



# HOW TO BE A SUCCESSFUL MASSAGE THERAPIST

Continuing Education E-Book



**T E X A S**  
**M A S S A G E C E U**

Melissa Wood, ND, MTI, LMT

# HOW TO BE A SUCCESSFUL MESSAGE THERAPIST

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12-HOUR CONTINUING EDUCATION UNIT CLASS

Approved by the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR)



## **How to Be a Successful Massage Therapist 12-Hour Continuing Education Class**

**Welcome to the How to Be a Successful Massage Therapist  
Continuing Education Class!**

**Class Objective:** This online class was developed to educate Texas Licensed Massage Therapists on marketing techniques and strategies to have a successful massage therapy career. It is my hope that this material will be interesting, educational and a valuable resource to assist you with your massage therapy clients and to help you maintain a long and rewarding career in this industry.

## About the Instructor



My name is Melissa Wood and I am a Naturopathic Doctor, Massage Therapy Instructor and Licensed Massage Therapist located in Sherman, Texas. I have been studying alternative and natural medicine for over 25 years.

My mission is to enable everyone on this planet to be healthy and to be actively involved in their health and healing. My goal is to offer information that will provide you with new insights that are useful in your path to wellness. I envision a time when everyone will seek out herbs, essential oils, vitamins, minerals, nutritional supplements, and whole foods (not processed food!) to help heal themselves, as these are very powerful tools for enhancing your health and well-being.

### **APPROVED MASSAGE THERAPY INSTRUCTOR**

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## Disclaimer

I am a Naturopathic Doctor (N.D.), Massage Therapy Instructor (MTI), Licensed Massage Therapist (LMT), and am an Approved CE Provider in the State of Texas. I am NOT a Medical Doctor (M.D.). I have been trained in holistic and natural therapies for the body and do not diagnose any medical condition, nor prescribe any medications. Should you need immediate medical or psychiatric assistance, please telephone 911 or seek immediate treatment at a hospital emergency room. Nothing listed within this e-book class should be considered as medical advice for dealing with a given problem. You should consult your health care professional for individual guidance for specific health problems. It is understood that the author is solely responsible for the content of this work and is **NOT** responsible for your usage of said information either personally or professionally with your clients. In addition, you should ALWAYS encourage your clients to see their health care professionals for help with any medical issues they are having.

This is an educational e-book class designed to be instructive and informative in nature. I encourage you to make your own health care decisions based upon your research and in partnership with a qualified healthcare professional. The use of this information, suggestions, recommendations, products, or services should be based on your own due diligence and you agree I am not liable for your success or failure.

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**T E X A S**  
**M A S S A G E C E U**

## **How to Be a Successful Massage Therapist 12-HOUR Continuing Education Class**

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It is a simple fact of life that people are busy. All they need to schedule another appointment is a friendly reminder that you are still there to help them deal with their stressful lives.

# **Introduction – Building a Massage Therapy Business**

You have entered an industry that not only offers immense satisfaction from alleviating clients' pain and promoting well-being, but one that is highly lucrative as well. Do you just want to learn some tips and tricks for increasing your client base while working out of a private spa? Or do you want to open your own private spa or practice? Either way, this e-book is filled with great ideas to help you become more successful in this rewarding career. In order to succeed in this industry, you will need to understand and utilize the concepts within this e-book in order to grow your clientele.

## **Some Trends to Consider**

The massage therapy business has tripled over the last 14 years and a 23% rise is expected in the next decade as far as the employment rate for massage therapists is concerned<sup>1</sup>. On average, a professional massage therapist can expect to earn anywhere from \$40 to \$70 on an hourly basis.

So, if you are a self-employed massage therapist, your income becomes directly proportional to the number of hours you work. Working smarter, not necessarily longer and harder, is what this e-book class is designed to teach you.

## **Other Factors That Contribute to Rising Demand**

Stress levels in America continue to rise. More than 8 in 10 employed Americans experience work-related stress, mostly due to low paychecks and increasing workloads. But even outside the workforce, almost 70% of adults experience physical symptoms of stress and 20% of these people experience extreme levels of stress throughout the year<sup>2</sup>.

Bottom-line: Stress is a reality in most people's lives and not something they only experience during traumatic events.



How is this related to our topic? Well, as the levels of stress rise, so does the interest in products and services to alleviate it. One of the most popular ways to calm oneself down is of course, massage therapy.



Massage therapy is also documented to help people experiencing a number of other conditions besides stress, such as:

- Arthritis
- Lower back pain
- Insomnia
- Headaches
- Anxiety
- Circulatory problems

This means that as a ‘Pain Relief Expert’ and a ‘Relaxation Specialist’ (more on this in the following chapters), you will never run short of clients who need your help to calm them down and help to rid them of physical pain.

## **So, What about the Competition?**

As mentioned above, the massage therapy industry is growing. This means with each coming year you will face fiercer competition! This is where this e-book comes in.

‘How to be a Successful Massage Therapist’ is just what you need to excel in this profession. You may be a world-class masseuse/masseur, but unless you know the ins and outs of marketing, you will find it hard to beat your competitors and get more clients.

In the following chapters, you will get page after page of extensive, in-depth, and practical marketing tips to boost your massage therapy business. Remember that not only do we want to be passionate about our work, but also passionate about *marketing* our work. After all, you might be a great therapist, but if no one knows about you, it will be hard to make a living! Good luck.

## **Section 1 – All About Marketing**

What is marketing? There are several definitions out there. This e-book focuses on differentiating yourself from your competitors, learning about niche marketing, informing clients what you can do for them and increasing your client base. All of these things will help you build your business when the economy is in shambles and competition is intense.

### **Doing Market Research**

While marketing mainly deals with promoting and advertising your business (see later sections), one of the key aspects in this process is market research. Let's be honest here: doing research isn't fun, as compared to doing massage! But it is a necessary component when trying to increase your sales. There is no sound marketing strategy (and hence no clients) without solid marketing research. You need to know who your clients are, where to find information about target markets and what they really need.

You must be thinking: *“I am a masseuse/masseur. My clients need a massage. What's there to research?”*

### **Marketing Plan**

In a similar vein, you also need to develop a plan to strategize your marketing efforts. This is essential for the growth of your business. The right marketing plan identifies:

- Who your target clients are
- How you will reach them
- How you will retain your clients so they repeatedly buy from you

### **Defining Your Business & Services**

What do you specialize in; i.e. clinical massage, sports massage, basic Swedish massage, etc.? One of the things I believe is critically important is education. When most people hear the words “massage therapist,” images of a darkened room with candles and incense come to mind. They immediately think of how relaxing and soothing a massage can be.

There's nothing wrong with that perception; however, I believe we as therapists need to go

a step further and really help to educate the client about the fact that bodywork is rehabilitative and can be quite powerful in healing and also in prevention of illness. So really stressing the physiological impact that massage can have is very important; this will help people to realize that it's much more than just a "spa experience." You also will need to specify whether you will offer massage therapy at your private practice, if you have a location where you do chair massages (like a gym or mall) or if you do outcalls to a client's home.

## **Defining Your Clients**

Whether you have years of experience as a massage therapist or you have just started out, knowing your ideal client is the key to leveraging your marketing efforts. As you gain experience, you will learn which clients pay well, keep their scheduled appointments and communicate their needs clearly during the session, as compared to those that simply drain your energy.

So, if you want to bring in more of the first type of client into your business and avoid the latter type, you need to determine the following factors about your target market:

- ✓ Gender
- ✓ Location
- ✓ Age range
- ✓ Income and lifestyle choices
- ✓ Habits
- ✓ What type of therapy they need (do you work specifically on athletes or fibromyalgia clients?)

Note that once you have a clear idea of the clients you want to cater to, you need to see if they match your offerings as mentioned above.

## Defining Your Marketing Budget

Creating a marketing budget is necessary, and it must be done before you even draw up a marketing plan. The simple reason is that you can only use strategies you can afford! Here are some quick tips to determine your marketing budget:



- ✓ Start by writing down all of your expenses (rent, taxes, utility bills, massage supplies, etc.) If you do outcalls, be sure you include gas expenses as well as wear/tear on your vehicle.
- ✓ Calculate your break-even point without any marketing in your budget.
- ✓ Consider your marketing needs, i.e. how much and how often you need to advertise.
- ✓ Get quotes for print, electronic, and online marketing.

Also note that not all business money will be used for the business. You have mortgages to pay and mouths to feed! And of course, you'll need to be paying yourself your salary! But it may take several months (and maybe even a year) to make a true profit, so be sure you plan accordingly. It's important to have several months' worth of expenses saved up before opening up your own private practice, as it will take time to build up your practice.

An important thing to remember here is that no matter what your budget, you have to spend it creatively and stretch every last cent. And be realistic when estimating your expenses, as well as costs of advertising. So, add the following things to the checklist given above:

- ✓ Calculate how much business one client provides you over a given time period
- ✓ How often will one client come to see you?
- ✓ How long does a client stay with you?

These figures are important because they tell you what you can spend to attract this client and how much you can actually pay to retain them in your business.

## Steps to a Successful Marketing Plan

Whether online or in the form of a flyer, you need to put out some ads at some point to attract clients and take your practice to the next level. You already know that you must include your name, address, phone number and Massage Therapy license number on all forms of advertisement. So, what else do you need to know about marketing and creating an ad?

One of the many things that hinder a nice ad response is the client's *resistance* to traditional advertising. Let's face it; the average person is literally bombarded with advertising, so it is wrong to assume that he/she wants more of it.

The underlying problem here is that while advertising has been done a lot, most of it is anything but worthwhile. This simply means that you can use time-tested strategies when launching your own ads to make sure that you get the desired response.

### Studying Your Competitors

The only way to make your massage therapy practice flourish is to outdo your competitors, not only in terms of the quality of service you provide, but also in the way you reach out to target clients.

Many therapists, when starting out their practice, think that analyzing the competition is something to be avoided. And then there is the other extreme, where people actually become obsessed with everything their competitors do, to the point where they often use illegal tactics. Both of these approaches are to be avoided.

Healthy analysis of competitors' marketing strategies involves the following things:

- Observing what they are doing
- Responding to changes
- Spotting what they are doing effectively and copying it

Make a list of your competitors (if you do not know who they are, it is imperative you find out). See what their objectives are and what kind of clients they target. In addition, note any threats they pose for you, along with any weaknesses you can leverage. Start by looking at competitors who might be within a 20-mile radius of you. An online search will yield some results, but don't be afraid to get out there and drive around and make a note of any spas or private massage establishments. Call and find out what kinds of clients they cater too; review local newspapers and health journals to see what kinds of ads they are placing.

In addition, see if your competitors have their own websites, blogs and social media accounts. This will not only let you in on the kind of marketing they do, but sometimes will even let you know their pricing strategies.

### **Keep the Big Picture in Mind**

Marketing is not restricted to flyers to leave at a hotel counter after a seminar. Ask anyone who has built a successful business and they will tell you that marketing is part of everything that their company stands for, from client interaction to public relations, and from publicity to pricing. So while publishing an ad is essential, you will have to keep the bigger picture in mind and realize you'll have to do much more than just run an ad once or twice. It will likely need to be an ongoing part of your budget for many years to come, especially in the beginning while you're trying to get established.

