip over San Francisco Bay and the Golden Gate! ■

Early birdie gets US golfing referrals

When Alastair Turner joined BNI's Edinburgh West Chapter he was naturally hoping his golf tour business would soon start to see some benefits. But, after six months active participation, very few referrals had come his way.

However, help was at hand – in a most creative way – from Chapter Director Roddy Dalziel, who noticed Alastair's plight and was determined to do something about it.

Recognising that Alastair's client base was almost entirely American and that fellow members did not have many contacts in the United States, Roddy figured that the only solution was to make a direct approach to Alastair's market – promoting his company, Tayleur Mayde Golf Tours – to Americans in their own homes and workplaces.

Roddy decided to e-mail 99 of BNI's American chapter directors, aiming to drum up referrals for Alastair. He explained the situation and asked the US chapter, regional and executive directors to assist him. Days later, to the amazement of chapter members,



GOLF TOUR SPECIALISTS: Alastair is pictured with his father Donald.

Roddy announced an incredible total of 15 referrals for Alastair – all from America.

Many e-mails had replies offering the names and addresses of American golfing enthusiasts and US-based travel agents – each of them ideal referrals.

Alastair's company is an inbound golf tour operator specialising in organising golfing trips to Scotland and Ireland, mainly for Americans. Because he is based in Edinburgh, he is able to assist and advise clients during their trips. He told *Successnet*: "Roddy was genuinely concerned about my problem and realised the potential of the BNI network on a global scale.

"The response has been very positive and extensive. To date I have had approximately 40 contacts, each of which could result in multiple business considering the number of clients each travel agent has.

"It's hard to believe that just six months ago I was receiving so few referrals, and now I've got so many that my business seems set for success. I am really grateful to Roddy for his creative approach."

Donald Maclean, Executive Director for South and East Scotland said: "I was really proud of Roddy. He has been an outstanding Chapter Director. He is always willing to go the extra mile – or in this case, 6,000 miles – to help his chapter members." ■

If you like our efforts

We can do the same for your business! Grosvenor Associates has been working with BNI to produce *SuccessNet* for the past two years, during which time we've made a number of improvements to retain members' interests.

For the next (summer) issue, we plan to make even more noticeable changes, so we'd like your feedback on them, just as we welcome your continuing contributions.

Meanwhile, if you'd like to know how little it can cost you to have your own company's 'SuccessNet' – not to mention copy-writing, speech-writing, design or media relations service – call Barbara Blume or Malcolm Grosvenor on 020 8541 1121. We think you'll be pleasantly surprised.

Givers a job – in just three days

When Gordon Leggatt, a member of Paisley Premier Chapter found himself redundant he knew just the right people to help him find a job.

When colleagues in neighbouring chapters learned of his misfortune – he had formerly been employed by Marshalls-Pattern Book Manufacturers – they pulled out all the stops to help get him back to work as quickly as possible.

Three days was all it took! It was

Tuesday when he 'put himself on the market' and by the following Friday, Gordon had an interview organised through Jim Stewart, Director of Lawprint & Stationery Ltd, and a member of the Glasgow Alpha Chapter.

He was offered the job and gratefully accepted. Such is the power of 'Givers Gain' – even when all seems lost.

Well done Jim, and good luck with the new job, Gordon. ■

Coatbridge Cavaliers

When Glasgow's Coatbridge Chapter found itself a few members short, the leadership decided to launch an appeal to the trades and professions from which they had no representative.

The local newspaper was more than happy to feature their request for a butcher, a baker and a candlestick-maker (well almost)! As well as an electrician, caterer, hairdresser, beautician, vet, carpet fitter, optician, dentist, chiropractor and a car sales dealer.

Producing up to 50 referrals a week after just nine months, Coatbridge was already very successful, but the response from the feature in the Airdrie & Coatbridge Advertiser is set to increase membership and gain them a respected profile in the local business community.

Donald McLean, Executive Director for South and East Scotland told the Advertiser: "I am delighted with the progress made at Coatbridge. Members have responded to the training we gave them and put it into practice very effectively.

"Apart from the business generated by members, they also benefit from the friendship and practical support within the group and from other BNI groups.

"Several members have formed alliances in order to tender for work which would be beyond any one member on his or her own."

