



Practice Building for Massage Therapists: Consistency Breeds Success

By David Kent, LMT, NCTMB

Keeping It Simple Series



The current economic slowdown is stressful to everyone. Business is slow, treatments are down, and both are affecting the bottom line. During these challenging times, however, there are things you can do to consistently to breed your success. Instead of getting frustrated and discouraged, use this extra downtime to your advantage. Following the tips in this article will help you achieve ongoing success in your practice, whether you are in a clinical, spa or outcall setting.

Getting Out There:

Marketing professionals know how important repetition is to “imprint” a product in the mind of the consumer. This same concept applies to massage therapy and your ability to imprint your services on potential referral sources. Each week, I visit specific locations that have become my best referral sources. If you aren’t getting the number of referrals you would like, it’s time to get

out there and introduce yourself. Here are just a few places to start:

- Medical and chiropractic clinics
- Acupuncturists and homeopaths
- Hotels and salons
- Personal training centers and gyms
- Tennis and golf courses
- Yoga studios
- Health food stores
- Gymnastic and dance studios
- Business centers

Talk it Up:

You took the time to get out there; now you need to make it count! Your goal is to attract business by educating your referral sources about the importance of massage therapy. Advertisers use test markets and focus groups to refine their messages. But before you begin pitching

your services, you will need to practice and refine your “commercial” with your “test market,” which is located in the next community over.

That’s right. You need to practice your selling skills before you officially launch your marketing campaign with your “real” audience in your own community. Practicing gives you the opportunity to build your confidence while simultaneously getting comfortable with introducing yourself to strangers, telling them what you do, and answering commonly asked questions. But don’t let yourself off the hook with your practice sessions. Make sure that you are as professional and courteous with your test audience as you plan to be with your “real” audience. The following tips will help you get comfortable in this newfound role as salesperson.

- Introduce yourself. Let people know who you are, what you do, and where you practice.
- Talk to everyone you come into contact with—everyone! From waiters and waitresses to the FedEx delivery person to your mechanic, dentist, or insurance agent.
- Never assume that people know what massage is or how it can help them.
- Following each encounter, reevaluate your performance and ask yourself the following questions: What did I learn? What will I do different next time? What other strategies could I try in the future? Answering these questions will help you do a better job each time.
- Finally, ask your clients and referral sources what they think is important for you to tell others when marketing your services. You’ll be surprised at how helpful their feedback will be.

Show and Tell:

Explaining the basics helps others understand how massage therapy can help with headaches, sciatica, neck and back pain, and more. Additionally, using “props” can help educate your clients.

- Carry a trigger point flip chart with



you. Explain how trigger point patterns are often the cause of severe pain.

- Take a moment to examine the posture of the person you are speaking with. Educate your contact about how each individual's unique postural pattern can be treated with massage therapy. Then describe your ability to custom tailor your treatments accordingly.

Mutual Benefits:

Discuss how you can be of mutual benefit to each other.

- Can you send them business?
- Take some of their business cards to pass out, and ask them to do the same.

Leave Treasures:

Do something unique so that your referral sources remember you.

- Give a helpful tip. If you are talking with a secretary who complains of neck pain, suggest that he/she try a telephone headset, or adjust the height and angle of the computer monitor or chair.
- Teach simple stretching techniques.
- Leave healthy snacks. I know people who are always on the run and rarely stop to eat. Sometimes, I'll drop off an apple, nuts, and a bottle of water, along with my business card.
- Leave samples of topical pain relievers.

Contact Information:

You've invested your time and energy marketing your practice. Now make sure that your referral sources can find your name and number when it counts. Be sure to leave

- Business cards
- Magnets
- Flyers
- Pens
- Notepads
- Any other tool you think will leave an impression.

Education:

Clients often want to understand and learn more about their condition, so put your education to good use.

