

new Practitioner

**THE BLUEPRINT FOR
SUCCESSFUL MASSAGE CAREERS**



MASSAGE
Study Buddy

MASSAGE
magazine

Welcome to *MASSAGE Magazine's* New Practitioner issue, filled with articles, products and services to support you on your exciting new career path.

Being a massage therapist today can be challenging because you wear many hats, including those of health care provider, businessperson or employee. This issue is designed to help you meet the challenges related to all of your new roles with confidence and ease.

The author of this special issue is Cherie Sohnen-Moe, an experienced and respected educator, author, business expert and former practicing massage therapist. Cherie has almost 40 years' experience in the massage field. She has led workshops internationally and authored the books *Business Mastery* and *Present Yourself Powerfully*, and co-authored *The Ethics of Touch*. She directs Sohnen-Moe Associates, and is a founding member of and served as president of the Alliance for Massage Therapy Education from 2015 to fall 2017.

Simply put, Cherie knows everything there is to know about running a successful massage practice. She loves this field and knows what it takes to build an enjoyable and meaningful career. She asked me to tell you that you are joining a dedicated group of people who are truly making a difference in this world.

"You help people ease their stress and improve their lives," she said. "I feel that massage therapists are major contributors to peace on the planet—after all, it's difficult to be mean when you are relaxed and can move comfortably through life."

As a health care provider, you want to understand the techniques that help create the best client outcomes. As a businessperson, you must embrace effective methods of

running a massage practice. As an employee, you will guide your career through the fabric of supervision and compensation. And as a student for the course of your career, you can see that choosing the most appropriate continuing education is key to a successful and fulfilling livelihood as a massage therapist.

Cherie has covered all of these topics and much more in *MASSAGE Magazine's* New Practitioner issue.

"The strategies in this publication are fundamental to your success, whether you plan on seeking employment, launching a private practice—or both," Cherie said.

"As you adopt these strategies, develop your skills and build a successful practice, I think you will find massage to be more than a job or a profession—it's a whole way of life," she added. "I am excited for your future and for your future clients, and I wish you great success in all you do!"

The staff at *MASSAGE Magazine* wishes you lifelong success as well. If you have any questions about this issue or would like more resources for succeeding in your massage practice, feel free to email me at edit@massagemag.com.



Karen Meneham
Editor-in-chief
Massage Magazine

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THIS TOOL GUARANTEES YOU'LL PASS THE MBLEX... AND IT'S FREE.

BY MESSAGE MAGAZINE

You have made the commitment to a career in massage therapy, and as the end of school nears a new hurdle is on the horizon: studying for and passing your state-licensing exam. Until you clear that hurdle, your career in massage is just a dream.

But you are not alone.

For more than 32 years, *MESSAGE Magazine's* mission has been to provide massage students the tools, information and resources to help them succeed in the classroom and their careers. With that in mind, we have worked with the leading educational minds in massage therapy to create *Massage Study Buddy*, a one-of-a-kind tool to help students pass their licensing exams.

SIMPLE & FUN

Massage Study Buddy makes exam preparation simple and fun. The platform

is free, fun and functional, and covers a broad spectrum of common questions and answers you'll find on your test. Students can study their way, in their time, on any device. The program offers both flash cards and practice tests that can be retaken multiple times until you feel you're ready for the exam.

Massage Study Buddy also offers tips on studying for and taking your exam. These tips have been created by seasoned massage professionals who understand what it takes to be properly prepared for a licensing test. Topics covered include understanding which studying methods work best for you to what to expect after you're licensed.

8 ESSENTIAL AREAS

While licensing requirements vary from state to state, most cover eight essential areas:

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- Anatomy and physiology
- Kinesiology
- Pathology
- Soft tissue manipulation
- Client treatment and planning
- Modalities and history
- Ethics and legal regulations
- Guidelines for professional practice

With an easy-to-follow program, Massage Study Buddy guides you through each of

these areas, giving you a thorough review and understanding of what you can expect on the test. Whether you are studying for the Massage & Bodywork Licensing Exam (MBLEX) or state-specific exam, Massage Study Buddy is a tool that will help you make your massage career dream a reality. •

Download the MBLEX Content Outline at massagestudybuddy.com/about-the-mblex.

Top 10 Tips for Studying Success

1. **Get organized.** Maintain a binder or folder where you keep all of your notes and materials.
2. **Have a designated study space.** This space should have few distractions and be somewhere where you know you will be productive.
3. **Take frequent, short breaks.** Studies suggest that a 10-minute break after every hour of study increases productivity. Set a timer or pay close attention to the clock. Don't shortchange yourself on study time.
4. **Prioritize.** Take practice tests incrementally to determine which content areas you're struggling with so you can give those areas the attention they need.
5. **Study according to your learning style.** The predominant learning styles are audio, visual and kinesthetic.
6. **Pace yourself.** Instead of cramming, designate a specific time slot during which you study every day, but no more than three hours.
7. **Summarize information in your own words and create your own notes.** Make outlines, graphic organizers or write a summary in narrative format to reinforce the highlights of the content you've just reviewed.
8. **Utilize mnemonic devices.** The funnier the sentence, the easier it will be to remember. Remember in third grade when you learned the nine planets with, "My very educated mother just served us nine pizzas"? Use terms that are related or fall under the same concept and keep the sentence to around 10 words.
9. **Study in groups.** This isn't a strategy that works for everyone; if you're easily distracted, you might want to stick to individual study sessions. Your time is valuable, so pick study partners whom you know will work as hard as you will.
10. **Set goals.** There's no way to stuff everything in your head in one session. Have a goal for each study session by setting a specific intent. For example, "Today I will memorize and understand all of the main components of the digestive system." •

Read "Top 10 Test Taking Tips" at massagestudybuddy.com/top-10-test-taking-tips.

PRIVATE PRACTICE vs. EMPLOYMENT

WHICH IS BEST FOR YOU?



Running a private practice is very different from working in a clinic or spa. In any of these types of venues you have to perform the same basic practice-management activities, although in a different manner for each arrangement.

PRIVATE PRACTICE

At some point in their careers, most massage practitioners work alone—either out of a private office or home, or doing out-calls. A private practice provides freedom and flexibility in that you choose your attire, clients, environment, music, modalities, fees and scheduling.

In addition to handling general

practice-management activities, the sole practitioner must contend with other issues:

AUTONOMY. Along with the freedom of being on your own is the potential for loneliness and isolation. You are the one responsible for making certain everything is done, which often means you get to do it all, until you can afford to hire an assistant.

FINANCES. When you are the only source of revenue in your business, you may not have the cash flow to purchase items when you want them. Oftentimes you need to delay financial expenditures such as

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expensive equipment, like an office copier, computer or hydraulic table.

MARKETING. When you are in private practice, you are responsible for all marketing activities intended to get new clients and retain current clients.

SAFETY. Safety should always be a concern for any business owner, but even more for the person in private massage practice. You don't always know what clients are really like the first time they come to your office, or what neighborhoods are like when you enter them for out-calls or on-site services.

BENEFITS. The only employment benefits you receive are the ones you pay for yourself. As a sole practitioner there are no true paid vacations, holidays or sick days.

EMPLOYMENT

Franchises are the number-one employers of massage therapists, followed by spas and then clinics. Some people kick-start their careers by working at a franchise, spa or clinic; others take part-time jobs to augment their private

Working as an employee requires conforming to a set image, policies and procedures. You might need to alter your style and scope of practice to align with the company's vision and schedule.

practices; and there are those therapists who prefer to only work for others.

Working as an employee provides many potential benefits, such as the possibility of walking into a full practice with little marketing; providing a larger scope of services for your clients' well-being; starting out with a ready-made

professional image; being part of a team with clear and established boundaries; reduced paperwork (there's usually an office manager); the ability to focus on hands-on work; access to better and more varied equipment and supplies; excellent built-in referral base; staff does the scheduling, places confirmation calls and handles financial transactions.

Working in these settings also requires conforming to a set image, policies and procedures. You might need to alter your style and scope of practice to align with the company's vision and schedule.

CLIENT CONTACT

You may be required to alter your treatments in terms of style, modalities and length. In a clinic setting the time you spend with clients and the actual work you do may be determined by the lead primary care provider. The most often cited complaint from spa therapists is the lack of control over the scheduling, such as being required to work several 50-minute sessions without a break. Another concern is receptionists booking a specific service even if it isn't clear that the practitioner on duty is proficient in that technique or if contraindications are present.

You rarely get to choose your clients. In spas there is little chance to mark progress or make lasting connections because clients don't return very often. Some spas also require massage therapists to perform other services when not doing their primary service. They often expect practitioners to promote services and products to their clients regardless of whether the practitioners like them.

FINANCES

Franchises usually pay employees a fixed rate per hour, and the therapist also earns gratuities. A six-hour, five-session day at \$20 base rate, for example, with a \$20 gratutie paid for each session, comes out

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to \$220 for the day (about \$26 per hour) before taxes are taken out.

Some spas hire therapists as employees and others hire them as independent contractors. Compensation varies greatly. If the spa isn't well-known with a high guest count, there might not be a lot of work available for practitioners—meaning your shift would not be filled. Spas often base salaries and preferential scheduling on seniority.

Working in these settings does avail certain benefits. You can receive discounts on services and products, for example If you work at a spa, you usually can use the facilities and get free or low-cost meals.

When hired as an employee, benefits can include health insurance, paid vacations, paid sick days, pension plans, profit sharing and reimbursement for continuing education.

LOGISTICS

Most franchises, spas and clinics have staff for the day-to-day activities of running the business, such as preparing the office for clients, stocking supplies and cleaning; however, in some employment locales, these activities are shared by everyone.

You need to know what's expected of you when you're not directly working with clients. These duties might include paperwork, janitorial chores, clerical duties, assisting the other practitioners, providing treatments for staff and marketing. Whether you get paid for these activities depends upon your employment status.

You usually have to share the treatment room with other practitioners. This can be challenging if the layout doesn't suit you well. The rooms may not be adequately sized or insulated and the equipment may vary from room to room.

SALES & MARKETING

In a destination spa, you don't have to do the marketing or scheduling of clients, but there is no guarantee that your work hours will be filled. Successful spa therapists excel at marketing to current guests for repeat sessions.

Many massage practitioners, particularly in franchises, and day spas, discover to their dismay that to increase their client flow they need to actively market their services. Additionally, many employers of massage therapists expect those employees to up-sell techniques and sell retail products to customers. •

Some spas hire therapists as employees and others hire them as independent contractors. Compensation varies greatly. If the spa isn't well-known with a high guest count, there might not be a lot of work available for practitioners.

LIABILITY INSURANCE

THE MOST OVERLOOKED TOOL FOR YOUR PRACTICE



BY BRANDI VESCO

When Mariana O'Neil* enrolled in massage school, part of her tuition fee went toward the purchase of massage student liability insurance. Now more than six months into her program at, O'Neil appreciates the peace of mind that comes along with liability coverage.

"Having liability insurance makes me feel protected," O'Neil said. "If anything happens, my clients will be able to rectify the situation."

According to Mark Manton, director of Massage Therapy Institute of Colorado, in Denver, massage students from the school provide massage therapy to members of

the public during massage clinics, as well as at numerous community outreach events.

"If an accident occurred, such as someone getting up from a massage and fainting or stumbling and falling, or if someone was injured by a massage technique, then it is important that funds are available through insurance programs to help the injured person recover," Manton said, "and to protect the school, faculty and students from the possible expenses that can accrue as the result of an injury."

This protection is among the main reasons the school has built massage student liability insurance into the tuition fee for the

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*Name was changed.

school, so every student is covered from day one.

However, not all massage schools purchase coverage for each incoming student, so it's important for massage students to do their homework when it comes to liability insurance. Find out whether your school has a policy that will protect you, or whether you want to seek out massage student liability insurance on your own.

"Most schools do not require students to carry their own insurance, and some schools provide only general protection for their students while enrolled," said Heather Alves, director of Massage Magazine Insurance Plus. "Either way, it is important that students understand the extent to which they are protected by their school policy."

LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE

Massage is a hands-on career, and a key piece of training to become a professional massage therapist is hours of tactile practice. Typically, massage students provide massages to one another, along with school staff, as well as members of the public during student clinics and various community events.

"The benefits of providing massage while a student are important and include gaining experience with a variety of clients, products and techniques," Alves said. "However, these benefits must be balanced with an understanding of exposure to liability—when students work with public clients during clinical hours, they are open to the maximum

amount of risk for liability."

Taking the possible risks of massage therapy into account can help students understand why they may need massage student liability insurance. The bottom line is that even though massage is a fairly low-risk profession,

Find out whether your school has a policy that will protect you, or whether you want to seek out massage student liability insurance on your own.

accidents happen—and when they do, massage liability insurance is designed to provide the necessary financial protection.

"People can be injured by massage," Manton said. "Hot stones might cause a burn; working on the elderly may cause osteoporotic bones to fracture; [clients can experience] bruising and muscle tears; disk injuries might occur with [range of motion] and stretch techniques; [and] if a contraindication is not observed properly, injury can result."

These are only a few examples of the risks that can come with giving massage. Others include clients simply slipping and falling in or around the massage session, as well as accidents associated with products, such as an allergic reaction to an ingredient in a massage lubricant.

"I think a lot of students are under the impression that if the school has coverage, which most do, that the student is somehow protected," said Kevin McCarthy, managing director of Massage Magazine Insurance Plus.

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“However, the school’s policy may cover the school and not necessarily the student.”

If your massage school does not include the purchase of individual massage student liability insurance with the price of enrollment, then it may be wise to consider purchasing such a policy on your own.

UNDERSTANDING LIABILITY COVERAGE

One of the primary reasons for massage students to purchase liability insurance is the peace of mind that comes with knowing one is covered just in case an accident does happen. With student insurance, the student should receive the same thorough coverage as a professional massage therapist.

“Coverage for massage students is no different than [coverage] for professionals,” Alves said. “General, professional and product coverage are the three most important and cover the majority of situations.”

Typically, these three forms of coverage are all packaged together in one liability policy for massage students. This means the student will get professional, general and product liability coverage with his or her purchase.

“Most of these policies are very inexpensive—we sell ours for \$77,” McCarthy said. “It’s a very inexpensive way to transfer the risk from the student to the insurance company in case something unforeseen happens.”

If that unforeseen happening is a client injury due to a lack of skill or competence on the part of the massage student, the

situation would trigger the policy’s professional liability coverage, also known as malpractice insurance.

If an injury occurs as the result of an accident around the session space, such as a slip and fall, rather than anything directly related to the massage session, then coverage would come from the general liability portion of the policy.

The third component, product liability, covers those instances where a client may be injured or

One of the primary reasons for massage students to purchase liability insurance is the peace of mind that comes with knowing one is covered just in case an accident does happen.

adversely affected by a product used during the massage, such as a lubricant that causes an allergic reaction or hot stones that are overheated and burn the client’s skin.

“The concept behind liability insurance is that you can eliminate the risk of facing a very significant financial penalty for something that just happened—something that was not your fault or was not intended but happened on your watch,” McCarthy said. “In exchange for the cost you pay for the coverage, you’ve transferred that financial risk to the insurance company.” •

Brandi Vesco is an avid bodywork client and full-time journalist based in Reno, Nevada. She has written on many topics for MASSAGE Magazine and massagemag.com.



THIS ACTIONABLE BUSINESS PLAN SETS YOU UP FOR UNLIMITED SUCCESS

If the thought of writing a business plan conjures up images of endless hours of drudgery, you aren't alone. Many business owners don't relish this time-consuming yet vital task. The good news is that several practices can help you create a business plan with ease.

YOUR PRACTICE BLUEPRINT

First, keep in mind that building a business without a business plan is a lot like attempting to build a house without a blueprint. The house may get built, but the budget may go through the roof and the project may take a lot longer than expected.

What's worse, on-the-fly construction efforts might not bode well for longevity. The house may look good for a while—but it probably won't last.

Business without a business plan is a lot like attempting to build a house without a blueprint.

Recognize that you don't have to approach this task alone. Those who have traveled the path before you have created numerous resources.

You can find help through business organizations such as the Service Core of Retired Executives, plan-writing software, local business school centers for entrepreneurs and some top-notch business books.

Also keep in mind that the first draft doesn't have to be perfect. Once you know

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the key ingredients of a business plan, you can start with a mission statement and let the rest flow from there.

Think of your first few hours of work on a business plan as a brainstorming session. If you are having trouble getting started, you may want to plan an initial two-hour work session with a business advisor, colleague or business coach.

