



2021

Business Resource Alliance Group™



**B.R.A.G.**  
**Member's**  
**Manual** Version 1.90

## **BRAG™ Manual Version 1.90**

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### **BRAG™ Manual Version 1.90**

**This BRAG Manual version is in full effect as of January 1, 2021. It is the only recognized version of the BRAG™ manual by the Business Resource Alliance Group™ (BRAG™) or the Sterling Heights Regional Chamber of Commerce and Industry™ as of this date. This version 1.90 supersedes all other versions of a BRAG Manual regardless of format, version name, number or date. The rules and policies written in this version 1.90 are the only rules and policies recognized by BRAG™ as of the January 1, 2021 date and supersedes all other rules and policies written within a manual or through any other form of communication, manual or electronic, to BRAG™ members past or present.**

**It is the responsibility of the individual BRAG™ member to make sure they have the latest version of the BRAG Member's Manual at all times. They may determine if they have the latest version by contacting their group leaders or the BRAG™ Administrator's Office of the Sterling Heights Regional Chamber of Commerce and Industry™.**

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**Appendix 1 - Brag Mentor Program**

**Appendix 2 – Core Election Process / Duties of Core Chair and Co-Chair**

# Welcome to B.R.A.G.

Congratulations on taking the first step to increasing your business! Joining a Business Resource Alliance Group indicates that you are a serious businessperson looking for proven ways to increase your sales! Perhaps the best part of joining BRAG is that every member of your group is committed to helping you increase your business!

Since its inception, BRAG has been extremely successful. Many members report that a significant portion of their annual business revenue comes as a direct result of the leads and referrals they have received from the members of their BRAG group. What had started as a few interested individuals has grown to more than a dozen groups, providing a dramatic positive impact on the Sterling Heights Regional Chamber of Commerce & Industry. This program works!

The Sterling Heights Regional Chamber of Commerce & Industry developed the Business Resource Alliance Group in 1999 to provide a forum for Chamber members to meet each other for the sole purpose of increasing each member's business. We accomplish this by organizing groups of Chamber members that meet weekly, make presentations about their respective businesses, build relationships, and exchange referrals with each other. The program is strengthened by the commitment that each group will have only one business or service of its type as members. We guarantee that no member will compete for referrals within their group!

The Sterling Heights Regional Chamber of Commerce & Industry works diligently to ensure the success of every Business Resource Alliance Group member. We are always open to the comments and concerns of our BRAG members which help BRAG to continually evolve in response to their input. The result is the structure, policies, and procedures that are contained in this manual.

The very essence of the success of each Business Resource Alliance Group is the structure, policies, and procedures that have been developed and proven effective over the years. It is vital to the success of each member to follow this program as presented.

This manual, along with the new member training is designed to educate members about how BRAG works and how to get the best results from membership. The Sterling Heights Regional Chamber of Commerce & Industry and your fellow BRAG members look forward to getting to know you and your business, and watching your business grow!



## **Group Mission**

To make every effort to support and promote small businesses that comprise the backbone of the economy at large, through the combined efforts of the staff and membership of the Sterling Heights Regional Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

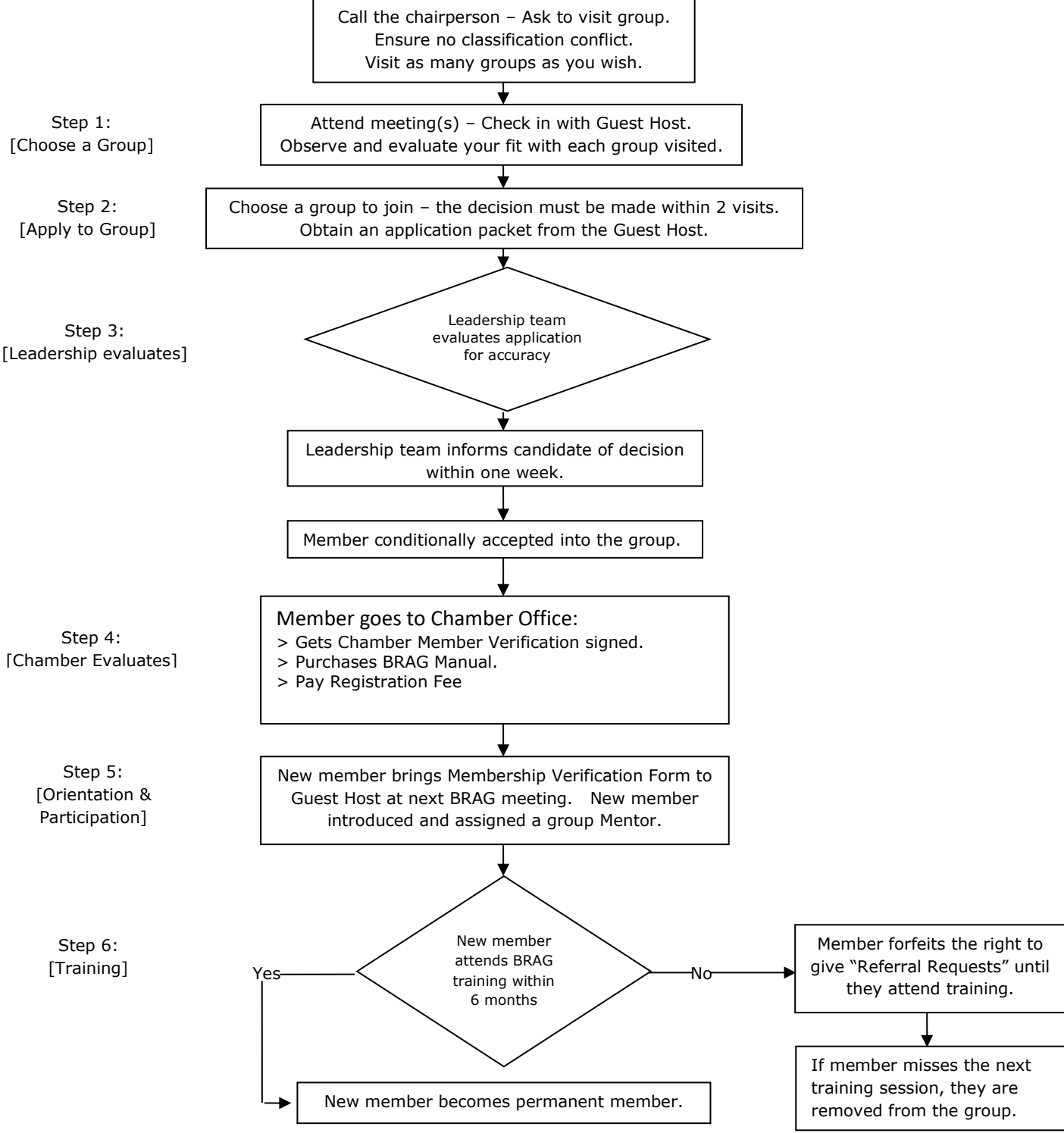
To offer Sterling Heights Regional Chamber of Commerce and Industry members a vehicle to facilitate the opportunity to increase business via active membership in the Business Resource Alliance Group relationship marketing program.

To continue to develop and grow member businesses by means of personal and professional relationship building, product and service knowledge, and the referral process.

To assist in the forming and accomplishment of short-term goals through the continued efforts of the Business Resource Alliance Groups to educate its members and improve its status as a viable and successful marketing tool for member businesses.

To support each member of the Business Resource Alliance Group in the referral process by providing the utmost in customer service.

# B.R.A.G. Member Process Chart





# Guiding Principles

## Business Ethics and Customer Service

The Business Resource Alliance Group (BRAG) is a benefit program provided by the Sterling Heights Regional Chamber of Commerce & Industry to its members. Consequently, as a BRAG member you represent not only your business, but also the Sterling Heights Regional Chamber of Commerce & Industry. Therefore, the Chamber expects that you will exhibit the highest standards of business ethics, customer service, and practices.

It is extremely important that each BRAG member maintain the highest standards of business practices when serving fellow members and their referrals. This is especially important since BRAG members share referrals from each other's client base, family and friends. BRAG members should provide better service and higher quality than they would provide to other clients or businesses, even other Chamber members.

## Customer Service and Product Quality Expectations

The Sterling Heights Regional Chamber of Commerce & Industry expects that each BRAG member demonstrate exemplary customer service and product quality.

Customer service is an absolute priority, and must be above reproach when working with the members of your group and individuals they refer to you. Each member must have the confidence that their fellow members will provide levels of service superior to what they could receive doing business outside the group.

