

SuccessNet

An education and information bulletin from Business Network International

Summer 1998



AHOY THERE SHIPMATES: Participants in a funday organised for Kent and Sussex chapters tackle the intricacies of rafting – See PAGE TWO for the FULL STORY and more PICTURES.

Your own new look newsletter

Here it is... the first issue of your very own version of *SuccessNet*. We hope you like it.

Ever since BNI opened its first British chapter at Harrow some 18 months ago, the organisation's growing UK membership has received quarterly editions of the American-produced BNI newsletter which, quite unashamedly, is primarily geared to its predominant US readership.

You and many other UK members have told us you wanted something more in tune with UK business, something that better reflected the activities of BNI in the UK and highlighted more of our home-grown success stories.

So, that's what we've sought to do – bringing you news, views and information from around BNI's fast-growing British network.

Whatever your thoughts about our first issue, we want to hear from you.

SuccessNet is YOUR newsletter, and its success depends on you telling us about your successes – and failures.

It's easy to contact us, either by phone, fax, e-mail or of course, in writing. Full contact details are shown on Page 4.

Meanwhile, we also need to know that our internal distribution system – through chapter team leaders – works.

So if you didn't receive your copy by Friday July 31 – or if you want further copies – please contact your own chapter director who will take the matter up with us.

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Breaking into new territories

Eighteen months after its first UK group was launched in Harrow, Business Network International has just marked the inauguration of its 60th British chapter, confirming BNI's status as Britain's number one business networking organisation

With new business chapters now opening around the UK at the rate of nearly two a week, BNI national director Martin Lawson's forecast back in January this year that BNI would have over 100 groups thriving by the end of the year is well within sight.

The past three months has seen BNI develop or launch its first chapters in Ireland and



Scotland, and break into new territories across England, including Sussex, Essex, the City of London and Nottinghamshire. Other new regions currently under development include Lincolnshire, Dorset, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire.

"BNI has doubled its UK size during the first six months of this year and we are likely to do so again by the end of this year," said Lawson (pictured left).

"Next year will see major expansion into neighbouring countries which will make BNI's European presence a significant part of the worldwide BNI picture and this will be a marvellous milestone to signal our arrival in the new millennium."

In just a year and a half since 80 would-be business entrepreneurs queued up in darkness and a winter snowstorm to launch BNI's first UK breakfast meeting, the organisation has come of age.

More than 1,200 members, who between them have passed tens of thousands of new business referrals with a combined value run-

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BBC TV pays return visit to BNI – Page 6

Funday for Kent and Sussex chapters

by KEITH GIDLOW
Tunbridge Wells Chapter

There's only one real way to network, and that is to have fun while you are doing it! Which is how some 50 BNI members recently came to be sitting on a river bank in Kent one Saturday afternoon – ready to have some competitive fun while getting to know more about each other's business activities.

Forming ten teams based on different BNI chapters, participants enjoyed various activities including Honda Pilots (fast rally carts), quad bikes (four wheel-motor bikes), archery, clay pigeon shooting and, of course, a team task which involved each team having to build a raft and float it across the river carrying various goods.

Needless to say, it provided more than one 'splash of the day'.

The raft-building exercise tested teamwork, spirit and balance. All five team members had to cross the river, pick up a can of 'toxic' waste and an injured person from the far bank, and bring them both safely back to the starting point. Most people got a little wet here, and one team were working so much as a team, they *all* got wet.

Many contestants had never tried such activities before, while others were experts – and I hazard a guess that some might *never* want to try them again.

First prize eventually went to the *Royal Wells Chapter*, while runners-up spot went to *Canterbury Chapter*.

The whole event was staged by Peter Reeves of the *Tunbridge Wells Chapter* who owns Arena Pursuits, while chapter colleague Robert Elcombe from S&A Catering Services, organised a wonderful barbecue.

Prizes were kindly donated by Andy Maple of Ideal Electrical.

A lot of networking took place over the evening barbecue, which was attended by national directors Martin & Gillian Lawson, and judging by the fact that many participants were still sitting talking at 10pm as darkness fell, we knew it had been a successful event.

Next time, we'll aim to make it an even bigger affair, opening it up to other chapters who were not represented this time.



BUT WE BUILD KITCHENS BEAUTIFULLY: John Martin in deep water.

Pictures courtesy Peter Reeves and David Smith of The Publicity Corporation (Tunbridge Wells Chapter members)



OVERALL WINNERS: The victorious team from Royal Wells Chapter.

Breaking into new territories

From Page 1

ning into millions of pounds, is evidence enough that BNI's approach works.

