



books. "There can be many answers," he says. "By having not just one correct answer, in fact, we are able to maximize the potential of the students."

He adds: "One hundred percent of the students benefit. We give them 'vitamins' every day, which is homework that serves to encourage and motivate them. And we promote character change in the child—they're soon able to think outside the box."

Benidy, Villacruz, and Yap brought SIP to the Philippines in October 2006. Their first students were their nieces and nephews, and within six months' time, their 2007 summer program—largely through positive word-of-mouth, tie-ups with pre-schools, and newspaper advertising—had already attracted some 60 students.

The programs are patterned after the Malaysian model. They consist of Foundation Level 1, for children ages 7 to 12, which consists of four one-hour weekly sessions a month (P1,680); and Junior AML (accelerated mental learning), for children ages 5 to 6, which consists of eight one-hour sessions, held twice a week for one month (P2,016). Tham says that through the SIP, chil-

dren will also learn to value teamwork and to become good role models.

Indonesia, which had 120 centers in 1998, now has 630 centers. Tham is confident that SIP will also attract a similarly substantial number of students in the Philippines. After training Benidy, Villacruz, and Yap, Tham has been visiting the Philippines regularly to train more teachers and update the courses.

One of the SIP academy's oldest graduates is a 21-year-old who learned to repair mobile phones with very little supervision. Another, an accountant, can man the cashier's box without using a calculating machine. A 13-year-old, who has trained with SIP since age 6, learned Mandarin in only five to six months' time.

SIP Academy Philippines currently has seven facilitators and six trainers in its flagship center in Broadway Avenue, Quezon City. It plans to expand in the next two to three years, targeting as many as 150 centers by that time through sublicensing. It also plans to launch an art program in 2008 to complement the current SIP courses. ■

[BUSINESS ADVOCATE] **Gaining by giving**

A NETWORKING GROUP PROMOTES BUSINESSES OF MEMBERS BY STRENGTHENING PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND MAXIMIZING REFERRALS OF PEOPLE WHO COULD BE FUTURE CUSTOMERS

By **JOSEPH PARDO**

WE HOLD OUR weekly sales meetings every Wednesday from 7:00 to 9:00 a.m. with the aim of propagating one another's business after every session. Indeed, membership in Business Network International (BNI) is like having your own sales team working for you.

BNI is a business and professional networking organization based in Southern California whose chapters allow

'OUR BNI CHAPTER ALSO HAS A 'DANCE CARD' PROGRAM THAT ARRANGES ONE-ON-ONE MEETINGS WITH GUESTS OR MEMBERS OF OTHER CHAPTERS TO EXPLORE POSSIBLE BUSINESSES'

only one person per professional classification or specialty to become a member. Founded in 1985 by Dr. Ivan Misner, who was then running a business-consulting firm, it emphasizes positive reinforcement and support through networking. BNI uses word-of-mouth advertising through personal relationships with

other qualified business professionals, and works on the so-called "giver's gain" philosophy: those who give business freely will benefit in return and get business as well.

In the Philippines, the first BNI chapter, Genesis, was founded in August 2006 by Sharon Gonzales-Gulmatico, who does business recruiting nurses and other

workers for overseas employment. Now one of the national directors of BNI in the Philippines, she decided to organize the chapter to maximize word-of-mouth referrals, which is one of the major benefits that networking marketing provides.

As of January this year, membership in the BNI Genesis Chapter had grown to 14. On the other hand, the BNI Harvest Chapter to which I belong was organized in October 2006 with Edlynn Frondoso-Ng, a financial planner, as founding president. Since there was already a financial planner in Genesis, she had been encouraged to form this new chapter.

We in the BNI Harvest Chapter have already seen very encouraging results after only three months. In the last quarter of 2006 alone, our eight founding members generated a total of P200,000 worth of business. For instance, chapter member Deedee Santa Cruz-Espina, an integrated communications consultant, notes an increase of 66 percent in her business since joining BNI, while Frondoso-Ng herself says her income rose by 22 percent in the same period, adding that being with BNI keeps her on her toes because she knows she has to deliver on the referrals she receives.

Such successful referrals through BNI are duly monitored and documented through referral slips handed out during meetings of chapter members. And these referrals





involve not only the passing around of business cards. When a BNI member makes a referral, he or she makes sure that fellow members can establish warm contacts with the referrals.

In particular, my BNI network has helped my new company, Beacon Information Services, develop its first project, the Women's Protection Seminar. My colleagues in BNI not only gave major inputs that helped shape

NETWORKING GURU

Dr. Ivan Misner is the founder and chairman of Business Network International, the world's largest business networking organization. Founded in 1985, BNI now has thousands of chapters throughout every populated continent of the world, generating each year millions of referrals that result in billions of dollars worth of business for its members.

