

BNI Focus: Referrals, Referrals, Referrals

Business Network International (BNI) calls itself the world's largest referral organization. And with good reason. The international business network and local networking organization offers members the opportunity to share ideas, contacts and most importantly – referrals.

Started in 1985, BNI is a business and professional networking organization in which members actively promote the businesses of their fellow members to generate referrals for each other. At weekly chapter meetings, members pass referrals around, exchange business cards and share success stories about the positive results of networking. They carry the business cards of fellow chapter members for on-the-spot referrals.

Only one person per professional classification (lawyer, florist, groundskeeper, etc.) is eligible to join a chapter. As of November 2002, there were 2,600 BNI chapters throughout North America, Europe, Australia, Asia and Africa with approximately 52,000 members. Last year alone, BNI generated 2.5 million referrals, worth an estimated value of \$856 million.

What separates BNI from other professional organizations is the disciplined structure each chapter maintains. Meetings are held each week and follow a strict agenda. Members must attend each meeting and stay for the entire meeting. If a member has to miss a meeting, a substitute must be sent. If a member misses three meetings without sending a substitute, the membership is revoked.

Jill Bode of Designed Write Public Relations says she has received 95% of her business from BNI referrals and also utilizes the expertise of her fellow chapter members for both business and personal assistance. She knows of one referral within her chapter that resulted in \$67,000 worth of new business from the initial contact, with follow-up work generating additional income.

"BNI groups are designed to focus on the act of generating business for members and not on food, the gossip or even electing new officers," Bode says. "The organization has built-in procedures for the running of each meeting – this frees up the membership and they can apply their energies to helping their fellow members find more business."

Resource: www.bni.com

Wanted: Life Sciences Business Ideas

Business plan competitions have been around for a number of years. Purdue and Roche Diagnostics are putting a new twist to the idea with an April 22-24 event at the university's West Lafayette campus.

The first Purdue University Life Sciences Business Plan Competition is offering \$144,000 in prize money for business plans that market products and technologies in the life sciences, biotechnology and biomedicine. Entries are expected to feature original products and services such as medical equipment and devices, pharmaceuticals and drugs, research services and software.

The goal of the competition is to unearth breakthrough life science technologies and provide a forum for inventors, students, academics and industry representatives to enhance the life science innovation process via networking.

"Business plan competitions are not a new concept," says Don Blewett, associate director of the Burton D. Morgan Center for Entrepreneurship at Purdue University. "But in this case, this competition is unique because it seeks entrants nationally, the total prizes that will be awarded are substantial and the business plans that are sought are narrowly described."

Participants will have an opportunity to define their innovations in commercial terms and to compete for the substantial cash prizes that can be used to further their research or to embark on the commercialization of their ventures. Participants will also have the opportunity to network and interact with investors and potential corporate partners.

Blewett says some side benefits he expects to see are elevated interest in life sciences and getting some technologies "from mind to market." He says the competition will be beneficial to Indiana's emerging industrial clusters, working population, and learning and research institutions.

Resource: Don Blewett at (765) 494-4485

Women Continue Political Climb

The percentage of women serving in state legislatures has increased from 4.0% in 1969 to 22.8% in 2003.

The breakdown includes:

- 404 (20.4%) state Senate and 1,276 (23.5%) House or Assembly seats
- All-time highs of 13 senators and 60 representatives (from 27 states) in Congress
- 89 statewide elected executive posts in 48 states
- 5 governors, 17 lieutenant governors, 8 attorneys general, 12 secretaries of state, 12 state treasurers, 6 state auditors and 10 chief education officials

In general terms (see chart), the West leads the way in female state lawmakers, while southern states remain more male dominated. Of Indiana's 150 state legislators, 27 (14 in the House and 13 in the Senate) are female (18%).