## Ethical Conduct within BRAG

The Sterling Heights Regional Chamber of Commerce & Industry has the following guidelines for what we consider ethical conduct within BRAG. Each member will:

- Provide a positive proactive environment for Chamber Members to network in. Make every attempt to be warm, welcoming and contribute to the positive energy of the group.
- Enhance the public perception of the Chamber's principles of good business practices and support each BRAG member by providing excellent product and/or customer service. Develop trust with members, deal fairly and honestly in all business interactions, and be reliable.
- Avoid participation in disruption of the group's relationship and trust that comes of the spreading of false statements about a group member, canvassing group members against another member, or making negative statements about group members during or after meetings.

## **Product, Service or Ethics Complaints**

Occasionally, a member's business will make a mistake or a problem will develop. If you are the member that is dissatisfied with the product/service you have received, bring it to the attention of the provider of that product/service. Give them every opportunity to correct the problem.

If a member or referral is dissatisfied with the product or service they receive from you, ***do whatever it takes to make them completely satisfied.*** Research shows that a customer is 63% more likely to return to a place of business if their problem is solved quickly, than if the problem is not resolved! Take great care to resolve the problem to *their* satisfaction.

From time to time group members are not able to come to a resolution about a problem on their own. If this occurs, take the situation to the Group Leaders. They will review the complaint and attempt to help the members arrive at an acceptable solution. If the situation is not resolved at this level, the Group Leaders may refer it to the Chamber of Commerce.

Although none of these entities can force a solution on either party, they can make a determination of whether the situation violates the Customer Service, Product, or Ethical Conduct guidelines. Any member found to be violating any of these rules or guidelines can be dismissed immediately from the BRAG program. **This may or may not affect membership in the Sterling Heights Regional Chamber of Commerce & Industry.**

# **Business Resource Alliance Group Leadership**

One of the unique benefits of BRAG is that it has an organizational structure that allows it to grow and evolve, and still maintain a focus on our members. This structure provides support for members, group leaders, and the Chamber itself, so every person associated with BRAG has an opportunity to be successful. The paragraphs below outline this structure.

## **The Chamber of Commerce**

The Sterling Heights Regional Chamber of Commerce & Industry is the governing body and final decision-maker of all Business Resource Alliance Groups. The Chamber with the aid of the Core Group reviews and approves all functions, activities, policies, rules, and procedures of BRAG. They organize new groups, market, recruit new members, and provide guidance for the Business Resource Alliance Networking Groups.

## **Core Group**

Core is the collaboration of BRAG leadership with the ultimate goal of improving the BRAG experience.

The Core Group is comprised of the Chair, Co-Chair, and Guest Host from each BRAG. They meet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of each month. Should the meeting date fall on a holiday – the meeting will be moved to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the month. The Core Chair will advise members accordingly.

The term of office for the Core Group members corresponds to each leader's term of office in their respective BRAG group.

The purpose of the Core Group meeting is to:

- Provide group leadership with additional training and support.
- Discuss issues and concerns of BRAG leadership.
- Learn about other groups and their successes.
- Discuss changes in rules, policies, and the direction of BRAG to take back to their members.
- Inform group leadership about the upcoming events and functions of the Chamber of Commerce. The Core Group has a Chair to run the meetings and a Co-Chair to keep notes on the meetings. The Chair and Co-Chair are elected via a special election held each year at the January Core meeting. (See Appendix 2 for the Core election process and the duties of the Core Chair and Co-Chair positions.) Their terms will commence at the February meeting and end with the January meeting the next year.

## **Core Committees**

From time to time, Core will find it necessary to form committees to meet for the purpose of accomplishing a desired goal of the group. Each committee formed will include the current Core Chair and BRAG Administrator. Though their attendance is voluntary, their inclusion is mandatory. Each committee will have a Chair person to preside over all meetings.

## **Recruiting Committee**

Currently, the only standing committee within Core is the Recruiting Committee.

The mission of the BRAG Recruiting Committee is to be instrumental in recruiting and securing new as well as not-yet Chamber members into the BRAG networking program.

The vision of the BRAG Recruiting Committee is to promote and recruit for all BRAG groups inclusively, based on the needs of the prospects and the individual groups.

This committee is charged with centralizing BRAG recruiting activity and maintaining an active spreadsheet to track on-going recruiting efforts.

The activities of the committee include but are not limited to;

- 1 - Focusing all efforts on recruiting for all groups.
- 2 - Contacting new members listed in the Chamber's weekly publication, welcoming them to the Chamber and inviting them to visit BRAG groups.
- 3 - Attending Chamber events for the purpose of recruiting new members.
- 4 - Planning, scheduling and coordinating guest/visitor days on a regular basis.
- 5 - Utilizing the BRAG Community Facebook page to communicate with members regarding the committee's efforts to find BRAG groups for potential members.
- 6 - Communicating with the BRAG Administrator to assure a smooth working relationship with the Chamber.

## BRAG Group Leaders

The leadership of the individual BRAG groups is comprised of the Chair, the Co-Chair and the Guest Host. Each leader has defined responsibilities that they are charged with to maintain organization and stability within the group.

### Leadership Roles & Responsibilities

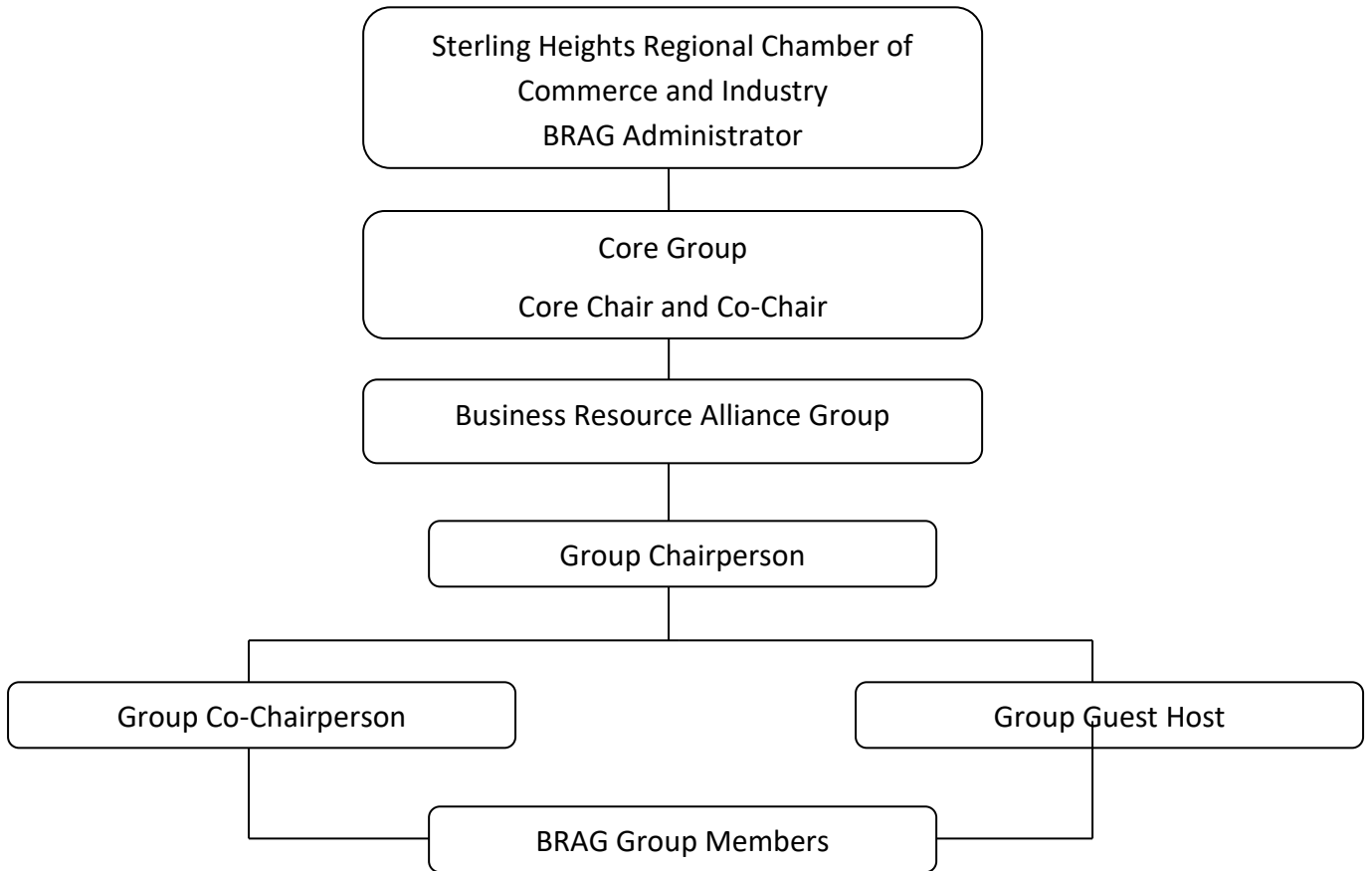
Chair	Co-Chair	Guest Host	Responsibility
X	X	X	Attend all weekly group meetings.
X	X	X	Attend 10 of 12 Core meetings.
X	X	X	Ensure that BRAG rules are followed.
X	X	X	Keep group focused and motivated
X	X	X	Maintain an enthusiastic and positive outlook.
X			Notify location representatives at least 2 weeks prior to change.
X			Manage changes in member classifications.
X			Resolve conflicts between members.
X			Ensure leadership responsibilities are performed.
X			Maintain the annual schedule of member's 10-minute profiles.
X			Begin & end the weekly meeting and mention agenda.
	X		Track attendance & punctuality on a weekly basis.
	X		Track referrals & completed actions weekly.
	X		Report tracking information to Chamber monthly.
	X		Manage Leaves of Absence requests
	X		Issue attendance /punctuality letters to members as needed.
	X		Maintain group files (card box, application and leave forms).
		X	Ensure potential new members are in good standing with Chamber.
		X	Maintain accurate membership roster and contact information.
		X	Inform Chamber of any changes in group membership.
		X	Ensure that new members attend training within 6 months.
		X	Arrive at weekly meetings 15 minutes early to greet visitors, etc.
		X	Collect business cards from guests & visitors.
		X	Communicate to guests / visitors if they may give a referral request.
		X	Introduce guests, visitors to group at beginning of meetings.
		X	Communicate upcoming events and Chamber announcements.
		X	Speak to guests after meetings, thanking them & inviting them to join.
		X	Arrange new member application, verification, training & mentoring.
		X	Meet with new members within 7 days to review rules & policies.
	X		Act as Chair in their absence.
		X	Act as Co-Chair in their absence.
X			Act as Guest Host in their absence.

