



BRINGING EMPLOYMENT HOPE: The new training centre is up and running.

BNI's key role in regeneration

Three members of BNI's Stoke-on-Trent Chapter have been instrumental in getting a key business regeneration project off the ground in one of the Midlands' most economically deprived areas – bringing hope of full time re-employment to hundreds of local people.

In an altruistic twist of BNI's founding philosophy of 'Giver's Gain', chapter members Jeff Jervis, Barry Balcanquall and Ian Walker have played a major role in transforming the socio-economic fate of the North Staffordshire community, combining their contacts and expertise, to help bring about a mini industrial revolution in a depressed part of the Midlands.

Following the demise of the region's traditional heavy industries, such as engineering and ceramics, mining and steel working, with consequent heavy redundancies, the North

Staffordshire area was considered ideal for inbound investment in service industries and the provision of call centres in particular.

But despite the plentiful availability of land, a hard-working and willing labour force with relatively low salary expectations, the cost of re-training so many people in customer relations and service centre skills looked prohibitive – especially given the high cost of the necessary computer and communications equipment.

Enter Jeff, Barry and Ian. As Enterprise Manager for Stoke-on-Trent College, one of the key institutions involved in the economic regeneration programme, Jeff Jervis realised that without some form of sponsorship or commercial benevolence, the project to re-train former heavy industry workers and the unemployed was in danger before it got off the ground.

The training centre itself – based at the Burslem campus of the Stoke-on-Trent College

5,000 up ...and still counting

With a further 19 new chapters launched and membership passing the 5,000 mark it has been a busy quarter for BNI in the UK and Ireland.

It is especially pleasing to note the arrival of BNI in Wales – the first chapter was launched in Wrexham last month – and continued expansion in the South and East Midlands regions.

Central and eastern Scotland have also seen BNI consolidate its position with the opening of several chapters during the summer months.

National Director Gillian Lawson said: "It is very rewarding to see the map of the UK and Ireland gradually being filled in as BNI moves into new regions, and expands its foothold in existing areas."

"In just three and a half years – in terms of the number of chapters and members we now have – we have become the second strongest BNI region in the world, behind only the USA where it all began."

She added: "It took us two years to open our first 80 chapters in the UK and Ireland, but by the time we reach our fourth anniversary this December, we will

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BNI crosses the Welsh border – Back Page

Full house for golf day

BNI's third annual golf day at Bushey Hall Golf Club, Hertfordshire, provided a fitting end to the summer, attracting a full complement of 60 golfers, with over 70 members participating in the evening's networking event and awards dinner.

Organiser Paul Wren said: "The event was a resounding success, both on and off the golf course. Some excellent golf was played, but everyone – the good and novices – had fun.

"The evening's networking event was a very sociable affair, enabling members and their guests to make new contacts and to learn more about each other's businesses."



GOLF DAY WINNERS: From left: Sean Milsom, Trevor Angus, Steve Schogger, Leon Gray, Martin Kaye, Phil Berg. All members of the Stanmore chapter, one of whose two teams won the first prize.

The team event was won by Phil Berg, Trevor Angus, Andrew Rhodes and Leon Gray of Stanmore Chapter, while individual prizes were awarded to Steve Schogger for the longest drive; Phil Berg for the straightest drive and to Andy Murphie for getting his tee shot nearest to the pin.

After completing their round, all players had a chance to participate in a putting competition which was won by John Maguire who took home a top of the range Tiger Woods putter, closely followed by second-placed Jerry Byrne.

Structured to appeal to golfers of all abilities and handicaps, the tournament was spiced up by the added incentive of a new Renault Clio car on offer to anyone getting a hole in one. Sadly, despite some valiant efforts, nobody proved up to the task and the car was returned to the dealer, much to the relief of Pinner Chapter member Richard Grainger of LRG Insurance who had underwritten the policy which would have paid for the car had anyone won it.

The evening's entertainment was provided by BNI ambassador and professional magician Michael Vincent, who mesmerised guests with his tricks.

Paul added: "BNI is most grateful to this year's sponsors for their support."

BNI's key role

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– was funded by Stoke-on-Trent Council and Staffordshire County Council, but it desperately needed the technology systems to make it work.

Jeff's mind turned to BNI and its 'Giver's Gain' approach to business, so he talked to fellow chapter member, Barry Balcanquall of PCDI about software for the project and, to his delight, Barry was able to persuade Goldmine, an American specialist manufacturer to provide the software free of charge.

He then approached another chapter colleague, Ian Walker, Sales Manager for Sitelink Telecom who was able to arrange for Nitsuko hardware to be installed – also free of charge.

Together they have created a 'virtual' call centre for trainees on the Burslem campus, and as a result of its success, Regional Director Rosemary Thew is considering siting West Midlands Employment Service's call centre in Stoke-on-Trent, while another 34 call centre providers are interested in establishing centres in the area, with the potential for creating 1,500 jobs.

Jeff Jervis said: "Without BNI's arrival in Stoke, the various people involved in the project would not have met, and the centre would not have been established.

"I believe the organisation can take great credit for playing an important role in the regeneration of this part of the Midlands."

Shaping the future

In common with every professional organisation, BNI's activities are underpinned by policies, rules and procedures that exist for the efficient, smooth-running operation of the organisation. And, when new members join BNI, they declare they will abide by these rules and procedures.

What newcomers may not fully realise is that the same rules and procedures have been formulated by ordinary, individual members of BNI who are also encouraged to put forward ideas and suggestions for enhancing or improving any aspect of BNI's structure.

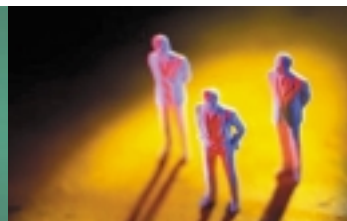
If you are interested in contributing to the evaluation of members' suggestions, one of the best ways to achieve this is by indicating (to your local BNI director) that you are willing to serve on the International Board of Advisors, whose task it is to assess all policy issues relating to BNI.