Elsewhere in this first UK edition of *SuccessNet* we focus on some of the remarkable success stories involving individual BNI members – many of which have come from the most unlikely quarters.

"It is not uncommon for newcomers to BNI to show initial scepticism, but it usually takes only one or two breakfast meetings to convince them that membership is one of the best and surest ways of gaining new business referrals," Lawson added.

"Several of our members have already won new contracts worth around £1 million, and a significant number have reported major increases in their turnover directly as a result of leads they've received over the breakfast table each week.

"Our initial progress in the UK has been outstanding, and we've only just begun."

Lawson, who readily admits he was a reluctant participant when his brother Stephen – a BNI Executive Director in Canada – first persuaded him to see how the organisation worked in North America said: "If there was ever a question about whether BNI's business philosophy would successfully

cross the Atlantic, we've now shown that its potential is just as big here.

"Its growth in Britain has easily outstripped its development in other countries around the world, and I have no doubt it will be received with equal enthusiasm across mainland Europe.

"We plan to have BNI's first German chapter up and running in Stuttgart by the early autumn, and others will quickly follow."

For the latest information about BNI's UK expansion, please contact Martin or Gillian Lawson on 01923-826181, or e-mail them at bninet@aol.com. BNI's website can be reached at www.bni.com.

Dialling up telecoms success through BNI

It was while working in the US during the early 1990s that Stuart Young first contemplated the huge business potential of a de-regulated telecommunications market – and decided he should be in the vanguard of the UK's new, highly competitive telecoms industry.

That was seven short years ago, since when Stuart and co-director colleagues Ellen Keble and Raymond Thomas have seen their independent telecommunications company, Axiom Telecom, join the industry's premier league, able to compete with major players such as Cable & Wireless, AT&T, Worldcom and BT – and frequently winning!

But it was Axiom's joining of BNI 12 months ago – as a core member of the Kingston Upon Thames Chapter – that really helped the company take off, first leading to a steady stream of modest business referrals and then, in January this year, producing a lead that is likely to become a million pound account within 12 months!

Both Stuart, Axiom's managing director, and Ellen, its marketing director, were attracted to BNI's fundamental concept of 'giver's gain', not least because it reflected the successful approach they had adopted to grow their business in an increasingly competitive market.

This foresight was to stand the embryonic company in good stead for rapid growth over the next few years.

Nick builds on his £300 investment

Insurance salesmen may not be everyone's favourite business callers, but East Sussex building boss Nick Green is just delighted he took the call when his insurance broker phoned earlier this year.

"After sorting out some insurance matters, he told me he'd recently joined a business networking group called BNI and invited me to go alone as his guest.

"I was very sceptical about the whole thing, but agreed to attend a breakfast meeting at his Tunbridge Wells (Southborough) Chapter," said Nick.

That was less than six months ago, since when Nick's company, Westridge Construction Limited has been given building contracts through BNI members worth nearly £100,000, and is currently tendering for other projects valued at more than £300,000 – all stemming from referrals passed to him over the breakfast table!

"Joining BNI has worked out far, far better than ever I thought possible," Nick admitted.

"I never thought we would find so much extra business in our first five months of membership, let alone have the opportunity to tender for some really large contracts."



PARTNERSHIP: Axiom's Stuart Young (left) and Ellen Keble with NFLI UK General Manager Paul Doughty.

Today, having resisted a number of early acquisition bids by green-eyed speculators, Axiom is going from strength to strength, helped not least by its weekly presence at BNI's Kingston chapter, through which it recently

won one of its largest new contracts, to design, create, package and launch 'LIFEdial', a total telephone service for 'Nutrition for Life International' (NFLI).

NFLI is one of the world's fastest growing and best respected network marketing companies with a wide portfolio of health products and supplements, and two years ago the company established a European headquarters in Warrington, Cheshire.

Its partnership with Axiom in developing the 'LIFEdial' brand was the result of NFLI's desire to expand its range of services, and Axiom is now working closely with the company to develop a full telecommunications portfolio, including monthly accounts, telephone cards and a number of innovative services.

Ellen Keble said: "When we were passed the initial lead, the company was already in the process of awarding this contract. I like to think we won the business from larger rivals because we were able to demonstrate a better understanding of NFLI's requirements, and could show our ability to meet them."

She said that while price was a key consideration when customers switched from BT or another major provider to an alternative like Axiom, they were only able to expand so rapidly by offering a top quality service.

"We aim to be 100 per cent reliable, accurate and efficient – and that's why we are able to take market share away from some of the bigger telecoms providers.

"It's an expanding market worldwide, and where better is there to promote our strengths to businesses than at BNI meetings? Joining BNI has undoubtedly helped us grow faster."

