

Marketing Misconceptions

Any misconceptions you hold about marketing can seriously impair your ability to attract clients effectively. They can interfere with your ability to focus, consume your energy, encourage procrastination, cause inertia, and erode your self-confidence.

The good news is that it doesn't have to be this way. In my coaching work with counselors and healing professionals, I find that once misconceptions are identified and replaced with accurate information, my clients become more energized, focused, and optimistic about their ability to build a practice. Most importantly, once these shifts take place, they start getting much better results from their marketing efforts.

Below are some of the most common misconceptions about marketing that I hear repeatedly in my work with healing professionals.

Misconception #1: You Can Build a Practice without Learning Marketing Strategies and Skills.

While some healing professionals succeed at building a private practice without a lot of experience or training in marketing, often their success is due to having a large network of people who know and trust them, or a few good referral sources that consistently send them clients.

Marketing after all, is about building lasting relationships with many people over time. To do this, you have to know how to go about finding the people you will market to, and know the best ways to deliver your message to them so that you are perceived as having a service that is valuable to them. You will also need to know effective methods for staying in touch with these people so that you can build strong relationships with them.

Misconception #2: If you are a Skilled Practitioner, You Will Automatically be Successful at Marketing a Private Practice.

It certainly will help you in building a practice if you are skilled at what you do as some of your clients that have benefited from your services will tell others about their experiences with you.

However, it is possible to be excellent at what you do and never achieve the kind of success that you want. Your success at filling your practice will depend on many factors that go well beyond your skills as a practitioner.

Some of these factors include how strong your desire is to succeed, the extent of your visibility, how effective you are at choosing and implementing marketing strategies, your persistence and patience, and how quickly you learn from your mistakes.

Misconception #3: It is Only Necessary to Market Your Services When You Begin Your Practice.

When you first start to market a practice you will likely need to spend a great deal of time marketing. The amount of time will depend on your goals (e.g. how many clients you want and how quickly you want to build your practice).

As your client load increases, you can gradually cut back somewhat on the amount of time you spend marketing. The mistake that many people make, however, is to quit marketing all together once they start having enough--or close to enough--clients. The problem with this is that clients continuously come and go, often without much warning.

If you set aside time for marketing on a regular basis, you will avoid the feast and famine cycle that many professionals get caught in.

Misconception #4: Promotional Materials Should Begin by Focusing on You and Your Credentials.

Too often helping professionals develop marketing materials (e.g. brochures, flyers, and websites) that immediately focus on who they are and their credentials. While potential clients do want to know about you, they are usually more interested at first to learn if you understand the problems they are experiencing and whether you can help them solve them.

If your marketing materials begin by identifying specific problems and the benefits you clients can expect, you will be more likely to attract their attention so that they continue reading, and perhaps even pick up the phone and call you for more information.

Misconception #5: If a Marketing Strategy Gets Minimal or No Response At All, it's Best to Try Something Else.

Many counselors and healing professionals assume that all they have to do when starting a practice is run an ad or send out some letters once to a few referral sources and clients will come pouring in. When this doesn't happen, they become discouraged and may assume that that strategy is not an effective one.

It is true that some marketing methods may not be the best ones for you and your particular situation. There are many things that influence whether a particular strategy will be effective for you and your target market. If you find that you are not getting the results you intended, it may be because you are giving up too soon.

Most strategies have to be implemented repeatedly and be fine-tuned as you learn what works and what doesn't. Successful marketing requires testing and tweaking the methods you use until you get the results you want. If you have given a particular method a fair trial and it still isn't working for you, then it's probably a good idea to try something else.

Misconception #6: You Can Be All Things to All People.

Believing that by marketing to everyone you will increase your chances of getting clients is another common misconception of counselors and healing professionals. This belief often stems from a fear that you won't attract enough clients. One of the major problems with trying to market to everyone is that you end up blending in with all the other professionals in your field.

By choosing a distinct target market and a specific niche as your focus, you will be able to stand out from the crowd. Potential clients will have an easier time finding you

and it will be easier for you to know where to find them as well. In addition, it is a lot easier to become known for what you do when you focus in this way.

Misconception #7: You Can Build a Successful Practice without Planning.

Professionals sometimes attempt to build a practice by dabbling haphazardly with a few marketing methods now and again. The problem with this is that it's difficult to get somewhere if you don't know where you are going. When you don't plan and structure when and how you will market, you won't know how much time you will need to spend marketing, you will have difficulty building and maintaining momentum, and it will be difficult for you to track your results.

Careful planning can counter a lot of the frustration, fear and doubts you may have about being successful. The more clear and specific your plan is, the better you will be able to implement it as you will always know what your next step is.

The more accurate information you have about marketing, the fewer of the above misconceptions you will have. This in turn will lead to much faster and better results, not to mention a much more enjoyable experience.

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