Marketing is more of a process than a mindset, and unless you put in as much work in it as you put in massaging, you are not going to get any results. This means:

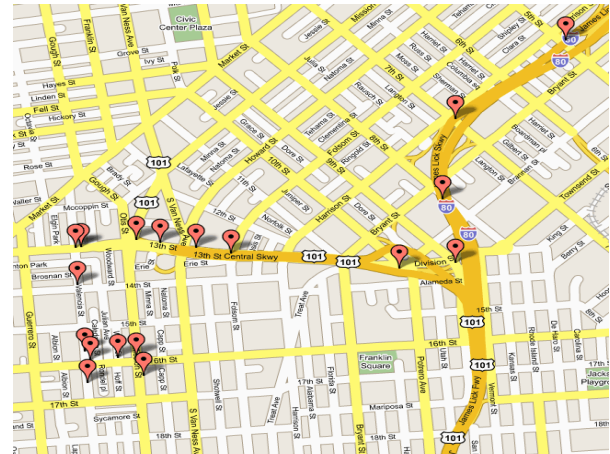
- Do not handout flyers if you don't have the time to take calls from prospects
- Do not start a blog if you can't update it regularly
- Don't send promotional emails if you can't follow up

Along similar lines, your ad should make it easy for the viewer to reach you. Once again, this is a basic element that many marketers overlook. Make sure that the ad has a clear

call-to-action and that you tell potential clients how to reach you. (More information on call-to-action will be discussed later in this e-book.)

Down the road, you can make this process smoother in the following ways:

- Add a location map to the ad so prospects can see your general location
- Create a responsive website that can be easily (and quickly) viewed on mobile devices



Along with knowing that marketing is an extension of everything you do as a massage therapist, you should remember that it is in essence a continuous process. And while you need to adapt to changing scenarios, you should always strive to be consistent in your brand message. This means your website, logo, social media presence and print marketing should resonate like one grand symphony.

A responsive website, for instance, helps you achieve a consistent message since you have only one website for all types of devices.

## Incorporating Change in Your Marketing Strategy

A massage therapy business has greater leverage over several types of businesses when it comes to adapting to changing economic and market conditions. It is even easier when you are working alone, since you're not responsible for employees. However, rather than dealing with changes as they come, you should have a proactive approach.

Keep track of your clients' changing needs. It is the *unsatisfied* clients that become the subject of research in this scenario. Don't worry; you will have a fair amount of such clients when you start your practice.



What you need to determine are the reasons *why* some clients don't come in for a second session. A fairly basic way to keep track of this is to calculate the number of such clients over a period of time, while also noting how frequently other clients visit your spa or call you for an outcall. You can then compare the number of repeat clients with the number of single visit clients to see the relationship between the two. Also, don't be afraid to make a phone call to a client you haven't seen in a while. People often get busy and a gentle "nudge" to remind them you're there can be very powerful and help to keep your clients returning to you for services. You might also call to let them know about a new technique you're doing or to inform them of a special promotion you're offering that month.

Be sure you keep a log or journal of all your clients, complete with dates of their visits and what their symptoms were and how you helped them. Don't be afraid to ask them if your massage *didn't* help them. It might seem strange to do this, but if you don't know what didn't work, it will be hard for you to change it in the future. Maybe the client didn't communicate their needs clearly enough. Maybe you misunderstood them. This process will help you to fine tune your therapy and keep retention at its highest.

## Niche Marketing

In a previous section, you were instructed on drawing up a profile of the ideal client that you strive to bring into your business (see [Defining Your Clients](#) to re-read that section). That is what niche marketing is all about, but here we are going to take it a step further.

Saying that you offer massage therapy is not enough, for it is a general term. Instead, you need to market the specific kind of massage you offer. Here's a quick overview of the most popular types of massage therapies:

### Swedish Massage

This is the most common type of massage therapy. Swedish massage is what most people have in mind when they talk about massage therapy, and it works great for stress relief, relaxation, and relieving muscle cramps.

## Hot Stone Massage

In this massage, the body is weighted down with hot, smooth stones, and they are also used to massage the person. The heat helps release the tension in the upper body.



## Chair Massage

This is where the client sits face forward in a chair and the therapist massages the neck and upper body. This takes less time than other types of massage therapies that involve the whole body. And this is a great way to have a portable massage practice...you've no doubt seen massage chairs set up in malls, airports and office buildings.

## Deep Tissue Massage

Deep tissue massage, as the name implies, applies deep pressure onto specific pressure points. While you feel pressure in your muscles, a deep tissue massage is a focused therapy that can help you with stiff spots like the shoulder and neck.

## Thai Massage

This is the massage where you see (usually) a female therapist walking on her client. Thai massage works on the entire body where the therapist stretches the body in yoga-like poses. The therapist uses her body to apply pressure on the muscles and loosen the client's joints. Thai massage improves energy and flexibility and is great for boosting overall health and well-being.



## Sports Massage

This is for athletes that incur sport related injuries.

## Raindrop Technique

Raindrop Technique seeks to address defects in the curvature of the spine, which are mostly caused by inactive viruses and bacteria. This is done, for the most part, with antimicrobial

therapeutic essential oils. Raindrop technique actually combines various techniques (such as reflexology, Swedish massage, and aromatherapy) to strengthen the client's structure so that it could better support their body. Various oils, especially Basil, Peppermint, and Oregano, are applied to the spine using different techniques. The oils then soak into the skin and soft tissue, reducing inflammation and eliminating viruses and bacteria.

Bottom-line, unless you are running a massive massage spa, you cannot offer all the different kinds of massage therapies listed above and there are dozens more as well. You have to promote the massage technique(s) you specialize in. This automatically makes you unique from a competitor who is just promoting herself as a "massage therapist," even though she may be offering the very same service as you.

Niche marketing is actually necessary, because you can't market to every person on the street. ***In fact, when you market to all, you are actually marketing to none!*** Defining your clients, finding them and promoting your services specifically to them, is not only cost-effective, but is the only thing that will help you earn profits in the long run.

## **Dominating Your Niche**

While carving a niche for yourself is necessary, it is only the first step on the road to success. Your aim should be to dominate your niche. The reason is simple. When you read a business guide like this one, with every turn of the page, you feel like you have finally unlocked the secrets of building a business, and that success is only a few chapters away.

However, while guides can help teach time-tested techniques and principles of bringing in clients, it is simply silly to think that no one else knows what you know. This is the mistake that many entrepreneurs make when carving a niche, i.e. thinking that it is a goldmine that no one else has thought about before. No matter how good the idea is, the overwhelming odds are that there is already someone out there who has actually implemented it. Instead, you should strive for a competitive niche, because that is where you will find your clients.

Another approach that follows from this example is personality positioning, i.e. you become your own brand. You become the face of your business and thereby create a personal rapport with your clients. This is more or less like celebrity endorsements. Building this kind of popularity not only takes time, but also you may have to take some fire for it as well.

You can also consider whether to publish educational content, which mostly means creating a blog. Here you can publish informative content on the massage therapy you specialize in and how it actually helps people. Readers will consider you to be an expert in the field, which automatically improves your sales. More on blogging and writing articles in later sections.

### **Gender-Specific Marketing**

Before closing this section on niche marketing, it is also important to realize that your client demographic also constitutes gender differences. Knowing how many males and females actually fall in your target market will further help you market your business more effectively.

This is where market research comes in. For instance, the *Massage Profession Research Report 2013*: Spa clientele was 77% female and 23% male in 2011. However, for both 2011 and 2013, male clients received *more massages in one year* than female clients.

How can you benefit from this data? While women on average, represent the bulk of the market, if you don't incorporate the male audience in your marketing efforts, you are losing out on potential clients.

Like all niche ideas, the concept of marketing to men and women separately is not a new idea. Marketing research has been exploring this concept for many years. And it's not that difficult. For example men, for the most part, are pragmatic about the products and services they use. So selling the benefits of your massage therapy will already strike a chord with them.

Moreover, sports are also associated more with men, so marketing your massage therapy as a treatment for upper body pain will be effective, i.e. “*get rid of back pain so you can improve your swing*”. And if you specialize in sports massage, it will even be better.

Of course, since you are focusing on a small segment of your target market, you may also have to customize your services to cater to these new clients. Additionally, you can have attractive names, such as “*body builder pro massage*” or “*the golfer massage*”; these types of things let your prospective clients know that you specialize in a certain area and if they are a body builder who frequently has sore muscles, this will likely appeal to them more than just someone who does “*massage*”.

These strategies can help them overcome their hesitations. Once they are in for the sessions, you have to use it as an opportunity to educate your clients about the benefits of the massage, outlining your techniques, explaining how this will help them feel better and what they can expect in the next session.

## **Understand Your Prospect**

We have already discussed why you should create a marketing plan and all the major items to include in this plan. Here we will delve a little deeper to understand your target market. Understanding your prospect is foundational in all marketing endeavors.

When you go deeper than leveraging benefits and competitive pricing, you start to understand the psychology of your clients and understand why they are willing to pay for your services. And to achieve this, you have to create a genuine connection with your clientele. You need to make a connection because your clients are real people and not business entities. And in this fast-paced world where everybody on the street hands us a business card, relationships are more important now than ever before.

One of the best ways to do this is info-marketing, i.e. educating your prospects about massage therapy and in the process opening the lines of communication in which you bring in your sales pitch and call-to-action. Posting ‘how-to’ information on your blog or your

Facebook page is one way of creating this relationship. This is known as ‘soft selling’, where you bring in your sales pitch only after you have provided free information and built trust with your prospects.

People actually don’t make rational buying decisions (they don’t make irrational ones either, but rather choices that benefit them on an emotional level). Hence, thinking that every client makes every purchasing decision by gathering information and doing comparisons before settling for a product or service is highly idealized.

For the most part, people invest in what makes them happy. But then there are those that engage in impulse buying. This happens in supermarkets all the time. Once you see a product that wasn’t even on your shopping list, you suddenly consider it to be the most significant purchase you can make!

On a slightly negative side, fear also drives people. This is deeply entwined with social pressure, i.e. people buy things they don’t need, but only to help them conform to the majority.

All this simply means is that in order for your marketing efforts to bear fruit, you need to connect with your prospects on an emotional level, understand where they come from and what drives their buying decisions. It also means that the prospect has the vantage point. Empathize with her and look at things *from her eyes*, instead of making arbitrary marketing decisions or forming strategies that *you* think are effective.

This is not as difficult as you might think. Even though you are providing a service, you yourself are a prospect to countless businesses, such as lawyers, doctors, massage equipment manufacturers, etc. With this in mind, answer questions like:

- How do you want to be treated when someone is marketing to you?
- How often do you want someone calling?
- How much freedom and time would you like to have to think about a product, to ask questions and to make your decision?

- How do you want to feel about the process when it is over?
- Would you appreciate hearing from them after the sale?