Any BNI member interested in reducing phone bills can contact Ellen Keble for a free review on 0181-255 2411.

Around the Chapters

Your very own SuccessNet

Welcome to YOUR own pages of *SuccessNet*, containing news, views, information and gossip about all that's topical in BNI.

Around the Chapters will be a regular feature in each issue of *SuccessNet*, giving individual members and team leaders the chance to tell the rest of our fast-growing UK network what you and your chapter have been doing – and how well you've been doing it.

That means we want to hear from YOU, because the more contributions we receive, the more varied and stimulating

will be these pages.

Your news does not need to be about a hugely valuable referral, nor any other major benefits you have received from BNI (although these are also wanted).

It might concern a training or other inter-chapter event, it could be an amusing anecdote, or it may relate to something which your chapter does particularly well.

Whatever it is, just tell us – either by writing to the address shown, or by phone, fax or e-mail.

And, while you're doing this,

we'd also like to know what you think of the new-look *SuccessNet*. Is the editorial balance right? What about ease of reading and the design? What else would you like to see in *SuccessNet*?

You can talk to us in one of the following ways:

Write to: Barbara Blume at Grosvenor Associates PR (members of Kingston Chapter) at: New House, Palmer Crescent, Kingston Upon Thames, KT1 2QT.

Or phone us on 0181-541 1121, fax us on 0181-546 1611 or e-mail gapr@btinternet.com.

Joyce's performance

While many BNI members would acknowledge the variable quality of their one-minute weekly presentations to inform colleagues of their business activities and the referrals they would like to receive, members of the Wandsworth Chapter, South London are guaranteed at least one truly magnetising presentation at every breakfast!

It comes from Gold Club member Joyce Webber who, after a career spanning TV, films, publishing and teaching, now acts as an independent distributor for a multi-billion dollar Japanese corporation whose magnetic health-enhancing products she delights in demonstrating to colleagues each Tuesday.

Joyce, who lives just round the corner from Chelsea Football Club's Stamford Bridge ground, said: "BNI gives me a superb weekly showcase and since becoming a member, my business has been dramatically kick-started."

"It has been a real success in terms of the new contacts I am now making and, equally important, I find that the range of referrals is now extending beyond our immediate chapter."

"This method of doing business is empowering and extremely effective."

As part of a company recognised as the leading provider of healthcare products in Japan and a global giant of the network marketing industry, Joyce said it was perhaps not surprising that the BNI system of passing referrals between members had worked so well for her.

"The products I demonstrate reduce stress, boost energy and promote deep, restorative sleep naturally, non-invasively and with no side effects."

"I get a real buzz from introducing their benefits to an audience which is sometimes bemused at the concept, especially at seven in the morning."

"I have also been able to introduce colleagues to BNI from as far apart as Reigate, Hampstead and Warwickshire."

"Without joining BNI, it would have taken so much longer to get my business off the ground," she said.

Joyce can be contacted on telephone/fax 0171-385 8112 or e-mail: joycewebber@compuserve.com.



Teamwork puts Warwick on the map

With a public relations consultancy, graphic designers, photographer and a printer among the founder members of the *Warwick Chapter*, perhaps the result was inevitable – the production of their very own BNI newsletter, called 'exchange' (pictured left).

Thanks to a teamwork effort involving several business represented in the chapter, issue one of *exchange* appeared earlier this year, acting both as a marketing tool for several members' services and a promotional vehicle to attract new members to the chapter, which meets every Friday at the Globe Hotel in Warwick.

Peter Bowen, who runs a publicity consultancy just outside Warwick and was one of those involved in the project, said: "It was well received and helped put BNI on the local map at a time when the Warwick chapter was quite new."

"We wrote the words while another member, Paul Hartley of Pyramid Design, put it together and a third member, Robert Collins, printed it."

Peter, the new director of the Warwick Chapter, added: "I'm delighted that BNI has decided to produce its own newsletter for the UK. I'm sure it is going to be well read."

"Members want to know what's going on in other chapters and having their own newsletter will encourage wider communication between groups in different parts of the country."

Leads galore – and plenty of visitors

Canterbury Chapter celebrated its first anniversary a couple of weeks ago – and gave itself a pat on the back for having produced an average of more than 100 new business referrals a month over the whole year.

Although not the largest group in Kent – it currently has 23 members – the chapter is also one of the more prolific when it comes to attracting new visitors to its breakfast meetings.

During June alone, the group welcomed over 50 guests, bringing its first year total visitors' tally to nearly 180.