DECLARE YOUR GOALS

A business plan serves many functions. It is a powerful declaration of your goals and intentions, a written summary of what you aim to accomplish, and an overview of how you intend to organize your resources to attain those goals.

If you are opening a private practice or clinic, a business plan assists you to clarify your vision and values, evaluate the marketplace, identify your goals, calculate your costs, forecast your growth and identify your risks.

A business plan addresses these questions: What are you offering? Who will your clients be? What needs do your services satisfy? How will your potential clients find you? How much money do you plan on making? What actions do you intend on taking to ensure success?

AVOID PROBLEMS

Using a business plan as a tool to keep you inspired and on track helps you achieve a laser-like focus. Many massage therapists get overwhelmed by the minutiae of running a business and miss valuable opportunities to plan strategies for future success. Clearly describing where you want to go and how you intend to get there encourages you to be more realistic.

A business plan also assists you in anticipating and avoiding problems, or at least being prepared so that you can overcome them, thus minimizing your risks. Written goals give you solid criteria to evaluate progress. A financial forecast illustrates exactly what finances are required to launch and maintain a thriving business.

STEPS TO SUCCESS

Scheduling periodic reality checks with your business plan on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis can help you to adjust course when needed and identify new ways to grow your business.

By developing a business plan you may discover steps vital to your success and happiness that you may have otherwise overlooked. •



Many massage therapists get overwhelmed by the minutiae of running a business and miss valuable opportunities to plan strategies for future success. Clearly describing where you want to go and how you intend to get there encourages you to be more realistic.

BUSINESS STARTUP CHECKLIST

You feel ready to open your first massage practice —but where do you begin? Here is a checklist for all of your major business start-up tasks.

MARKETING

- Join a networking group before graduation.
- Send letters to your school clinic clients inviting them to continue working with you after you graduate.
- Conduct market research.
- Evaluate your business potential.
- Scope out the competition.
- Identify three specific client target markets.
- Choose a business name; this might simply be your name.
- Design and print marketing materials.
- Send out press releases and announcements about your business opening.
- Schedule an open house.

OPERATIONS

- Determine the city where you want to practice.
- Develop a business plan.
- Establish your support system of advisors and mentors.
- Reserve a business telephone number.
- Find a location.
- Design or update the office layout.
- Obtain any required licenses and permits.
- Purchase appropriate insurance coverage.
- Apply for your Federal Employer Identification Number if you plan to have employees.
- Purchase equipment, furniture, supplies and office sign.

FINANCES AND LEGAL

- Project your startup costs.
- Create a budget.
- Finalize startup financing.
- Select a legal status; most massage therapists start out as sole proprietors.
- Open a business checking account.
- Decide which products you want to carry and establish accounts with vendors.
- Determine your fee schedule.
- Set up a merchant account to take credit card payments.
- Set up your bookkeeping system.
- Review tax requirements with your accountant.





BUSINESS PLAN OUTLINE

COVER PAGE

The cover page is simply the first page of the business plan. Include a title, such as “Business Plan for The Healthy Alternative,” and below it put your name and contact information.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List all of the business plan sections with corresponding page numbers. Title each document you include in the appendix.

It is of critical importance if you are applying for financial backing; it must convince lenders and investors that your business will succeed.

OWNER'S STATEMENT

A one-page description of the business and the owner. Include contact information, a summary of your business experience and philosophy; and a brief business description, such as the year the business was established and current financial status.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This section consists of business plan highlights. It is of critical importance if you are applying for financial backing; it must convince lenders and investors that your business will succeed.

MISSION STATEMENT

A mission statement conveys the essence of your business—why your business exists and what values underpin everything you do.

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PURPOSE, PRIORITIES AND GOALS

A detailed description of your business activities and career plan in terms of short-term and long-term goals.

BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

Give a brief overview of your company. Describe your location, the services you provide, the unique features of your business and products you sell.

MARKETING

This is the pivotal component of a business plan. Describe your brand, target markets and differential advantage. Outline your marketing goals for all four areas: promotion, advertising, publicity and community relations. Delineate a timeline, budget and rationale for each strategy.

RISK ASSESSMENT

List possible external events that might occur to hamper your success and include a contingency plan to counteract the most significant risks.

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

Statements about your income potential, fees, current financial status and financial forecast.

OPERATIONS

An overview of your business organization, procedures and policies.

SUCCESS STRATEGIES

Describe your methods for implementing your business plan.

APPENDIX

Additional information or documents, such as letters of recommendation, news articles about you, copies of promotional materials and financial statements. •

BUSINESS PLAN SUPPLEMENT

If your business plan is to be used in securing a loan, it's recommended to incorporate the following additional information:

- State the type of business loan(s) you're seeking, such as term loan, line of credit or mortgage.
- Summarize the proposed use of the funds.
- Calculate the projected return on investment.
- Write a persuasive statement of why the venture is a good risk.
- Describe the loan requirements: the amount needed, the terms and the date by which it's required.
- State the purpose of the loan, detailing the facets of the business to be financed.
- Provide a statement of the owner's equity.
- List any outstanding debts. Include the balance due, repayment terms, purpose of the loan and status.
- Document your current operating line of credit—the amount and security held.
- List all pertinent information regarding your current lending institution: branch, address, types of accounts and contact person(s).
- List the names, addresses and phone numbers of your attorney, accountant and business consultant.

TAKE AIM AT THE MESSAGE CLIENTS YOU WANT TO WORK WITH



Developing an innovative marketing plan is crucial to long-term success. Marketing is simply sharing yourself in such a way that people learn who you are and what you do, so they can make an informed choice about using your services and buying your products. Marketing is an extension of who you are. Everything you do makes a statement about how you feel about yourself, your clients and your practice.

You're always marketing yourself—for better or worse. Marketing isn't just about the outward activities you do, such as advertising and promotions; it also involves the way you relate to your clients, your ethics and your professional demeanor. To attract the right clients and grow your business, your outward image must be consistent with your vision of a successful massage therapist.

Marketing isn't just about the outward activities you do, such as advertising and promotions; it also involves the way you relate to your clients, your ethics and your professional demeanor.

Ultimately, marketing is all about taking the right actions to attract potential clients and retain current ones. It involves identifying your target markets, developing a marketing plan, and putting those goals into action.

Marketing has greatly evolved in the last several years. What worked in the past might not be as effective now.

Consumers are much more savvy and

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want to be reached through creative and personal marketing methods. A lot of competition exists for where people spend their money on health and wellness, so your marketing methods need to identify what makes you unique compared with other practitioners in your specific field, as well as what sets your work apart from other wellness choices.

TARGET MARKETING

The concept of target marketing may seem very scary at first. On the surface, specialization appears to limit the pool of potential clients. Many practitioners fear that by defining a market they will lose business, or choose the wrong one. An additional concern is other practitioners will absorb the potential business outside the target market.

However, in most instances, narrowing your field actually increases your overall number of clients. Target marketing is analogous to archery: the goal is to get your arrow as close to the center as possible. The outer rings are bigger and easier to hit, but the high score comes from hitting the center.

The same goes for attracting clients: You can appeal to the general masses—the outer rings; but, it takes more money and time—multiple arrows—to get the same return on your marketing investment than it would if you focus on a target market, or hitting the bull's eye with one arrow.

The number of target markets you have depends mainly on the size of your practice and scope of your knowledge. Some target markets are more productive than others. Most successful practitioners have one or two major markets and a couple of minor target markets. Working with several markets helps to avoid the potential disaster of selecting an unsuitable one.

There are many benefits of not being restricted to only one type of clientele; in particular, your skills become well-rounded by experiencing a variety of people with

Target marketing is analogous to archery: the goal is to get your arrow as close to the center as possible.

unique issues. Plus, not being restricted to just one type of clientele allows you to balance altruistic goals and financial needs.

For instance, one of your passions might be working with a specific market that doesn't normally have the funds to pay for your services. If you have another target market that covers your bills, you can work with the former population for free or on a sliding scale.

MARKETING VENUES

Marketing a massage practice is based on education and relationships. In general, people prefer to receive massage from someone they know. The second-best option is working with a practitioner who is highly recommended by a friend or family member.

Unfortunately, no one-size-fits-all marketing formula works. The marketing venues you choose are best determined by your target markets. The trick to marketing success is to determine what's most important to your potential clients and communicate how you can meet their needs and goals.

Successful practitioners include a good mix of promotion, advertising, publicity and community relations in their marketing plans. The more creative and natural your marketing techniques, the more successful they are, mainly because you enjoy doing them.

Keep in mind that marketing never ends; it's an integral component of your business. Plan on investing at least 15 percent of your time in marketing to maintain your practice, and more than that to expand it. If you're just starting out, you

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may need to increase marketing to more than 50 percent of your time.

The crucial factor for selecting a marketing venue is: Does it appeal to your target market? Many years ago I heard a speaker talk about the need to learn how to broadcast on station WIIFM (What's In It For Me?). This is particularly true in marketing. Your marketing endeavors need to convey to recipients exactly how your company is going to benefit them.

PROMOTION

Promotion involves the activities and materials you produce to gain visibility. The money invested is indirect; for instance, while it does cost money to print business cards; it costs nothing to distribute them. Oftentimes, promotional activities are free of cost.

Some of these include networking; generating word-of-mouth referrals; holding open houses; public speaking, which can be anything ranging from a 15-minute talk for a local business group to presenting workshops and giving demonstrations; writing articles for local newspapers, magazines and newsletters; sending newsletters and email blasts; and being active in social media.

Talk with everyone about your profession: family, friends, neighbors, and people in line at the grocery store, movie theater and Department of Motor Vehicles. Share your enthusiasm for your work and the results it produces. Excitement is contagious!

PUBLICITY

Publicity involves building media awareness about you or your business, often in connection with a special event or milestone. Publicity lends an air of credibility to a business that advertising cannot. People are more likely to utilize your services if they read an article about you, listen to an interview with you on the radio or watch you on television than if they see an advertisement about your business.

When a respected journalist or reporter makes a positive statement about you, it has much greater impact than if you said the same thing about yourself. Some examples of publicity are news

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TYPICAL MESSAGE CLIENT TARGET MARKETS:

- High stress executives
- Pregnant women
- Athletes
- Weekend warriors
- Infants
- Children
- People in self improvement programs
- Pre and post operative recovery
- People with disabilities
- Attorneys
- Accountants
- Seniors
- The entertainment industry
- Natural disaster survivors and workers
- People in addiction recovery programs
- Patients of other primary care providers
- Small business owners
- Students
- Animals
- Abuse survivors
- Computer operators
- Military personnel
- People committed to wellness
- People with chronic pain
- People with specific health care conditions
- Health care providers

releases, announcements, feature stories, interviews and press conferences.

ADVERTISING

Advertising differs from publicity and promotions in that you must pay directly for your exposure. Some forms of advertising include: display ads in publications; radio and television commercials; classified ads; billboards; phone books; Internet ads; and bus-stop benches. Mass media advertising has typically been avoided by massage practitioners, mainly due to the impersonal nature and the relatively high cost.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Community relations are goodwill activities that create a positive public image for you and your business. Community relations increase your visibility and enhance your image, but only if it's clear you're doing the activities to serve the community and not just to build your business.

You can cultivate these relations by: devoting your time and services to a charity or community organization; assembling a disaster relief team; giving presentations in public schools; sponsoring an activity such as for a special cause; developing a newsworthy persona outside of being a wellness provider; hosting your own radio show or public access cable show; giving free demonstrations; sponsoring a public interest program; and becoming a spokesperson for your profession.

PUT PLANS INTO ACTION

The two fundamental items needed to start out are business cards and a telephone. These may be the only tools you need if you want to work part time or reside in a community where you're the only practitioner of your kind. Most practitioners need more than that.

Building a practice requires consistent marketing, business acumen, perseverance and optimism. Many practitioners give

up too soon because they don't receive enough positive feedback and rewards don't come as quickly as desired. While exceptions do exist, it takes most people two to three years to build a thriving practice.

Keep in mind that relationship marketing is the focus for massage therapists. Make emotional connections with people. Do whatever you can to increase your visibility in your community. Attend networking meetings, take classes, write articles, hold open houses, deliver talks and give demonstrations. Wear logo clothing with your profession or slogan emblazoned on it. Always carry your business cards with you. Volunteer in your community. Get interviewed by the media. Post your business cards and brochures wherever your target markets are likely to see them. Maintain an active social media presence.

Marketing your practice can oftentimes appear overwhelming and arduous, yet no rule says you can't have fun while promoting your business.

One idea is to join marketing campaigns with other therapists or other people and companies who have the same target markets. This particularly holds true for public speaking. I find it much more enjoyable and less scary to have a co-presenter—plus, you double your odds of audience members connecting with at least one of you. Another option for having fun with your marketing is to choose activities that match your personal interests and hobbies.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

When incorporating creative approaches to building your clientele, keep in mind that the most effective means of marketing massage is through a personal approach. Given that the majority of people become your clients out of an experience with you, it's vital that your marketing plan include informal ways for people to get to know you and your work. •

FORGET EVERYTHING YOU KNOW



ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media has become an integral part of our cultural landscape. While Facebook is one of the most popular sites, people actively engage on Twitter, Pinterest, Snapchat, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, Meetup and other social sites.

According to Pew Research Center's Social Media Fact Sheet, released in January 2017, 69 percent of all Americans use some form of social media. Within social media use, Facebook is by far the most popular social media platform, with 68 percent of Americans using it, followed by Instagram (28 percent), Pinterest (26 percent) LinkedIn (25 percent) and Twitter (21 percent).

These platforms provide a major way for people to connect—and this is particularly

Facebook is by far the most popular social media platform, with 68 percent of Americans using it.

true in the massage profession, as it's a rather solitary calling. Yes, you work with clients, but those interactions are supposed to be client-centered—which means not about you.

Interaction with colleagues is limited, even for those practitioners who work in a group practice or are employees in a spa or massage center. Most practitioners

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barely have enough time to stretch and drink water between clients let alone have in-depth conversations with co-workers.

The image of colleagues standing around the water cooler and chatting doesn't really exist in this field—but practitioners do find time to check their phones for posts to see how their friends are doing, and that helps them feel connected.

SOCIAL STRATEGY

Social media platforms aren't limited to fostering your personal relationships. They can also be an effective business tool to promote your practice, generate new clientele, keep in contact with your current clients, drive people to your website, and enable you to quickly research almost anything.

You have to be careful people don't discover too much of your personal information and that you maintain client confidentiality.

Unfortunately, pitfalls also exist. It's easy to wander down the social media rabbit hole and find yourself emerging hours later. Plus, there are technological restrictions and ethical considerations.

One of the first social media platforms was MySpace. That sounded like a great name, but social media has never been your space. You don't own the space so you have limited control of how or when your content is seen. You have to follow the platform's guidelines—and those guidelines are all different.

The solution is to use your social media sites to drive people to your website where you can control what and how content is viewed. Share links to your articles blogs, and once people are there, offer them regular opportunities to join your email list for announcements, special offers and newsletters.

ONLINE PRIVACY

Privacy is tenuous in the realm of social media. You have to be careful people don't discover too much of your personal information and that you maintain client confidentiality.

The main way to secure your online privacy is to be cautious when posting. Only post things you would be comfortable having anyone (and everyone) know about you. The next step is to manage your privacy settings.

For instance, in Facebook, you can allow only friends to see certain posts. You can also create subgroups that can only see certain posts.

Think before you write—particularly if you have an emotional response to something. Once something is posted, you can't take it back. Yes, you can remove it from your site, but there are other sites where it's already been shared.

Do create a dedicated Facebook business page, because it will help establish boundaries. Keep in mind that even with a business page, many people will still search for you by your personal profile.

When I first set up my Facebook account, business pages didn't exist. I set up a separate business page once that option was available and attempted to move my business friends to that page, but it wasn't as effective as I would have liked. Now, I have a personal Facebook page and a business page. Sometimes there's crossover of people on the lists because the focus of what gets shared is different. And there are times where I post the same thing on each page.

Some people don't allow others to directly post on their Facebook pages. The only option is for those people to reply or comment on a post written by the page owner. While this certainly helps keep unwanted posts from your page, this isn't a very social thing to do.

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CONSERVE CONFIDENTIALITY

It's crucial to maintain client confidentiality. This is another aspect of online privacy. Many practitioners use social media as an informal peer support group. This can be perilous, particularly when discussing client issues. You must make certain that nobody could figure out who you are talking about in your posts.

The most common confidentiality violations occur in relation to photos. For instance, you hold an open house for your practice and take some great photos of the attendees. You write about the event and post the pictures.

