

Just three and a half years after 80 hardy North London souls waited in sub-zero temperatures and the darkness to attend the launch of BNI's first British chapter, the organisation has passed a significant milestone with the opening of its 200th chapter – part of its continued rapid expansion across the UK and Ireland.

In marked contrast to its arrival on the UK scene in December 1996, when visitors queueing to attend the opening of BNI's first chapter at

BNI launches 200th chapter

Harrow were caught in a snowstorm, last month's 'kick off' day at **Norwich** was heralded by bright sunshine bringing an appropriate early morning glow to the city's historic Assembly House, a majestic venue for Norfolk's

first BNI chapter. And, while the organisation has been accustomed to many larger turn-outs for launches than the audience of 60 business people who attended the new Norwich Chapter's Introductory Day, few BNI

chapters have got off to such a buoyant start, with no less than 25 members signed up by the end of that first meeting!

Chapter Director Stephen Thomson, a management consultant, said: "I think it showed how seriously local people take new business opportunities. I am just pleased Norwich companies are now able to share in BNI's success."

Such is its rapid growth after being 'imported' to Britain from America, that BNI now has over 4,500 members who, in the past 12 months alone, have exchanged some 140,000 referrals over breakfast tables from Brighton and Hastings to Belfast and Edinburgh, worth in excess of £30 million!

Worldwide, BNI has more than 1,700 chapters in 11 countries, which last year generated over £300 million of business for its members.

Meanwhile, BNI's spread

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Gillian in free fall over Queensland.

Just dropping in on Aussie friends

BNI's UK national directors Martin and Gillian Lawson don't believe in doing things by halves. So, when Gillian suggested interrupting their belated holiday on the Great Barrier Reef to drop in on BNI's Australian directors conference, Martin felt duly obliged to follow... not realising just what he was letting himself in for!

Barely 48 hours later, and still not sure it was really happening to him, Martin took his courage in his hands and jumped – quite literally – out of a plane flying at 12,000 feet above the Queensland

coastline, following Gillian in what he described as "a quite exhilarating free fall" for 7,000 feet, before parachuting gently back to the ground.

Back on terra firma, the daring duo were welcomed by Ian Pendlebury, BNI's National Director for Australia, and regional directors who, when they weren't muttering about 'mad dogs and Englishmen out in the mid-day sun' seemed quietly impressed with the Lawsons' first sky dive.

Gillian told *SuccessNet*: "The night before the

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They're tickled pink with Ken Dodd in Macclesfield – Page 3



TOASTING A DOUBLE CENTURY: Members of the new Norwich Chapter celebrate their opening.

BNI launches 200th chapter

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across the UK regions and Ireland continues unabated, with a number of new territories being opened up and more than 40 chapters launched in the last three months.

Since the last edition of *SuccessNet*, BNI has substantially expanded in Scotland – with seven chapters launched – as well as moving into Yorkshire and Merseyside, while strengthening its presence in other key areas including Leicestershire, Shropshire, Greater Manchester, the West Midlands, County Cork and Greater London.

National Director Martin Lawson said: “With some 220 chapters up and running and new chapters being launched at the rate of two or three every week, we are aiming to continue this rate of progress and, before the end of August, our UK and Ireland business membership will have broken through the 5,000 barrier – so there will be plenty to talk about as the year progresses.

“However you look at it, a business organisation which, from nowhere, has managed to gain the major commitment of nearly 5,000 businessmen and women, must be doing something right.

“People join BNI principally to improve their own business by helping others to improve theirs. The fact that we are growing faster than ever is ample evidence that BNI’s Giver’s Gain philosophy works everywhere!”

Chapters opened in the second quarter of 2000 (April to June) are: Alloa, Arundel, Ascot, Basingstoke, Burslem (Stoke on Trent), Chelmsford Meadows, Chester, Chichester, Clacton, Congleton, Coventry, Didcot, Dover, Dunfermline, Edinburgh Pentland, Evesham, Finedon (Northants), Gravesend, Headington (Oxon), Kilmarnock Kappa, Kirkcaldy, Knightsbridge (London), Leeds Armouries, Leeds North, London Marylebone & London Sloane Square, Maidstone II, Merseyside Alpha, Merseyside Beta, North Manchester, Norwich, Perth, Richmond-upon-Thames, Rutland, Shrewsbury, Stone (Staffs), Sunley, Tayside, Uddington, Warrington, Wilmslow and Woodbridge (Suffolk).

Golden memories of San Francisco

Pictured right is just one of the stunning panoramas enjoyed by the lucky winners of BNI’s first European membership drive prize draw – a bird’s eye view of the famous Golden Gate Bridge across San Francisco Bay.

The eight winners and their partners, pictured below at a windswept airport before the start of their sight-seeing trip over the city by helicopter, also met BNI Founder Dr Ivan Misner and members of local Californian chapters, attended a reception in their honour and held a networking workshop – in between exploring the sights, shops, food and culture of San Francisco.

One of the winners, Tony Stuart from the Royal Spa Chapter, Leamington, who took the chapter photo below, summed up their experiences: “The whole trip exceeded our expectations, with the sight seeing tour and helicopter flight being the highlights.”

And there was special praise too for UK & Ireland National Director Gillian Lawson from Elizabeth and Graham Hodgson (Eastbourne Chapter) who said: “One of the things everyone appreciated most was that Gillian made a 12,000 mile round trip just to attend our reception with Dr Misner and make sure everything was going to plan – a sign of her very deep commitment to BNI members.”



WHAT A PRIZE: Over San Francisco.



