

Attracting quality clients

Following his coaching theme of “The Difference that makes the Difference”, **Mark Shields** explains the second of the essential Practitioner Proficiencies.

Research suggests that 10% of complementary and alternative medical practitioners practise full time and 33% of this 10% earn a comfortable living. You don't need to be a genius to do the maths.

The statistics surprised me. The evidence leads us to believe that 1 practitioner in every 300 practices professionally and earns a comfortable living at the same time. Through their own admission far more practitioners would like to become full-time practising professionals but dare not due to the financial insecurities that are linked to our profession.

But does it have to be this way? After running a successful Life Coaching practice for five years with a full client book and a four-week waiting list, I for one think not.

The secret is in how to ensure your practice is busy, attracting and sustaining quality clients month after month. Consistency and sustainability is key.

The Big 5 proven success strategies for attracting clients

1. How many clients do you need?

Forecast how much income you want and divide this number by 45 weeks, which equates to the actual amount of working weeks allowing for sickness and holiday. Calculate your average client treatment value. Divide your annual income forecast by this average client spend. This will give you the total amount of clients you need to see annually to achieve your earnings target.

Simply going through this process and forming a written plan will add to your focus and help you attract more clients. It is evidenced that we have a 33% greater chance of succeeding with our plans if they are written down.

2. Adopt a professional approach

However small you think your business is, ensure you adopt a professional approach and never compromise your image or

representation. Remember, “you are what you are perceived to be”.

Make sure you have a professional website. This is your advert to the outside world. If you are going to be a professional practitioner you have to have a professional web presence.

WebHealer offers a great therapist/practitioner package from £10.00 per month: www.webhealer.net

Also in this day and age you need to be able to deal with client requirements at all levels of demand. Ensure you have a credit card machine, for example. 78% more clients want to pay in this way. If you can't offer this facility you can't compete.

You can get a good credit card machine from Cardsave: www.cardsave.net, for £15.00 per month.

Don't advertise your mobile phone number unless you have to because your business is mobile. A landline is far more professional and gives the impression you are stable and located. Also if you are local, people can't tell from a mobile number.

3. The Secret of Successful Advertising.

Set an advertising budget and ensure you stick to it. As a rule of thumb set your budget at a maximum of 20% of turnover. You have to speculate to accumulate.

After five years of researching and experimenting with different advertising strategies I've discovered the most successful way to advertise is with Google ad words. By allocating a small budget and cleverly timing your campaign you can turn the tap on to a steady flow of enquiries whenever you want or need to. It's that simple.

For example, start your campaign at four o'clock everyday. This will allow your competitors' budgets to have expired and you will reach number one on Google at half the normal price. In addition the evening is the most popular viewing time so will get double the viewings for half the cost.

4. Obtaining Referrals

The best business is referred business. Don't be afraid to ask. Your competitors will. Ensure you give every new client a business card and leaflet. Leave something visual with them to put on the fridge or in their wallet. You don't want them to forget you.

There are many techniques about asking for referrals. The “specifically for you” technique is as good as any I know and goes a little like this.

“As we are going through this process together, as its personal and about you, I am sure other people will come to mind in a similar situation or with similar needs. Don't worry when we are finished I will remind you of this and give you some business cards to give them or take their details to contact them”. Don't be afraid. Good clients know it's tough out there at the moment and they will help you if they can.

5. Create your own PR

Local businesses like to support local businesses. Approach the local paper for editorial, or the local radio station. If you don't ask you don't get.

Approach the local gym to put up a poster of what you do, or the local doctor's or dentist's surgery.

Local community magazines are excellent. They cost around £20.00 to advertise and reach in excess of 1000 people all living and working within a mile of you.

Remember, the techniques I am sharing with you are modelled on success. They work. They are currently working for other people, why shouldn't they work for you? ☺



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