

## Is networking right for you?

Do you see networking as an opportunity for your business?

There is no doubt that networking is a great way to do business.

There can't be many businesses that would disagree that the most economical and effective way to gain business is to attend a meeting where you can freely discuss your product or service to a receptive audience and convert them into customers. Unfortunately networking does not work like this and not many businesses actually get the results out of networking that they hoped for!

Have you already attended networking events for your business?

The probability is that you have already attended networking events, perhaps those held by the Chamber of Commerce, Business Link, Federation of Small Businesses, etc.

For some these networking meetings may have led to great things, but for most the meetings do not generate the business they might have hoped for.

Do you get the feeling that you are just going through the motions of networking - you attend, you talk, you wait for calls, but little or no business comes your way?

Why is this type of networking not as successful as you would wish?

Well, the problem is a fundamental one. Meetings are infrequent and when they are held, they are often attended by a completely different group of businesses from one meeting to the next. The chance to get to really know people, or for others to get to know you, is hard.

This is an important factor. After all, people buy from people not from businesses, and if you are not getting to know the person would you trust doing business with them?

It works both ways, if they don't get a chance to know you that well, is it really that surprising that they aren't rushing to your door for your products or services?

It's also likely that when you attend a meeting, you are there solely to promote your own business and are not particularly interested in the products and services of the others in attendance. In other words you are attending to sell, rather than be sold to.

It may come as a bit of a surprise - but that is how other attendees will be viewing you!

How much business do you actually get out of your networking efforts at the moment?

If the above is true - and it is for most that attend infrequent networking meetings, you probably don't get much out of networking. You may have even stopped going to networking meetings and see it all as a waste of time.

Therefore it may surprise you to know that at our weekly business networking breakfasts, we regularly pass more business referrals to each other than the total number of people sat around the table.

In other words, over one referral per person per meeting.

**Why our business networking meetings result in actual business!**

Business Network International (BNI) is the most successful business networking model in the world because of a number of simple (and when explained obvious) differences.

### Regularity

Business meetings are held weekly. The Christchurch BNI members hold their networking meeting each Thursday morning at 7am prompt. This ensures that meetings do not interfere with their normal working day.

Members are under an obligation to attend. By attending each week you get to know and understand the business activities of the people sat around the table with you. Naturally, because members understand your business better, they can also promote your business more easily and effectively during the course of their week.

### Structure

The meetings follows a structured agenda which helps guarantee that the meetings run smoothly and completes on time with all ares of the meetiiing covered. Each member (and visitors too!) gets a chance to introduce themselves to everyone and talk about their business. In addition, each member on rotation, is able to explain in more detail their business activity. The principle of this approach is to educate the members in your particular field of expertise. Time is allocated at the end of the structured session for members to network in an infomal manner.

### Referrals

This one area makes BNI unique compared to all other networking organisations and is a proven recipe for success.

The emphasis within BNI is firmly on finding business for your networking colleagues, rather than trying to get business for yourself. Members are encouraged to refer their fellow members each time an opportunity presents itself during the course of each week.

Making this effort to find business for others may seem a bit odd at first until you understand the reasoning behind it. The approach is referred to within BNI as 'Givers Gain' and it is very effective. 'Givers Gain' is the idealology that 'If I give you business you will want to give me some too!'

You will be amazed how effective this is in practice and needs to be seen to be believed!.

### Only one member per profession

Once you have joined our Chapter (BNI refer to each networking group as a Chapter), you become the sole representative for your professional classification. The advantages are obvious; unlike other network meetings that you may have attended in the past where you could have been surrounded by businesses all offering the same products or services as you, BNI only permit one person per profession to join. Consequently, should another member hear of a business opportunity that falls into your line of work, you will be the one that gets the referral!

Our members normally live and operate their businesses in the local area, so another advantage of being a member is to stop a business competitor getting a foothold locally.

One member per profession allows you to lock out the competition from your area.

Are you right for the Christchurch Business Networking Chapter?

Understandably, we want to make sure that we have the very best people representing each business classification within our network chapter.

What makes a perfect member?

You will need to be professional, responsible and reliable in your approach to business and offer good value in the products and services that you supply for us to be able to recommend you. There is also the additional responsibility of being reliable by committing to attend weekly meetings and making an effort to support other members.

Our members take their businesses seriously and are perhaps a little bit more motivated than their competitors. Most businesses are based in the Bournemouth, Christchurch or surrounding areas of Hampshire and Dorset and your business should be too as this makes referrals easier.

If this also sounds like you, and you really want networking to make a difference for your business, we would love to have you along to one of our meetings as a visitor, remember you can come along to any meeting as a visitor before joining to get a taste of what we get up to before deciding whether to request membership.

We meet at the Captains Club Hotel, Christchurch Quay, Christchurch, Dorset.

Please make sure to contact us before the day so we can order a breakfast for you.