The group will shortly stage a Visitors' Day when the fruits of their labours will become apparent. Well done, Coatbridge, and good luck filling those vacancies. ■

Networking on the net

Glasgow West Central is the first Scottish chapter to launch its members' businesses on the Internet.

Online Computer Developments, based in the city have created a fully featured web site promoting the chapter's members.

"We had to think of a new way of advertising our members to the outside

world," said Online's Kevin Ashcroft, "and we decided on a chapter-specific web site in preference to traditional media such as brochures.

"This means that members' details can be updated and new members added without the trouble and expense of printing paper-based marketing materials.

"We first examined the bni.com web site and created our own chapter site with similar features."

Anyone interested in checking out Glasgow West Central's web site can do so at <http://www.gwc-bni.ic24.net>, while members can contact Kevin on 0141 564 1500 or E-mail at kashcroft@ocd.co.uk.



SIGN HERE: Peter Steedman, Elsi Duncan and Hugh McCrea with their sign.

Sign of some Stirling work!

Two members of the Stirling chapter in Scotland have found an artistic way to promote BNI and their chapter meetings in the hotel where they meet.

Chapter director Hugh McCrea was keen to highlight the group's weekly meetings at the Terraces Hotel, so two of his members, signwriter Elsi Duncan of D Signs, and picture framer Peter Steedman of Framed Images, put their talents together to produce the elegant and effective sign (pictured) which now adorns a wall in the hotel's foyer.

Have any other chapters produced their own permanently displayed 'meeting signs'? Let us know – and send a photograph.

You never know what might happen

Stirling Chapter's Tanya Hine was delighted when she received a referral from fellow member Bob Jones giving her the chance to pitch for the design of a new corporate identity for an Architectural practice in Stirling.

Little did she know what would come of it. Tanya's graphic design consultancy, TBDA (Scotland), took the brief and started work on the designs.

What she did not expect was a phone call the following week inviting her to pitch for a complete corporate identity change for the rest of the practice – comprising a much larger London group.

Five design companies (all from London except Tanya), pitched for the account, and Tanya was short listed in the final three.

The following week, to her delight, her company was awarded the contract, proving that, from little acorns... Well done Tanya!

Hammered

Every chapter director knows how difficult it can be to keep members' weekly commercials to their 60-second time slot, but in **Falkirk** Chapter such problems are a thing of the past. One member, auctioneer David Manning, has presented the chapter with an impressive gavel complete with engraved BNI badge – and, we're reliably informed, it has already been put to good use. ■

Belfast readies itself for a second chapter by May

Less than three months after launching Northern Ireland's first chapter in Belfast, BNI's Regional Director James McCrossan is confidently forecasting a second group will be up and running in the city by May.

There are currently 24 members in the first group – the Lagan Valley chapter – and already a core group of six working on the second.

"It is a very committed group whose members have already started passing referrals," said James. Core members include a chartered accountant, a web designer, a

signwriter and a financial advisor.

Meanwhile, after a very buoyant start, Lagan Valley members now have the added stimulus of a delightful new venue, with their group having just moved to the beautiful Malone House – a stately home with an interesting heritage.

For Chapter Director John Heenan, a fifth cousin to the late Cardinal Heenan, these are busy times, since in addition to strengthening his group, he has been putting in many hours a week training for his third New York marathon in November.

Mind you, *SuccessNet* hears that his 'training' includes downing substantial quantities of Guinness and pasta as he prepares to beat his position last year – when he came home in 4,000th place out of a field of 30,000 runners!

With over two million spectators watching the race through the five boroughs of New York, John reckons it's a feast for the adrenalin buzz and, though he'll have other things on his mind – he may even pick up the odd referrals in his tracks. ■

The DOs and DON'Ts of...

When it comes to public speaking and 'selling' our business services to an audience, most of us – even though we may hate to admit it – are really not very good. So, whether we have only 60 seconds to get our message across to our BNI colleagues over breakfast, or we find ourselves asked to give a major presentation to a prospective client, we owe it to ourselves, our business, and our would-be customers to express ourselves clearly and persuasively.

Public Speaking

There are numerous opportunities for public speaking in BNI, and your effectiveness in generating referrals for your business can be greatly enhanced by your effectiveness in communicating to your chapter colleagues what you do and what type of referrals you are looking for.

You'll present a professional, confident image if, when making a speech, you resist committing these seven common mistakes.

BLUFFING: If you don't have the answer to a question, admit it honestly and find out the answer as soon as possible. Don't pretend to be knowledgeable on subjects where you are weak.

