

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Business Network International (BNI®) Case Study Demonstrates How Referral Institute ® Helps Members Succeed in Challenging Economy

Training, Education, Support and Referrals from Business Network International West Central Florida (BNI® WCF) Help Interior Decorator Close \$13,000 in Business in Four Months

(TAMPA, Fla.,) August 6, 2012 – Business Network International (BNI®) is dedicated to helping members build their business through referrals; and a new case study from [BNI West Central Florida](#) illustrates how the organization and the Referral Institute helped one business professional expand her client base. Tom Fleming, the Executive Director of BNI in West Central Florida and the [Referral Institute](#) in Tampa, says the case study demonstrates how business challenges – particularly during an economic downturn – can be successfully overcome with the right knowledge and tools.

According to the U.S. Small Business Administration, America's small businesses are a driving force of the national economy, employing about half of all private sector employees. Unfortunately, statistics show that only half of all new businesses survive more than five years. (1)

"Entrepreneurs who wish to build a thriving, sustainable business need more than just a good idea," says Fleming. "Many businesses fail because they simply don't generate enough revenue to keep going or keep growing," he stated. In today's competitive environment, business success depends not only on what you know, but increasingly, on *who* you know, Fleming explained.

Fleming claims networking and referral-based marketing strategies sometimes mean the difference between success and failure. Fleming cites the recent Referral Institute case study as an example:

Laurel Barnhart, of [Interiors by Laurel](#), Inc., joined BNI with the goal of increasing her client base through referrals. An interior decorator with over 20 years' experience, Barnhart says her business had either remained steady or grown from year to year, until the economic downtown hit in 2009 – and then her income dropped by about 40%. "When I attended my first BNI meeting, I heard two different members talk about how their business had increased by tens of thousands of dollars over the past year due to BNI and the Referral Institute," she said.

After then joining BNI, Barnhart reports that her business returns exceeded her expectations: "Within four months of joining, I closed about \$13,000 in new business. I was also able to provide others referrals that amounted to 13K over the same period of time." BNI calls this the Givers Gain® method.

Fleming says Barnhart's experience demonstrates the advantages of BNI membership and the Referral Institute training combined. "Our members have consistently reported that referral-based marketing has led to significant increases in revenue, and is helping them grow their businesses," he remarked. "Cases like Laurel's are becoming more common and more successful every day."

The Referral Institute provides training and tools for small business owners to achieve financial success within any and all of their networking and referral based marketing activities. Two [Referral Institute programs](#) designed to help hone entrepreneurs' networking and referral-based marketing skills are Certified Networker® and Room Full of Referrals™:

1. The [Certified Networker](#) program is a 12-module college level class that gives participants tools for saving time and making more money through increased referral generation.
2. The [Room Full of Referrals](#) class teaches attendees in one session how to understand basic behavioral styles that people exhibit, in order to overcome personality differences that can hamper striking up profitable relationships.

Every day, we see our community of entrepreneurs working with people they enjoy, saying, 'good-bye' to cold calls," says Fleming. "And as members like Laurel have shown, experiencing increased revenues."

To learn more about BNI of West Central Florida, visit <http://www.bniwcf.com>. For details on the resources and training programs available from the Referral Institute in Tampa, visit <http://www.referralinstitutetampa.com>.

About Tom Fleming and BNI

Tom Fleming is the Executive Director of BNI in West Central Florida and the Referral Institute. When Tom acquired the region, BNI WCF had one chapter with just 13 members. The region now has over 43 chapters, with 1,800 members passing \$75 million in business to each other in the past year alone. Tom is sought out as a local, national and international speaker on the subjects of marketing businesses by referral and organizational development. He is also a contributing author in two best-selling books on referral-based marketing, and has been recorded on many educational CDs produced from his speaking engagements. Prior to beginning his career as an entrepreneur, Tom worked for various Fortune 500 firms, earned an MBA from Babson College and a Bachelor's degree in Business from Boston University. Visit BNI West Central Florida at www.bniwcf.com.

- (1) U.S. Small Business Administration, *Frequently Asked Questions*. Fact sheet published online; accessed July 23, 2012.
<www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/sbfaq.pdf>

###

Media Inquires:

Karla Jo Helms

JoTo PR

kj@jotopr.com

Phone: 888-202-4614 x 803