The Board comprises rank and file members from chapters all over the world, and its purpose is to ensure there is open and effective

communication between the membership and BNI head office. As a Board member, you have direct access to BNI Founder and Chief Executive Dr Ivan Misner, and by helping to evaluate all new suggestions, you can help shape the organisation's policies to reflect the wishes of its members.

National Director Martin Lawson commented: "I would like to see at least one representative from each of our main regions nominated to serve on the International Board. Anyone who thinks he or she could make a useful contribution, should let their Chapter Director know they are happy for their name to be put forward. All such nominations are fully considered and those regarded as suitable are forwarded to Dr Misner who personally makes each appointment."

Among the most recent UK/Irish appointments to the Board of Advisors are Jane Hart from the Cheltenham Chapter, and Maurice Leahy from Dublin's Airport Chapter.



Capture the moment to win digital camera

There is an old saying in newsrooms the length and breadth of the country that "a picture is worth a thousand words". The persuasive power of the visual image has always been paramount in media terms, and it's not hard to see why.

With your help, we now want to harness that power in *SuccessNet*. You will already have seen that this issue of BNI's quarterly newsletter is different – brought to you in colour for the first time, and we hope you like the greater impact it presents.

However, the single most important factor in any successful full colour publication is the quality of its pictures, which is why we're offering a superb prize – a high quality digital camera – to the member who submits the best, relevant photograph for our next (winter) issue, to be published at the start of January.

With over 230 chapters around the UK and in Ireland, representing the widest possible range of business talents, we believe BNI's own members' newsletter should be able to reflect that quality and diversity in pictures as well as words.

We want lively, colourful, action pictures which reflect the creativity, the enterprise and the determination of BNI members and their business activities – whether inside or outside the chapter, for example many members use unusual props or clothing for their 60-second presentations, which could make an amusing or dramatic shot! The more unusual, offbeat and creative you can make



them, the better your chance of winning our prize – which will only be awarded if the expert panel of judges believes one or more entries are of sufficient quality.

On a technical note, submissions should be sent – as colour prints (not transparencies) – to Malcolm Grosvenor, Editor, *SuccessNet*, New House, Palmer Crescent, Kingston Upon Thames, KT1 2QT and arrive no later than Tuesday, 12th December.

Alternatively, entries can be sent electronically (either as .jpg or .tif files) in which case they must be high resolution images, scanned at a minimum of 300dpi.

So start planning your BNI photo assignments now and, who knows, you could soon be the lucky recipient of a smart, new digital camera – on which further *SuccessNet* contributions can be captured!

Must try harder!

Oh dear, it had to happen. After inundating the *SuccessNet* office all year long with your clever and witty contributions, your memory hooks largely dried up in the summer heat!

With just a handful to choose from for this quarter's bubbly award, Executive Editor Gillian Lawson liked the directness and simplicity of Duncan Millar's contribution.

Duncan is Technical Director of Doncaster-based Imagine If Ltd which produces Digital CD ROM Business cards that can contain text, audio or video – hence his memory hook, when promoting his services to colleagues at the Leeds (Thursday) Chapter is: "If your business card could actually speak... what would you want it to say?"

So, a bottle of champagne is on its way to Doncaster, Duncan, with our congratulations.

And our commiserations to runner-up:

Derek of Embassy Caterers, a member of Chelmsford Meadows Chapter, whose "Catering with no boundaries" conjures up a mouthwatering feast.

With no disrespect to this issue's winner and runner-up, you know – and we know – you can do a lot better!

So we'll keep the competition running for another quarter in the hope that you keep your memory hooks coming in.

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 bninet@aol.com.

Closing date for all competition entries is Friday November 24.

5,000 and we're still counting

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have trebled that number!"

New chapters opened in the July – September period are: Belfast City, Chelmsford Meadows, Daventry, Evesham, Hereford, Leeds Moortown, Leicester Tigers, Long Melford, Merseyside Delta & Merseyside Oscar (both Formby-based), Ormond, Redbridge, Redditch, Silbury, Stockport 1, Strathkelvin, Thorpe Wood, Wakefield Stanley and Wrexham.

12 more pot black

Another dozen members have earned the right to join BNI's exclusive 'black badge' club in recognition of their success at introducing members – and business referrals – to their chapters.

They are Tom Parry of Merseyside Alpha Chapter, Alan Kant, Horsham; Peter Reeves, Tunbridge Wells; Steve Marshall, Croydon (1); Nicholas Dutton, Gloucester City; Charles Dimsdale, Stansted; Douglas Aitkin, Dunfermline; Forbes Walker, Kirkcaldy; Catherine Begg, Edinburgh West; Allen Chubb, Knightsbridge (London), and Chris Chater and Colin Brett, both Northampton Collingtree.

Quote

(from BNI's European Conference 2000)

"Winging it isn't OK"



Around the Chapters

The Big Breakfast

As a member of Warrington Chapter, Bob Abson had more reason than most to ensure the size and quality of the breakfasts served to his BNI colleagues were fully up to scratch.

That's because, as the owner of Paddington House Hotel where the Chapter has met since its inception, Bob's 'full Monty' breakfasts already enjoyed something of a local reputation.

So when he bought the 62-bed Wendover Hotel in Eccles, on the outskirts of Manchester a few weeks ago, Bob knew he'd have at least one captive and appreciative customer base for his latest venture, having learnt that BNI's West Manchester Chapter had

adopted the venue for their meetings.

"We are renowned for providing a great cooked breakfast at the Paddington House Hotel where we give BNI members the full monty, and while the new hotel – renamed Monton House – provides a buffet breakfast, I can guarantee our West Manchester colleagues that it will be just as good," promised Bob.

Bob Abson is a BNI enthusiast and says its principles are very similar to those he uses in his own businesses.

"I've never relied on massive advertising, believing that word of mouth is much more effective," he said.

"People always come back to you or pass on a recommendation when they're satisfied with the service they get and it's the same with BNI.

"I've used the services of several BNI members to help me in setting up the

Monton House Hotel because I know they're professional and reliable."