You think you are maintaining confidentiality because you didn't identify anyone by name. Unfortunately, someone else could share your photo and tag the person(s). The best solution is to get written permission whenever you take photos of clients or people attending your events.

PHOTO PROTOCOL

Use appropriate photos for your cover photos on your personal and business page. You can add other photos on your personal sites—but it's best to be conservative with the photos that you allow the public to see.

Only use photos or images that are yours or that you confirmed are royalty free. (Read the guidelines carefully, because royalty free doesn't necessarily mean that there aren't costs for using the photo or specific requirements for crediting the source.)

Get permission or give credit to the source of the original post whenever you share, re-tweet or re-pin a photo, video, post or meme.

SECURITY STEPS

Most cellphones and tablets have automatic geo-tagging (location information) loaded. While this is helpful for people trying to find your business location, it also provides a lot of information you might not want to share. There are software applications that can read metadata to

Royalty free doesn't necessarily mean that there aren't costs for using the photo or specific requirements for crediting the source.

pinpoint the exact location where a picture is taken. In most instances, this isn't a problem, but there are times when you want to protect your privacy.

For instance, let's say you want to sell or even give away one of your possessions. You take a photo of that item and post it on several social sites such as Craigslist, Freecycle and Letgo. If you don't remove the geo-tagging information, you could be unwittingly providing your location to thieves.

The first step to removing this information is checking the privacy settings on your phone. I own an iPhone, and when I click on privacy and location services it gives me a list of options to activate or disable. I've set things like maps and compass to while using and have set everything else, such as camera and messages, to never status.

Another security option to consider if you don't want to alert people to the fact that you aren't home is to wait to post photos from events and meetings until you or someone else is at your house.

BE SAFE

Also according to Pew, 77 percent of Facebook users visit the site daily (51 percent of Instagram users do so, as do 42 percent of Twitter followers). With so many Americans online and looking for information, education and connection, no massage therapist can afford to ignore social media as a valuable venue for capturing clients.

Implement social media safeguards to protect your clients, your privacy—and your practice. •



THE STEP BY STEP GUIDE FOR A RESUME THAT WORKS

The purpose of a resume is to get you a job interview. Rarely is anyone hired solely on the basis of a resume. Indeed, most employers use resumes for the initial screening of job applicants.

A resume that inspires a potential employer to interview you is one that conveys your talents and clearly demonstrates your ability to produce results that align with the particular company's goals. This is why it's so important to research your potential employers.

DO YOUR RESEARCH

Make certain you know to whom you are writing: learn about the company's history, its mission, needs and problems; determine the ways in which your skills

Learn about the company's history, its mission, needs and problems; determine the ways in which your skills can contribute to the company's success.

can contribute to the company's success; and finally, ascertain the name and title of the person in charge of hiring, which isn't always the personnel administrator.

Your cover letter is an integral part of your resume packet. This is where you build rapport. Keep your tone friendly and use terminology that's appropriate to your field. Open your letter with something you

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find interesting about the company. Inform them how you can be of direct benefit to the company. Close your letter by requesting an interview.

In the massage field, your resume may be very different from the traditional ones, where the focus is demonstrating results, and that may be difficult for you to do. It's important to think

It's important to think of your resume not in terms of a biography, but as a prospectus for your future.

of your resume not in terms of a biography, but as a prospectus for your future.

The two major types of resumes are chronological and functional.

The chronological resume is used when you want to emphasize a good work history that is directly related to your desired job.

The functional resume is used when you want to emphasize your talents, abilities and potential—not your work history.

In most instances, massage therapists use more of a functional resume or sometimes even just a targeted personal letter.

A resume is a useful tool for promotion, even if you own your own business. If nothing else, the process

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SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEWING SKILLS

- Avoid telephone interviews
- Dress appropriately
- Be well-groomed
- Be enthusiastic, confident, and polite
- Bring an appointment book or a tablet
- Bring a nice pen
- Bring extra copies of your resume
- Bring a printed sheet with at least three professional references' information
- Be on time
- Be prepared. Have all necessary documentation available
- Be well-poised, centered and relaxed
- Maintain good eye contact
- Listen to what is really being said
- Use positive wording
- Control the interview, yet don't monopolize the conversation
- Ask specific questions and give specific answers
- Know what sets you apart from the other candidates
- Have a list memorized of unique skills, education or attributes you can bring to this business
- Know your strengths and weaknesses and how you plan to compensate for those weaknesses
- Be prepared to discuss each item on your résumé or job application
- Have at least three questions that you can ask the interviewer
- Prepare a response to the inevitable interview question, "Tell me about yourself"
- Look for closing signals
- Avoid discussing salary and benefits in the first interview
- Thank the interviewer when done
- Send a thank-you letter to everyone with whom you've spoken

of developing your resume clarifies your strengths and reinforces your self esteem.

CHRONOLOGICAL RESUME FORMAT

OBJECTIVE. This is optional, particularly if you address it in your cover letter. If you do use an objective, make it very specific and concise. State what you can contribute to the organization. Objectives can help focus resumes when you have an eclectic background or you are embarking on a new career.

HEADING. Name, address and phone number, centered at the top of the page.

EDUCATION. Include the year graduated, the name of school, degree(s), certification(s) and any awards or honors. If your education is within the past few years, it should be the first thing listed after the heading, otherwise put it at the bottom.

WORK EXPERIENCE. Start with your present or most recent job. It isn't necessary to give the month and day, just the year. List your employer, job title and a brief description of your duties. Emphasize your major accomplishments and abilities. You don't have to list each position change within a company.

PERSONAL. This is optional. Only include information you feel is valuable toward getting you the job.

FUNCTIONAL RESUME FORMAT

OBJECTIVE. Again, this is optional, particularly if you address it in your cover letter. If you do use an objective, make it very specific and concise. State what you can contribute to the organization. Objectives can help focus resumes when you have an eclectic background or you are embarking on a new career.

HEADING. Name, address and phone number, centered at the top of the page.

FUNCTION. List your strongest abilities or accomplishments in four or five separate paragraphs—put them in order of relevance to desired job. Have a major headline for each paragraph.

If you have a strong work history it can be by position, such as “staff management.” If you have limited work history and are relying on your education, list by modality, such as “sports massage, hydrotherapy” or related skills such as “organizational skills.”

EDUCATION. Put at the bottom unless it was within three years.

WORK EXPERIENCE. List a brief summary at the bottom of the page. Include dates, employers and titles.

PERSONAL. Again, this is optional. •

If you have limited work history and are relying on your education, list by modality, such as “sports massage, hydrotherapy” or related skills such as “organizational skills.”

CAN YOU REALLY SUCCEED AS AN EMPLOYEE?



Many companies prefer the independent contractor designation because it is less costly: it substantially reduces the amount of paperwork; they aren't required to withhold taxes; they don't need to provide benefits; they don't have to pay matching FICA and Medicare or unemployment insurance; they don't have to provide Worker's Compensation coverage; and it's much easier to terminate a contract than to fire an employee.

The benefits to the therapist for being hired as an independent contractor are: a greater sense of autonomy; usually you receive more money for your services; you aren't responsible for running the business; and you can deduct your business-related expenses on your income tax return.

In general, an employee is an individual who performs services subject to the employer's will and control and the employer has the authority to tell the employees what to do and how to do it.

For example, massage therapist "Hailey" is an employee at a day spa. She is told what hours she is to work and has little

control over the types of clients she sees or the modalities she is to use. When not working with clients, she is expected to perform other duties such as cleaning and marketing. The spa has set prices for services and collects all monies. She receives paychecks and is issued a W-2 at the end of the year.

An independent contractor is in charge of establishing his or her own hours, setting fees and controlling how he or she does the work; the IRS states that a general rule is that the payer has the right to control or direct only the result of the work done by an independent contractor, and not the means and methods of accomplishing the result.

For example, Steve is a massage therapist who has a private practice providing onsite massage to several companies. He also works on an as-needed basis for a salon when he is available. He sets his own schedule with the spa and often brings in his own clients. The spa pays him a per session fee, less costs, to cover room rental, linens and supplies. He receives a 1099-MISC form at the end of the year. •

LOOKING FOR A MASSAGE JOB?

**You're Going
to Want to Say
These Things
Immediately!**



Employment in the complementary and integrative medicine (CIM) fields has risen significantly over the past two decades. Spas and massage centers have thousands of job openings for massage therapists.

According to the most recent report on CIM survey data released by the National

**According to a CIM survey,
more than 33 percent
of U.S. adults are using
some form of CIM.**

Center for Health Statistics, more than 33 percent of U.S. adults are using some form of CIM. Additionally, adults in the U.S. spend more than \$33.9 billion annually in out-of-pocket expenses for the products and services of professional CIM health care providers which include chiropractic, acupuncture, and massage and bodywork practitioners.

In light of these statistics, your opportunities for employment are likely to continue rising.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The most common locations for massage

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therapists to work as employees are spas, franchises, wellness clinics, and medical facilities such as doctors' offices and hospitals. If you are considering working in any of those settings, be certain to clarify whether you are going to be considered an actual employee or independent contractor.

There are still way too many people being misclassified as independent contractors, so that the hiring company can reduce the amount and type of paperwork they would have to file and saves money (for instance, not having to pay matching FICA).

Working as an employee provides many potential benefits such as: the possibility of walking into a full practice with little marketing; being part of a team; providing a larger scope of services for your clients' wellbeing; starting out with a ready-made professional image; reduced paperwork (there's usually an office manager); health insurance; the ability to focus on hands-on work; access to better and more varied equipment and supplies; excellent built-in referral base; laundry service; and an office staff that does the scheduling, places confirmation calls, and handles financial transactions.

Employers are responsible for all facility liability, overhead costs, marketing, financial management, and business operations.

When we deliver quality and ethical work as employees, the most obvious result is we keep our jobs, which certainly is to our personal advantage. At the same time, our quality work contributes to the success of the company, and a successful company gives us more opportunity to perform quality work. This cycle of success is the root of employment and economic health.

The characteristics of an employee-employer relationship are like those of any long-term, serious relationship. By agreeing to accept employment, an individual enters a world where commitment, loyalty, cooperation, and obligation play important roles.

Be certain to clarify whether you are going to be considered an actual employee or independent contractor.

Hopefully the business earns these from its employees through its own ethical behavior; nevertheless, these qualities, on the part of the employees, aren't optional. The employees' commitment, loyalty, cooperation, and obligation remains with their clients and the services they provide.

Think about yourself. Do you enjoy working as part of a team? Do you enjoy focusing primarily on client wellbeing? Do you prefer the convenience of an office support staff and less paperwork? Do you like the idea of someone else handling marketing and business logistics? Do you like working within an established structure?

Working in these settings also requires conforming to a set image, policies, and procedures. You might need to alter your style and scope of practice to align with the company's vision and schedule.

Success as an employee requires you to understand the rationale behind the policies and procedures set by the employer. These guidelines protect clients, the company, and the practitioners. In addition to requisite standards of behavior for practitioners, these guidelines often cover relationships with co-workers, relationships with clients, what situations constitute a conflict of interest, and relationship between the organization and the practitioner.

When it comes to image, you can expect to encounter a clear list of do's and don'ts. Ambiance and image are often key elements of a business brand and corporate identity, requiring employees conform to policies about image and

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personal appearance. For instance, some workplaces may require employees not to have visible tattoos or excessive piercings. Some require practitioners to conform to a dress code or wear a designated uniform.

Take the time to review policy and procedure manuals. Clarify any ambiguous policies and ascertain what's expected of you when you're not directly working with clients.

The following are some answers to obtain questions to in a potential place of employment:

QUESTIONS RELATED TO COMMON STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOR:

- Is there a dress code?
- Is there a policy regarding use of fragrances?
- What are the expectations regarding timeliness?
- How are absences to be handled?
- What are the expectations regarding sobriety in the office?
- What are the expectations regarding language in the office, such as that related to profanity, offensive language or innuendo?
- In what off-site situations are practitioners considered representatives of the company? What kind of image should practitioners exhibit in these situations?

QUESTIONS RELATED TO RELATIONSHIPS WITH CO-WORKERS:

- What hierarchy exists among group members? In what circumstances is this hierarchy invoked?
- What referral patterns are acceptable among practitioners?
- What behaviors are considered poaching clients?
- What lines of communication exist for resolving internal conflicts between practitioners?
- What are appropriate reporting avenues when practitioners suspect or know of

Clarify any ambiguous policies and ascertain what's expected of you when you're not directly working with clients.

unethical behavior on the part of a co-worker?

- What policies exist regarding trading services with co-workers? How are discrepancies in value handled?
- What guidelines are provided regarding personal relationships between co-workers?

QUESTIONS RELATED TO RELATIONSHIPS WITH CLIENTS:

- How is privacy maintained? What procedures are in place to ensure HIPAA requirements are met?
- What are the policies regarding tips and gifts?
- What guidelines are provided regarding personal relationships between practitioners and clients?
- Are there limitations to practitioners advertising in a common waiting room to all clients, or to an individual client who is waiting for a different practitioner?
- What policies govern client/practitioner relationships when the practitioner leaves the company?

QUESTIONS RELATED TO RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ORGANIZATION AND THE INDIVIDUAL PRACTITIONER:

- How does the business ensure practitioners have proper licensure, credentialing, and continuing education?
- What guidelines exist regarding scope of practice?
- Does the work environment encourage practitioners to become multi-modal or to stay within a single modality?

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- Are procedures in place for regular peer or employee review?
- What are the expectations concerning noise in the office?
- What is the expected use of parking facilities by practitioners and clients?
- What constitutes overlap of services or retail competition among practitioners?
- What pricing policies exist to prevent undercutting of other practitioners?
- How does the business meet applicable laws regarding correct billing practices, payments of taxes, and other financial regulations?
- What recordkeeping responsibilities do practitioners have?

QUESTIONS RELATED TO SITUATIONS THAT CONSTITUTE A CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

- What responsibilities do team members share for the care of common areas such as lobbies, waiting rooms, bathrooms, kitchen, or break rooms?
- What procedures are established to create a healthy, safe, and secure working environment?
- How does the organization encourage community involvement?

TRAITS OF SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYEES

Many practitioners believe that acquiring advanced technical skills and a high degree of expertise are sure ways to success. However, they are only one part of the equation. The major key to success as an employee is strong interpersonal skills.

Fundamental interpersonal skills include: creating rapport and building relationships; developing a soothing and inspiring manner with clients; setting appropriate personal and professional boundaries; and creating a safe space for clients.

I've interviewed many people who employ massage therapists and the majority of complaints don't have anything to do with the practitioner's hands-on skills, but rather their lack of professionalism and soft skills.

Professionalism includes appropriate dress, good hygiene, good boundaries, excellent time management, and integrity. Professionalism issues are reported by employers as the most common barriers to practitioner success.

Highly successful employees share the following common traits and career success secrets. Keep these traits in mind to develop a successful employment relationship.

CAREER SUCCESS SECRETS

PROFESSIONALISM: Professionalism includes appropriate dress, good hygiene, good boundaries, excellent time management, and integrity. (Not surprisingly, professionalism issues are reported by employers as the most common barriers to practitioner success.)

FLEXIBILITY: Some employers ask their employees to expand their skills and perform other treatments, such as hydrotherapy, seaweed body wraps, and paraffin treatments, when not providing their primary service. Master doing a session in the allotted time (usually 50 minutes for the treatment and 10 minutes turnaround time) without appearing rushed.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS: Great communicators are good listeners. They know how to communicate with clarity and genuine respect for others. They take every opportunity to hone their skills through practice, continuing education, and study.

Take courses to enhance your communication skills with clients and co-workers. Learn and practice conscious

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detachment. For example, make an effort not to take anything personally, especially when a client is difficult.

CONFIDENTIALITY: If you work at a high-end spa or wellness center, management expects strict adherence to confidentiality policies. Many celebrities, or other high-profile individuals, count on companies and their employees to “go the extra mile” to protect their privacy.

MARKETING: Although the major marketing is the employer’s responsibility, you can contribute a lot to retaining clients. Communicate regularly with the staff to learn about marketing plans and ask how you may assist (possibly unpaid) in promoting your service. Be aware of how your service is currently marketed and make sure the front desk knows what you can do and your scope of practice.

COMMITMENT: An employee demonstrates commitment through action. Quality work and performance start by being on the job as scheduled, in a timely manner, and by performing work skillfully for all clients and in all circumstances. Commitment proves itself over the long term; it shows up through diligence, determination, honesty, and objectivity. From a place of commitment, an employee chooses appropriate behavior at and away from work.