PROFANITY: Even mild swear words – however much they are used in everyday language – may upset some listeners. Don't take any chances.

SARCASM OR RIDICULE: Again, you risk alienating your audience for no good reason if you offend them, or insult groups they identify with.

PATRONISING YOUR AUDIENCE: You may be an expert in one subject, but that doesn't mean you should treat your listeners as idiots. Respect their intelligence, and try to learn from their questions and comments.

Last month, members of the 13 chapters in North-West London were invited to participate in the first bi-monthly 'Presentational Skills' training course, run by Executive Directors Martin and Gillian Lawson and, by the end of this year it is intended that most BNI regions will have similar courses in place – encouraging members to develop presentational skills that will directly help them improve their self-confidence and business performance. In the meantime, SuccessNet reproduces below, an article by BNI members James Van Fleet and Carol Driscoll which appeared recently in 'The Toastmaster' magazine.

IMPATIENCE: Does a listener ask you about a topic you've already covered? If so, don't show annoyance. Repeat the information from a different viewpoint, and ask if you've clarified the matter. Then ask yourself if you really explained the point(s) clearly in the first place.

HIDING BEHIND A LECTERN: If your listeners can't see you, they'll find it hard to pay attention to you – especially those at the back of the room. If you're lost behind the lectern, stand beside it when you speak.

EXCUSES: Only amateurs make excuses for themselves: "Well, I didn't have time to get ready for this speech... This isn't really my best subject..." Comments like that invite listeners to tune out. Make sure you are prepared for your speech or presentation, and exude confidence.

Successful business speakers share certain practices and techniques. Among other things, they make it a point to entertain as well as inform. They also deepen and expand the bond with their audiences through openness, sensitivity and humour.

Based on observations of successful and unsuccessful speakers, the good ones:

Are thoroughly prepared and comfortable with their material. They outline their main points on a blackboard, slide projector or flip chart. They also make sure that all audio-visual equipment functions smoothly – before they start!

Involve their audiences by soliciting answers and information. For example, one speaker whose subject was "Downsizing in the 90's," had all the audience stand up, and then sit down in stages if they or someone they knew had been affected by firings, layoffs, take-overs, etc... Eventually the entire group was seated.

Enhance their presentations by the creative use of newspaper cuttings, cartoons, music, appropriate quotes or (relevant) anecdotes and experiences.

Often use self-deprecating humour to get a point across. This allows the audience to identify with the speaker's foibles.

Move around the room rather than remain fixed behind a lectern or a table – a technique that makes the speaker seem accessible. Many will greet people individually as they enter the room.

Avoid boring their business audiences with material that is common knowledge.

As BNI members, you have over an hour of presentation, speaking and teaching time during the year to educate fellow members of your chapter about what you do. If you focus on representing yourself in a professional, polished and informative manner, you can greatly increase your potential for referrals.

Matt's 60-sec sales pitch is a big hit

A BNI member who allows himself just 60 seconds to sell his business services to potential customers reckons the one-minute discipline he picked up at his chapter's breakfast meetings is paying handsome dividends.

Matt Hession, who runs Key Medical Supply in Los Angeles, realised that his target customers were too busy to accommodate a standard 'cold' sales call in their tight schedules. So he developed what has proved an irresistible solution: the one-minute sales pitch.

"When I get in to see my prospective customer I immediately take off my watch and put it down in front of them. They think it's fascinating and I gather they're now describing me to each other as 'the day's entertainment'. My customers are all independent pharmacists to whom I sell or lease medical equipment such as wheelchairs, and I need to be able to make 15 to 20 cold calls a day, without people saying, 'Leave your card, and I'll call you back'."

Using a carefully honed script, Matt describes his specially tailored service for independent chemists and, after exactly 60 seconds, whether he's finished or not, he tells them: 'My minute is up so I'll leave now because I want you to know I mean what I say.' "They are always impressed that I manage to pull it off and it clearly makes an impression."

A week later, Matt calls the prospective customers and introduces himself as 'the guy who did the one minute presentation'. Matt added: "I ask them if they've had chance to read the documents I left with them, and just about everyone remembers me".

Does the approach work? "Well, 90% of them end up signing contracts with me so I guess you could say it does," he said. "For me the 60 second sales pitch is a winner, and I've no plans to drop it – even though I may change the script to keep customers interested!"