Chapter colleagues who assisted include Mike Allen of Signarama, who produced the signs for the hotel, Alan Brown of Kallkwik who produced the new stationery, Gary Skentelbury who promoted the hotel on the Internet, Philip Wrothford-Thomas (his financial advisor) and solicitor James Edwards from Linaker and Linaker.

Bob's new venture poses just one problem. Both his Warrington Chapter and the West Manchester Chapter meet on Friday mornings and, with 25 miles between them, he can't be in both hotels at once.

"I'm hoping that Nigel Gates, my manager at Monton House, will be joining the local chapter – but I still intend to keep an eye on his breakfasts, to maintain our reputation!"

Lawsons' Lore

BNI National Directors MARTIN & GILLIAN LAWSON write...

Something very reassuring has been happening in BNI throughout the UK and Ireland. We are seeing major national commercial organisations investing their time and resources in multiple membership of BNI chapters – and looking to place senior staff in all relevant new chapters that are opening.

In this issue of *SuccessNet*, as in previous editions, you will read articles about banks, building societies, legal and accountancy practices – and a growing number of more regionally-based businesses – which, having recognised the immense benefits of belonging to BNI, are now positively awaiting the development of new groups which they can join.

We are delighted to witness this trend for one reason in particular: it demonstrates that BNI has started to mature into a clearly effective and productive business organisation, whose tangible strengths are increasingly respected by key players in British commerce and industry.

We have of course known for some time, that several of the major banks have engaged in friendly rivalry to fill the single 'bank manager's chair' in new and existing chapters, just as we have been aware that some of the larger regional building societies and professional accountancy practices have gradually been extending their presence in specific geographical areas, taking an early leading role in

the development of new BNI chapters.

What is particularly pleasing now, is to hear the same earnest message being repeated again and again by these organisations, who make no secret of their multiple membership. These businesses – many of them substantial institutions – are not investing ever greater time and human resources in BNI for altruistic reasons, however beneficial membership may be in terms of improved community and customer relations.

They are consolidating their positions within BNI because they know it makes total business sense to do so, and because they know that having dramatically enhanced their contacts and standing within a particular community where BNI has a presence, they would be foolish to relinquish their position to a competitor. In short, they want to be part of BNI because they have discovered – in many cases, very quickly – how well our Giver's Gain philosophy works.

While we will continue to ensure that every chapter retains the optimum balance of members, drawn from the widest possible range of trades, crafts, services and professions, we can be proud that BNI is now increasingly regarded as a preferred alternative to certain more traditional – but less practical – business organisations. With well over 230 chapters and more than 5,000 members in the UK and Ireland alone, we are rapidly becoming a force to be reckoned with!

Merseyside goes 2x2

Following the unique launch of Merseyside's Alpha and Beta chapters in Liverpool earlier this year, Regional Director Terry Hamill has done it again!

Formby-based Oscar and Delta chapters were launched within 24 hours of each other at the end of August. Both chapters meet at Formby Golf Club.

And, as *SuccessNet* went to press, Terry was about to complete his hat trick of doubles – opening of Bravo and Charlie chapters in St Helens.

"BNI is really taking off in Merseyside," said Terry. "Merseyside membership now exceeds 100 and we've generated about £7.5m in referrals in the last six months."

Quote

(from BNI's European Conference 2000)

"The system is the secret"



Breakfast at Dorothy's

Let's face it: why would any BNI member want to eat a meal in a smart hotel restaurant when they could enjoy the unique atmosphere of breakfasting in the middle of a cold grey warehouse, surrounded by packing cases?

But if members of Limerick's Treaty Chapter felt deprived of their usual luxury – breakfast meetings held at the town's Hanrattys Hotel – at least one member, Dorothy Quinn, was feeling pleased with herself as colleagues started arriving at the Docklands Business Park for the Chapter's most unusual meeting of the year.

As Area Manager of Beverly Records Management, Dorothy (pictured right) was struggling to explain her company's business and obtain good referrals from chapter colleagues, when she hit on the perfect solution: Why not bring the entire Chapter to her business base so that members could see what happened for themselves?

And so it was that an impromptu restaurant was hastily created in the



middle of Beverly's main warehouse, with all 33 of Treaty Chapter's members turning up to be greeted with a delightful breakfast spread – courtesy of fellow member, Michael Madden of Scrummies Restaurant.

To show there were no hard feelings about losing his regular weekly BNI custom, another member, John Likely

of Hanrattys Hotel, even provided tables, chairs and all the trimmings to create a restaurant-like ambience.

Beverly Records Management manages and stores confidential documents and magnetic media, and Dorothy mounted displays around the tables so that members could view the computerised systems and walk along the racking to see how documents are stored.

"It was the best thing I've done since joining BNI," said Dorothy. "I felt my chapter colleagues needed to see at first hand what my business involved, and get a taste for the kind of referrals I needed. The idea of hosting a chapter breakfast worked a treat.

"Since then, the quality and quantity of referrals has increased dramatically and I'd estimate that about 50 per cent of my business now comes through BNI. I've even had to rack out another warehouse to accommodate the increased demand," she added.

Dorothy joined BNI some eight months ago and reckons it provides the perfect business marketing system. "It took me about six months to find my feet, but it's really working for me now."



A day at the races

It was a pretty safe bet that combining business networking with a day at the races would prove a popular idea, and that's how things turned out for members of the Tayside, Perth and Falkirk chapters who enjoyed a wonderful day at Perth Races last month – with one or two BNI tipsters netting substantial wins!

Audrey Fenton the new Perth Chapter Director organised the event, but the day's success must have gone to her head, since she couldn't be found when it was time to leave. Happily we can report that she has turned up safe and well – and is already planning a repeat outing!

Beating the blockades

The middle of a petrol crisis is not the time most of us would choose to launch a new chapter.

But, having planned Hereford's kick-off in mid-September, Assistant Director Nick Dutton had little alternative other than to go ahead... and hope.

"The invitations had all gone out, our core group of ten had done their follow-up calls, and we had a hundred acceptances for the launch," said Nick.

