

Seeds of Growth

To Build and Grow A Touch-Therapy Business

Issue 1
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Welcome to your first edition of the *Seeds of Growth* business-training newsletter. We would like to congratulate you on beginning your journey to becoming a health-care practitioner. You have made the choice to commit time, energy and effort to learn how to help others find healing, wellness and balance. This informational newsletter series will give you insight into the keys to establishing and running a successful massage-therapy practice after completing your training.

We will be sharing with you some of the practical points of the external, go-out-there-and-make-it-happen aspects of running a business, as well as the importance of cultivating internal aspects, such as personal purpose and vision.

The series is designed to work with your school curriculum. We will be with you throughout your training, giving you helpful information about how to set up and run a successful health-care practice.

Three Areas of Marketing

After graduation from massage school, and as you begin to develop your practice, you will need to know how to get the word out about your services. Three key ways of marketing your new practice—external, internal and community—will be important.

To begin, make sure to include all three of these marketing strategies in your practice-building plan. Practitioners who rely on only one area will find that they have a difficult time quickly getting a practice started.

At different stages in the growth of a practice there will be different marketing requirements. For example, the novice practitioner who only relies on referrals for gaining clients will experience minimal and slow growth. This therapist would benefit from an aggressive advertising campaign to get her name out into the public domain. On the other hand, the practitioner who has a strong, established practice with a large number of clients naturally receives referrals, and would not be well-served

There is an Eastern adage, “When you begin, hold the end in mind.” Throughout your training, you, your teachers, the school staff and everyone involved with this newsletter, look forward to the day when you will go out into the world to practice, and make a positive impact on people’s lives. Please use this time of learning to apply yourself to the task of becoming the best health-care practitioner you can be. By making this choice you will develop all of the skills necessary to be a healer in your community.

In touch,

Robert Noah Calvert
MASSAGE Magazine
Publisher

Jay van Schelt
Inner Chi Methods
and Systems

by spending a lot of money on print advertising. She would, however, benefit from the retention practices of internal marketing and strong customer service.

The first and most obvious kind of marketing is advertising. This is considered external marketing, because it is directed at people who do not know about your practice. It includes newspaper ads, flyers, posters, press releases and e-mail campaigns.

Because external marketing is also the most expensive of the three forms of marketing, it is wise to understand how it works and its possible benefits for your practice before you jump in. External marketing used effectively at the start of your practice through the time when your practice is strong and vibrant will ensure the most return on your investment.

A key to advertising is that it has to stand out while conveying professionalism and trustworthiness. It must also connect with the needs of potential clients.

Advertising also works over time. Many people in business make the mistake of running an advertising campaign for 4-6 weeks and when no significant change in business revenue occurs, they stop the ads. When new clients start to trickle in, they decide they don't need advertising at all, only to see this "flow" of new customers subside. Why? External marketing works on people slowly. An advertisement needs to be seen several times for it to begin to connect with a potential client, but at that time he may not be in need of your services. By consistently placing your name in his view, when he does need a massage therapist there is a greater chance that he will call you.

The second method of connecting with a client is internal marketing, and is used for client retention. Through newsletters, client surveys, thank-you cards, gift-certificate programs and rewards for clients who refer others to your practice, you let them know that you value

them, and give them an extra incentive to come back to you. This also works to create a natural referral network of new clients.

The third method of connecting with new and old clients alike is to have a community-marketing strategy. This means getting involved in your local community through civic and business groups, and combines both the education aspect of internal marketing and the advertising to get the word out that you are there and can help certain types of problems. This approach takes the most time and energy from your practice but can be a most effective approach to both the start-up practice and the well-established one.

Obviously there is much to discuss about these three aspects of marketing a practice. In the following months you will receive more newsletters giving more detail about each of these areas.

—Jay van Schelt

The Yin and Yang of Practice Building

by Michael Gaeta

Let all your things have their places; let each part of your business have its time.

—Benjamin Franklin

Most people today are familiar with the concept of Yin and Yang, the fundamental concept upon which many Asian healing methods are based. Yin and Yang are the two poles of life—heaven and Earth, light and darkness, visible and invisible. The blending of these forces gives rise to all that is manifest (qi). Yin and Yang are differentiation of the One, and the parents of all creation. The principle of Yin and Yang is at work in all life, from the smallest atom to the largest galaxy. Let us explore how it applies to building and sustaining a successful health-care practice.

The Yang aspect of practice management can be described as dynamic energy. It is the active, "go out there and make it happen" energy which fuels the passion and enthusiasm necessary for any successful venture. Nearly all practice-management and success seminars focus almost entirely on this area. Steven Covey, in his book *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, refers to this as the realm of technique-specific sales, marketing and relationship-building methods for business success. Countless books have been written on this subject. A few of them are excellent; they detail the nuts and bolts of

how to "put yourself out there" in an intelligent and effective way. Related to a health-care practice, these are excellent expressions of the Yang aspect of practice management. They include public speaking, writing articles, promotional literature, print advertising, direct mail, health fairs and expos, and networking. These external methods and techniques are useful parts of a successful approach to growing a strong practice.

The Yin aspect of practice management can be thought of as magnetic energy. As Covey points out, technique without authentic presence is shallow and superficial, and leads to a flash-in-the-pan business. Three of his seven habits (think win-win, seek first to understand, synergize) are technique-based, and three are "character habits" (be proactive, begin with the end in mind, put first things first) that cultivate integrity and personal power.