## Terms of Office

Each leader serves for a period of one year, beginning January 1st and ending December 31st. There are no term limits for leadership positions. Each leader may serve for as many terms as they desire. In the event that a leader cannot fulfill their entire term of office, the Chamber of Commerce will aid in appointing a member to assume the leadership position for the remainder of the term.

# Organizational Structure

Sterling Heights Regional Chamber of Commerce & Industry  
**Business Resource Alliance Groups**



## Meeting Order Of Business Guidelines

Each BRAG meeting follows the agenda below. The Chamber developed this agenda over several years to help each member get the most from their BRAG experience. The Chamber expects each group to include all agenda items.

Prior to the meeting is the perfect opportunity to network with fellow members, pass out flyers and complete referral slips. Always try to arrive at meetings several minutes prior to facilitate networking opportunities.

### Agenda

- **Call to Order**
- **Introduction of Guests and Visitors** – Guest Host makes the introductions.
- **Referral Requests** – make every attempt to keep these requests to one minute.
- **Discussion** – New member profiles, open discussion, etc. – scheduled by Chair.
- **Referrals, Testimonials and One-on-Ones** – members discuss each from the past week.
- **Announcements** – The Chair makes announcements of Chamber functions and activities.
- **Adjournment**

It's a smart idea to arrive at meetings at least 15 minutes prior to the start of the weekly BRAG meeting. This gives members an opportunity to meet and greet guests, visitors and fellow members and begin the networking process.

After the meeting is complete, spend some time setting up one-on-ones and networking with the members of your group.

# Rules of Courtesy

The success of a relationship-marketing group depends upon the unity of the group's members. Each member within the group is, in a sense, a salesperson for the others. For this concept to work, it is important to see the others in your group as allies not as competition.

Another vital aspect of successful relationship marketing is knowledge about what the others in the group have to offer and what type of person they are. To do this you must listen and learn about them and their business. To help this process we follow some common courtesies:

1. All side conversations stop when the Chair calls the meeting to order.
2. Turn off all cell phones to avoid disrupting the meeting.
3. Pass out your handouts prior to the meeting, not during the One-Minute Commercials.
4. Listen to the other members of the group during their presentations. Learn as much as you can about their business. Use that information to produce leads for that business or service.
5. The purpose of the relationship marketing meetings is to give and receive quality referrals. Members of BRAG may not use it to recruit employees, business partners, or members of a down line (multi-level marketing).
6. If one member promotes a product or service that is similar to yours, take it to the group leaders for a determination.

**Remember:** Be as courteous and attentive to the others in your group, as you would want them to be to you.



# The Referral Request

At each meeting, you will present a "Referral Request". This is an opportunity for you to deliver a 60-second commercial about your business, product, or service. These "Requests" are the heart and soul of relationship marketing within the BRAG group. Through these "Referral Requests", the other members learn about you and your business. It is here that relationships start to develop.

Here are a few helpful points to help you in your requests.

- **Plan for your Presentation** - Choose your topic prior to the meeting. Plan a short outline about how you want to illustrate your point. (See "Referral Request Planning Form, on page 12).
- **Bring Visual Aids** - Bring your brochure, marketing pieces you have, or other material that helps illustrate what you do. This helps the other members understand your business quickly.
- **Stand when Presenting** - When you are standing it helps the other members see who you are, and most of all, to be able to hear you better.
- **Start by stating your Name** - Even though you are promoting your business, YOU will be the person getting the referrals.
- **State the name of your company** - Tell the group for whom you work. It is also appropriate to state if you are the owner, or what your position is within the company you represent.
- **Briefly tell them what your business is or does** - The company name does not always help people know what your company does, so tell them. This is the perfect point to present your **tag line**.
- *For example, "Floor Coverings Extraordinaire - the Flooring Store at your Door. We offer the time saving convenience of being able to shop and select top brand name carpeting in the comfort of your home".*
- **Tell the group specifically who/what you are requesting** - . State names of specific companies, titles, or even specific people you would like meet. By requesting specific companies, names, and titles, you give your group a clear idea of what a good referral is for you.
- **Explain why the person/company you are looking for is a good referral for you** - **What** characteristics does this person or company have that make you want to do business with them?
- **Tell the group what you offer that would be a benefit to the person or company you want to be referred to** - Outline a special service, product or program your company offers, and how it can help the organization you want to be referred to.
- **State your name and business name again.**

By following the "Who I am looking for", "Here is why I am looking for them", and "This is what I can do for them" formula, you will give an effective and informative "Referral Request". Soon you will be able to interject a catch phrase that will spice up your presentation.

**Business Resource Alliance Group  
Referral Request Planning Form**

I want to be referred to:	<i>It is important that you include specific information.</i>
Name: Title: Company/Organization:	
I want to be referred to them because:	<i>Tell your group why this is a good referral for you.</i>
This is how I can help them:	<i>Tell your group what you can do for this referral.</i>
Hand-Outs Or Other Presentation Material:	

## **The Member Profile**

Periodically, members have an opportunity to spend ten (10) minutes presenting their products and services in detail. This provides members with an opportunity to explain what they do, their best clients, and how the group can best help them.

Initially, The Member Profile should follow a specific format. The Chairperson will introduce the presenting member and then ask a series of specific questions. These questions were designed to keep the presentation concise, yet cover the major points necessary to provide the group with pertinent information about their business, product and/or service for the membership to be able to provide quality leads in the future.

Following these questions, the group will be given the opportunity to ask questions of the presenter to make sure every member has a clear understanding of what the presenter does and what type of client they seek.

Members are given the opportunity to do a Member Profile soon after they join the group. The Chair will approach them and schedule your presentation date. Existing members may also do a Member Profile presentation by requesting the opportunity with the Chair. The Chair will then schedule the Member Profile. Subsequent Member Profiles are a good opportunity to present new product lines, new promotions or other business updates to further enhance the membership's ability to provide quality referrals and leads.

### **Member Profile Questions**

- 1. How did you get started in your career and how long have you been in this field?**
- 2. Give examples of current referral sources, strategic alliances, home runs and immediate business and how you met.**
- 3. What makes you different or unique in your industry?**
- 4. What do we listen for? What do we say if we hear it? (Triggers and icebreakers).**

# Referrals

Every business or business representative joins BRAG with one purpose in mind: Improve revenues through the exchange of business referrals with fellow members. Since every person joins BRAG for the sole purpose of improving their revenues, it follows that each group must generate quality referrals for BRAG to be effective.

Generating referrals for your group members ultimately leads to generating leads for you. It takes a genuine focus on listening for opportunities as you go through your normal day. When you hear someone say, "I wish I knew someone..." or "I need to find a good..." listen intently. They are about to tell you something that could result in a referral!

Work hard to find referrals for the members of your group. Your success in BRAG depends on it!

## Definition of Referrals

Referrals should meet certain criteria:

- The referral expects your group member to call them.
- The referral is open to hearing about your group members' product or service.
- The referral specifically asks your group member to call because they have intent to purchase soon.

If your referral does not meet one or more of these criteria, do not pass the referral. Instead, spend some time qualifying the referral, or "warming them up". Then pass the referral once they meet the criteria.