"Then suddenly, without warning, the blockade was on and everywhere started running out of fuel. "I cut down my own journeys to make sure I had enough fuel to get to and from the meeting but, as I was setting up at 6am in the Green Dragon Hotel I had a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach... what if nobody turned up?" he added.

Nick needn't have worried. "Despite my fears, the meeting was brilliant. More than 60 local people beat the blockade, with a good mix of trades and professions, from decorators in paint-spattered overalls to a bowler-

hatted solicitor.

"Executive director David Bullock arrived from Stratford-upon-Avon, BNI International Board of Advisors' member Jane Hart came over from Cheltenham chapter, and four members of my own chapter in Gloucester shared a car to support the launch."

One of the visitors, chartered commercial insurance practitioner Graham Wedgbury who is also membership co-ordinator of the Gloucester Chapter was very impressed with the new Hereford members.

"My spirits rose when I saw the whole core group there, all getting down to it from 6.30am. They've got off to a strong start."

Hereford is a close-knit community which has always relied on word-of-mouth recommendations to do business, but the rural city has never seen anything like the structured BNI approach to networking.

The new Hereford Chapter meets on Wednesday mornings at the Green Dragon Hotel, a few yards from the cathedral.

What a coincidence

When solicitor Charles Dunbar stood up at a meeting of the Stoke-on-Trent chapter and posed the question "Does anyone have an idea about the best person I could introduce to our financial advisor, Steve Amison?" the unanimous answer came straight back: "A lottery winner," cried colleagues.

It might have been said in jest, but Charles's response was: "Well strangely enough, it just so happens..." And with that, he passed Steve the name of one of his clients who had just won 'a substantial amount of money' on the lottery.

Charles, from Rees Jones Solicitors, had been approached by the winner who needed some conveyancing work on the new house he had bought with his winnings, and Charles suggested he should meet with Steve Amison of SDB Strategic Financial Planners, who could give him valuable financial advice on what to do with the rest of his windfall.

"It was an excellent referral, naturally," said Steve, and I have been able to give advice on an ongoing basis.

"But lottery winners aside, BNI has been really good for our business and now we've got senior staff in three local chapters – Stoke-on-Trent, Newcastle-under-Lyne and Burslem."

2000th referral in Potteries

Members of the Newcastle-under-Lyne chapter have cause for celebration this month – having just notched up their 2,000th referral in a year, representing an amazing total of £500,000 worth of business.

Chapter Director Roger Turner asked all his members to quantify the amount of business BNI had brought them in the last 12 months, and half a million pounds was the impressive total.

With 31 members, Newcastle was the first and is now the largest of the Potteries chapters and Roger describes it as "an excellent business forum".

He said: "Everyone is on first name terms and all the members go out of their way to help each other, personally as well as professionally."

"We're all very cheerful, and although we stick rigidly to BNI principles and agenda, the meetings are still quite informal."

"The results have been achieved by highly active networking, both before and after the meetings, combined with a true sense of friendship."

'BNI is a gold mine'

How many of us wouldn't give our eyetooth to be guaranteed a healthy income for the next few years – without having to do anything more to earn it?

Well, that's the happy situation Telford Chapter member Steve Bellerby finds himself in, having already guaranteed some £50,000 worth of net income per year to his business, for the next three years – thanks to BNI.

Steve is a partner with Smith Bellerby Associates, cost management consultants, who advise clients on how to reduce utility bills on telephones, electricity, gas and water.

"Whatever savings are identified and imple-

mented, we split 50/50 with the client. Where there's no saving, there's no fee," explained Steve, a member of BNI for 15 months.

"I'm almost embarrassed to admit it, but BNI has become something of a gold mine for me, with existing referrals from chapter colleagues already worth £150,000 to our business over the next three years," he said.

"At least 80 per cent of my new business comes through BNI members, either directly or indirectly through word-of-mouth recommendations. In fact it's been so successful, I haven't even advertised for the last 12 months! It is a fantastic organisation."

Giver's Gain alive and well

Two members of Stafford Chapter have exchanged referrals worth over £150,000, proving once more that the Giver's Gain philosophy is alive and well. Michel Jones and Jeremy Roney, whom he introduced to BNI four months ago, had been acquaintances for some time but it was only when they sat around the chapter breakfast table that they realised they could help boost each other's businesses. Jeremy first received a referral from Michel worth £136,000, for his company, Midland Telecom, to install a call centre and telephone systems in a football club, and later in a conference centre for the same client. Just two days later, he passed a £16,000 referral to Michel, of J & M Technology, for the installation of computer networking equipment.

A good Choice!

Choice Hotels Group operations director Tony Mylchreest certainly made the right decision when he accepted an invitation from sales manager Jo Callender to visit BNI's Telford Chapter.

Jo, pictured right, a member at Telford, persuaded its leadership team to transfer meetings to the Clarion Hotel, Madeley Court. She then thought it would be appropriate for other West Midlands chapters looking for a home to try their local Choice hotel. Hence her suggestion that boss Tony should see BNI in action and, hopefully, lend his support to her idea.

The result? "He was so impressed with BNI that he offered a special deal for chapters in the



region if they based their group meetings at Choice Hotels. I'm delighted that several have, including those in Wolverhampton, Walsall and Loughborough, with others in negotiation," said Jo, who can be contacted on 01952 680068.

Quote

(from BNI's European Conference 2000)

"Just like a business, a chapter should send out sales letters every week to targeted companies"



BNI to the rescue

When Philip Swinford's marketing company, Stratagema, was advised by police to 'disappear' last year after assisting in a commercial fraud investigation, he naturally thought it would mean the kiss of death to his business.

Philip, pictured right, a member of Gloucester Chapter, had also received a personal phone call threatening his life.

"We took the advice, changed cars, moved offices and, of course, went ex-directory. We were even advised by the police not to put up a website and to be careful about giving out business cards. You can imagine how worried we were about the effect on our business."

Unable to advertise or promote his company, the impact on his business could have been disastrous had it not been for the timely appearance of BNI, which has happily transformed his business fortunes, and also had a major effect on his life and future.

