

Iris Harrell On Winning The Award For Giving More Than \$1 Million In Closed Business In One Year (2012)



The secret to my own success at giving referrals is probably something you already know and are doing.

One key to our BNI chapter's success has been the choice of

members that we have invited to be in our chapter.

I have personally brought in about one third of the members in our chapter and many of them are successful businesses that I have known for many years and I interact with sporadically.

The key word is "sporadically" because the interesting thing about BNI is that our contact is now more constant and less sporadic because we see each other every week.

Our strongest Power Team is the "Homies" because one third of our group works directly in residences in the same geographical area. Since there is a natural synergy with this sub group, it is a great source of our referrals and closed business for our chapter.

The Homies all share the same values and level of quality of services delivered, so each almost every referral is a quality referral.

My company, Harrell Remodeling, is a design/build firm for residences. We regularly use 3 painters, several HVAC

plumbers and 3 electricians and we have more than one in each trade category. But the painter, the electrician and the plumber I invited to join BNI are our preferred highest quality level trade specialists. We also invited our top roofer in into our BNI chapter.

We all share the same values of top quality work and service to our clients. And all these companies are interested in growing their businesses. I have some trade specialists we use who are not interested in growing their business nor are they capable of it.

It is not true that you have to invite bigger companies to be members. We have some great members who own small companies...but they have to be interested in growing their company and capable of making it happen.

You can bury somebody pretty quickly with too much work and then everybody's unhappy with them because they're not showing up on the job because they can't get their phones answered.

So if a small company does want to grow and has the ability to add capacity and they value referrals, then they can be a great BNI member. Some people do not understand the value of a good referral. And they don't have the infrastructure or systems to even answer their phones in a timely manner.

I know of roofing companies that just don't answer their phone when it starts raining because they have more business than they can handle. That is BAD!

The second key to giving meaningful referrals effectively is to expand on the motto "Givers Gain." We need to cover the meaning of this motto multiple times in our education moments to really make people understand the many aspects of what this motto really means. "Givers gain," in essence, is thinking of others who I know that other people I know will need to be connected with...

People who are really thinking about other people realize "they could really benefit by meeting so-and-so." Thoughtful people are not the ones gazing at their own navel.

A recent example of thoughtfulness in our chapter is about Gus, our favorite painter. His office is next door to a cabinet maker and installer. He introduced us to that cabinet maker and we use them occasionally, as we have 4 or 5 cabinet makers that we use.

What Gus realized about a month ago was that the cabinet maker had a problem. He did not have someone he could rely on on a regular basis to install his cabinets on a regular basis.

Gus talked to the owner and asked, "Why don't you use Harrell Remodeling? They have their own carpenters. They install cabinets all the time. Why don't you make an arrangement for them to be your regular cabinet installer?"

This would not be work that we would normally get....a cabinet maker bringing us work. We usually bring the cabinet maker work. This was a brilliant idea. I don't think he would have thought of that if he had not been in our BNI chapter. He has only been in the chapter a few months now. All of a sudden the light bulb just turned on for him.

Another recent example is one of our members got us a speaking engagement at a Rotary Club in Half Moon Bay. This member has a lot of connections in Half Moon Bay. We don't have much work in that territory but we could if we had the connections, as it is within our geographical borders of areas we would be willing to service.

He is also personally introducing me to people that he knows are really going to be of help to our company. He is thinking about me. He knows I don't want to waste my time. He brings me together with people he especially feels would be a good connection.

He introduced me last week to a clean air tester and one of this guy's specialties is checking on sources of water leaks in homes. We hired that guy the following week to find the source of a water leak for one of our existing clients.

The BNI motto "givers gain" is what's making all this happen. It is making us become natural networkers. The people you should bring into your BNI group should be natural networkers.

The third key to better referrals is network weaving...meshing and blending our circles of influence artfully. We all have what BNI refers to as Circles of Influence. We know people at church; we know people at our golfing and social events; we know people at work. How do you get those circles to overlap each other and weave together?

One example of network weaving is our realtor in our chapter that I helped bring in. I had not worked with Dan personally, but I knew of him and I knew his values. He is a very honest man and realtors, like contractors, have the stereotype of not being people you can trust and some of us are doing our best to overcome that.

I have an existing client who did not want to spend money on remodeling her house unless a realtor said the value would be worth the investment.

I asked Dan, the realtor in our BNI chapter to go speak with the owner on site. I did not tell him what to say and I would not want to tell him what to say. He ended up endorsing a million dollar job for us.

Unfortunately, because it was not a referral I cannot count it as BNI closed business, but my BNI team helped my company make that sale. It was my past client needing assurance that her money was going to be well spent.

There are so many ways to utilize your BNI colleagues.

Another thing about network weaving...my employees, just like your children, are not my minions. They don't necessarily do what

I tell them to do. They have minds of their own. They have their own contacts.

But I try to share the contacts I get by sending out a BNI name now and then to my staff with an example of how they helped me and what their specialty is. When that info goes over the airwaves of our office email, it gets put into our company data bank. This is another form of network weaving.

The final key to better referrals is refreshing your BNI chapter with new members and visitors. That really makes things more lively and keeps things from getting old. As I am more involved with all of these people on a weekly basis from attending the BNI meetings, I am reminded to think about how I can help them...and the result of that is more business.

Givers Gain!

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