Fact-finding visit nets £1½m deal for new boy

When Stuart Saul was invited to consider becoming a core member of the new Richmond-upon-Thames chapter, it was suggested he pop along to an existing, local chapter "to see how BNI works..."

Not a person to waste time, Stuart appeared the following morning at the weekly breakfast meeting of the **Kingston-upon-Thames Chapter**, thought it looked 'very interesting' and, after introducing his investments and venture capital business activities during the 60-second slot given to guests, was promptly handed two referrals.

Some weeks later, with Stuart and his other core group members about to launch the new **Richmond Chapter**, he is busy putting the finishing touches to a brand new venture in the information technology sector which, he conservatively estimates, will be a £170m annual turnover business, netting him personal management and consultancy fees of up to £500,000.

Stuart told *SuccessNet*: "Having been advised at my very first meeting of the Richmond core group to go along to an existing BNI chapter meeting, I really did not know what to expect. When I was invited to tell Kingston members about my services, I had no idea at all that it would result in my being given two referrals.

"One of them has become an exciting prospect. I have been able to introduce some other business expertise to the embryonic company, as well as help with the necessary venture capital requirements.

"The next few weeks are fairly crucial in development terms but I am hopeful the new venture will be launched before the summer, as a pan-European business."

Meanwhile, Stuart is already looking forward to generating other referrals through the new Richmond group whose launch meeting takes place on 19th April.

He added: "One never likes to talk about a particular business venture until it is up and running, but it will be a quite remarkable introduction to BNI if my very first referral results in such good business." ■



AWARD WINNER: Philip Amps, right, receives his award from Stan Middleton, Wholesales Sales Director of Carlsberg-Tetley.

'Posh' vintner tastes success nationally

Peterborough Chapter member, Philip Amps can now boast that he's the best in Britain after his drinks business, Amps Fine Wines, scooped the award for 'Best Independent Off-Licence of the year.'

Philip took the independent specialist title and was named joint second to the overall winner, after an hour-long examination to choose the Off Licence of the Year in a competition organised by trade magazine Off Licence News.

And, while he admits that the family business is "my hobby, my job and extremely good fun," he also acknowl-

edges that joining BNI eight months ago has made a difference both to his business approach and profitability.

"It is an excellent environment for the growth of my business, since I can access both wholesale and individual customers through my BNI colleagues."

He particularly enjoys the camaraderie of the Peterborough Chapter. "There's a great combination of business and fun. Everyone has a good sense of humour and because we all really enjoy the meetings, we get a lot out of them. BNI has been really good for my business." ■

Cheshire is hit by the snowball effect

A mild winter it may have been, but that hasn't stopped Cheshire being hit by the snowball effect – BNI style – with several chapters launched and more on the way.

South Cheshire was the county's first chapter, opening just before Christmas with members coming from the **Crewe** and

Nantwich areas, while following close on its heels was **Macclesfield** which drew over 100 business people to its February 'kick-off'.

As a result of Macclesfield's success, an overflow group was started in **Wilmslow**, where the core group and information meetings attracted so many would-be members,

a further spin-off group was started in **Congleton**. Both have just launched.

Meanwhile, a group of Chester business people have formed a core group in the county town. For information about any Cheshire chapter, contact Tony Coxhill, Regional Director, on 01270 620074. ■

Oh, don't you all just love them... memory hooks, that is! BNI's national office has been inundated with contributions – from the sublime to the, well, not so sublime – since we invited you to show us just how creative you are when it comes to making that lasting impression!

National Director Gillian Lawson, tasked with choosing an outright winner to receive a bottle of champagne in our first quarter's Memory Hook Contest, was eventually persuaded by the seductive words of **Telford** Chapter member, Simon

Bubbling over with creativity

Bromley who describes himself as 'a smile doctor' – better known as a dentist at the Bridge Dental Health Centre in Oakengates, Shropshire. And his winning hook? "Come to see us for that 'wow' not 'oww' experience!" Congratulations

Simon. The bubbly is on its way to you...

Several other contributions came close to stealing it from Simon, not least those from **Dublin Airport** Chapter's Graham Smith, whose "If you're lost for words, I'll find them" seemed the perfect sign-off for a public relations specialist, and from **Edenbridge & Westerham** Chapter Director, John Durrant, the rather risque: "It's easier to sleep at night with a chartered accountant." We don't need to tell you John's profession!