WINNING LINE-UP: Our winners pose for the camera before take-off

BNI'll be tickled missus!

Rubbing shoulders with the famous is becoming common practice for Phil Jones, a member of Macclesfield Chapter.

The Macclesfield Chapter had raised money for the Rocking Horse Appeal to fund a new cancer unit at Liverpool's Alder Hey Children's Hospital, by holding a 'scouse breakfast' when members paid £1 extra for a taste of the Liverpoolian dish – scouse pie – in addition to their normal bacon and eggs.

Local bakery Sayers donated the scouse pies for the event which took place at

Macclesfield's Belgrade Hotel and led to Phil, who had organised the event, being invited to a private Scouse party hosted by comedian Ken Dodd.

To mark the occasion, Phil presented Liverpool's most famous comic with a huge business card, containing the details of all his Chapter colleagues (see picture below).

Phil's enthusiastic charity work led him and several Chapter colleagues to be mixing again with celebrities a few weeks later, this time with the former world heavy-weight boxing champion, Henry Cooper and the cast of TV's 'Brookside', at a fund-raising event for the East Cheshire Hospice.

The Belgrade Hotel played host to a Sportsman's Dinner where Henry was guest speaker, and Phil ensured the town's chapter was well represented – with a fully subscribed table of BNI members and their guests.

Phil is particularly keen that members should know about Alder Hey's Rocking Horse Appeal which will provide the country's only cancer unit specifically for children. Reaching the target is proving difficult and if anyone would like to make a donation or undertake a fund-raising event, they should contact the Appeal Office at Alder Hey Hospital on 0151 228 4811.



Baker's dozen join 'Gold Badge' club

Thirteen new names have been registered with BNI's exclusive 'Gold Badge' club in recognition of their success at introducing new members – which results in more business referrals – to their chapters.

They are: Douglas Aiken of Dunfermline Chapter; Philip Berg, Stanmore; Jonathan Grant, Leeds North; Eamonn Leahy, Dublin Airport; Mark Lewis, Stafford; Jeff Matthews, Leeds Armouries; Tom Parry, Merseyside Alpha; Anthony Quinn and Sharon Slowey, both Baggot Street, Ireland; Jim Stewart, Glasgow Alpha; Chris Twinn and Clare Wadham-Smith, both Bury St Edmonds, and Tony Weiss of Watford.

Congratulations to all. Keep those visitors flowing in!

Dropping in

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sky dive neither of us got much sleep, just wondering – or rather worrying – what we'd let ourselves in for. But it was never a question of pulling out.

"It was something I'd wanted to do all my life and the experience will live with me for ever. I'm not sure that Martin shared my enthusiasm before the event, but having survived it, we're both really pleased we were able to take part. It was an unforgettable experience."

Lest you consider them crazy, both Martin and Gillian were harnessed to experienced sky divers for their inaugural jump and, as our photograph shows, a good time was had by all. Who said BNI directors have no fun!?

Sharing winning secrets

More and more members are sharing their winning business development secrets with colleagues around the world through BNI's global chat room.

While the power of the Internet as a serious worldwide marketing and sales medium is growing rapidly, BNI members have been exchanging new ideas for boosting their business for more than a year, by joining monthly chat room sessions which now regularly attract a significant number of participants from as far apart as the USA, Israel, Canada and Switzerland.

UK National Director Martin Lawson said: "Being in business means you never stop learning, and what could be better than getting sound advice from business colleagues who may have experienced similar problems or challenges and are prepared to share their solutions with you?"

"Our chat room regulars are happy to acknowledge they constantly pick up good ideas from colleagues throughout the UK – and around the world – and they thoroughly enjoy

sharing ideas to generate more business."

So much useful advice now comes out of the chat room sessions, that a 'key points' summary from each month's exchange of views is posted on BNI's website, accessible to anyone by logging onto: www.bni-europe.com and then navigating through the UK Members Area to click on 'Chat Directory'.

The sessions, hosted by UK national directors Martin and Gillian Lawson, take place on the second Monday evening of every month, from 9pm to 10pm, and the easiest way to enter the Chat Room is through BNI's own website [www.bni-europe.com] where you will find it as an option after clicking over the UK on the map.

Each month focuses on a different business or BNI topic, and subjects for the forthcoming chat room sessions include:

Monday 14th August – Effective meeting stimulants; **Monday 11th September** – 25 PR ideas for chapters; **Monday 9th October** – Building big and strong chapters.

Lawsons' Lore

BNI National Directors MARTIN & GILLIAN LAWSON write...

Last month saw the launch of our 200th chapter. Next month we expect to welcome our 5,000th member. These are two significant landmarks in our consolidation as the leading business referral organisation in the UK and Ireland.

But while we have reached these key milestones quickly – a reflection of how valuable membership is regarded – there would be little lasting benefit to anyone if we could not match our 'organic growth' with continuous improvements to BNI practices and procedures, ensuring that the organisation's overriding purpose – helping businesses to help each other to succeed – remains as fresh and effective in five or ten years time as it was when we started.

Let no-one doubt the huge benefits BNI has already brought to thousands worldwide, many of whom have seen previously mundane businesses flourish in ways they could only have dreamt about. Our task, as national directors, is to see that the tremendous success possible with BNI is shared by the greatest number of members.

That task begins and ends with education, a word not always appreciated by entrepreneurs, who may think they have little to learn when it comes to running a business. But all of us must learn from others if we are to maximise our potential.

