

include the total number of chapters, average number of members per chapter, market penetration (based on studies to determine how many chapters are possible in a country). The factors are derived from BNI's rather sophisticated database system which takes into account variables such as the country's gross domestic product.


Then there are external or non-administrative measures which include the number of referrals and the value tied to those referrals. In 2004, there were 4.4 million referrals and US\$1.7 billion worth of referrals, as verified by two doctoral studies.

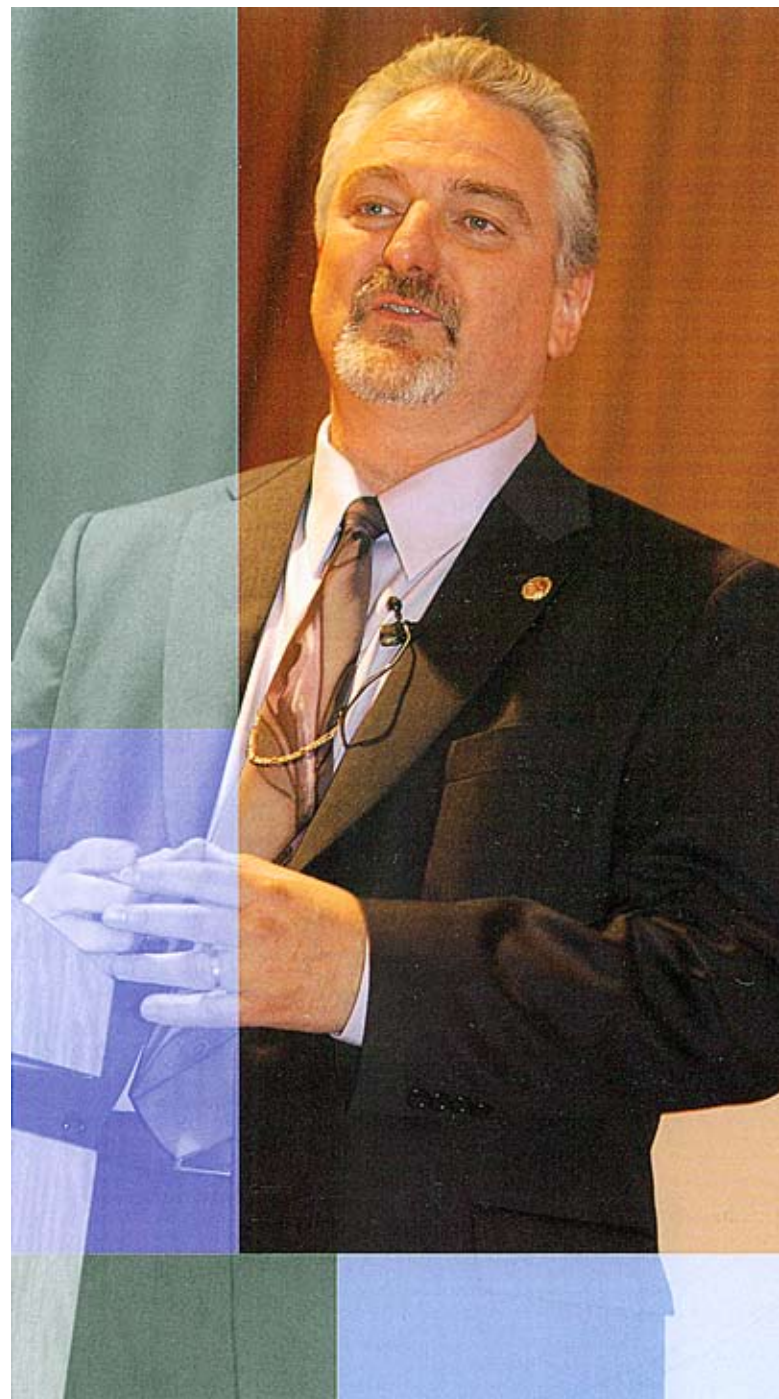
One of the strengths of the business model is that all members become friends. Paradoxically, a potential weakness is that although members become friends, BNI is not a friendship organisation but a referral organisation, so all members must be accountable to others for the referrals they make.

### Here to stay

Misner is also an accomplished author who shares his marketing philosophy through both the print and electronic media. One of Misner's books, *World's Best Known Marketing Secret*, has been translated into Chinese. His upcoming book *Truth or Delusion* discusses networking in the real world. The underlying message in the book is that when big companies eventually get it, then small companies had better watch out!

The very first "truth or delusion" question posed by Misner in his next book is whether networking is a fad. And yes, that is a delusion! Misner was once told in no uncertain terms that networking was merely a passing fad. But 20 years later, it is here to stay.

Why is Misner convinced of the enduring power of his business model? "The more technologically advanced we become, the more we need to connect on a human level!" Misner surmises. 



"BNI is well accepted in every community wherever there are business operators. This has proven to be true in Malaysia as well – we now have 30 chapters operating in Penang, Johor and the Klang Valley, with plans to open in all the other states. When BNI Malaysia started six years ago, it was no different from what happened 20 years ago in the US. The concept of 'givers' gain' has a universal appeal, but it is still a challenge for

the majority of professionals to adopt such a strategy in the business world. To truly succeed in whatever we do, we must first help others succeed in getting what they want. 'Farming' takes time and patience in contrast to the current business environment which expects everything to be done and delivered at the speed of light."

*Avryl Au, National Director, BNI Malaysia*