



Why Profanity Violates BNI Cultural Standards

A BNI chapter that normalizes profanity does not meet the BNI Standard of a Positive Culture. While BNI encourages high energy and camaraderie, its framework explicitly requires corporate professionalism to build goodwill, trust, and referral confidence

Impact of Profanity within the BNI Meetings

Breach of the Code of Ethics:

Every member signs and commits to the [BNI Code of Ethics](#), which mandates displaying a positive and supportive attitude. Profanity frequently shifts an environment from supportive to aggressive, exclusive, or hostile.

Destruction of Referral Trust:

In BNI, culture directly drives revenue. Members pass referrals because they trust their colleagues to represent them professionally. If a chapter's environment is perceived as unprofessional due to vulgar language, members will hesitate to introduce their high-value clients or personal network to that group.

Alienation of Visitors:

BNI relies heavily on guests to grow and inject new referral sources into the chapter. A culture of profanity makes the environment highly uninviting and uncomfortable for many visitors, directly stunting chapter growth and violating BNI's branding as a professional networking organization.

The Difference Between "Fun" and "Etiquette":

BNI founder Dr. Ivan Misner frequently notes that while chapters should have fun, they must maintain strict professional etiquette. Profanity blurs the line between casual "shop talk" and the structured business environment BNI mandates.



BNI Culture Always Comes Before Chapter Culture

Every BNI chapter should develop its own unique personality and culture—but never at the expense of BNI’s culture, policies, standards, Core Values, Code of Ethics, or brand. When someone says,

“That’s just our chapter culture,” ask if that same argument would justify these statements:

- “Our culture is that we don’t take attendance”
- “Our culture is that we don’t do One-to-Ones.”
- “Our culture is that we don’t follow the agenda.”
- “Our culture is that members of our chapter can substitute for each other.”
- “Our culture is that profanity is acceptable during weekly presentations.”

Chapter culture cannot override BNI culture. Chapter Culture sits under the umbrella of the BNI Culture.

BNI culture is something every chapter inherits. Local traditions, humor, and personality are encouraged—but only within the framework of BNI’s established standards. A chapter’s culture is something its members create within the framework of BNI Culture.

Executive Directors should also recognize that a culture of intimidation is incompatible with BNI. Every member has the right to communicate openly with their Director, Executive Director, and Region Office without fear of pressure, retaliation, or interference. No individual or group within a chapter has the authority to discourage or prohibit those communications.

If a group wants to create a culture that is contrary to BNI’s established culture, policies, or standards, then BNI is simply not the right organization for them.

BNI is the world’s largest word-of-mouth marketing organization because it has built a proven culture over decades. Those who prefer a different culture are free to create their own networking organization—but they are not free to redefine BNI’s.

A healthy chapter builds upon BNI culture. It never attempts to redefine it.



Building Blocks of BNI Culture

The culture of BNI is built on the following foundational building blocks:

- **Givers Gain®:** The primary philosophy of BNI, based on the law of reciprocity. By giving business to others, you will get business in return.
- **Building Relationships:** Networking is fundamentally about trust and establishing positive, strong connections, rather than just chasing immediate sales.
- **Lifelong Learning:** A commitment to continuous education through BNI training and workshops, which drives greater chapter engagement and success.
- **Traditions + Innovation:** Balancing the proven traditions and structural rules of the organization with fresh, innovative approaches to business.
- **Positive & Supportive Attitude:** Creating an uplifting environment surrounded by individuals who want to help you succeed.
- **Accountability:** The principle that makes BNI a powerful referral engine rather than a mere social gathering. Members are responsible for their attendance, referrals, and closed business.
- **Recognition:** A culture that consistently celebrates members' achievements and milestones.
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Mission Statement

The mission of BNI is to help Members increase their business through a structured, **positive**, and **professional** referral marketing program that enables them to develop long-term, meaningful relationships with **quality business professionals**.

Members are expected to uphold the following **BNI universal Code of Ethics**:

1. I will provide the quality of service at the prices that I have quoted.
2. I will be truthful with the members and their referrals.
3. I will build goodwill and trust among members and their referrals.
4. I will take responsibility for following up on the referrals I receive.
5. I will display a **positive** and supportive attitude.
6. I will live up to the ethical standards of my profession.



How to Address This Issue

The Membership Committee: The chapter's Membership Committee holds the final authority to enforce BNI Core Values, the Code of Ethics, and BNI Policy. They can place members on probation or open their business classification if their behavior undermines the group's professionalism. Membership Committees do not need a policy to hold members accountable. Any behavior detrimental to membership or the chapter as a whole must be dealt with.

The BNI Director Consultant: If the local leadership team is participating in or ignoring the behavior, the issue should be escalated to the regional BNI Director Consultant to realign the chapter with corporate standards.

The Franchise Owners: It is the Franchise owner's responsibility to uphold and protect the BNI Brand. Profanity in chapters is detrimental to the Global Brand, word of mouth is always working, and bad habits spread.

If working with the Membership Committee, and Director Consultant fails, and no action is taken to resolve the issue, responsibility falls to the Owner. The Franchise Owner has several options.

1. Replace the current leadership team.
2. Remove offending members from the chapter.
3. Remove the BNI Brand and members from the organization.