Resource: National Conference of State Legislatures at www.ncsl.org

Top 5 States for Women Lawmakers

Washington – 38.8%
 Arizona – 35.6%
 Nevada – 34.9%
 Oregon – 34.4%
 Colorado – 34%

Bottom 5 States for Women Lawmakers

Alabama – 7.9%
 Oklahoma – 10.1%
 South Carolina – 10.6%
 Kentucky – 10.9%
 Mississippi – 12.6%

Developing the Teachers of Tomorrow

The TEACH Academy (Teacher Education Arts and Careers) has become Indiana's magnet school for teacher education. The Academy, based at Indianapolis Manual High School, is the first of its kind in Indiana and one of the first long-term programs in the nation.

The Academy is intended to motivate and prepare high school students for careers in education. Other states such as Florida, California, New York and Texas have two-year or four-year programs, but Indianapolis Public Schools and Ball State University are the first to create an eight-year curriculum – four years of high school and four years of college.

During last year's planning phase, more than 20 students participated in the pilot program. This year, the official start of TEACH, 43 freshmen enrolled. The original projection for the year was 15 freshmen, a number that was increased to 30 and eventually the 43.

TEACH students take college preparatory classes, ones that meet both Core 40 and academic honors diploma requirements. In addition, students take four one-year teaching courses.

The 25 upper classmen who participated in the pilot program are still considered part of TEACH. Three high school seniors are now cadet teachers (working on site two hours each day) at Emma Donnan Middle School in Indianapolis.

Elizabeth Owens, director of TEACH Academy, says she is documenting the curriculum and the philosophy behind it to serve as a resource for others that might be interested in initiating a similar program.

"The only way we will begin to answer the teacher shortage is by a united effort across the education profession," she says. "Unfortunately, most teachers have not considered building their replacements."

The U.S. Department of Education, which partnered with Ball State University to develop the program, awarded Indianapolis Public Schools a three-year, \$650,000 magnet school grant.

Resources: Ball State University at www.bsu.edu/news

Liz Owens, TEACH Academy, at (317) 226-2234

Telemonitoring 'the Future of Home Health Care'

Health care reform and challenges are the subject of two articles in this issue, beginning on Page 8. Another industry change involves the use of in-home telemonitoring.

Telemonitoring devices in patients' homes are used to take vital signs on a daily basis. Irregularities can be caught before they become full-fledged problems.

Carmel-based Nightingale Home Healthcare offers the technology throughout central Indiana.

Dr. Dev Brar, president of Nightingale, says telemonitoring is the future of home health care.

His company utilizes the latest technology in exclusively offering the HomeMed Home Monitoring System (available for free to Medicare eligible recipients).

"The HomeMed system allows us to identify when our patients need in-home nursing visits the most," Brar explains. "The HomeMed monitor, combined with clinical expertise, allows us to build successful disease management programs that provide clinical data with ongoing support and patient teaching."

In just three minutes, the system collects vital signs such as heart rate, blood pressure, oxygen saturation, body weight and temperature. Individualized programs allow for additional measurements. Results include fewer hospitalizations and emergency room visits. The goal is to allow in-home patients to maintain independence with dignity.

Industry analysts predict growth in the telemedicine industry from \$500 million in 2002 to \$10 billion by 2005.

Resource: Nightingale Home Healthcare at (317) 334-7777 or www.nghhc.com



Work Hard to Discourage Shoplifters

One of the biggest problems facing retail store owners is how to handle shoplifters – who cost retailers an estimated \$8 billion a year. Although one out of every 11 shoppers steal, shoplifters are only caught once every 49 episodes.

If a shoplifter is apprehended incorrectly, the merchant could be exposed to civil or criminal liability for false arrest, false imprisonment, assault, battery or defamation. But there are methods retailers can use to deter would-be stealers. The best defense is customer service.

"We just try to talk to and watch all of our customers," says the general manager of the Fashion Bug store in Lebanon. "Most of our merchandise has sensors attached, but there are still ways for people to take things."

An adequately staffed store and trained, proactive employees can discourage switching price tags and hiding articles – creating an environment of apprehension for would-be shoplifters.

A few tips from retail owners:

- Provide good customer service
- Have a written shoplifting policy
- Make sure high-value items are not hidden from the sales floor
- Maintain a visual observation of the shoplifter the entire time
- Don't put yourself in danger over an item
- Prosecute an offender to the full extent of the law

Resources: www.shoppingcenterworld.com

Fashion Bug, Lebanon, at (765) 482-6212

Evansville Strives to Get Fit

In a recent study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Indiana was awarded the dubious distinction of being the 12th fattest state in the nation.

