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Top 7 Ways to Grow Your Business by Referral

Businesses that have survived the startup phase are often uncertain about how to take their business to the next level. BNI WCF helps entrepreneurs solve this dilemma by teaching them how to grow their business with unique referral and relationship development strategies.

TAMPA, FL (April 25, 2011) -- So many people think that growing a business by referral consists of shaking hands, passing out business cards and asking your current clients, "Do you have any referrals for me?" only to get a resounding "NO" as a response, says Tom Fleming, Executive Director of [Business Network International West Central Florida](#) (BNI WCF) and Director of Training at the Referral Institute in Tampa, FL. This perception is partially due to lack of understanding about the power of word of mouth marketing and how to leverage existing and new relationships to grow a business. Last year, Business Network International helped businesses generate over \$2.6 billion dollars worth of business for members by passing 6.2 million referrals in 5,500 chapters in 43 countries. This year, 40 BNI chapters in the West Central Florida region are on track to pass over \$50 million worth of business to each other.

In accordance with BNI's mission, BNI WCF helps members increase their business through a structured, positive, and professional word of mouth program that enables them to develop long term, meaningful relationships with quality business professionals. Subsequent to this, BNI's role is to better educate, guide and inform business professionals in the process of developing a word-of-mouth based business.

So exactly how does BNI WCF help entrepreneurs grow their business by referral?

BNI WCF provides unique networking opportunities while offering a customized curriculum through the Referral Institute which is designed with tips, tools, and techniques to help professionals become more effective and productive networkers. The Referral Institute helps all business professionals who rely heavily on referral-based marketing to succeed by teaching them how to take their business to the next level. Here are some of the top ways BNI WCF and the Referral Institute helps businesses to flourish despite the economy:



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- **Finding the Starting Point for Referral Marketing** – Understand your business and reasons why customers choose your business over competitors. This knowledge helps businesses generate referral based marketing communications strategies by highlighting the aspects of the business that attract customers.
- **Identifying Networks and Using the VCP Process** – According to Dr. Ivan Misner, Founder and Chairman of BNI and NY Times best selling author on referral based marketing, a referral marketing plan involves relationships that are fed by mutual trust and shared benefits. These relationships evolve through three phases: Visibility, Credibility, and Profitability, otherwise known as the VCP Process.
- **Learning the 10 Commandments of Networking a Mixer** - Business mixers can be a waste of time because they are unstructured. By using the 10 Commandments business professionals can put structure into an unstructured event to make the most effective use of their time and generate results.
- **Making Introductions That Last** – Business professionals can learn unique strategies for making introductions referral sources will remember. This is an important part of referral based marketing because it ensures the referral source will think of the business when the opportunity arises to send the qualified prospect. It’s all about building brand recognition.
- **Diversifying Your Network** - According to Dr. Ivan Misner, there are 7 different types of networking organizations which include Casual Contact Networks, Strong Contact Networks, Community Service Clubs, Professional Associations, Women’s Business Organizations, and Social/Business Organizations. It is important for businesses to know which business networking groups will be most beneficial to them in mining a “VEIN” of referrals.
- **Learning the G.A.I.N.S Profile for Success in Generating Referrals** - This concept teaches business professionals how to generate referrals by learning as much as possible about the members of their network. To do this it is necessary to be aware of five aspects that ensure productive networking which include: **G**oals, **A**ccomplishments, **I**nterests, **N**etworks, and **S**kills.
- **Generating Referrals for Life** – Business professionals learn how to effectively ask for referrals and reward those who provide referrals.



Members also learn skills on developing a system for tracking how sources are motivated to pass referrals all day every day.

These are only a few of the top ways that the BNI WCF and the Referral Institute help entrepreneurs take their business to the next level after the startup phase. Notice that not one topic here references how to shake someone's hand, pass out a business card, or ask existing customers for referrals. Instead it is all about a new approach to referral based marketing.

Additionally, the programs offered by the Referral Institute support the attendees by providing them with a Referral Based Marketing Strategy and System for growing their business. Many of the Referral Institute attendees have remarked on how they gained a sense of focus and confidence as a result of learning how to network effectively through BNI WCF and the Referral Institute.

About Tom Fleming and BNI:

BNI is the largest business networking organization in the world and offers members and prospective members the opportunity to share business referrals or initiate a local chapter of BNI.

Tom Fleming is the Executive Director for BNI in West Central Florida and the Referral Institute. When Tom acquired the region, BNI WCF had one chapter with 13 members. The region now has over 40 chapters with 1600 members passing \$50,000,000 in business to each other in the past year alone.

Tom is sought out as a local, national and international speaker on the subjects of marketing businesses by referral and organizational development. He is also a contributing author in two best-selling books on referral based marketing and has been recorded on many educational CD's produced from his speaking engagements. Prior to beginning his career as an entrepreneur, Tom worked for various Fortune 500 firms, earned an MBA from Babson College and a Bachelor's Degree in business from Boston University.

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