RESPECT: Respect for others means honoring clients, co-workers, and managers as unique individuals. Although others may have different outlooks or ideas, it means treating others as you would like to be treated.

Respect can manifest in social courtesies such as greeting co-workers pleasantly each morning. Or it can mean holding back an angry or unkind remark during a difficult conversation. It can also mean coming in to work on time or even a little early.

Respect also includes going out of your way to pitch in when others need help, and, if you share a room, making sure you leave that room clean and appropriately stocked for the next practitioner. Whatever shape it takes, respect requires a conscious effort to honor both the terms of your employment and your team members’ needs to be treated in a positive and kind manner.

LOYALTY: Loyalty means making the company’s priorities your priorities; acting as if the company was your own. A loyal employee avoids associations that interfere with the ability to represent the company.

Commitment proves itself over the long term; it shows up through diligence, determination, honesty, and objectivity. From a place of commitment, an employee chooses appropriate behavior at and away from work.

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Conflicts of interest are resolved by the employee if they arise, and the employee recognizes that the organization has the right to own ideas and opportunities created by the employee as part of the employment.

The loyal employee communicates candidly and honestly with the employer through appropriate channels, but recognizes that those channels aren't invitations to second-guess or criticize the employer's decisions.

SELLING PRODUCTS: Overcome any phobia you have for selling products and other services. Most companies sell products and expect practitioners to generate from 5 to 20 percent of their total sales in home-care products or supplies.

APPRECIATION: Show appreciation by acknowledging the positive effort, unique talent, or personality characteristics of co-workers and employers. It creates a sense of teamwork and inspires people to be their best.

TEAMWORK: Teamwork is paramount in settings where clients receive multiple services. Time is a very important consideration so as not to throw everyone off of their schedules. Help with clients' or co-workers' needs that might not technically be "your job." For instance, if a practitioner is running behind schedule, jump in and help by doing something such as resetting the room or escorting the client to the next station whenever possible.

SOLUTION-ORIENTED: An employee who can identify creative solutions to problems, or find new ways at looking at old problems, stands out from the crowd. If you see difficult situations and difficult people as opportunities to put your creativity to work and learn new skills, you're sure to shine. Most companies highly value and reward this type of employee.

As in many business environments, politics can sometimes get in the way of equitably resolving scheduling issues or work conditions. Make an effort to express your views in a balanced way, and then release your expectations. Accept that some things are beyond your control.

POSITIVE ATTITUDE: Simply put, attitude is everything. A positive attitude is like a magnet. It attracts good people and fortunate circumstances. It ensures that you excel in your career. Keeping a positive mindset isn't always easy, but it's always worth it. When challenges loom large, a good sense of humor can work wonders to help revive a positive attitude. •

PA An employee who can identify creative solutions to problems, or find new ways at looking at old problems, stands out from the crowd.



THE REAL REASONS WHY YOU WON'T ACHIEVE YOUR GOALS

Goal setting is the means of turning your dreams into reality. Dreams are similar to wishes: they are things we fantasize about, yet do little to make them happen. (But we're certainly ecstatic when they do.) Goals are those things to which you commit and take action to ensure their attainment.

Goal setting is tied into the reticular activating system. Our senses, particularly sight, are constantly flooded with a vast amount of stimuli, yet we are consciously aware of only a fraction of that data. Most of that information is not necessary for our well being, so it gets screened.

In essence, we have programmed filters—or in some cases, blinders—in our brains. Although this may seem like an oversimplification, it's indeed how it functions.

For example, recall the last time you decided to get a new car. You finally chose the model and color, and lo and behold, it seemed like everywhere you went, you saw your car. Now, all of those people didn't just go out and purchase those cars when you did. They were already on the road. You just hardly noticed them before because it wasn't significant to you.

This is the magnificence of goal setting. By establishing clear goals, you are programming your brain to be aware and notify your conscious mind of the information and opportunities that you desire.

WHY SOME GOALS DON'T WORK
The inability to actualize goals is

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usually related to unclear goals, lack of commitment, conflict or negative conditioning. Very few people write goals, and those who do don't always write their goals in a way that easily produce results.

Sometimes they write what they think they should want or what their spouse, parent, boss or peers think they should want.

Other times, people claim to want something, but what they really want is what that thing represents. Occasionally, conflicts exist in relation to the achievement of their goals. The attainment of one goal may preclude the fulfillment of another, or the consequences may not be viewed favorably by their immediate family and colleagues. Quite often, people have a lot of negative conditioning that they need to overcome.

There are people who write goals that aren't real for them, meaning they believe they could never achieve them. They set unrealistic deadlines or have goals that are dependent on other people. Some have page after page of goals and yet hardly ever accomplish anything. And then other people are so detail oriented that they lose sight of the big picture.

We have a tendency to get so caught up in the list-making and the things we ought to do and should do that we don't always take into account the overall picture and consider what would be the most appropriate action to take.

Life isn't about just getting by, making it from day to day. It's about reaching for and attaining our full potential at all levels. Often we do things out of habit, or because it's easy, or because we do those things well.

Effective goal setting is the groundwork for success. I advocate that you actually have written goals in addition to any other techniques you employ. The written word is powerful! By inscribing your intentions, you say to yourself and the world that you know you deserve to have these things happen.

Sometimes, people are afraid to write down their goals because they don't think they can achieve them, and thus they don't want a written reminder of their failure. Failure, per se, doesn't really exist in goal setting.

Usually, when you don't accomplish a goal it's due to setting an inappropriate deadline, having inaccurate information, experiencing blocks, encountering conflicts, not really wanting the goal, or being unwilling (or unable) to do what's required to accomplish the goal.

GOAL SETTING TECHNIQUES

1. Always state your goals in the positive present tense. If you write in the future, they may remain in the future—never attained.
2. Personalize your goals: use a pronoun, such as I, we, they, your name in every sentence.
3. Make your goals real: something you know you can accomplish on your own, without help or without someone waving a magic wand over your head.
4. Do not use the terms try, will, not, never, should, would, could or want.
5. Include deadline dates whenever possible.
6. Keep your goals SMARTER: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Tangible, Enthusiastic and Rewarding.

FROM DREAM TO REALITY

Having written goals serves to support and teach you, enhancing your self-knowledge. What is crucial is the way you actually state your goals and the individual steps necessary to accomplish them. Follow the suggested goal-setting techniques and most importantly of all, be sure they are your goals.

Setting goals can be creative and exciting: it is a necessary component of success, but it doesn't have to be a burden. Remember, the purpose of setting goals is to make your dreams become reality. •



TRANSFORM YOUR FINANCIAL ATTITUDE

Many therapists struggle financially, whether they are in private practice or work as an employee. The first step to improving your financial prospects is to transform your attitude toward money.

A lot of people do not have a healthy relationship with money. We may wish

Some people innately handle money well while others find it difficult to balance their checkbooks. Few people are taught how to manage money.

it were not the case, but money plays an important role in our lives. Some people innately handle money well while others find it difficult to balance their

checkbooks. Few people are taught how to manage money.

The only formal training people receive happens if they take economics, finance or accounting courses. Incidentally, most people taking those courses are the ones who are comfortable with the concept of money in the first place.

THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL?

Consider the often inaccurately cited biblical quote, “Money is the root of all evil.” The original quote is, “For the love of money is the root of all evil.” Money is simply a method of exchange for goods and services.

Originally people traded one thing for another. Money evolved as a method to simplify that exchange. Money is not

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a mysterious entity. Unfortunately, we imbue it with emotional significance and other qualities, because most of us do not understand how to relate to the concept of money or how to manage money in a rational way—and that is where trouble brews.

Many people in the helping professions proudly wear the poor-but-pure badge. Besides contributing to financial insecurity, this attitude often leads to questionable business practices. Many practitioners experience difficulty in charging appropriate fees for their services, while some are uncomfortable charging anything at all.

TRUE COSTS OF BUSINESS

On the flip side, employees often become resentful over the supposed disparity in their wages versus the charged fee because they haven't factored in the true costs the business owner incurred in setting up and running the business.

They only look at the \$80 the spa charges per massage and the \$30 they receive. They forget about the thousands or even millions of dollars the facility cost.

Some therapists in private practice get defensive about their rates and make statements such as, "I'm worth that much!" The paradox is that most often the people saying that are struggling. The sooner you learn that your worth has very little to do with what you charge, the happier you will be.

Your fees can only hold up to what the market will bear. And frankly, most of your work is priceless—yet the majority of clients have budgets.

WHERE DO YOU STAND?

The next step to fiscal freedom is to know where you stand financially. It's so easy to be in denial about your finances. One of my key phrases is "Do the math!" Take the time to do a personal budget. Forecast your daily, monthly and annual expenses and plan accordingly. If you intend to be self-employed then you need to do similar estimating and forecasting for your business.

One of the biggest pitfalls I see people encounter is that whenever they get extra money, such as from a better-than-usual client load for the week, they go out and spend the extra cash. Before doing that, check your cash flow forecast as you might have a large one-time expense coming up soon.

I also recommend that you put at least half of the money into a savings account, because the key to financial success, as well as life, is balance. •

Many people in the helping professions proudly wear the poor-but-pure badge. Besides contributing to financial insecurity, this attitude often leads to questionable business practices.

WHAT CE PROVIDERS DON'T WANT YOU TO KNOW



Online education provides convenient, affordable access to a wide array of topics, ranging from two-hour ethics courses to more than 150-hour modality trainings.

Many people take online courses to keep up with their required continuing education (CE) requirements, while others take courses because they want to learn about specific topics, regardless of how much credit they receive toward CE requirements.

REQUIREMENTS

If you need to find an online course to meet your CE requirements, first check with your certifying or licensing bodies

to find out their parameters before purchasing the education. Not all states have the same requirements. Find out the following:

- The number of hours required each year.
- Whether all or a percentage of the classes must be given by approved providers.
- The scope of topics that can be taken and which topics are not allowed.
- The minimum or maximum number of hours that can be allotted to certain subjects (for example, half of the hours must be hands-on or only up to one-third of the hours can be practice management).

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- The method of learning allowed (some states don't allow distance learning for certain topics).
- Specific course requirements (for example, six hours of ethics every four years or CPR recertification every five years).

CE SOURCES

Many individuals, companies and organizations provide CE courses on a range of topics. Check advertisements in trade journals, magazines, newspapers and newsletters; contact your professional association for a list of providers; view online catalogs from massage and bodywork schools as well as local community colleges, universities and adult education programs; and peruse local specialty publications.

Search online with keywords such as training, continuing education, home study, correspondence, massage schools, seminars, workshops or the specific topic you are interested in exploring.

CREDIBILITY

Knowing how to evaluate CE providers is helpful, regardless of the reasons for taking CE courses. After all, it is your time and money you are investing. The depth, breadth and overall quality of CE courses vary greatly.

Do proper research before purchasing an online course. The key aspect is the credibility of the company and individual facilitating the course. The following steps will guide you in ascertaining credibility:

1. Review marketing materials such as advertisements, brochures or website in order to answer the following questions: Do the materials project a professional image? Are the courses clearly defined with specific objectives? Are the testimonials believable and are they from real people rather than a vague reference, such as "J.R. from Dallas, Texas"? Does the company offer any type of satisfaction guarantee or quality assurance?
2. Investigate the business' history in order to answer these questions: How long has the company or individual been in business? How many classes have been given? How many

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Do proper research before purchasing an online course. The key aspect is the credibility of the company and individual facilitating the course.

people have taken courses? What are the qualifications of the developer of the course? What are the professional affiliations held? Has the company or individual received any awards? Does the company or individual have credentialing status, such as approval by the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork or a state provider?

3. Obtain references. Get feedback from people who have taken courses from this provider. The CE provider should give you names and contact information from past participants; keep in mind that the referrals will most likely be slightly biased, because such lists usually comprise happy customers. Talk with your colleagues. If you are registered with an online newsgroup, you can request support from members. You can also post questions on your Facebook page or Twitter. Ask specific questions, such as:

- How easy was it to contact the provider about the course?
- What did you like the most about the course?
- What did you like the least about the course?
- Were the course materials (handouts, manuals, videos) beneficial and of high quality?
- On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate the overall value of this course?
- Did you learn what you expected to learn?
- Were agreements kept?
- Do you think this was the best way to learn this subject? Why or why not?
- What is the likelihood of you taking another course from this company?

FACTORS

Online and distance-learning courses are ideal for people who learn best at their own pace. Keep in mind that these courses also vary: Some courses provide only written materials, while others include audio materials or videos.

Further, some courses are offered completely online, while others e-mail or mail all or a portion of the materials. Assessments can range from multiple-choice exams to written essays, documented case studies or submission of a video showing you performing a specific treatment protocol. •

**Talk with your colleagues.
If you are registered
with an online newsgroup,
you can request support
from members.
You can also post
questions on your
Facebook page or Twitter.**

GET NEW CLIENTS IN 15 EASY STEPS



A thriving practice consists of a strong base of clients who receive your massages regularly, as well as a steady stream of new clients. Unfortunately, many massage therapists become so focused on efforts to attract new clients that they overlook simple ways to enhance client retention.

Many studies have been done on customer retention. One of the most common statistics is that on the average it costs anywhere from four to 10 times as much money and takes three times the effort getting a new client as it does to retain a current client.

The good news is that you can easily master the art of retaining valued clients

It costs anywhere from four to 10 times as much money and takes three times the effort getting a new client as it does to retain a current client.

with a minimal investment of time and effort. The trick is that the effort must be consistent to succeed; the key is to make sure your clients feel valued. This article highlights time-tested ways to enhance your customer service so you can avoid the mistake of underemphasizing client retention.

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BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

The core of client retention is a solid customer service plan. At the heart of all top-notch customer service plans is one thing—a consistent, careful and creative effort to build strong relationships with clients.

In marketing lingo this is called relationship-based marketing, and it involves truly caring about how you can best serve your client's needs. In essence you become your client's partner in wellness. It isn't about convincing or selling; it's about listening, planning, educating and being proactive. It means going the extra mile to attune to your clients' needs and taking the time to express your appreciation for their business.

Building lasting client relationships takes consideration, time and some money. Keep in mind that customer service techniques are only powerful if your clients are aware of them. You could implement major changes, but if your clients aren't directly informed, they might never notice.

Ultimately the key to building strong relationships is to inspire your clients to move from a space of client satisfaction to one of client enthusiasm. In addition to inspiring clients to work with you on a regular basis, this usually results in "glowing reviews" that naturally translate into word-of-mouth referrals.

In general, the main things needed to improve retention are to maintain a client-centered approach, show that you truly care about your clients, keep your space clean and comfortable, and anticipate what your clients want—and make those services and products available.

According to social psychologists, motivational needs range from physiological to transcendent. Many postulate that the core human needs are to avoid pain and gain pleasure. In terms of receiving wellness care, clients have many wants in addition to the desire to achieve their specific wellness goals.

Ultimately the key to building strong relationships is to inspire your clients to move from a space of client satisfaction to one of client enthusiasm.

The following are the top client concerns, not necessarily ranked in order of priority. All of these factors can profoundly impact your success. When you provide what clients need before they know it, your clients appreciate your extra attention and think the world of you.

1. CONVENIENCE

The three major aspects of convenience are location, products and appointments. In real estate lingo, the phrase is "It's all about location, location, location!" In terms of location, consider things such as being near the majority of your target markets, making sure your office is easy to find and ensuring that it has ample parking.

Make sure your office is handicapped-accessible. Carry the products you use in your sessions, and stock items that you tend to recommend clients use. Offer online booking. Use a receptionist service or front desk personnel. Offer evening and weekend appointments.

2. ACCESSIBILITY

Following up on the issue of location, is it easy for your clients to get into your office? For instance, if one of your markets is people in injury rehabilitation or seniors, are there ramps (and elevators if you aren't on the first floor)? Also, if you do hands-on work on a table, is it hydraulic? (This can be crucial if any of your clients have limited mobility; or if you're really tall, you don't want clients to feel as though they have to pole vault to get on the table.)

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3. EFFICIENCY

Most people have busy lives and appreciate efficiency. Clients need to be able to easily book appointments, by phone and online. You should offer a variety of payment options. Your check-in and checkout processes should be smooth.

4. SAFETY

Safety is paramount. Your office should be in a safe neighborhood, where there is plenty of lighting for clients arriving for nighttime appointments. If there are steps leading to your office, they must be in good condition. Stairs must have handrails. Your equipment must be sturdy and in good condition. For instance, you don't want people to be worried about falling off a table or having it collapse under them.