Chapter member Peter Drummond, who provides general insurance services to his BNI colleagues, said: "The rapport between members of the chapter is particularly good, and our business relationships have undoubtedly been strengthened by taking part in various business and personal development 'games' arranged through BNI."

Peter added: "One of the best things about doing business through BNI is that you know you are going to receive the best possible deal from your fellow members."

Brian hopes BNI will bring divi

Pinner builder Brian Helme needs no act of God to persuade him that BNI membership works, but he's hoping to receive a particularly divine benefit within the next few weeks as a result of his joining the *Harrow Chapter* in March this year.

"I was recently passed a referral from one of my new BNI colleagues who told me to get in touch with a local vicar."

"They are building a new church and are about

to invite tenders, so I'm hoping that as a local company we'll be in the running for this," said Brian, whose construction company, Helme Builders, has been undertaking new building, maintenance and structural repair work for over 30 years.

Whether or not Brian builds the new church, he is very pleased he was able to overcome his initial natural reserve and join the Harrow chapter.

e's magnetising ormance

'Teletubby 1' takes the lead(s)

Tim Coombs from the *Canterbury Chapter* has probably set a national record for the number of leads he has generated during his first ten months with BNI.

In that time he has passed a staggering 240 referrals to his friends and colleagues around the breakfast table, averaging nearly six a week.

And, it seems, his referral bug is infectious, because the Canterbury Chapter's 23 members consistently pass an average of nearly two leads each, producing no less than 59 referrals at one of their meetings during the Spring – albeit 22 of these from, you've guessed it, Tim!

When *SuccessNet* sought to discover his secret, Tim's answer was disarmingly simple. "I just talk to a lot of people," he said.

"My business, TC Fire & Security Ltd, has a national network, so I'm working all around the country and I meet a lot of different people from all kinds of organisations.

"I tell them about the people I know from BNI and ask if they need any of their services.

"Most of the leads have probably been in insurance, but I am very aware of trying to be fair with the referrals I give.

"I can visualise every member of the chapter and if there is someone I haven't passed a referral to for a while, then I make a special effort on their behalf. I don't really need BNI for myself.

"Although it's nice to get work from BNI, the real satisfaction of membership to me is being able to help my friends. I get far more from giving than receiving."

Tim has been in business for six years now and has around 1,500 maintenance contracts for which he travels as far afield as Lancashire, Merseyside, the North West and the West Midlands.

Known affectionately in his own chapter as 'Teletubby 1' (because of his blue overalls), Tim enjoys being a winner.

"I like people to think I'm doing well and helping them out. It's the old giver's gain theory and it really does work.

"I was given a really good referral recently, from Robert French, our regional director, who put me in touch with a member of the *Ashford Chapter*, resulting in a £40,000 contract."



MAGNETISING: Joyce Webber's presentations are always a breakfast highpoint.

Averaging six leads a week is a challenging record to maintain, but Tim is quietly confident that nobody's going to beat him, just yet! But, perhaps you know differently?

What goes around comes around

They know how to network effectively down in *Tunbridge Wells*, where a group of BNI's chapter members have discovered a business synergy with a collective silver lining.

Over their regular early morning breakfast meetings, four chapter members involved in specialist IT recruitment, project management and financial services, accountancy and banking, decided that by pooling their expertise they could help create a team of independent, self-employed IT consultants whose services are in increasing demand from many of the UK's biggest computer companies.

Graham Adams, from IT recruitment consultants Reeve Alexander said: "We are co-ordinating a project with Xport IT – a major supplier of computer specialists to the industry – that will provide up to 100 individual IT specialists with their own limited companies, enabling them to provide consultancy services to major blue chip clients much more effectively.

"By working closely with Xport IT, Ward McKenzie accountants and Business Banking Consultants, all of whom are members of the Tunbridge Wells chapter, we have been able to define the market's needs very specifically, and develop a solution that suits both major clients and the IT consultants."

He added: "This could only have happened through an organisation like BNI, because in other circumstances the key partners involved would never have met, or been able to spend sufficient time developing the project.

"It is just another example of BNI's hidden benefits to members – which is perhaps why I've already recommended membership to several of my business associates."

Lawson's Lore

BNI National Director
MARTIN LAWSON writes...

The pace at which BNI is expanding, not just across the UK, but throughout the world, is nothing short of dramatic.

If you've read the article on the front page – and various other stories throughout this issue of *SuccessNet*, then you'll know that 1998 is on course to be BNI's single most successful year – and we're barely past the half way stage.

Last year, BNI launched 218 chapters in the first six months of this year we have already opened 140 new groups.

