



Real Member Stories

Florist



Having that trusted network of contacts is really important...

Case Study: Paul Sampson of Green Parlour

A florist might not be the first thing you think of when you head ‘business networking group’, but that doesn’t mean it never happens. Many BNI chapters over the years have involved florists of all shapes and sizes, who have seen a lot of success from the network. One of those is Paul Sampson of Green Parlour Florists in Pangbourne, who can always be found in the Reading Central chapter at 6.30 every Friday, ready to network.

“I’ve been a member of BNI for eight years, with a little bit of moving in between. I was first introduced to BNI by NatWest – when we opened our business account with them one of the things they did was introduce us to business networking. He was a member of the chapter and invited us along. We did and then we joined a chapter in Pangbourne that was just forming with 27 people and stayed there for four or five years. When that group closed, we moved across to Reading Central, which is where we’ve been ever since.”

“For us, it’s all about creating a consistent drip feed of orders. Through BNI we get orders for around three or four bouquets a week, which adds up to around £200 a week in revenue we wouldn’t get otherwise. On top of that, there’s the corporate and events, weddings and parties – the ad hoc referrals we get for special occasions. And those jobs are much bigger, and the customers tend to remember and stay with us. In fact, we still have three customers who first came on board when we were in that chapter in Pangbourne!”

“I would say percentage wise the amount of business we get from BNI is probably around 10% - so fairly small. But the thing is it’s regular business every week. That small, regular business is very good for florists because it helps you with stock buying and knowing what you need. But we also get lots of online orders from people who have found us using BNI connect, which is really fantastic. And because it’s all tracked through the BNI system, it means there is a clear trail you can always go back to and the whole process runs more efficiently.”

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“For us having that trusted network is really important. Having a reliable source of suppliers at our fingertips. Especially as right now we are going through a relocation for our shop, and I already have a team of people I know will do a great job. From plumbers to carpets and painting – everything we need. And that’s been the case since we started in BNI really. We’ve always favoured using BNI trade suppliers where they have the capacity. There’s an existing strong relationship there when you place an order, and you know they’re going to do a good job. So now we have a pool of people we can go to if we need something, and we can recommend them to others.”

BNI might not be the most obvious choice for florists when it comes to networking, but for Paul, it’s a no brainer. We asked him what advice he might have if a fellow florist was considering joining BNI.

“Visit some chapters, and attend at least two meetings. Talk to as many members as you can and see how they see your business fitting in. Everyone has a different experience of BNI, so this is the best way to get an overall picture. Obviously, BNI isn’t for all businesses or for everybody, but it works very well for many businesses and many individuals, including us.”

“For florists, being a member of BNI means you’re networking with business owners, and those are the people who are usually involved in a lot of the buying for their business. Reading has had two florists over the years, and we’re happy to continue being members. If you’re more than a one-man band (which means you don’t have to be up preparing flowers every morning), then BNI is well worth the investment for any florist.

Contact Paul Sampson

Call: 0118 984 4000 Email: paul@greenparlour.com Visit: www.greenparlour.com

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