

Joining the Business Consultancy Network

What is BCN?

BCN is a network of experienced, professional, independent consultants who offer quality assured business consultancy, advice and training. It is an evolving network which enables consultants to work together to maximise their businesses and for their professional development.

We have around 25 members, based in and around Cheshire and North Wales/North West, covering a wide range of industry sectors, specialisms and interests. We work in teams or individually with clients offering consultancy, advice and training to organisations in the local area

How does BCN work?

BCN is an enabling organisation which will provide you with the tools and skills you need to develop your consultancy business. We encourage and facilitate teams to work on issues of interest.

Examples of such operating groups are:

- developing work on communications in organisations
- promoting BCN to 'intermediaries' (accountants, solicitors, Business Link, etc.) and coordinating the management of relationships with these organisations
- developing business in a range of market sectors
- promoting the training activities of BCN

Membership of BCN provides you with the opportunities for team working that are not normally available to self-employed consultants.

What's in it for me?

Members will have access to

- space and time in network meetings to form and operate teams for product development or to identify and develop market opportunities
- marketing facilities such as our web site, the directory of consultants, general brochures, boilerplate printed paper to produce your own promotional materials, training and advice
- opportunities to promote services to clients as an individual or in teams, for example through the web site, exhibitions and media exposure
- opportunities for professional development, including organized events four times a year, and problem solving in network meetings, or by arrangement with other members

What's in it for our clients?

BCN consultants are able to offer the benefits of independent consultancy and the benefits of 'big name' consultancy, with the drawbacks of neither. Our clients gain:

- a 'one stop shop' where they can select the skills and consultants best able to meet their needs
- a quality assured service, with consultants operating under a code of practice and
- a quality management system, so that they can have full confidence when

choosing a consultant

- bespoke solutions which are truly tailored to their requirements
- personal service from a local consultant, where they can build a long term relationship with someone who is available when they are needed
- a consultant with in-depth experience, not a learner, at competitive rates, so that they know who they will be dealing with, before they buy

When does it meet?

Network meetings are held on the second Friday of every month (except August and a social meeting in December). We meet over lunch for informal networking and then spend from 1 pm - 5 pm together. The typical agenda comprises:

- professional development, where we may have an external speaker, a talk by one of our members on his/her specialist area, a debate or a training session
- time to 'advertise' and network
- space and time for the formation and operation of teams of consultants working on developing products, market opportunities or problem solving
- quality - peer review of projects undertaken by members.

Outside meetings we communicate electronically. Groups may arrange to meet to progress their various projects. Internally, we have small functional groups that undertake work as required on professional development, marketing and membership, and the coordinators of these groups comprise the co-ordination group, which addresses network-wide issues.

What is my commitment?

BCN is owned and run by all its members. We operate a flexible structure which encourages all members to contribute to the organisation and running of the network, as well as gaining the benefits of membership.

Members commit to:

- the BCN Code of Practice
- meeting the requirements of the BCN Quality Policy
- aiming to attend at least six meetings each year
- provide an e-mail address to be used for regular communication
- give a minimum of three days per year to the Network, in addition to meetings attendance
- pay an annual subscription (currently £100) by the due date (usually 1st April)

What are the entry requirements?

BCN consultants depend on each other to maintain their professional reputation, and so we believe we are the strictest assessors of each other's potential. To join, you will normally have to be a practising consultant although new consultants with a professional approach will be considered. Entry to the Business Consultancy Network is by peer review to ensure that all our consultants are able to work to the highest quality standards, as expected by our clients.

An existing member of BCN will sponsor your application. After an initial discussion about what you can contribute to and get out of BCN, you may be invited to attend one of the BCN monthly meetings with no obligation. If, after the meeting, you are interested in applying to join the Network, you will be invited to

- complete a draft Consultant's Profile according to guidelines sent to you
- complete a Commitment Form
- supply the names of two professional references
- provide a cheque for your annual subscription

Note that you are allowed to attend one or two meetings without commitment in order to see how BCN works and to decide whether you wish to join or not. By the time you attend your third meeting you must have submitted a membership application as described above.

You will then be given feedback on your application and will be invited to attend a meeting with the Membership Panel to talk through your profile and your previous experience. It is incumbent on both the Applicant and the Membership Panel to deal with relevant correspondence promptly to allow the membership interview to take place within one month from the date of the submission of the application.

Since your profile will eventually be included in our Directory of Consultants if your application is successful, it is important that both you and we are satisfied that the terms have been used consistently and that it is a fair description of you and your abilities. The Membership Panel will also explain to you the commitment we ask from our members and the subscription structure and they will answer any questions that you have about joining BCN.

Shortly afterwards, you will be notified of the result. Should you be invited to join BCN, you may be asked to sign to resubmit your profile with any changes agreed with the Membership Panel. You will receive copies of the BCN Code of Practice, the password to the BCN web site, access to all current policies and the BCN Directory of Consultants. You will be entitled to use the BCN name and publicity materials to promote your business and you will have access to all BCN professional development and business promotion support activities.

In the event that your application is rejected, you have a one-time appeal to BCN. You will be given details of the appeals procedure.

In the event that there is a BCN meeting in the period between submitting your application and meeting with the Membership Panel you are of course welcome to attend. You may also attend one professional development event whilst you are waiting for your application to be processed. You will be invited to contribute £10 to cover your share of the costs of the event.

What happens next?

If you are interested in joining the Network, please speak to a member of BCN or call Bill Webster on 01606 301122. You can also send in an enquiry via the website www.bcn.org.uk or email us on enquiry@bcn.org.uk (please remember to include your full contact details). A member of BCN will then contact you to discuss what you might contribute to and get out of BCN and, if appropriate, host you at a BCN meeting.

Induction Process

You will be provided with a checklist to ensure you are inducted effectively into the network. This involved contacting all BCN members to introduce yourself, circulating your profile and ensuring that you are added to the members address books. The Webmaster will add your approved profile onto the website and you will be provided with BCN business stationery. You will be entitled to use the BCN name and publicity materials to promote your business and you will have access to all BCN professional development and business promotion support activities.

In the event that you are rejected you have a one-time appeal to BCN. If you have any queries regarding this procedure, please call the Membership Group Coordinator, Bill Webster, on 01606 301122.