

Seeds of Growth

*To Build and Grow
A Touch-Therapy Business*

Issue 2

The Purpose of Marketing

by Jay Van Schelt and Michael Gaeta

In this article on the subject of marketing, we will be discussing the basic purpose of marketing. In subsequent issues we will look at what that marketing looks, like in terms of: the phase of development that your practice is in; and the different approaches and techniques of the three ways of marketing a small health-care business. Those three ways are external, such as ads in newspapers or on TV; internal, such as direct mail; and community, such as event sponsorship.

We'll begin with the overall purpose of marketing. We will focus on external marketing at first, as you will be in the start-up phase of your business when you graduate, and this is when this type of marketing is most important. But we will also touch upon and expand these principals for the growth and stabilization phase of your business as well.

The purpose of marketing, simply stated, is; to grow the level of awareness of a certain set of products and/or services within a particular demographic and influence the buying decision so that people buy from you, rather than from someone else. A demographic means both a particular age and gender that a product or service will benefit, and a geographic area where potential customers live. Marketing demographics can be very broad-based or can be extremely narrow, so the approaches to marketing can also be either broad-based or narrow. As stated above, they can also be external, internal or community-based campaigns.

We all experience some form of marketing each day. We get marketing exposure from newspapers, TV, billboards, radio, magazines, the Internet and other sources. Some marketing comes from companies we know and do

business with, while some comes from companies we don't currently, but might someday, do business with. And some of this marketing comes from companies we will never do business with. Marketing simply lets us know that a product or service is out there.

Most marketing is done in an honest and straightforward way, while some is by definition annoying or deceptive. For instance, getting unwanted offers in the mail or by telephone is annoying and the idea that if you smoke a certain cigarette you will have a great car and a beautiful life partner is deceptive. Almost all businesses will need to use marketing in some form to let people know that they are there. Some of these businesses will unfortunately use any means at their disposal to create a strong marketing message without thought to the overall truth of that message. The industry you have chosen to work in can not afford to fall into that category of marketing. You must develop and maintain the integrity to your services throughout your career. This integrity is the backbone of who you are and what you do, and will help keep our industry strong into the future. By placing this idea of integrity into your marketing, you will develop reputation of trust in your community. So to do this we must ensure that our marketing is honest, and that our internal marketing efforts are wanted by our customers.

Most external and community marketing campaigns are broad-based, meaning they touch many different people over a large area who see your marketing pieces and begin to connect your name to their buying decisions. These campaigns are usually not condition-specific, but instead give an overview of the types of services that you offer. People seeing your external and community marketing may or may not have a current need for your services, but you are making them aware that you are there if and when they need you. These types of marketing can be either very low-cost but take more of your time and

effort, or high-cost and take little of your time and effort. An external or community-based, narrowly targeted campaign will look to reach a specific audience. This type of a campaign is usually targeted to a specific type of treatment for a specific ailment; for instance, clients who suffer from low-back pain or shoulder pain. These types of marketing efforts look to establish your business as having a unique ability to help those suffering from a specific type of problem. Again, the people seeing the external marketing may or may not need your services now.

Internal marketing efforts, like a newsletter, allow you to offer an educational curriculum over time which creates a greater understanding of your products and services. You can also design internal marketing campaigns from a demographic perspective. Are you trying to target all of your customers for a product or service? Or are you trying to target specifically those who have used a certain type of product or service before? This influences what you are doing to market your product or service, and when you might do this marketing. You must understand that, by definition, all of your internal marketing efforts should be permission-based to ensure they are not annoying to your customers. There are three things to cover for permission-based marketing: 1) The marketing piece needs to be anticipated by the client; 2) It has to be personal in some way; and 3) It has to have some kind of relevance to them.

As you go through school, one of the things to begin to be aware of and to consider is, what type of massage you are drawn to? This will begin to develop where your personal target demographic will be when you graduate.

If you are drawn to a more therapeutic massage practice, you will be in a demographic where you will benefit through more connections with doctors, chiropractors and other health-care professionals.

If you are more drawn to relaxation techniques, like hot-stone massage, for instance, your target demographic might be more suited to the spa environment. This does not limit you to one or the other, of course, and does not mean that one type of massage is exclusive. You are learning there are particular styles to differing types of treatments; your job is to become aware of your personal preferences, so that you can look clearly and see where you will want to spend a large portion of your time and energy after you graduate.

