

The silent challenge

In his coaching series for CAM practitioners dedicated to “The Difference that makes the Difference”, NLP coach **Mark Shields**, director of the Life Practice Group, explains the sixth key Practitioner Proficiency: joint ventures.

This month’s article covers a very simple, yet high impact challenge that more often than not is overlooked from the outset. I call it the Silent Challenge.

A common challenge many practitioners face today is working alone. Especially if you have come from a career that involves working with others, graduating as a practitioner can be daunting when it comes to day to day motivation and focus.

Many practitioners fall into the trap of failing to consider the implications of their version of remote working. It’s so easy to overlook but can become very difficult when you suddenly realize that you are on your own.

I have met many highly motivated practitioners who are full of energy and enthusiasm and can’t wait to get started, yet six months down the line their biggest problem turns out to be coping with working alone and the lack of staff interaction found in a normal employed position.

Following up the research I wasn’t surprised to see that 85% of practitioners who work alone view this as one of their biggest challenges and had never considered this before setting up. An amazing 50% find this so difficult to deal with that it ultimately leads to a change of career direction with the practitioner going back into an office or team environment and giving up their practice.

There is obviously a lesson to be learned here, and full considerations to remote and isolated working should be explored and understood from the beginning.

There are a number of solutions to this common problem which once understood can easily be overcome.

Set up your own networking forum

There are many networking forums that you can join as a practitioner. My advice is not only to join such a forum, but also to task yourself to find and model the most successful like-minded practitioners you can find. Make it your target to develop a minimum of three personal relationships and then set up your

own networking forum with your chosen few.

Very quickly you can find yourself swapping tips and advice daily and even making good new and solid friendships for the future.

Have your own Coach

Every practitioner should have a personal coach and mentor. This is often set up casually, but I believe it is more effective to take a formal approach. A weekly session with your coach offers guidance, focus and the ability to share concerns and problems.

Often a good coach will ensure you build into your own model week time for reflective practice, your own CPD and personal development and most importantly provides you with a feeling of a working partnership.

Joint ventures

How many times do we wander into an alternative health shop and see hundreds of different practitioner leaflets that no one has looked at it months slung across a disused counter?

If yours are there, remove them immediately. Getting tangled up in this way adds no value to your business and in my view pitches you alongside everyone else in more ways than one.

There is, however, every advantage to be gained by putting yourself out there with other people – it just needs to be done in a much more structured way.

I call these arrangements joint ventures: business partnerships with reciprocal value-adding arrangements where everybody, including the client, benefits.

In my years of working with practitioners I have found top gyms a great place to set up joint ventures. You keep gym application forms in your practice and introduce clients to the gym while in return you get to display framed posters in high-traffic places in the gym for all to see.

Keep it simple and focused. Highlighting stress and weight loss programmes seems to fit with the gym audience and has worked very well for many practitioners for many years. Always offer an introductory discount to gym members.



Most gyms these days have internal messaging and email systems. If you have a good working relationship with the gym manager I am sure they won’t mind you sending a monthly message to members advising them of your latest promotion or offer.

A good gym will have between five and ten thousand members all aware of your presence. What’s more, obviously, you join the gym yourself to integrate with the members and help with your own challenges of working alone.

Other successful joint ventures I have seen can be with other alternative practitioners, GPs, personal trainers, large local employers – the list goes on.

Very soon you find feelings of isolation and loneliness can disappear as soon as you integrate your practice within the local community as much as you can.

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* For more information on this article and details of current practitioner business coaching initiatives, including business plan coaching workshops visit www.lifepractice.co.uk/business-coaching.



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