The primary function of BRAG is to pass quality referral within the group. Some people feel pressured to pass referrals regardless of whether they are a qualified referral or not. Do not waste another member's time by giving a referral where there is no interest just so you will have a slip to pass during the meeting. Remember that this is about building businesses and relationships. Passing a "hollow referral" will hinder your ability to build relationships within your group.

## How long will it take?

One of the common questions the Chamber receives is "How long will it be before I can expect to receive my first lead?" Many factors influence how long this will take. The major factors are:

- How well do your fellow members understand what you do?
- Do they have confidence in your business or service?
- People with products generally receive referrals faster than people that offer services.
- Do your group members encounter the types of businesses that are good referrals for you?
- Some businesses are very familiar types to other businesses and tend to receive leads very quickly. Other businesses are more complex or highly technical. It may take time to understand how to help generate leads for these business types.

BRAG works. You may not receive referrals in the first few weeks. In fact, some businesses do not receive referrals for the first month or more. Don't jump to the conclusion that BRAG doesn't work for you until you have given it plenty of time, and plenty of hard work.

You can speed up the time it takes for you to receive a referral by investing significant amounts of time explaining and presenting your business as completely as possible to your group. This is especially important if your business is complex, or highly technical.

The time before and after your meeting are excellent times to talk with people about your company. Use this time to schedule as many one-on-one meetings as you can. You can also help people to get to know you by attending other Chamber events, since many BRAG members attend these events in addition to the BRAG meetings.

Nothing will speed the time it takes for you to receive a referral more than generating quality leads for the members of your group. Keep focused on identifying referrals for your group. Passing quality referrals gets you noticed quickly, and helps people want to help you.

### **The Exception**

There is one type of business transaction which does not qualify as a referral; a member-to-member referral to purchase the same product or service that they have purchased previously from that member. For example, you refer yourself to the chiropractor in the group. You go to the chiropractor's office and receive treatment, then make an appointment for three more visits to the chiropractor's office. This counts as one referral, not four. You may generate an additional referral, however, if you purchase a different product or service than was covered under the original referral.

## The Referral Slip

The most important portion of the weekly BRAG meeting is when the group exchanges referrals. Business Resource Alliance Groups use a form, called the "Referral Slip" to record the information about the referral you are passing.

The referral slip is an excellent way to track and evaluate the revenue you are generating from BRAG, and being aware of who is generating the most productive leads for you. There is a lead tracking form at the back of this manual. Referral slips are available at your weekly meeting.

Keep referral slips with you at all times so you can write down any lead you encounter for members of your group. These slips should provide as much information about the contact as possible so that the member receiving the referral understands whom they are calling, and why. It is also helpful to tell the group member what the referral knows about the group member's business, and if this is a "hot" referral. (See Referral Slip — "Decoded", page 17).

If you get a referral for a group member, immediately write it on a referral slip and call the group member to give them the information. You do not have to wait until the weekly meeting to pass the referral. You can pass the referral slip at the meeting as back up to your phone call, and receive credit for the referral.

Be sure that the slip includes:

1. Your name
2. The name of the person or company you are referring
3. The name of the contact you want the group member to call
4. The name of the business you want the group member to call
5. The phone number where the group member can reach the contact
6. The comments section completed with details the group member should know about the potential customer.

It's also helpful if you indicate if the lead is expecting a call and if you passed the referee's business card. Knowing if this is a strong lead or weak lead - if they're ready to buy or just looking can be helpful. The more information you can provide the better the results will be.

The area on the referral slip is admittedly small – but the information you enter can be big business for your fellow BRAG member. Just remember to be as thoughtful in preparing a referral slip as you would like to receive from another member.

# The Referral Slip — "Decoded"

The name of the person or company giving the referral.

The name of the person or company receiving the referral.

Date Referral was given.

The name of the person to be contacted.

The address and phone number of the person to be contacted.

Check the appropriate box to let the receiver know how much the referral knows about them before they

This tells the person receiving the lead, how interested the referral is in their

This area is to be used to tell something about the lead. "They're taking bids on a large construction project." Or, "they're looking for a new

This is a three-part form.  
White copy: To the person receiving the referral.

**Definition of "Hot", "Medium" and "Cool"**

**Hot:** A referral is hot if they have a need for the product or service and is ready to buy NOW! They have agreed to speak with the BRAG member about their particular need. Whenever you have a "Hot" lead – contact your fellow BRAG member immediately. Do not wait for the next meeting.

**Medium:** A referral has a need and has agreed to speak to the BRAG member. The referral may have other companies in mind – but is willing to talk to your fellow BRAG member based on your recommendation. It may be that the referral is looking to make a move in the future. If that's the case, provide the BRAG member with a favorable introduction.

**Cool:** A referral simply uses the product or service the BRAG member provides. They are willing to speak to the BRAG member, but may be happy with their current vendor. Or, the referral's need may be off in the future.

## Building Better Relationships with Members of Your Group

BRAG works because of the relationships the members build with each other. Relationships build trust, and trust helps people feel comfortable enough to pass you a referral. People generally do not make referrals to a business or a person until they know you and feel comfortable about what you do and how you do it. This may take just a few meetings, or much longer, depending on your type of business. The faster you build these relationships within your group, the faster you will receive referrals.

To achieve a greater understanding of a member and their business, try meeting with them individually away from the weekly meeting (one-on-one). A luncheon meeting, a get-together after work, or calling on them at their place of business may help you develop a personal relationship that will give you a greater understanding of that member's business. You also gain a more in-depth knowledge of its workings and a greater insight into that member. By knowing more about each other, you can give better leads and referrals and in return, receive better leads and referrals.

Once you have obtained knowledge and developed confidence in the members of your group, work diligently to give referrals and testimonials to them. Nothing fosters a good relationship more than saying or doing positive things for the other members. You can then expect the same in return from the other members. This process is the very building block fostering the groups' dynamic, thus creating a desirable atmosphere that could lead to the expansion of your group membership. More members lead to more referrals and the possibility of more business alliances. More business is BRAG's ultimate goal.

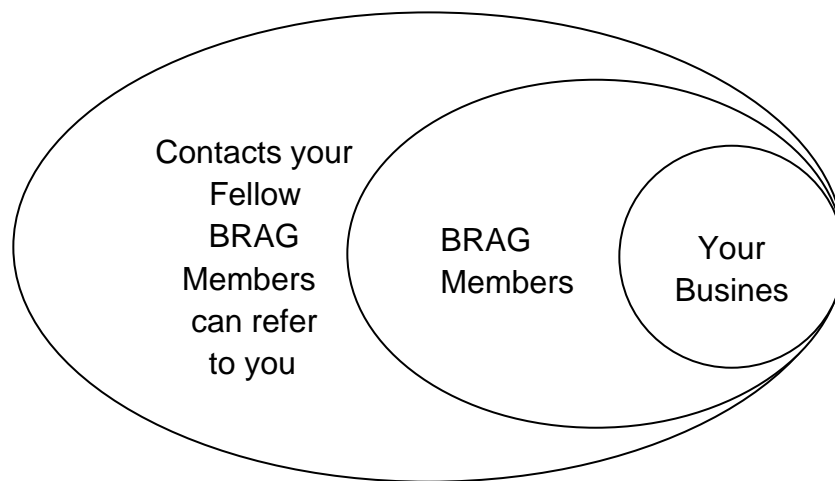
### Hints for building relationships:

- Call *every* referral you receive. Keep the person who gave you the referral apprised of the progress and the outcome.
- Go beyond the call of duty when doing business with any referral you receive. Help develop a culture within your group that every referral customer will receive the best product or service you are able to offer.
- Give sincere testimonials for members of your group.
- Give qualified quality referrals. Nothing is as exciting as receiving a referral to someone that is expecting your call, and has a prequalified interest in your product or service.



## Expanding your Network

As you get to know the members of your BRAG, remember what relationship marketing is all about: Expanding the number of individuals, businesses or services that will do business with you. Certainly, there are members of your BRAG that will do business with you directly. The true power of relationship marketing, however, is getting to know, and doing business with, BRAG members *as well as businesses* that your fellow BRAG members can introduce to you. Washington Researchers, a Washington D.C firm that specializes in obtaining government research for corporate clients, states that within seven phone calls, they can get virtually any information you want from the government. Many experienced relationship marketers claim they can reach anyone in the world with no more than six interactions. Maybe your fellow BRAG members can introduce you to your perfect client (or perhaps you can introduce them to *their* perfect client).



**Figure 1** - Use BRAG to expand your network of contacts.  
Do business with BRAG members, but research the connections they have that can affect your business.

Businesses that are successful at relationship marketing are constantly working to identify companies or individuals they want to meet. Once they do that, they search for people they know that can introduce them to these companies.

Include this process in your Referral Requests. Make a list of people or companies you would like to meet. Use this list as a basis for your Referral Request each week. In this manner, you will get referrals to organizations outside your group, and constantly expand the network of people you know and can do close business. This is one of the critical processes of being an effective networker.

