

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Dennelle Catlett  
212/583-2744 | [catlettd@plannedtvarts.com](mailto:catlettd@plannedtvarts.com)

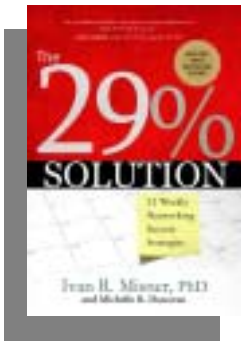
From *New York Times* bestselling author, Ivan R. Misner, Ph.D., with Michelle R. Donovan:

# THE 29% SOLUTION

52 Weekly Networking Success Strategies

*“This is an incredible book! It shows sales professionals and business owners how to get more and better customers, faster and easier, than in any other way. The practical, proven strategies for sales and business growth you learn can save you months and years of hard work.”*

*– Brian Tracy, author of *The Way to Wealth**



Question: What do Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, and “six degrees of separation” have in common?

Answer: People all around the world believe in them. You’ve heard that there are six degrees of separation between you and anybody else on earth that you would like to meet, right?

Amazing, isn’t it?

Ain’t true. It is an urban myth that has grown from a small kernel of truth. It is true, though, that there are some people who are better connected than others.

Ivan R. Misner, Ph.D. and Michelle R. Donovan, authors of **The 29% Solution: 52 Weekly Networking Success Strategies** (Greenleaf, September 2008), believe that “six degrees of separation” can be achieved, because quite simply, “connecting” is a skill that can be acquired. The 29% Solution offers 52 weeks worth of success strategies that include tactics for developing networking skills by way of increasing connections, and becoming part of the roughly 29 percent of people who are, in fact, separated from the rest of the world by just six degrees.

In many ways, success at networking is the uncommon application of common knowledge. It’s not “net-SIT” or “net-EAT” – it’s “net-WORK.” Successful networking is about learning how to work the networking process – not just letting it happen. Most people understand that networking is important to their success – they just lack a step-by-step process to get the results they want. Almost no one really implements a comprehensive methodology that will build a business through networking. Thus, the need to network is “common knowledge,” and the development of the methodology required to be successful at it is the “uncommon application.”

The 29% Solution offers the true essence and meaning of networking from the *father of modern networking* (CNN). It provides the answer to two conflicting questions that a business owner or salesperson faces every day: How can I tend to my existing clients while at the same time network for new business? *and*, Should I place higher value on my current clients or on new clients?

For more information, visit [www.29PercentSolution.com](http://www.29PercentSolution.com).

## **The 29% Solution: 52 Weekly Networking Success Strategies**

Ivan R. Misner, Ph.D.; Michelle R. Donovan  
Greenleaf Book Group LLC; September 2008  
978-1-929774-54-8; Hardcover \$21.95, 286 Pages

Contact: Dennelle Catlett  
212/583-2744 | [catlettd@plannedtvarts.com](mailto:catlettd@plannedtvarts.com)

# IVAN R. MISNER, Ph.D.

Founder and Chairman of BNI

Bestselling author of *Masters of Networking*, *Masters of Sales* and *Truth or Delusion?*

---



Dr. Ivan Misner is the Founder & Chairman of Business Network International (BNI), the world's largest business networking organization. BNI was founded in 1985. The organization now has over 5,000 chapters throughout every populated continent of the world. Last year alone, BNI generated 5.5 million referrals resulting in \$2.2 billion dollars worth of business for its members.

Dr. Misner's Ph.D. is from the University of Southern California. He has written ten books, including his *New York Times* Bestsellers: *Masters of Sales*, *Truth or Delusion?* and *Masters of Networking*. He is a monthly columnist for Entrepreneur.com and is the Senior Partner for the Referral Institute – a referral training company with trainers around the world. In addition, he has taught business management and social capital courses at several universities throughout the United States and now sits on the Board of Trustees for the University of the Rockies.

