

Contact:
Diane Stein
dstein@jotopr.com

BNI Helps Businesses Increase Referrals and Build ROI

During the current economic recession, businesses are opting to use word of mouth advertising. Why?

TAMPA, FL (January 31, 2011) -- Word of mouth depends on developing relationships with other professionals and clients who can refer business to qualified prospects that are ready to buy. 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, according to Tom Fleming, Executive Director of [Business Networking International West Central Florida](#) (BNI WCF) and Director of Training at the Referral Institute in Tampa.

So why is word of mouth advertising so important? Because the Return on Investment is high and it works. It also makes the consumer the most valued advocate for a business and its brand.

In 2009, Laurel Barnhart of Interiors by Laurel, Inc., experienced a grim year when her income was down about 40 percent. In 2010, she attended her first BNI meeting where she heard two different members explain how their business increased by \$10,000 last year thanks to BNI WCF. After only 4 months of membership Laurel closed \$13,000 worth of business from BNI WCF referrals. She has also been able to provide referrals for other members who closed similar amounts. According to Laurel, "give and you shall receive."

BNI WCF takes a unique approach to helping businesses increase referrals and build a solid Return on Investment. BNI WCF is what is known as a "strong contact networking organization" which means they only allow one person per profession in each chapter. By becoming a member, businesses "lock out their competition" says Mr. Fleming.

The specific purpose of BNI WCF is to support members by gathering on a weekly basis for the sole purpose of passing referrals. Members receive referrals to qualified prospects that have a need for their product or service. New Clients = Increased Revenues for firms who are members.



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BNI WCF has been able to impact the local community helping businesses increase referrals and build their ROI by passing 4 million dollars worth of referrals per month to each other over the last year which stimulates the economy in the Tampa region. BNI WCF members have gone around town wearing "We refuse to participate in the recession" pins thanks to the networking skills they have learned from BNI.

Mr. Fleming purchased BNI West Central Florida from the former owner in late 2002 and arrived in the area to live in Jan 2003. When he arrived there was one chapter with 13 members. The region has grown to over 40 chapters with just under 1600 members. To manage this expansive growth they have gone from having 2 support people on the team to just under 40.

BNI West Central Florida also includes 7 different training programs built around the art of growing your business by referral of which 2 of the 7 are Referral Institute Programs offer by the Referral Institute in Tampa. The company has just completed training 1000 members during this past September across 8 different 5 hour sessions and International Networking Week is coming up during the first full week of February 2011.

Any business that relies on referrals to grow can benefit from a business networking group. The unique part of BNI WCF is it offers exclusive and copyrighted structures and trainings in business networking which is a valuable skill that most business people lack. It is also a skill that helps businesses generate a loyal client base which increases the longevity and profitability of their business.

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,



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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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