This month's wooden spoons go to Alan Sargeant, an independent financial adviser from **Leeds**, who tells breakfast colleagues: "When you look at me, I want you to think about haemorrhoids, because I can save you 'piles' of money on your finances," and to Lynn Ramsbottom, a member of **Stirling** Chapter whose company manufactures bags and packaging, who sent us this self-deprecating memory hook: "If you need a new bag, see the old bag!" Lynn, it might be memorable, but is it really how you want to be known?

Among the best of the rest were:

"Florists do it by arrangement" – Selwyn Davidson, florist

"Don't get stitched up by other people" – Jim Symes from Ashford & Maidstone Sewing Centres

"Taking more time than the rest, to ensure you look your best" – Brian Brown, photographer.

Thanks to everyone who sent us contributions, and to those who didn't, why not try to win the champagne next time? Send your contribution(s) to Executive Editor Gillian Lawson at BNI's head office, Gate End, Northwood, Middlesex, HA6 3QG, fax it to 01923 827813 or e-mail it to: bnet@aol.com. Let's have an even better crop in June!

More join 'black badge' club

Ten more members have joined BNI's exclusive 'black badge' club, which recognises their success at introducing new members – and new referrals – to their chapters.

They are: Jerry Slann (**Newcastle-under-Lyne** Chapter); Stephen Amison, **Stoke-on-Trent**; Joe Margiotti, **East Kilbride**; Patricia O'Brien, **East Cork**; Peter Snell, **Rochester**; Peter Beck, **Braintree**; Geordie Hayward, **Canterbury**; Rob Smith, **West Malling**; Dominic Leese, **Uxbridge** and Alan Price, **Milton Keynes**.

And we mustn't forget Jon Foster of **Maidenhead** Chapter who, for some reason, slipped through the *SuccessNet* when he became the first in Home Counties West to receive a black badge – two years ago!



Working in harmony – 'as-best-os' friends

Lisa Gannon and Jerry Slann (above) run complementary businesses, just half a mile apart in Newcastle-under-Lyne. Today they are doing considerable business together, but, until BNI arrived in North Staffordshire, they'd never even heard of each other.

By coincidence, both Jerry and Lisa were directors of their respective chapters, Newcastle-under-Lyne and Stoke-on-Trent, until the end of March, and it was through their leadership teamwork that they first met – a few months ago – to discover their common business interests.

They now promote each other's services, and are pictured at a seminar on Asbestos which was held recently at the Royal Institute of British Architects – the

second such event in which both companies have participated.

Collaboration on the development of Asbestos Permit to Work Systems has proved mutually beneficial to their two companies and the seminars have attracted delegates from all over the country, bringing new business prospects for both of them.

Their next joint venture – in June – will see them at Manchester United's Old Trafford Stadium, exhibiting at a seminar on asbestos management and proposed regulatory changes.

Jerry Slann, The Environmental Man, can be contacted on 01782 713242, or e-mailed at: info@shutlers.co.uk ■

Banking on BNI

Managers in at least one of Britain's big four banks are being encouraged to join their local BNI chapters as a means of enhancing business relationships within their local communities.

The recommendation is contained on the 'good ideas' page of Natwest's Intranet computer network (used to keep its staff and managers up to date on all banking matters) and several branch managers or business managers are known to have followed up the advice with visits to their local BNI groups.

One such business manager is Alan Neville from Natwest's Barnet branch who joined BNI's Barnet Chapter 18 months ago.

He told Successnet: "For me, BNI is about building relationships. It is much easier for a decorator or a similar tradesman to develop quick response referrals across the breakfast table, but when it comes to banking it's a much slower process. People don't switch banks overnight and it takes time for them to make the change.

"However when new businesses have joined BNI they have often looked to me for advice and support, and that is where the majority of my referrals have come from.

"I've also found that introducing some of my clients to chapter members has been good for me in adding to my credibility.

"For example, I introduced one of my clients, a firm of solicitors, to a member who is an accountant and who was able to save the solicitors £20,000 in tax, so that enhanced my standing with them!"

Alan is very supportive of the BNI ethic and says that although he hasn't yet had a great increase in business, he has had a lot of personal fulfilment from it. ■

Making the Internet a place to talk business

While the Internet is rapidly establishing itself as a serious global marketing and sales medium, BNI members have gone a stage further – by developing a chat room to share ideas for boosting their business with other entrepreneurs around the world!