He has a Ph.D. from the University of Southern California and has written nine books, including *Masters of Networking* and *Truth or Delusion? Busting Networking's Biggest Myths*, both of which became New York Times bestsellers. He is a monthly columnist for *Entrepreneur.com* and is chairman of the board for the Referral Institute, a referral training company with trainers around the world. He has taught business and social capital courses at several universities, and sits on the board of directors for the Colorado School of Professional Psychology.

Hailed as the "Father of Modern Networking" by many organizations and called the "Networking Guru" by *Entrepreneur* magazine, Dr. Misner is considered one of the world's leading experts on business networking. He has been a keynote speaker for major corporations and associations throughout the world, and has been featured in *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The New York Times* as well as on numerous TV and radio shows.

Dr. Misner is on the board of directors for the Haynes Children Center. He is the founder of the BNI Misner Charitable Foundation and was recently named "Humanitarian of the Year" by the *Daily Bulletin*. He is married and lives with his wife Elisabeth and their three children in Claremont, California. He is also an amateur magician and a black belt in karate.

(Source: www.bni.com)

the seminar into its current form but also introduced me to women's rights advocates. In my other business, Special Steel Products Inc., we use the "Load Extreme" network of fellow BNI member Marcia Castañeda. Instead of buying P7,000 worth of cellular phone cards monthly, we just load through "Load Extreme" based on actual requirements, thus eliminating the need to stock up on cell phone cards. Also, I have been sourcing my printing requirements from another BNI member, Aljo Chua, who runs Print Avenue.

The BNI networking process, in addition to my masters in entrepreneurship from the Asian Institute of Management, has further built my confidence in pursuing various businesses. Although my business background definitely is a plus factor, my being in BNI reinforces my skills in running my businesses, particularly in sales and marketing. I believe that like me, you can



JOSEPH PARDO:

BNI works on the so-called "giver's gain" philosophy: 'Those who give business freely will benefit in return and get business as well'





also make the most out of the training that BNI provides. In our BNI chapter, in particular, Edlynn, our president, gives personalized four-hour sessions with members who need assistance, ranging from getting referrals to financial planning.

Those interested to join our BNI chapter can apply for membership by filling out the application forms and paying a one-time fee of P5,000, which is refundable if the application is denied. The membership committee will then conduct a background check of the applicant. If the applicant qualifies and is accepted, he or she has to pay an annual fee of P25,000; until August 2007, our BNI chapter is reducing this membership fee to the discounted price of P15,000. Some may find this membership fee prohibitive and others even ask us if they can pay in installments, but we at BNI believe that paying this fee strengthens the prospective member's commitment as a member of BNI.

Another major test of that commitment is the BNI member's having to adjust his or her lifestyle to wake up early on Wednesday mornings to attend the regular weekly BNI chapter meeting. This is a must for every BNI member, and if for some legitimate reason a member cannot attend a particular meeting, he or she needs to send somebody from the same line of business. It always helps when we generate business for our members since it sustains their interest even more.

Our BNI chapter also has a "dance card" program that arranges one-on-one meetings with guests or members of other chapters to explore possible businesses. An idea that originated in the US, it allows us to network outside of the Wednesday sessions as well as to help BNI members from other chapters with their projects. Through this program, we have been encouraging our members to invite guests who would like to see how BNI works and to bring in prospective applicants for BNI membership.

As of last February, our BNI Harvest Chapter already had 10 members and we are aiming to double that by the time we mark our first year in October. The business categories for which we already have members are security and safety systems, E-loading solutions, financial planning, communications consultancy, real estate, ID systems, print-on-demand solutions, software development, IT hardware, and health supplements. ■

—Interview by Marie Anne Fajardo

Joseph Pardo is the vice president of BNI Harvest-Chapter Ortigas.

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[SMART IDEAS]

Realistic video games, treats for dogs on the move



GETTING REALISTIC

TWO STUDENTS BROUGHT VIDEO GAMES TO LIFE WITH 3-D TECHNOLOGY

WHAT: DEVELOPER AND MANUFACTURER OF INNOVATIVE GAMING ACCESSORIES
WHO: MICHAEL EPSTEIN AND NATHAN NEWMAN OF EDIMENSIONAL
WHERE: WEST PALM BEACH, FLORIDA
WHEN: STARTED IN 2000
STARTUP COSTS: \$500

Michael Epstein and Nathan Newman, both 28, started Edimensional, their gaming accessories company, when they were just college students. Armed with credit cards and backgrounds in IT management, the two friends set about realizing their entrepreneurial dreams to make video games as realistic as possible using 3-D technology.

Focusing on computer gaming, they found a supplier