An obvious example of this is the way many members view BNI as an automatic passage to increasing turnover, mistakenly thinking that by simply attending chapter meetings each week they will gain good referrals. This casualness manifests itself in the 60-second presentations each of us makes to chapter colleagues, too many of which show that little if any thought has gone into preparing what is a vitally important advertisement for our business.

Joining a BNI chapter is the easiest part of membership. Putting in the effort and commitment to show fellow members that you and your business are worth their time and energy is altogether more demanding. Why should other members make the effort to gain business for you if you can't be bothered to present your services in an enthusiastic and persuasive manner? The article on Pages 8-9 has the answers.

Through its chapter and regional networks, BNI offers members the opportunity to improve their business performance by participating in learning and education programmes. Developing better presentational skills is just one of many training courses on offer, and in the coming months we hope to see more members participating in them.

Who knows, you might even be surprised to discover what a little more knowledge can do for your business!



Sky's the limit for BNI word

Word of BNI's increasing influence on small to medium sized companies is spreading through national media and business press coverage.

During May, BNI was the subject of an in-depth analysis by the business team on Sky Television's 'The Money Channel', while Great North Eastern Railway's inter-city magazine 'livewire' focused on business networking, devoting more than half its four-page feature to BNI's growth and activities.

Gillian Lawson, National Director said: "Positive publicity is a key element in every organisation's growth.

"We encourage chapters to tell local and regional press about BNI developments because the good news that comes out of every chapter can be used to publicise BNI activities for the direct benefit of all its members."

Lucy's so quick on the draw!

Anyone contemplating membership of Cheltenham Spa Chapter had better be warned: you'll be caricatured in print – with your picture passed around the local business community!

But, it's all for a good cause.

Wearing her 'other' hat as a professional artist and illustrator, the Chapter's Membership Co-ordinator Lucy Byatt has produced a colourful flyer comprising witty caricatures of many of her colleagues, now being used by the Chapter to introduce potential members to BNI, and by individual members as an unusual marketing tool.

For just £30, chapter members are immortalised in pen by Lucy, who gives them an A4 coloured caricature to frame and keep, while they are also incorporated into the Chapter's promotional leaflet.

Lucy told *SuccessNet*: "The leaflet has stimulated great interest both in my own Chapter and in other BNI chapters across the area which I am now visiting as a result of their invitations.

"Just using the flyer to advertise my business has started to bring a significant number of referrals and there are signs that other local chapters may want me to produce something similar."

Although a BNI member for just six months, Lucy says she wouldn't give it up for anything.

"I am meeting so many new faces and, because there are relatively few people in my line of work, that means I am receiving a lot of promising referrals.

"Happily, my caricatures also seem to be prompting considerable interest in the services offered by my chapter colleagues, so it's working both ways.

"Every time I give the leaflet to members of a new BNI chapter or a potential client it is promoting my own chapter colleagues and, unlike leaving a conventional business card which may be instantly forgotten, I get lots of feedback which suggests that people retain the leaflet and refer to it frequently," she added.

Having attracted several new recruits following a successful Visitors Day last month, and just relocated to Cheltenham Film Studios, members of the town's Chapter are about to undergo further scrutiny by Lucy as she seeks to update their images – and add some new faces – to a larger replacement flyer.

Meanwhile, she's also out and about the Gloucestershire area, pens and paper at the ready – so don't say you weren't warned.

Anyone interested in Lucy's work can contact her on 01242 222692.

Membership translates into worldwide business



People whose work is so specialised that it appeals only to a small niche market are arguably the least likely to benefit from BNI membership – if only because their skills or services cannot be used as part of everyday life.

But one such specialist, linguist Jenny Willis (left) had no hesitation in joining BNI's **Croydon 1** Chapter, even though she mistakenly thought her new colleagues were unlikely to refer business to her.

Why? Because BNI is a global networking organisation – and Jenny knew that, if she didn't find local referrals, by tapping into the organisation's Internet website she

would have access to an almost unlimited number of potential clients, worldwide!

"As a translating and interpreting company, I thought from the start that my services would not necessarily appeal to most of the business sectors represented in my own chapter, but I recognised that with advances in communications technology and the ability to send translations electronically, it did not matter where either I or my clients were located," said Jenny.

As soon as she received her new members' manual, she scoured BNI's website for details of members working in business sectors with whom she traditionally had regular contact, such as graphic designers, and public relations consultancies.

"I soon found a dozen such member companies scattered around the UK, so one morning I e-mailed them to offer the services of my company.

"To my amazement, by the early afternoon I had received three positive responses, one from Scotland saying they would use me at a future date, one from Northern Ireland asking for a quote to translate a website into French, German and Spanish, and the third from a graphic designer, who invited me to attend the Tonbridge Chapter, and promote my business, Tongue Tied to members," Jenny added.

Through these and other chapter contacts – and somewhat to her surprise – Jenny has now started to receive business referrals from BNI members. Meanwhile, her second initiative was to produce even more dramatic results.

"Browsing through BNI's main website, I noticed that one of the books written by BNI Founder Dr Ivan Misner, *The World's Best Known Marketing Secret*, had been translated into Chinese and German and that there were plans to produce a Spanish version," she said.

"I sent an e-mail to California offering my company's translation services and I was again amazed when, that same evening, I received a response from the man himself! Dr Misner said he would pass my details to his publishers and also to the international directors of BNI. Who could ask for more!?"

All for one and one for all



Three members of the Cambridge Chapter are reaping the benefits of true networking within BNI by pooling their skills to offer would-be clients a unique package of services.

