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67% of your business comes from your **POWER TEAM!**

Inside: A whirlwind of advice, ideas and resources to make your Power Team even more effective



Let's see your business bloom!

After a tough winter, it's good to welcome springtime and the promise of new life and renewed growth. Once again, *SuccessNet* brings together a host of fresh ideas, initiatives and inspiration to help every BNI member's business flourish.



Here at National Office, we've been busy planning a very special Power Team Focus that could add many thousands to your profit lines. Read all about it on pages 4-5 and make the most of this great opportunity. We're certain that the Focus will help to establish enduring Power Teams with the strength and confidence to win exciting new business. (And don't forget – when you're celebrating your Power Team's success, be sure to share your story with *SuccessNet*.)

Now for another big announcement: we're delighted to herald the launch of BNI's new social online network, BNI Connect. Now, you can connect with other BNI members and chapters across the world at the click of a mouse. There are many good reasons to register on the system as soon as possible: find out more about BNI Connect on page 13.

Finally, as the royal wedding bells ring out from Westminster Abbey, we hope that every chapter might be inspired by our Word of mouth 'Wedding Mafia' and create their own Wedding Power Teams. There's endless scope: as well as the most popular categories you could get creative and recruit a tour guide, a chocolatier, a sweep, a (black) cat breeder... the possibilities are endless!

Go ahead, Make More Money... and enjoy.

Charlie Lawson and Tim Cook – National Directors, BNI UK & Ireland

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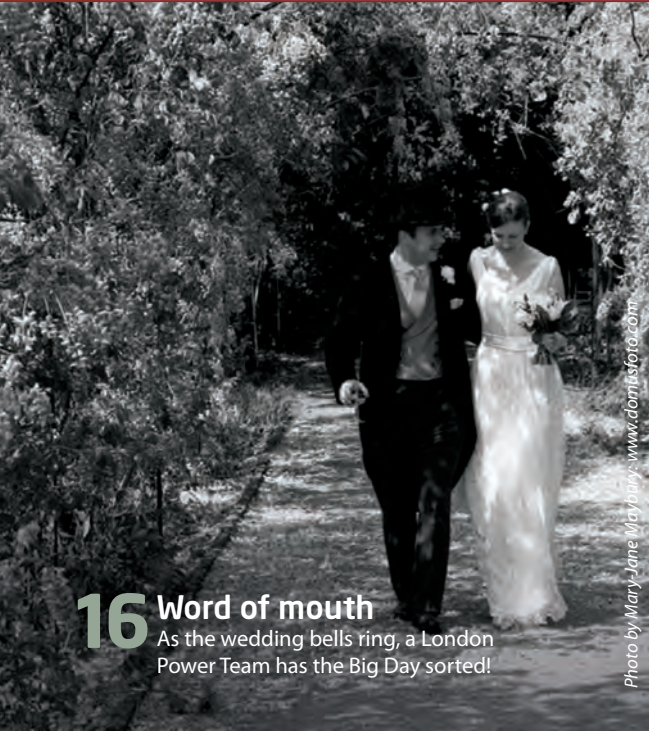
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Photo by Mary-Jane Wray/mary-wwww.dominofoto.com

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POWER TEAM FOCUS

BNI presents a new strategy to help you win more business this summer.

In recent years, chapters across the country have begun to realise the remarkable business generation power of Power Teams. It's clear that bigger Power Teams bring in more business, so it makes good sense not only to be an active team member but to do whatever you can to build a strong, effective and cohesive Power Team.

LIFT-OFF!

We're proud to announce the launch of the Power Team Focus, which will run from May 16th to July 29th 2011. This carefully designed initiative will help every member generate more business for themselves and for their Power Team colleagues.

MISSION CONTROL

Building a Power Team is not a random exercise: it needs consideration and planning. The Power Team Focus offers a clear structure for progress. It's also designed to make the process as effective and time-efficient as possible. You will soon be involved in planning the right way forward for your own chapter with your BNI director, but this overview gives an initial guide to the Focus.

REACH FOR THE STARS

Although the Power Team Focus will run for just a few months, the aim is for Power Team Development to become a long-term initiative that underpins and drives each chapter's growth and success. It's not about producing a sudden burst of extra business: good Power Team practice will generate healthy new revenues for years to come.

Your local BNI Director will visit your chapter to present the details of the Power Team Focus. The Focus is not a fixed plan but a route map, and your BNI Director will be on hand to help you design an appropriate strategy for your chapter's particular needs.

Each chapter will appoint a Power Team Coordinator and a Chairperson for each of their Power Teams. The Coordinator and Chairpersons will choose dates within the Focus period on which to hold Focus Days – at least one (but as many as you like!) for each Power Team.

Power Team workshops will take place in April and early May in every region to demonstrate how you can make Power Teams work well for you.

WHAT'S A POWER TEAM?

A Power Team is a group of professionals or trades whose businesses complement (rather than compete with) each other, and who work strategically together to refer business to each other. Chapters with strong Power Teams generate more business than those without them.

Power Teams should continue to meet each month to continue the growth and success of each team.

On the Focus Day, the Ten Minute Presentation will be delivered by one of the team members. Not only will this be excellent for the presenter, but it will help to give visitors a relevant and compelling demonstration of the potential value of membership.

Each Power Team will run its own Focus Day at a chapter meeting.