### **Key Things to Remember About Each Prospect**

Marketing is not an easy job, especially for shy people. Many people think that marketing is pushy and that you are actually interrupting your clients while they are engaged in some important activity. But that is simply not true. The first thing you need to understand about your prospects is that they need you and they need the service you are offering. This is the mindset with which you should engage with *all* your prospects.

Why do they want what you are offering? The primary reason is to feel good and improve their lives. They also likely have a problem (back pain, stress, etc.) and they need a solution to that physical (or emotional) problem. An honest examination of our national and global scenario will reveal that there is more negativity out there than ever before. Your massage therapy services (even if only for a short moment), brings positivity to your prospect's life. It is imperative that you become the expert for your prospects.

That means guiding your clients on every step:

- You have to help them find you
- You have to teach them how to contact you
- You have to explain what it takes to obtain your services
- You'll need to educate them about the physiological benefits that your particular niche can bring to their life. Remember, it's much more than just a "spa" treatment!

And of course, you have to help them feel better with massage therapy. The more you make these easy for your prospect, the more likely you are going to get the sale and keep them returning to you. However, sometimes this involves guiding your prospects into *not paying* for your services.

Be sure you practice fair business tactics. You know who your service is for and who it's not for. While all types of massage techniques are ultimately beneficial, you may specialize

in Reiki massage, while a sports massage is better for the problems your prospect is describing: *‘You know I think I have sprained my pectorals working out and pain killers don’t seem to help.’*

Your job here is to explain what your massage therapy is best suited for, while also letting him know that it is a sports massage that he should seek instead. You also have to let him know when you feel that there could be an injury involved that would necessitate a visit to a physician.

Copyblogger puts it beautifully:

*“Bartenders know this truth better than anyone. They’d be unlikely to recommend an Old Fashioned to someone who’s been ordering Strawberry Daiquiris, and wouldn’t dream of recommending rum and diet [soda] to someone looking for whiskey.”<sup>3</sup>*

Therefore, don’t try to talk them into a type of therapy that isn’t indicated for their condition. While you will be actually turning down the sale, you are **building trust with your prospect**. They will remember you and even if they don’t come to you personally (this time), they will definitely refer you to friends and family and maybe will come to you in the future. Being honest about whether your service is genuinely useful for the prospective clients, rather than “just making the sale” is the best way to handle all prospective clients. Ask them if they would like to be part of your newsletter/marketing email list; that way you can stay in touch with them.

Your prospects also need time to make decisions, especially those that involve money. You have to give them this time, while also remembering to follow-up without coming across as desperate.

You also have to realize when a prospect has only an impulsive interest in what you are offering. When asked face-to-face, an individual may





express interest in trying massage therapy out. But when you follow-up, she doesn't seem too enthusiastic. Of course, you can't simply disregard these prospects completely for there is always a possibility that they will return to you down the road. However, you shouldn't waste time following these prospects. Don't mind when clients pigeonhole you, at least they have your card in their office drawer. Who knows, they may bump into it after a year when they are sorting out old stuff, moving to another department or leaving their job.

### **Communication and Empathy**

In the end, it is about moving your prospects and compelling them to take action, and empathy goes a long way in achieving this key task on which your business depends. However, empathy is actually a cognitive skill rather than an emotional one. It is an essential part of market research and customer service, where you see your business through the lens of the clients.

You already know how to think like a prospective client because you are a prospect to many businesses out there. However, empathy also helps when you are actually talking to the client. You need to ask yourself, *“Do I really understand what she is saying?”*



You should also learn how to pick up clues from her body language, i.e. what kind of mood she is in and whether her disposition can get in the way of the massage session. Another important question to ask yourself is what you can do to make your client feel more

comfortable. All this introspection will make it easy for you to extract important information from the client, specifically what she is really expecting from the session.

You also have to become a good listener. The client needs to feel that whatever she says is valued. One of the best ways to do this is picking a phrase the client used and repeating it back word-for-word. This is a highly effective technique that makes the client feel comfortable and safe, which increases the likelihood that they will return in the future.

Once you know exactly what the client requires from you, you can easily customize your session in accordance to help her derive maximum benefit from the time she is paying for. For instance, you will know what techniques to use if the aim is relaxation as compared to pain management.

Keep in mind that every massage should be a soothing and positive experience for the client, *every time*. No questions asked. A soothing massage is not something you deliver only on a good day. What makes you a successful massage therapist is the ability to provide the best experience to each client in every session. Just like a professional singer, dancer or a baseball player has to perform his best every night because the crowd has come in for the experience, and they are spending their time, money, and energy, you have to make sure your client gets the experience they want from each session. Your own personal life struggles need to be set aside and your focus should stay on your client. That is why you need to keep a positive disposition. After all, how can you expect the client to believe in the stress relief effects from your massage therapy if the therapist is stressed out? Think about it.

And finally, before and after the session, you have further engaged your client in conversation, letting her know the technical aspects of massage therapy, as well as what the latest research in the industry says. Remember that while history is interesting, it is the future that people are interested in. Massage therapy, and the industry that it has created has come a long way, but what you should really be conveying to your clients is what the present and the future of this service holds for them.

## Branding Yourself



You may have a general concept of branding in your mind. What we are going to discuss in this section is personal branding, which is similar to branding products.

Branding is all about differentiating your business in the market in the pursuit of fulfilling your objectives. In your case, it

may be to increase your clients or start your own spa when you have a substantial clientele. But personal branding is not an end task, but rather a process where you establish yourself as a unique name in your niche, define the aspects that define your business, and then manage this brand image. For example, you aren't *just* a massage therapist; you are a "Pain Relief Expert" or "Relaxation Specialist."

While many entrepreneurs know what it means to brand themselves personally, they forget the preparation aspect. Your brand is going to be your reputation, your image and the level of professionalism that you have. Market research plays a key role in establishing a brand.

### Questions to Ask Before Branding Yourself

These are the key factors to consider in the process of personal branding:

#### What Are My Objectives?

This and other questions that will follow will mostly revolve around the business plan and the consumer profile we talked about earlier. To brand yourself in your niche, your objectives need to be crystal-clear.

- Do you simply want to increase clients as a call-in therapist?
- Do you want to establish your own spa?
- Do you want to earn money from massage product endorsements?

- Have you developed a particular massage technique or special style that would be appealing to clients?

### Are Your Competitors Into Personal Branding?

This brings us back to competitor analysis. Is there a therapist you know who has boosted their business to an extent that their name has become their Unique Selling Point or USP? If yes, see what are they doing right that you missed.

### What Are The Attributes Of Your Brand?

You have to review all attributes of your brand, right down to the very words you want people to associate with your brand. What image do you want to create in people's minds when they hear your name?

### How Do People Currently Perceive You?

This follows from the previous point. To plan how people should perceive you, you first have to assess how they currently do so. You need to see how far you are from the image that you want to be projected on your target market and what can be done to change that.

Once these questions have been answered, you can launch your personal branding strategy. However, another mistake that most people make is to associate branding purely with Internet marketing.

What you need to understand is that personal branding (where *you* are the product) is an extension of your own self. This encompasses the way you dress, speak, and carry yourself around in the public sphere (more on this below).

Likewise, it also encompasses your activities on your social media profiles and not just your business page. That means your LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and GooglePlus G+ profiles should also reflect the image you want to project.

This is known as managing your brand. You need to make sure that all your branding attempts are synchronized to project a grand whole. This includes taking simple measures like updating your social media profiles with current pictures and avoiding posting

anything that goes outside your niche or goes against how you want the world to perceive you. Otherwise, you will confuse your audience about who you really are and what you specialize in. And obviously, remember to be professional at all times; keep religion, politics, familial dramas, excessive partying, etc. out of online postings.

## **Effective Verbal Communication**

When you communicate well with your clients, you not only reinforce your brand image, but also build strong relationships with them. Here are some effective methods of communicating in a way to get the client to trust you:

1. When clients call you to ask questions, such as your pricing information, avoid giving direct answers. This sometimes can catch the client off-guard and they may not know what else to ask. Instead, consider these questions as opportunities to develop rapport. Ask something like *'what kind of a massage are you interested in?'* (And then give a list of the techniques you offer), or, if he/she has back pain, ask for how long has he/she had this condition.

A good phone call between you and your potential clients should ideally go on for at least 5-10 minutes because this is your route to creating a long-term working relationship with them. In fact, ask some questions of your own to engage them in conversation, such as *"Have you ever had massage therapy before?"* and if the answer is yes, ask *"How did it go?"*

When you pay attention to how your potential client responds to these questions, you can understand them by using psychology and thereby use the best marketing approach. Just make sure that the questions you ask do not require a yes/no answer. They should be open-ended either/or questions, such as *'Would you like to schedule an appointment for tomorrow, or will next week be more suitable to your schedule?'*



2. Following from point 1, instead of replying directly to questions related to your pricing policy, you should instead offer clients various pricing options. For instance, you can have a low-priced session (for instance, a ‘trial massage’ for half an hour), a standard one-hour session price and then a discount if the client comes in for a multiple massage sessions in a month (more than three).

Three pricing options will suffice. The key is how you introduce them. Always start with the highest price first, for this makes the next option look like bargain. And having at least 3 options also prompts the client to make a quick decision compared to if there were only 2.

However, you shouldn’t provide all 3 options at one time. Instead, provide the first 2 and then wait for the client to respond. Only if they reject these offers should you bring in the lowest-priced suggestion.

You should only lower your prices when the client books multiple sessions. You can still reward clients who refer your business by offering them discounts on their next session.

3. Most importantly, you need to stay focused on your clients when they walk into your office. Make them feel as if nothing else holds your attention at that present moment. This in itself is a valuable service you are offering to your clients. Who knows, maybe you are the only person in the past of couple days who has given them undivided attention.
4. Never fail to suggest a second (you can call this a ‘follow-up’) appointment at the end of the first session. Most therapists may shy away from doing so, but remember that sometimes simply asking the client to schedule an appointment does the job. This becomes easier with clients who come in for a clinical massage for a specific physical condition they are in. So, after the first session, you can describe what was achieved (“*We covered trigger points that were causing you pain*”), and then suggest what will

be done if she rebooks (“*Next time, we will work some more on your deep tissue and start to address...* ”).

## **Further Tips on Personal Branding-Seeking Media Attention**

Ultimately, the purpose of branding is to garner publicity for yourself, and it helps when you get people talking about you.

To start off, you should consider gaining expertise in something that is relevant to your business. For instance, you can become a health and wellness expert who promotes using natural products and also offers tips on stress reduction.

You can write columns, blog posts, create videos and give interviews. Of course, when you are trying to publish columns and offer interviews, make sure that you also choose good media sources that your target audience is interested in. This not only includes newspapers and magazines, but also blogs and YouTube channels. You need to pitch yourself to these media sources (more on this later in the e-book).