When Stuart London of Eastern Counties Newspapers Web Design, Chris Clarke of Excel Telecommunications, and Mark Duckworth of NTL Telecommunications (pictured left to right) met each other through BNI, they soon realised that their complementary expertise represented a formidable new business proposition.

Chris and Mark, although in related lines of business, recently worked together on a £20,000 account for a client in London, where Chris provided the hardware and Mark the software installations.

Meanwhile, when Chris visits companies to install systems where there is also a requirement for a web site, he has been able to recommend Stuart and one such referral recently resulted in a £6,000 contract.

"Even though we might seem to be in competition, the similarities in our business activities are working well for us," said Chris. "We are definitely all benefiting from working together."

All three use BNI's appointment card system very successfully, and Stuart says the BNI members card-holder system has also helped him achieve many referrals, by finding out about his fellow members and their needs, and making sure he has the best possible understanding of their businesses in order to identify potential business for them.

Mopping up a fortune



Most people join BNI to make their businesses more successful. So when Carol Stewart was introduced as 'a cleaner' to members of Chester Chapter earlier this year, no-one could have guessed that she had already made her business fortune – running one of Britain's fastest-growing companies.

Today, less than six months after being taken along to her first BNI meeting by a friend, Carol is Chester's Chapter Director and while, after recent national publicity, her dramatic rags to riches story is common knowledge, her insatiable drive for further success through BNI has become an inspiration to her chapter colleagues.

Carol, left, is Managing Director of Dublcheck, a national commercial and industrial contract cleaning company mod-

estly valued at £10 million, employing 50 full-time staff and with 175 franchise-holders throughout the country, whose annual turnover exceeds £6 million. She, husband Duncan and 14 year old son, also Duncan, now enjoy the trappings of success – a large house, luxury yacht and fast cars – but as she explained to *SuccessNet*, not so long ago their life was very different.

"Seven years ago we were at rock bottom following the collapse of my husband's business. The three of us were living on £40 a week benefit in the garage of my in-laws' home because we couldn't afford anything else," Carol reflected.

But, out of adversity came the seeds of future prosperity.

"As an unqualified housewife I knew I wouldn't be able to find a well-paid job, but I certainly knew how to clean, so I decided to approach local companies to see if they needed a new Mrs Mopp," she added.

Carol trudged around the city's shops and office blocks, knocking on countless doors. Just two potential customers asked to see her – but it was enough to launch the UK's most dynamic contract cleaning business. The rest, as they say, is history.

Within a year they commenced franchising the business and today – with their 200th franchise in sight – their company's name is familiar throughout the UK.

However, while some people might be happy to sell out and retire – Carol has already rejected more than one multi-million pound offer – she is just beginning to make the business fly – hence her new commitment to BNI.

"After attending my first chapter meeting, I immediately saw the tremendous potential for a franchised business like ours to be members of BNI, throughout the country.

"Some people might wonder why I would want or need to get up at the crack of dawn every week to attend a business networking meeting, but I don't see it that way. I like meeting new people and seeing whether our businesses have anything to offer each other, and I am now recommending BNI membership as part of the standard business package for all our new franchise partners. I think they should all be joining their local BNI chapters without delay," said Carol.

Presentation puts business coach into the big league

When business coach, Will Kintish prepared his first ten minute presentation to colleagues in the Manchester Chapter, he had no idea what an impact he was about to make.

In the event, he made such an impression on two fellow members, both bank managers, that one of them immediately recruited him to give a training presentation to a large chapter of senior management colleagues on the way that banks should go about hunting for new business.

That presentation resulted in Will being retained to provide a further 15 days of professional coaching for bank managers in the art of networking, presentation and communication skills, opening an important door for his expertise in the financial sector.

Meanwhile, the other bank manager has since joined a building society and invited Will to

undertake a similar training programme for his new colleagues.

"Two other banks and a building society have now asked me to conduct a series of pilot schemes for them, and I would think that the total value of these accounts must be worth in the order of £50,000 to me," said Will, who also credits BNI for helping him to go into business on his own.

"When I first joined BNI I was a partner with a firm of accountants, but thanks to BNI and the many new business colleagues and friends I have made I have now been able to set up my own business," he added.

"I used the services of my BNI colleagues to help me start up in business. I needed a banker, a printer, a designer and a lawyer and it was very reassuring to be able to call on the services of people I knew to be professional and reliable.

"In fact I would say that was of as much benefit to me as selling my services to them!"

BNI gets Tom's business motoring

As a 'stand in' member of Altrincham chapter, Tom Bridge wasn't too sure what kind of reception he'd get from fellow members when he decided to break away from the security company he'd been representing and don a chauffeur's hat.

He needn't have worried. When Tom told members of his plans to set up his own execu-

tive chauffeur business he found them very supportive of his new venture and wanting to do everything possible to help him.

Tom joined the Chapter in his own right and found the services of a solicitor, accountant and printer within the chapter, whose help and advice he described as "a tremendous support and confidence booster."

He added: "My business has really taken off in a short space of time and it's all thanks to BNI.

"About 90 per cent of my initial business has come through referrals and I have contact with so many customers that I can give lots of referrals in return. I wouldn't have got where I am now without BNI."

Flying high is bonding idea

Leicester Chapter has found a novel way of bonding its members by taking to the skies and giving them a whole new perspective on their business territory!

With three of the chapter – Anne French, Malcolm Fountain and Dot Barnard – all members of Leicestershire Aeroclub, it seemed like a great idea for a social event to take everyone on an aerial tour over their Leicestershire ‘patch’ in a light aircraft.

