

1. Organic invitations that follow normal business conversations

This is the easiest and most natural path. Listen for business-growth clues:

“Where do most of your clients come from?”

“Are you looking to grow in a particular market?”

“Who would be a good introduction for you?”

“Do you work with many accountants, mortgage brokers, builders, solicitors, HR consultants, or tradies?”

When the person says something that connects to referral marketing, the invitation becomes natural.

Script:

“That’s interesting. In my BNI chapter, we have a group of business owners who meet weekly to build referral relationships. Based on what you just said, I think there are a few people in the room who could be useful for you to meet. Would you be open to visiting as my guest, not to join anything, just to meet the group and see whether there are useful connections?”

Business examples:

For a **real estate agent**:

“You mentioned you’re looking for more referral partners around finance, conveyancing, renovations, and property management. That’s exactly the kind of contact sphere we talk about in BNI. Come as my guest and meet a few people who may be useful to you.”

For a **bookkeeper or accountant**:

“A lot of our members work with business clients who need bookkeeping, payroll, tax planning, or better systems. I’d like to introduce you to the room and see who you connect with.”

For a **builder or tradesperson**:

“You mentioned most of your work comes from word of mouth. BNI is structured word of mouth. You don’t need to know anything about BNI before visiting; just come and see how the referral process works.”

This connects well with BNI’s “offer value” principle: highlight how attending could help *their* business, not how their attendance helps the chapter.

2. Approaching suitable business people the member does not know well

This is where Ivan’s “We’re interviewing” method is especially powerful. Instead of saying, “Would you like to come to my networking group?” say, “We are looking for a quality person in your profession.”

Ivan’s example is: if the chapter needs a printer, tell a printer that the chapter is interviewing printers to find a good one in the area to give referrals to. The psychology is important: strong

chapters are selective, and good businesspeople respond better to being considered than to being sold.

Script:

"I'm part of a referral group made up of local business professionals. We're currently looking for a strong [profession] to meet because we don't have that category represented. I don't know enough about your business yet, but you look like someone who may be worth introducing to the group. Would you be open to visiting one meeting so we can learn more about what you do?"

Business examples:

For a **commercial cleaner** you met briefly:

"We have members who regularly get asked for reliable commercial cleaners, especially by property managers, builders, and office-based businesses. We're looking for someone credible in that category. Would you be open to visiting?"

For a **business coach** found through LinkedIn:

"I noticed you work with growing SMEs. Our chapter has several business owners who value practical support around growth, people, and accountability. We're currently looking at whether a business coach would be a good fit for the room."

For a **mortgage broker** met at a chamber event:

"We have a strong property-related contact sphere, but we're selective about who we introduce to our clients. I'd like you to visit and meet a few members so we can see whether there's alignment."

The invitation should be respectful and specific. BNI's own visitor advice says to understand the visitor's business and tailor the invitation, rather than sending a generic "come to BNI" message.

3. Presenting the opportunity differently to people who know the member well, are not interested, or had poor networking experiences

When someone already knows the member and has never shown interest, a standard invitation often sounds like pressure. The better approach is to remove the "join" expectation and frame the visit around observation, introductions, or supporting a specific speaker.

BNI has a useful concept here: invite for the featured speaker. A visitor may attend because the speaker's topic, industry, or contacts are useful to them, even if they are not yet interested in BNI itself.

Script for someone who "doesn't like networking groups":

"I understand. I'm not asking you to join a networking organisation. I'm inviting you to visit one structured business meeting, meet a few local professionals, and decide whether any of the conversations are useful. No pressure beyond that."

Script for someone who had a bad past experience:

"That makes sense. Some networking groups are very casual or sales-heavy. BNI is different because it is structured, category-based, and referral-focused. Come once as my guest and judge the experience for yourself. I'll introduce you to the people most relevant to your business."

Script for a close contact who has ignored previous invitations:

"I may have invited you the wrong way before. Rather than asking you to 'come to BNI,' I'd like to introduce you to three people in the room who could be useful contacts for your business. Come once, meet them, and see whether it's worth another conversation."