Philip discovered BNI after being invited to attend a meeting of Cheltenham Spa Chapter and, despite being a self-confessed 'business breakfast baloney' cynic, when he found he was unable to join that chapter because his 'position' was already taken, he drove to the Gloucester Chapter meeting the following morning and joined on the spot.

"I listened to the tapes, read the books and could see the psychology of BNI, so I decided that I would not only join but would buy into the system lock, stock and barrel," said Philip.

"If it's recommended in the BNI material then we do it – all of it – and guess what, surprise, surprise, it works."

"Admittedly, I lose a fair amount of sleep because of BNI but we've put on more business in the last six months than in the previous two years. Some 75 per cent of our 'bought ledger' is now in BNI and if I can get



that up to 100 per cent I will be very happy. This year Stratagema's turnover will include a six-figure sum representing business generated from BNI members."

Philip has been Gloucester Chapter's Director for the past six months, and Educational co-ordinator prior to that. He puts his heart and soul into BNI, based on his strategy that "I treat BNI as our largest client and every member as a Board Director of it, spending between eight and ten hours a week working the BNI system – and that's not including my duties as Chapter Director.

His philosophy is simple: "BNI doesn't work for us – we work at BNI. We achieve our own destiny and take full credit ourselves for everything we achieve. What BNI does do is provide us with a fantastic framework within which to work – but to achieve success we use the same skills and techniques as we would in the outside world."

Signing up was a shrewd move for Rod

When signmaker Rod Simpson joined BNI's Coventry Central Chapter he didn't expect things to start happening so quickly!

At only his second meeting Rod's company, Signhere, received a referral worth over £2,000 from Tracey Kelly of Flanagans Travel to produce new signs for their refurbished premises and after just three months in the Chapter he's received a remarkable 21 referrals.

One of Rod's selling points is his unique presentation which entails super-imposing signage solutions onto photographs of the building taken before refurbishment. "That is particularly handy when we're making large signs, such as the 30ft structure we supplied to Flanagans, because clients can get a good

idea of how it will look afterwards," he said.

Rod admits he hates getting up in the morning but looks forward to chapter meetings where, it seems, his powerful sense of humour keeps colleagues wide awake.

His favourite topic is the mother-in-law and he always starts his 60-second slot with a joke at her expense.

"It's got nothing to do with business, but at least it makes everybody laugh!

He offered readers this example of his Les Dawson-style humour: "I haven't spoken to my mother-in-law for 15 years now. It's not that we don't get on, I'm just not quick enough to interrupt!"

Referrals fly at the Airport

Dublin's Airport Chapter may not be the largest in members but it continues to soar to new levels.

Throughout August, the Chapter averaged 80 referrals a week, and peaked when 27 members around the breakfast table passed no less than 108 referrals between them – an average of exactly four per member!

BNI Executive Director Pat Guiden said: "The atmosphere within the Chapter has always been vibrant and you never quite know what is going to happen next."

Quote

(from BNI's European Conference 2000)

"BNI members are Walking Talking Yellow Pages"

Sprat lands a mackerel

When builder Ray Justice, a member of Ilford chapter, received a referral from Mayo Patel, BNI's Regional Director for London North East, he had no idea just how lucrative it would turn out to be.

The initial referral for a small building job was worth £15,000, but the architect supervising the contract was so impressed with his work that he retained Ray for a further job which was worth over £100,000.

Ray, owner of Justice & Sons, reckons BNI is 'the fun way to do business'.

He said: "There's no sense of competition, just a genuine desire to help and support fellow members."



Success in numbers

Partners in Lambert Chapman, a well-known Essex-based firm of chartered accountants and registered auditors, have proved that, where BNI is concerned, three is definitely not a crowd!

Melinda Atkinson, Paul Short and John Smith-Daye all joined BNI when new chapters were formed in the towns where their respective offices are based, and all went on to become chapter directors of their local group, each reflecting on the similar philosophies of BNI and their own partnership.

Melinda was first to sign up, becoming chapter director of what is now **Chelmsford** Central, and Paul soon followed in her footsteps to become Director of the new **Braintree** Chapter.

That left John who was initially quite cynical about the idea of BNI, but Melinda persuaded him to go along to a formative meeting in **Maldon** and, it seems, he liked what he saw – becoming a founder member and then the first Chapter Director of Maldon.

“From a personal point of view, the best thing

that BNI has done for me is to force me to be more outgoing,” said John. “Accountants tend to be very reluctant to project themselves as a result of the traditional restrictions on advertising and promoting our profession.

“BNI has certainly helped me to put myself forward and given me a different perspective on marketing. I also get a real buzz when I can recommend BNI members to business colleagues and know that they will be pleased with the service they receive.”

All three are dedicated to the philosophy of BNI and the principle of ‘givers gain,’ and say it works very well for them, having gained the confidence and trust of members, many of whom have become clients or recommended them to third parties.

James Finch, BNI’s North Essex Assistant Director, is delighted with their commitment.

“They are a superb example to all members, and they really make the BNI system work well for others and as a result for themselves, by giving that extra support when required,” he said.

“I know many members are very grateful for their valuable contribution.”

Seeing red in the white rose county

Editor Malcolm Grosvenor is in sackcloth and ashes after upsetting readers on both sides of the Pennines with his reference to Yorkshire as the ‘red rose county.’ (SuccessNet, Summer 2000).

Not even the most grovelling apology could spare his blushes as we received complaints from BNI members in Lancashire and Yorkshire, alarmed that we couldn’t tell the white rose county from its old enemy across the hills...

David Haywood, Secretary/Treasurer of Bolton Chapter, put it thus: “It was bad enough when the Labour Party hijacked our Red Rose, but to find that it was being used to promote Yorkshire really took the biscuit. I am sure our friends across the Pennines are just as upset, for they are as fiercely proud of their white rose.”

Absolutely. And Margaret Andrews from Chester Chapter wasted no time confirming the fact. She wrote: “My principal, Michael Scully, is a Yorkshireman and he visibly turned red with disbelief when reading your article, ‘All is rosy in the red rose county.’ “Ye Gods!” he exclaimed, “it’s the white rose county, as every proud Yorkshireman knows. I was enjoying reading the magazine until then!”