When BNI's founder, Dr Ivan Misner paid his first visit to Britain less than six months ago, the organisation had just over 900 chapters in five countries around the world.

Today, there are no fewer than 1,050 chapters in six countries and, by the end of this year, we're likely to see these figures substantially increased.

By any measure, that tells us BNI is a huge success story, and one that can only grow bigger.

Why? Because doing business in the modern world can be an increasingly lonely affair.

Advanced electronic communications and sophisticated computer technology might be a godsend to business, but they also bring the potential for individuals to become isolated in their offices, doing more and more of their total business through the computer screen, e-mail, fax and phone.

Human beings are not insular creatures. We need personal contact and communication, with our family, our friends, and our business colleagues.

That's why BNI works, because it provides the opportunity – week after week – for business people to interact and, as Ivan Misner would say, "to get belly to belly."

There simply is no better way to do business than by getting to know those to whom you are giving work, and those who may want to give you business.

We were not designed to operate by remote control, and nor should we want to.

The best new leads always comes through personal referral, because when someone else knows you and trusts your expertise, they'll want to give you business.

Make no mistake. There's a growing vitality and determination throughout our fast-growing UK network, which reflects the belief of individual members – more than 1,200 at the last count – in BNI's ability to help them generate significant extra business.

Many have already received substantial additional contracts from referrals passed across the breakfast table and, I have no doubt, many more will share in this success over the next few months.

If you give BNI your personal commitment, and if you demonstrate enthusiasm for its philosophy when you attend your chapter meetings, you can be sure of one thing: You WILL benefit from being part of the world's largest and fastest-growing business networking organisation.

Martin Lawson

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divine benefits

"A business colleague invited me along and I was a bit worried that it wouldn't be my scene, because I'm not a natural extrovert. But I needn't have worried. I very quickly got into the swing of things, we picked up a number of jobs and I don't mind admitting that joining the chapter has brought me out of myself.

"I'm starting to feel more confident about promoting myself and the business."

Around the Chapters

A perfect day for the early birdies!



READY TO TEE OFF: Steve Lawson and his team prepare to tee off at Ealing Golf Club.

BNI organisers have a penchant for getting their members up at the crack of dawn, so a Golf Day event that started just as the sun was rising, was about par for the course!

Despite the early start, 41 brave souls from five of BNI's southern regions turned up at Ealing Golf Club's first tee earlier this month, to be greeted by a salutary memory hook – one on each tee, to be precise – sponsored by a BNI member!

Regular golf club members watched in amusement as BNI's wanna-be Montgomerys chipped and putted their way round the 18 hole course before declaring Hugh Weston of the Epsom chapter, the overall winner. Hugh is a solicitor from the Taylor Wilcox partnership.

Runner up was Peter Moss, from Liverpool St Chapter, who had travelled from Southend for the day, while third place went to Jo Fitzsimmons from Ealing. Kingston Chapter's Colin Chalmers and his team won the Team Prize.

The evening's presentation dinner attract-

ed even more participants than the golf, with 69 guests enjoying not only a fine dinner, but one of the most lavishly sponsored raffles anyone could recall.

With numerous prizes – all donated by BNI members – ranging from a case of vintage wine to golf umbrellas, BNI polo shirts, a professionally sketched cartoon of the day's events and a free will, all 69 guests found themselves holding winning tickets.

One or two caused a ripple of embarrassment, like the prize won by a certain Allied Irish Bank manager who proudly collected his gift – a leather bound document folder – to find it carrying the 'Barclays Bank' motif. Needless to say, he felt obliged to re-affle it!

Gordon Wilkie, South Central London executive director, said: "It was a super day and quite apart from some great golf, a lot of business networking took place between members from different chapters who wouldn't normally meet each other, and I fully expect considerable business to result."

Will the event be repeated?

"Our new BNI golf trophy has space for 21 winners, so we'll have to have further events – but someone else can organise it next year!" he added.

BBC TV revisits BNI for breakfast

Northwood Chapter members unexpectedly found themselves sharing breakfast with a nationwide TV audience when they turned up for what they'd thought would be a normal Friday morning meeting at Batchworth Park Golf Club.

Anticipating the announcement of an interest rate rise, BBC TV's Business News wanted to obtain the views of small to medium sized companies about whether their local bank managers offered sufficient help when the financial going got tough – and where better to canvas opinion than at a BNI breakfast meeting.

Chapter Director Shelly Bansal said: "The first I knew of BBC TV's plans to visit us was the previous afternoon, so I hardly had time to tell my members to be on their best behaviour."

"There were a few surprised faces when they found themselves sharing breakfast with six million viewers of BBC Breakfast Time."