# Testimonials

An important part of building relationships among members of the group is to let your group know when a member has done something good for you or somebody you know. In BRAG, this is accomplished by giving testimonials about other members of the group.

A testimonial is the process of standing up and saying something complimentary about another member of the group. One type of testimonial may be a positive experience you or your referral had with a member of the group, or their staff.

You could report that the quality of work or service that you received was excellent, or simply report that they gave you a good referral. Share with the group what made the referral a good one. If your referral was very pleased with the product or service they received, share your referral's experience with the group by praising the member involved.

When you first join your group, you may not have many referrals to pass. You can compensate for this by getting to know your group members better through one-on-ones. This is another type of testimonial. You can then give testimonials about your experience with the group member and what you learned about them during the one-on-one.

Everyone likes to be acknowledged for doing a good job. By giving a testimonial, you are saying to the group, "I think this organization has a great product" or "this company goes over the top to do a good job". Nothing builds a networking relationship better than hearing compliments about their business from fellow group members in front of the entire group.

Testimonials also have the effect of providing additional information about a members business to the group. There may be a part of their business that they take for granted, but you found interesting. An equally valuable benefit of testimonials is that it helps the group gain confidence in the products and services of that member.

As you get to know your fellow members, you will learn many positive things that others in the group should know. "BRAG about your fellow members and they will "BRAG" about you! Oh, and one more thing – you should do this both inside and outside of the group. You can bet they'll be doing that for you!

## **Remember!**

Relationships are precarious things. You can spend months or years building the strongest relationships. And then, cause harm or hurt them irreparably with one reckless comment. For this reason, we strongly urge you to use testimonials to make only positive comments. If you have any concerns or anything negative to say about another group member, you should confront that person privately or take the matter to your group leaders. Never risk the trust you've built. There are better ways to deal with problems. Explore those avenues first.

## **The Business Card Box**

The business card box is an indexed box that contains the business cards of all the members of the group. The purpose of the box is for each member to take the cards of their fellow members. When you encounter a potential referral for a member, you are able to give the referral the member's business card. This allows the referral to call your fellow member at their earliest convenience.

It is recommended that you take at least three of each of your fellow group member's cards to have on hand for prospective referrals. Also, be sure that you have plenty of your business cards in the box.

It is helpful to have a method of carrying the business cards of the members of your group. It is most effective if you keep business cards and holder with you at all times.

# The One-on-One

Your entire success within BRAG hinges on your ability to get to know and form meaningful relationships with the members of your group. One of the best ways you can build these relationships is by meeting with members outside the group meeting. We call this a One-on-One. Two or more members meet at their place of business, or other mutually agreed on location for the express purpose of getting to know each other on a personal as well as professional level. Some areas you may want to discuss are:

- **Personal information.** Share your educational background, your family life, your hobbies – anything that will help the other member know you and feel comfortable with you.
- **Professional background.** Jobs and/or education that you may have had or other means by which you gained the experience necessary to have started or become part of a successful business.
- **Understanding the business.** What products or services do you offer? What sets your business apart from your competitors, etc.?
- **Unique Selling Points.** Explain what makes you unique or different from your competition.
- **Target markets.** What are the types of companies/customers each of you trying to meet? Why?
- **Alliances.** What is it that you can work on together to drive customers to your respective businesses. How can each of your businesses complement each other or work together to appear as one larger business?

## Schedule them often

One-on-Ones could be the backbone of your BRAG efforts. You should plan on having a minimum of one each week. Of course, it is difficult to maintain this schedule every week, but you will find that the more One-on-Ones you have, the better you will know your colleagues, which will put you in a better position to both give and receive referrals and develop new and stronger alliances.

## Repeat as needed

It will take you several weeks, perhaps months, to have One-on-Ones with all of the members of your group. There are some members, however, that you may want to meet with on a somewhat regular basis. Some members are better strategic alliances with your business so you'll need to keep abreast of progress, changes or improvements to either business.

## Take Notes – Keep Records

It is essential that you take notes during the One-on-One. You aren't going to remember every detail of the meetings and you'll want to keep records to refer back to in the course of doing business, preparing referrals, etc.

## BRAG One-on-One Worksheet

Member Name: \_\_\_\_\_

One-on-One Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Professional Background

How and why did they get into their industry?

How long have they been in their industry?

How did they acquire their position?

Professional accomplishments.

Professional associations.

---

### How Can I Help?

Strategic alliances.

Potential referrals.

Follow up action plan.

---

### Their Business

What products/services do they offer?

Target market / Ideal clients.

Their triggers.

Unique selling Points.

What businesses would be good alliances?

---

### Personal Information

Spouse.

Children.

Pets.

Schooling.

Hobbies.

Personal accomplishments.

Other.

# **Policies and Procedures**

## **Business Classification Exclusivity**

BRAG offers its members exclusive representation for their products or services within a group. We do everything possible to ensure that there will be no competition of products or services.

Should a conflict over classification exclusivity arise within a group, the group's leadership has guidelines to resolve the issue.

## **Classification Exclusivity Guidelines**

Each member states on their original BRAG application what products and/or services they will promote within the group. These are the products or services that the member delivers personally, regardless of which other products or services their company offers. The member can only promote those products and services that are listed on their membership application.

The following guidelines are used in an attempt to maintain classification exclusivity without allowing members to claim that they do "everything", which needlessly limits membership.

1. There will only be one person representing a particular product or service in a group. This policy applies not only to the weekly meetings, but also to one-on-ones and other BRAG activities. There shall be no attempt to promote other products or services to group members in any form or manner.
2. A business may have no more than one person in a group, with the following exceptions:
  - a. Different divisions of the same business may each have one representative in the same group. Each of these divisions must offer unique products or services from the others.
  - b. A person from the same business may substitute for the regular member when the regular member is unable to attend the weekly meeting.
3. A member of the group may only represent the product or service that they personally deliver, regardless of whether the company has other products or services available. This policy exists so that members do not claim overly broad classifications, which is harmful to the group.
4. A business or service may have members of their organization in one other group, providing there is no existing business or service of the same type in that group.
5. The Group Leaders are the individuals that determine if a classification conflict exists. In the event that a conflict arises, they will attempt to work with both members to resolve it. If the conflict cannot be resolved in this manner, the Group Leaders will make the decision that they believe to be fair to both members, and in the best interest of the group.

## Who owns the membership?

Participation in the relationship marketing program, The Business Resource Alliance Group (BRAG), requires being a member in good standing of the Sterling Heights Regional Chamber of Commerce & Industry. Occasionally, individuals participating in BRAG decide to leave the employment or affiliation of the company they are representing within their group. In such instances, the following policy is applied to help the Chamber determine whether the company or the individual has the right to refill that classification in the group after the individual leaves the company.

1. If a company holds the Chamber membership, the participant is attending on behalf of the company. If the participant leaves the company for any reason, that person loses the right to maintain their position in BRAG. The company has the right to refill that position with another individual, provided that they do so within three weeks from the date last attended by their former representative. If the company fails to send a replacement within that time, the classification in that group is then open. If the classification opens, it may be refilled by the participant, assuming they, or the company they have joined is a member in good standing of the Chamber. The Chamber and Group Leaders are under no obligation to notify the company when the classification opens, or when it is filled.

It is the responsibility of the company to notify the Chamber and/or the BRAG group if there is a change in their representation.

2. If the participant holds their own membership in the Sterling Heights Regional Chamber of Commerce & Industry at the time they join BRAG, they own the right to participate in BRAG regardless of the company they work for, as long as there is no change in classification.
3. If both the participant and company are members of the Chamber, an agreement must be reached between the two parties about who will retain the rights to the classification in the event the participant leaves the company. This agreement must be made prior to acceptance in the group. If the participant leaves the group, the agreement shall guide the decision about which party retains the right to the classification.

To ensure there are no conflicts regarding membership in the event that a person should leave their company, we require each member to complete the Group Membership Authorization Form contained at the back of this manual. No person shall become a member of a BRAG group without completing this form.

## **Changing Business Classification**

If a business changes the products or services that they offer, or add new products or services, they may promote those if no other active member within the group promotes a similar product or service and the leadership team approves the change.

### **ALL three criteria must be met before the member may begin to promote their new products or services.**

The leadership team will use the following criteria to determine whether the classification should be allowed or not. The group leaders will:

1. Determine if the change will cause a classification conflict within the group.
2. Determine if the individual personally delivers the products/services.
3. Determine the intent of the change. It is possible that the classification change was requested in an effort to block out a category that a potential new member could occupy. In such cases the request could be denied.
4. Decide whether granting the change will adversely affect the potential growth of the group.

If the above conditions are met, the group leaders will approve the change and inform the member that they may begin promoting the new product or service.