You can also offer a response to an article published about your niche, critiquing it or offering a new perspective. Both ways, you will build authority. And that way, you will create the possibility of the publication consulting you in the future as well. However, if you don't find the time or opportunity to approach publications in this manner, you can always take the online route. There are several forums out there where people are seeking guidance on health, wellness, stress relief, better posture, and different types of massage therapy. Here is a list of popular websites where you can contribute:

- [About.com](http://About.com)
- [eHow.com](http://eHow.com)
- [wikiHow.com](http://wikiHow.com)

By offering your expertise on these topics on a regular basis, you will eventually build an audience that will be more than happy to pay you for massage therapy.

In this way, you are creating a win-win relationship, where your potential clients are getting valuable information. In fact, you are actually offering something valuable *for free* before asking for a business opportunity, and this approach of giving for receiving is highly effective. *In the marketing world, offering something of value first, before pitching your business, is a great approach to take to obtain new business.*

But understand the emphasis is on a ‘regular basis.’ Once you establish contact with your target market, you have to follow up and not lose touch, even if you are not making immediate sales. Never let your audience forget you, for you never know when new opportunities will surface.

Finally, along with your audience, you should also connect with fellow massage therapists using social networks and also comment on their blogs if they have any. This is known as networking and still remains one of the strongest ways of carving a niche and establishing yourself in the industry.

Bottom-line: personal branding is necessary because the world wants to hear what *you* have to say. Personal branding (or a lack thereof) can make or break your business.

## **Setting Your Fees**

This is the second-to-last part of this section, but a highly important one. Setting your fee or estimating how much you can earn by offering massage therapy depends on whether you are working for a spa or are self-employed.

### **Spas Will Set the Fees and Pay You a Portion**

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, as much as 36% of all massage therapists work at health spas, salons, hotels and medical facilities. On average, the hourly earnings of a massage therapist are \$17.29<sup>4</sup>. This includes tips, which usually account for 15% to 20% in gratuities. However, also consider the fact that therapists employed in hospitals and other medical facilities typically do not receive tips.



Also note, that when employed by a massage business, the therapist not only has to provide several massage sessions a day, but also perform related tasks. These include setting up the equipment, doing laundry, answering the phone, folding towels and assisting clients. While usually the employer provides the equipment and supplies, some spas actually charge the therapists' 'back bar' fees, i.e. the cost of supplies.

Moreover, while being employed at a spa/resort/clinic has a major advantage over being self-employed, i.e. you still get paid for your time at the workplace even if you didn't deliver a massage. And you're not responsible for paying rent, hiring/firing employees, purchasing supplies, etc. The downside is that some employers, when they have no clients coming in, tell their massage therapists not to come in. And while benefits like health insurance and paid vacations are sometimes provided to full-time therapists, many spas avoid the full-time arrangement so they won't have to give these benefits.

But even at a busy health spa where there is a continuous stream of clients coming in, you will have to be available for a certain amount of hours per day and only be paid for the massages you give. A typical massage at resort spas costs about \$150 to \$200 for a fifty-minute session. Some locations manage to charge even higher by marketing the session as an "experience" or "ritual." In these establishments, the therapist can expect to earn anywhere from \$30 to \$60, which includes the tip<sup>5</sup>.

While these figures do not seem that lucrative, there are many factors at play here. Moreover, as noted at the beginning, the massage therapy business is expanding every year and as more people learn about its therapeutic benefits, the number of clients will continue to increase. Hopefully, this will boost the average earning of the employed massage therapists substantially.

Much also depends on the city you are working in. Considering the median annual earnings of a massage therapist are around \$35,970, here is a list of cities where you can get paid even higher:

- York, Pennsylvania (annual median wage \$62,710)
- Holland, Michigan (annual median wage \$65,920)
- Anchorage, Alaska (annual median wage \$83,130)
- Corvallis, Oregon (annual median wage \$63,480)
- Danbury, Connecticut (\$67,980)<sup>6</sup>

In fact, some therapists at major casinos in Las Vegas are actually making \$100,000 a year even while they work less than 40 hours a week<sup>7</sup>.

Now that the economy is recovering, it will serve both spas and massage therapists to employ sound marketing tactics (such as the ones described in this e-book) to increase their clientele and come up with a better pay structure.

### **In Your Own Business, You Get to Set Your Own Fees**

This is never easy, even if you are good with financial matters. The economy makes it even tougher as people tend to spend less. The key to charging the best prices that will keep your business afloat at such times is to assess your operating expenses and compare them with what you are charging.

This is something people new in business fail to understand. Pricing variations, even minor ones, sometimes are the difference between a client who rebooks and a client who doesn't. But to do that, you first need to determine what the costs of running your business are. How to go about this?

To start off, list all the expenses that you will have to invest in to get started. These include major items like furniture for the waiting area, linens, massage equipment and maybe even a van or large car for outcalls. For the most part, you wouldn't have to pay for replacing these items before a year, unless a major accident happens. However, these still do not constitute as monthly expenses.

Monthly expenses include things like:

- Rent
- Massage supplies like sheets, lotions, essential oils
- Utilities (water, electricity, phone, internet)
- Insurance

And then you have the yearly expenses. This mostly pertains to maintaining your license, attending massage conferences and seminars and obtaining your CE class credit hours for renewal. And then there are the taxes. You'll need professional accounting advice here, but depending on your income tax bracket, you should plan on putting away 15-25% of your earnings just simply to pay federal tax, self-employment tax and even state tax depending on the state in which you reside. Deducting these costs from your revenue will give you your gross profit. This is one of the best ways to find out how much you should charge for your massage therapy services.

Competition, once again, also comes into play when you are trying to set pricing points. You need to evaluate your market and see what other therapists in your target market are charging. This becomes easier if your competitors have websites from where you can access their pricing policies without any hassle. This will give you some perspective on how effective your pricing strategies are. Are you charging higher than your competitors, lower than them or are your prices the same? Of course, location also plays a part here. Are you charging prices that people in the city can comfortably pay, but are higher than the town standards? Most importantly, you need to consider the effects of the recession in your area. These factors are extensive enough to help you set good prices.

Sometimes, it also happens that massage therapists set prices according to their own expectations without proper market research. If you have also done the same, you need to match your expectations with the rates that are actually being charged in your area.

Here is a simple formula for setting massage therapy prices in your area, whether you are self-employed or work full-time/half-time in an establishment. The hourly earnings of an

employed massage therapist is \$17.29 on average, and s/he works for at least 20 hours a week.

Considering holidays and other days where you couldn't work, let's assume you are working for 50 out of the 52 weeks every year.

So, \$17.29 (average hourly income) x 20 hours (estimated hours worked every week) = \$345.80. Next you have to calculate your yearly income. \$345.8 x 50 (weeks) = \$17,290 per year.

While we have worked with estimated numbers, you can apply this formula with the average wages, prices, tips and taxes in your area. When you know what your fellow therapists who work full-time are earning, you can price your services in accordance.

### **The Low Price=More Client Fallacy**

Yes, lower prices don't always result in more clients. One reason is that when you consistently charge lower prices, it can sometimes make potential clients think that you are desperate to get their business.

In fact, when you are targeting a high-end clientele in the city, you will have to price higher to add some prestige to your business and make the clients think they are getting something exclusive than clients in other price points.

Many spas have experienced that even after offering substantial discounts and introducing shorter sessions and lower prices, most clients still opted for the regular-priced full-hour massage therapy.

### **How Many Massages Do Clients Actually Have in 1 Year?**

This is an important question, as this helps you determine accurately what prices you can charge your clients and whether price changes will bring in new clients to your business or not. Research shows that even if you charge as high as \$80 for a single massage session, your clients will not get more than 6 massages per year. And even by offering discounts or

special packages, you cannot persuade them to come for more than 14 sessions. Most of the clients in a massage therapy business (72% as of 2011) are those who rebook sessions<sup>8</sup>. *That is why it is very important that you focus on how to get the maximum re-bookings from existing clients.* This is especially true when the economy is in shambles. Under these conditions, when you pay special heed to the needs of the existing clients, you can survive as a massage therapist even when the competition is tough.

### **Never Compete Your Price Alone**

Don't think that simply lowering your price will help you gain a competitive edge in the market, especially for a service like a massage therapy. Of course, from the client's end, what they will pay will obviously be based on a host of factors, income being the most important of them. And as we have noted above, even with high and low prices, the client will only get a limited number of massages each year.

In this context, you should rather compete on things like customer service, massage technique, and experience.

### **Methods for Increasing Clients without Altering the Price**

Now that you know that while pricing strategy matters a lot in business, for the most part you cannot beat your competitors for new clients with price alone. The key to building your massage therapy business is getting as many repeat clients as possible.

To do that, you need to start with answering the following questions:

- How many clients will you see once a month?
- How many clients enter your business but never rebook?
- Have many clients left your business following a price change?

You should only focus on changing your pricing if you have a substantial number of clients that fall in the 3<sup>rd</sup> category. Otherwise, you should focus primarily on customer service.

Many spas and massage therapy business have actually benefited from this technique. Some even hired customer service consultants to teach their staff how to better engage with their client and understand what goes into creating a great experience for clients, something that other businesses may not be providing.

When you do the same, your clients will see value and benefit in spending their money for *your* services. Even something as simple as greeting a client when he/she enters and leaves goes a long way toward increasing engagement. Making sure the greeting is sincere and genuine, will communicate clearly to your client that you care about them.

Free upgrades also help. How do you ‘upgrade’ a massage service? A simple way of doing so is by extending a session by even 5 to 10 minutes, provided that you do not have another client waiting.

This also makes the client feel special, since you are not in a rush to close the deal and service the next client like a cash counter in a department store. Just consider what an extra 10 minutes of massage would cost you? Practically nothing (once again, provided that you don’t have clients waiting), but these extra few minutes can possibly provide you the earnings of a full-hour follow-up session and retain that client for the long-term.

## **On Cutting Costs**

Business survival doesn’t solely depend on the revenue you earn from clients. If there are business expenses that you can cut *without* affecting the quality of your service, you should curtail them. And even if your business is doing well, an audit of your spending patterns will do you no harm.

But before discussing all the costs you can reduce, let this one thing be implanted in your mind: You should not cut down your marketing budget unless extremely necessary. For many small businesses, marketing budgets seem to be the first cost cut simply because there is no tangible (for a lack of a better word) link between promotion and what you do as a massage therapist.

But if you have been reading this e-book from the beginning, you know very well that marketing is not an afterthought. Rather, it is your trump card and the very reason why your business survives in the presence of competition in a tough economy. In fact, when you see your revenue falling, it is actually time to increase your marketing efforts, especially during peak business months. For massage businesses, December through May tends to be the busiest season<sup>9</sup>.

Another way to cut costs is to take on all or most of the administrative tasks yourself. This requires wearing different hats, which is also a section in this e-book. If you haven't hired an assistant, consider prolonging that decision if there are financial constraints.

Finally, you should also realize some relevance of the adage: 'you have to spend money to make it'. This is true for your marketing efforts, but also do consider giving your massage center a 'touch-up'. A new coat of paint, for instance, can significantly improve the presentation of your business.

## **Rules for Advertising**

It is important to remember that advertising, on the virtue of being a business activity that can potentially harm the public, is regulated by law, both federal and state.