There is good reason for alarm. Obesity is the second leading cause of preventable disease in the United States and is linked to ailments such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, hypertension, sleep apnea and some forms of cancer.

When Evansville was ranked near the top on *SELF* magazine's 2001 "most unhealthy lifestyle" list, one man decided action needed to be taken.

"I read that article in *SELF* and my general manager and I decided to do something about it," says Tony Maier, director of fitness at the Tri-State Athletic Club in Evansville.

Maier, Welborn Health Plan and Hamilton Clinic teamed up in March 2002 to start Get Fit Evansville, which hosts monthly health fairs offering expert advice on eating right and relaxation, as well as free health screenings.

"It's a whole gamut of wellness," says Maier, whose program reaches out to children, men, women and seniors.

SELF did a follow-up article on the project as the city improved four slots in this year's healthy lifestyle rankings. "We dropped off their list," says Maier.

Resource: Tony Maier at (812) 479-3111

Entrepreneurial Gender Gap Exists

Do you have what it takes to be an entrepreneur? If you're living in America or the United Kingdom, for example, the chances are greater if you are a male.

A recent survey conducted by Texas Christian University discovered a larger entrepreneur gender gap in robust economies than in developing countries.

This survey of more than 2,700 men and women in 17 nations found that men in developed nations are more likely than women to score high on personal traits of innovation, risk-taking and confidence. In less developed countries, however, the gender gap was smaller or even reversed.

In the United Kingdom, a man is two and half times more likely to be an entrepreneur than a woman. In Croatia, the Czech Republic and Russia, among others, women scored higher than men in traits such as risk-taking.

"The gap we're seeing is largely due to educational backgrounds and necessity," says James Eifert, president of Rose-Hulman Ventures in Terre Haute. "Women in countries like Russia have been more engaged in math and science education, while in America, the percentage of women in technologically based fields hovers around 20%."

Eifert noticed the same trend when he was a visiting vice president of a university in Japan, where women have traditionally been denied the same opportunities given to men.

Some speculate that nations with a long history of capitalism and free markets are traditionally male-oriented, while business-based, gender roles in developing countries are not well established and social barriers to entrepreneurship are much lower.

Further, in developed countries, fewer women make the leap to set up a business because of social reasons. The evidence shows that women still have to overcome more hurdles than men in becoming entrepreneurs, including discrimination, lack of confidence and difficulty in finding financial and other support. They also face challenges in balancing work and family life.

Resource: James Eifert, Rose-Hulman Ventures, at (812) 244-4000



Coalition Seeks to Lift Airline Industry

The airlines industry has traditionally suffered through economic ups and downs. Due to post-September 11 actions and reactions, it faces an entirely different situation – a lengthy negotiation process that some believe threatens the entire industry.

Communities for Economic Strength Through Aviation (CESTA) is a coalition of more than 400 organizations nationwide attempting to change the Railway Labor Act of 1926. The goal is to authorize the secretary of transportation to implement an accelerated system of mandatory, binding arbitration in airline labor negotiations.

CESTA argues that the Railway Labor Act is an antiquated law written in a different era for a different industry and has failed to prevent strikes, encouraged hostile negotiations and leads to agreements that weaken airlines.

"The RLA is outdated and ill designed for an industry that is vastly different from railroads," says Reggie Henderson, director of small business and economic development policy for the Indiana Chamber.

"The airlines need their own language that considers their business climate and produces timely labor negotiations and resolutions."

Opponents of the group argue that the campaign will severely undermine the collective bargaining process and weaken the rights of all airline employees, potentially taking away an airline employee's right to vote on collective bargaining agreements.

Henderson disagrees, saying that the RLA has enhanced an already difficult situation because it encourages long labor negotiation processes, which can be devastating in the airline industry in today's business climate.

Resources: CESTA at (202) 789-8060

Reggie Henderson, Indiana Chamber, at (317) 264-6892

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