



Real Member Stories

Exhibitions



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from BNI...**

Case Study: Ellen Stokes of Be Exhibitions

Exhibitions are a booming industry right now, with more and more businesses taking to stands to sell their products and services at business shows, specific events and even seminars. But when your skills like in running your own business, how can you make sure your stand looks it's best, catches the eye and draws people in? Ellen Stokes has the answer to that, and she shares her knowledge with her BNI chapter every Wednesday morning.

"I've been a member of BNI at Salisbury Spire for about 19 months now, and I do exhibition stand design and build. I actually first found BNI online when I first set up my business. My old boss actually said to me that I needed to go networking. Personally, I hate networking, but I understood that you need to do it to get your business off the ground. So I just typed in local networking groups in Salisbury and found BNI. And that was pretty much that! I didn't realise you were supposed to be invited by a member, so I just turned up and confided the people on the front desk by saying I had invited myself."

"BNI has really helped me grow my business over the last 19 months. For one, I got introduced to one of my biggest customers through BNI – through a visitor invited by another member actually. It's been a really good experience actually, and this year I've seen real benefit in the BNI connect. Because people have been finding me all over the country, this year alone I've brought in about fifteen thousand pounds from just people finding me on BNI connect or through member referrals to marketing agencies. I got another huge client in September that way as well, so yes, I don't think it gets better than that!"

"The Salisbury chapter has given me a fantastic return on my investment – while the first 4 months of membership earned me around £400, I kept putting the effort in and at the end of the first year I had made a total of £41,516.00. Which isn't bad at all! I know that networking takes time and people aren't going to buy from you in the first week, so I stuck with it. And now BNI continues to be my best networking group in terms of return on investment. It is thanks to BNI that I was once a sole trader, am now a limited company. Tripled my year one turnover and have made some fantastic contacts along the way that have supported my journey."

“I got introduced to one of my biggest customers”

“It’s mainly building a network. Meeting different businesses and different people at different stages of their business. I’ve also found that taking on the chapter president role this year has really helped me develop as a person – it’s given me a touch of management of people and softer skills I might not have learnt elsewhere. I mean I’m quite a young person and managing a roomful of 25 people is quite interesting! I think that was really good for me and really, really nice because it brought me out of myself, and I got to get my personal touch on the BNI chapter that I was in. So the opportunity to have those leadership roles where you may not have, and that little bit of training as well that’s really beneficial.”

“Also, once you are a part of this community, you automatically become trusted to those members who aren’t in your chapter, region or even country but can find you through the BNI network and do business with you. A huge chunk of revenue comes from members outside my own chapter, and I work very hard to grow and nurture that network.”

“BNI has also enabled me to help my clients. I work internationally and often where I am working, I need a photographer local to that area and BNI has helped me source photographers local to where I am working, getting professional shots of my client’s exhibition stands.”

“The thing about BNI is that you’ve got to stick with it and make sure you get as much out of it as you can, because at the end of the day it’s not the cheapest thing to join, so if you’re just going to sit there and think it works like magic you’re going to be disappointed, because it really doesn’t. You get out as much as you put in, and you’ve got to be engaged in the process. If you’re not engaged, then you may find that you’ve not seen the return that other members have.”

“One-to-ones are brilliant, and you get to learn so much more about the people in your chapter and how you can help them. I think that to be successful in BNI you don’t need any special skills - you’ve just got to put the time in, and you will get it back.”

Contact Ellen

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