



A Guide for New Practitioners

Launching your business and achieving your goals

The Most Common Mistakes

New and Sometimes Even Experienced Therapist and Coaches Make.....

Congratulations! You've passed the exams, received the certificate, and you are ready to open the diary in your new business. You are your own boss, possibly for the first time - and here's where the learning starts all over again.



We know from personal experience there are some common traps that newly qualified practitioners often fall into - In this e-book we will discuss 7 of them, and get you off to a flying start. However, before we start can I pass on some general advise that would have made my first few year's in Private Practice a little easier ?

Initially I was fired up with enthusiasm, full to the brim with dreams and plans, and of course these are necessary for success. However in my passion to make my Business profitable I was a little guilty of neglecting the rest of my life. My family, my health, the finances, and things like relaxation and leisure activities suffered, and in hindsight this created stress and tension which got in the way. Coaching helped me survive this transition period. I was fortunate enough to have help defining where I was going and keeping things in balance.

The other point I would like to make is that, being passionate about your chosen approach to helping people, sometimes it's easy to focus solely on the skills you have learned, forgetting the business side of things. If you are a sole-trader, this is even more likely. Get good advise up front, don't wait to find out about the practical issues, work out what you are likely to face in advance. Unfortunately you need to know about boring things like National Insurance Contributions and Tax, or find someone to take care of those for you.

So, lets move on to those Mistakes then, starting with not understanding your perfect average client, and not using their language.

1. Defining your niche - Have a Target Market



One of the main mistakes you can make is thinking you can provide services to everyone. When you start up and begin to market yourself, don't be a 'Jack of all trades, Master of none'. Your training may qualify you to deal with a whole list of presenting clients, with a whole range of tools, but the best thing you can do for your business is to focus on just one or maybe two areas. Don't risk diluting your message. Become an acknowledged expert, the obvious choice for whatever it is.

You want all your marketing to speak to your target market.

If you are already in Practice, you can simply look back over your last few months, and find out who your core client group is, and then tailor your marketing language to those client's.

You might be frightened that this will narrow your appeal, you will be surprised to hear that this is rarely the case. Your response rate will be much higher if your message is properly targeted. Who would you rather work with, someone who knows a bit about the issues you want to work with, or someone who specialises in them? You could even have multiple websites, each focussing on one thing, this need not be expensive these days.

Your niche(s) could be something you have personal experience of, or a particular interest in. You will be most successful when you have personal insight in overcoming the problems of the target market you serve, and it will increase your credibility.

Once you have chosen the area in which you want to work, you can identify your typical client, the person that is mostly likely to need the help you offer. Before you market to anyone you need to know how to target properly. Their gender, age, location, occupation and what problems keep them up at night. You need to decide what solutions you can provide to help them overcome these problems; once you have done that then its time to go out and find them!



First, step into their shoes, understand their problem. When you communicate with them you need to use a style of language that resonates - then you should then find it easier to speak to them in a way that inspires them to take action. You will also have a better idea of where to find more people like them. There is no point advertising around themes of women's fitness in a men's motor-sport magazine!

When writing advertising copy the words matter. And what matters even more is the connection these words make between you and your typical client. You have to engage them, and stay engaged. Don't be tempted to blind them with science in any of your communications, using jargon risks causing a disconnect. It creates a serious barrier, and risk losing them as a clients. Even if your aiming you marketing at a specific technical audience, keep your message simple, plain and easy to understand. Avoid big words.

The language you use sets the tone for your entire relationship. If the words you use are inappropriate your prospect may feel you are hard selling them, or worse not competent enough to deal with their problem. They may become skeptical, or get distracted from the message you want to give them. Your message must be strong, clear, concise and engaging.

The Importance of strong Branding

When you begin your business you may have spent a lot of money getting qualified. You



may even have been out for work for a while you studied. The last thing you want to do is spend loads of money on setting up your business. However, there are some areas that you cant afford to skimp on. We offer an intangible product, so we don't have a shop front; we need a clear brand image, and we also need a website, business card, brochures to carry our brand, with its associated message, into an already crowded market place.