Sorry, Lancastrians. Sorry, Yorkshire men and women. But our Editor is from Birmingham and anywhere north of Walsall is a foreign land to him.

Staff at BNI head office have clubbed together for a copy of the Enid Blyton Illustrated Guide to British History and, rest assured, we’ll keep a close eye on him!

Adrian’s referral came from 6,000 miles away!

Insurance broker Adrian Sutton just can’t stop passing referrals to colleagues in his Rugby Chapter, even when he’s on holiday 6,000 miles away!

But fortunately, Adrian’s quick thinking helped save the day, and the holidays of quite a few people, when he received a call to say his next door neighbour’s home in rural Warwickshire had been burgled, causing major losses and distress to its temporary occupants.

Both Adrian’s family and his next door neighbours were house-swapping with Californian families at the time of the burglary, and the first Adrian knew about the problem was when he had a frantic phone call from his holidaying neighbour who had received a transatlantic call from his American house-sitters in England, threatening to abandon their holiday and flee back to the USA.

“It seems my neighbour’s property had had been burgled while the American family were asleep in their beds, and when they discovered their hire car, credit cards, computer and personal effects had all been stolen. I think it unnerved them.

“When my neighbour called me as his handily placed insurance agent, he said that unless I could do something immediately, the family

were about to quit, which would have spoilt everyone’s holidays,” said Adrian.

So, chasing up his UK business contacts – including BNI members – Adrian hit the phone and had soon organised a replacement car, started processing the insurance claim and, crucially, found a way to reassure the American visitors that they would be safe for the rest of their UK stay.

“They desperately wanted a burglar alarm and security system fitting to my neighbour’s house before they were prepared to stay any long, so I called up a chapter colleague, Simon Galt of Countrywide Security Systems, explained the situation to him, and he installed the system in less than 24 hours.

“I don’t know who was more impressed – my neighbours or his American house guests – when we sorted things so quickly from 6,000 miles away,” Adrian added.

Inevitably, there is a sting in the tale! Adrian’s Chapter Director Steve Maybury said: “I’ve relayed his story to the rest of our members and warned them that, in future, the old excuse about having been away and not had chance to find any referrals just won’t wash any more.

“Adrian’s long distance referral has set a challenging precedent.”



Prontapack picture (to be scanned)

Prontapack's Marcus Amery (left) with Simon Elkins-Green, Operations Manager.

Flat out to keep up

Marcus Amery, the new chapter director at Horsham is the first to admit he's not been a model BNI member – having missed a few breakfast meetings recently.

But when he lays the blame firmly at the feet of his fellow members for giving him too much work it's hard to argue!

"Chapter colleagues have referred me so much business that I've been working 17 hours a day for weeks and just haven't been able to get to some of the meetings," said Marcus.

"I joined BNI in January this year and within two months I'd gained £1.2m worth of business, since when I've been working flat out to meet those new contracts."

He also admits to an even greater irony in his recent appointment as Chapter Director.

"If you'd told me 12 months ago that I'd soon be chairing a business networking group I'd have said you were mad. I was very cynical about networking and couldn't be bothered with it. When I eventually went along to a meeting I couldn't believe what I'd been missing.

Keeping it in the family

The UK launch of a new domestic 'fresh air' system has turned into a real family affair for members of the Stratford-upon-Avon Chapter.

Kitchens and bathrooms specialist Geoff Tallis set up The Pure Fresh Air Company to market, sell and distribute the Olsberg AirCom heat recovery ventilator and then decided he needed the expertise of chapter colleagues to assist the launch.

Now, I'm taking it very seriously," he said.

Marcus owns two companies – Prontapack Ltd and distribution firm Dortodor Carriers Ltd – based on an eight acre site in Crawley, and housing 140,000 sq ft of storage warehousing, all of which was fully utilised following his first three BNI referrals – involving national companies, Dorling & Kindersley, Bodyshop and LEC Refrigeration, who needed storage for stock.

"I had to totally re-organise my warehouse to accommodate them," says Marcus.

"It involved a lot of hard work but we've finally got it sorted and now I can get back into BNI again. That's the one thing I've regretted in the past few months – not being able to give BNI the attention it deserves, so I need to make up for lost time."

Thanks to BNI, all the warehousing space on Marcus's Crawley site is now full so he's in the process of negotiating for another site which will give him a further 96,000 sq ft of storage.

Which happily means that Marcus will be needing to regain his full attendance record in the coming weeks as he seeks to find sufficient new business to fill his latest warehouse.

"I have been a member of BNI for 12 months and it's really as a result of the contacts I have made through the chapter that I have been able to launch the new venture.

"I have employed the bank manager, the website consultant, the public relations consultant, and the graphic designer from my chapter, and knowing them all personally has been very reassuring," Geoff added.

BoNnle Scotland pulls out all stops

As *SuccessNet* went to press, two Scottish chapters were due to stage the biggest networking event to hit Scotland since the millennium Hogmanay!

Well, that might be an exaggeration, but for BNI members north of the border the inter-chapter networking day due to take place in early October promised to be a truly memorable occasion.

Ron Hain of Dunfermline chapter and Kevin Roach of Livingston chapter had pulled out all the stops to create a 'Network Golf' and 'Healthy Networking' day at Deer Park Golf and Country Club in Livingston, to which members of all 22 BNI chapters in Scotland were invited with the aim of encouraging informal cross-chapter networking, and giving would-be members a taste of BNI camaraderie.

More than 100 members from 15 chapters had booked places by mid September, leading Kevin to comment: "It should be one of the biggest events in BNI's short history in Scotland, presenting a great opportunity for members to learn about each other's businesses.

"Who knows, we might even manage to tempt a few of our Sassenach brothers and sisters to cross the border for a spot of networking!"

Quote

(from BNI's
European Conference 2000)

**"Never ASSUME –
assuming makes
an ASS out of U
and ME"**



Around the Chapters

Stitching up a world record

A new world record has been stitched up by clothing manufacturer Pat Stanworth, a member of the Gloucester Chapter, who has created the biggest-ever T-shirt to help local charities.