Shelly needn't have worried. The chapter passed nearly 40 referrals and the BBC got what they wanted – a frank interview with chapter member Nick Mansi, owner of a popular garden centre, who spoke very positively about the improvement in relationships between banks and their business customers.

Well, he had to really, since his own bank manager, Barclays' Peter Bashford, belongs to the same BNI chapter and was sitting directly opposite him during breakfast!

Fellow Northwood member, John McCarroll, co-director of Denham-based courier company, AMJ Distribution, went even further in his praise of Peter Bashford.

"I used to bank with another branch of Barclays who were far from helpful."

"When I joined BNI and learned about Peter's approach to his business customers, I moved my own company's accounts to his branch – since when he's also been given the accounts of five of my business associates."

"Joining BNI has been tremendous for us."

"Since February this year, I've gained accounts through BNI referrals worth around £100,000 a year."

"It's so good for business that my co-director is now joining the *Uxbridge Chapter*, from which we've already received one potentially high value referral."

Internet 'directory' for BNI members

An Internet directory service is being developed which will be capable of listing the names, services and contact details of all 20,000-plus BNI members around the world.

The BNI-approved website – accessible at www.businessnetworking.com – will also be able to provide comprehensive data about the services offered by each BNI member and highlight particular events and business opportunities. Generic BNI information, such as networking tips, listings and contact details for all chapters, and a helpsite, is an integral part of the website.

More than 600 BNI members in the USA and Canada are already listed in the Internet directory, which is currently being upgraded to provide fast and easy access for BNI's UK and European members.

UK national director Martin Lawson said: "There have been many requests for a BNI members directory and we believe the new Internet website will go a long way towards meeting this demand."

More detailed information about this new service will appear in the next *SuccessNet*.

After just three months, Dublin (Airport) Chapter has taken off so successfully that BNI's regional director Patrick Guiden is already busy developing two further groups in the Irish capital.

Nearly 120 prospective members attended the Airport Chapter's Information launch meeting in April at Kittihawks Restaurant (now its regular venue) and the original core group of 10 members has trebled in just 12 weeks to a very active 30, under the leadership of solicitor, Maurice Leahy.

Trades and professions represented include an architect, photographer, translator, accountant, plumber and cabinet maker.

Significantly, in its first two months the Airport Chapter also yielded a healthy 150 referrals, averaging almost 20 a week and, while many of these early leads were internal business referrals between members, already

Airport chapter is flying high

the trend is moving towards referrals from third parties.

The Airport Chapter was the third to be launched in Ireland, following close on the heels of two groups started just weeks earlier in Cork.

Since then, two further chapters have been formed in Cork and two more will be opening soon in Dublin, under the direction of BNI

regional directors, Pat Guiden in Dublin and Mort Murphy based in Cork.

"I feel very positive about what's happening over here," reports Patrick. "I'm really looking forward to getting more chapters up and running because I believe BNI will really take off in the Irish business community."

Patrick feels that one of the most important aspects of BNI is the way that relationships have been fostered between chapter members.

"A lot of new friendships have been formed and members are rapidly building up their businesses and enhancing their relationships in a very positive way."

Two members who have found BNI extremely useful in complementing each other's business are art director, David McKane of graphic designers Visart and PR Consultant, Graham Smith of Wordsmith PR & Editorial Services.

Already they have collaborated on a number of projects such as brochures and corporate literature, while their combined resources also gained a significant account for advertising and promotional activities on behalf of Connemara Marble – pipping a number of leading Dublin agencies.

As a result, the two firms are networking closely and both David and Graham have established a rapport and a confidence in each other's work that augurs well for future collaboration.

Meanwhile Architect Neil Sholdice, who joined the Airport chapter less than two months ago, has already received eight referrals – five of which he has converted to actual contracts, with the others good possibilities.

"My BNI membership fee has already been repaid several times over, and I've barely walked through the door," he said, adding that BNI was the dream solution for every 'one man band' business. Unlike the golf club scenario, there is better quality exchange of business referrals delivered across the breakfast table – it's more reliable and accurate.

"BNI is particularly helpful to me in that it gives me the critical mass to network my abilities without breaching the publicity ethics of the Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland, which prevents me from advertising in the public domain.

"In the true spirit of BNI's 'Givers Gain' philosophy, I find myself now constantly on the look out for opportunities for my colleagues.

"BNI has been brilliant for me and I have no hesitation in recommending it to my friends – two of whom have just joined."

City short on trades

"Where have all London's craftsmen gone?" That's the dilemma facing executive director Laura Hurren, whose introduction of BNI into the heart of the City's Square Mile and West End has been hampered by just one thing – too many professionals and no tradespeople.