Called the “*Father of Modern Networking*” by CNN and the “*Networking Guru*” by Entrepreneur magazine, Dr. Misner is considered to be one of the world's leading experts on business networking and has been a keynote speaker for major corporations and associations throughout the world. He has been featured in the *L.A. Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *New York Times*, as well as on numerous TV and radio shows including *CNN*, *CNBC*, and the *BBC* in London.

Dr. Misner is the Founder of the BNI-Misner Charitable Foundation and was recently named “*Humanitarian of the Year*” by a Southern California newspaper. He is married and lives with his wife Elisabeth and their three children in Claremont, CA. *In his spare time!!!* he is also an amateur magician and a black belt in karate.

For more information, visit [www.bni.com](http://www.bni.com) or [www.29PercentSolution.com](http://www.29PercentSolution.com).

-----

Contact: Dennelle Catlett  
212/583-2744 | [catlettd@plannedtvarts.com](mailto:catlettd@plannedtvarts.com)

# MICHELLE R. DONOVAN

**Owner and Founder of Pinnacle Training Services**  
**Owner of Referral Institute-Pittsburgh**



Michelle R. Donovan is known as “The Referability Expert” in Pittsburgh. She owns and operates Referral Institute in Western Pennsylvania, specializing in referral marketing programs and personalized referral coaching. She is also the founder of Pinnacle Training Services.

She has been a guest faculty for Penn State Beaver campus and the University of Pittsburgh’s Katz Center for Executive Education.

Michelle has made multiple contributions to the *Training and Development Sourcebook*. She has published over 30 articles on networking and referral marketing in multiple publications and has presented at several national and local conferences. Michelle is an “expert author” on EZines.com.

Michelle recently completed her first book, **The 29% Solution: 52 Weekly Networking Success Strategies** (Greenleaf, 2008), which she co-authored with Ivan R. Misner, Ph.D., founder of the largest international business networking organization, BNI.

She has a Masters in Adult Education and is a Certified Instructor of Trainers.

As a facilitator, Michelle engages her participants with meaningful substance through real-life application to learning. The key to her success is a supportive partner and surrounding herself with exceptional people.

In her spare time, she makes homemade wine, rides her motorcycle, and enjoys fishing.

For more information, visit [www.pinnacletrainingservices.com](http://www.pinnacletrainingservices.com) or [www.29PercentSolution.com](http://www.29PercentSolution.com).

-----

Contact: Dennelle Catlett  
212/583-2744 | [catlettd@plannedtvarts.com](mailto:catlettd@plannedtvarts.com)

## ABOUT BNI & THE REFERRAL INSTITUTE

---

**BNI® (Business Network International)** was founded in 1985 by Dr. Ivan Misner as a way for businesspeople to generate referrals in a structured, professional environment. The organization, now the world's largest referral network, has tens of thousands of members on every populated continent of the world. Since its inception, members of BNI® have passed millions of referrals, generating billions of dollars in business for the participants.

The primary purpose of the organization is to pass qualified business referrals to the members. The philosophy of BNI® may be summed up in two simple words: Givers Gain®. If you give business to people, you will get business from them. BNI® allows only one person per profession to join a chapter. The program is designed for businesspeople to develop long-term relationships, thereby creating a basis for trust and, inevitably, referrals. The mission of BNI® is to help members increase their business through a structured, positive, and professional word-of-mouth program that enables them to develop long-term, meaningful relationships with quality business professionals.

For more information, visit [www.bni.com](http://www.bni.com).

-----

**The Referral Institute®** is one of the leading referral-training organizations with franchises, trainers, and coaches around the world. The organization teaches business professionals how to harness the power of referral marketing to drive sales for long-term, sustainable business growth by referral. Founded in 2001, the Referral Institute® began developing training materials specific to referral marketing. Today, the Referral Institute® is a franchised company recognized by Entrepreneur.com as one of the top 500 franchised companies in the world.

