

THE OLD saying goes, you'll get by with a little help from your friends and in these straightened times, a group of local business owners have helped each other to the tune of €1.5m!

Business Network International (BNI) is a business referral organisation with 5,000 chapters in 38 countries. The Boyne Chapter in Drogheda has generated just over €1.5m of business for its members in the last 12 months.

The chapter members meet every Thursday morning at 6.45am in Bru, Drogheda, with one sole purpose: to generate business for themselves and for each other. Chapter members act as a sales force to fellow members.

'Anyone in business will know dozens, hundreds or even thousands of people,' says Bernard Burke, Chapter Director for BNI Boyne and owner of local web design company Spintech.

'We are a group of business professionals who are committed to success through the development of word-of-mouth referrals. Someone who belongs to BNI Boyne is getting access not just to the 20+ members but all of their contacts too.'

Each meeting is structured with every member given the opportunity to present their business and inform their chapter colleagues about the type of business they need.

Members then use their business and personal networks to help find business for their fellow members and bring qualified referrals to each meeting.

'We always welcome visitors to come along and see how we work,' says membership committee member Malachy Murphy from local flatpack assembly company FP Assembly.

'As a member, you know that the services you are using are safe and reliable, and we currently have vacancies in a wide range of businesses, including a florist, beautician and architect, and a big advantage of becoming a member is you will not find competition in that chapter. Each chapter will include only one representative from a particular profession, which ensures exclusivity.'

Business networks are becoming more popular and BNI in Ireland has doubled its membership in the last four years as business owners look for new ways to generate extra income.

If you would like to learn more, log onto www.bniboyne.com or pop along to join in one of the breakfast meetings. It really proves the early bird does get the worm!