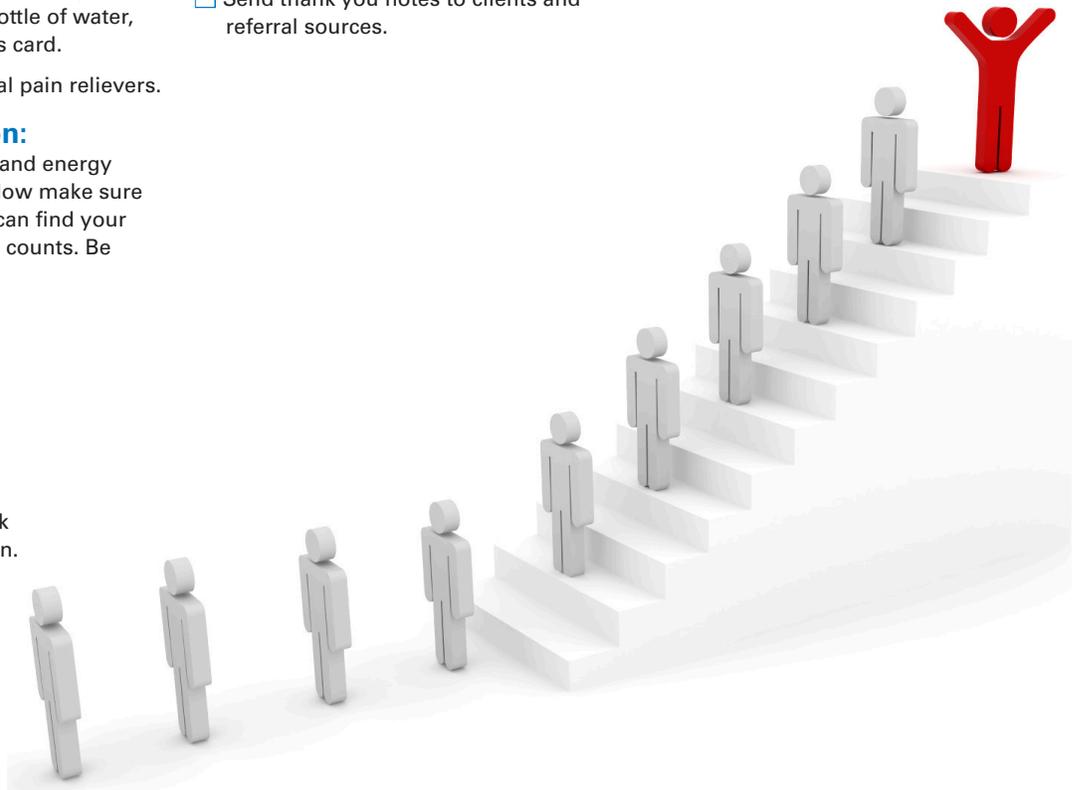
- Continually educate and re-educate your clients.
- Show them how to stretch and maintain themselves between sessions.
- Explain the importance and benefits of regular exercise.
- Use visuals, such as anatomical models, textbooks, trigger point charts or other charts to show the musculoskeletal origins of their condition.
- Review the effects of poor posture and explain how it contributes to pain. Since a picture is worth a thousand words and many cell phones have cameras, taking postural analysis photos on the road is easier than ever. Read "Getting Comfortable with Postural Analysis" (*Massage Today*, July 2008) for more tips on using postural analysis photos.
- Discuss the uses of ice, heat, and topical analgesics for pain.

Say "Thank You":

- Place follow-up calls to new clients.
- Send thank you notes to clients and referral sources.

We typically avoid the things that we are uncomfortable doing; however, with practice, you will quickly realize that certain thoughts and actions consistently focused in positive directions will ensure your success. And if you practice your selling skills consistently, you will improve each time you sell your services to somebody new. Remember: practice makes perfect! Hang in there and don't get frustrated. Results don't always happen overnight. Just invest the time and keep a positive attitude. You'll be amazed with the results!

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