### **General Guidelines**

While legislation regarding advertising is extensive and varies from state to state, the ultimate purpose is to stop businesses from misleading or deceiving the general public. In addition, you can't plead ignorance and it doesn't matter what your intentions were. If the advertisement was misleading or contained false statements, you can face legal consequences.

- Accuracy in Advertising

All ads should be factually correct so to not deceive or mislead your clients; e.g. don't show a list of last year's prices if you have changed them. Be crystal clear about the physical benefits that your massage therapy will provide. If it is just stress relief, don't talk

about pain relief. Likewise, make sure you don't use the words "cure" or other types of language that specifically talks about health or safety. You can certainly say you are a "pain relief therapist" but you cannot say, "you cure pain." Remember that we are professionals and it is important that we do not misrepresent ourselves by making false statements.

- Avoid Copyright Issues

This is especially true for online and print ads. Are you using a logo or a picture that belongs to someone else? And even if you are naming the American Cancer Society, for example, in passing, it is best to get written permission. This is because the law allows limited quotations from copyrighted works without specific authorization from the copyright owner. But if you are quoting extensively, then permission is a must.

- Don't Malign Competitors

Do not provide false or misleading information about your competitors. And even when you are doing pricing comparisons, thoroughly check your information to avoid lawsuits.

- Limited Quantities

This only pertains to sale of goods. Businesses should clearly inform clients in the advertisement if quantities are limited, or else keep quantities large enough to meet reasonably expected demand. Of course, this may not apply to your massage therapy practice, unless your spa also sells massage products.

- Is it Really Free?

If you are planning to use the words "free" or "without charge" in your ads, never leave the clients in the dark about unstated conditions that qualify the offer. For instance, if you are offering a 'free bottle of essential oil' or a 'free e-book on stress relief' for clients that book 2 visits a month, you can get into trouble if:



- i) You are charging a higher price for the massage sessions than you normally would. This means the client is still paying for that ‘free’ product.
  - ii) You reduce the quality or the timing of the session, or stop providing a service (such as giving an adjustment of extra 10 minutes) that you normally do. Once again, you're exacting a hidden cost for the ‘free’ product.
- Clear Pricing

You should remain honest about all claims concerning pricing, especially when you are making comparisons with other businesses, or with your own ‘regular’ prices (as compared to the ‘discount’ you are now giving).

## **Federal Laws**

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is the main federal agency that regulates advertising. Its duty is to take action when clients and/or competitors file unlawful advertising complaints. An investigation is initiated and if the FTC deems that an ad violates the law, they first attempt to get the company to comply voluntarily (i.e. the company should run ads with correct information and admit that the previous ads were misleading).

If that doesn't work, the FTC has the right to issue a cease-and-desist order and file a civil lawsuit on behalf of the clients/competitors. While the investigation is underway, the FTC prohibits the ad from airing.

Unless you want to hire high-end corporate lawyers and still face the risk of heavy fines, you should never advertise against the law.

## **State Laws**

Along with the federal laws, state and local governments can also try businesses that violate advertising laws. And in addition, each state massage therapy board has their own rules and regulations regarding advertising policy and do's and don'ts. Be sure you check those guidelines for any specific requirements in advertising that you do.

In addition to getting fined or having your massage therapy license suspended, there could also be repercussions from governmental officials such as the state attorney, who can seek injunctions against unlawful ads and take legal action to get restitution to the parties harmed. And if fraud is proven, the convicted party can get criminal penalties (fines and jail).

### **On Marketing Online**

Before closing this section, it has to be noted that since you may choose to engage a fairly significant amount of advertising online, you should also familiarize yourself with the local and federal laws surrounding Internet marketing.

While the principles behind these injunctions are the same as in offline marketing, ads on the Internet are regulated because of anonymity of this digital platform that enables people to engage in scams. You can learn more about these laws from the official website of the U.S. Small Business Administration<sup>10</sup>.

## **Section 2 – Marketing Specifics**

### **Marketing Your Services Locally & Face-to-Face**

In the virtual age of Twitter, obtaining information is a matter of microseconds. With this bullet-fast speed of sharing and obtaining information, many have questioned the relevance of face-of-face communication in the context of a business, marketing, and brand building.

Contrary to what people think, face-to-face communication doesn't have greater relevance than in this virtual age. Research shows that face-to-face communication is not only necessary to bring in new clients, but also essential to retain loyal clients. As much as 40% of new clients on average are brought in by companies via live interaction, and real-life meetings account for more than 25% staying loyal to the business<sup>11</sup>.

Hence, while Internet marketing is a foundational activity for the success of any enterprise, face-to-face interactions still hold tremendous importance. The greatest benefit of the latter is the personal connection that builds trust between you and your audience, which is sometimes absent from online interactions we so commonly encounter.

In addition, while technology makes multi-tasking easier, sometimes this comes at the cost of engaging conversations that drive home your message and persuade the client to book an appointment.

Opportunities for face-to-face marketing include attending networking events, participating in seminars and even social events. But there is an essential element of this type of marketing which we have to discuss before moving on: The Elevator Speech.

### **The Elevator Speech**

As a self-employed massage therapist, you obviously need to build contacts with audiences, clients and even healthcare partners like chiropractors and physical therapists. But while all of us are pursuing this goal, most people don't know what they should do

once that opportunity finally arrives. And remember that at most, you've got a few seconds to make a great impression on a potential prospect, so it's imperative that your elevator speech is powerful!

For such encounters, you need among other things, an elevator speech. This is a personal, mini-speech about who you are and what you do. And if the listener is interested, only then should you explain to them why they should do business with you.

It is known as an elevator speech because it should be as brief as an elevator ride, which generally means 30 seconds or less. But this concise speech is not about selling your services. All you need to do is to tell the listener exactly what you do as briefly and clearly as possible. *And it needs to be much more than just saying that you're a massage therapist.*

Once the message is conveyed, the listener(s) will decide whether or not they want to engage in conversation with you about what you have to offer. The potential benefits of successfully delivered elevator speeches not only include getting new clients, but also getting these clients to refer you.

Let's say you are at a networking event. In such scenarios, it is understood that you get an allotted time for delivering your elevator speech to interested listeners. However, there are several scenarios where you don't expect to meet a potential client, such as a friend's wedding or standing in line to buy movie tickets.

Sometimes conversations begin with random strangers in these settings and after introducing themselves, they ask for your name and what you do. However, that doesn't mean that you start with your speech right away.

Here you have to see whether the person in front of you fits the profile of your ideal client or not. But if s/he does, then you have a golden opportunity in your hands to describe what it is that you really do. Ideally, you will give the person your business card and hear from him or her soon.

However, you also need to be prepared for delivering your speech to a group as well. The same rules apply here as well, i.e., your speech should be clear to not leave any doubt in the mind of the audience about what you really do. You should be more succinct and exude more confidence in a group setting because there is a greater chance of getting *one* person to respond.

Here are some general guidelines so you can help create your own elevator speech.

- ✓ The speech should be under 30 seconds
- ✓ You need to be specific about what you do; again, don't just say "I'm a massage therapist". Get creative! *"I specifically work with people that have fibromyalgia, as I'm a pain management massage therapist"* or *"As a therapeutic massage therapist, I help people that are stressed out so they can get more enjoyment out of their life."*
- ✓ Remember to create your speech from what your potential client is looking for. They don't care that you're a massage therapist; they just want to know if you can help them with their pain, insomnia, frequent headaches or their stress level.
- ✓ You want to create curiosity, so that the client will want to engage with you further.
- ✓ Remember to ask about THEM and what they're looking for.

These are a few of the essentials of an effective elevator speech. Note that this is a detailed topic in itself on which an entire e-book can be written. For the time being, you can find some nice elevator speech templates online<sup>12</sup>.

## **Marketing Your Services Traditionally**

Here we will talk about traditional avenues of marketing. Although these are typically expensive, they are the most effective means of getting your message across to your clients.

## Yellow Pages Ads

Yellow Pages advertising is still a powerful way of building business in the health and bodywork industry. Of course, Yellow Pages ads are not cheap and can exceed the beginner and aspiring massage therapists' advertising budget. But in essence, Yellow Pages have the potential to help small business owners make their ventures profitable.



Since you are spending significant, precious dollars, make sure that your Yellow Pages ads are effective. This means not being lured by the Yellow Page reps that are only primarily interested in increasing the publication's revenue by selling you the largest ad space.

You may think a larger space is what you need to get noticed, but there are no studies that show a proportional increase in client response with the space an ad takes. But if you are getting larger ad space, don't ignore the quality and message of the ad. Ultimately, it is the quality of the ad that will bring in the revenue.

As in most forms of advertising, it is advised that you shouldn't make the name of your business (or your own name for that matter) the main item of the ad. Instead, let the *benefits* that your clients received from your service take center stage; i.e., stress relief or pain relief.

You should have an effective headline that captures the readers' attention. It should be clear what the reader is going to find in the rest of the ad. However, do ensure that you

deliver in the ad whatever is promised in the headline. Important things to highlight include, but are not restricted to:

- A specialized technique you offer
- Your experience
- Clients served (this works if you are promoting yourself as a corporate massage therapist)
- Any other pertinent information

But while addressing your strong points is essential, make sure you are not filling up the ad space, literally. No matter how much space you have, write the copy in a way that leaves a lot of white space. This produces better results than cramming in as many words as possible.

The profile of your ideal client comes into play here as well. With each benefit that you have listed, honestly evaluate which *really* caters to your market. If there is a point that you think isn't strong enough to garner a phone call, simply cut it out.

This makes sense, for people do not pick up the Yellow Pages to read feature articles. They are looking for professionals that can solve their problems and by addressing those problems succinctly, you are bound to get noticed in a sea of other massage therapy ads.

Along with a well-written copy, the design of the ad should also be topnotch, considering that you are spending a hefty chunk of your advertising budget on the ad. If you are reluctant to buy larger ad space, the reps may 'lose motivation' to help you with design. However, you must insist on getting what you paid for.

While the use of colors may not be such a good idea (and an additional expense), you can use illustrations. You can even consult a designer, but this may also be a budgetary consideration. Just remember, once an ad is published, it will represent your business in the Yellow Pages for a year, which is why you should leave no stone unturned. **It goes without saying that you should not be planning on changing your phone number,**

**website or physical location for at least that long, since again once the ad is published, that information is there permanently.** If you move or change your phone number and the information is wrong in the ad, you've just wasted a serious amount of money.

## **Print Advertising**

Yellow Pages, at the end of the day, are only part of a business's marketing mix. Here are some other print advertising opportunities that you should use:

- **Newspaper/Journals Ads**

Publishing ads in newspapers and journals is also a costly advertising option. You really need to have some statistics on hand about whether a newspaper or journal can really reach your target market or not, and what are the chances of the bulk of the readers viewing your ad. An exception to this would be any local natural health or community smaller newspapers; they tend to be a better bang for your advertising buck!

In the ultimate analysis, newspaper ads should not be your only option. Rather they should be used in conjunction with other methods of advertising. Nevertheless, it is a great method of putting yourself out there. It is worth noting that there are two different types of ads in newspapers; there are "classified" ads and then there are ads that would be placed throughout the publication. As a rule, classified ads might be cheaper, but they also don't often result in obtaining the best type of client.