Every Professional Practice should have a presence on the internet. Whether it is complex and multipage, or a simple one page site, a strong internet presence is the most economical way to prove the validity of your business to your customers. Your Website should allow customers an opportunity to learn about your brand, thus deepening your relationship with them.

You need a basic understanding of how to get a site going and keep it maintained, so that your business can take full advantage of being online. You can only risk a DIY job if you know what you are doing. You cant afford your "shop front" looking shoddy.

An online presence needn't cost much, but it does require a bit of thought before you start to set it up. Write the text and gather the pictures. If someone offers to make you a logo then bear in mind that it will need to look good in print as well as on screen (avoid special effects, drop shadows etc, and pale tints) - one or two clear, strong colours is sufficient for your logo and these should inform the colour scheme of your website, business cards and leaflets. The design of your online and printed material should match and your message should be consistent.

Choosing A Domain Name

A domain name (ie. www.YourCompanyName.com), also known as a URL, is what people type in their Web browser to get to your site. Domain ownership is purchased and renewed on a yearly basis. Your domain name is an opportunity to demonstrate that all important consistency to your customers. The URL name should be the same or similar to the name of your brand. Be concise with your domain name and try to get a '.com' or '.co.uk' address before considering a '.net' or other suffix. Some research indicates that dot com "endings" have more clout in customer's eyes.

A Hosting Account

A Website hosting account is where your Website's files (HTML, SWF, etc.) physically reside on the Internet. Your Website hosting account will give your site a space on the Web that is connected to the Domain Name you registered. Don't confuse hosting with your Internet Service Provider (ISP). ISP's offer DSL, cable Modem or dial-up accounts that connect your computer to the Internet. The ownership of a Hosting account can be purchased and renewed on a monthly or yearly basis.

Design and Layout

If, like me you have little or no idea what XHTML is (the code used to program Websites) I recommend getting a professional Web designer. Starting off with a professional Web site will increase the validity of you new 'brand'. So when thinking about Web site content, it may be useful to spend a few days playing around with;-



A concise sentence or two that describes the value that your Practice provides clients. These statements will act as your "guiding star".

List a brief, two-sentence description of the overt benefit your clients will receive. You can attract steadfast clients if you have an emotionally driven way of introducing what clients will gain from seeing you.

Write a brief, one sentence summary of your service product. Then, bullet point the specifics and details of your service, from most important to least important. These specifics can be facts, outcomes, procedures, methodologies and/or pricing.

List what existing customers are saying about you and your services. Get permission to use their name on your Website in a 'Testimonials' section.

Write down 5 to 10 common questions clients have asked you (or you will expect them to ask) and answer them.

Write down the reason you started your Practice.

List your accomplishments. Have a good picture of yourself, if possible.

List your general business contact information including e-mail address, phone number etc. Type in the address you will be working from at maps.google.com. Once you see the

map of your location, right-click the "Link to this page" link, copy the link and paste it into your document.

You might want to consider having a website with a 'Content Management System'. This allows you to change your site yourself, without extra cost. It puts you in control, no one knows your business like you, no one knows what you want to say, or how you want things to look more than you.

Site content is much better when its fresh, updating on a regular basis gives your business the appearance of being more active, and search engines give higher emphasis on new content.

You will need some content protection, write this: **Copyright 2012 [Insert your business name here]. All Rights Reserved.** Display it on the Bottom of your page.

Some people create "websites" at MySpace, Facebook etc. This can work for some markets but I believe it is still necessary for successful Coaches and or Therapists to have a legitimate website.

Maximising your Website, Search Engine Optimisation

Of course building a website, or having one built is only part of the job. Clients have to be



able to find you. The higher up the search engine rankings you can get the better. Keeping your website up to date with lots of relevant content is the best way to get good search engine results. ry to update it as often as you can, it makes a huge difference. You tube clips leading to your Website are a good way of cranking up your visibility. If you can get other high ranking sites to link to yours it also makes a big difference.