Since Yin is magnetic, receptive energy, it would be useful to look at how magnets work. A magnet does not reach out and grab metallic objects. It draws that which is responsive to its particular creative field. There is a perfect and specific design to that which is attracted to a magnet. For example, a mass of iron filings arranges itself in a beautiful geometric pattern on the attracting magnet. This occurs without any conscious effort on the part of the magnet. The magnet does not advertise, "Iron fil-

ings wanted," or say to the filings, "You move over there. You move over here." It does not network with groups of different metals in order to cultivate relationships with iron. It simply is itself, naturally expressing its true nature. Then, without effort or struggle, all that resonates with the magnet—all that rightly belongs in close proximity to it—is drawn to it.

All people will come to him who keeps to the One
For there lie rest and happiness and peace.

—*Lao Tzu, Dao De Jing*

So it is in life, and in a health-care practice. As a practitioner grows, matures and becomes more in touch with and expressive of his or her true nature, all the clients that can receive help from him or her are naturally drawn close. And those who are for the moment unresponsive—or unable to receive that which the practitioner offers—are naturally repelled, like two magnets of the same polarity. Even more, it is Life, not the practitioner or their marketing effort, that beautifully orchestrates this relationship according to Life's perfect design.

One can have no greater mastery than mastery of oneself.
—*Leonardo da Vinci*

The practical "how" of cultivating magnetic Yin energy relates to daily spiritual practice. This is essential for a health-care practitioner to have. It is not for this author or anyone else to say what that practice should look like, but it is for each individual to seek and find what works for him or her. It can be part of a religious context, or outside of a religious context. The important thing is to find a spiritual path or practice that most deeply resonates with the highest truth you know. Elements of spiritual practice common to most traditions include meditation, prayer, journaling, inspirational reading, and joining regularly with like-minded people. For practitioners interested in working with people at a level deeper than

taking symptoms away with a technique, this is fundamental. A practitioner can only reach someone to the depth he or she has gone in themselves. If you want to do deep work, be deep. The deepening process is what is referred to here as daily spiritual practice.

Try not to become a [person] of success, but rather try to become a [person] of value.

—*Albert Einstein*

People come to you not because of what you do, but because of who you are. This is a generalization, because some people will call and come in after seeing your ad, flyer or business card. But what will inspire them to come more than once or twice is your presence, and the connection they feel with you, which is the basis of the therapeutic relationship. Become someone people want to be in the presence of. It is not something which can be manufactured or put on. It is being true to the highest truth you know in each moment. As you continue to refine your expression—your thoughts, words and actions—to more accurately reveal the truth of who you are at your core, your true nature, then your work will deepen, your practice will thrive, and your life will know greater peace and fulfillment.

Business is not about business, in the usual sense of money and profit. It's about people. Success in business entirely depends on cultivating healthy, positive, loving, long-term relationships with people. Building and sustaining a successful practice combines the Yang, dynamic energy of outer action, with the Yin, or magnetic energy of inner development.

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Customer Connection Means Customer Service

As you begin your training as a health-care practitioner it is important to understand that this profession is by default one that contributes to the well-being of others. Your practice will be a symbiotic relationship, you will help your clients with your practice, and they will support you with their business. This win/win experience will in large part be based on your

ability to connect compassionately with potential clients and develop lasting, true healing relationships with them.

Your practice will follow through four phases of growth:

- Pre-startup: from school to first treatment
- Initial startup: from first treatment to 6-12 months in business

- Growth: from Year 1 to Years 5-10
- Stabilization: signified by slow growth till you retire or expand your practice.

You are now in the pre-startup phase of your practice, which will last until you graduate from school and receive your first paying massage client. It is an important time in your career. But the training does not end here. During the entire life of your practice you should be consistently staying connected to the news and developments of your profession. You should read trade publications, pursue continuing education and personal development to extend your ability to help others heal. This is a challenging and exciting time for you.

Ecclesiastes said, “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven.” This truth applies to the skills you will need as your practice goes through the different phases of growth. The next three phases of your practice—startup, growth, and stabilization—will demand hands-on skills as a practitioner and an understanding of the ins and outs of running a practice. This newsletter is designed to guide you through these phases and unlock the keys to a successful, thriving practice.

For now, let’s get an overview of some customer-connection aspects of the startup phase. This happens in multiple stages:

- From stranger to potential client
- From potential client to client
- Moving from client to long-term client
- Getting the client to refer others

At each stage of this process there is an appropriate way to interact. In the first stage, when a stranger becomes a potential client, they are looking for information about your practice and whether what you do may be of benefit to them. They most likely are responding to your marketing campaign, and your initial contact will set the stage for the kind of relation-

ship you will develop. At this point it is key to have developed a strong set of personal listening and communication skills, including the ability to hear and understand what the client needs and to recognize whether it is within your scope of practice. This and other skills required for each stage as you develop your practice will be covered in detail in this newsletter series.

Other customer-connection/customer-service ideas to be covered include:

- Creating a comfortable treatment space
- Communication and connection with new clients
- Giving more than is expected
- Phone skills
- Understanding the cycle of a client
- Creating a strong client/therapist relationship

The second and third stages of building your practice are when a potential client becomes first a client and then a long-term client. This is the heart of your practice; if it’s neglected, your practice will not be successful. Some of the key topics pertinent to this area that will be covered include:

- Patient education, the key to retention
- Patient feedback; what does it mean, how do I get it
- Office procedures and organization

We will also cover some of the important points to watch out for in the growth and stabilization phases of your practice in future newsletters.

Enjoy this pre-startup phase of your practice. You are learning and being introduced to many sources of information, and although it may feel a bit overwhelming at first, rest assured that all of the great practitioners you have met, and will meet, started where you are now.