According to the dictionary a relationship is a connection existing between people, a commitment, a binding agreement. A referral is a recommendation, providing direction to a source of help.

Putting your money where your mouth is – when it comes to networking is really “word of mouth” referrals. And when I think about the word “referral”, I immediately think of BNI.

BNI is the largest business networking organization in the world. Offering members the opportunity to share ideas, contacts and most importantly, business referrals. Dr. Ivan Misner is the Founder & Chairman of BNI, and a best-selling author. Often called the "Father of Modern Networking," Dr. Misner is one of the world's leading experts in business networking and referral marketing. www.bni.com

In case you’re wondering, this article is not an advertisement for BNI, it is a referral for a strategy that works. This article is about relationships and referrals.

I speak to tens of thousands of individuals every year, and wherever I go, I always take a list of favourite resources with me. It’s a printed document that is updated regularly. It includes the referrals I believe would be valuable to my audience. These referrals are always built on a personal relationship I have with the individual, the organization or the initiative. While giving this list out does not increase my income, it does increase my self-esteem, knowing that I’m giving away, at no cost, valuable referrals.

How then does this word of mouth referral system work for me? It’s simple. Everyone on the list knows that they are being introduced to people that they would never meet. They know they are being held accountable for their actions and that the relationship they have with me is reciprocal. BNI has a phrase – “givers get”. I guarantee that if you develop your list of referrals through relationships you have taken the time to develop – you will be able to actually measure your business growth.

I don’t recommend people I don’t know. Relationships take time to build. Recognize that relationships can be built electronically, if a face-to-face connection can’t be made.

I’ve built this type of relationship with the man who wrote “Beach Money”. His name is Jordan Adler and he is a network-marketing expert. We were introduced a few months ago by one of his colleagues. After I read his book I set up a telephone conference call to get to know him. I interviewed him for an article I was writing for another publication.
and I liked his systematic process towards building relationships. What he does, works! Jordan Adler is now on my list of resources! [www.beachmoney.com](http://www.beachmoney.com)

I’ve always said that in order for me to be successful, I have to recognize that it isn’t what I know, but whom I know and how I use that knowledge!

“Relationships and Referrals” are all about sharing that list of resources I have personally built. I can attest to the fact that my business grows dramatically because I give before I get.

I don’t worry about competition. I believe in what I call co-opetition. When I began my business, in order for me to compete, I needed to recognize that I had something unique about myself and my business; something that set me apart. Once I was able to identify exactly what that uniqueness was – my competitors became colleagues and referrals.

7 Secrets to Build Relationships and Get Referrals

1. **Do your homework.** Don’t keep your head in the sand. Get to know your competition.
2. **Write.** Become an expert on your subject. Quote the competition in your articles.
3. **Speak.** Offer to speak to groups on your area of expertise. Join Toastmasters.
4. **Volunteer.** The best way to build relationships is working together for a common goal.
5. **Participate.** Be active, don’t just become a member. Be recognized for your expertise.
6. **Give.** Donate your time and your talent without expecting any return.
7. **Get.** Incredible rewards, when you least expect them.

*Relationships & Referrals* – *A profitable connection existing between people who make a commitment to recommend those who can be a source of help.*

Donna Messer is the author of Effective Networking Strategies, a Canadian Best Seller. She is a motivational speaker and an executive coach. She builds relationships and gets referrals wherever she goes. For a list of her resources or to book Donna for your next event go to [www.connectuscanada.com](http://www.connectuscanada.com)