- **Postcards/Direct Mail**

Direct mail marketing remains one of the most successful options for massage therapists in a highly competitive marketplace, for it is one of the most effective ways of tracking advertising results. Best of all, direct mail allows you to build your brand in the local community.

One of the best methods of reaching your current client base via direct mail is sending postcards on special days throughout the year, such as Mother's Day, Valentine's Day, graduation, and Christmas. If you have been in business for a while, you will have a list of



all of your past and current clients and you should know which seasons or holidays bring peak client demand, so consider scheduling your direct mail marketing campaign at these times, taking advantage of the busiest months.

And by adding in extra advertising support at these times, you might just be able to pull some of the buzz into the low demand months. Postcards can be used for:

- Building brand loyalty (via your personal signature on the card)
- Birthday greetings
- Christmas
- Tax day

Marketing to new clients can also be done effectively using postcards. You'll need to purchase marketing lists for people in your immediate area or neighborhood. Then you can design a postcard using a website like Vistaprint and send several hundred postcards to those new prospects. Be sure to include your name, the benefits of massage and your contact information to encourage them to get in touch with you. You might also include a special offer or discount to entice them to contact you for an appointment.

## **Flyers/Brochures**

When it comes to traditional print advertising, it is easy to be confused between booklets, flyers, pamphlets and brochures. For all intents and purposes, these terms can be used interchangeably, for it is the purpose of the print material that matters at the end of the day. In this section, we will discuss tips on using flyers and brochures.

- **Flyers**

Another important tool for local marketing, the flyer is one of the most affordable marketing options in the market. Since they are comprised of a single sheet, they can be printed and shipped to you overnight in case you need them urgently. And while it is best to work with professional publishers, you can even create decent flyers on your computer as well and on websites like Vistaprint.com.

Flyers are mostly used to announce new events, advertising the opening of a new establishment, providing facts and information at conferences and trade shows and to be used as inserts in publications. They also can be used very effectively to hand out to referral network partners (chiropractors, yoga instructors, gyms, etc.), basically anyone that you would like to refer you some business.

- **Brochures**

Unlike flyers, brochures are multi-page print products that seek to educate clients about your massage services. For instance, a brochure can explain how massage therapy is beneficial for your health and wellbeing. It may not be extensive, but a good brochure offers accurate descriptions of the services offered as well as the techniques for obtaining them.

As far as the technicalities are concerned, brochures are created from single sheets, which are then typically folded to create bi-folds and tri-folds. Once again, while you can create brochures on your PC, it is better that you let professionals publish them since technical expertise is required in areas like proofing and alignment of the folds. These should be done accurately if you want a quality product to distribute to your target market. If you don't have the budget to hire a printer or designer, check with your local UPS Store or FedEx Office store to see if they can help you.

Since they carry more information than business cards and flyers, brochures are mostly used as reference materials for potential clients and they help to close the deal initiated by your marketing efforts.

There are some general considerations to be honored in order for your brochures and flyers to be effective. These are necessary because of two essential factors. Print advertising costs money. If you are hiring writers, editors and publishers, the costs will escalate automatically. Even if you are doing everything in-house, publishing something with the intent of bringing in sales takes significant time and effort.

Add to this the costs of mailing if you are mailing out to prospects. If the flyer or brochure fails to engage with the readers and bring you business, then it is simply a failed investment. But there is a greater cost here.

Everything you hand out to your audience leaves an impression, a long-term impression when we are talking about print. A wrong impression with a poorly designed flyer or a brochure laden with typos, and your potential clients will leave your business for good, never to come back.

Note that these tips form the basis of all content writing and will be expanded as you progress through this e-book.

- Your flyers and brochures should be unique and engaging. This is necessary since the average prospect receives brochures from many businesses trying to get his attention. Why should they even pay attention to what you have to offer? So make sure that your print material is not only unique from your competitors, but it should also pique interest and curiosity in the reader. This brings us to the next point.
- Readability is essential. The average reader takes less than 5 seconds to glance at a piece of text before deciding whether it is worth reading or not. If your headline or the graphics on the cover of your brochure are not eye-catching, few recipients will bother reading it. So, make sure that the format you use goes easy on the readers' eyes. For instance, you should use clear and bold headlines and use subheadings if the subject material is lengthy.
- Another readability tool is the bullet point. That means you should use bullet points liberally to focus on the key features of your product or service. This saves your prospect precious time, something that they are already short on. This will also help them skim through the copy quickly. Once again, by making life easier for them, you are automatically building trust through your print marketing. A great way to

use bullet points in a flyer or brochure is to list all the major benefits people can get from the massage therapy that you provide. Remember to use specifics – if you're a specialist in sports massage or fibromyalgia pain relief, put those benefits in the bullet points.

- Use the AIDA principle, which stands for Attention, Interest, Desire and Action. The layout, design and headline should catch the readers' attention and generate interest, and then the text (and other visual content) will create the desire to get massage therapy and facilitate the reader into taking action in contacting you.
- Keep the Ideal Reader in Mind. Profiling the ideal client comes in handy even when you are developing content. Who are your readers? 30 year-old executives or sports athletes? Pregnant women or senior citizens? The design, layout and the tone of the content should be different to target different demographics. For instance, a 'neat' professional design will appeal to the executive, while a lively, colorful brochure will appeal to the athlete. And larger type will always appeal to a senior citizen!
- Finally, and most importantly, you have to include a call-to-action (CTA). The client has read the entire brochure. Now what does s/he do? Book an appointment, give you a call or refer you to their friends? Believe it or not, if there is no call to action, the readers will not stay around to guess what they have to do. So while it may seem obvious, you have to include statements like 'visit our website' or 'call today to make an appointment!'

## Use Gift Certificates/Coupons As Incentives

You can increase sales with the help of massage gift certificates. This works effectively when you place signage at all possible places where the client can access them. For instance in a spa, signage can be placed in the treatment rooms and also the reception area.



You informed people about the benefits of getting a massage from you, and they became your clients. So just place the thought in their mind that massage can also help family and friends ease their stress; therefore, massage gift certificates can serve as great gift ideas for occasions like:

- Birthdays
- Anniversaries
- Holidays
- Bridal shower
- Baby shower
- Graduation

...and so on. As each client is about to leave, ask him or her if they are interested in a massage gift certificate for a loved one.

## Call-to-Action (CTA): Definition and Tips

We have talked about call-to-actions in prior sections. It is without a doubt a core component of marketing. That is why we will expand on this concept here, and you can use this section as reference whenever you read about CTA in this e-book.

CTA is one of the most critical aspects of content marketing. Basically, it is that part of the copy/video/podcast that tells the audience what to do after going through the content and also what they will get from it.

Since you are persuading people to do something (especially something that involves spending money), a boring CTA will not do. It has to be dynamic, creative and motivational. Use bold words like “Act Now!” and “Call Today!”

Before we discuss the essentials of a successful CTA, the most important thing to remember is that having it is extremely necessary. Sometimes you think that your service is so spectacular (which it is) and the copy is so compelling (which it should be) that people will automatically come running, thirsty for more information.

But this is just a myth. They are paying you the money, so why should they engage in the guesswork? This is true even if you are the best massage therapist in town and even if you don't have any competition.

So, insert your contact information and tell people to call you to schedule an appointment. Otherwise, they simply won't or at least the number of clients you actually get from this approach will not help you pay the mortgage. Not to mention, you can also use small call-to-actions, such as “Call Now” and provide the number on every page of the brochure.

With that cleared up, let's go through all the essential components that make a CTA effective:

### Limited Options

You may offer 6 different types of massage techniques and each has 3 price options. However, it is not wise to flood one flyer or brochure with that information. While a variety of services offered can help your business gain a competitive advantage, inserting all that info in the copy can potentially confuse the reader and that never results in a sale.

They may put the brochure away thinking they will get back to it when they have the time, but the sales process has essentially been cut off and you can expect this person to call you

in a year or so, if at all. Instead, offer them limited choices. Talk about only 3-4 services at most and make them intrigued to contact you for more information and pricing. Remember that it's important to create curiosity...you want them to call you to find out more!

### **Give the Reader an Ultimatum**

Not literally of course, but you know the effect of an ultimatum. When you have a CTA that gives readers a time limit, they are more likely to respond than a call-to-action with no time restrictions. With the latter, the reader is more likely to think *"Maybe I'll try this later."*

Compel the reader to overcome this reluctance with a time sensitive offer. That way, they will have to make a choice soon, otherwise the offer will be void and they will lose out on that amazing offer.

Not to mention, a limited time offer will also help you track marketing results, hence serving a dual purpose. For instance, you may offer special discounts on all massages in the 3 weeks before Christmas after which the offer will go void. You can easily see how many clients came into your business with the help of that brochure or flyer.

### **Contact Details (Website/Email Address/Cell phone)**

You should also consider how clearly your contact information is presented. This follows the same idea of having a clear enough call to action. Without clearly listed contact details, your CTA serves no purpose.

### **Radio/TV**

Along with newspapers and the Yellow Pages, the most common forms of promotion that most people subscribe to are television and radio, collectively known as electronic media. When it comes to purchasing ads on both these media, the rates will typically be beyond the advertising budgets of most massage therapists. Not to mention, the time slots will also not be that attractive. Hence, it may take several rounds on TV and radio to get your ad noticed by potential clients. Sometimes, you may have to run an advert more than 25 times

for a client to call. This is definitely not the preferred way of investing your advertising dollars!

You can instead attempt becoming a guest on a talk show. If there is a local radio show or a morning talk show, call the producer and see if you can use that forum to get the word out about massage. This will bring you into the public eye while also establishing you as an authority. Look for radio or TV stations in your area that have a health-related time slot, particularly those that deal with alternative medicine.



*This is actually me on a local radio show in San Antonio*

### **Face-to-Face Marketing in Action**

Let's go over some real-life situations where face-to-face marketing can help a massage therapist build business:

- **Become a Client at High-End Salons**

You will have at least one high-end salon in your area. See if it offers on-site massage therapy. If not, here is something you can do. Become a client and visit at least twice a month. Get friendly and develop rapport. And when the time is right, ask if you can cross-market. Salons hold open houses and you may get an opportunity to offer chair massages for free or \$1-per-minute.

**Note:** The same arrangement can be made with other types of businesses in your area, such as a restaurant. Give them your gift certificates, which they in turn hand out to special clients. The business benefits by gaining client loyalty and you are able to get new bookings.



- **Network with Medical Practitioners**

Doctors and chiropractors in your area are great people to connect with. If you can develop relations with them, you will find that a substantial amount of clients will enter your business via prescriptions. In fact, when doctors themselves recommend massage therapy for pain recovery and stress relief, the turnout of clients will increase significantly. Networking with other professionals will be discussed in greater detail later on in this e-book.

