

How to Create a Great “Power Team” with Business Networking

Business networking is a powerful way to generate a significant ROI by building relationships. Yet many business people struggle with developing a strong network that continually refers them business because they just don't know how.

TAMPA, FL (January 10, 2011) -- Business professionals that take on leadership roles enjoy the advantages of higher visibility, credibility, and profitability in the organizations they are part of, says Tom Fleming, Executive Director of [Business Networking International West Central Florida](#) (BNI WCF) and the Director of Training at the Referral Institute in Tampa. The problem is that many business professionals have become experts in their chosen fields, but they haven't learned how to market a business by referral – which is a completely different knowledge base.

In an economy where many people have gone out of business, a recent BNI member, Jon Bessellieu of West Coast Graphics Printing formed the Nexus chapter of BNI near St. Petersburg. The chapter was formed in January of 2009 and since then Jon has experienced great success by the referrals he has obtained through business networking within the BNI chapter.

During the course of 2010, Jon was referred to an advertising agency by a BNI member and the account resulted in \$600,000 in billing. In addition to that account Jon was able to trade referrals with another BNI member in a similar field that has resulted in \$100,000 in additional billing from an “inside” referral. All of this happened in an economy so bad that many of Jon's competitors have gone out of business.

But how do you go about creating a great word-of-mouth “power” marketing team? Businesses such as financial planners, insurance agents, realtors, Mortgage Originators, Chiropractors, and others that rely on referrals to grow their sales can significantly increase their Return on Investment if they take the time to learn how to network successfully. Once they learn this process many professionals like Jon go on to establish their own local Chapter of BNI.

According to Jerry Schwartz, Executive Director of BNI in Maryland and DC, there are five different skills one must learn to network effectively:

1. Don't take relationship skills for granted. It has to be worked on by both parties.
2. Focus on methods and actions to work together.
3. Get to know your referral partner's business and support team.
4. Identify “best practices” to find qualified referrals and implement a follow up system.
5. Find ways to help each other outside of the business setting.

One way that Tom Fleming has helped business people develop these skills is through the Referral Institute in Tampa, FL. Business people can obtain formal training in networking and learn how to grow their business by referral as opposed to cold calling, direct mail, advertising and other promotional methods. The Referral Institute supports businesses with this type of education while BNI WCF provides a forum for business professionals to network within.

Once business people develop great networking skills through the Referral Institute they go on to establish additional chapters of BNI WCF in an effort to create results and make money in their referral based marketing activities for their respective businesses. Their successes result in stories similar to Jon Bessellieu's with a business that flourishes despite economic conditions.

One of the Referral Institute's programs is a 12 week college level course that supports business professionals with developing and implementing a Referral Based Marketing Strategy. From survey results, graduates of the program expect to generate an incremental \$10-50K in business just over the next year as a direct result of what they have learned.

This is one of the unique opportunities created by Tom Fleming which include an exclusive training program *plus* a place to use the networking skills that are learned by getting involved in a chapter of BNI West Central Florida.

Tampa referral marketing - it is like having an economic stimulus package designed specifically for this region.

About Tom Fleming and Business Networking International:

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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