



## Real Member Stories

### Portrait Photographer



**I'd say around 80% of my business comes through BNI...**

**Case Study: Akki of Akanksha Agarwal Photography**

Akanksha (Akki) Agarwal is a portrait and personal branding photographer based in Newbury, Berkshire. As well as focusing on modern, contemporary solo and family portraits, she helps serious business owners put themselves out there into the market with the right image and brand identity. Akki encourages business owners to step outside of their comfort zone and become the true 'face' of their business. When the pandemic hit earlier this year, her business fell completely flat, so when a friend invited Akki to visit a brand new chapter of BNI in Newbury, she decided to investigate. We spoke to Akki about how that decision not only helped her get her business back on its feet, but to flourish, over the past five months:

"I knew of BNI from other photographers but there had never been a group at a convenient time for me to attend. Then, last year a LinkedIn acquaintance (Linda) approached me to let me know there was a new group opening with a 10 AM meeting, so I went along. It wasn't the right time for me to join as I was planning a visit to India for a month and a half. After coming back, I was invited again to the Newbury Connected Chapter. The meetings had moved online during the pandemic and it was the structure and organisation that really impressed me. There was a really clear strategy in place that I liked.

"When lockdown hit in March, my business was badly affected so I was really worried, and nervous about investing in networking, as I'd been to other groups in the past which just hadn't worked for me. But I loved the meeting format and was reassured when I spoke to another photographer and member of BNI, who explained it had been great for their business. So, I joined - and I'm so glad I did!

"BNI has been amazing for my business over the last 5 months. I spent the time during lockdown building relationships which meant that, as soon as lockdown was over, people were already interested in working with me. I decided to organise my first event shortly after that, to give people a lower-ticket entry point into working with me, which was a success, and I've been getting consistent enquiries through BNI ever since.

"What I love about BNI is that it's not 'fluffy' networking! People are genuinely serious about growing their business and the businesses of others. I've been to other groups where it's more about chitchat, but BNI isn't like that. The focus is on building strong relationships and respecting your fellow business owners. I love the 'givers gain' concept and helping others grow their business too.



# “If you’re willing to put in the effort, there’s no doubt BNI will work for you”

“I’d say around 80% of my business now comes through BNI, both from members and from second tier referrals. Realistically, even the 20% outside of that is often linked to BNI in some way; a contact might have shared a post or commented on something I did, and that led to an enquiry!

“It’s important as a photographer, or any business owner really, to be flexible right now, and know how to put your business out there; BNI can be incredibly helpful with that. It’s about focusing on what works for your audience: For example, right now people are less interested in portraits and want to ensure their business survives the pandemic, so I’m focusing more on personal branding and putting on introductory events; that’s how I’ve adapted myself to the current situation. By demonstrating that I was willing to give away value, I’ve got a lot back in return.

“If you’re a photographer and you’re wondering if BNI is for you, I’d say that if you’re willing to put in the effort, there’s no doubt BNI will work for you! I’m so grateful that I was invited to the meeting and now feel excited to share the success that’s possible with BNI with others too. It’s a beautiful opportunity and if you’re keen to grow, BNI can help you do that!”

### Contact Akanksha Agarwal

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