The Referral Institute's mission is to direct professionals to proactively increase their business through implementing structured referral strategies. In total, the Referral Institute® provides the world's leading material on referral marketing in three different areas:

- Referral-Marketing Training
- Referral-Marketing Coaching
- Referral-Marketing Consulting

For more information, visit [www.referralinstitute.com](http://www.referralinstitute.com).

-----

Contact: Dennelle Catlett  
212/583-2744 | [catlettd@plannedtvarts.com](mailto:catlettd@plannedtvarts.com)

## STANLEY MILGRAM'S SIX DEGREES OF SEPARATION

*Excerpted from The 29% Solution: 52 Weekly Networking Success Strategies (Greenleaf, 2008)*

*by Ivan R. Misner, Ph.D., with Michelle Donovan*

---

What do Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, and “six degrees of separation” have in common? Answer: People all around the world believe in them.

Now, we’re not going to do an exposé on Kris Kringle or the egg-laying rabbit. We don’t want to stir up trouble. What we do want is to take issue with the six-degrees thing.

You’ve heard that there are “six degrees of separation” between you and anybody else on earth that you would like to meet.

Right?

Amazing, isn’t it?

Ain’t true.

Sorry, we hate to burst your bubble on such a lovely idea, but it’s one of those urban myths that have grown from a small kernel of truth.

The legend originally stems from several “small world” experiments conducted by Stanley Milgram in the ’60s and ’70s. These experiments involved sending letters from a group of people in one part of the country to a specific person (whom they did not know) in another part of the country. The participants were told to get the material to someone who might know someone who would know the individual to whom the material was to be delivered. This process formed a chain of connections linking the people together.

It was, in fact, found that the letters that eventually arrived in the right person’s hands took, on average, between five and six connections, or degrees. This part is true; however, if you look closer, you will discover the problems that exist within the blanket statement that “we are all connected by six degrees.”

First off, though the average number of links for people who got the material to the final contact was five or six connections, the majority of the connections made ranged from two to ten. This means that roughly half took more than six and roughly half less than six.

Well, you say, that’s the average, and we would agree that there’s nothing wrong with addressing this concept by the average, but there’s one small problem: the overwhelming majority of people in all of the “small world” studies never got the material to the intended recipient at all!

In Milgram’s most successful study, “217 chains were started and 64 were completed—a success rate of only 29%.”<sup>1</sup> That’s right—a success rate of less than one-third of the participants!

This means that 29 percent of the people in Milgram's most successful study were separated on average by six degrees from the final contact person. However, it also means that 71 percent were not connected at all!

But wait, we're afraid it gets worse. This was Milgram's most successful study. In another of his studies, only 5 percent of the participants completed the chain, which means that 95 percent of the people in the study never made the link to the person with whom they were to connect at all—ever!

Don't shoot the messenger, but we must tell you that we are not "all" connected with everyone in the world by six degrees of separation. We're just not . . . not all of us. But why would the authors of a book on networking be telling readers about the Achilles' heel of this iconic concept upon which a lot of networking pros hang their hats? There are two reasons.

First of all, we believe this myth creates complacency. The thought that everyone is absolutely connected to everyone else on the planet by six degrees gives some people a false expectation, lulling them into the impression that the connection is bound to happen sooner or later, no matter what they do. Second, and most importantly, the studies' findings indicate clearly that some people are better connected than others. We believe that's important, because it means that "connecting" is a skill that can be acquired.

With reading, training, and coaching, people can develop their networking skills, increase their connections, and become part of the roughly 29 percent of people who are, in fact, separated from the rest of the world by just six degrees.

Milgram's work was revolutionary, to be sure. It opened up a whole new world of discussion and understanding. It has also, however, been romanticized. The mythical version of his findings does no good for anyone. It gives people a false sense of security and/or an erroneous worldview from a networking standpoint.

We do believe that we live in a "small world" that is becoming smaller and smaller; we also believe it is possible to be connected to anyone in the world by only six degrees. We just don't believe that we are *all* connected by six degrees, and Milgram's own findings support that.