### **Marketing Locally**

Many of the ideas explored above are relevant for local marketing as well. Local marketing simply means targeting the community around your business. As a massage therapist, you will obviously be restricted by geography as far as the clientele you intend to serve is concerned. Local marketing is effective because it helps you create repeat clientele.

# Marketing Your Services Online

## The Importance of a Website

Websites have flooded the cyberspace for over 2 decades now and yet their importance for businesses continues to grow. Whether at the workplace or on the go, your clients are using the Internet either on their PCs or on hand-held devices like mobile phones and tablets.

Hence, the need for an online presence becomes imperative and a website is the epitome of that presence. However, simply creating a website is not enough for your business: you need to make sure that your website actually works and that search engines can find you.

A good business website achieves the following purposes:

- It ranks on the first page on Google when people search for keywords related to your business, such as ‘massage’ or ‘massage therapist [your city name]’
- It prompts visitors to click on the link
- It persuades (and then facilitates) the visitors into contacting you for your services
- It helps you grow your profit over time

## Blog vs. Website

Blogs have also overpopulated the Internet at least for the last 10 years. And while technically they are websites (in that they have a domain name), there are some distinctions between blogs and websites. Blogs are basically online journals, which makes content their central defining factor. Posts on a blog are either listed periodically (with the most recent post showing up first), or in categories so that readers can find relevant topics easily. Each post is followed by a comments section where readers can give feedback and make comments about your post. In addition, they also usually contain social media buttons, which enable visitors to share the post on various social media platforms like Facebook or Twitter.

Websites, on the other hand, do not update their content on a regular basis. The ‘Home Page’ or ‘About Us’ copy for example, can sometimes stay static for as long as a business lasts. And obviously, no one comments on this content.

You can distinguish between blogs and websites in their purpose as well. While websites are an online shop for what you provide, a blog seeks to educate your clients about the service or the industry via regularly updated content, sometimes without asking readers to buy from you.

## Why a Blog Is Better For SEO

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is the process by which a business builds its online presence right until it dominates search engine rankings in its niche. And while your business website should also be based on SEO strategies, a blog can help boost your online ranking more effectively.



Both human readers and search engines like Google love high-quality blogs (emphasis is on high-quality). Since they are constantly updated with fresh content, blogs rank up there with newspapers and magazines when it comes to readership.

Keywords are an important element for Search-Engine Optimization (SEO), and thereby Internet marketing as well. It is important for you to know what words or phrases people are using to search for massage in your city on the internet. Google can help you research these keywords with its [keyword tool](#). Once you know what they are, you can use the search terms on your website within your text. Search terms like ‘massage therapy in San

Antonio, Texas' would definitely be a search term that would be very important to put on your website so that it will be found by search engines.

As you build a readership, you will directly engage with potential clients via comments, both on the blog and social media at large. This will allow you to build a community around your business that is inhabited by loyal clients. And as more people find your blog helpful, Google will consider you an authority in the niche and favor you over competitors, thus ranking you higher in search results.

## **Simple Places to Make Your Own Website/Blog**

The most common platforms for creating websites and blogs are [WordPress](#) and [Blogger](#). You can create your websites for free on these platforms. Developers, along with the support community, provide you enough information to set up a basic website. These platforms are simply amazing for beginning online marketers. Of course down the line, you should work with a professional designer. These free platforms do come with a downside and that is that the domain name you will be given will have a longer name and include the name of the site. For instance, [www.JulieJonesMassage.wordpress.com](#) would likely be an example of a domain name you would be given. I would strongly encourage you to purchase your own domain name (from a website like Godaddy) so that you can have your own domain name without any reference to a blogging platform. Buying your own domain name would give you the freedom to name it what you want; i.e., [www.JulieJonesMassage.com](#) as it is more professional looking to potential clients and healthcare partners.

## **KISS (Keep it Simple Stupid)**

The KISS principle tells you the basic elements you should add to your website to make the client's buying experience smoother. These elements are listed below. Some are self-explanatory, while others require elaboration.

## **A Mission Statement Is Critical**

When you are out networking, you have an introduction of what you do, an elevator speech that tells the listener who you are professionally, what you can achieve for them and how you manage to achieve these targets.

On the website, this is known as a mission statement, without which no site is complete. In fact, no business can achieve success without a mission statement. In order to make a mission statement, you first need to lay down the direction in which you want your massage therapy practice to go. The question of how is not relevant at this point.

Next, ask yourself how the clients will benefit as your goals are fulfilled. This forms the basis of your mission statement. And it doesn't need to be elaborate, nor are you writing it to convince someone. You are just reflecting your goals and values and why you are doing business in the first place.

Other Pages to include on your website are:

- About You
- Your Services
- Location/Hours/Contact Info

## **Don't List Your Fees Online**

While pricing helps you find clients who will actually pay for your services and avoid those who will not, sometimes it is prudent to actually not list your prices online. Instead, under the pricing section, leave contact details where you answer these specific queries. When you don't list the price, you actually prompt interested clients to initiate contact with you and from here you can start to build trust and develop a relationship with them.

## **Testimonials from Happy Clients**

This is quite self-explanatory. You have to ask the clients who keep coming back for regular sessions to write you a testimonial that will be featured on the website. You can

offer rewards or incentives to the clients who take the time out to write a few words of praise for your business. Be sure you reassure them that they can write this anonymously to protect their identity.

## Social Media

Like SEO, you also have SMO (Social Media Optimization). With billions of people around the world immersed in social media 24/7, engaging with your target market on these platforms will work wonders for your business. You can start with the 5 most popular networking websites:



- Facebook (1 Billion registered users. Share articles, blogs, pictures, and videos)
- GooglePlus+ (540,000,000 users) Links your website with google searches
- Twitter (93,800,000 users. Improve online visibility with interesting 140-word Tweets)
- LinkedIn (200,000,000 users. Connect with professionals in your industry and beyond)
- YouTube (1 Billion users). Share message videos with potential clients.

- [Google Places](#)

Google Places is a great avenue for businesses that want to dominate their territory online. Registration is easy, as all you have to do is get your website and contact information listed. And when people search for massage therapy in your area, Google will rank you high in the search results.

## Paid Advertising on Search Engines (PPC)

Search engine marketing (SEM) allows you to buy paid ads on search engines. One of the most common and effective ways to do this is Pay-Per-Click, or simply PPC. A PPC marketing campaign has the potential to give your massage therapy business exposure as sponsored ads are displayed in search engine results and on Google at large.

Google offers six ad extensions that help communicate your message without using the full character count. These are as follows:

1. Location: You can link to a Google Maps display, allowing potential clients to find your location.
2. Products: Your products and services will be shown in this extension with their prices.
3. Site links: This allows you to show more than one page from your website, so clients can immediately navigate to the page they want.
4. Phone number
5. Social media: Number of +1s your Google+ page has.
6. Seller rating: Presents prospects with the rating your clients have given you.

## **Must Have Tools of Trade**

### **Business Cards**

Business cards still have a great relevance in the context of face-to-face and local marketing. This follows the same principle that we discussed above; personal interaction creates greater market value as the world connects virtually. This 2.5-by-3 inch object leaves an impression once the hands are shaken and elevator speeches are exchanged.

In fact, it hardly ever happens that people book a massage therapy session in an elevator, cab or bar. A successful elevator speech mostly ends with the listener taking your card home for future contact.

Business cards have another benefit as well. They can be incorporated seamlessly into other marketing materials that you provide to potential clients. For instance, your website and print materials can have the same design and color scheme (possibly a logo as well). You can alternately get T-shirts printed in the same design to leave a vivid memory in the minds of potential clients that you encounter on a daily basis.

Having a business card will be CRITICAL to your business. If you think you don't need one, you're wrong. EVERY massage therapist needs a business card, whether you work for someone else in his or her spa or if you're on your own. It is your identity card and one you can quickly give out to potential prospects. Really inexpensive ones can be purchased on VistaPrint.com. Make sure you pick a professional design; one that is not "busy" with too much information. Your name, address, phone number, email and website should all be listed as well as your specialty. Instead of listing "massage therapist" as your title, why don't you use a catchy title like 'Stress Reduction Specialist' or something else creative! Remember you're trying to separate yourself from every other massage therapist out there! And you'll be using this card very much like a resume, so you want it to appeal to your target market.

You can also use business cards for tracking the progress of your referral programs. Simply add, along with your business name and contact details, two lines at the bottom (or on the back) where the recipient of the card can enter her name, and below that the name of the person who referred your services to her. You can offer both a discount and this can help you to track how well your referral program is working.

In addition, you can provide quick tips on stress relief and relaxation, such as '*Inhale as you lift your arms and exhale as you lower them. Repeat this 3 times.*'

The bottom line is that massage business cards work. They are not only affordable, but they offer tremendous versatility as far as design and sizes are concerned. Plus, they are user-friendly as well as your clients can easily fit them in a wallet or pocket. And most importantly, they add professionalism and uniqueness to your business.

The most important thing to remember about business cards is that they don't do you any good if you leave them at home. Keep your business cards on you everywhere you go!



## **Images of You**

One of the most powerful things to use in marketing materials like flyers, brochures, websites and yes, even business cards is a nice photograph of you. You don't need to invest thousands of dollars in a professional photographer, but you *do* need to have a professional looking picture of yourself. It goes without saying that if a prospect sees your smiling face in an ad, newspaper article or some other media, that they are more likely to engage with YOU as opposed to the ad who doesn't have a picture. Aren't you more likely to connect with the person that you can actually see, rather than just reading a lot of words in an ad or on a flyer? Remember this is about building a relationship with someone; people want to see who you are! You can have a friend take a picture of you; many cell phones have great photography ability so this should not be hard. Make sure your hair is neat; that you're dressed professionally; that you don't have excessive jewelry; and above all, make sure you're smiling and have good energy about you! This will come through in the ad and your prospects will feel comfortable with you before they even call...and that's what you want. Take lots of pictures; some inside, some out; some with different colored clothing, etc. Then, ask opinions of others. Oftentimes, we don't have a good perception about ourselves. But engaging friends and family in helping to select a quality photograph will be fun for everyone; after all, they want you to succeed and would likely feel pride in helping you with this aspect. Once you've got a photograph selected, use it on everything...put it on your website and on all of your advertising. Remember, *a picture is worth a 1000 words*, so make yours work for you in your business!

## **Promotional Items**

Another great marketing idea is to give away promotional items. It might cost you a little bit of money, but having pens with your name, number, website and "pain relief expert" on it, can go a long way toward increasing your business. They are super cheap; give a few to your clients, carry extra with you and hand out randomly like when signing a credit card receipt. Offer to leave some at your local gym or with the local chiropractor where you do massage and have them give out to potential prospects. In addition to pens, there

are all kinds of massage-related items that you can have imprinted with your information. What about a back scratcher, hand-held back massager or something else similar? There are a lot of promotional companies out there and a simple Google search will yield a lot of results. Here's one, [Promo Marketing](#), that has 125 items that are related to massage; you can see that some are very expensive and others are just pennies. What about lip balms, nail files or a neck pillow from [Brand Comet](#)? Again, there are lots of ideas for promotional items; just think about your ideal prospect and see if something appeals to you that would entice them to come to you. In addition, these also can be wonderful gifts to give your existing clients; again, this will separate you from other therapists and this will add to the retention of clients.