You'll be shown how to run special Power Team meetings. This will help you strengthen your Power Team and attract suitable visitors for your Power Team day.

Power Teams will each have an Education Slot in which to educate the chapter about the visitors they want to target for their Focus Day: potential members of their Power Team as well as target clients for their Power Team.

GET INVOLVED AND JUST SEE YOUR MEMBERSHIP VALUE SOAR!

If a Power Team has only one or two members, it's not a problem, it's an opportunity. Build that team – and watch the business boom!

When we think about adding, say, 12 members to our chapters so that we all make more money, the task seems pretty daunting. But if we think about adding just two or three members to our Power Teams, that feels far easier!

Don't grow your chapter, grow your Power Team!

CHAPTER AND VERSE

WHAT'S NEW AND HAPPENING IN CHAPTERS THROUGHOUT THE UK AND IRELAND

SUPER-POWER YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Are you working with your Power Team? No? Then you're not making the best use of your BNI membership. Over the last two years the awareness of Power Team potential has grown significantly. More and more members are understanding that small businesses are far stronger together than alone.

Power Team members are not only perfectly placed to generate more quality referrals for each other, they can also work together to fulfil major contracts that would otherwise be beyond their grasp.

In Altrincham, Bowdon Falcons Chapter has an excellent example of a successful Power Team. Jonathan Riddle of ARC Design Services Ltd is the chapter's architectural designer. He says,

“The 10 members of our Building Services Power Team find it easy to give each other referrals because we share similar clients. Many of the Power Team members have worked very successfully with a number of my own company's clients to create great homes and extensions. It works well for everybody because I can depend on my team colleagues to give excellent service and quality every time.”

In fact, one of ARC's projects which also involved the team's landscape architect, Rory McVean, and AV and lighting specialist, Chris Brooks, recently received a Daily Telegraph award for the Best Traditional Style Home of 2010.

“Strong Power Teams can be incredibly productive,” says Jonathan. “The secret is to communicate really well together. For example, frequent 1-1s help you to know each other – and each other's businesses – in depth, giving you confidence and trust in your fellow Power Team members.”

Jonathan Riddle – jonathan@arcdesignservices.net

See pages 4-5 to find out about the new Power Team Focus.

GREAT COACHING

Ever felt that some Ten Minute Presentations sound a little same-ish? Well, there's no value in hearing the same old speeches time after time. A good chapter encourages variety and effective, attention-grabbing presentations that hit their message home to members and visitors alike.

At Peregrine Chapter (Waterford), Michael Malone of Piltown Coaches decided to take a different approach to his Ten Minute slot. He asked all the members to leave the meeting room immediately and assemble in the foyer. As the members gathered by the hotel reception desk, they were all met by the sight of one of Michael's luxury coaches pulling up to the front door.

Everyone got on board and as they toured the local town, Michael addressed all the members of the chapter over the coach's PA system. After an enjoyable experience (far more than just a presentation), Michael even made sure that all members were back in their seats with a minute to spare for questions!



Peregrine members all agreed that this was the best and most creative Ten Minute Presentation they had ever seen at a chapter meeting, and a great way to hold the audience's attention.

Michael Malone – info@piltowncoaches.com

TASTING SUCCESS

Limerick's BNI Desmond is one of Ireland South & West's newest chapters. The members are always eager to find ways of energising their weekly chapter meeting, and recently it was Ronan McCoy's turn to spotlight his business in a Ten Minute Presentation. Ronan is the owner of the chapter's venue, McCoy's Bar and Restaurant – and he had a surprise in store for his fellow BNIers...

As the members walked into the restaurant, their eyes lit up. Ronan's chef Jason had laid out an extra special breakfast spread for them all. But first Ronan wanted to show the members that they could cook a meal just like this in less than 10 minutes.

While Jason performed a speedy cooking demonstration, Ronan explained to his colleagues how they could easily refer McCoy's with confidence. To conclude his presentation, Ronan took questions and invited all the members to taste the delicious dishes they'd watched Jason create.

One of Ronan's audience, fellow member Darragh Goggins commented, "This was a really impressive presentation and a welcome change from the usual PowerPoint slide shows! It was a good lesson to us all to do a Ten Minute Presentation that everyone will remember."

Ronan added that although his fellow members had already known about his restaurant, referrals have increased since his Ten Minute Presentation proved just how good his food really tasted!

Ronan McCoy – sharon-mccoy@eircom.net



BE MY GUEST!

One of the most powerful ways of contributing to your chapter's success is to introduce new people to the group. And when it comes to inviting visitors and sponsoring new members, **Ray Johnson, insurance specialist at Folkestone's Imperial Chapter, is a legend!**

Over the last 12 years, Ray has introduced hundreds of visitors and a stunning total of 53 new members to the group. *SuccessNet* has bent Ray's ear to discover his best hints and advice on growing your chapter...

INVITE THEM WELL...

- **Be a good listener.** Listen to people's needs, hopes and aspirations: it'll help you understand how BNI can help them.
- **ASK people to visit.** Never assume they won't be interested. If you don't ask, you don't get!
- **Avoid any hard sell.** Explain simply that being a member of a high quality networking organisation works very well and that the best way to check this out is to come along without obligation and see how it works.
- Explain that visiting may win them new business, save money and **pick up good ideas.**
- If someone declines your invitation, **ask if they know someone** else in their sector who may be interested. You'll be surprised how this can pay dividends!

