

BNI Policies

The Origin of BNI's Code of Ethics and Policies

The BNI Code of Ethics and all BNI Policies have been approved by the International Board of Advisors. They are all members from around the world who meet to discuss issues that deal with the concerns of members. BNI's policies dealing with the standards expected from our members were created by members, for members.

BNI members are expected to learn and abide by these policies. Directors, Ambassadors, Leadership Teams, and Membership Committees are entrusted with the enforcement of these policies.

BNI's NETWORKING CODE OF ETHICS:

When evaluating members in response to complaints by other members, please apply the following Code of Ethics to the situation. This is not meant to be a list of specifics, but can be applied in principle to almost any conflict or complaint.

Upon acceptance to BNI, I agree to abide by the following Code of Ethics during the tenure of my participation in the organization:

1. I will provide the quality of services at the prices that I have quoted.
2. I will be truthful with the members and their referrals.
3. I will build goodwill and trust among members and their referrals.
4. I will take responsibility for following up on the referrals I receive.
5. I will display a positive and supportive attitude with BNI members.
6. I will live up to the ethical standards of my profession.

NOTE: Professional standards outlined in a formal code of ethics, supersede the above standards. (This means that a member belonging to a profession that has a more stringent standard must adhere to that standard. An example of this is the state bar association standards for attorneys licensed to practice law in that state. It should be noted that no professional standards outlined in a formal code of ethics may lower BNI ethical standards, or avoid compliance with BNI policies.)

GENERAL POLICIES:

1. Only one person from each professional classification is permitted to join a chapter of BNI. Membership committees of each chapter have final authority relating to classification conflicts.
2. Members must represent their primary occupation, not a part-time business.

3. The weekly meetings last for 90 minutes. Members need to arrive on time and stay for the entire meeting.
4. An individual cannot be in a second BNI chapter nor in any other group that allows only one person per profession and whose primary purpose is to pass referrals to one another, because it substantially reduces their commitment to the chapter members. Membership Committees must enforce this policy.
5. Attendance is critical to the group. If a member cannot attend, you may send a substitute (not a member of your chapter) to the meeting. This will not count as an absence. A member is allowed three absences every six months (April through September and October through March). More than this and the member's classification is subject to being opened by the chapter's Leadership Team or Membership Committee.
6. Members are required to bring bona-fide referrals and/or visitors to their chapter of BNI. Chapters may establish a minimum number of referrals and/or visitors that is acceptable to maintain membership.
7. Visitors may attend chapter meetings up to two times.
8. Speakers must bring a door prize. Only members bringing a visitor or a referral are eligible for the door prize.
9. There are no leaves of absence except for medical leaves. A member may take up to eight weeks medical leave with the Membership Committee's prior approval if fees are pre-paid for that period of time and they attempt to have someone "fill-in" during their leave.
10. It is the member's responsibility to file a concern with the Membership Committee of the chapter if a visitor "who submits an application in any way conflicts with the member's classification." This should be done before the visitor is approved for membership. If there are no complaints, the Membership Committee will "assume their consent."
11. Members who wish to change their classification must submit a new membership application and get approval from the Membership Committee for that classification change.
12. In case of problems with a member, Membership Committees may, at their sole discretion, put a member on probation relating to the member's business practices or commitment to the chapter.
13. A member's classification may be opened for failure to comply with the policies and/or the code of ethics of BNI. Membership Committees of any chapter may open classifications. In the absence of a Membership Committee, the Leadership Team may fulfill that responsibility.
14. If the Leadership Team fulfills all responsibilities throughout their term, they will receive compensation for their fees. The Leadership Team must agree to the terms outlined in the

Leadership Team Agreement in order to hold a position and must go through training before participating.

15. In the absence of a Membership Committee, the Leadership Team may act as an ad hoc Membership Committee until one is established.

16. All BNI membership lists are for the purpose of 'giving' referrals and not for soliciting (via e-mail, direct mail or other means) BNI members or Directors without their prior approval.

17. All new members must attend Members Success Program (MSP) training in their region within the first 60 days of their participation. Only after attending the MSP training may the new member be added to the "speaker rotation" for the chapter. Any new members not attending the MSP training within the first 60 days after being inducted into the chapter will be subject to having their classification opened by the Membership Committee.

18. Policies are subject to change. All proposed policy changes need to be reviewed first by the Board of Advisors.

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES:

1. There is an initial registration fee. Fees are paid annually, or biannually. Contact the local Secretary/Treasurer for amounts. Fees may also be paid with VISA, MASTERCARD, DISCOVER, AMERICAN EXPRESS, CASH or CHECK.

2. BNI may establish chapters in every city or community with people interested in developing a referral-based business. In addition, BNI reserves the right to open more than one chapter per community or city where BNI's services are requested.

3. Membership fees are payable 30 days prior to the due date. Members not paid by the first meeting of the month they are due, are considered late and will be subject to a late charge. If fees are not paid within 15 days, the member will be officially dropped by BNI.

4. Fees are nonrefundable. A Certificate of Credit will be given, upon request, to members in good standing for the unused portion of their time.

5. Fees cannot be transferred from one person to another unless the fees are from the same company.

6. BNI has a strict policy on returned checks. A member has three working days in which to contact their Regional BNI office and resolve the matter. Any returned checks not resolved within this period will be turned over to collections. All returned checks will be assessed a minimum \$25 returned-check fee.

If a member passes a second NSF check, that member will be subject to immediate termination.

7. BNI is a marketing service provided by BNI Enterprises, Inc. BNI or any of its franchisees reserves the right to discontinue a member's participation in this program.

8. A member requesting a transfer from their current chapter to a new chapter will be required to submit a completed new member application to the Membership Committee of the new chapter. In addition, if the member has less than 12 months of paid membership credit, they must submit a renewal payment. Or, if the member has more than 12 months of paid membership credit, no additional investment is required. Upon acceptance into the new chapter, the credit from their previous chapter will be added to their membership in the new chapter as well as the renewal time, if applicable.

PROGRAM GUIDELINES:

Program Guidelines are not policies, but are recommended practices that allow chapters to run more smoothly and effectively.

VISITING CHAPTERS:

1. Members visiting other chapters should announce that they are from another chapter.
2. Visiting members must not do or say anything that competes with a member of that chapter.
3. The chapter should be cautious in giving referrals to individuals they don't know, including visiting members.
4. Visiting members should pay for their own meal.
5. Before visiting another chapter, the visiting member should call that chapter's President first.
6. A visiting member should visit on the same basis as a regular visitor, i.e., no more than twice.

ABSENCES AND TARDINESS:

Absences and tardies mean less business for members; therefore, the Membership Committee of a chapter may give warnings to members who are consistently late or leave early. If the problem continues, the member's classification may be subject to being opened by the Membership Committee.

SUBSTITUTE PROGRAM:

1. People to consider for substitutes include: your customers, clients, patients, friends, family, and/or employees.
2. The primary purpose for a substitute is to represent a BNI member. BNI recommends minimal use of a substitute. However, a member may use substitutes up to three times in a six month period.

3. The chapter should be aware that a substitute will be attending the meeting. The Visitor Host should be there to greet the substitute and welcome him/her to the meeting.

MULTI-LEVEL MARKETING:

Multi-level marketing members of BNI should represent their products and services in BNI and not the business opportunity element of their business.