While Anne and Malcolm are fully qualified private pilots, Dot describes herself as ‘a professional passenger’ who can’t get off the ground often enough.

“I love flying, and on this occasion the visibility was perfect,” said Dot.

“Everyone was able to see their homes and even the cars parked in their drives.

“Some of the guests were brave enough to take the controls during the flights, while others were happy just to be passengers.

“The instructors were very impressed with the enthusiasm of the chapter and I’m quite sure we will be taking up their invitation to return for another trip,” she added.

The flight was followed with a tour of the hangers and the bar, while the club chef provided a delicious curry to end the day.

“It’s a great way to get to know your chapter colleagues, and I’m sure some good business will come out of it,” said Dot.

“We’re a relatively new chapter with 22 members, but if people hear we’re offering free flights I wouldn’t be surprised if that figure goes up quite quickly!”

Watch out, Cambridge!

It looks as though they’re in training for next year’s university boat race – but members of the **Huntingdon** Chapter, pictured below getting to grips with their oarsmanship, had only one thing on their minds: raising money for the MacMillan Cancer Charity.

The Chapter’s squad of over 20 members and friends (pictured right) were taking part in the Pearl Dragon Boat Festival – a major fund raising event – on the River Nene at Peterborough and, while few had any previous rowing experience, they almost put the opposition to shame, ending up with two wins in three races and just missing out on a place in the semi-final.



“The weather was fantastic and everyone enjoyed the convivial atmosphere,” said Chapter Director Margaret Gledhill. Team drummer Sheila Robinson and team

organiser Graham Buck even went one better – finishing up in the river. The BNI crew, elated with their unexpected success, decided it was the only way to celebrate!



Recruiting is a stroll in the park for Ilford



RECRUITING DRIVE: Ilford Chapter member Mayoor Patel is pictured with Sharon Eden at Redbridge Show where she visited the BNI stand.

When it comes to finding new members, Ilford Chapter doesn’t believe in waiting for prospective candidates to come to visitor days.

While the Chapter had experienced modest success with its normal visitor days, one of its members Mayoor Patel reckoned they should become more proactive and take BNI’s business philosophy into the park.

Last month’s Redbridge Show in Ilford’s Valentines Park, offered the perfect opportunity – and saw Chapter members giving up their weekend to run a promotional stand which attracted scores of visitors, more than 20 of whom duly turned up at the next two breakfast meetings.

Mayoor said: “We expect to gain at least half a dozen new members, some of whom we are directing to the soon-to-be-launched Redbridge Chapter because we don’t have vacancies in the relevant categories. We had tremendous fun and managed to get BNI much better known in the area.”

Chapter members ran the BNI stand on a rota basis, with Shirley Shawe winning their internal contest to see how many people they could each sign up for a breakfast meeting.

Learn to use your weekly

60 seconds that can

Picture yourself as the sales director of a medium-sized manufacturing company whose products, whilst high quality and previously in high demand, are now struggling to sell.

With the company heading for losses, your immediate task is to call the entire 25-strong sales team together, when they're expecting you to present a new sales and marketing strategy capable of returning the business to profit.

Now, imagine that you've just won a business competition for which the first prize is a free 60-second regional television commercial, to be seen over breakfast in thousands of homes throughout your area.

Unless you've got all the business you want, the chances are you'll be delighted with your good fortune, not least because you could never normally afford one such slot, let alone one a week!

If you are wondering what relevance these two scenarios have to each other, or to your BNI membership, the answer is simple: every time you attend a chapter breakfast, you are meeting your own sales team, giving you 20 or 30 or more experienced business professionals ready and willing to go out and 'sell' your products and services over the following week.

One of the benefits that BNI offers all its members is a free one-minute 'commercial' every week for his or her business. While many use their regular advertising slot to great effect in promoting their services, a substantial minority fail to recognise either the opportunities it provides, or its huge significance to the success of their BNI membership. Here, in the first of two articles, UK National Director GILLIAN LAWSON explains why the 60-second slot is such an important part of the weekly agenda, and how you can maximise its value. In the next issue, she will discuss some of the things you should avoid in delivering your weekly commercials.

Your opportunity – but also your challenge – is to make sure they know exactly what new business referrals you want. And yes, you have only one minute each week to educate, persuade and motivate your sales force!

Okay, I hear you say, but most of my sales team (i.e. chapter colleagues) don't seem interested in what I do, nor very keen to find out how they can help me.

Bingo! You've struck the nail right on the head. If your potential sales team isn't doing the business for you, it's almost certainly because you haven't taken the time or trouble to enthuse them, get to know them or adequately explain what you do.

Think back to winning a 60-second TV commercial slot once a week. What is the first thing you'd do? Start planning of course, in detail, what you want your commercial to say, and what impressions you want it to convey.

You'd probably agonise over the imagery and the wording, bounce possible ideas off friends and family, and eventually create something that you felt did you and your business justice.

Now reflect again about your hypothetical task as sales director of that troubled company, faced with motivating your sales force to pursue new strategies in order to restore profitability.

What is the first thing you'd do? Prepare, of course. You would take time out to think through your strategies, the right psychological approach and the best way of presenting your messages to them.

In both instances, it would be foolish and probably counter-productive to go in ill-prepared. What kind of commercial would you end up with if you hadn't carefully planned its content?

And what kind of reaction would you expect from the company's sales team if you turned up with little or nothing positive to say about the way forward, and made no effort to persuade or encourage them?

