

5 Classic Marketing Mistakes --Part 1

Helping and healing professionals often find that marketing their practice is extremely challenging. In the process, they make numerous mistakes as they attempt to build their client base. Not only are these mistakes common, but practitioners are frequently unaware of the types of mistakes they are making, as well as what these errors are costing them. This is the first of a two-part article that identifies some of the most prevalent marketing blunders made by those practicing in the helping and healing professions.

1. Not Addressing Your Biases, Misconceptions and Hang-ups About Marketing

If you are like many healing professionals you likely have some—if not a lot--of uncomfortable feelings about marketing your practice. This is not only common, but completely understandable.

To begin with, marketing is not something you were trained to do, so how can you expect to know how to do it effectively? As with any skill, you need knowledge and practice to become good at it.

In addition, you probably did not enter your field because you wanted to become a business person. More likely, you did so because you felt inspired to help others. One of the biggest challenges professionals face when marketing their practice is reconciling their desire to help others with the need to earn a living. The two are often mistakenly seen as being incompatible.

To make matters worse, you are flooded with negative, manipulative and misleading marketing messages on a constant basis from the media, which can lead you to erroneously believe that there is something about marketing that is inherently inappropriate, or even unethical.

All of these beliefs couldn't be further from the truth. Before you can implement marketing strategies effectively, you must identify and correct any faulty assumptions you have about marketing your services and find a way to overcome them. You can't market your practice successfully if you have beliefs and attitudes that are getting in the way.

2. Not Understanding That Marketing is a Science

As a helping or healing professional, you probably highly value the training and experience you have in your profession. However, chances are you don't value nearly enough the training and experience required to become a skilled marketer.

Due to a lack of understanding about the science of marketing, much of what helping and healing professionals believe about marketing is based on myth, rather than on fact. Just because you believe something works, doesn't mean it does. The reverse is also true; just because you believe something is ineffective, doesn't mean it is. The problems you have in marketing could be due to many factors, including the execution of the methods you use.

While marketing is an art, in that you have to be creative to do it effectively, at its core, marketing is a science that has specific principles, rules and quantifiable results

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that have been tested and proven over and over again. You must know what these are if you want to be successful in marketing your private practice and not waste your time, energy and precious dollars in the process.

3. Assuming That Because You are Good at What You Do, Clients Will Come Banging at Your Door

While it's important to be good at what you do, it is possible to be excellent at what you do and still not have any clients. Likewise, you can be mediocre at practicing your skills and have an unrelenting demand for your services.

How can this be? It is because being good at what you do is not necessarily related to being a good marketer. Of course, you have to be at least reasonably skilled to consistently get clients, and the better you are at delivering your services, the more people will tell others about you. However, you can be the best in your field, but if no one knows about your services, it won't do you one bit of good.

Becoming a skilled marketer takes knowledge, time and experience. It's largely about the clarity of the message you put out, how many people know about your services, and how you execute and follow-up with your plan.

4. Trying to Be All Things To All People

Helping and healing professionals often attempt to cover all bases by trying to appeal to all types of people with all sorts of problems. Often, this stems from a fear that if you don't attract everyone, you won't fill your practice.

While there are successful generalists out there, in the current competitive market it is wise to target your marketing efforts to a specific population(s) you want to work with.

Why is this the case? In the first place, people like to hire those who they view as experts because there is an expectation that they will then get the best service possible. Think of what you do when hiring someone. For example, if you had chronic back pain and had a choice between hiring an alternative health practitioner who was a generalist, or someone who specialized in that area, who are you more likely to hire?

Second, you will have a better idea of where to market if you know whom you are marketing to. For example, if you treat pregnant women, you can target your marketing to those specific groups, instead of focusing on the general population, which won't be as effective.

Third, targeting a specific market makes it easier for people to find you and understand how you might help them. In the long run, you will become better known for what you do, attract more suitable clients, and provide a higher quality service. In the end, this is better for your clients, in addition to being better for your pocketbook.

5. Having Marketing Materials That Simply Don't Work

If you are like many in the helping and healing professions, you may have developed your marketing materials (brochure, website, etc) by yourself, perhaps with some help from a graphic designer. You might assume that because your materials look

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nice, you are a good writer, and that your friends like them, that they are going to attract the clients that you want. This is a big mistake.

The reality is that many graphic designers don't have a clue about what works from a marketing perspective. Your materials can look beautiful and still not draw in clients. This is even more true for websites.

Furthermore, being a good writer has nothing to do with writing effective copy (text) for your materials. In fact, like marketing, copywriting is an art as well as a well-researched science. Well written copy will not only greatly increase the chances that a potential client will read your materials, but will also more often compel them to take action on your offer. Even changing one word in a headline can significantly increase your response rate.

Developing marketing materials can be expensive, so it's a good idea to understand how to develop them in a manner geared to getting the best possible results. Hiring someone experienced to assist you can help ensure your investment is not wasted. Of course, you can always learn how to do it yourself, but most likely, you will want to conserve your time, energy and funds for becoming the best at what you do. You cannot be an expert at everything.

Read part two of "[Classic Marketing Mistakes](#)."

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