

Hailed as the “Father of Modern Networking” by Ecademy.com and the “Networking Guru” by *Entrepreneur* magazine, Misner now stands as one of the world’s leading experts on business networking and is a monthly columnist for Entrepreneur.com. This acclaimed author of eight books, including *New York Times* bestseller *Masters of Networking*, has lectured on social capital at several universities and sits on the Board of Directors for the Colorado School of Professional Psychology.

How did Misner mastermind and achieve his grand vision for global business networking? Actually, Misner’s initial foray into this business started quite accidentally.

How the quest was born

It all began in 1984 when Misner was actively seeking referrals as a management consultant offering services in the areas of organisational behaviour and employee evaluation. He had started a group among friends who would meet regularly and refer each other to any business opportunities they came across.

Then someone approached Misner to open a second chapter in a different location, and later someone else asked him to open another chapter elsewhere. This started to snowball until there were 20 locations in the first year alone. It was a serendipitous discovery!

Sensing the business potential from the chain of events, BNI was set up in January 1985. The organisation's business philosophy struck a chord within many people, something which exceeded even Misner’s anticipation.

Initially, Misner had only envisioned the business for the US market, but in 1994 the first chapter outside of the US opened in Canada. Thereafter, the number of countries leapt from two to 25 by the end of 2005. subsequently,



Dr Misner and Avryl Au

Misner formulated a structure and a system that would be replicable worldwide.

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Business model

Outlining his organisation’s business

model, Misner pre-empts the question on most Malaysian minds – BNI is not a multi-level marketing (MLM) organisation. Instead, its business model is more like a franchise, and thus BNI is more similar to McDonald's than any MLM company, none of which is franchised. This means that BNI Malaysia is locally owned and 95% of the revenue stays in Malaysia.

“BNI trains people how to participate in networking organisations; members are told that they are not there to close a sale, that’s why members don’t have any quotas to meet. BNI merely trains members how to listen for the 'language of referral'.”

This, according to Misner, means listening to words that usually spring up in daily conversations, during which we invariably find people saying things which point to a need for referral, for instance the need to fill a vacancy at their office or the need to get a tutor for their children.

“BNI builds a team of people that members can refer to; so when someone indicates a need for a referral, BNI members can put in touch the relevant people together,” Misner explains.

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