5. VALUE

People want to get good value for the money they spend. Sometimes this is a bit difficult to identify with wellness care. Clients can more easily justify the time and money spent on your services if they have observable or quantifiable results, which is why doing treatment plans and regular assessments is crucial. Make sure you offer a good return on investment. Perform thorough intake interviews and follow up with progress assessments.

6. COURTESY

Keep in mind that your clients pay your bills. Treat them with respect and courtesy. Greet clients with a smile and handshake, and call them by name.

7. RELIABILITY

Reliability can make or break your practice—and is one of the major complaints employers have with practitioners. Be punctual. Make sure the quality of your work is consistent.

8. COMPASSION

You must honor clients for who they

Keep in mind that your clients pay your bills. Treat them with respect and courtesy. Greet clients with a smile and handshake, and call them by name.

are and have compassion for their issues and challenges. Offer comfort while maintaining boundaries. Take the time to listen to clients and discover their concerns and goals. Conduct thorough intake interviews and co-create treatment plans with your clients. Be well-versed in the issues, options and protocols of the major common concerns of your target markets.

9. INTEGRITY

People trust you with their bodies. It's imperative that you're a person of integrity. Maintain a client-centered approach. Keep your agreements. Honor confidentiality.

10. ATTENTION

Treat your clients like they're the center of the universe. For some people, that can be more valuable than the actual work you do with them. Review client files before each session and make notes afterward. Be fully present during the session. Make every attempt to accommodate clients' special requests, such as those related to temperature, sound and favorite music.

11. ACCEPTANCE

People crave being accepted for who they are. Plus, so many people have body issues. Coming from a position of acceptance can be incredibly healing for your clients. Operate from a position of nondiscrimination. Respect clients even if they don't share your beliefs or don't do what you recommend.

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12. EXPERTISE

Clients expect you to excel in your work. Keep up with current research. Regularly take advanced continuing education classes. Read trade journals. Confer with other health care practitioners.

13. CARE

Establishing trust and credibility encourages people to commit to working with you on a regular basis and following through on their wellness goals. The key to developing long-term professional relationships is that you must truly care about how you can best serve your clients' needs.

Creating treatment plans is the cornerstone of client retention and compliance. Do thorough intake interviews in which your clients identify their long-term and short-term wellness goals, and then develop a treatment plan together. By doing this you identify their needs, clarify your role, and determine what other services they might need.

Your role here is to educate clients on their options so they can choose how to proceed. It's very crucial to list the long-term goals as well as the immediate ones: When they've achieved the desired results of the immediate goals, you are still there to work with them on the next phase of their wellness.

14. PLAN

Always review clients' charts before their sessions. Before you do any hands-on work, update the clients' long-term treatment plans and set specific goals for the current sessions. Take the time to research potentially effective techniques or other recommended services for specific client conditions, and prepare handouts of resources and referrals of other wellness providers. Place a check-in call the day after the first session, as well as whenever a client experiences dramatic changes from your work.

Always review clients' charts before their sessions. Before you do any hands-on work, update the clients' long-term treatment plans and set specific goals for the current sessions.

15. PROFESSIONALISM

Being professional includes your communications, your attire, and the steps you take to go beyond basic customer service. Greet clients with a smile and a handshake. Have water or tea for clients to drink. Share information and resources. Send thank-you notes for referrals and give clients some reward for every referral. Return calls within 24 hours. Make confirmation calls. Professionalism also includes maintaining a clean, safe environment, and using high-quality products and supplies.

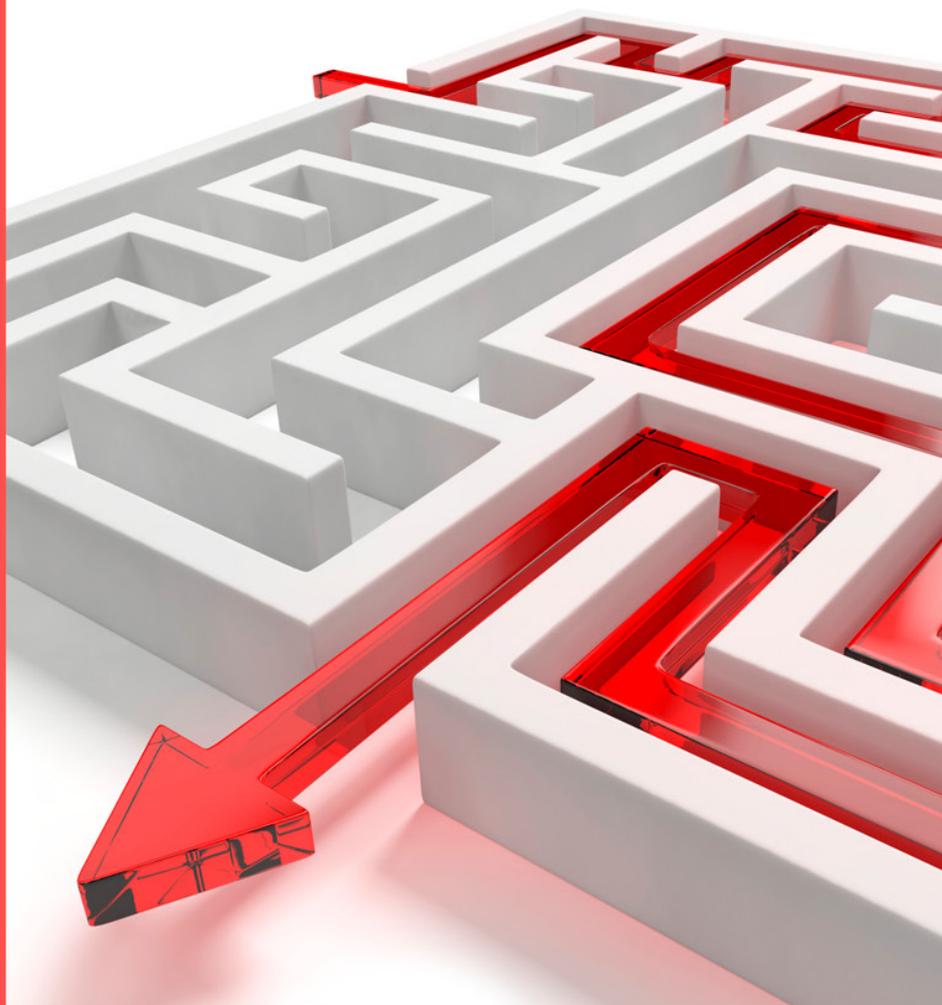
Ensure that all of those things match the image you want to portray. Stock books and products that can be beneficial to clients.

Keep in touch by sending clients announcements, newsletters, and newspaper or magazine clippings on topics in which they've expressed interest. Hold events such as monthly open houses, demonstrations and free workshops for clients and their guests. Send greeting cards for birthdays and anniversaries.

Ask clients to give you feedback either verbally or on a comment card. Offer incentives and freebies. Post published newspaper or magazine articles about your clients' achievements in your office and on your website—with their permission, of course, so as not to violate confidentiality. •

This article was adapted from *Business Mastery*, Fifth Edition, by Cherie Sohnen-Moe.

HERE'S THE EXACT STRATEGY FOR MARKETING THAT WORKS



Throughout the life of your business, you will encounter times when it is vital to reassess your direction. Your practice might be on a path for which you hadn't planned—or it might be stalled altogether. Have you found yourself asking, “How did I get here?” or “How can I get to where I want to be?”

You might have an elaborate business plan with specific goals, but if you don't have the self-assessment tools to chart your path successfully, then you won't get where you need to. Come with me on a journey of self-exploration and assessment to put your practice on a successful path.

ARE YOU OFF TRACK?

It can be difficult to change career direction when you're experiencing the outward manifestations of success. Some common indicators that point to the need to re-evaluate your practice's growth may include:

If you don't have the self-assessment tools to chart your path successfully, then you won't get where you need to.

- Working too many hours, yet not having enough billable hours
- Developing the practice to where there's too much work to do by yourself
- Outgrowing your physical space
- Needing to better serve your clientele
- Attempting to appeal to too many target markets
- Offering too wide a range of services
- Restlessness or vague dissatisfaction

Refrain from taking action without first considering the ramifications. Before implementing major shifts in your practice,

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step back and identify what is important to you and determine how you ultimately want to run your business and lead your life. Then, evaluate your current status. Once you've done these steps, you are in a much better position to decide the best way to take your practice to the next level.

Start this process by focusing on the bigger picture of your life. Are you satisfied in most areas? Are you living the life you choose or have you acquiesced to what's come your way?

WANTS, NEEDS & VALUES

A satisfying and balanced life occurs when your values are in synchrony with the way you live your life and run your business. Invest the time in exploring your values. After all, they are the major conscious and unconscious influences on the decisions you make throughout your life. Many conflicts in one's life, both professional and personal, arise because there is a clash of values either within oneself or with others.

PERSONAL VALUES

1. MY IDEAL LIFE

- What would I do with my life if I could do anything? Why?

2. HAPPINESS

- The people I know who seem to be happy are happy because:
- I am happiest when I am:
- What is my most treasured memory? Why?

3. RELATIONSHIPS

- The most admirable things about me are:
- When I look at my home life, the activities that are of the most worth are:
- The things I most value in a relationship are:
- Who and what have been major influences in the development of my values?
- Who are the most important people in my life? What could I do to improve those relationships?

A satisfying and balanced life occurs when your values are in synchrony with the way you live your life and run your business.

4. CORE VALUES

- What values are most important to me?
- What are the character traits I deem essential?
- What is the greatest accomplishment of my life? What do I hope to do that is as great or even better?
- If I only had one year to live, I would concentrate on:
- Am I doing those things now? If not, why?

After you've identified the elements of life that are truly important to you, then examine how your career fits into that picture. How does your business support your life vision and how does it detract from it?

PROFESSIONAL VALUES

1. WORK LIFE

- My attitudes and beliefs about wellness are:
- My attitudes and beliefs about my profession are:

2. PROFESSIONALISM

- How do my values enhance my professionalism and affect my work with clients?
- What are the most meaningful attributes of an effective practitioner in my field?
- Which of my personal values might conflict with professional rules of conduct?
- Which of my personal values might conflict with laws or regulations?
- What is my commitment to customer service?

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3. CORE VALUES

- What are the most important personal characteristics for someone in my field?
- What are the key professional characteristics for someone in my field?
- When I look at my work life, the activities that have the most worth to me are:
- What are the key elements I embrace in running a business?

SUCCESS MARKERS

Quite often we have conflicting ideas of what it means to be successful, and our requirements for success may vary greatly in the personal, business and social realms. What does success really mean to you?

Are you successful only if you earn a certain amount of money, perform miracles in your work, look a particular way, are in a perfect relationship, drive a great car or live in the right neighborhood? Is success a “thing” to achieve or a way of being? Make a list of your major success markers and assess where you are in terms of achieving those markers.

For instance, let’s say one of your success markers is to work with 20 clients each week. Look over your records for the past month and calculate the average number of people you see each week. Then do the same for the past several quarters and also note the direction you’ve been going. Are you moving toward your goal, or away from it?

Typical success markers

- Gross income a business generates
- Profit or salary
- Number of years in practice
- Number of years in current job
- Scope of practice
- Total client base
- Number of clients seen each week
- Number of hours worked
- Amount of leisure time enjoyed
- Number of associates and employees
- Office location, square footage or ambiance

- Prominence on a local, national or international level

EVALUATE YOUR PRACTICE

The next phase in determining the best way to take your practice to the next level is to evaluate your practice in terms of overall descriptive factors, numbers, statistics, your personal qualities and professional capabilities.

Summarize the current state of your career or business experience. Include the length of time you have been in this field, your average yearly income, your average yearly expenses, your gross profit, perks, the number of clients you see each week and your total number of clients. Define your major target markets and how many clients are in each of those target markets.

Look over your records for the past month and calculate the average number of people you see each week... Are you moving toward your goal, or away from it?

If you are an employee, you might not know all of those statistics, but other pertinent information to include are such things as seniority status, shift, title and benefits.

Reflect on your personality characteristics that make you good at your job. Consider such qualities as confidence, positive mental attitude, flexibility, maintains healthy boundaries, willing to take risks, determination, focus, caring and respectful. How good are your communication skills? Do you enjoy having co-workers or prefer to be in private practice? Most importantly, what do you really think about your clients? When you work with people, do you feel a sense of honor at being allowed to touch another human being?

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Describe what it is you actually do. What approach do you take to your work? What techniques do you utilize? What is your level of expertise? Do you regularly invest in continuing education? Do you use any special equipment or tools? How do you run the day-to-day operations of your practice? What is your level of business acumen?

Taking in all the information from your evaluation, contemplate what sets you apart from other massage therapists. Most people claim to be unique, and I can say that from experiencing more than 1,000 massages, I've never had the same massage—even from people with the same training. What sets you apart is a combination of your training, personality and philosophy. Sometimes other key factors in your differential advantage are your equipment, hours and location. So, what makes you unique?

MATCHING FUTURE TO PRESENT

The final step in evaluating your practice is to compare and contrast your ideal vision of your practice with its current status. Once this groundwork is established, you can more easily be objective in your business direction decision-making process. Consider the following questions:

- What are the three attributes of your practice of which you are most proud?
- What is working well?
- What success markers have you achieved?
- What success markers are on target of being achieved?
- What isn't working well?
- What success markers have you not achieved?
- What changes would you like to see occur?
- What do you want to be doing that you aren't doing now?
- What would you like people to say about your business?
- How does your business support your life vision?
- How does your business detract from your life vision?

Sometimes other key factors in your differential advantage are your equipment, hours and location. So, what makes you unique?

ALTER YOUR COURSE

The two most common options for altering your course are expansion and contraction. Expansion can include offering new modalities and services, adding more products to your retail line, attracting new target markets, increasing the number of hours worked, enlarging the square footage of your physical location, opening another location, hiring office staff, hiring other practitioners, joining with other practitioners as associates or partners, augmenting your marketing endeavors and diversifying your practice to include such activities as teaching or doing research.

Contraction can include narrowing your focus to a specific condition or modality, reducing the number of target markets you serve, working less hours, hiring support staff, getting a smaller office and reducing your overhead expenses.

STAY OR GO

Ultimately, there are no right or wrong answers when it comes to making a choice to stay on a path or move to a new one. The only true factor is what the best decision is for you in terms of your overall needs, wants and goals. Keep in mind, bigger is not always better. Also, you don't have to pursue each of your talents or abilities.

Note it is not always easy to see all of your options by yourself, as in telling the proverbial trees from the forest. You might consider working on this process with a colleague, counselor or coach. I wish you great success in taking your practice to the next level. •



20 MUST-KNOW TECHNIQUES THAT WILL KEEP CLIENTS COMING BACK FOR MORE

You graduated with expertise in Swedish massage, and that's an excellent foundation for your practice—but there are many advanced techniques to learn and offer.

Advanced education and specialization will help your clients, your business and your professional growth. Here are 20 massage and bodywork techniques that reflect the ever-changing practice of massage therapy.

AROMATHERAPY: The use of aromatic essences and essential oils extracted from plants to create, depending on the oil or blend, relaxation, invigoration and other physical effects. **WHAT'S NEW:** Delivery systems for essential oils now include diffusers, roll-on sticks and



Aromatherapy

granules along with traditional liquid drops.

ASIAN BODYWORK THERAPY: A term that covers acupressure, amma, AMMA

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Therapy, Chi Nei Tsang, Jin Shin Do Bodymind Acupressure, medical qigong, traditional Thai bodywork and tuina, as well as shiatsu and derivatives. **WHAT'S NEW:** Although thousands of years old, Asian Bodywork is experiencing a renaissance of public understanding and acceptance.

ASSISTED STRETCHING: Various types of stretching protocols used by the massage therapist on an engaged or passive client. **WHAT'S NEW:** More clients are aware of the benefits of stretching, and as one national massage franchise has added assisted stretching to its menu options, this technique will only continue to grow in popularity.

CHAIR MASSAGE: A fully clothed, seated massage session, which can incorporate various other bodywork techniques, usually done in a public space. **WHAT'S NEW:** As employers wise up to the benefits of healthy employees to their bottom line, more are implementing workplace wellness programs that include massage.

CRANIOSACRAL THERAPY: This technique involves a light-touch modality that uses gentle, soft touch to release restrictions in the membranes around the brain and spinal cord. **WHAT'S NEW:** This technique is being used to address medical conditions including autism and anxiety.