Yet this is exactly what some members are prepared to inflict on their long-suffering chapter colleagues, week after week.

Arriving late, ill-prepared and ill-equipped to offer any intellectual stimulation and, only starting to think about what they might say in their 60-second slot when the item is reached on the agenda, they unsurprisingly repeat the same bland, instantly forgettable message they delivered last week, and the week before.

Memory hooks just go on getting better and better...

Did you hear the one about the funeral director called Edward Box? Nor had we until he joined BNI's recently formed Leeds North Chapter, immediately endearing himself to colleagues with his sense of self-deprecating humour and dry wit.

So it's fitting perhaps that Edward should have won this quarter's Memory Hook competition with his typically sardonic sign-off line: "Box is the name, and burying is our game."

As proprietor of Box's Funeral Services in Leeds, Edward confessed to his new BNI colleagues: "We love slowing you all down when we're driving in the funeral procession but, like footballers, you only see us on match days."

No-one is there when we do our equivalent of training, often working all night and

putting in an average of 42 hours per funeral."

SuccessNet felt it somewhat inappropriate to enquire how many referrals Edward had received from the Chapter's first few meetings, but we are reliably informed he is very happy with his membership.

Congratulations Edward, a bottle of champagne is on its way to you.

Keep your memory hooks coming in and who knows, next time you could be the lucky recipient of BNI's finest bubbly!

Send your contributions 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 bninet@aol.com.

Closing date for all competition entries is Friday, 8th September.

commercial effectively

transform your business



National Director
Martin Lawson
demonstrating the
value of visual
props at a work-
shop for members
in the North West
London region on
how to present
their businesses
more effectively in
60 seconds.

No wonder that, treated with such disrespect, some colleagues around the breakfast table look bored and switch off.

You've just lost both your unpaid sales team, and with it, probably your most important new business opportunity of the week. Fortunately, it doesn't have to be like that. Whatever your presentational abilities, there are some simple, effective steps you can follow to maximise your chances of making an impression, and leaving your BNI sales force wanting to know more about how they might help.

So, if you recognise yourself in the above analogies, try putting these six DOs into action in your next one-minute presentation:

1 Plan, rehearse and time your presentation:

Unless you are a born performer, don't delude yourself by thinking you can find something witty, memorable and apposite to say while you're tucking into breakfast. Even the biggest and best presenters plan and rehearse their lines, honing them to maximum effect – and this is particularly important when you have only one minute to get your messages across.

2 Deliver your presentation with enthusiasm and conviction:

If you don't believe in yourself and your services, no-one else is going to. So, no

matter how you're feeling or how bad a week you've been having, put your personal problems aside when you come to your chapter meetings and present an upbeat, optimistic, confident image – especially when it is your turn to deliver the 60-second commercial.

Everyone likes positive people, so work on your demeanour and, if necessary, make an effort to be bright and cheerful.

3 Focus on just one or two aspects of your business each week:

To properly understand even the simplest product or service takes far longer than one minute, so don't try to make your chapter colleagues instant experts in all aspects of your business by covering too much ground in one presentation.

Instead, mention only one or at most

two aspects of your business, and seek specific referrals for the particular service or product you have described. Remember, you are not trying to sell your services to colleagues, but rather aiming to educate and enthuse them about you and your business activities.

4 Use props and examples:

Describing even the most routine businesses can be easily animated and enlivened with the surreptitious use of one or two props, or examples of your work.

But don't simply bring props along to wave them around; try to give them a purpose and relevance to your presentation.

You'll be surprised how many people remember the props you use – even if they forget the nature of your business!

5 Tell (short) stories:

As the old adage goes: 'Facts tell, stories sell'. There's nothing better for bringing your business to life than quoting real cases, involving real people and events.

Keep your anecdotes tight, pithy, relevant and *focused on how you add value*, and you'll be amazed how many people find it easier to bring you referrals.

6 Be specific in asking for what you want:

Your sales team needs to know exactly who you'd like them to be talking to on your behalf, and who you want to talk to.

So be precise. "I'd like an introduction to the Business Travel Manager at KPMG" is far more helpful than telling colleagues: "I'd like to hear from anybody who does a lot of business travelling."

Oh, and one final point: Always end your 60-second slot by clearly repeating your name and company name, before closing with your personal memory hook.

And, if you are not entirely sure your memory hook is memorable, try to find a new one that is. They may sound corny, but they do work!

Brushing up your presentational skills

If you feel you would benefit from some friendly, informal training in basic presentational skills related to your 60-second commercial, help may be closer at hand than you thought.

Following the success of pilot courses in effective presentation skills staged by the North West London region of BNI, execu-

tive directors in all BNI's UK and Irish regions are being encouraged to establish similar regular training sessions.

Courses will be introduced across the country over the next few months, so please check with your Chapter Director or Executive/Regional Director for appropriate starting dates and venues in your area.

Several dozen traumatised Bosnian citizens have had their shattered faith in humanity somewhat restored, and their war ravaged bodies made to feel slightly less fragile, thanks to the voluntary efforts of BNI therapist Tricia Underwood and her chapter colleagues.

Tricia, a member of **Croydon 1** Chapter, has just returned from her second mercy visit to Sarajevo in three years, thanks to The Healing Hands Network (a healthcare charity) and a little extra help from her BNI colleagues.

A qualified stress management therapist

Volunteer Tricia helps war victims

and counsellor, Tricia usually sees private clients at her consulting rooms in Croydon and Central London, using techniques such as reflexology, reiki and boen to ease their tensions and stresses but, in 1997 she was invited to Sarajevo to help relieve the altogether greater mental and physical suffer-

ing of those caught up in the bitter war, many left to face appalling living and social conditions.