When she launched the Liverpool Street Chapter in April this year, more than 100 pinstriped suits turned out to greet her, but there wasn't a tradesman (or woman) in sight – and three months later that remains the position.

"It's both curious and unfortunate, because an electrician, a builder and a decorator would do really well in one of the City chapters," she said.

"In some of BNI's suburban chapters, the challenge has occasionally been to find sufficient professionals to balance the number of crafts and tradespeople, but our problem is recruiting members with manual skills.

"The irony is that there is a wealth of new business for such people among chapters in these more affluent areas of central London."

Both Liverpool Street and Clerkenwell chapters now have around 30 members, while Laura's inaugural group – the Holborn chapter – has just completed its first six months and has 20 members.

She added: "The city chapters are very receptive to BNI's business philosophy and members are keen to expand the concept.

"We hope to achieve this in September with the launch of another chapter – the City Chapter – which I believe will be very successful, located within the Square Mile. The West End groups – West One and West End are proving equally successful. Both have 26 members and a recent visitors' day attracted 50 guests.

"But again, neither of these chapters has any tradespeople, and that's a significant loss.



DILEMMA: Laura Hurren

"They'd be made so welcome at any of our central London chapters and if any BNI members know any colleagues who might be interested in visiting us I'd love to hear from them."

While her five existing chapters are generating good business for each other, much of Laura's time is currently spent dealing with some of London's more practical problems, such as trying to organise adequate parking for members, keeping the cost of breakfast down and, her biggest challenge yet, finding a suitable replacement venue for Liverpool Street Chapter.

If you think you can help end Laura's dilemma, or you know of tradespeople who would like to join a central London chapter you can call her on 01923 897175.

Scotland's first launch in August

Scotland's first BNI chapter is due to be launched in Glasgow in August when newly appointed regional director, Hugh Lee will urge canny Scots to set aside their natural caution towards new business initiatives and welcome BNI with open arms.

With a core group of nearly a dozen would-be members, Hugh has set a provisional date of Friday August 14 for the launch, which he believes should attract more than 60 of the city's businesspeople.

Hugh, who is regional director for West Central Scotland, said the organisation's rapid UK growth belied the convention that British people were prejudiced against imported wisdom from America.

"BNI has already produced millions of pounds worth of new business for UK members in its first 18 months and I want to see Strathclyde businesses share in this success.

"My advice to local business people is to put natural caution aside and try this new approach.

"When you are offered quality business referrals, you don't worry about where the idea came from.

"I am sure very few Glasgow folk would turn down the offer of additional business income!"

Hugh recently enlisted the help of seasoned BNI Executive Director Steve Lawson to

develop interest in Glasgow and, after spending several days in the city Steve said: "We have a very strong core group and are now in the countdown stages to the launch.

"I'm pretty sure that as soon as local businesspeople see what BNI can do for them, we'll not only have a highly successful first chapter, but be looking to open up further groups around the city.

"We're already looking at developing a second chapter in the Bearsden and Milngarvie area."

Anyone with business contacts in these areas who would like information about BNI should contact Hugh Lee on 0141-641 2981 or 0410 768337.

by MIKE SMITH
Co-Executive Director, St. Louis

I believe networking is an acquired skill, not unlike many other skills we master, first by understanding and then placing into practice the principles by which we can gradually establish a degree of proficiency through application.

It should also be noted that our most valuable assets in this achievement would have to be the quality of our contacts and the degree of our credibility.

Edward Everett Hale was credited with saying: "I am only one, but still I am one; I cannot do everything, but still I can do something. And because I cannot do everything, I must not refuse to do the something I can do."

If you can agree that almost every action begins with a single thought or first step to accomplish the end result, this single quote could become the theme for becoming a professional or 'Master of Networking'.

In the following paragraphs I use *seven words* which I believe define the principles for becoming the successful networker you want to be, and provide a perspective for what I call 'The cycle of success'.

Let's start by anchoring you in these principles with something we call habits. We are all accustomed to referring to these as good or bad.

From now on I would like you to think of these as habits of reaction (bad habit) or habits of perspective (good habit).

It is the repeated practice in these two areas that determine the degree of success or depth of failure we achieve.

Vince Lombardi said: "Success is not a 'sometimes' thing. Success is a habit, unfortunately, so is losing. Winning is not everything, but making the effort is. Not everyone can be a winner all the time, but everyone can make that effort, that commitment to excellence. The quality of a person's life is in direct proportion to his commitment to excellence, regardless of their chosen field of endeavour."