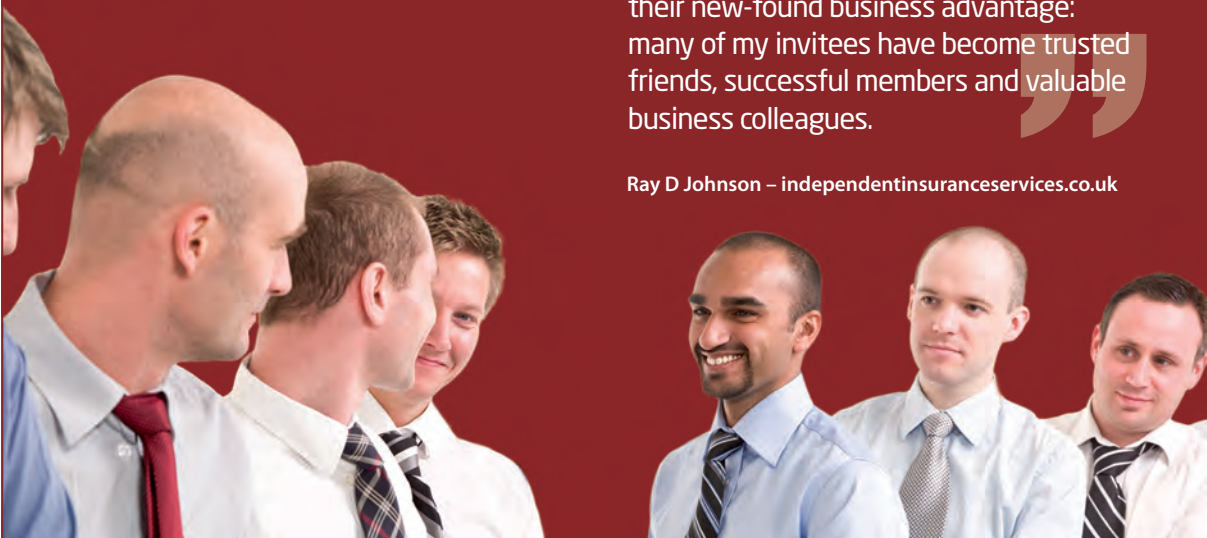
... AND TREAT THEM WELL

- **Make sure your visitors are welcomed and included** in the group from the moment they arrive.
- With your visitor's needs and aspirations in mind, introduce your visitor to those members who can best help them **achieve their goals.**
- **Arrange a personal 1-1** with them afterwards and ask for their feedback.
- After the meeting, **keep communicating** with them for as long as they wish. **NEVER** let visitors drift away or feel forgotten.

Ray comments:

“Good visitors clearly benefit the group but those who join also greatly appreciate their new-found business advantage: many of my invitees have become trusted friends, successful members and valuable business colleagues.”

Ray D Johnson – independentinsuranceservices.co.uk



FROM THE JAWS OF THE DRAGON

Bobby Kerr is a celebrated name in Ireland. As well as being one of the more formidable investors in the *Dragons' Den*, he has built an extensive catering empire. Currently Chairman of Insomnia Coffee Company, Bobby's latest venture is Bang Café in Dublin's Merrion Row. He also presents a business breakfast show on Newstalk every Sunday morning. We're delighted that this busy business Dragon found the time to talk to us here at *SuccessNet*.

What do you think makes a good entrepreneur great?

Drive and ambition, never giving up, fearing failure and excellent interpersonal communication: all these make for a great entrepreneur.

But in these tougher times, does it take more than that? Has the recession improved or repressed our keenness and creativity as a nation?

Unfortunately, the recession has caused many people to start a business because they can't secure employment. People have had to become more creative to get their ideas off the ground. However, the upside of this climate is that it has never been cheaper to set up a business.

Sadly, many of these smaller start-ups don't last. When times get tough and the future is especially uncertain, what options are out there?

Try and seek support from other small businesses. Ask for help. You'll be amazed at how many people respond. It's important to keep going, but it's just as important to be realistic. There is a time when throwing in the towel is the best option if it looks like you will make the situation worse by continuing.

How do you see the value of networking to keep a business going?

Whatever the size or strength of your organisation, advocates are your most powerful selling tool. Word of mouth networking is becoming increasingly important.

How has networking helped Insomnia and Bang Café?

Our customer base is very loyal and we have people visiting our shops several times a week. Word of mouth is critical to our success. Referral organisations. Referrals are critical to our business. Organisations such as BNI are a great way of staying in touch with the market and they encourage people to go out and promote their business.

What are your thoughts on the economic outlook?

While some sectors of the economy are recovering, I don't believe that we will ever scale the dizzying heights of 2006–2007 again. 2011 will see the economy improving. I suspect that small businesses will find recovery slow and painful as they constantly reinvent themselves to meet their customers' needs and struggle to get paid for their efforts.

If you could make one change to the present government's economic management, what would it be?

The next government needs to attract people off the dole and into employment, even on a part-time basis. We need an in-built flexibility which allows this to happen. In addition, banks should be forced to lend to small businesses.

Which *Dragons' Den* investment projects have especially grabbed your attention?

In 2009, Surf Seeds emerged as a strong contender. It's a great healthy snack product and sales have been very strong. Recently I've invested in the Bin Trasher, a compacter device for your wheelie bin that enables you to get up to 40% more waste into your bin.