Local dignitaries and celebrities, along with members of BNI's Gloucester and Cheltenham chapters, queued up to be the first to hand over a £1 donation to sign the record breaking garment, all proceeds from which will go to local charities for the disabled: the Spring Centre, the Star Centre and Cloud 9.

The three organisations hope to raise thousands of pounds as the T-shirt gains additional signatures from its current tour of Britain.

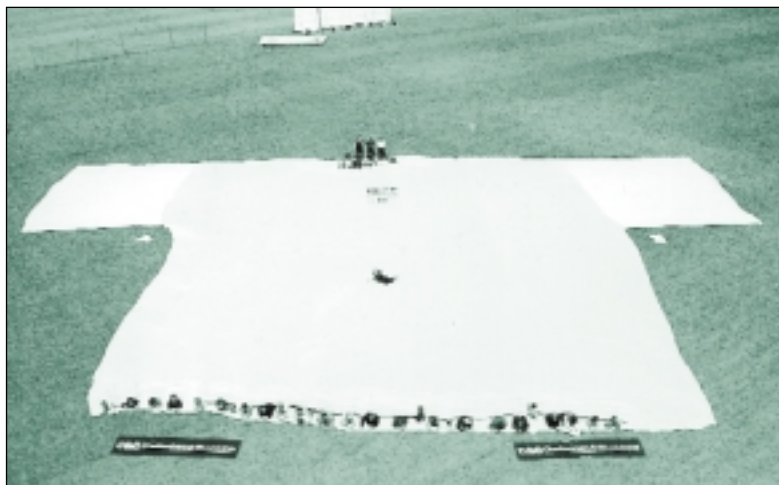
The gigantic T-shirt, which measures 96.5ft by 70ft, took a team of ten workers 150 hours to make, out of more than half a mile of material!

As its vast dimensions were unfurled for the first time on Cheltenham College playing fields, it was confirmed it will go into the next Guinness Book of Records as the largest T-shirt in the world. The record was set in 1991 in Minneapolis, USA, with a shirt that measured 90ft x 65ft.

More used to producing normal sized team kits, outfits for majorettes and marching bands, school uniforms and promotional clothing, Pat said: "I'm used to strange requests and tight deadlines but even I was lost for words when I was asked if I could make the world's largest T-shirt, on behalf of its sponsors, the Cheltenham & Gloucester Building Society.

"Of course, I said yes, and then I was told it was needed for a photocall in a fortnight's time, so it wasn't just the T-shirt that was stretched!

If any BNI member needs garments manufactured, embroidered or printed in a hurry - from a posing pouch to a record breaker - Pat Stanworth of Patz Gloucester will respond to the challenge on 01452 731336.



The world's largest T-shirt is unveiled.



Pat Stanworth makes the news, inside the record breaking T-shirt she created.

It all adds up back at school!

Salesman Bill May, a member of Dover Chapter, might have been surprised to find himself back at school this summer, especially since it happened to be the town's Grammar School for Girls!

But it was a profitable return for Bill, Sales Director of the Kent division of the Principal Corporation, because he'd secured a £20,000 contract to install the school's new computer network cabling - following a referral from fellow chapter member, Ian Harding of Skybiz.

Bill said: "Everyone knows that BNI's philosophy works, but it's always nice to receive personal proof of the benefits of membership."

Gloucester greets Gloucester!

BNI's worldwide web site has brought one of England's newer chapters face to face with its namesake 3,000 miles away in Massachusetts.

David Christmas, a member of Gloucester Chapter explains: "I opened the BNI web site to check what was on our own page, and found myself looking at the site for Gloucester in Massachusetts. There was an email address for the American chapter, so I sent greetings from England to our namesakes in the USA.

"A reply soon came back from ex-Brit, Elizabeth Frere Jones, now living in the States and building her Shaklee Life and Health business through referrals from the US chapter."

David is confident that members of the US chapter visiting Europe are now sure to put England's Gloucester on their itinerary, not

least because the UK chapter meets in one of the city's most historic venues.

The Parliament Room stands in the precincts of Gloucester's 900-year-old cathedral and its name commemorates the time when King Richard the Second summoned his parliament to meet there in 1378.

"Visitors to the USA's Gloucester Chapter might not get the same sense of history, but Elizabeth tells me we'll be made very welcome over a good breakfast in a downtown Massachusetts restaurant," David added.

Meanwhile, David's 'twin chapter' discovery prompts *SuccessNet* to ask: Are you making good use of BNI's website? You can access the whole world of BNI on www.bni.com or, if you want to stay more local, www.bni-europe.com.

Quote

(from BNI's European Conference 2000)

"Accept your uniqueness and accentuate your strengths"



The weekly one-minute 'commercial' that every BNI member receives to promote his or her business is one of the greatest potential benefits of membership – if you use it properly. Unfortunately, a significant minority don't, because they have failed to appreciate its ability to vastly enhance their BNI membership. In the last issue, UK National Director GILLIAN LAWSON explained why the 60-second slot is so important, and offered tips for maximising the impact of your regular one-minute presentations to colleagues. Here, in her second article, she discusses some of the pitfalls you can avoid in delivering your weekly breakfast message...



Don't waste your 60 seconds

P sychologists have long known that there are three things human beings fear most in life – drowning, being burnt alive – and public speaking.

To find the latter ranked alongside the other two may sound almost unbelievable, but years of research into human behaviour has confirmed that, while we are all born with the easy ability to communicate verbally, many people are initially terrified by the prospect of having to address a business audience, and more than a few will go to great lengths to avoid the ordeal.

Happily, the majority of BNI members do not freeze at the prospect of promoting their business services to colleagues in the relaxed surroundings of the weekly breakfast meeting but, as every member knows, the quality and content of those 60-second presentations varies between the sublime and the totally wasted opportunity.

I would suggest that, with sufficient thought, planning and practice, every member of BNI is capable of delivering an effective, persuasive commercial.