If a change of classification is denied, the affected member may feel that their effectiveness in the group will be negatively impacted. In such cases, the member may contact the Chamber of Commerce about the possibility of transferring to another group.

## **Change of Classification: Same Company - New Member**

There are occasions where a member leaves a company, is promoted or terminated and no longer able to attend BRAG meetings. In this case, the business may replace the current member with another representative.

In these cases, a new *Application for BRAG™ Participation And Business Classification Declaration* must be completed by the incoming member. A replacement member may be assigned a maximum of once per calendar year.

There are two circumstances that could circumvent the once annual replacement limit.

1. If the member as an employee of the company they represent is terminated by their employer.
2. The member is promoted and can no longer attend BRAG meetings.

Under these two circumstances, the Company is allowed one additional replacement for that calendar year for a maximum of 3 replacements.



## Visitors

Within BRAG, the term "visitor" refers to an individual, business or service that currently belongs to a Business Resource Alliance Group, but wishes to visit another group. The following guidelines apply to Visitors:

- Members may visit another group at any time, provided they do not visit the same group more than one time per month.
- Visiting members register with the group's Guest Host 10 minutes prior to the start of the meeting.
- The Guest Host introduces visitors' name, business name, and identifies the group they belong to so there is no misunderstanding about classifications among guests and members.
- Visitors may participate in the Referral Requests at the discretion of BRAG leadership. This is generally acceptable if there is no classification conflict.
- Visitors are welcome to pass referrals, get referrals and give testimonials about group members.

## Guests

The following guidelines apply to Guests:

The term "guest" refers to any individual that is attending a BRAG meeting, but has not joined a BRAG group.

- Both Chamber members and non-members are encouraged to attend BRAG meetings for the purpose of evaluating the program, and determining if they would like to join a group.
- Guests must notify any of the group leaders that they will be attending at least 24-hours in advance of the meeting.
- Guests are asked to arrive at the meeting at least 10 minutes early to meet with the Guest Host.
- The Guest Host will introduce guests by name and business name at the beginning of the meeting.
- Guests may not participate in the Referral Requests.
- Guests may pass referrals and give testimonials about group members.
- Guests may attend up to two meetings of any BRAG, without joining the group. They may not attend the third meeting unless they decide to join the group.

## **Attendance**

Attendance at the weekly meeting is mandatory. BRAG is about building business relationships with your fellow members. It is impossible to build meaningful referral networks if you are not present. In fact, members of your group may not refer business to you if they cannot depend on seeing you at the meeting.

We make attendance mandatory for another important reason. Experience has shown that every group that struggles has an attendance problem. Members severely compromise the success of their group when they are not committed to attending the weekly meetings and giving/receiving referrals. In fact, groups have disbanded simply because of attendance related problems.

The Chamber recognizes that you have a business to run or employment obligations that on occasion may prevent you from attending your meeting. This policy is in place to provide for these normal business occurrences, and provide us with a way to remove individuals or businesses that are not able to make the meetings regularly.

## **Absences**

You are allowed a maximum of 6 absences in a calendar year. If you exceed this number, you will be removed from the group. A member is expected to show commitment to the group by calling the group leaders, and explaining the reason they are not able to attend a meeting. An explanation of why you are absent helps preserve your relationship in the group.

## **Events That Do Not Count as Absences**

The Chamber has many programs and events that are of benefit to all members, including those participating in BRAG. We want to make all of these programs available to all members without penalty. For this reason, no absence will be charged to a BRAG member that participates in the following:

1. Chamber Board or Ambassadors Meetings. Absences related to attending a monthly Board or Ambassadors meeting for any Chamber of Commerce.
2. Attending another BRAG group meeting. You may attend another BRAG meeting that meets at the same day and time as your meeting. You may however, only miss one of your group's meetings per quarter. Regardless of the meeting day, you may only attend a different BRAG meeting once per month.
3. Individual Participation in Sterling Heights Regional Chamber Events. A member will not be counted as absent providing both of the following conditions are met.
  - A. The Chamber event occurs on the same day and time as the BRAG meeting.
  - B. The Chamber office can verify the group member's attendance at the Chamber event.

## **Group Participation in Sterling Heights Regional Chamber Events**

The Leaders of the group may suspend their weekly meeting if more than 50% of their group has registered for a particular event that occurs during the day/time that your group meets, and the leaders have permission to do so from the Chamber. In the event that a meeting is suspended for this reason, every group member must attend the Chamber event to be counted as present. If a member fails to attend the Chamber event, they will be counted as absent per regular attendance policies.

## **Mandatory Company Meetings / Trade Shows**

From time to time, a member's company may schedule a mandatory monthly meeting on the same day and time that the BRAG group meets. A group member may request not to be charged an absence from that particular BRAG meeting so they may attend their company's meeting

Similarly, there may be scheduled trade shows whereby you or your company derives considerable business by participation.

. The absence will not be charged if the request meets all of the following conditions:

- The member has made every effort to make other arrangements with their company to be excused or to reschedule their company's requirements.
- They are unable to get a substitute for their BRAG meeting.
- It does not exceed one (1) meeting per calendar month.
- There is no other BRAG group they can transfer to because there is no open position for their classification.
- They have been a long standing member of their BRAG group and their company, and the mandatory monthly meeting is added or changed after they have joined the group.
- This meeting or trade show requirement can be substantiated to the satisfaction of the group's leaders and the Chamber.

If all of the above conditions are met, this special absence is not counted as part of the member's absences.

This policy cannot be used by prospective new members that have an existing conflict at the time they want to join the group. In such cases, the perspective member must join another group that does not conflict with their monthly meeting.

The intent of this exception is to help the committed group members to continue to be a part of the BRAG program while meeting the expectations of their company. As we have stated elsewhere, however, it is extremely important that each group member makes every effort to attend their weekly meetings — including those times where the monthly company meeting may be cancelled.

## **Holidays**

There are certain times during the year in which your BRAG group will not meet.

The weeks of:

Memorial Day, Labor Day, the Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, Christmas Day\* and New Year's Day\*

\*Should Christmas Day and New Year's Day fall on a weekend – there may be a need for Core or the Chamber to make a further determination.

## **Cancellation of meeting due to inclement weather**

On occasion, winter weather and school snow days make it difficult for members to attend their meeting. For this reason, your group will not meet on the days that the public school system where your group meets is closed due to inclement weather. For example, if your group meets in a location that is in the Chippewa Valley school district, then your group will not meet when the Chippewa Valley schools close due to inclement weather. If every other school district remains open, and Chippewa Valley is the only district is closed, then only the groups in the Chippewa Valley district will not meet — all other groups will meet as usual.

Check with your group leaders if you are unsure in which district your group meets.

Group leaders have the option (at their discretion) of suspending the "Punctuality" policy for meetings in which inclement weather may cause members to arrive at the meeting past the starting time.

## **Special meetings of all BRAG Groups**

Occasionally, the Chamber may call a special meeting of all the groups and their members. These special meetings may occur on a different day than the groups regularly scheduled meeting day, time, or location. The Chamber reserves the right to have the entire group attend the special meeting instead of their regularly scheduled one. The attendance policy for all members applies to these special meetings, i.e. — if a member does not attend the special meeting, they will be charged with an absence.

## Attendance/Punctuality record belongs to the Member

On occasion members change groups, classifications, or leave the company they are working for.

In such instances, the following policies apply to the attendance record for the member and/or their replacement.

1. If a member is permitted to change groups, their attendance record goes with them.
2. If a member leaves a group, and the company who owns the membership replaces that member, the new representative of the company starts with a clean attendance record. (See “Exception”)
3. Conversely, should a member who previously left the group returns, their attendance record bridges from the point they left. (see Exit Form – page 42)

## Exception

If a member is removed due to *attendance violations*, their *BRAG membership* is forfeited and the classification is opened. In this case, the seat may not be reassigned to a different representative.

## Attendance Violations

Once a member reaches six (6) absences, they will receive a letter from BRAG leadership advising them of their absences and inform them that another absence or tardiness during the calendar year will cause their removal from their group. If another absence or tardiness does occur, leadership will send a second letter advising the member that they have been removed from the group, and their classification open.

If the removed member is representing a company that actually owns the seat, it is the responsibility of the removed member to inform that company they have been removed from BRAG. Neither BRAG nor the Chamber is responsible for informing the member’s company of such action.

Members that are removed from a BRAG group may not re-join a group for six months, and only then upon receiving approval from the Chamber of Commerce. ***Removal from BRAG in no way affects your membership in the Sterling Heights Regional Chamber of Commerce and Industry.***

## Substitutes

Substitutes for members that cannot attend a meeting are allowed and encouraged. A member is not considered absent if they have a substitute.

A substitute can be any individual that you feel can adequately and professionally represent your business, with the following suggestions and restrictions:

It is highly suggested that the substitute be employed by the member's company, or at a minimum be someone in the same field as the member.