Although the war has now been over for some time, its effects are still felt by many and Tricia wanted to return to lend a soothing hand and gentle counselling to those suffering the aftermath: Homes devastated, infrastructure destroyed and minds and bodies permanently scarred.

First, however, she needed to raise £750 to fund the trip for which she enlisted the help of chapter colleagues who, touched by her dedication soon generated over £500 through a variety of fund-raising activities, enabling her to confirm her participation in the mercy mission.

Sadly, despite the passage of time, things are generally not much improved in Sarajevo, as Tricia explained. "My sole task was to help reduce the huge stress that so many citizens are still having to cope with. I saw up to ten patients a day who live with the constant fear of unexploded mines and munitions, and are exposed to additional disease and ill health caused by their poor diet."

As *SuccessNet* went to print, Tricia was due to attend her first post-visit chapter meeting, and give colleagues a first hand report on her visit.

"BNI's philosophy works in every area of life, not just in business, and it was typical of my Croydon colleagues that they should have guaranteed my place in the mission as soon as I mentioned why I would be away from the chapter for a couple of weeks."



THERAPEUTIC: Tricia, right, and a colleague working with a patient in Sarajevo.

Giver's Loss

When Mike Cruse, a member of the Weald Chapter, passed a referral in the true spirit of Giver's Gain, he didn't expect it turn out quite the way it did.

Mike had quoted for installing a telephone system and when it transpired that the client also needed carpets, he passed the referral on to Andy Walters, a member of nearby Tonbridge Chapter.

Mike's client was so impressed with Andy that she signed a contract for £2,000 worth of new carpeting – more than she had budgeted for – with the result that when Mike called to progress his own quotation she was forced to admit that due to overspending on the carpets she could no longer afford the telephone system!

"Of course I'm still talking to Andy, but he feels a bit guilty about it," said Mike.

"I've now recommended Andy to a facilities management company – and I'm hoping they'll place orders with both of us."

Is that one cheque or two with your bacon, sir?

It's worth getting up early for BNI when you get a cheque for £40,000 during breakfast – twice over!

The cheques were presented across the table to Mike Burgum, a member of **Bexleyheath** Chapter, by chapter colleague Paul Cutler of Swiftcure Property Services in payment of Mike's work, fitting vinyl flooring to the communal areas of several blocks of flats.

Both members benefited from the arrangement, but Paul was so pleased with Mike's professionalism, he wanted to thank him personally – and pay him – during a chapter meeting.

Mike commented: "I've only been with BNI for six months and already received £96,000 worth of contracts.

"It's wonderful for my business and I reckon I must be the most successful member of our chapter."

Not that fellow member Graham Turner who runs a commercial interiors business, would necessarily agree.

Since he joined the Chapter, he has responded to members' referrals for contracts worth over £400,000, and reckons he has won nearly half of those!

Middle and Far!

BNI has opened chapters in two new countries – Israel and Malaysia – giving the organisation representation in no less than 11 countries worldwide.

Merseyside baptism for twin chapters

Why launch one chapter when you can do two at the same time?

That's the challenging standard set by BNI's new Merseyside regional director Terry Hamill, whose first information meeting led to the instant foundation for two chapters.

Although a modest 48 visitors turned up at the city centre's Moat House Hotel for Liverpool's introduction to BNI, a remarkable 32 of them were so impressed with what they saw that they joined on the spot – the largest number to do so from any UK-based information meeting, and enough for Terry to build two new chapters rather than one.

Today, just over two months after their launch Alpha and Beta have a combined membership of nearly 50 and, attracting further members is the single area of competition between them.

"They both want to reach

capacity first, and so each leadership team is working hard with members to generate further visitors," said Terry.

"In all other respects, having 'twin' chapters, born out of the same information meeting with the members all knowing each other, is proving to be rewarding for both chapters.

"If one of them receives an approach from a potential member it cannot accept – because the trade or profession is already filled – it recommends its twin chapter, and the same applies to referrals.

"If one chapter doesn't have anyone who can fulfil a particular referral, it is automatically offered to the other," he said.

Anyone interested in BNI's Merseyside expansion should contact Terry Hamill on 0151 291 6396.

Awards for Essex four

Four BNI members from **Colchester** have been celebrating after taking four of the 25 awards at the Essex County Business Awards ceremony which attracted over 400 entries in eight categories.

Karen Ainley, a partner in Mosaic Publicity won the online marketing category, while Juliet Hull, Managing Director of Park City Human Resource Consultancy, took the prize for the New Company category, and Mary Mudd of Carters Vineyard won an award in the small businesses category.

Meanwhile, showing that the men can also do the business, Tony Hales, Managing Director of Capel Court Plc was the proud recipient of the county's first award for training and staff development.

James Finch, BNI Assistant Director, said: "These awards reflect the quality of the companies and individuals which make up BNI."



NETWORKING SUCCESS: Jim Vincent, centre, Royal Armouries Secretary/Treasurer, with Membership Co-ordinator Stewart McLean, right, and Regional Director Niri Patel.

There's nothing like BNI

Founder member and Secretary/Treasurer of Leeds' Royal Armouries Chapter, Jim Vincent, thinks there's no other networking organisation to match BNI.

As Managing Director and main budget holder of Royal Armouries International Plc, Jim's work involves purchasing professional services ranging from recruitment to printing, and liaising with hundreds of suppliers, contractors and customers involved in the Royal Armouries' corporate hospitality business.

