# BNI Australia - Guidelines for Selecting a BNI Meeting Venue

**All BNI Venues must be approved by BNI**

Thank you for involving your local BNI Director to ensure we can share the benefit of our experience with previous venue successes and challenges. As a key stakeholder in your success, BNI values the opportunity to support you and contribute to achieving the best possible outcome.

**Contracts are to be avoided if possible**

Most Chapters operate without a formal venue contract. In situations where a contract is required, it is important to note that only the legal entity of the local Executive Director is authorised to enter into agreements on behalf of your BNI Chapter. It's considered good practice that any such contract is signed both by the local Executive Director and by an authorised representative of the Chapter.

**All BNI Venues (BNI meetings, social events, etc)**

- ARE EASY to find and have adequate parking.
- ARE handicapped accessible.
- HAVE adequate public liability and other appropriate insurance.
- HAVE professional aesthetics that will make you want to take your best clients there.
- ARE affordable for Chapters. Ideally, this means a fixed fee regardless of the number of attendees. To ensure meetings run professionally without disruption, best practice is for the Chapter to avoid serving food or coffee during weekly events.

**The Weekly BNI Meeting Room:**

- IS private and has an exclusive area set up for BNI.
- HAS good lighting and sound conditions, with access to AV where possible.
- IS open at least 30 minutes before the meeting scheduled start. (This lets the Leadership Team and Visitor Hosts set up for the meeting, and early arrivals can get in out of the elements.)
- MUST comfortably hold at least 50 people or more.
- HAS enough clear space near the entrance for a sign-in and/or brochure table.
- Ideally, the venue includes a separate space for open networking to create a strong first impression. The meeting room should allow for a horseshoe or long table setup, with the head positioned at the far end and the open end near the door. Avoid placing chairs inside the horseshoe, and ensure enough space around it for members and staff to move freely.

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- Although not 100% essential, there are many advantages to this horseshoe setup:
    - It looks and feels more professional
    - It is more convenient for the wait staff and makes them less conspicuous.
    - Most people feel more comfortable sitting on the outside of the horseshoe.

**Dealing with Management:**

- Contracts with venues are not to be entered into unless a BNI Director is involved. If they are necessary, please contact your BNI Director immediately for assistance and support. As indicated above, only the local Executive Director's legal entity can enter into contracts on behalf of the BNI Chapter.
- If a fixed fee regardless of the number of attendees is not possible, and the Chapter decides on a venue with food then:
    - work with the venue to create an arrangement whereby every member will pay a venue fee that includes a free meal and possibly coffee. Members and guests need to accept that this is necessary to supply a professional meeting location.
- Tell the venue that BNI members will:
    - Bring guests to the meetings.
    - Be advocates of their business.
    - Give them great word-of-mouth advertising.
- Have them agree to mutually acceptable arrangements that cover the following:
    - Planned cancellations such as holidays and special events.
    - How they would notify you if they have a problem that would adversely affect your meeting.
- Kick- Off meetings and other special events should receive special attention from the venue management and staff. Their extra effort to help at these times will benefit them in the long run. For those special events the room should be available 1 hour before start time.

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**Final Touches:**

- If you use a horseshoe table, keep the open end unobstructed and have the feature presenter stand there during their presentations. Everyone will see better, and it will look and feel more professional.
- If you use a long table, leave the far end of the table open for the same reason.
- In the spirit of BNI's Core Value of Traditions and Innovation, it is important to note that the provision of a meal at a BNI weekly event is not longer recommended. Chapter times have shifted and choice of venues have broadened where the service of a meal is no longer feasible.
- In addition, it is BNI's experience that members have a large range of dietary needs which cannot always be accommodated and many members, even at the traditional breakfast meeting time slot, are choosing not to eat the meal provided. It is also common that many challenges a venue faces is due to having sufficient staff arrive very early to cook and serve food. Removing food from weekly BNI Chapter events may also open up the selection of venue options available and may decrease member complaints in regards to food quality. Finally, it is also possible, that removing the meal requirement may result in the weekly venue dues being decreased and less pressure on the venue

**Remember**

Establish rapport with the venue. Re-establish this relationship with every change in staff or chapter Leadership Team. Make them feel you are their best customers. They will help you do all of those nice things that turn a weekly meeting into a special event.

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