The monthly sessions, conducted through BNI's Yahoo chat room, were introduced just over a year ago as part of a members' educational and business awareness programme, and they proved popular from the start, with members able to discuss specific business problems – and solutions – 'on line' with senior BNI directors.

"Last month's chat attracted nearly 30 participants from seven different countries," said UK National Director Martin Lawson. "We were discussing ideas for joint chapter activities and, as well as hearing from our colleagues in the USA, the session brought contributions from members in Canada, Israel, Switzerland, Malaysia, Ireland and the UK."

With so many useful tips and ideas for new business marketing stemming from the chat room sessions, a summary of the key points from each month's exchange of views is now posted on BNI's website, accessible via: www.bni-europe.com, then clicking the 'Chat' icon and following it to the 'Chat Directory'.

Martin added: "Some people might initially be put off the idea of sharing their views about gaining business with strangers on the Internet but, as Chat Room regulars will readily testify, they constantly pick up new techniques from colleagues around the world and thoroughly enjoy sharing business problems with others who may offer solutions."

The sessions, hosted by UK national directors Martin and Gillian Lawson, take place on the second Monday evening of

the month, from 21.00 to 22.00hrs, each focusing on a different business or BNI topic. Subjects for the next four chat room sessions are:

Monday, 10th April: Hints for new Leadership Teams

Monday, 8th May: Sales Manager Minute

Monday, 12th June: Becoming a Business Card Magnet

Monday, 10th July: Conversation Starters.

The easy way to enter the Chat Room is through the BNI website (www.bni-europe.com) where you will find it as an option after clicking on the UK. Remember, you must pre-register as a BNI/Yahoo Chat Room member *before* joining one of the sessions for the first time. ■

Seventeen new Millennium chapters

Seventeen new chapters have opened across the UK since the last *SuccessNet* was published – including the first group in Northern Ireland (see story page 7).

As *SuccessNet* went to press, the number of UK and Irish chapters stood at 187 and, with BNI's rapid expansion across England – particularly the North West, and East and Central Midlands – it is anticipated that the organisation will celebrate the launch of its 200th chapter during the spring, when membership is expected to near the 5,000 mark.

New chapters launched this year are:

Belfast Lagan Valley, Chester, Corby, Dundalk, Forest of Dean, Glasgow Clyde, Gravesend, Hastings, Haverhill, Leeds, Leicester, Macclesfield, Milton Keynes, Pembrook, Sunley, West Malling and Woodbridge. ■

Hussein takes Canterbury tales to Kuala Lumpur



The calm backdrop of one of England's oldest county cricket grounds at seven in the morning is a far cry from the teeming, noisy streets of Kuala Lumpur – but what Hussein Zin found there was more than enough to convince him he'd made the right decision in quitting a top executive post to join BNI.

Hussein was recently appointed BNI's first National Director for Malaysia – resigning his post as Senior Marketing Director for Maxis (the Malaysian equivalent of Vodafone) – to work alongside UK executive directors Robert French and Andrew Hall who acquired the Far East country's franchise last year.

Until last month, Hussein had never

even seen a BNI chapter in action but that changed dramatically when, on a fact-finding visit to the UK, he attended a meeting of the Canterbury Chapter at Kent's county ground.

"At the meeting, 38 members passed no less than 97 referrals," said Robert. "So, while Hussein was brave to give up a high-flying job before seeing how BNI works, after visiting Canterbury he was convinced he'd made the right decision. He aims to have his first Malaysian chapter up and running by the end of April – and we intend to be there."

Hussein (left) is pictured at Canterbury with Robert French. ■

The basis of networking

Mike was a good and active member in his BNI Chapter. Most people were surprised when he dropped out of the group only a year after helping to form it.

As a financial adviser, he had been receiving referrals and things seemed to be paying off with some high quality sales.

But, despite appearances, Mike had a totally different perspective on the situation. In talking to him, he explained that while the members all liked each other and he believed that they would always help each other if they could, he inexplicably felt that it just wasn't working for him.

Yes, his business was doing well, but he didn't feel that had very much to do with his membership of BNI.

Mike then went on to describe some of the new clients that he'd recently acquired and, oddly enough, many of the clients and referrals he described had a very familiar ring.