You can buy in help, there are lots of companies that will offer their services. We get at least 3 telephone call's or e-mails a week from companies that specialise in Search Engine Optimisation.

Data Capture

Web savvy Practitioners will tell you their best asset is their list. When you build your website, you will want to begin collecting names of visitors to your site. These are your potential clients. You will need a way to collect their email addresses, and create an offer, so they will want to give you their name and email address. You can perhaps create a free product to give away that doesn't cost you anything to give, but that will be of high perceived value by your perspective clients.

Business cards

These are the brand in the hand items that are really important. They are the things that get felt and experienced. They need to be not only consistent with all your other Branding, but feel good too. Nice cards handed to you by a real person are hard to beat in terms of authenticity.

I believe that touch is the one human sense that will keep print alive.

Business cards have different weights and textures as well as finishes and shapes. You can get smooth and silky matte laminates, which produce a sophisticated, classy card.

Sleek and shiny gloss finishes give a wow factor. Then for a slightly larger investment you can get foils and other fancy finishes.

Business cards are an essential component to Networking (more on this later), and you may want a different card, with different titles and layouts for different Networking opportunities. However remember that the link between your branded business cards and you on-line profile is important, consistency is vital. Your card can have not only your website details on, but also any Facebook, Twitter or Linked in accounts. This will tempt your prospective clients to investigate more. Checking out these social media type sites is part of most peoples daily life, it feels like home, and you can do it from home, so they will be relaxed and receptive to your message. Also, Displaying the Facebook or Twitter logos on your card connects your brand with really well known companies psychologically.



Basic Marketing Principles

I know lots of really great practitioner's, highly skilled, geographically well positioned, competitively priced, working well below their capacity. The bottom line is they could be offering their services free of charge, and still see very few people if nobody know's who or where they are. You need to a least read a basic marketing book, or attend a course. WCHN package all our program's so that they cover at least the basics, but if you studied elsewhere you can probably get a local further education course at a reasonable cost.

The main principles of marketing are often called the 4P's. Product, Price, Promotion and Place. Without understanding these four elements an effective marketing plan is impossible. You need to ensure that each piece is in place to make the others work. Without this 'marketing mix' the success of your business will be severely compromised. Learn about the four main principles of marketing, and the impact of a strong marketing program.

Failure to Nurture your 'Herd'

It is said that in business there are three ways to grow. Number one sell more 'product'. This means continually attracting new clients, not the easiest thing to do. Number two increase the transaction price, this can make you uncompetitive. Number three is to sell more to the clients you have. Once your clients experience the benefits of what you offer, they may well want to stay with you and deal with other things. More importantly if you nurture your existing or past clientele, turn them into a loyal following, they will continually refer their friends, relatives and work colleagues to you. I still get referrals from people I worked with over 15 years ago.

Failure to Get Out There

Tell people what you do - Network, network with everyone you know, and everyone they know. Networking is all about letting people know what you do, and building up enough of a relationship with them to make them feel comfortable recommending you to their friends or clients. It is the most cost effective way there is to generate business.

We all have existing networks of one sort or another, where we get our hair cut, eat out, shop, hobby clubs or organisations, the school run The important thing to remember it's not who you know, it's who they know.

All you need for this is a business card or leaflet.

Formal networking organisations and events

There are loads of networking organisations, some are expensive, some are cheap, some are free, but you must make sure that the results will well cover any costs you meet. Even the expensive options allow you a visit or two as a guest, and in some of them attendance is obligatory. This means there is even a possibility that you could 'fill in' for a member and cover their sickness or holidays etc.



