



Real Member Stories

HR Specialist



For me, the most valuable thing has been the relationships...

Case Study: Michaela Gartside of HR Dept

HR is always a very delicate subject within businesses. As people who deal with sensitive information and support businesses through difficult issues, business owners need to know that a HR company will be professional and discreet. This is why so many HR companies rely on referrals and word of mouth marketing to build up a client base. Something Michaela Gartside, who runs The HR Dept in Bracknell knows very well. That's why you'll find her at the Sand Martins Golf Club bright and early every Friday morning, networking with her fellow BNI members.

"I've been a member of BNI for six years. I first found out about BNI when I joined the HR Dept - which is a franchise. Obviously as part of the induction they talk about ways to grow your business, and we very much believe that as a business we grow by referrals. So during that we were encouraged look at networking options and in particular they encourage you to look at BNI only because I think Sue, the founder had had a lot of success with it. I'd never heard of it before as I was coming out of corporate life. So literally, I Googled it to find out where it was in my area and invited myself along."

"BNI has clearly helped me grow my business in a couple of ways. Obviously there are the referrals, which visibly helps you grow your business financially. I don't have big, high-value transactions, but I have gained lots of long term retained clients, building longer term returning revenue streams, and that all adds up. I think BNI represents around 20% of my business at the moment."

"But actually, I believe I've had much more credibility with business owners as a business advisor because I've also got a robust network of people that I can trust and refer. So when my clients say to me you don't know anybody that does such and such do you? Quite often I do! So actually for me what being a member did was it made me a much more knowledgeable and credible business support adviser, because I've got other experts around me as well that I could refer."

Yes, BNI will give you business and help you generate new clients. But it's not just the monetary benefits that keep members renewing year on year. For Michaela, one of the most important things about BNI wasn't necessarily the money, but the network she has built.

“BNI represents around 20% of my business”

“I think for me the most valuable thing has been the relationships and I think on a number of levels. One, it gives me that network of people I can trust and refer to. But also, being a business owner can be quite a lonely existence, particularly when you’re in the early days of your business. If you’ve been used to being part of the corporate team, you can miss it. But what BNI does is it gives you that. A circle of trusted businesses and business acquaintances who become much more than that. They become friends.

You can have good honest conversations with people. And you know people who will provide support through the good times and bad times, who have been there themselves.”

We asked Michaela what sort of work she had done with members outside of her chapter, and what benefits she had seen personally – and she had a fantastic example for us:

“I had a client who very proudly announced to me one morning that they were hiring their first employee in America. And then when I said to them ‘That’s great! So how’re you going to do contracts and how are you going to pay them?’, they hadn’t got the first clue. I was able to use BNI Connect to find a payroll company in the San Francisco Bay area. So 48 hours later we had a proposal on the table for them that meant that they could administer this new employee in America properly. And I said to this client that while I didn’t know this company personally, they were in BNI, so let’s go down that route and test them out. BNI gave me that network and the trust to be able to refer to them.”

“I think you’ve got to come along. You’ve got to visit and you’ve got to experience it. And once you’ve done that, then you’ve got to ask yourself if it’s something that you’re prepared to make the commitment to in order to get that return on your investment. I would also say - don’t prejudge it. Come along, visit, find out for yourself and make your own decisions. Don’t listen to everyone’s opinions.”

Contact Michaela

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Find your local BNI meeting...

To find your local BNI meeting please visit www.bni.co.uk and enter your postcode.

BNI is the most successful business networking referral organisation in the world. We have thousands of members in the UK and Ireland, passing hundreds of thousands of referrals worth over millions of pounds every year!