And just so we all know, what is it that pitchers get wrong most often in the *Den*?

The most common mistake I see is people overvaluing their business before it has even become a business. I am also often surprised by the number of people who arrive in the *Den* with no understanding of their projections.

Everyone in Ireland surely now knows your face because of *Dragons' Den*! How has national recognition affected your own business and personal life?

It's changed my life completely. The exposure has opened up all sorts of opportunities for me as I now get unsolicited business plans submitted to me every week – I'm never sure what to expect! On a personal level, it can be awkward when people start pitching an idea when I'm with my kids queuing to pay for groceries at the supermarket, but in general it's encouraging to see such spirit and bravery!

www.bobbykerr.com

Bobby Kerr was talking to Trióna Marren-O'Grady, exclusively for *SuccessNet* Ireland.



From: Chris Jones

To: Neil Durant

Referral: Appointment to FARG Network for accident repairs

Value: £100,000+

The road to success

Before joining BNI Excelsior in July 2010, Chelmsford Carriage Company owner Neil Durant had never tried networking. However, Neil recalls, "I 'got' BNI immediately and saw that by quickly integrating myself into my vibrant and growing chapter, I would see rapid results."

Neil immersed himself in the *Givers Gain* approach and invited several of his key staff to observe chapter meetings so that they too could understand BNI and look for referrals. He became a Visitor Host and was also invited to join the Membership Committee.

As every committed BNler knows, givers really do gain and in his first six months Neil received referrals worth more than £15,000. However, an outstanding referral was about to land his way. It came from the chapter's new insurance broker, Chris Jones of Brents of Brentwood.

After a 1-1 with Neil, Chris spoke to his accident management company, Fleet Accident and Repair Group (FARG) and explained that he wished to refer his clients' accident work to the Chelmsford Carriage Company.

As a result, Neil's accident repair facility began working with the FARG Network in December 2010 on major accident repairs often worth £1,500 - £3,000 at a time. Neil estimates that the contract could be worth more than £100,000 of referred business in 2011.

In turn, Neil's company now also refers its own customers to Brents for car insurance quotes and includes Chris's company on its showroom displays.

"Taking on a role within a chapter is not solely about giving; it also raises your business profile and helps people get to know you more quickly," says Neil. "With a little commitment, BNI is a two-way street that delivers great results for everyone."

Networking at its very best!"

Neil Durant

The greatest referral I ever had...



Big referrals, small packages!

When Liam Higgins was sorting through all the referrals he had for fellow BNI Tribesmen members the next day, his 10 year old daughter Eimear was watching him closely. "Where do you go to so early every Thursday morning, Dad?" she asked. As the school holidays were about to begin, Liam decided to take his daughter along to see for herself.

Early the next morning, Eimear and Liam went together to meet all the members of Galway's Tribesmen Chapter and after the meeting, she was given BNI pens and goodies to show to her friends.

When Eimear showed her schoolmates the goodies that the members had given her, her teacher asked her to explain to the class what BNI does. The children were very interested and the school's Principal, Joe Kennelly, heard



Every chapter has its 'great referral' stories. If you've given or received a referral that arose in an unusual or interesting way or perhaps one that turned into spectacular business, then we'd like to hear about it. Here we feature a small selection of excellent referrals from recent months...

From: Pauline Newcombe

To: Neil Sysum

Referral: Preferred accountancy supplier to Punch Taverns and Enterprise Inns

Value: £25,000 and growing...

Something amazing's brewing...

Warriors BNI Chapter Director Neil Sysum is toasting major deals with Britain's two largest pub chains thanks to a terrific referral and the services of his fellow BNI members.

Neil's company, NRS Accountants, is now the preferred supplier to Punch Taverns and Enterprise Inns, who between them own 14,000 managed pubs.

"These deals have so far generated £25,000 and are likely to lead to business worth more than six figures. The contracts are a real testament to BNI," said Neil.

The deals also prove that visitors really are VIPs at any meeting. Having already received a warm recommendation of NRS's services by Pauline Newcombe of Three Counties Fuel, it was a visitor who gave Neil his valuable introduction.

"The referral allowed me to make contact with one of these major companies very high up the chain," explains Neil. "In addition, the help of several more Warriors BNI colleagues has been absolutely invaluable in getting these contracts signed and sealed. I'm indebted to Paper Angel Photography, Chris Green Media, Accentika Internet, Aardvark Marketing Consultants, SB Print, City Signs and Unique IQ for all their expert assistance."

The chapter used Neil's story of referral power and BNI teamwork during the Education Slot at a Visitor Day, and it's probably no coincidence that two visitors signed up on the spot!

Neil reflects, "It's thanks to my BNI colleagues – and that generous visitor – that we have the opportunity to work with them. We hope to continue doing so for a long time."

Neil Sysum – neil@nrsaccounts.co.uk

From: Liam Higgins

To: Michael Bane

Referral: School extension

Value: €160,000

the news. He too asked Eimear to explain to him what BNI was all about. So afterwards, Liam received a call from the Principal. "I've been hearing about BNI," he said. "We're planning an extension to the school: do the Tribesmen have a builder you can recommend?" Liam was delighted to refer his colleague Michael Bane of Purcell Construction who specialises in building schools. Michael tendered for the contract and a few months later won the contract which was worth more than €160,000.