Business examples:

For a **financial planner** who dislikes networking:

"I know you're careful about where referrals come from. That's why I think you should see the room, not because I'm asking you to join, but because there may be accountants, mortgage brokers, lawyers, and business owners worth knowing."

For a **marketing consultant** who says networking is a waste of time:

"I agree that random networking can waste time. This is a structured referral meeting. Visit once and evaluate whether the people in the room are the kind of business owners you'd actually want to meet."

For a **well-established lawyer** who thinks they are too busy:

"You may not need more networking, but you may value better referral partners. Come once and meet the people who already influence business owners before they need legal help."

This also requires the chapter to deliver a strong visitor experience. BNI reminds chapters that visitors may feel anxiety when they do not know people, so members should welcome them, introduce them to relevant contact spheres, explain the agenda, and make sure they are not left alone.

A simple chapter system: "One invitation, one follow-up, one hosted experience"

Each member should have a weekly rhythm:

1. Identify one business category the chapter needs.

For example: electrician, HR consultant, conveyancer, commercial cleaner, finance broker, property manager, web developer, NDIS provider, videographer.

2. Use the right invitation style.

Organic conversation → "you should meet these people."

Weak relationship → "we're interviewing your category."

Skeptical close contact → "come once for introductions, not to join."

3. **Pre-host the visitor.**

Tell them where to park, what time to arrive, what they will be asked to say, and who you will introduce them to. BNI specifically recommends preparing visitors with timing, agenda, business cards, parking, meeting location, and introduction expectations.

4. **Follow up after the meeting.**

Ask: "Who did you enjoy meeting?" and "Was there anyone else in the room you'd like an introduction to?" BNI's visitor guidance stresses consistent follow-up as part of successful inviting.

Podcast examples to use for chapter education

Episode 278: "Inviting Visitors"

Best for teaching the "We're interviewing" method. This is the core episode for members who feel awkward inviting people because it changes the posture from begging to selecting.

Episode 458: "Inviting People — Good, Better, Best"

Best for helping members improve the quality of their invitation language and stop using weak or generic invitations.

Episode 486: "Inviting Visitors to Your Featured Presentation"

Best for members with strong relationships who do not want to sound like they are recruiting. Invite people to hear a relevant presentation and meet useful contacts.

Episode 522: "The Value of Visitors"

Best for changing member mindset. Visitors can bring referrals and value even if they never join.

Episode 606: "Meeting at a Different Time to Get More Visitors" — Ask Ivan

Best for a chapter that says, "People won't visit because of our meeting time." Use it to discuss whether the chapter is making visiting easy enough.

Episode 639: "How to Bring a Visitor into the Room"

Best for operational follow-through: invitation, arrival, hosting, and follow-up.

Episode 659: "Inviting Visitors Is Easy Online" and Episode 830: "Inviting Visitors Through Social Media"

Best for members who are active on LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, or local business groups. Episode 830 specifically focuses on social media invitation methods.

Episode 726: "The Visitor Experience" and Episode 678: "How to Give Visitors a 'Wow!' Experience"

Best for reminding the chapter that inviting is only half the job. The meeting must make visitors feel welcome, guided, and commercially valued.

Final advice to the chapter

Do not ask members to “bring a visitor.” Ask them to **identify one businessperson who deserves to meet the room**. That small wording change matters.

The chapter should build a culture where members say:

“We are not trying to fill chairs. We are looking for quality business professionals who can give and receive referrals.”

That is much closer to Ivan Misner’s philosophy: selective, relationship-based, and focused on Givers Gain®. Visitors strengthen the chapter by broadening categories, adding business opportunities, and increasing the value of the network for existing members.

Podcast Mention Used: Episodes 278, 458, 486, 522, 606 Ask Ivan, 639, 659, 678, 726, and 830.

Ivan Misner’s podcasts can be found on the official site: <https://www.bnipodcast.com/>