The good news in all of this is that it is possible to be part of the 29 percent through education, practice, and training. We can be connected to anyone through the power and potential of networking. In fact, by understanding that, we can set ourselves aside from our competition by knowing that being able to make successful connections is not an entitlement. Instead, it is a skill that only some actually develop.

We believe that you would like to be a part of that 29 percent. Why? Because you want to improve your networking skills, that's why! It's a no-brainer. The smaller the number of phone calls, letters, e-mails, lunches, and road trips between you and someone's ideal client somewhere in the world, the more value you bring to your networking partners, and the stronger and more prosperous your business networking becomes.

By the way, for the 71 percent of people who are not connected but still believe in the six-degrees-of-separation concept—keep the faith. You'll always have Santa Claus.

-----

Contact: Dennelle Catlett  
212/583-2744 | [catlettd@plannedtvarts.com](mailto:catlettd@plannedtvarts.com)

# TOP 10 TRAITS OF A MASTER NETWORKER

*Excerpted from *The 29% Solution: 52 Weekly Networking Success Strategies* (Greenleaf, 2008)*

*by Ivan R. Misner, Ph.D., with Michelle Donovan*

---

Networking is more than just shaking hands and passing out business cards. Networking is really about building your “social capital,” according to the results of a survey of more than two thousand businesspeople throughout the US, UK, Canada, and Australia, published in *Masters of Networking* (Ivan Misner and Don Morgan). The survey respondents rated most highly the traits related to developing and maintaining good relationships. Here are the top ten traits that make a master networker, ranked in order of their importance as judged by the respondents.

**1. Timely follow-up on referrals.** This was ranked as the number-one trait of successful networkers. If you present an opportunity—whether it’s a simple piece of information, a special contact, or a qualified business referral—to someone who consistently fails to follow up successfully, it’s no secret that you’ll eventually stop wasting your time with this person. Following up with what you say you’re going to do, when you say you’re going to do it, builds your credibility and trust with your network.

**2. Positive attitude.** A consistently negative attitude makes people dislike being around you and drives away referrals; a positive attitude makes people want to associate and cooperate with you. When you are positive, you’re like a magnet (see Week 14). People want to be around you and will send their friends, family, and associates to you. Positive attitudes are contagious. Being positive contributes to your determination, internal motivation, and ultimate business success.

**3. Enthusiasm/motivation.** Think about the people you know who get the most referrals. They’re the people who show the most motivation, right? It’s been said that the best sales characteristic is enthusiasm. To be respected within our networks, we at least need to sell ourselves with enthusiasm.

Once we’ve done an effective job of selling ourselves, we can reap the reward of seeing our contacts sell us to others. That’s motivation in and of itself! Enthusiasm aligns well with a positive attitude. Enthusiastic and motivated people make things happen for them—and for the people they know.

**4. Trustworthiness.** When you refer one person to another, there is no doubt that you’re putting your personal and professional reputation on the line. You have to be able to trust your referral partner and be trusted in return. Neither you nor anyone else will refer a contact or valuable information to someone who can’t be trusted to handle it well. Trust, as we have been taught, is earned. It develops over time and throughout the life span of a relationship. Trust can never be taken lightly, because it plays such a huge role in your credibility.

**5. Good listening skills.** Our success as networkers depends on how well we can listen and learn from the people in our network. The faster you and your networking partner learn what you need to know about each other, the faster you’ll establish a valuable relationship. Listening for the needs and problems of

others can also position you to engage the services of the people you know. Many distractions can get in the way of listening well to each other. Communicating well takes focus and effective listening.

**6. Commitment to networking 24/7.** Master networkers are never formally off duty. (Well, maybe when they're asleep.) Networking is so natural to them that they can be found networking in the grocery checkout line, at the doctor's office, and while picking the kids up from school—as well as at business mixers and networking meetings. Master networkers take advantage of every opportunity that's presented to them on a daily basis. They operate in the "Givers Gain" mind-set and are first and foremost looking for opportunities for the people in their network.