It just proves that you can never know where your next referral is coming from... Do your children or nieces and nephews know where you go and what you do at half past six each week?

Liam Higgins – liam_higgins@o2.ie



WOULD YOU LIKE AN EXTRA €6K?

If so, just power up your Power Team! Charlie Lawson, National Director of BNI UK and Ireland, shows how the numbers speak for themselves...

As you can see on pages 4-5, we're launching a major Power Team Focus for BNI members this year. But perhaps you're wondering whether it's worth putting this effort in to grow your team...?

There's a simple answer: it's worth doing because it will help you and your Power Team colleagues to EARN MORE MONEY. With a bit of simple maths, we can even tell you how much money you could gain by bringing new members into your Power Team. Let's take an example...

You're currently in a Power Team of three people. Imagine that on your Power Team Focus day, you add two new Power Team members, taking your Team up to five.

Remember that across BNI, members get 67% of their referrals from their Power Team. The remaining 33% comes from the rest of the chapter.

Let's now assume that your two new Power Team members bring one referral each per week: that would amount to 100 new referrals for the chapter per year. However, 67% of them would remain in YOUR Power Team – that's 67 new referrals for your Power Team per year.

On average, one quarter of those 67 referrals will be for you (since there are five in your team and you don't pass referrals to yourself!). That means you'll receive 17 referrals per year as a direct result of just TWO new Power Team members. The average referral value of €392 (€273m ÷ 696,258 referrals, 2010 figures for BNI UK & Ireland) makes those 17 referrals worth nearly €6,000.

So it's really very simple. To enable your chapter to generate an extra €6k of business for you in the coming year, all you need to do is add two quality members to your Power Team. Of course, if you add three, four (or even more!) members, you'll add far more turnover to your business.

The Power Team Focus is a key tool that will help you build your business. Get thinking about how you can make it work for you!



THE NEXT GENERATION OF NETWORKING

BNI constantly looks for new and better ways of helping members to build successful, thriving businesses and this year we're on the brink of major new opportunities!

April sees the launch of the new and exciting BNI Connect, a social online media system that you can use to connect with BNI members across the world.

Until now, BNI Connect has been an administrative facility used by Leadership Teams to record chapter and member details. However the shiny new system which replaces it opens up a world of opportunity for every member, everywhere.

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

BNI Connect offers a wide range of tools and benefits that will make a positive difference to members, their businesses and their chapters. You'll have your own profile page which you can populate and develop: keeping it fresh and up to date can help you win business locally, regionally, nationally or even globally. The system will provide your chapter with its own website to help build a stronger, better group, and a wealth of additional resources will help you maximise the value of your membership. And of course, you'll be

able to connect with others, share ideas and discuss a combination of face-to-face and social media issues, as well as exchanging business opportunities with valuable BNI contacts worldwide.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Leadership Teams will all receive training on using BNI Connect during March. Then in April, you will receive an email inviting you to register on BNI Connect. Access to the system is part of your membership entitlement and it's completely free to use. It's worth giving some thought to your strategy for getting the best possible value from the system. Of course, it's important to respect that we remain a referral organisation, so don't be tempted to send spam as this won't build you the good reputation you'd want! Indeed, the killer advantage of the BNI Connect community is that all members are linked by a common thread – an understanding that the best way of growing a business is through *Givers Gain*.

Get online and get BNI Connected!

Karen Darby: *Givers Gain* personified

At the tender age of just 22, Karen Darby set up one of the UK's first telemarketing companies. Within seven years the company had 200 employees and a turnover of £4 million. Since then Karen has become a successful serial entrepreneur committed to building businesses such as Karen Darby Direct, SimplySwitch and Call Britannia - businesses that not only created wealth but also made a positive difference to people and communities.

In this interview, Karen speaks exclusively to *SuccessNet* about what drives her and some of the lessons she's learned so far.

Who or what inspired your first business?

I was only about 10 or 11 when I started my first money-making enterprise. In those days the word 'entrepreneur' didn't really exist and there were no business role models to follow. But I did have an insatiable desire for chocolate! I came from a working class background and knew that if I wanted the sweets and treats I had to buy them myself, so if I'm brutally honest what inspired me was money. I was always looking for ways to make cash without breaking any rules! One of my first money-making schemes came about when decimalisation was introduced. I loved penny arcades and at a time when some arcade machines accepted old money and some new, I exchanged coins for people. I spent all day in the arcades and made a bit of cash on the exchange rate: it seemed like a game really and that mindset stays with me. I've always enjoyed finding new ways to make money.

What do you believe are the three top qualities or characteristics of a successful business owner?

A good business owner or entrepreneur needs persistence, resilience and determination. You don't have to have a great education or a privileged upbringing: you work with the hand you're dealt. But persistence is essential. One great example of persistence is Walt Disney, who had to approach around 300 banks to get funding for Disneyland! Persistence pays. If someone says I can't do something I'll go out of my way to prove that I can. I certainly had to stay focused when trying to find funding for SimplySwitch. A long list of high net worth property investors and business angels turned me away before I eventually found venture capital funding. No gloating of course but I was thankful for my dogged persistence and determination when I later sold the company for £22 million! Resilience is vital too: things don't always go the way you want, but you have to deal with it and keep heading forward.



Clearly there are lots of businesses finding the going tough right now. Is a 'Keep calm and carry on' attitude just delusion?