With the choice of the Royal Armouries museum complex as home and meeting place for two new BNI chapters, Jim has

found a convenient supply of many of the services his organisation needs and, more importantly, he has been impressed both with the competitive prices and high standards delivered by BNI members, creating significant savings for his company.

"I have been a member of several networking organisations in Yorkshire," said Jim, "and I strongly believe that networking is the answer to growing your business.

"However, BNI has quite literally taken networking to a higher realm, and I am delighted to be so closely involved with its early development in Yorkshire."

All is rosy in the white rose county

Just three months after BNI's arrival in Yorkshire everything is looking rosy – with three new chapters up and running, and the county's first £1 million referral set to be clinched this month.

Following the launch of the first chapter, **Leeds North**, at the David Lloyd Leisure Centre in Moortown in early spring, Regional Director Niri Patel quickly established two more successful chapters in the city – **Leeds Armouries** Chapter (so named because it meets at the city's Royal Armouries Centre) and **Leeds Moortown** which also meets at the David Lloyd complex. Two further chap-

ters – a second Armouries chapter and a first for **Wakefield** – were under construction as *SuccessNet* went to press.

Meanwhile, an indication of BNI's early success in the white rose county comes from Armouries Chapter member Paul Holmes whose career as an independent financial adviser has really taken off since he joined the new chapter.

Paul told *SuccessNet*: "Last month was my best yet and it's all thanks to chapter colleagues whom I reckon gave me more than two-thirds of my business in May. I am delighted with how things are going."

Things could soon be going even better for Paul who is hoping to tie up a £1 million investment deal during July, following another referral from Chapter colleague, accountant Tony Sherman. He added: "After just a couple of months I think BNI is a marvellous organisation, but if this deal is completed, I'll be wanting all my colleagues to share my success."

If you have colleagues who might be interested in BNI's Yorkshire chapters, contact Regional Director Niri Patel on 01484 684041.

Will your business card impress BNI's founder?

BNI members, more than most business people, are taught to recognise just how important a striking, effective business card can be.

But while most chapters' card boxes contain an interesting mix from the suave and the pretty, to the sublime and the (almost) ridiculous, how many contain one or more business cards that are simply... perfect!?

BNI, or rather its Founder and Chief Executive Dr Ivan Misner, is currently in the latter stages of writing a new book which focuses on the marketing and promotional powers of the humble business card – and he's thrown down this simple challenge to members worldwide: "Send me the



WANTED: Dr Ivan Misner wants the best business cards.

very best of your examples and, if they have something really special, I will include them in the book."

Ivan, whose previous books include: *The World's Best Known Marketing Secret* and *Business by Referral* is an acknowledged world authority

on word-of-mouth marketing, and when he is not busy spreading the word about BNI, he is frequently to be found delivering keynote lectures to university students or being interviewed by TV stations and leading business journals.

He told *SuccessNet*: "I'm not necessarily looking for total originality – which can be hard to achieve when there are hundreds of millions of business cards produced worldwide every year – but rather for examples that simply stand out in the crowd, whether because of their unusual design, colours or wording.

"It's obvious that business cards are an important tool in our total business marketing, not least because we all give our card to those we meet for the first time and we want to be sure it conveys the best possible impression of us personally and the services we offer.

"My book will therefore be looking at how we can make the most of our cards, so the more examples I can find the better."

Anyone who thinks their cards are worthy of a worldwide readership should send two samples either direct to: Dr Ivan Misner at BNI, 199 South Monte Vista Avenue, Suite 6, San Dimas, California CA 91773-3080 USA, or via UK National Director Gillian Lawson who will ensure all cards received are passed on in time for consideration.

"Who knows, this might even prompt one or two members into a timely re-design of their outdated business cards," she said.

Bonding over the BBQ

Up to 150 BNI members and their families from some 14 different Essex chapters attended a Sunday garden party and barbecue at Westwood Park, Colchester, as *SuccessNet* went to press.

The event was held to raise money for two charities – the Broomfield Art Project to help seriously burned children, and The Royal Star & Garter Home for ex-servicemen and women, but Assistant Director James Finch commented: "It was also a great day to cement new friendships among members from different chapters."

Agency nets benefits from BNI contacts

When leading Scottish recruitment agency, PTRC, decided to set up new offices in Perth, the company's Business Development Manager Cherry McNicol, knew exactly where to find all the resources and services they would need: her own BNI Perth chapter.

The first task – to find suitable business premises – was soon solved by Cherry's Chapter colleague Peter Fawns whose company, Select Estate Agency, was able to offer a choice of good accommodation.

Then PTRC needed a lawyer to prepare the lease for the new premises, so Cherry gave the task to Chapter member Alison McKean, a solicitor with Perth firm McNabb Gordon & Douglas.

Their new location sorted, PTRC's final major challenge was finding the best computing and network communications systems to enable them to have direct contact with colleagues in their other branches. To the rescue came fellow member, Fraser McDonald of Computer Cable Networks who provided them with a bespoke solution – installing the latest computer system to allowed instant communication between all PTRC offices and staff.

Since moving into Perth, the company's business has increased and, said Cherry, the involvement of BNI chapter members had been paramount in creating their smooth and successful expansion.

"It's wonderful to be around such positive people at the meetings each week," she said "Everybody makes such an important contribution to each other's business."



'I thought you said I had to do a short presentation'

Submitted by Jim Barker, Falkirk Chapter

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.

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Amigo Books (01579-350 579).

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