In my own North-West London region, we now run regular members' training courses in basic presentational skills and BNI is encouraging the introduction of similar courses in other parts of the UK and Ireland during the coming months – details of which will be made available through your chapter or executive/regional directors.

However, there are a number of ways you can start to improve your existing 60-second presentations, simply by avoiding some common mistakes. Having listed a number of DOs in my first article, I would offer the following DON'Ts, if you want to avoid wasting yours, and everyone else's time:

1 DON'T leave any aspect of your presentation to chance: The most entertaining, informative, relaxed and seemingly impromptu presentations, are nearly always the result of careful planning and practice. If you don't start planning your 'slot' until you're on the way to your chapter meeting, the chances are it will have an almost zero effect on your colleagues.

2 DON'T expect colleagues to understand your whole business in one minute: It may sound absurd, but I am constantly amazed by how many members try to summarise their entire business in 60 seconds. As the saying goes: 'If you're going to serve up an elephant, you wouldn't expect your guests to eat the whole thing at once. You'd offer it to them in bite-sized chunks!' So it is with your business, which you should break down into small, easily digestible components.

3 DON'T ignore your body language: It's not just what you say that is important. It is the way you present it. If you are not a natural public speaker – and few of us are – then it may be difficult to put on a confident, self-assured manner but, if you want to sound convincing to others, you must practice your presentation techniques until you are happy that others will see you in your most positive light.

4 DON'T waste time handing out brochures or using technical aids: Use your chapter brochure table to display your promotional literature and product samples. If you plan to rely on a projector or computerised animation, the chances are you'll be let down – or distracted – by the technology. Keep your commercial simple.

5 DON'T repeat yourself: Heavens, you only have 60 seconds a week, so why waste time telling colleagues what you told them last week, and the week before? That's why it is so important to

break down your business services into individual 'chunks' and plan to present these one or two at a time, each week.

6 DON'T sit down without ensuring everyone knows who you are: However well you think you've performed, and however much you think your chapter colleagues already know about you, never sit down without signing off with your name, your company name and... your memory hook. You want people to be thinking about you and your business when they leave the meeting, and still thinking about you as they go about their week's business.

7 DON'T give up your 60-second slot if you are the featured ten-minute speaker that day: Your subscription entitles you to only 70 minutes of promotion for your business in a whole year, so don't waste any of it.

8 DON'T forget to ask for the business you want: Too many members spend all their time telling us who they are and what they do, and forget to tell us what sort of business they would like colleagues to find them. Remember, the more specific you can be in defining the business referrals you would like to receive, the more likely you are to get those referrals.

Finally, remember that public speaking in BNI is about selling yourself, not your company. The aim is to persuade colleagues to bring the right people to your door, primarily because they (your colleagues) believe in you and trust you to do a good job for the person they are referring.

For them to do this with confidence, they need to know you and understand what you do well.

Which, is where I started, and why I cannot overstate the importance of using your 60-second commercial to the best possible advantage. So, plan, practice, and good luck.

Wales gets the message

Just under four years after BNI's introduction to the UK, the world's largest business referral networking organisation has arrived in Wales, with the launch last month of the country's first BNI chapter in Wrexham.

Meeting at the Cross Lanes Hotel, Marchwiel, the new group's Launch Day was attended by some 60 Wrexham-based business people, more than 20 of whom returned the following week to formally join the Wrexham Chapter – pictured on what was a historic day for the Welsh business community.

As *SuccessNet* went to print, exactly one month after Wrexham's launch, its membership was up to 25, under the leadership of Chapter Director Peter Stevens, a local graphic designer, who predicts that it won't be long before other BNI chapters start springing up in neighbouring Welsh border towns.

But why has it taken BNI nearly four years to 'move in' on Wales, when in neighbouring Cheshire and Greater Manchester, the organisation has expanded rapidly over the past couple of years.

Tony Coxhill, BNI Executive Director for Cheshire and North Wales said: "Every region has its established lines of business commu-



nication and, after we were encouraged to open our first Cheshire chapter in Crewe & Nantwich, it was no surprise that others quickly followed in neighbouring towns like Macclesfield, Wilmslow, Chester, Congleton and Warrington.

"Having now ventured over the border into Wrexham, I believe the same thing will soon happen there, as the business community learns what BNI can do for its members."

Anyone interested in joining the new Wrexham Chapter, should contact Peter on 01244 659858, while would-be members keen to join any other new or existing BNI groups in Cheshire and North Wales should contact Tony Coxhill on 01270 620074.

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Share your problems on the Internet

Anyone who runs a small to medium-sized business knows how lonely it can sometimes feel, having to make tough decisions on your own – and wishing there was someone out there who could offer practical support.

Well there is... BNI's own chatroom, where any member worldwide can drop in to share problems, catch up on general BNI news and discuss specific topics aimed at improving the way you do business.

With the Internet rapidly becoming one of the major global marketing and sales media, it makes sense for every BNI members to use this desktop resource, whether to access key information or simply share business ideas with others around the world!

BNI's monthly online sessions, accessed through the Yahoo chat

room, have attracted more and more participants since their launch nearly 18 months ago as part of BNI's educational programme for members.

Typically, members from around the world join each session to discuss business difficulties – and solutions – with other members and experienced BNI directors from around the world.

UK National Director Martin Lawson said: "We also summarise the key points from each month's exchange of views and post these on our own website in the Chat Directory, so even if you are unable to join a particular session, you can always catch up on the main points afterwards."

Sessions normally take place on the second Monday evening of the month, from 21.00 to 22.00hrs. Subjects for the next three sessions are:

Monday 20th November (Note: this is the third Monday of the month): Tuning up your chapter – Are you doing the right things at the right time?

Monday 11th December: Common Objections by Visitors.

Monday 9th January: Effective Meeting Stimulants.

BNI's chatroom is accessible by logging onto www.bni-europe.com and then clicking the 'Chat' icon found after first clicking on the UK map.

While you're passing through the BNI website, why not visit Network Central in the Members Area where, in 50-60 words, you can promote your own business free of charge to all visitors to the BNI-Europe website – which gets over 40,000 hits a month.