CUPPING: By creating suction and negative pressure, cupping is said to soften tight muscles, tone attachments, loosen adhesions, lift connective tissue, hydrate



Cupping is growing in popularity, as the public notices athletes and celebrities touting its benefits.

and increase blood flow to body tissues, and drain excess fluids and toxins by opening lymphatic pathways. **WHAT'S NEW:** Cupping is growing in popularity, as the public notices athletes and celebrities touting its benefits.

ENERGY THERAPY: Techniques that restore balance and move energy. These include Healing Touch, Therapeutic Touch and Reiki. **WHAT'S NEW:** More hospitals now offer energy therapies, as they are seen as a way to help patients relax and recharge.

FACE-LIFT, OR FACIAL, MASSAGE: Acupressure, manual lymph drainage and massage strokes used on the face to stimulate blood flow, relax the muscles, reduce the appearance of lines and refresh skin. **WHAT'S NEW:** As consumers turn away from plastic surgery and toward holistic beauty treatments, this type of technique is increasingly

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seen as a staple in anti-aging programs.

GERIATRIC MASSAGE: Massage modified to address age-related conditions, including lessened mobility and thinner skin. **WHAT'S NEW:** Every day, 10,000 Americans reach the age of 65—and this generation has more interest in complementary health care, and more money, than did previous generations.

HANDS-FREE MASSAGE: Use of the feet, forearms and tools to perform massage, rather than the palms, fingers, thumbs or knuckles. **WHAT'S NEW:** Specific techniques such as Ashiatsu Oriental Bar Therapy, NO HANDS Massage, The Auth Method and Forearm Dance Technique offer unique ways to not use hands, which could mean a longer career for the massage therapist.

INSTRUMENT ASSISTED SOFT TISSUE MOBILIZATION: Massage Therapy performed with the assistance of specialized tools. **WHAT'S NEW:** Leading educational companies are creating multipart protocols using tools and additional techniques, such as scraping, taping and stretching, or scraping, taping and movement therapy.

LIGHT AND LASER THERAPIES: Pain-relief tools that can be used in combination with massage therapy to address pain, injury, scar tissue and cellulite. These devices incorporate red and infrared light. **WHAT'S NEW:** The effectiveness of light, laser and massage combined is seen as a valuable add-on that

helps clients leave a session more limber and relaxed.

MASSAGE FOR WOMEN & CHILDREN: Techniques include abdominal therapy, pregnancy massage, infant massage and pediatric massage. **WHAT'S NEW:** The ability of touch to assist with fertility issues, support women



Start babies off on a healthy path and help children—especially those in the medical environment—feel less fear and anxiety.

during pregnancy, start babies off on a healthy path and help children—especially those in the medical environment—feel less fear and anxiety is increasingly seen as a type of specialization that helps society overall.

MEDICAL MASSAGE: The application of massage techniques to address specific physical conditions, sometimes by diagnosis of a physician. **WHAT'S NEW:** The number of hospitals offering massage to patients, staff and the

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public is growing consistently, providing an opportunity for massage therapists to learn advanced skills and work with physicians.

MYOFASCIAL RELEASE: A method of affecting connective tissue by applying pressure in the direction of fascial resistance. **WHAT'S NEW:** insights and studies into the nature of fascia are showing that everything under the skin is connected.

RELAXATION, OR SWEDISH, MASSAGE: Stroking, kneading, percussion, vibration and friction. **WHAT'S NEW:** Research is increasingly indicating that simply relaxing, such as what a client does during Swedish massage, has great effects on pain and anxiety.

ROLFING® STRUCTURAL INTEGRATION: This method strives for realignment of the body's structural relationship with gravity and consists of deep-tissue work on the fascia, conducted during a period of 10 sessions. **WHAT'S NEW:** The addition of Rolf Movement® to the 10-series or as a standalone technique.

SALT THERAPY: When Himalayan salt's minerals are absorbed through the skin, they help balance the body's pH and aid in proper metabolism, improving circulation and calming the nervous system. **WHAT'S NEW:** Salt is now available in forms including granules, stones, blocks, lamps and warmers—so it can easily be combined with other treatments such as a facial, foot or hand scrub, or body exfoliation.

STONE THERAPY: Heated or cooled stones used to perform massage or trigger-point work, or placed on the body for energy balancing or to elicit a physiological response. **WHAT'S NEW:** Tools take this therapy beyond basalt and marble stones, with manmade heatable or chillable “stones” and seashells used as handheld tools.

TAPING: The practice of applying elastic tape to the skin to provide a gentle lifting effect, which can help ease muscular tension, improve blood and lymphatic circulation, and extend the benefits of massage



Taping can help ease muscular tension, improve blood and lymphatic circulation, and extend the benefits of massage beyond the end of the session.

beyond the end of the session. **WHAT'S NEW:** Olympic athletes bearing stripes of tape put this technique on the map, and it is now used extensively by massage therapists with both sports-minded and mobility-impaired clients. •

3 MYTHS OF MESSAGE RETAIL AND WHY IT'S HOLDING YOU BACK



Ten years ago, the majority of massage therapists rarely sold products, and those who did only sold a fraction of what they could have sold. Of course, there were those rare exceptions. Recently, a growing interest in retailing has emerged. Some of that is due to employers' expectations, yet most of the curiosity stems from therapists' desire to support their clients' well-being, while boosting their own revenue streams.

Unfortunately, the majority of therapists are still reluctant to embrace retailing. This article explores three primary myths regarding retailing in a massage practice and concludes with the top three tips to retailing success.

MYTH 1: I am a healer, not a salesperson
I have heard that phrase far too many

times. The closely related claims are along the lines of, "Clients come to me for massage, not products," or "Massage is about my hands, not about sales."

The truth is, clients see massage therapists for many reasons, ranging from stress reduction to injury rehabilitation to getting fit to pure pampering. The benefits clients receive from seeing you comprise much more than the actual hands-on portion of the session. Some of the most profound outcomes result from other things, such as a client experiences someone (you) who truly listens without judgment—or the client experiences being the center of the universe for an hour. This also applies to products. You increase the benefits your clients receive by using

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appropriate products in the treatment and then offering those items for sale. After all, there is only so much you can accomplish in a given session.

I have collaborated for several years with Lynda Solien-Wolfe, Lynda Solien-Wolfe, vice president, Massage and Spa at Performance Health, on the topic of retailing. We have facilitated workshops and written articles, and have a website and Facebook page ([facebook.com/RetailMastery](https://www.facebook.com/RetailMastery)) on this topic. She coined a phrase that has inspired us throughout this adventure:

When it comes to retailing, you need to drive your BUS to selling success:

B—Believe in the products you use.

U—Use the products in your sessions.

S—Supply samples to your clients.

You have a unique position with your clients due to the nature of the therapeutic relationship. You know about their needs and what products might support them in achieving their goals. If you view products as an extension of the treatment and a value-added service, then sales become a natural part of the client-practitioner relationship, without pressure—particularly when you use the product within the session. You can also create packages where you use specific products in a session and the client takes the products, or what is left of them, home.

Product sales offer clients a valuable service, because you have access to many products that aren't easily available to the general public. For instance, there are wonderful self-care products your average clients can't find at their local health emporium. Many of these products aren't even directly available to retail consumers; instead, they must be purchased by a practitioner and then sold to the client.

I believe you do your clients a disservice if you don't have products they can purchase. Many people are overworked, and time management is a problem for them. If you can save them the time of having to stop to buy a product, then you've simplified their lives—and that's priceless. Also, clients with tight schedules may not have the time to fit in both a treatment and the purchase of wellness products, and you don't want them to have to choose one over the other. After all, they might not choose the massage treatment.

How many times have you used a product on a client and she said, "Wow, that feels great; what is it?" and you responded by just stating the name of the product? Instead, you could tell the client the name of the product, mention that it's for sale out in the waiting area, and give her a brief suggestion about its use, such as, "This will really help if you apply a small amount before going to bed

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Many people are overworked, and time management is a problem for them. If you can save them the time of having to stop to buy a product, then you've simplified their lives.

tonight. If you are interested, I can explain it more after the session.”

MYTH 2: Product sales will cheapen my practice

Some practitioners fear that clients will see them as unprofessional or unethical if they try to sell them things. They want to be respectful and not cross boundaries. The reality is, appropriate product sales actually boost professionalism.

Offering products make a massage practice more valuable to clients. Clients want you to carry products that help them achieve their wellness goals. Most also appreciate you having a few items they can purchase as a treat or gift.

The tricky part is balance. Your retail offerings should be modest, unless you have a bustling office with numerous practitioners, a large waiting area where you can display a lot of products, and a front desk person to process orders.

Ethical product sales are not about hype or hard-sell tactics. You must be cautious when selling products. If product sales are not handled well, they can negatively impact your practice. The major issue here is: Are you influenced more by the money that product sales generate, or are you selling products to clients because they need or want them? Exercise caution and check your motives to make certain you are not pushing a little harder because your income

is down or because you are required to meet a targeted sales volume.

A conflict doesn't need to exist as long as a few guidelines are followed. If you currently run a professional, ethical practice, then retailing can naturally follow suit. If you keep good boundaries, treat people with respect and fairness, and remain client-centered, then you will manage product sales in the same manner that you manage the rest of your practice.

MYTH 3: Selling products is complicated

Much of the reluctance to sell products stems from the fear of the required paperwork, not knowing what products to choose, and not knowing where to purchase products. The good news is the fundamentals of retailing are easy to implement, the laws related to retail are easy to comply with, collecting and remitting sales tax is quite easy to do once you have the proper licenses, and there are many products to choose.

Let's start with paperwork. The first thing you need is a Transaction Privilege Tax License if you live in a state that requires you to collect and remit sales tax. Many cities and counties impose additional local sales taxes. Sales tax is calculated by multiplying the purchase price by the applicable tax rate, and is collected by the seller at the time of sale. Technically, you

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Offering products make a massage practice more valuable to clients. Clients want you to carry products that help them achieve their wellness goals.

don't have to collect it, but that is the amount you must remit to the government. If you don't charge your clients the sales tax, that money comes out of your pocket. Keeping track of this is extremely easy if you use business software that calculates the tax you need to collect and prepares the required reports.

There are so many products you can sell. You just need to make sure there aren't any local statutes or specific industry guidelines forbidding the sale of certain items. In addition to health care products designed to assist in the relief of pain and promote well-being, it's fine to sell ancillary items that are fun or make for unique gifts. Selling products that help clients feel pampered is also appropriate. Do proper research and test the products on yourself.

When choosing the right product, ideally choose one that is not commonly sold, is unique, and if possible, is an extension of your work. Ideally, you would use some of these items in your sessions so your clients associate those items with their experience of your work.

Financial success in retailing requires that you purchase products at wholesale prices and mark up those prices appropriately. Many practitioners purchase items from a distributor that carries a wide selection from a variety of manufacturers, or buy bulk products directly from a manufacturer or publisher. Sometimes you can get a better price if you go directly to the manufacturer.

Yet, many manufacturers only sell through distributors. The main benefits of buying from a distributor are you only have to place one order, and the minimum quantity orders might be more flexible than the manufacturer's requirements. The bottom line is you need to find companies with which you feel comfortable.

EDUCATED SALES

Product sales are a great diversification method, and profits from them can defray overhead expenses. Product sales add value to your sessions, extend benefits at home, and increase your bottom line. Product sales are a natural extension of the standard of care and healing already associated with massage therapy.

You already have a relationship with your clients, and retailing is simply another avenue of supporting your clients in their wellness. Clients like to get products from you, and they appreciate the convenience of being able to do so. They expect you to have more knowledge than they do about these products, and will trust your recommendations. Ultimately, selling products is just like selling your services—simply share your enthusiasm about them. If you make your products visible, accessible, attractive and affordable, your clients will buy them when appropriate.

Educating your clients about products means there is no real reason to have to sell anything to your clients. •

In addition to health care products designed to assist in the relief of pain and promote well-being, it's fine to sell ancillary items that are fun or make for unique gifts.



MY SECRET WEAPON FOR WINNING OVER MDS

Building a referral community with health professionals is a great way to build a massage business. Here I'll explain how you can develop affiliations, initiate contact, approach and build relationship with medical personnel, including physicians and chiropractors.

Those efforts are what, collectively, are known as networking.

DEVELOP DIRECT AFFILIATIONS

Assemble a list of people with whom you want to build alliances. Start by identifying allied providers who work with your target markets. Conduct an online search to find local providers.

Ask your clients, colleagues, friends and family for names of people for your list and why they recommend them. Determine

your purpose, priorities and goals for developing these alliances, and create an action plan. Consider how much time you want to invest, the types of professions—and how many—you want to include in your network, and the levels of interaction you desire.

Start developing affiliations by establishing credibility. Many allied providers (particularly physicians) are required to obtain layers of licensure and certification. This leads them to judge competency by the number and types of certificates hanging on a wall—so some type of professional certification is helpful. Yet pieces of paper aren't the only badges of credibility.

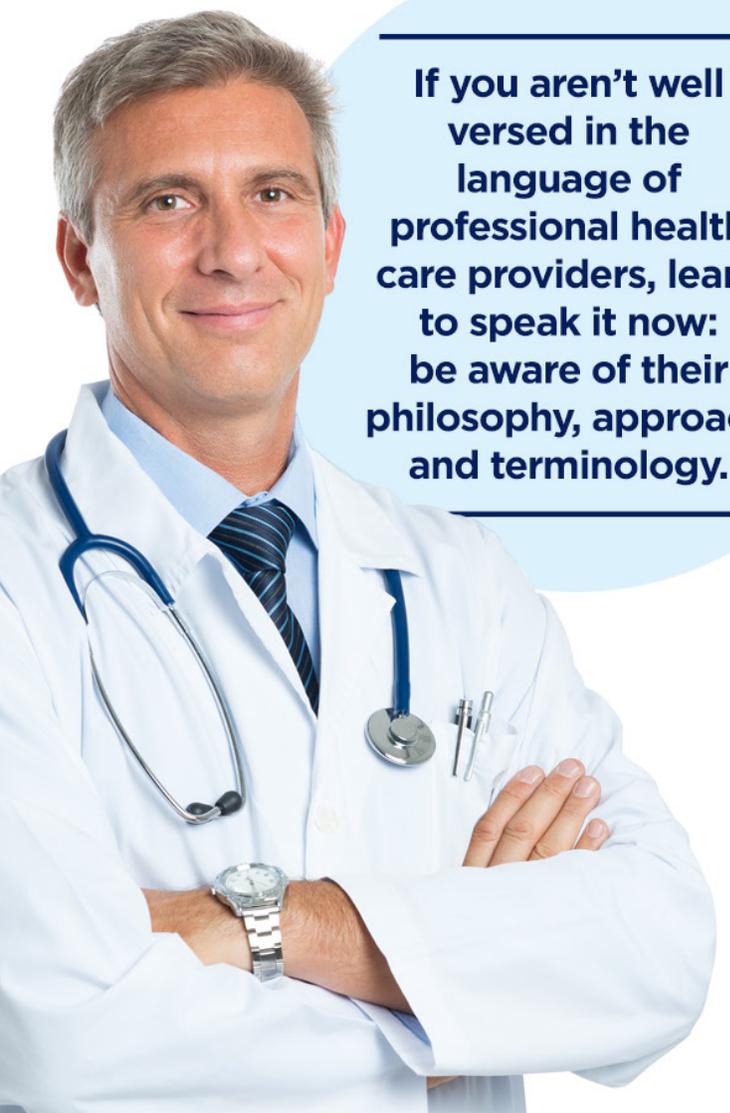
You can enhance your visibility and

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credibility by getting involved in the activities described in the previous section on increasing public awareness. In addition to those activities, you could attend meetings at which there are other practitioners, join a local wellness organization (usually sponsored by a hospital), or volunteer your services for a charitable organization.

If you aren't well versed in the language of professional health care providers, learn to speak it now: be aware of their philosophy, approach and terminology. While it's fine to refer to your leg as a "calf" when talking to the general public, you're less credible if you aren't more technical while addressing other practitioners (in those instances, you might reference a specific muscle, such as the gastrocnemius).

Keep in mind that not everyone shares your particular approach to wellness care. While many practitioners believe in and



If you aren't well versed in the language of professional health care providers, learn to speak it now: be aware of their philosophy, approach and terminology.

specialize in prevention, others, such as physical therapists, general physicians and surgeons, spend most of their time working with people on the remedial side of health care.

INITIATE CONTACT

Some people prefer the front-door approach while others feel more comfortable with the side-door or even back-door method of developing affiliations. You might consider using a combination of these approaches.

