

Contact:  
Diane Stein  
[dstein@jotopr.com](mailto:dstein@jotopr.com)

## **BNI Establishes Alliance with Clearwater Regional Chamber of Commerce**

*Business Networking International West Central Florida offers businesses a unique opportunity to generate referrals to grow their business. The recent alliance with the Clearwater Chamber of Commerce reinforces this opportunity by helping business professionals to diversify their networks.*

TAMPA, FL (November 29, 2010) -- Tom Fleming, Executive Director of [Business Networking International West Central Florida](#) (BNI WCF) and Director of Training for the Referral Institute in Tampa, recently facilitated a strategic alliance with the Clearwater Regional Chamber of Commerce to help promote membership in their respective organizations. The alliance is part of BNI's philosophy of helping business owners diversify their networks in the spirit of growing their client base by referral. Mr. Fleming says some Chamber of Commerce organizations view BNI as competition, so he is working to change this perception by creating an alliance with local Chambers. BNI's tactical alliance with the Clearwater Regional Chamber of Commerce has proven to be a great opportunity for both parties.

"The amount of business and support has been incredible," says Karen Christensen, the Vice President of Member Relations for the Clearwater Regional Chamber of Commerce. "The quarterly events with BNI and the Referral Institute resulted in \$3000 for the chamber so far with just two events." Tom Fleming and BNI have also sponsored membership drives for the Chamber, resulting in 4 out of 5 new Chamber members signed up from BNI contacts. "The biggest impact from our alliance is that the BNI members who have joined or attended our events have helped teach our membership not to sell to each other, but to educate each other, resulting in more members doing business with one another," says Christensen. "That is a huge impact for us."

BNI offers opportunities to share ideas, contacts, and business referrals. BNI's role is to better educate, guide and inform members in developing word-of-mouth based business. High trust and long-sales-cycle type industries rely on a "relationship sale" to increase their revenue and client base. These industries include financial planners, realtors, insurance agents, attorneys, architects, engineers, accountants, auto repair, coaches, and consultants.



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BNI and the Clearwater Regional Chamber of Commerce both foster different methods of business networking - an essential part of sole proprietorships and businesses that rely on referrals to grow their enterprise. This helps businesses to build a diversified network that result in a high return on investment. Mr. Fleming recently gave a presentation on attracting referrals at an event at the Feather Sound Country Club sponsored by the Clearwater Regional Chamber of Commerce, BNI, The Referral Institute, the St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce and the Tampa Bay Business Journal. Mr. Fleming's presentation focused on Tampa referral marketing, as well as the best ways to engage in business networking to build a loyal client base despite the current economic conditions.

BNI's alliance with the Clearwater Regional Chamber of Commerce will also help Chamber members recognize the power of referrals versus obtaining leads that may or may not be interested in offers to do business. The current association with the Clearwater Regional Chamber of Commerce has strengthened this relationship and opened up new networking opportunities for all.

Tom Fleming has worked under the principles of Dr. Ivan Misner, "The Father of Modern Networking" and the founder and chairman of BNI. The philosophy of BNI is built upon the idea of "Givers Gain." By giving business to others you will get business in return.

Within this framework BNI's goal is to educate members that networking is more about farming than about hunting; it's about cultivating long term mutually beneficial business relationships. The alliance with the Clearwater Regional Chamber of Commerce certainly aligns with BNI's goals.

The Referral Institute will be hosting an Educational Evening entitled, "Double to Triple your Referrals in 60 to 90 Days" on December 9<sup>th</sup> from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Holiday Inn Express, 2580 Gulf to Bay Blvd., Clearwater FL. This free workshop is open to the public and will provide networking opportunities along with insights on how to expand your business through referrals. Select individuals will also have an opportunity to apply for an upcoming Certified Networker Curriculum; a college level course which educates business professionals on a structured approach to building a business by referral. Those interested in attending are asked to RSVP to [tampa@referralinstitutedtampa.com](mailto:tampa@referralinstitutedtampa.com).

## **About Tom Fleming and BNI**



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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](http://www.bniwcf.com).

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