No, I don't think so. Obviously you have to be realistic and have a good team around you, work with good people and know what you want to achieve. But you need to be optimistic too. Politicians and journalists are always talking down the economy and it does great damage to individual and business confidence. How successful you are will depend in large part on your attitude, so keep focused, look for opportunities and stay blinkered to the doom-mongers. Be successful in spite of them.

You're well known for your commitment to social enterprise. Why does this kind of business particularly attract you?

I didn't really look on my plans specifically as social ventures: I simply wanted right from the start to offer good products at a good price, provide good jobs and look after people. I guess it's an approach that fits well with BNI's *Givers Gain* ethic. There's an awful lot of bad business around that just wants to rip people off and run, but doing the right thing by others is a much healthier way of building businesses. Both SimplySwitch and Call Britannia created jobs for those who were disadvantaged in the workplace. I knew that it was perfectly possible to make money and make a difference too. And it's not just about money: I have a wonderful family and that alone makes me rich. I believe an attitude of gratitude makes for happy living and working. It's a good idea to consider what you'd like to see written on your tombstone... 'She left the world a better place' would be fantastic!

Do you have plans for your next social enterprise venture?

I'd like to take a portfolio approach rather than concentrate on a particular business as I have before, but the synergy between those future businesses would always be social impact. I get really excited about start-ups as the greatest fun lies in creating something new, so one of my aims is to raise £10 million to help fund social enterprise start-ups. If I could help create 1,000 social entrepreneurs, the ripple effect would generate lots more.

They say that learning is for life - even for millionaire entrepreneurs! What's the most important business lesson you've learned over the past 12 months?

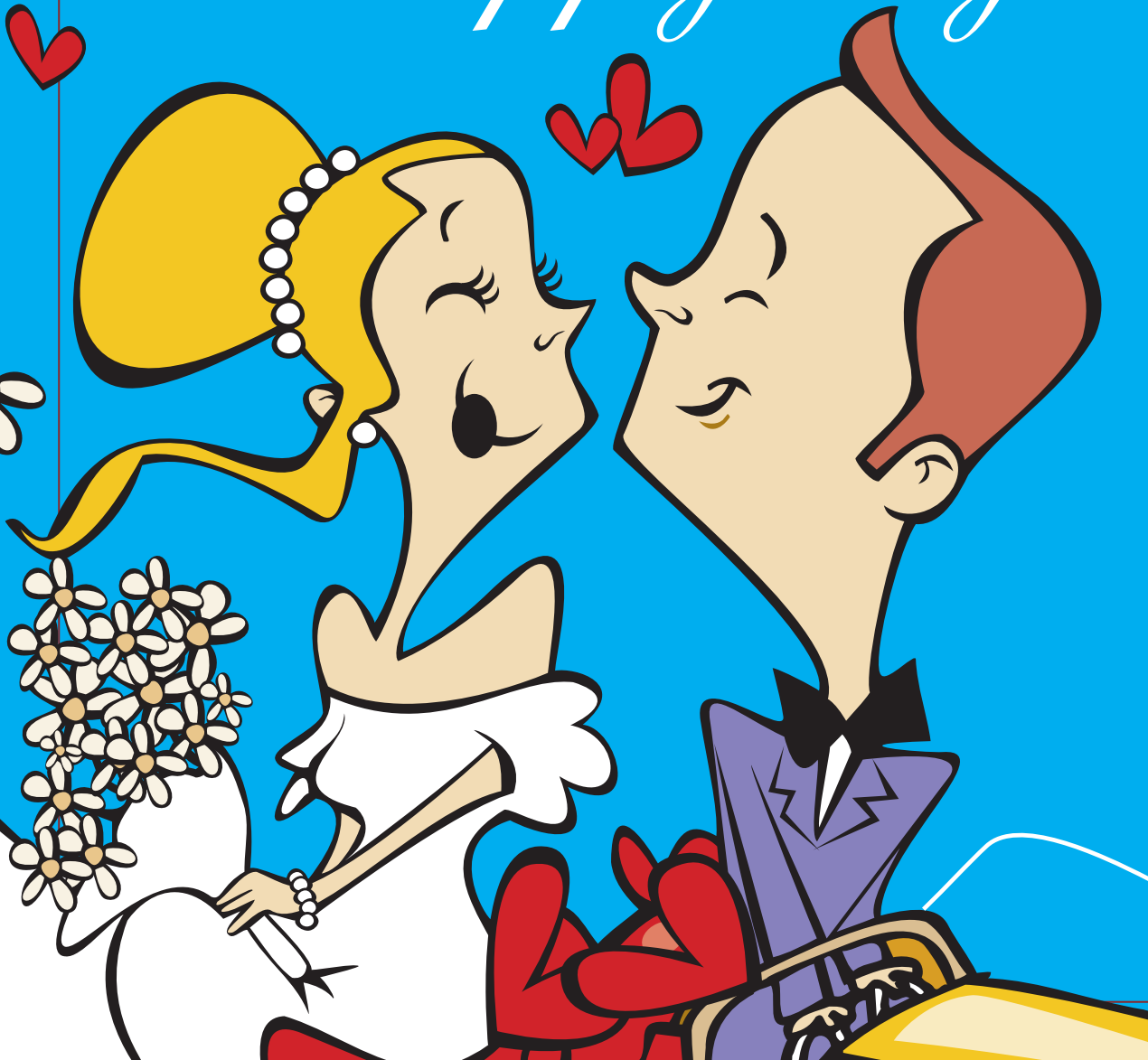
I guess I've learned that sometimes things go wrong and people let you down but that it's how you respond that really counts. Losing Call Britannia was hard, but if that hadn't happened I wouldn't now be looking at creating all these new social entrepreneurs - a project that excites me tremendously. And one more important lesson: make sure that while you're reaching your goals you also have the time of your life. We're here for a good time not a long time, so enjoy the journey!

www.karendarbydirect.com

Word of mouth

Every edition of *SuccessNet* now features a topical article written by a member. Each Word of mouth article aims to share the great reserves of knowledge and good practice that abound in our organisation.