1. They may not be a member of your BRAG.
2. If your substitute is a member of BRAG, they may give your Referral Request, and may give one for their own company or business – at the discretion of the group's leadership.
3. It is in the best interest of non-BRAG members who wish to participate, to contact the BRAG Director to be placed on the current substitute list. This list is provided to all members via the website, should the need arise to go outside the groups for a substitute.
4. They may not be "permanent substitute". If your substitute is going to represent you on a regular basis, you should consider making them the permanent member of your group.
5. Use of a substitute is limited to 6 times per year. This technically allows a member to be absent a total of 12 times per calendar year.
6. If a person substitutes more than five (5) times, they are required to attend the next scheduled member training. Failure to do so results in the loss of the right to present a Referral Request.

## Punctuality

Punctuality is mandatory. A member is considered late for the meeting if they arrive after the chairperson calls the meeting to order.

Your tardiness could hinder the relationship building process. It may reduce the number of referrals you receive, cause you to miss a member's Referral Request, Member Profile, or the opportunity to make your own presentation.

Members that are late to the meeting are not able to give their Referral Request for that meeting.

In addition, members will receive one absence for every 3 tardies that are charged to them. These absences are no different than if you didn't show up for a meeting at all. They are counted toward your total allowed absences of six on the BRAG records.

As an example, if you miss five meetings and are late three times, you will have reached the maximum of six absences.

If you are tardy 18 times, you have reached the maximum allowed absences. One additional absence **or** tardy will remove you from the group. Any combination of absences and tardies that puts the member at the maximum of 6 absences means that the next absence **or** tardy will remove the member from the group.

## **Mentoring Program**

Each member should be assigned a mentor to assist them in assimilating to the BRAG meeting format. The group's guest host will assign a volunteer mentor to assist the new member through the different portions of the meeting and paperwork. This is of particular value when the new member has not taken New Member Training prior to attending regular meetings. (See BRAG Mentor Program - Appendix 1)

## **New Member Training**

Another feature that differentiates BRAG from other relationship marketing opportunities is its training. Every BRAG member must complete a new member training program within six (6) months after joining a group. This training teaches members how to present a memorable Referral Request and an effective Ten-Minute Presentation. Overall, it teaches how to make BRAG the most effective for your business.

If a member does not complete the training within the specified six months, they may not give their Referral Request or ten-minute presentations. These members must attend the weekly meeting, however, to keep their classification. The member may resume giving their Referral Requests once they have completed the required training. The training programs are scheduled quarterly. If the member does not attend a training program within nine months of joining BRAG, they will be removed from the group.

## **Resignation from a Group**

If a member of a group voluntarily withdraws from the group due to scheduling problems, they may apply to join another group that fits their schedule at any time.

## **Removal from a Group**

If a member is removed from a group for any reason, they may not apply to join another group for six (6) months after termination from the original group. Additionally, the member must receive permission from the Chamber before applying to a group at any point after they are removed.

## **Re-Admission to Group**

If you voluntarily leave BRAG for any reason, you may rejoin under the following circumstances:

- a. Your classification is available.
- b. You left in good standing, and currently meet all requirements to be a BRAG member.
- c. Complete the Membership Application and Membership Verification Form.
- d. If you have been gone from BRAG less than one year, you may give your Referral Request immediately. If you attended the New Member Training when you were a member previously, you will not need to do so again. If you have been gone from BRAG more than one year, you must join as if you have never been a member previously, including New Member Training within six months of rejoining.

## **Non-permissible Activities for BRAG Meetings**

To ensure that the original intent of BRAG stays intact, all groups will follow the *Meeting Order of Business Guidelines* at all times. No activity other than that which fulfills the purpose of BRAG can occur at a BRAG meeting. Group members must conduct all other activities, such as solicitations, fundraisers, and political canvassing, after the meeting, and only then with the voluntary participation of the members. The Sterling Heights Regional Chamber of Commerce & Industry reserves the right to veto any activity that does not fall within the purpose of BRAG.

Examples of activities which are not permissible in BRAG:

- Using the one-minute commercial to recruit for employees.
- Soliciting people to become members in a multilevel marketing organization. Specifically, using BRAG to build ones down line.
- Soliciting members of BRAG to join networking programs not affiliated with the Sterling Heights Regional Chamber of Commerce & Industry.

## **Chamber / BRAG Policy for Promoting Fundraisers or Charitable Events**

The Chamber and BRAG policy for dealing with fundraising and/or procuring donations:

1. At no time is any group or individual allowed to organize or hold a fundraising event using the name of BRAG or the Chamber.
2. If a member or members within a group wish to announce or conduct a fundraiser or fund raising event, sell tickets, or solicit donations, they must clear it with the group's leaders before making the announcement. Announcements of this type can only be done after the close of the meeting's regular agenda.
3. Member participation in any fundraiser is completely voluntary.

At no time should any member of BRAG be made to feel obligated, expected, or required to donate or participate in any fundraising event promoted by fellow members.

Furthermore, at no time should fundraising activities be done in a manner that makes a member feel that their lack of participation will hurt their reputation or make them seem isolated from the group.

This policy enables our members to show their support of other members and events and allow them to choose which activities they wish to support without any repercussions (real or perceived).

## **Multiple Relationship Marketing Memberships**

Members of the Business Alliance Resource Group may belong to networking groups other than BRAG.

Members of BRAG may also be a member of a relationship marketing group within another Chamber, provided their business or service is a member of both Chambers. Such business or service is entitled to all benefits that our membership has to offer without restrictions.



## **Businesses having more than one Representative in BRAG**

Businesses may have two representatives participate in the BRAG program. While the Chamber does restrict participation of an individual to only one BRAG group, member businesses may have a second representative participate in another group. In many cases, these representatives are commission sales people or independent contractors with their own client base separate from others in the parent company. This makes them no different from another member that owns his own business. Under no circumstances, however, may member businesses have more than two representatives in the BRAG program under a single Chamber membership.

## **Individuals Owning More than One Business**

If a member owns more than one business, that member must choose which business they will represent in their BRAG. A member may not promote two businesses within the same group. Members may designate a representative to promote the second business in another group.

Neither representative may mention, in any way, the other business in the weekly meeting or during one-on-ones.

## **Disputes and Conflicts**

In the normal course of events, conflicts between members are bound to arise. There are four (4) steps that members may take when dealing with differences of opinion:

1. Try to resolve your differences on your own either before or after the meeting.
2. If you and the member in conflict come to an impasse on the issue, take it before the Chair, Co-Chair, and Guest Host for a determination.
3. If the group leaders are not able to resolve the situation, they may refer it to the Chamber of Commerce.
4. If the group leaders make a determination you feel is unfair, you may appeal the decision to the Sterling Heights Regional Chamber of Commerce & Industry.

## **Use of BRAG Materials in other Networking Organizations**

To protect the integrity of BRAG, The Sterling Heights Regional Chamber of Commerce & Industry forbids the use of any BRAG manuals, forms, or support materials in any other networking organization, without the express written permission of the Sterling Heights Regional Chamber of Commerce & Industry. This includes any BRAG materials used as guidelines for forming a networking group or organization, materials used for training purposes and support materials handed out at BRAG meetings and / or functions.

BRAG is an integral part of the Sterling Heights Regional Chamber of Commerce & Industry. Violation of this policy will cause irreparable harm to the Sterling Heights Chamber of Commerce. As such, the Chamber will seek any remedies available by law against any party violating this policy.

## **Leave of Absence**

Members may occasionally encounter situations that prevent them from attending their weekly meeting for a prolonged period. Group Leaders may grant a Leave of Absence to a member if extreme circumstances, such as prolonged, unavoidable work related commitments exist. A Leave of Absence can be for a minimum of four consecutive weeks, but not more than eight consecutive weeks.

### **Applying for Leave of Absence**

Any member that wants to request a leave of absence must complete a "Request for Leave of Absence Form" (see page 41), and submit it to the group leadership.

A leave of absence is not in effect until the leadership team evaluates the circumstances and approves the application. If a member chooses to take a leave of absence without leadership approval, their classification becomes open immediately as they will be removed from the group.

### **Returning from Leave of Absence**

Members are expected to return from their leave of absence on the meeting date identified on the Request for Leave of Absence form. Group leaders are not required to communicate with group members that are on a leave of absence. This responsibility rests with the member on leave.

Members on leave do not need to do anything to return from their leave if they return on the date identified on the Request for Leave of Absence form. If the member wishes to return sooner than the date identified, they should simply call one of the group leaders and indicate they are ready to return to the group.

### **Members That Do Not Return From Leave**

As outlined on the Request for Leave of Absence form, it is the member's responsibility to communicate their status to the group leaders during their leave. If a member does not return on or before the date outlined on the leave of absence form, they have authorized leadership to open their classification and remove them from the group.

