



A NEW CHAPTER BEGINS

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS.

GROWING BUSINESSES.

CHANGING LIVES.

JUNE 2026

A NEW CHAPTER FOR BNI MOUNTAIN SOUTH REGION

By Elaine Zambos

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“BUSINESS GOES FURTHER WHEN PEOPLE GROW TOGETHER.”

There are moments in life when you can look back and see exactly how one conversation, one invitation, or one brave decision changed everything.

For me, BNI started with a simple invitation.

In 2008, my neighbor invited me to a **BNI chapter** meeting. I said no more than once. Honestly, I did not fully understand what I was walking into, and I did not realize how much that room would eventually shape my life, my business, and my future.

BNI MOUNTAIN SOUTH REGION

Today, I am honored to share that BNI Southeast Tennessee and BNI Western North Carolina are coming together as one expanded region:

This new chapter officially begins on

JUNE 1, 2026

and it is more than a name change. It is the beginning of a larger referral community across Southeast Tennessee and Western North Carolina, including Asheville and the surrounding mountain communities.

It is a chance for our members to build stronger relationships, expand their reach, and create new opportunities through trusted referrals. It is the beginning of a larger referral community across Southeast Tennessee and Western North Carolina, including Asheville and the surrounding mountain communities.

When I finally agreed to attend, I remember thinking,

“WHY DID I NOT COME HERE SOONER?”

That first meeting opened a door I did not know I needed. It introduced me to a community built on relationships, trust, and the belief that people can grow farther when they grow together.



WHY THIS MATTERS

I have always believed that business has no borders.

A great referral does not stop at a county line. A strong relationship does not stop at a state line. When people trust one another, support one another, and believe in one another's work, opportunities can travel much farther than we often imagine.

That is one of the most exciting things about BNI Mountain South Region.

With this expansion, our members will now have the opportunity to connect across **19 additional counties**.

Our regional reach grows from approximately **900,000 people to 1.9 million people**.



OUR REACH GROWS FROM

900,000
PEOPLE



TO 1.9 MILLION
PEOPLE

**IN 19 ADDITIONAL
COUNTIES**

That is nearly one million more people connected to the potential of referral-based business. But to me, the most meaningful part is not just the number. It is the people behind the number.

It is the business owner in Chattanooga who may now build a relationship in Asheville. It is the professional in Western North Carolina who may now connect with someone in Southeast Tennessee. It is the contractor, realtor, financial advisor, health provider, marketing professional, attorney, home service provider, and small business owner who now has a larger community of people listening for opportunities on their behalf.

In BNI, you are not growing by yourself. You are building relationships with people who become a sales team that is not on your payroll.

They are not just handing out business cards. They are listening. They are watching for opportunities. They are willing to say your name in rooms you are not in at the time. **That is powerful.**

MY JOURNEY TO THIS MOMENT

“That could have felt like the end of the story. Instead, it felt like God handed me a blank canvas and said, **Paint a new picture.**”

That new picture brought me to Chattanooga.



My journey with **BNI** has never been just about business. It has been personal from the beginning.

Before I moved to **Chattanooga**, I owned a small consulting and coaching business. I was working long hours, teaching classes, serving clients, and trying to keep everything moving. Eventually, I reached a point where I knew I could not keep going the way I had been going.

In 2009, my largest client purchased my company. Around the same time, I learned that the condo I was living in had sold. On the same day, I was facing life without the business I had built and without the home I had been living in.

I came here to help launch ESPN Radio. I did not know anyone. I had no built-in network, no familiar business circle, and no easy path in front of me. But I knew one thing: if I was going to build something here, I needed relationships.

**SO I WENT
BACK TO** **BNI**

My early experience in Chattanooga was not perfect. I visited chapters where I did not feel fully seen.

I wondered if there was a place for me.

Then one local chapter leader followed up, invited me back, and ***made sure I had the opportunity to apply.***

That moment mattered. Sometimes one invitation can change a life.

I know that because it changed mine.



NEW BEGINNINGS

Every ending can be the start of something greater.



RELATIONSHIPS MATTER

One invitation can open the door to opportunity.



YOU ARE NOT ALONE

BNI is a community that has your back.



A STRONGER FUTURE

When we build together, we go further together.

BUILDING BNI SOUTHEAST TENNESSEE

Years later, I was given the opportunity to purchase and lead **BNI Southeast Tennessee**.

At the time, we had around 200 members. I believed we could become a 500-member region, even when others thought that goal was out of reach. I did not have an easy path to make it happen. I emptied my savings. I took a second mortgage on my home. I borrowed money from a friend. I made sacrifices because I believed in the region, the people, and what BNI could become here.

In 2023, we reached 500 members. I marked that milestone in a very Elaine way. I bought a pair of boots. They became my 500 boots.



SINCE THEN

every time we reach another

**50-MEMBER
MILESTONE,**

I buy a new pair.

Now, as we approach **700 members** and step into this expansion, those boots mean even more to me.

They remind me of the steps it took to get here.

- ✓ The **hard** steps.
- ✓ The **faithful** steps.
- ✓ The **brave** steps.

The steps taken by every member who **showed up, invited, referred, served, led, and believed** in this region.