Oh happy day



There's good Power Team practice a-plenty in BNI chapters nationwide. La Fugue is a successful inter-chapter Weddings Power Team. Last year they worked together on six high-value wedding events, generating excellent business for them all. With a royal wedding about to take place, La Fugue offers good advice for happy couples everywhere – and some tips on building a top Power Team.

As any married person will tell you, planning your wedding day can be both stressful and time-consuming. You need trusted, friendly experts who can remove some of that stress and deliver exactly what you want.

That's why we formed our Wedding Power Team, La Fugue, a group of like-minded individuals dedicated to supplying the highest quality products and services. We work together to ensure that every aspect of your wedding is perfect, so you can enjoy (rather than endure) the happiest day of your life. Here are our top tips for planning the perfect wedding.

Hire a good team

Ensure that the suppliers you select can work together. They must communicate effectively, understand your ideas and requirements and work as a team to maximise your budget.

Choose seasonal flowers

Flowers that are in season at the time of your wedding day will be more readily available than out of season blooms. Seek your florist's help to ensure you use flowers that are both beautiful and affordable (and help save the planet).

Find a trustworthy photographer

Anyone can put together a selection of their best shots from different weddings. Make sure your photographer shows you a complete wedding album or two, so you get an idea what your album may look like. If you like the photographer and the albums, the chances are you'll like the photos of your special day.

Stick to your dress budget

Choosing a dress is great fun but daunting too. When you're searching, keep your price range firmly in your head – it's easy to get carried away.

Use a music director

Most couples will want music on the day, perhaps a singer during the ceremony, a string quartet during canapés or a band in the evening to get your guests dancing. Or maybe all three! Use one high quality supplier for your entire day and they will take care of everything for you. Be aware that some large agencies can be impersonal and may not consult with you in detail.

Don't jet off on your honeymoon straight away

Your wedding day will be both exciting and hectic. Arrange a day's relaxation in a quiet hotel immediately after your wedding so you can enjoy additional time with family and your new spouse. If you do head straight off on honeymoon, then try to relax for the first few days and save the jet skiing and skydiving for later! You're more likely to enjoy the experience if you're rested.

Select a special venue

If possible, choose a wedding venue that means something to you both as a couple – perhaps a restaurant that you love or a hotel you've stayed in before. Otherwise, make sure your venue fits your personalities and individual style. When the Big Day comes you'll want to be somewhere that feels comfortable and welcoming.

La Fugue's tips for a successful Power Team

- Work with like-minded people, those who share your standards as well as similar clients.
- Agree on your Power Team goals (eg more clients, raised profiles, tendering for larger contracts).
- Meet together regularly. Prepare a straightforward agenda, make clear decisions and assign action points to be fulfilled before the next meeting.
- For larger projects, consider drawing up a contract between the team members.

The La Fugue Power Team members come from Tower Hill and West One Chapters in Central London.

They are: Nicole Manier (Couture designer), Neill Strain (Floral designer), Richard Swan (Music), Ash Ghadavi (Travel consultant), Mary-Jane Maybury (Photography)

www.lafugue.co.uk

GET IN TOUCH



Here's your chance to share ideas, views and information with the BNI community across the UK and Ireland.

You can say what you really think: constructive criticism is just as valuable as a well-founded compliment. Or perhaps your chapter has come up with a successful new initiative – something that could work for fellow members elsewhere?

Simply send an email or letter to the SuccessNet office and we'll publish a selection in every edition. What's more, the Star Letter wins an iPod shuffle, so why not drop us a line today?

Email: successnet@jmhcopy.co.uk **Post:** SuccessNet, BNI House, Church Street, Rickmansworth, WD3 1BS

■ The best part of a decade has passed since my first BNI Hammersmith meeting. I was dragged to it kicking and screaming by a local restaurateur after I'd run out of excuses not to go. If I'm honest, I dreaded it: I really wondered what I might be getting into...

However, when I arrived I was pleasantly surprised. The meeting would fit neatly into my working day and I felt sure my landscape design and construction business would benefit. I decided to join. Amazingly, my first referral came immediately and turned into £34,000 of business within a week!

I have never had an annual total of less than £100,000 worth of work from BNI. My 2010 total was nearly £300,000, with one referral alone amounting to £107,000 and at Christmas I had more than 100 BNI orders for my Christmas trees! I am now an avid BNI fan and view it as an essential business tool.

Over the years my fellow members have become trusted friends and I regularly use their services for personal and business use, from printing to insurance and photography to travel arrangements.

