



BNI TEAM - Representing Macarthur, Sydney Southwest, Central Coast, Newcastle & Hunter Valley Region
"TO PASSIONATELY INSPIRE PEOPLE TO GET 100% OF THEIR BUSINESS THRU BNI"

Building relationships is the key to open the door

By Glenn Kirkwood and Ivan R. Misner, Ph.D.

Let me put this notion into perspective. Imagine you are standing in a large room full of people. Let's say that I ask everyone to pull out their key ring from their pocket, briefcase or purse. We can visualise everyone holding up the ring of keys. There is a key to their house, to their office, to their car. We can see people flipping them over one at a time as we ask everyone to show them to the room.

Here's the question – would you hand over the keys to your car to a perfect stranger? What about your office or home? Of course not!

Now instead of a key to a car or home, imagine that you have a key that opens the door to an important relationship with someone with whom another person would like to connect. Let's say you hold the key to open the door to a relationship, but you don't know the person who wants the key. Would you give it to them? Of course not! Why? Because when you give a referral, you give a little of your reputation away. If it is a good referral, it helps your reputation. If it is a bad referral, it hurts your reputation; therefore, you will only hand over the keys you have to someone you know and trust.

What I love about this metaphor is that it works on two levels. First, you're not going to hand over the keys you have to a relationship until you know me well. But more importantly, I don't even know what keys you actually have (or people you know) until you trust me enough to tell me about them.

Sure, I may know some of the keys (or relationships) you have, but I don't know all of them. Until we have a strong relationship where we are comfortable sharing each other's key ring, we'll never know who is on the ring or be willing to share it if we did.

No one is willing to hand over the keys to important relationships that are close to them until they know and trust the person who is asking really well. Unfortunately, that's exactly what some people expect when they network with others. They expect perfect strangers to hand over the keys to some relationship they have without yet knowing the person to whom they are talking.

Take a look at your referral partners or prospective referral partners. Does it surprise you to think that they have keys to referrals that they are keeping in their pocket until they feel that they can trust you with them? It shouldn't. Any successful business person holds on to those relationships carefully. So how, then, do we begin this process of the key exchange?

I believe it all comes down to taking time to establish credibility with your referral partners. I have seen so many people who think that networking is about meeting people and asking them for business right then and there. That's it! They meet someone and focus right away on telling them what they need or what kind of business they want. It's like saying, "Hello! My name is Glenn. Let's do business!!"



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Effective networking is about building relationships with others who can refer you once they have come to trust you, have confidence in you and feel very loyal to you. This truly is the key to networking success. This isn't a get-rich-quick scheme by any stretch of the imagination. It is the credibility factor that will dictate which of the keys your referral partners have that you will get to see and borrow.

If there was one single thing that I had to identify that most entrepreneurs just don't get – it's this concept. They listen, acknowledge its importance and then go off asking questions about the best way to close a deal when meeting someone for the first time. The short answer is – you don't. The norm in successful networking is about building the relationship in order to generate long-term referrals.

I think that you will be astonished at how powerful this concept is with regard to developing powerful networking partnerships with the people with whom you are currently in contact. When you get to the place where you can, without hesitation, hand over your physical set of keys, you will be in the best place possible to begin asking for keys to relationships that will lead to many years of business referrals.

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