PRINCIPLE 1 – Your belief system

Neil Young says, in one of his songs: "I believe in what you're saying to be the undisputed truth, but I keep doing what I'm doing because it keeps me in my youth." Most of us might agree that this thought process probably won't get this person very far, unless he changes his thinking and decides to get a different mindset.

Change is the most difficult thing most of us have to deal with every day, but it's important to understand this particular principle completely if you plan to master networking.

We are not by nature accustomed to talking to everyone with whom we come in contact each day, to help us acquire new business.

Unless you are totally locked into a strong belief of practising these skills as often as you can to become proficient, it would be very easy not to make a strong commitment to achieve your goal.

It's true that your thoughts determine your actions, and your actions determine your attitude, so your attitude must certainly determine your results, if your belief system is in place.

Norman Vincent Peale said: "Change your thoughts and you change your world." The same quote could have said: "Change your beliefs and you change your world."

Your belief system to become the best possible networker, will be reinforced by the success you achieve.

Set yourself a time frame, through your participation and involvement, to build the model you want to achieve.

Finally, when it comes to your belief system, you can either live in the model you create, or you can live in someone else's.

Here are some final ingredients for this prin-

Networking Skills

Part 1: It all starts with belief...

If you are already a member of BNI – and most readers will be – then you've probably already discovered the many benefits of membership, not just in terms of more business and better profits, but in your personal development and professional relationships.

But have you stopped to consider why BNI's philosophy works so well, and what is required of you when you make a commitment to the organisation?

In this article, which will appear in Dr. Ivan Misner's next book, 'Masters of Networking', Mike Smith, Co-Executive Director of BNI in St Louis, offers his view of how we can all make the very best of BNI membership...

ciple which you can develop with some practice.

First, determine if your belief in becoming the master of your craft (networking) is real enough and fixed firmly within the standards you want to accomplish.

Secondly, what amount of time and energy are you going to commit to developing these skill levels? I call this the 'You Factor'.

Will you become a student and develop a 'whatever it takes attitude'?

The last part of this principle is simple and easy: join as many organisations as you can.

These networking organisations should offer a structure to help increase your exposure in the marketplace and reinforce your belief system by diversifying your networks to achieve your success.

PRINCIPLE 2 – Your commitment

Have you ever noticed that most of us live in what I call "the 90-day mentality syndrome?" We will try out just about anything for 90 days, and if it doesn't work out, what have we lost?

The interesting thing about networking is that it's about building long term relationships and without a strong commitment backed by a game-plan that works for you, the time you spend will be wasted.

This principle requires change of a different degree, unlike your beliefs which can change from time to time.

A strong commitment has to lock in and hold if your long-term results are to be beneficial.

I like to anonymously quote, "*Commitment means you will do the thing you said you would do, long after the feelings you had when you said it, have up and left you.*"

Everyone will tell you they are involved, but the best story I ever heard explaining the difference relates to the 'Chicken who gave up the egg' (involved) and the unfortunate Pig 'who gave up the bacon' – that Pig was definitely committed!).

It takes time to build meaningful relation-

ships. The first year is the 'getting to know you year', year two is the 'getting to like you year' and year three is the 'getting to love you year'.

If we can understand this simple analogy, it's not difficult to understand that commitments are going to take time.

PRINCIPLE 3 – Your ultimate goal

You might be asking yourself at this point why I didn't start here. I felt it was important to establish the other two principles first.

It's important to determine what your expectations are and to be realistic about the time frame needed to finally obtain your Master Networker goal.

Remember, if you do not know where you are going, you can start from just about anywhere.

As one of the directors of the largest referral organisation in the world, we teach our members the importance of knowing what you want from BNI: more business or more contacts to get more business.

We encourage an understanding of the idea that 'constant contacts can create wealth' or any other purpose you deem important from the process of successful networking.

The time you take to prepare for your ultimate goal will be invaluable later as you continue to improve and develop your skill level.

One of our founding fathers, Benjamin Franklin, was once asked how he would devote his time to chopping down a tree if he were only given an hour to complete the task.

Franklin replied by saying he would spend the majority of his time sharpening his axe.

Wouldn't you agree that you might want to have a definite plan in place, rather than go spinning out of control with no place to go, even if you're going fast.

It is true that ignorance on fire is better than knowledge on ice, but you still need to have your goals firmly in place.

One last thought I often share with BNI members is to adopt an 'on purpose' attitude towards establishing your ultimate goal and injecting the necessary 'sweat equity' it takes to achieve it. It is a fact that what you always do with the last ten per cent of your effort, yields you 90 per cent of your results.

I look forward to sharing Part II of 'Networking Skills' in the next issue of SuccessNet.

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