**7. Gratitude.** Gratitude is sorely lacking in today's business world. Expressing gratitude to business associates and clients is just another building block in the cultivation of relationships that will lead to increased referrals (see Week 19 Strategy). People like to refer others to business professionals who go above and beyond. Thanking others at every opportunity will help you stand out from the crowd. Expressing sincere gratitude to the people who will one day be there to help you is not just a courtesy—it's the right thing to do.

**8. Helpfulness.** Helping others can be done in a variety of ways, from simply showing up to help with an office move to clipping a useful and interesting article and mailing it to an associate or client. Master networkers keep their eyes and ears open for opportunities to advance other people's interests. They offer to help others whenever they can, because they authentically want to help. It's as simple as that. Master networkers get joy out of helping other people succeed.

**9. Sincerity.** Friendliness without sincerity is like a cake without frosting. You can offer the help, the thanks, the listening ear, but if you aren't sincerely interested in others, it will show – and they'll know it! Those who have developed successful networking skills convey their sincerity at every turn. One of the best ways to develop this trait is to give your undivided attention to the individual with whom you're developing a referral relationship. Don't multitask when you're on the phone; stop browsing the Web, balancing your checkbook, and shining your shoes. When you multitask, nothing gets your full attention, and everything suffers in some way; besides, people can tell when you're not all there. Make eye contact when you're speaking to them in person. Sincerely show that you care, and give your complete attention to the individual in front of you.

**10. Dedicated to working one's network.** As mentioned previously, it's not net-sit or net-eat—it's net-WORK, and master networkers don't let any opportunity to work their networks pass them by. They manage their contacts with contact management software, organize their e-mail address files, and carry their referral partners' business cards along with their own. They set up appointments to get better acquainted with new contacts and learn as much about them as possible, so they can truly become part of one another's networks.

-----

Contact: Dennelle Catlett  
212/583-2744 | [catlettd@plannedtvarts.com](mailto:catlettd@plannedtvarts.com)

## 5 NETWORKING FACTS YOU LEARNED FROM MOM

*By Michelle R. Donovan, The Referability Expert  
Owner of Pinnacle Training Services and Referral Institute-Pittsburgh*

---

Mothers are a beautiful thing. They care for us, they nurture us and they teach us the dos and don'ts of life.

I've learned a lot from my mother. Especially when she taught me all about life, love and networking! I'm sure she didn't realize she was teaching me about networking at the time! Indeed she was and I bet your mom taught you about networking as well. Perhaps the words of my mom might sound familiar to you.

### 1. "Share your toys"

I can't remember how many times my mom told me to share! She felt it was important that we knew how to give to others. Growing up in a large family, I had to share almost everything. Sharing is good to learn when you're young, because it's a skill that helps to make us approachable.

Networking just wouldn't be networking if we didn't share. We can build stronger relationships with people when we're willing to share our resources. Some of our best resources include time, money, connections, information, knowledge, and skills. People appreciate us when we're willing to give to the relationship. Giving people are approachable and reap the benefits of reciprocity.

### 2. "Walk, don't run!"

I used to hear this phrase no matter where we were ... in the house, in the grocery store, in the mall, in church, and even at school! As a kid, I was always in a hurry to get to the next exciting thing around the corner. I couldn't wait! There always seemed to be someplace more interesting than where I was at the time. My attention was short and my mom was trying to teach me patience.

Patience is a virtue when it comes to networking. A fast-paced networker misses the true essence of the event and could very easily blow right past a tremendous opportunity. Fast-paced networkers tend to build shallow relationships that offer little or nothing of value to your business. On the other hand, patient networkers build deep, long lasting relationships that significantly impact the growth of their business. Establishing a network that has depth far exceeds one that is shallow and frail.

### 3. "You have to work for it!"

Nothing in life worth having comes easy ... you have to work for it! My parents taught me this lesson by example. Both of my parents worked hard for what they accomplished and gave to their five children. They were determined to provide a wonderful life for their family and indeed they did. Today, in their retirement, they are reaping the benefit of their labor.

