

Contact:
Karla Jo Helms
kj@jotopr.com

How to Spend Less Time Building a Network of Referrals

There are businesses that avoid business networking like the plague because they think they don't need it, it doesn't work or it takes too much time. Instead they spend money on forms of advertising that generates a low return on investment.

TAMPA, FL (June 17, 2011) -- Word of mouth marketing is extremely important says Tom Fleming, Executive Director of [Business Network International West Central Florida](#) and Director of Training at the Referral Institute in Tampa, FL. Because the prospects are referred, they are more ready to buy, have less price sensitivity and are more loyal than if they contacted the company from the yellow pages for instance. Case in point: last year, Business Networking International helped businesses generate over \$2.8 billion dollars worth of business for members by passing 6.5 million referrals in 5,500 chapters in 43 countries. In 2010, 40 BNI chapters in the West Central Florida region passed \$50 million worth of business to each other.

If word of mouth or referral based marketing is so effective and lowers advertising costs, then why do many businesses make it a low priority when it comes to their marketing plan? The answer lies in the time investment it takes to build a referral network.

There are many business professionals in sole proprietorships that feel they do not have the time it takes to do cold calling and some of the other methods that are used to develop a customer base. Instead they opt to use advertising, direct mail, and strategies that do not require as much time. Although there is nothing wrong with these strategies they often do not produce the results that are needed to sustain a business over the long term and can come with the investment of money versus time.

According to eMarketer research on trend analysis in digital marketing and media, 65 million people in the United States alone are talking about



www.jotopr.com

411 Cleveland Street, Suite 204 Clearwater, FL 33755 888-202-4614

products and services they investigate online. eMarketer statistics show that 30 percent of all Internet users will be passing the word about products and services over the next four years. When you look at case studies and statistics for word of mouth marketing most of the results point to the fact that referral based marketing is the way to go.

In light of these statistics, more business professionals are choosing referral based or word of mouth marketing and they are saving time and money by joining business network organizations. A business networking group helps business people learn how to work smarter not harder to gain new business.

Fleming has brought this opportunity to the Tampa region to help businesses with Tampa referral marketing. As Director of Training at the Referral Institute in Tampa, Mr. Fleming has been able to provide the training and tools to help business professionals increase revenues through relationship-based referral marketing.

Instead of being a numbers game that requires cold calling and other time consuming strategies, the Referral Institute teaches business people how to implement and then consistently monitor a well-organized referral marketing plan.

Karen Christensen, Director of Membership Relations for the Clearwater Regional Chamber of Commerce, always thought she was a pretty good networker, but after taking the Certified Networker Program at the Referral Institute in Tampa, she learned there was so much more for her to learn.

During the course, she was constantly thinking to herself, "I never thought of it that way". It was light bulb after light bulb moments going off in her mind. She now uses the phrase, "there's a big boot mark on my back from me kicking me, for not taking this incredible, eye opening, riveting course sooner!" Her presentations are power charged and she continues to get fantastic feedback and better yet, quality referrals. She can't remember the last time she had to cold call.

In addition to the Referral Institute, business professionals become members of Business Networking International West Central Florida to participate in unique networking opportunities and additional education programs. Each chapter prides itself on having only one member from each profession to eliminate competition and increase networking opportunities. This in itself is a time saver for many business professionals. BNI WCF also uses a screening system prior to membership so professionals in each chapter are



411 Cleveland Street, Suite 204 Clearwater, FL 33755 888-202-4614

www.jotopr.com

only networking with the best. Potential members are also encouraged to start a new chapter if there is no professional opening in a current chapter.

BNI WCF and the Referral Institute is a one-stop location for business networking and referral based marketing education which helps businesses with Tampa referral marketing and referral-based marketing in the surrounding region. As a result, many businesses in West Central Florida are flourishing despite the economy by using a very old marketing technique with a new twist.

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.

Visit BNI West Central Florida at www.bniwcf.com.

###



www.jotopr.com

411 Cleveland Street, Suite 204 Clearwater, FL 33755 888-202-4614