

Seven Marketing Pitfalls Every Massage Therapist Can Avoid



Sometimes the best advice for marketing your massage practice begins with what not to do. Whether you are revamping your marketing plan, planning for an upcoming event or just beginning your business, a review of the following pitfalls can help you avoid costly mistakes and noneffective strategies.

Pitfall #1. Not having a marketing plan, a marketing budget or both. How can you measure what is successful or not if you have no benchmark? Even the smallest of massage-therapy practices need a plan, even if that plan is simply to use business card marketing and networking activities. If you have fallen in this pit, stop now and do not proceed until you have developed both.

Pitfall #2. A bad business location. A new massage-therapy school graduate recently asked me where she should locate her new business. A friend had offered to share space in a second floor suite and the price was great. Unfortunately, the suite had elevator access a long way from the front door and worse yet, the suite was tucked in a corner of the building. A new client would need a GPS device to find her. The moral of the story is that a price break on rent is no substitute for a

workable location that fits the type of practice you want to build. Locate your business close to the clientele you want to attract.

Pitfall #3. Not being easy to reach. I love to collect, review and critique business cards. One of the most common errors is simply not listing enough ways for a potential client to contact you. How can I book your services if I cannot get to you? List your phone, cell phone number, e-mail address and Web site. Don't forget the physical address, too. Don't have a web site? Consider investing a small amount from your marketing budget to have a "landing page" that can share information regarding your business, hours, philosophy, any special training you have taken and any offers. This is a low-cost alternative to having a full-blown Web site, and it allows potential clients to find you 24/7!

Pitfall #4. Not having an internal marketing system in place and using it. Your greatest business asset is your current customer base. Better yet, they have friends, business colleagues, family members and contacts that could become great clients. You must have a systematic program that promotes new client referrals, retention of your current clients and rewards your most loyal and valuable customers.

Pitfall #5: Not tracking your current market efforts, so that you know what works. Do you consistently ask all potential clients how they heard about your business? You can include this on your intake form or when answering a phone call or e-mail. This is the first step in tracking your efforts, and to be successful it has to be done every time. Making this part of your protocol will help with Pitfall #6.

Pitfall #6: Not converting the phone or e-mail potential client into a new client. Remember, products fulfill needs; personal services fulfill desires. The client who calls or e-mails has a desire, and it is your job to identify it! A few simple questions can help reveal the client's intention. It may be pain relief, stress management or just the need for a great birthday gift. When you discover what they desire, you can provide the best solution to meet that desire.

Pitfall #7: Not staying in touch with your customers. Once you gain a new customer, never let her go! Always follow up with a new client, either with a brief phone call or e-mail message. Clients want to know you care about them, not just the next appointment. Follow up with existing customers through e-mails, newsletters, birthday cards or thank-you notes. Whatever fits your personal style and budget will pay off. To stay on top of a customer's mind takes consistent and frequent communication.

Avoiding these pitfalls can save you time, money and frustration! Take a realistic survey of these danger zones in your practice. Identify the areas you can improve on. Write them down and look at them daily. List one or two actions you can take to overcome the pitfall, and then give yourself a target date to complete the action. This targeted action will pay off--and better yet, your bottom line will thank you.

(These suggestions are excerpted from the course **Personal Services Power Marketing**, by Patti Biro.)



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