Regardless of the approach, be sure to emphasize how your services enhance their practices and support their clients' goals. Briefly share about your training, highlight any unique modalities or equipment you use, and provide client testimonials.

FRONT-DOOR APPROACH

The three most common front-door approaches are the telephone, the mail (or email), or in person. Some people feel very comfortable just walking in and introducing themselves. This is a lot easier if your office is located close to other providers. In general, though, people prefer to initiate contact with a letter or telephone call. When you know the practitioner, a phone call usually suffices.

An effective technique for generating prospective alliance partners is to send a mailing to targeted wellness professionals. Direct the emphasis of your letter to the benefits of the reader. First introduce yourself and say what you do, including your abilities and qualifications. Focus on how you can help them, their practices and their clients. Create a separate letter for each type of practitioner you contact. For each type of provider you contact, include examples of how your services address their specific needs.

For instance, chiropractors see people who suffer from arthritis, back pain, fibromyalgia, migraines, injuries

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from sports activities, job injuries and automobile accidents. Psychiatrists work with people experiencing pain, stress disorders and migraines, as well as support people in personal growth and wellbeing. Obstetricians work with women experiencing back pain, edema, hormonal fluctuations and body image issues, as well as support general mother/child wellbeing. Touch therapists work with people of all ages, providing services ranging from relaxation to injury rehabilitation.

Highlight the mutual benefits of your association. Reassure your prospective colleagues that your intent is to support and complement each other's practice, not compete for clientele. Close the letter by telling them how to contact you, and that if you don't hear from them within the next 2 weeks, you will contact them.

Enclose your promotional material and a research article that lends credence to your claim for potential benefits. You can also include a stamped, pre-printed return postcard that allows the practitioner to respond directly. After the letter has been sent, you must follow up.

SIDE-DOOR APPROACH

The side-door approach is usually taken with the practitioner who keeps a buffer person—a nurse, assistant, or office manager—between herself and the public. This mainly occurs with medical doctors, chiropractors, dentists and other clinicians. Always treat these gatekeepers courteously, because they're the ones who will get you in the door to meet the practitioner (and encourage client referrals once a relationship is established). Be direct. Inform the office staff that you're interested in developing alliances with other providers.

If you're unable to make an appointment with the practitioner, ask when would be a good time to drop off your brochure. When you deliver your brochure, ask the office manager if she has any questions about

your services or background, and offer to demonstrate your work, for example, by teaching a 5-minute self-massage routine. Give free sessions to the provider and the staff. This is time well invested, because if you get the opportunity to demonstrate your services, and the recipient is impressed with the benefits, that person is likely to be interested in building an alliance with you. Give a certificate for the session(s), and if possible, book the appointment(s) before you leave.

Another way to build alliances through the side door involves your current clients. When conducting intake interviews, ask your clients if they're working with other wellness providers. If so, get their

Another way to build alliances through the side door involves your current clients. When conducting intake interviews, ask your clients if they're working with other wellness providers.

permission to send a note to those providers. This could range from a simple letter of introduction informing each practitioner that you're working with their client, to a more in-depth report with a brief description of your assessment, treatment plan and progress notes. (Follow HIPAA guidelines when appropriate, and also include your promotional literature and extra business cards.)

BACK-DOOR APPROACH

The back-door approach can appear to be the least threatening entrance to developing professional relationships. There are various ways to enter through the back door. You can get to know other practitioners by sponsoring a talk show on radio or cable (on which you bring

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wellness providers as guests) or by hosting an open house.

You can also encounter practitioners by attending networking events, social engagements, professional society meetings, special interest group meetings, professional development seminars and civic functions. Research these groups to determine which ones are most likely to attract the types of practitioners you wish to meet.

An example of attending events to develop professional alliances and get clients happened when I did a seminar tour in Australia. One of the participants in my workshop in Brisbane was a business coach. She attended my seminar for a dual purpose: to learn new information, but mainly to get new clients.

Here was a perfect opportunity: She could spend two days getting to know many people who were obviously interested in their professional development—with the knowledge that I wouldn't be there to work with them on an ongoing basis.

FORGE RELATIONSHIPS

Your first official meeting with a wellness provider sets the tone for the relationship. Be punctual and look professional. Ideally you will also be giving a session, so your clothing can be a little more casual. Wear what you normally would while working with a client in your facility. Business attire is appropriate if you aren't giving a session. Greet the practitioner with a handshake and smile.

Briefly share information about yourself and encourage the provider to share information about her practice. Discuss ways in which you could be of mutual benefit (including reducing the demands on her time and energy) and set goals.

Confer about approaches to different situations, and determine how you would like to work together. Be certain to cover the preferred methods of future communication about shared clients. Some

people favor written correspondence only, while others like to discuss cases and proactively work together to enhance clients' wellbeing.

While it isn't imperative that the practitioner experience your work, I strongly advise you make it happen. If she claims she is too busy, offer to do a modified session at her convenience. Also give a free session to the staff (see the previous section on initiating contact). Be upfront: tell her that it's important to

You can encounter practitioners by attending networking events, social engagements, professional society meetings, special interest group meetings, professional development seminars and civic functions.

experience your work firsthand to ethically feel good about making referrals to you.

The converse is also true. For you to refer clients to her, you need to experience her work—or in the very least get a sense of her methodology and style, which can be done by assessing the person's demeanor, office environment, and written materials such as intake forms and information pamphlets.

When you give her a treatment, do an intake interview, take notes and submit a sample of your records. This is of particular importance if you aren't a primary care provider, because it demonstrates your ability to do charting and follow-up.

Before you leave this meeting schedule the next one—whether it's a telephone conversation, another session, or a more formal face-to-face meeting. Sometimes the steps to forging a relationship take several meetings to accomplish. •

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**YOU HAVE
7 SECONDS**

**TO MAKE A
FIRST
IMPRESSION**

When I hear the phrase present yourself powerfully, I immediately think about public speaking—yet, presenting yourself powerfully isn't limited to just giving formal presentations or performing chair massage at public events.

Everything you do and say contributes to your overall image. Presenting yourself powerfully means exuding an image of confidence, compassion and professionalism.

Presenting yourself powerfully translates into increased self-satisfaction and improved career success.

This is important when speaking one on one with current clients in your office or on the telephone and informally talking to potential clients—as well as giving formal presentations. Presenting yourself powerfully translates into increased self-satisfaction and improved career success.

The key elements to enhance your image are your communication skills, vocabulary and grammar, marketing and presentation materials, personal presence and self-confidence.

COMMUNICATION

Skillful communication is the foundation of healthy relationships and thriving practices. In fact, one of the common threads of highly successful practitioners is

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effective communication skills. Advanced technical skills and business savvy are simply not enough. Without good communication skills, the growth of your business is likely to lag.

Communication skills are also known as people skills because, at its best, communicating involves connecting with people in positive and productive ways. As you enhance your skills in this area, you can expect to increase productivity, reduce stress and improve teamwork. You can also build stronger client relationships and minimize the potential for misunderstandings with colleagues, co-workers and clients. However, the greatest benefit manifests in clients who feel at ease and experience high levels of satisfaction with your work.

Skillful communication is a two-way process that involves an exchange of ideas, emotions and attitudes. The ultimate goal of communication is to elicit some type of action. The communication skills necessary in effective therapeutic relationships are the ability to establish rapport, listen to answers, effectively utilize communication technology, be patient, make astute observations, elicit information, ask open-ended questions, gain cooperation, conduct excellent interviews, ask for input, assert boundaries, use active listening techniques and show genuine concern.

VOCAL QUALITIES

Your vocal qualities, such as timbre, pacing and volume impact your communications. The energy in your voice conveys your sincerity. Practice speaking from your diaphragm to raise and lower the pitch and volume. Moderate the inflection and energy you use and the rate and rhythm at which you speak. Avoid ending your sentences in a raised voice, unless you are asking a question. Articulate clearly. If you have an accent, take extra care in pronouncing your name. Most people say their names too quickly,

Taking the time and effort to enhance your communication skills serves you well and contributes to projecting a powerful image.

and if it's also hard to understand, your listeners will be spending the next several minutes trying to figure out your name and miss whatever else you are telling them. Also, avoid fillers such as um, uh, er, like and you know.

Taking the time and effort to enhance your communication skills serves you well and contributes to projecting a powerful image. Like any skill, achieving a degree of mastery takes practice—and in this case, a willingness to take a fresh look at your communication style and behaviors.

VOCABULARY & GRAMMAR

Now we explore the key points on what to say. Choose your words carefully. The rapport you build and the credibility you establish are either enhanced or diminished by your vocabulary and grammar.

Be certain the language you use is appropriate to the listener, and is friendly yet not too personal. Avoid street slang and overly formal language.

Only use technical terminology when you know the listener will understand what you are saying. The terminology you use when speaking to a group of young athletes will be different than what you use when giving a presentation to a group of physicians, for example.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

Vocabulary and grammar are even more important with written communications. Grammar mistakes, especially, are much more prominent in writing.

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Always check spelling and punctuation. Unfortunately, just using spell check isn't sufficient; in that it won't flag a word if it is spelled correctly yet is not the word you want to use.

Imagine the negative impact if you sent a marketing piece with typographical errors. Many people are a bit gracious with an obvious slip-of-the-key typo, particularly in e-mails, but not when the word is incorrect. (I would say the two most common incorrect usage of words that reduce credibility are their/there and its/it's.)

MARKETING & PRESENTATION MATERIALS

Your visual marketing materials reflect the character of your business, so you must make sure your marketing materials are appropriate and attractive to your target markets.

Invest in high-quality business cards and always keep them on hand, as they are the most common method used in one-on-one promotions. Not having cards most definitely reduces your credibility.

The range of marketing material you need depends on the type of work you do, the people you work with and where the work is done. Basic printed materials include: business cards, brochures, gift certificates, coupons, stationery, greeting cards, client forms, newsletters and educational handouts.

Some practitioners also use additional promotional materials, such as signs, posters, doorhangers, displays, personalized gift items and informational DVDs.

WEBSITES & SOCIAL MEDIA

An online presence is critical in presenting yourself powerfully. At the very minimum, this means having a website.

The majority of people search online for information—as is witnessed by the decline of printed phone directories. Many practitioners are active in social media, particularly Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

Your visual marketing materials reflect the character of your business, so you must make sure your marketing materials are appropriate and attractive to your target markets.

Exercise caution and restraint when using social media. For instance, use privacy settings and create groups on Facebook so that only your friends can see personal information and photos. Be judicious in what you post, keeping in mind that whatever you post on these sites can easily be seen by millions of people. Better yet, create two distinct profiles—one for your personal friends and family, and one for professional relationships, including clients and potential clients.

PERSONAL PRESENCE

Have you ever walked into a room and felt the presence of someone who strikes you as powerful? Sometimes it can be difficult to determine what created this sensation.

The foundation of a powerful presence is being present. This entails really listening to people, looking at them while talking, avoiding distractions—turn off your cell phone ringers, refrain from chewing gum, maintain eye contact—and talking less.

If you feel you are challenged in the area of personal presence—if you feel you are not confident in meeting people or nervous about speaking to people you don't know—invest in a self-help course, support group or books and DVDs on improving confidence and connection to others, in order to help get in touch with your true, powerful nature.

BODY LANGUAGE

Body language immensely contributes to

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your presence. It may reinforce what you are saying, send a contradictory message or signal something important that hasn't been verbalized. Body language includes your posture, gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, movement and the distance you place between yourself and another person.

Maintain good posture when standing and sitting. Keep your stance upright yet open. Good posture projects that you are confident and comfortable. As a massage therapist, people expect you to model agility and good posture in all situations. Poor posture often communicates a lack of confidence or disinterest.

Additionally, demonstrating good posture is extremely important when giving presentations. All eyes are on you and you lose credibility if you have poor posture.

Increase your impact by matching your body language to key points of your message; think like a choreographer! For instance while describing how a particular technique reduces stress, move your arms from your sides, keep your palms downward and at a slight angle (with the thumbs superior), slowly bringing your hands so your thumbs and index fingers gently touch. Then lower your hands several inches. Have fun with this. The effective use of gestures engages people and improves communication.

APPEARANCE

First impressions are powerful—and often irreversible, and the first thing most people notice when they meet you is your appearance. Present yourself powerfully by dressing appropriately, being well groomed and maintaining high standards of hygiene.

Dress stylishly yet modestly, and choose clothing that is comfortable and clean, as well as appropriate to the work environment. Ideally, create a work wardrobe that does not include

**First impressions are powerful—
Present yourself powerfully
by dressing appropriately, being
well groomed and maintaining
high standards of hygiene.**

your nonworking clothes. Keep jewelry to a minimum, particularly when doing massage. Your attire isn't meant to be a distraction.

When giving a formal presentation—particularly if it involves a hands-on demonstration—consider wearing your typical work clothes with a jacket on top (that can be removed for the demonstration). Other times a more formal outfit, such as a suit, is more appropriate.

Good hygiene and grooming go hand in hand (pun intended). Keep your **nails** well manicured, cuticles trimmed and skin moisturized. Make sure your hair is clean and doesn't contact your client: you may need to pull it back, clip it or wear a headband. If you wear makeup, apply it conservatively. Avoid perfume or cologne, as many people have chemical sensitivities. Pay attention to your breath and body odor.

NEXT STEPS

While you can't control what people feel about you, you can definitely do things to help you present yourself powerfully. Note the areas that you want to improve and create a plan of action. Do the suggested activities and discuss them with a colleague. Go through your clothing and only keep items that project your desired image. Consider joining a group, such as Toastmasters, to help you polish your public speaking skills.

Stay grounded in who you are and the benefits of your work. Your enthusiasm and compassion set the foundation for presenting yourself powerfully. •

HOW TO BUILD SELF-CONFIDENCE

Self-confidence is a belief in one's powers or abilities. Self-confident people project an air of competency. They are positive, balanced, and immerse themselves in living their lives. Self-confidence comes from your feelings about yourself, feedback from others, and your achievements.

- You demonstrate your self-confidence in your practice by greeting people with a handshake, smiling, maintaining good eye contact, enunciating properly, introducing yourself in a clear and engaging manner, and dressing appropriately. Do keep in mind different cultures have varying norms of what is considered polite behavior.
- A tip for increasing self-confidence when talking with clients and potential clients is to write scripts on topics that cause you discomfort, and rehearse responding to those topics.

Start by creating a list of questions people ask you about your work, policies (e.g., rates, missed appointments), and procedures, such as scheduling. Write what you want to say and practice saying it until the words easily roll off your tongue.

- You boost your confidence by being prepared. In your hands-on work with clients, this means being punctual, setting up the room before a client arrives—unless you do on-site massage—and reviewing the client's chart in advance.

If you are working with a client who has a health condition you don't know much about or your work isn't producing the desired results, research the condition and look for other massage protocols you can use.

- Preparation is critical when doing

any type of public appearance. The steps are the same if you are giving a 20-minute talk for a local group or if you're facilitating a 2-day workshop: research your audience; determine the key points you want to make; outline your presentation; create audio-visuals; and practice, practice, practice.

- Sometimes the preparation is not so much about what you are going to do, as what you need to bring.

For example, let's say you are giving chair massage at a public event. You reduce your stress and increase your self-confidence if you set up your environment to support you and your clients.

