



EMBRACE THE NEW YEAR

Mark Shields' Big 5 tips to ensure a successful first quarter for your Practice in 2012

WITH the beginning of a New Year comes a wealth of new opportunities, challenges and successes. It is just recognising these opportunities, rising to the challenges and enjoying the successes that can sometimes elude us as practitioners and therapists.

For a number of you, the New Year represents the end of one business year and the beginning of another. It can often be quite daunting for the therapist who feels that all of the clocks have gone back to zero (metaphorically speaking of course) and as the start of a new business year looms you carry a 'here we go again' attitude. This thinking can breed obvious insecurities, worries, and concerns for practitioners, who often face this challenge alone. However it does not have to be this way... read on, and learn some valuable tips to help your business embrace the first few months of the New Year with structure, focus, and confidence.

1 Seasonalisation: The Power Months

As experienced therapists and practitioners you will recognise the natural business highs and lows that occur every year. I call these, natural periods of 'Client Seasonalisation'. For example, many businesses have found certain periods of the year quieten down, particularly during the holiday

season at Christmas, Easter and also during the summer months when everyone is away. January to the beginning of April, May through to mid-July and September to November are times in your business that seasonally hold the greatest potential for success, and its up to you to unlock that potential and maximise opportunities.

2 Unlock January's Change Culture

January is in my opinion the golden month in the life of a therapist and practitioner. The

BE PREPARED TO REVIEW YOUR ACTIONS FROM THE PREVIOUS YEAR

Holy Grail period for everyone that works in the alternative therapy market. This is because 76% of the UK decide they are going to embrace their New Year's resolutions, and many seek help within the CAM arena to support them.

Top three New Year's Resolutions:

- 1 Achieve a healthier work-home life balance
- 2 Enhance your wellbeing: lose weight, quit smoking,

reduce alcohol
 3 Learn something new
 While this 76% sounds admirable, only 12% actually achieve the desired change which shows that there is a recurring mountain of opportunity every year.

3 Review 2011 Goals & Performance

The first step is to review your 2011 goals and business performance using the GROW Model. GROW stands for Goals, Reality, Options, Way Forward.

Note down your success of 2011 and list the areas of your performance that did not go so well. You can then build on your success and after reflection, learn from your failures and implement a "Do Differently" list for 2012. Remember, be flexible, and try not to be too harsh on yourself. The important thing is to be prepared to review your actions from the previous year, take what you have learned forward and implement your new strategies in the year ahead.

4 Set New Year Business Goals & Actions

When setting your New Year goals and actions set no more than five goals at a time and adopt the KISS principle. Keep It Simple Stupid. The last thing you want is a set of new goals that you have no chance of achieving because

they are over complicated, or include strategies outside of your direct control.

I often find that working to more than five business goals at a time dilutes the energy and focus needed to deliver on the goal actions, resulting in lack of focus, and often in failure.

Also adopt the SMART process. Ensure your goals are Specific – Measurable – Achievable – Realistic with Timescales. Ensure you are fully committed to implementing the actions to achieve these goals.

5 Implementing Change for 2012

Achieving business success is one thing, however, sustaining business success is something entirely different and far more challenging. To do this you need to be constantly piloting and implementing new ideas and strategies to ensure your practice not only continues to achieve the results you require, but equally you are able to change to meet the ever evolving needs of your clients and the market in which you operate as alternative practitioners.

Be prepared to take the knocks, learn from your mistakes and rise to the challenges, never give up on your vision and mission for your practice. ■