As it turned out, many of these people and companies that he referred to as being part of the basis for his burgeoning business were the very same people that had been referred to him by the chapter members throughout the previous year!

One of us called Mike to end the confusion over why he was leaving but, as it turned out, the call only created more confusion.

The conversation took an hour and in the end we agreed with all the facts, but held dramatically different interpretations.

Mike believed that:

1 He had been introduced to these new clients by members of his group or by people introduced to him by members of his group, mainly by chance.

It's an occurrence experienced by most chapters at some stage of their development; one of the group's founders, usually someone who appears to be making a considerable success of his or her membership, unexpectedly drops out of BNI. Usually, no-one bothers to find out why, which is a pity because it is often based on the individual's misunderstanding of the business referral process. In this article, based on a real case, ART RADTKE, Executive Director, and IVAN MISNER, BNI Founder and Chief Executive, explain why we need to ensure that every member understands the basis of business networking...

2 He also didn't feel the results were any indication that a 'system' was at work. He clearly believed that these referrals were basically coincidences. It was by chance that 'so and so' had bumped in to someone who just happened to need the services Mike could provide, etc...

In fact, he was looking at his success from a position of repeatability. His professional training required him to call people from a defined list based on the demographics he was looking for in a client.

If he didn't have enough business, he needed to call more people. The results of his activity were always measurable and could always be accounted for by the actions he took. More importantly, there was a well-defined ratio that Mike understood, relating to the number of calls, appointments, and closed sales.

The clients he picked up from referrals, on the other hand, always had a story attached to them that could not be repeated, leading him to believe the ensuing business was coincidental.

This misconception happens when someone focuses on the referral rather than on the relationship that produced the referral. This interpretation led Mike to the inaccurate conclusion that the results were coincidental. However, it is no more coincidental that you receive regular and consistent referrals from the people in

your network than it is that a fisherman who casts a net will catch fish.

The fisherman concentrates on his action of casting the net, not on the path of an individual fish that swims into it. If he did base his decision on that one random fish, he would quickly conclude, as Mike did – that it was coincidental.

The reason Mike focused on the referral and not the relationship was because he didn't understand that building effective and profitable relationships is a system. In fact, he had never been trained on how to systematically build mutually profitable relationships.

In his training as an independent financial adviser, he was taught about products, customer service, and cold calling.

When he did receive referrals, he had no idea what specific actions he had taken that had caused them – so he was simply thankful for his good luck and went back to what he knew.

When it comes to networking, 'luck' is where persistence meets opportunity. There are no coincidences about repeat referrals. They come from the day to day activities of building relationships.

Although they can't be measured as easily as tracking cold-call ratios – the results are dramatic and almost never coincidental.

'ACT NOW' on follow-ups

Every BNI member should already know how important it is to follow up each and every new business referral promptly, courteously and professionally.

But, the following submission, received by *SuccessNet* from Jerry Davies, a member of the Carrollwood, Tampa Chapter in Florida, might help remind us all how we should go about responding to referrals.

Jerry, who runs a training company, also fills a regular five-minute 'networking education' slot each week at her Chapter's meetings.

She has developed this memory-jogger on how to handle referrals, which may strike a chord:

- A:** Act on the referral within 24 hours. If you can't, leave a message saying when you will get back to the person.
- C:** Communicate with the referral customer and let the him/her know if you are able to do the job within the required time frame. If you cannot provide the required service, say so, ideally referring them to someone else.
- T:** Thank both the person who gave you the referral and the person who is the referral.
- N:** Never ignore a referral. Always follow up.
- O:** Own the referral. Take ownership so that your customer knows you care.
- W:** Welcome the opportunity to discuss your business and your skills. Be honest and follow through.

SuccessNet is published quarterly and distributed free of charge by Business Network International Ltd to all members through BNI directors and chapter directors.

Additional copies can be obtained by writing to, or calling, the BNI National Office, at Gate End, Northwood, Middlesex, HA6 3QG. Tel: +44 (0)1923-826 181; Fax: +44 (0)1923-827 813; E-mail: bninet@aol.com. BNI European web site: www.bni-europe.com.

EXECUTIVE EDITOR:
Gillian Lawson, BNI National Director

EDITOR: Malcolm Grosvenor,
Grosvenor Associates (020 8541 1121)

DESIGN & LAYOUT: Ken Sheldon,
Amigo Books (01579-350 579).

Copyright © BNI 2000. All rights reserved