Here is a list of possibilities you may want to look at

www.fsb.org.uk (benefit to membership like free banking schemes etc)

www.britishchambers.org.uk (not overly expensive to join, but the functions are often quite pricey)

www.bni-europe.com (expensive to join and a major commitment of time and effort)

www.thefocusednetwork.com

www.speednetworkinghampshire.co.uk

www.4networking.biz

www.networkingforwomen.co.uk

www.thewomensbusinessclubs.com

www.theathenanetwork.com

In any networking situation you have a very small space of time to make an impression and get your message across!

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF YOUR ELEVATOR SPEECH AND WHY YOU SHOULD HAVE ONE.

The US Elevator Company, Otis reckons that people will wait 40 seconds for an elevator (lift) and that a typical journey may last 40 seconds.

During this time you have a captive audience of fellow passengers. What do you say if they ask 'what do you do? This is an opportunity to deliver a free 30 - 40-second commercial for your practice.

Write, Practice and learn your own 'elevator speech'. Focus on benefits rather than techniques. Keep it to the point and have a business card handy to present at the end.

Think 'outside the box'. Don't start with 'I am a Hypnotherapist'. Start with something like "I make dreams come true"! Then end with the same theme.

Use your elevator speech at social gatherings with strangers - but don't bore them into the ground. The objective is to create interest and a request for further information - not to make an appointment there and then.



Sample 'elevator speech' for formal presentation

Bob Hammett , Romney Centre (Christmas Networking Event)

This time of year we are all encouraged to foster goodwill to all men, so if I tell you that at the Romney Centre we could not only save lives, but make someone thousands of pounds better off, perhaps that's a tip worth passing on?

According to figures published last year a 20 a day smoker who gives up could be nearly £21,000 richer in 10 years time.

So today I'm looking for people who want to make one of the most important decisions of their life, to save their lives and improve their bank balances,..... people who may be concerned about becoming a social outcasts as the laws regarding smoking in public places changes.

I'm also looking for companies who value the health of their employees, and want to save themselves the thousands of lost man hours that smoking related diseases cost.

Bob Hammett, Romney Centre where smokers quit.

Fear of Taking Action

The artist Pablo Picasso once said, "Action is the foundational key to all success."

It's one of those quotations that when you ponder it, you will have to agree with its blatant truth. But if so many of us are of the same mind as Picasso, why do we regularly forget to take his advice? There is a missing ingredient here is taking **action**, the first step is the most important. There is a quote from Newton that says it all "A body in motion remains in motion unless it is acted on by an external force. If the body is at rest it remains at rest".

Once you get started its easier to stay in motion, but the difficult bit is that first movement. Once you take your first action, bit by bit you gain momentum. So what stops us making a start? Perhaps you fear making a mistake, doing it wrong. Making a fool of yourself maybe. Being rejected ... Being a little fearful is a good thing, it produces adrenaline and up's your game a little. However if you let it get out of hand you might start avoiding what you perceive as fear-provoking situations. If you are building a business you can't avoid social situations (meetings, presentations, exhibitions etc), for fear of making some sort of blunder. You don't have the luxury of procrastination for fear of getting the disapproval of others.

Fear is the biggest coward of all, once you face up to it, it runs away with its tail between its legs. Being successful is not necessity, but choice. Most of the things that hold us back are completely self-inflicted. Remind yourself of the things that you want to achieve and the reasons why.

Tell the world

Statistics say that you are much more likely to achieve something if you tell other people about it. The things you promise yourself rarely work out. Even if you promise your spouse or partner your likelihood increases slightly but not usually enough to make it happen. But, if you commit to a stranger, a coach or a supervisor your chances shoot up. Why is it we value other people's opinion of us more than we value our own? We let ourselves down regularly but are reluctant to let others down. If you want to take action tell somebody about it, tell someone you respect what you are going to do, and ask them to check up on you. At the same time it can do no harm to try to respect yourself more, and deliver on your personal commitments.

As Picasso says we cannot reach success without action; there needs to be movement towards the goal for the goal to be achieved.