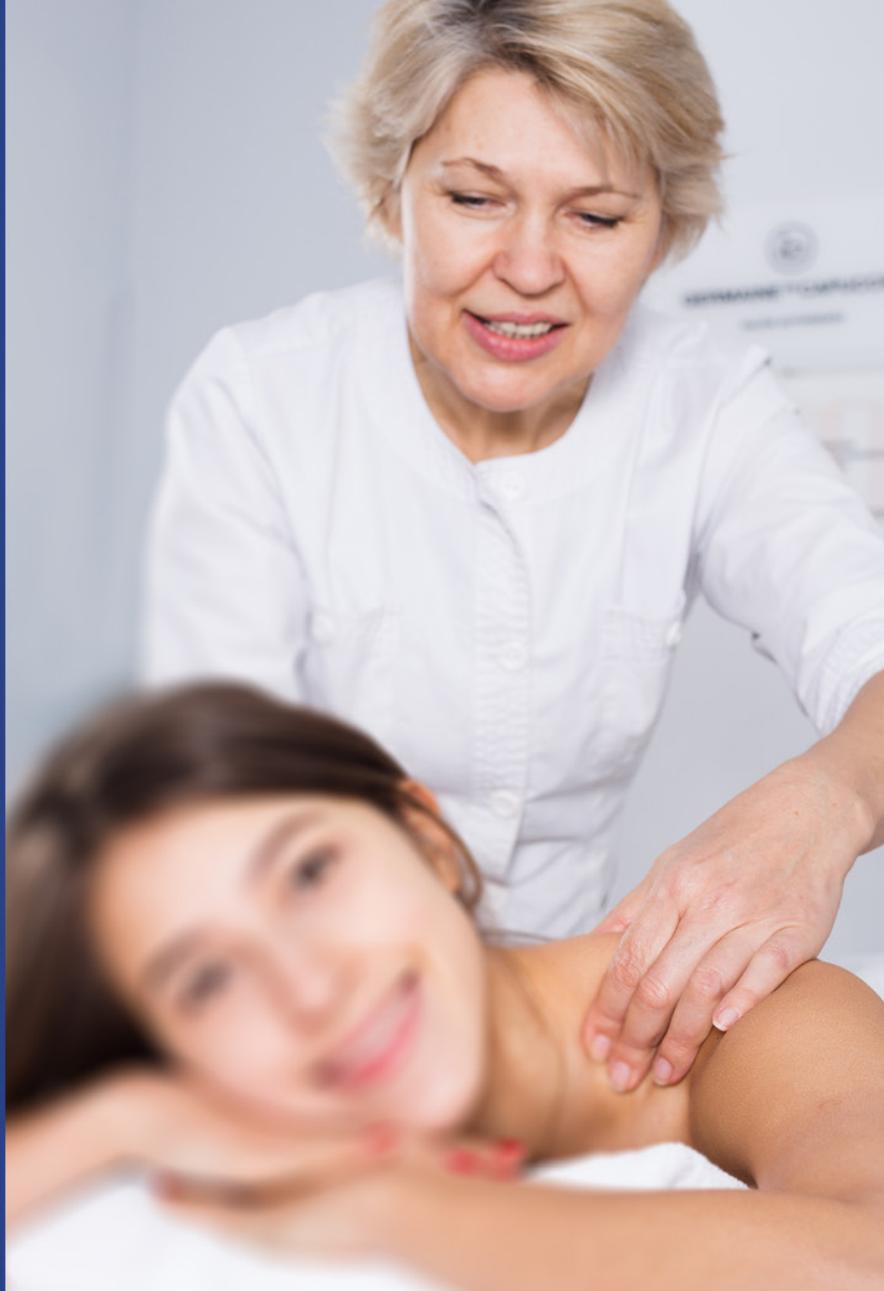
In addition to your chair, face covers, antiseptic solution, intake forms, sign-up sheet and pens, consider bringing water and snacks, a large umbrella, your promotional materials, and a place to display your promotional and other written materials.

- Always keep business cards with you. You never know when you'll meet a potential client—it could be when you are standing in line at the store or while attending a social event. •



**MOST
MASSAGE
CAREERS
ONLY LAST
3 YEARS.**

**HOW
WILL YOU
BREAK
THE
MOLD?**



According to industry leaders, it appears that the average number of years a massage therapist stays in practice is two to three; yet, some people stay in the massage field for more than 20 years. What sets those people apart from therapists who have a hard time making it?

COMPONENTS OF LONGEVITY

According to expert career counselor Randall S. Hansen, Ph.D., “Recent studies indicate that the average worker will change careers—not just jobs—several times over the course of a lifetime.” But what if massage is your second or third career, and you want it to be your last? Or what if you’re just beginning your

Recent studies indicate that the average worker will change careers—not just jobs—several times over the course of a lifetime.

first career in massage, and want to be in control of when—or if—you leave it someday?

Here, 10 massage therapists whose careers have ranged from three-and-a-half to 35 years offer advice on career longevity. Two practitioners work solely as employees, while the rest are in private

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practice; two therapists also work part time in chiropractic offices. The average number of hours of hands-on work done each week is 20. The one exception is a therapist who has been in practice for 13 years and who works 28 hours a week for a chiropractor and 25 hours a week from her home office.

The principal components of career longevity are: personality characteristics; client interactions; technical capabilities; business savvy; and self-care. Most of the suggestions for longevity are the same for those who are self-employed as they are for those who work as employees. The additional skills critical for employees to master are interpersonal communications with staff and management, and knowing how to adapt to various management styles.

PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS

Successful practitioners are confident in their abilities, possess a positive mental attitude, maintain healthy boundaries and are willing to take risks, such as speaking in public. They are willing to press through challenges and be uncomfortable for a while. They are determined and focused. They do what is necessary to ensure quality and success.

Along with this determination is flexibility. Flexibility is crucial in the hands-on aspect of the work as well as business operations. For instance, there may be times when practitioners find themselves needing to change the type of work or treatment plan right in the middle of a session: perhaps a client isn't responding well to a particular technique; doesn't like what's being done; or it becomes apparent that the treatment needs to go in a different direction.

Flexibility is also needed to sail through the changes that occur in one's career. This includes adding modalities to one's repertoire and branching into other areas, such as teaching. Employees, in particular, need to be flexible, as they rarely have much control over their work. Massage practitioners will be unhappy in an



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employment setting such as a spa if they don't enjoy working with a diverse clientele or can't go with the flow, such as working out of different treatment rooms, being asked to use modalities that aren't their favorite, and accommodating last-minute scheduling change).

CLIENT INTERACTIONS

I find that massage therapists who have been in practice for a long time have a reverence for the inherent magnificence of the human body and spirit. They respect their clients regardless of their physical condition or the particular reason(s) that brought them to massage. They are clear about the role that massage can play in their clients' wellness and are genuinely concerned for their clients' welfare. It's rare that a highly judgmental person lasts long in private practice. Clients pick up the subtle messages that are communicated.

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Successful massage therapists say that a client-centered approach is important, that it's crucial to stay present with clients and to listen to what they are really saying. They customize each session to address the clients' long-term goals as well as immediate concerns.

"I feel my client base has grown and my clients have remained with me because I work hard to make sure I understand their needs, and either am able to help them or refer them to someone else," says Vicki Muench, in practice for 14 years.

You can improve client relations by taking courses to enhance communication skills, learning to do effective intake interviews, and creating treatment plans that encourage clients to take an active role in their own wellness.

TECHNICAL CAPABILITIES

Practitioners with staying power possess a high level of expertise and excel in what they do. They consider their initial schooling as just the starting point and invest in regular continuing education. While some therapists do well as generalists, most specialize in a particular technique or condition.

"Find a massage technique that will set you apart from other massage therapists, says Sue Welfley, in practice, as of this writing, for 15 years. You need to offer more than the massage therapist down the street has to offer."

Most of the therapists who have been in practice longer than 10 years shifted from doing relaxation massage to more of a health-care approach, such as working with people in pain. Others developed very specific target markets.

Larry Warnock, with 35 years in practice, says, "Find a niche. Learn everything about the needs of that niche. Go out and tell people in that niche what you know. They will come."

Welfley specializes in lymphatic drainage, which she says has helped her promote

her practice. "This specialty has helped tremendously in getting the word out about me," she says. "I work with a lot of clients with cancer and post surgical conditions. Several physicians are now referring patients to me because of the lymphatic drainage specialty."

BUSINESS SAVVY

In my opinion, lack of business acumen is the main reason people do not succeed as massage therapists. The majority of people enter this field with limited business knowledge, and many bear a

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negative attitude about business. Yet, there are certainly plenty of books, classes, marketing products and online resources to assist therapists in expanding their business knowledge. The savvy therapist takes advantage of those tools.

"The single most important factor in your success is business skills, not massage skills, yet most massage schools teach very little business, and even then it's mostly limited to how to write a resume," says Donald Schiff, in practice, as of this writing, for 23 years. "Unless you have a business background already, what you learned in massage school is not enough to create and sustain a thriving massage practice."

Learning to work smarter, not harder, is a chief tenet of success. Be organized and keep excellent records. Look to the long term and consult with experts.

"Spend some time working for others to gain both business and work experience,"

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suggests Dawn Graf, in practice for 13 years, the past seven in the spa industry. “Then if you want to go into private practice, keep that job or have a second, part time job that pays well and has benefits.”

SELF-CARE

Burnout—on either the physical or emotional level—is yet another cause of failure.

The number-one cause of physical burnout is poor body mechanics, so take the time to find out what works best for your body. Exercise regularly, stretch before and after working with clients, and eat properly. Invest in a high-quality table. (If I were still in practice today I would buy a hydraulic table.) For those who do outcalls, be sure to purchase and use the accessories specifically designed to help tote tables. There are several books and numerous articles written for therapists on self-care. Read them and follow the suggestions. And, of course, get weekly massage.

A leading cause of emotional burnout is weak boundaries on the part of the therapist. I have heard so many stories of therapists who let their clients take advantage of them by: showing up late; not giving appropriate cancellation notice; engaging in excessive self-disclosure; expecting special treatment, such as offering extended hours or an extended session. The inability to effectively maintain and manage boundaries with clients, co-workers and management is the leading cause of burnout for massage practitioners. Learn to set strong boundaries for yourself.

Additional steps to avoid emotional burnout include: meeting with colleagues on a regular basis; taking part in some type of group or peer supervision; attending conferences; maintaining a strong support system; consulting with experts; enrolling in classes in new techniques, business and communications; varying the way you work; targeting a new



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market; and diversifying your practice.

William Burton has been in practice for only five years, but he is already taking positive steps to ensure he stays enthusiastic. “Becoming an instructor has rejuvenated me,” he says. “It has made me break the old books open again. Learning new modalities has ... given me new juice.”

A STRONG CLIENT BASE

Keep in mind that the number-one key to career longevity is to have clients. After all, without them you don’t have a business. Most people claim that referrals from satisfied clients is the best form of marketing, yet very few therapists can afford the luxury of building their practices solely in this manner. You need to have some clients first. Effective marketing in this field includes a mixture of promotion,

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advertising, community relations and publicity—with the emphasis on promotion.

MARKETING TECHNIQUES

Promotion involves the activities and materials you produce to gain visibility. The money invested is indirect; for example, it costs money to print business cards but it doesn't cost anything to distribute them. Promotional activities are often free of cost or low-cost: public speaking; teaching community classes; hosting massage demonstrations; writing articles for a newspaper; holding open houses; networking; sending special-occasion cards; maintaining a Web site; and building alliances with other health-care providers.

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Publicity is notoriety given to you or your business, usually for an event you have done or are about to do. For example, massage therapist William Burton was featured on the Web site WebMD.com.

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Career Longevity Tips

- Believe in yourself
- Read, read and read
- Excel at what you do
- Take continuing education courses
- Learn new techniques
- Invest in high-quality equipment
- Strengthen your business savvy
- Diversify your practice
- Develop a marketing plan and pursue it
- Become proficient with your computer skills
- Work from a client-centered approach
- Enhance your communication skills
- Possess a positive mental attitude
- Utilize correct body mechanics
- Get weekly massages
- Exercise regularly
- Eat properly
- Be flexible
- Maintain a good sense of humor
- Be willing to press through challenges
- Be focused
- Do what is necessary to ensure quality and success
- Maintain healthy boundaries with clients and co-workers
- Learn to say “no”
- Keep up on the latest research findings
- Keep balance
- Pace yourself well
- Take regular breaks
- Meet with colleagues on a regular basis
- Engage in group or peer supervision
- Attend conferences
- Network
- Have the confidence to take risks
- Learn from mistakes
- Avoid taking sides at work
- Do not gossip
- Follow the rules
- Be direct about expressing feelings and needs with your employer
- Schedule fun time that has nothing to do with your work
- Create a good support system
- Consult with experts
- Have a life outside of work
- Do what you love. Love what you do

Advertising differs from publicity and promotions in that you must pay directly for your exposure. This includes display ads in the newspaper or telephone book, billboards and radio spots.

Community relations are goodwill activities you do to create a positive public image for you and your business, such as hosting a charity function, adopting a highway or donating services to a charity.

Sometimes activities intersect. For example, giving free sessions can be seen as community relations as well as promotion. The title of a popular book is, *Do What You Love and the Money Will Follow*. Unfortunately, most people forget about the verb in the sentence: do. Instead, they assume that deciding what they want to do is enough. Doing what you love doesn't mean sitting in your office waiting for the phone to ring; it is about taking action to attract new clients and actually doing your work. In other words, if you don't have a full client load, either invest that free time in educating people about your work or donate your services (do what you love)—then the money will come.

“Give lots of free massages so people know who you are and what you do,” says Welfley.

In massage, marketing centers on making personal connections and educating the public. Keep this in mind when developing your strategies. Don't take it for granted that people know what you do because you have a certain title. Define what you do. Explain the benefits of what you offer. Every practitioner is unique, and brings his or her experience and personality into play along with whatever techniques are employed. The power of your marketing increases with the level at which you are integrated into those marketing strategies.

The biggest mistake I see people make is overextending themselves; they try to be the practitioner for everyone. Yet, one person cannot fulfill all the needs of



At most day spas, therapists still need to do a lot of work to build and maintain a strong client base. In a destination spa setting developing a client base becomes more a matter of retaining a guest and that guest's friends.

every client. Effective marketing involves targeting the appropriate people and informing them of the benefits they'll receive from your services.

A CLIENT BASE IN SPAS

At most day spas, therapists still need to do a lot of work to build and maintain a strong client base. In a destination spa setting developing a client base becomes more a matter of retaining a guest and that guest's friends.

“Guests talk to each other,” explains Graf. If I'm amazing, they will tell their friends who are at the resort and they will request me. It's about keeping a healing intent to be the best I can be with a guest.”

CLIENT RETENTION

Working with clients on an ongoing basis is great for your own time-management as well the personal and professional fulfillment you experience witnessing

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positive changes in clients. In most instances, a thriving practice consists of maintaining a strong client base of people who receive your services regularly, while generating a steady stream of new clients. Exceptions do exist, such as working in a destination spa or resort, where there's a continuous flow of new guests, or the specific nature of a particular modality (or philosophy) that advocates working on a client only once or twice.

For example, Steve Miller had, at this writing, been in practice less than four years and has already shifted his focus to alleviating pain. He feels that the key to client retention is being honest and providing the best service possible. "My practice is not geared toward having someone come in on a regular basis for massage, but rather when they are in pain, he says. Because of my thorough treatments, I get the results my clients and I desire. When they no longer need my services, I agree and wish them well, hoping not to see them again unless they are in pain. Because I never try to sell a massage package or have someone come endlessly, I've earned great trust with my clients and they are very loyal."

Unfortunately, when it comes to building their practices, most massage therapists spend the majority of their marketing resources in finding new clients, instead of concentrating on keeping the ones they have. The simple steps to keep clients returning are often overlooked or ignored.

The core of client retention is a solid customer-service plan. Client retention principles are founded upon making clients feel safe and welcome so they can more easily make appropriate health-care decisions. They are not based in intimidating someone into your ordained plan. A fine line exists between supporting a client in well being and manipulating a client into booking sessions. Yet the flip side also occurs: practitioners who do not even broach the concept of a treatment



Most massage therapists spend the majority of their marketing resources in finding new clients, instead of concentrating on keeping the ones they have.

plan or booking a subsequent session.

"I ask clients if they want to schedule another appointment when they pay me for the one I just did," Schiff says. "It took me a long time to understand how helpful this is both for me and for the client."

Clients return when they feel valued, honored, and benefited by the sessions, says Vincent. "Sometimes it is a matter of chemistry, a good connection," she adds. "Other times people return because my therapeutic services were transforming and effective."

NOTHING BETTER

If you take care of yourself and follow the basic guidelines suggested by these successful massage therapists, you could have a long and successful career. The therapists who have been in the field for a while think that's a great thing.

"I love the work I do, most of the time I feel like the most fortunate man alive," Schiff says. "I mean, I get to relieve suffering in the world, and I get paid for it, too. What could be better?" •

MASSAGE

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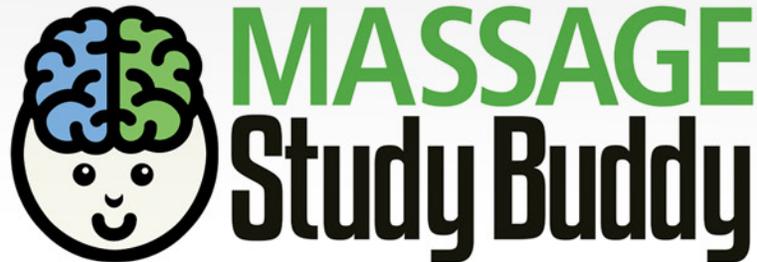
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