Our first marketing skill is to understand what our target demographic is. To do this we must know what types of clients we want to work with. Remember that this does not mean that someone from a particular demographic cannot enjoy and benefit from a type of treatment that targets a different demographic, only that they are probably looking for another type of experience. By knowing what your target demographic is, you will have a greater understanding of what an appropriate marketing campaign might look like. This means that you have the right ad in the right place so that those that you are targeting as clients see your marketing.

In next month's newsletter we will examine the vision of how to develop a marketing campaign based on the phase that your practice is in.

The Business Plan Stage

by Jay Van Schelt and Michael Gaeta

As you are developing your skills in massage we invite you to consider some of the following questions:

- What is the purpose of what you do?
- What is the vision of how you will manifest your purpose?
- What are the concrete steps in your plan to create your vision?
- Can you actually implement those steps?
- How will you know when you are being successful or not?

Most people who start out on the road to running

their own business should consider these questions. In the following months we will look at many aspects of being successful in your chosen career path. Some of you will choose to open businesses on your own, some will choose to work with others, and some will choose only to do this work part time. We honor each of you in the choice that you make and are here to help you have the information to choose wisely.

Let's look at the first question together. Many people have a broad purpose to help others, but in business there is a saying, "having to broad a product line, no one who knows what you sell." By narrowing your purpose you can focus your skills in a specific area. This focused skill

can help to make a niche for you in the marketplace. Some practitioners have made their practices on only medical massage, for instance, and do not want to do anything else. If you look at the local area where that you will be performing your services, you might see a need for a certain type of services. Looking at the specifics of what you want to be doing is an important first step in creating your plan for success.

The second step in creating a business plan is to look at and clarify your vision of what you want to be doing. Some of the questions in this area are:

- Will I work full time or part time?
- Will I work from a location or from my own home?
- Do I have the finances to get this started?
- Will I work for myself or for others?
- What other skills will I need to make my business successful?

Each person has to answer these and other questions over and over. Clarifying your vision is not a one-step process; it is a continual process of self-discovery. You may be feeling that you do not have answers to some of these questions at this time. Please know that many other successful practitioners have felt that way at the beginning as well. Many have found that just by knowing that they needed to think about these areas they discovered what their own personal vision truly was. And this helps to go through the next step: creating a business plan.

This piece, creating a business plan, is the most concrete part of this process. To do this you need to get specific with yourself. Up until this point you have been in what could be known as the ether stage of business development. During that stage you are simply thinking about possibilities. In this next stage you have to be more specific. By not being specific you can leave yourself in a bad situation, which could lead to failure.

Some of the steps you need to take here are:

- Make a decision on what exactly you want to do
- Define your market
- Access your competition
- Create a marketing plan
- Establish your financial position
- Decide on where you will operate your business from

The decisions that you make during this stage should be written down and kept in a safe place. Many people have experienced the truth that the act of writing goals down moves the goal into action.

Feed Your Soul

- Make it a point to learn or create something new every day.
- Exercise to reduce stress, advocates Debbie Mandel, author of *Turn on Your Inner Light: Fitness for Body, Mind and Soul*. It oxygenates the brain and releases endorphins. "Strengthening the physical helps support the spirit," she says.
- Create a personal sanctuary. "De-clutter your space and make it beautiful," suggests Pat McHenry Sullivan, author of *Work with Meaning*.
- Read a few pages of an inspirational book or write in a journal about the things that stir in your soul.
- Seek out kindred spirits who think positively and believe in the power of goodness.

Now comes the time to act. After the goal-setting process is done you must choose to act upon your desire to do what is necessary to implement your plan. Many people have great plans and then fail to implement them effectively. It is not the plan that fails, but the poor implementation that creates failure.

As you move forward into business, the last point to look at is how you know you are successful. This is a very important aspect so that you do not work hard for several years and then feel like you are spinning your wheels. You should have set, definable milestones to work toward, like having a certain number of clients or making a certain amount of money. Do not make only large milestones, make short-term, achievable goals for yourself as well. You might also consider setting a reward for yourself each time you reach one of your milestones. This helps to achieve these worthwhile goals.

In future articles we will delve deeper into these important issues. But you should begin to work on your purpose and vision as soon as you can.