Networking is no different. That's why it's called, net-WORK! It's not net-SIT or net-EAT! Building relationships takes not only time, but effort and energy. It also takes commitment and dedication to the process.

Some people put their faith in the “six degrees of separation” theory that tells them that they’re connected to anyone by only six degrees. In fact, this theory is flawed. This study actually showed that only 29% of the population is indeed separated by six degrees! So, for the majority of us, we’ve got to work hard to get into the 29% and work hard to stay there. The reward for accomplishing this task is great ... beyond what we can even imagine. Our mothers must have had foresight!

#### **4. “Say thank you”**

Not long after we began to speak my mom was making sure that we knew how to say “thank you”. As most kids do, I wanted to know “why” saying “thank you” was so important. Because being a fast-paced kid, there seemed to be no time for “thank you.”

In true mom form, my mother would reply, “because, it’s the right thing to do”. Before I knew it, saying “thank you” became second nature and it felt right. It became a part of who I am and how I operate.

Little did I know then that my mom was teaching me one of the biggest of life’s lessons. Saying “thank you” to those who have helped you in some way shows your gratitude, expresses your appreciation, and solidifies the steps made towards further developing the relationship. It seems as though these two little words don’t pack much of a punch these days. I can assure you that a written note of thanks for the efforts of a referral partner will enhance the possibilities that person might refer you again.

#### **5. “Clean up after yourself”**

My mother keeps a tidy household. I know that she wanted her kids to learn to appreciate a tidy household, so she always would be sure to tell us, “clean up after yourself!”

Secretly, I think it was her way of delegating so that she didn’t have to spend the little spare time she had, cleaning up after five kids! For me, it worked. I can remember always putting my toys away and tidying up my room.

What does cleaning up after yourself have to do with networking? As kids, there was always one last thing to do when we played with our toys ... put them away. That was our quiet lesson in follow-up. We followed-up every play-time with a consistent behavior of cleaning up after ourselves. Today, as adults, one huge component of networking is follow-up and more importantly, our ability to do it consistently. Meeting people and building relationships mean very little if we never bother to follow-up with them. Making promises to help someone without efficient follow-up is just a bunch of empty promises. This homegrown lesson in follow-up might have been one of the most important networking lessons of all.

These five lessons grounded me as a person and helped to develop me into a successful professional. As I write this article, I can hear my mom saying, “Some day you’ll thank me!” Thanks, mom, for covertly teaching me lessons that would one day help me to be an effective networker! Perhaps it’s time you thanked your mom.

-----

Contact: Dennelle Catlett  
212/583-2744 | [catlettd@plannedtvarts.com](mailto:catlettd@plannedtvarts.com)

## SUGGESTED QUESTIONS / BYLINE TOPICS

---

### Suggested Questions

1. So, what *do* Santa Clause, the Easter Bunny, and the six degrees of separation have in common?
2. Why would the authors of a book on networking be telling readers about the Achilles' heel of an iconic concept upon which a lot of networking pros hang their hats?
3. If you could only give 3 strategies from the book to someone looking to network themselves into the elite 29 percent, what would they be?
4. What's your favorite strategy in the book?
5. What are SMART goals?
6. What are a few traits of a Master Networker?
7. How does one maximize their approachability?
8. How has networking evolved in the 23 years since you founded BNI?
9. How has the Internet influenced referral marketing and networking in general?
10. How many networking relationships have you and BNI been responsible for since you founded the organization more than 20 years ago?

---

### Byline Topics

1. Debunking the Six Degree of Separation: Do You Believe That Anyone In The World Is Only Six People Removed? Here's Why That Theory's Wrong And What It Means For Networking
2. Laser Sharp Networking: 3 Tips To Getting Precision Results From Your Networking Efforts
3. Networking Faux Pas: Think You're A Good Networker? Make Sure You're Not Making 1 Of These 3 Big Blunders
4. 5 Things You Learned From Your Mother About Networking
5. 5 Attributes a Networker Can Learn from Tiger Woods