### **Extending a Leave of Absence**

A Leave of Absence cannot extend beyond eight weeks. If the member originally requested a shorter leave, they may extend their leave to eight weeks by notifying the group leaders, and resubmitting the Request for Leave of Absence form indicating the date they will be returning.

### **Multiple Leaves of Absence**

Members are allowed one Leave of Absence per calendar year. If circumstances require a second Leave of Absence within the same calendar year, the member must leave the group, and rejoin when they are able to, if their classification is available.

There may be extenuating circumstances that necessitate a member take multiple leaves of absence. Such situations as medical necessity, extreme personal situations, etc. may arise. If there is a true need for the allowance of multiple leaves – leadership should weigh the circumstances and decide whether the leaves should be allowed.

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## Business Resource Alliance Group Forms

Below are additional forms that may be helpful during the course of your BRAG membership. These forms may be copied for official BRAG business.

These forms include:

1. Lead Referral Given Form.
2. Lead Referral Received Form.
3. Leave of Absence Form
4. Exit Form.
5. Exit Interview Form.







## Business Resource Alliance Group Request for Leave of Absence

Member's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Leave Begins: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Leave Ends: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Returning: \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for Request: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I am requesting a leave of absence from my BRAG group for the reasons stated above. I understand that our group leadership must approve this leave of absence and they only approve a LOA for unavoidable business or personal concerns. BRAG attendance rules apply if I miss meetings without an approved Leave of Absence.

I understand that the leave is for a minimum of four and a maximum of eight weeks, and that the group leaders will protect my classification within the group during this time. The leadership will not allow any person or company to join our group or promote a product or service in my classification while I am on an authorized Leave of Absence.

I assume complete responsibility for communicating my status to the group leaders during my leave of absence. I realize the group leaders will open my classification and terminate my membership if I do not return to the group by the date stated above. I authorize the group leaders to fill my classification with another company after this date with or without prior notice to me.

\_\_\_\_\_

Member's Signature

Date

Approved

Denied

Leadership Signature:



# Business Resource Alliance Group Exit Form

Member's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Group Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Member Left Group: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Absences at time of Exit: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Tardies at time of Exit: \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for Leaving: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Leadership Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please forward a copy of this form to the office of the BRAG Administrator.





## Business Resource Alliance Group Exit Interview

Member's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_

What was your primary reason for leaving BRAG? \_\_\_\_\_

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What did you like most about BRAG? \_\_\_\_\_

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What did you like least about BRAG? \_\_\_\_\_

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What could BRAG have done to make your experience more rewarding? \_\_\_\_\_

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Please forward a copy of this form to the office of the BRAG Administrator.

## **Appendix 1**

### **BRAG Mentor Program**

Each new BRAG member will be assigned a mentor from within the group, in most cases, prior to BRAG training, who will provide them the basics necessary to become an effective and successful member. It is advised that mentor and mentee launch their relationship with the mentee's first 1-on-1. Be sure to welcome them to the BRAG Community.

#### **Purpose:**

The sole purpose of the group is to help each other's businesses grow. This is accomplished with BRAG's unique brand of relationship marketing. We succeed together by creating strong relationships among members through meeting interaction and networking. It is most important to go overboard to welcome new and potential members to make them feel as part of the group right from the start.

#### **Attendance:**

Explain the requirements for attendance and the realities of why it is in everyone's best interest to be present (Page 29 BRAG Manual). Introduce them the availability of substitutes and how to effectively use them in their absence (Page 33 BRAG Manual). Introduce the idea that not only is it important to be punctual – but the most effective members are those who come early and participate in pre-meeting networking. This is especially beneficial with attending guests and visitors at a meeting.

#### **The Meeting:**

The BRAG meeting is basically comprised of 3 components:

1. The Referral Request.
2. Discussion. (The Member Profile)
3. Testimonials

1. The heart of the BRAG meeting is the Referral Request. In fact, your success within BRAG depends on your ability to present yourself and your expertise in the business you represent within a one-minute format. (See pages 12 and 13 of the BRAG Member's Manual for full details on Referral Requests.) It is extremely important that you come to the meeting totally prepared to present your referral request. Parking lot preparation never works. The other members will see right through this practice.

Often times, new BRAG members feel some apprehension at their first few meetings due to the fact they must make an effective Referral Request to a room full of seasoned and experienced members.

So let's outline the Referral Request:

- A. Introduction – Greet your group with a smile, and tell them your name, your company name – and if you have one – a tagline for your business.
- B. The Ask – Tell the group who you are looking for to do business.
  - If you operate business to business, ask for specific names when you can. Request a warm introduction to the contact.
  - If you operate business to consumer, ask for a specific demographic.

- Include what is in it for them as the customer and why you are uniquely qualified to meet their need.  
“My name is” (your name) and I am with (company name), I'd like to be introduced to (name, with company name) because ...”
- State in detail, your unique selling points.

Practice and maintain a *one-minute* referral request. There needs to be time for all members to present their requests.

Be sure to be a good listener when other members present their requests. If you aren't sure what they are asking for – be prepared to ask for clarification.

2. Discussion – This portion of the meeting may include New Member Profiles or open discussion as scheduled by the Chair. (See page 14 of the BRAG Member's Manual for further details on New Member Profiles.) You also may consider volunteering to make a presentation about your goods, services or what may be new and exciting in your business.
3. Testimonials – This is the part of the meeting where members acknowledge passed referrals (especially closed referrals) and give testimonials about their fellow members and their performance relating to referrals. A brief discussion of 1-on-1s is also appropriate in regards to what may have been learned during one of these sessions. (See pages 23 and 24 of the BRAG Member's Manual for full details on the 1-on-1.) This is also a good part of the meeting to thank guests and visitors for attending your group's meeting.

Be sure that new members understand what a 1-on-1 is exactly. Stress how this is a great relationship building tool by learning more about the individual members, what they do and what triggers to listen for to refer them in the future. It's the perfect time to discuss possible alliances as well. There is a BRAG 1-on1 worksheet on page 24 of the BRAG Manual.

New members need to be aware that they are able to visit other groups as well. (Page 28 of the BRAG Manual) This practice is encouraged and offers the opportunity to spread your business awareness to other groups where there is no conflict of membership category.

The mentor should help clarify any questions the new member may have about the different components of the meeting as well as make recommendations as to how you might improve your presentations, etc. New members should feel free to ask questions of their mentor.

Encourage the new member to participate in other Chamber events to further their relationship marketing. The After 5 and Business and Breakfast events are particularly designed to provide a broader base for additional networking and relationship building.

Advise new members to be an ambassador for their group and the Chamber at all times. Encourage them to help their group grow for everyone's benefit. This is not just the responsibility of leadership.

If you provide this information to the new member and encourage them to participate accordingly – they can't help but come out of the gate swinging and reap the benefits that BRAG has provided for all our businesses.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Core Leadership Election Process**

1. In the month of October, a BRAG leader list will be distributed to all Core members and they are asked to either nominate a member or volunteer for the BRAG Core Chair and Co-Chair positions.
2. The volunteer or nominee must be a current BRAG leader and plan to continue in that position until at least the following December to fulfill the one-year term.
3. Nominees will be contacted to either accept or decline the nomination. No one will be added to the ballot without being given the opportunity to accept or decline.
4. The Director of BRAG will publish a deadline for volunteers and nominations as well as acceptance of nominations.
5. A “sample ballot” will be emailed in November including all nominees and volunteers. Members will be reminded that they should attend the December Core meeting prepared to vote confidentially.
6. The election will be conducted at the December meeting via paper ballots that will be distributed to all members present. (There will be no absentee ballots allowed.)
7. The ballots will be counted by the Director of BRAG and the winners will be announced once the count is concluded before the end of the meeting.

#### **Duties of the Core Chair:**

1. Prepare and distribute the monthly Core meeting agenda via email and Core Facebook page covering old and new business and items of interest previously requested by Core members.
2. Distribute copies to the Core meeting minutes prior to the next scheduled meeting.
3. Maintain a library of all Core meeting agendas and minutes.
4. Carry out all Core policies, preferences, rules and general wishes including:
  - Distribute changes in BRAG policy via email and BRAG Community Facebook Page or any other way Core prescribes.
  - Prepare wording and format of new rules and incorporate them into the BRAG manual as prescribed by Core
  - Carry out any instructions Core dictates such as placing items on Facebook, emailing or other actions that Core decided needed to be handled on the group’s behalf.
5. Be an ipso facto member of any committees formed within Core
6. Be available to Core members and the Chamber to guide, answer questions, or discuss Core issues.

#### **Duties of the Core Co-chair:**

1. Take the minutes at each meeting to be given to the Core chair to distribute before the next meeting.
2. Take over the meetings when the Core chair is unavailable.