“ BNI Mountain South Region is not something that happened overnight. ”

It is the result of years of relationships, trust, consistency, and community.

WHAT MEMBERS CAN EXPECT

As the BNI Mountain South Region comes together, I am excited about what this means for both sides of the mountain.



For our **Southeast Tennessee** members, this opens the door to new relationships, new markets, and new referral opportunities in Western North Carolina.



For our **Western North Carolina** members, this brings access to more cross-chapter activity, more regional events, more recognition opportunities, and more ways to connect with trusted professionals across Southeast Tennessee.



We plan to continue building a culture where members are encouraged to connect beyond their own chapter.



MEMBER
COFFEES



NETWORKING
ROUNDTABLES



RECOGNITION
EVENTS



SPORTING
EVENTS



AND OTHER
OPPORTUNITIES



“Some of the best referrals happen when people are willing to look beyond the obvious.”



Sometimes, the person sitting across from you is not your customer, but they know

- ✓ your **customer**,
- ✓ a **family member**,
- ✓ a **client**,
- ✓ a **neighbor**,
- ✓ a **vendor**, or
- ✓ **another business owner**

who needs exactly what you offer.

That is the
beauty of

BNI

We are not just doing business
with each other.

WE ARE DOING BUSINESS
for each other.





A BIGGER REGION WITH THE SAME HEART

As we launch the BNI Mountain South Region, I want our members to know this:



**WE ARE GROWING, BUT
WE ARE NOT LOSING WHO WE ARE.**
The heart remains the same.



We will continue to lead with **relationships**.



We will continue to value **trust**.



We will continue to celebrate the people who **show up for one another**.



We will continue to believe that local business owners deserve a community that **knows them, supports them, and helps them grow**.



We will continue to live out that **mission**.

**THIS EXPANSION
GIVES US MORE
ROOM TO LIVE OUT
THAT MISSION.**



More people to meet.



More communities to serve.



More businesses to support.



More stories to celebrate.



More referrals to pass.



More opportunities to prove that when business is built on relationships, it can **change lives**.



**TOGETHER, WE ARE BUILDING
SOMETHING STRONGER, WIDER, AND DEEPER**
than we ever could on our own.



MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

There is a saying I love:

“ You can go fast alone, but you go far with a team.”

That is exactly how I feel about **BNi** Mountain South Region.

This is not about one person, one chapter, or one city.

This is about a team of business professionals across Southeast Tennessee and Western North Carolina choosing to **grow together**.

It is about building something that reaches across the mountains while staying rooted in the values that have always made BNi meaningful.



As we step into this new season, I feel grateful.



Grateful for the **members** who helped build BNi Southeast Tennessee.



Grateful for the **leaders** and members in Western North Carolina who are trusting us with this next chapter.



Grateful for every **person** who has referred, invited, encouraged, challenged, supported, and believed in me.



And grateful for the opportunity to watch BNi Mountain South Region become a place where business owners do not just **grow their companies**.



GIVER'S GAIN



**MORE PEOPLE
TO MEET**



**MORE BUSINESSES
TO SUPPORT**



**MORE REFERRALS
TO PASS**



**MORE COMMUNITIES
TO SERVE**



**MORE STORIES
TO CELEBRATE**



JUNE 1, 2026,

WE BEGIN THIS NEW CHAPTER AS THE
BNi MOUNTAIN SOUTH REGION.

- > The region is growing.
- > The community is expanding.
- > The opportunities are multiplying.

AND I TRULY BELIEVE

THE BEST IS STILL AHEAD.

BNI[®]

MOUNTAIN SOUTH REGION

BNI Mountain South Region brings together **BNI Southeast Tennessee** and **BNI Western North Carolina** into one expanded referral community serving business professionals across the southern mountain region.

Through weekly chapter meetings, trusted referrals, cross-chapter events, leadership development, and relationship-based networking, BNI Mountain South Region helps members grow their businesses through **connection, collaboration, and community.**



**JUNE 1,
2026**

A NEW CHAPTER BEGINS.

BNI Mountain South Region officially launches on June 1, 2026 uniting Southeast Tennessee and Western North Carolina under one mission:

**BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS.
GROWING BUSINESSES.
CHANGING LIVES.**



WEEKLY CHAPTER MEETINGS

Build meaningful connections and grow stronger relationships through structured, weekly networking.



TRUSTED REFERRALS

Receive quality referrals from members who know, trust, and believe in you.



CROSS-CHAPTER EVENTS

Expand your reach and opportunities by connecting with professionals across the entire region.



LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Grow as a leader through training, resources, and opportunities to lead and inspire.



RELATIONSHIP-BASED NETWORKING

A proven system built on trust, support, and genuine relationships that delivers real results.



**MORE
PEOPLE
TO MEET**



**MORE
BUSINESSES
TO SUPPORT**



**MORE
REFERRALS
TO PASS**



**MORE
COMMUNITIES
TO SERVE**



**MORE
SUCCESS STORIES
TO CELEBRATE**

BNI[®]
MOUNTAIN SOUTH REGION

**THE REGION IS GROWING.
THE COMMUNITY IS EXPANDING.
THE BEST IS YET TO COME.**





made with love by
METATECH