You will never hear me say I'm too busy to continue at BNI because it's BNI that plays a large part in keeping me busy! I can afford to be selective on the projects I take on and that is a luxury that few have in these tough economic times. To top it all, I enjoy every meeting. I think it's what's generally known as a 'no-brainer'...

Hew Stevenson, BNI Hammersmith

■ A few months ago my BNI colleague and web supplier, Hamish Fell (of the neighbouring Professionals Chapter), introduced me to Simon Woodward, his group's electrician. Simon is a down-to-earth, straightforward kind of guy. Everyone will tell you that he's a great electrician. And although he doesn't know it, I soon discovered that he's one of the most skilled networkers you could ever wish to meet.

We got on well and spent some time talking about our businesses. He was good company and a keen listener. I instantly liked him and we met up to talk about various business matters on a number of occasions. As Simon learned more about Hanson Contracts, my interior fit out business, he suggested that his client list could be very interested in my company's services. However, instead of simply recommending me to his contacts, Simon opened up his entire contact list to me and offered to introduce me to them in person. So it was that soon afterwards, I spent a whole day with Simon meeting and talking to his clients. For example, he took me into schools needing interior refits – perfect clients for me. Amazing! He's not even a member of my own chapter, yet Simon has given me the opportunity to do a whole lot of business with some of his best clients.

I'm truly grateful to him, not to mention humbled by his 100% *Givers Gain* approach and his networking skill. He took a major risk by introducing me like this but he knows that we'll never let him down. And you won't be surprised to learn that on the many occasions when Hanson Contracts needs an electrical contractor, Simon is the first person I call.

Simon Hanson, Olympians, Sheffield

STAR LETTER

■ At Blaze Chapter, we are always talking about the hidden value of BNI membership. It's not always easy for visitors (or even some members) to see the many ways that you can move yourself and your business forwards through BNI. I felt that with the right visual aids, some of those 'hidden' messages could be shouted out loud!

One day, when I was explaining to one of my office colleagues at Arena Personnel how our chapter had generated £1.7 million of revenue among its members in the last two and a half years, she came up with a brilliant idea. She suggested a jacket made of the referral slips

we'd exchanged. A few late nights, many staples and several tubes of glue later, the Blaze Referral Jacket was created.

The Referral Jacket is worn or displayed at every meeting and it goes down especially well with visitors for whom it's something of a reality check: it helps them realise that this is no talking shop, it's REAL business!

Vanessa Kaye,
Blaze Chapter, Hitchin

You too could be the writer of a Star Letter and win a cool iPod shuffle.



BNI USA: YOU SAW IT HERE FIRST!

As well as playing its central role in world affairs and trade, the United States has brought us a multitude of ideas, structures and images that form part of our everyday lives. Think the White House, Mickey Mouse and Google... And more than a quarter of a century ago, it was also the birthplace of a refreshingly positive approach to business success – the organisation that we all know and love as BNI! Dr Ivan Misner launched the first BNI chapter, Arcadia, in California in 1985. He realised that business owners could help grow each other's businesses by working closely together in a spirit of *Givers Gain*.

Since then, BNI has emerged in each of the 50 states and there are now 3,558 chapters in the USA. And proving that successful businesses refuse to participate in a recession, BNI USA successfully launched a massive 333 brand new chapters in the last 12 months. The USA's total national membership of 78,123 includes some uniquely American categories... In Virginia, Trapper Dan (pictured right) rescues and controls wildlife such as snakes, racoons and coyotes, while in California one member occupies the Belly Dancer category!

Just as in the UK, the vast majority of American chapters meet at breakfast time, when the bacon and eggs that many US members enjoy are likely to be accompanied by hash browns or a Danish, whilst their health-conscious colleagues opt for oatmeal and fruit at the BNI table.

BNI HQ is still based in California and it's from there that major initiatives such as Power Teams and BNI Podcasts are driven. The great thing is that this information and training is rapidly shared around the world via the BNI network and online media. Team USA are currently busy on several projects. Firstly, the forthcoming USA Conference takes place in Rhode Island from May 19th – 21st. This major networking and development event will feature keynote speakers and offer the best in networking opportunities for hundreds of delegates. (If you've never been to an international BNI conference, it's something you should consider: you don't need to be a big business to work in productive international

partnerships.) Secondly, there's a real buzz in the USA about the exciting new global networking opportunity that is BNI Connect (see page 13 for more details).



A rare breed... Trapper Dan

DID YOU KNOW?

- In 1507, America was reputedly named after the Italian cartographer and explorer, Amerigo Vespucci.
- The USA occupies a land area of 9.8 million km².
- The USA's resident population in 2010 was 308,745,538. It is the third most populous nation in the world.
- At 389, California is the state with the most BNI chapters. Alaska has the fewest.

**Want to know more about BNI USA?
Contact the BNI HQ team - bni@bni.com**



Number of wedding planners in BNI UK & Ireland. Find a great wedding planner for your chapter today.

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It's springtime!

There's just **1** BNI member with the surname Spring.

Hello Robin!



21 UK and Ireland chapters have passed at least £1 million in the last year.

UK & Ireland members exchanged more than **£245 million** of business in 2010.



The closest chapter to Westminster

Abbey is Victoria BNI from St Stephen's Club, Queen Anne's Gate. Reckon the members will get an invite to the big day?



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members attended a London North West Chapter Development workshop on 1st February. Watch those chapters grow!