## The Power of Networking

Once you are armed with business cards, flyers, brochures and a website to bring home those clients, you have to go out and network. Find out where your ideal clients are hanging out. Go and preach in their territory!

Additionally, you can become a part of organizations and communities related to your field and business in general. The following is a list of such opportunities:

- Join Professional Organizations
  - [AMTA](#)
  - [ABMP](#)
  - [NCBTMB](#)
  - [National Association of Massage Therapists](#)
  - [Massage Therapy Foundation](#)
  - [American Medical Massage Association](#)

- Chamber of Commerce's in your local community
- [American Business Women's Association \(ABWA\)](#)
- [Business & Networking International \(BNI\)](#)
- Speed Networking Groups
- [Mommie's Network](#)
- [Newcomer Club](#)
- [Meetup Groups](#)

The ideas are endless. For instance, if your specific type of massage therapy targets people with sports injuries, consider contacting sports organizations in your area so you can spread the word about your services.

And it is not about the size or the repute of the places where you will network. It is all about facing people and getting your feet wet as you step outside your comfort zone to boost business prospects. And while you may have a great website, never forget that face-to-face networking is the gold standard. If you can't deliver in person, your chances of scoring sessions become bleak. This is a good time to talk about your appearance; always dress professionally when networking. Scrubs are certainly appropriate, given that we are in a healthcare related field.

In addition, you can get listed in local directories related to massage. This gives you amazing opportunities for physical interaction, where you will meet new people, and even if half of them respond, that is a considerable amount of new business. And unless these organizations have membership fees, you are essentially getting more clients without spending anything.

## Other Venues to Explore and the Importance of Networking

When it comes to growing your massage therapy practice, networking is one of the best things you can do. You will learn that is an essential thing, whether you go to business school, get professional coaching or get involved in a startup.



And while most people understand the importance of networking, they don't have a clear understanding of exactly what it is and how you can go about growing your business with it.

Networking is essential for massage therapists and they should start doing it as soon as they obtain their massage therapy license in order to find contacts, grow in expertise and ultimately find clients of their own. However, with massage therapists, the implications of massage therapy go a step forward. You also establish yourself as a subject matter expert and also sharpen your entrepreneurial skills.

Networking, in its essence, is both an art and science. It deals with initiating, developing and maintaining relationships with people and organizations that are beneficial to your business.

Specifically for massage therapists, for cultivating such relationships it is vital to understand what factors prompt people to make business decisions, even those that involve their health. You see, massages aren't usually covered under medical insurance plans. Instead, most people will be paying out-of-pocket with money that is normally used for food, utilities, repairs or even entertainment, so why should they spend it on a one-hour session with you?

This is where personal preferences and the trust factor come in. People will pay you because they have a relationship with YOU and they believe you can help them. They trust

your skills as a massage therapist and this will make them more likely to come to you for treating their back pain.

All of us are engaged in networking in some capacity. When you started out as a massage therapist, you would have already informed friends and family. A simple status on Facebook “*Completed Massage School!*” will also introduce what you do to dozens of people in your circle.

However, when practiced as a science, networking allows you to form relationships with people you don't already know and it is this group of people that will bring you business once you have exhausted your immediate circle.

Networking also brings you business through good referrals. You see potential clients are more likely to book an appointment if they find out about you through a mutual acquaintance, rather than a referral from a stranger. So, your initial aim as a business marketer is to get potential clients to not only recognize you, but also trust you.

But before that, let it be clear that networking, like genuine marketing, is not manipulative. In fact, networking is all about creating authentic relationships, based on genuine care and compassion you have for your clients. As a therapist who heals people, this will come naturally to you.

## **Getting Referrals**

This is not that hard to understand and can also be called “word of mouth” advertising. The more people you interact and communicate with, the more people will be speaking on your behalf. Imagine having an entire network of people who are all looking out for you and who could refer others to you? Once again, networking hardly ever pays off 100% (i.e. not every contact of yours brings in referral clients). However, getting even 50% of your clients via word of mouth is not such a bad deal. The other benefit is that via networking, you can even get clients who fall outside the traditional circle of massage therapists.

## **Getting Media Opportunities**

Even a small, personal massage therapy business can benefit from media presence. This is yet another benefit of marketing. Networking, both online and off, can help you get screen time, interview in a magazine or the opportunity to write a guest blog post will only reflect positively on your revenue. Not to mention, next time if you want to promote a deal or the opening of your spa, these media connections will come in handy.

## **Getting Referrals by Referring Other Professionals**

Networking, like all things business, involves give and take. While you are looking for people to provide you new business opportunities, a time will come when you will have to return the favor. Do it. You have a friend who teaches yoga. While giving therapy to one of your clients, you think that yoga will help her improve posture and also reduce stress. So you recommend your friend to her.

Doing things like these initiates an endless cycle of referrals:

- Your client will appreciate the fact that you are going the extra mile by helping her achieve wellness in her life.
- Your yoga instructor friend will appreciate the fact you gave him/her business, so he/she will be more likely to recommend you if someone he/she knows needs massage therapy.

## **Other Medical Professionals - Networking within a 10-Mile Radius**

Massage therapy offers several scientifically proven health benefits. These include:

- Boosting functioning of the body's immune system
- Decreasing symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome
- Lowering blood pressure
- Treating lower back pain
- Improving sleep

- Lowering the incidence and intensity of anxiety disorders, depression and other mental health conditions
- Aiding in migraine treatment
- Lowering cancer-related fatigue and pain
- Lowering post-operative stress and pain
- Aiding in alcohol rehabilitation by easing withdrawal symptoms
- Alleviating osteoarthritis of the knee

Hence, many medical practitioners, physical therapists and sports trainers endorse massage therapy, especially Swedish massage, deep tissue massage, trigger point massage, sports massage and holistic massage.

The more medical practitioners in your area that endorse massage therapy, the more clients you will get, albeit indirectly. However, if you get some MDs, physical therapists, and chiropractors to refer your name directly, that will obviously be better.

The same holds true for health-care organizations. Here is how you can increase rapport with these individuals and institutions:

- **Mark Your Calendar**

There are important days and seasons throughout the year that hold special relevance for your massage therapy business.

For instance, May is National Arthritis Month. So, you can contact local nursing homes and hospice care facilities. You can also setup a presentation or speech for health care professionals on how massage therapy can help people with arthritis.



And during the fall and winter season, when people are raking leaves or shoveling snow, they are prone to back pain and even serious muscle injury. Along with setting up shop at local health-care institutions, you can also work with hospitals, wellness centers and clinics to educate both healthcare professionals and patients about massage therapy, while also introducing your business.

- **Partner with a Local Chiropractor**

Along with networking with local chiropractors for referrals, you can even seek employment opportunities, both part-time and full-time by partnering with them. If you manage to market yourself well and show the chiropractor's office that you can contribute to their business, you may well be in line for a source of steady income.

To achieve this, you first need to be crystal-clear on your targets. The chiropractic clinic needs to understand exactly what it is that you are offering them.

On the other hand, there are many benefits you will receive by working at a chiropractor's. Not only will you get in-depth knowledge of the human body (which will only enhance the effectiveness of your techniques), but you can also observe closely how a health-care business is run.

While you should be clear on your goal because there is a high level of commitment involved in such a partnership, this arrangement helps you with many of the obstacles that you face as a self-employed massage therapist. For instance, you wouldn't have to sign a multi-year lease to acquire commercial office space or invest in equipment and furniture way before you even get your first client. By being employed at a clinic, you will have the security of a regular working schedule and paycheck.

Benefits like insurance, payments for license renewal and paid holidays maybe included in your package depending on whether the IRS considers you an employee or an independent contractor. This is because there is more than one way to form a partnership with a chiropractor. You can either apply for an open position in a practice or rent space in a



chiropractor's office. In the latter option, you will not be necessarily working as part of the team or even working hourly.

You may need to consult with your accountant for your employment information in this context and also find the local and federal laws that apply to a massage therapist working full-time for an establishment.

Another benefit is the exposure you get. Patients suffering a variety of conditions visit chiropractors and you will get a chance to take part in the treatment. You will be delivering massages under expert supervision. This will not only add to your skills, but you will also learn to empathize with all kinds of patients as well.

The rule of thumb in local marketing is to communicate and partner with people within a 10-mile radius. This can limit the choices of chiropractic offices you can approach, but if there is more than one option available, first approach the one that has a large client base and the location that offers good signage.

As far as the work responsibilities are concerned, each chiropractor office will have a unique way of doing business and how a massage therapist is integrated into the system. That is why you can expect to see shifts in your work responsibilities as you build experience. This will be based on how well you communicate and how comfortable the doctor is in having you deal with patients.

Under a chiropractor's supervision, a massage therapist may be able to help with resistance training, exercise balls, reviewing self-care techniques and other activities.

The topmost reason why a chiropractor may take you onboard is because a massage therapist brings an added layer of hands-on experience. This in-turn can increase client retention, while bringing in new clients. In fact, by having a massage therapist on-site, chiropractors can use marketing tactics like offering massage therapy gift certificates.

As you gain experience and the trust of the doctor-in-charge, he may delegate the entire postural analysis responsibility to you, with some basic training, of course. This usually

involves positioning the patient in front of a grid chart and then taking digital photos from different angles. These photos are then used by the chiropractor to deliver the report of findings, setting goals and laying out a treatment plan that may include massage therapy as well.

Further assistance can be provided as you augment the information provided by the doctor to the patients. For instance, before or even during therapy sessions, you explain to the patients how muscle-positioning effects posture and range of motion or what trigger points are causing pain.

In fact, when it comes to trigger points (TrPs), the doctor can use your insight while conducting postural analysis and educate the patients better about their condition.

Finally and most importantly, having a massage therapist only contributes to the overall and financial success of the clinic. This is because chiropractic offices also have the potential from earning from product sales, such as topical analgesics and cold packs.

By introducing these products during therapy sessions, massage therapists can contribute to an increase in sales, which will improve the bottom-line of the clinic. You can start by providing free samples and educating clients exactly how these products will help them get better.

You can then facilitate purchases by placing a display case featuring the different application types in each treatment room, reception and checkout counters. And even while you are charging patients for these products, you will still retain client loyalty because all their needs are being met by the clinic only and they don't have to make an extra trip to the pharmacy or the superstore.

In short, working for a chiropractor can prove to be one of the most significant stages of your career as a massage therapist. By outlining all these benefits and by showing yourself capable of achieving them, you can get a local chiropractor to hire you.

Work ethic is also necessary, as you need to respect the relationship between you and the chiropractor. Even if you are just renting office space, you need to remember that you are a partner and not a competitor. So, no badmouthing, as you are getting clients because of this office.

But remember, even if you don't get the job, you should still leave a good impression to get your name out there for networking and referral purposes. And since you are communicating business deals with a doctor, use professional introduction letters on the letterheads you use. The same goes for your attire. Professional appearance and conduct are important to consider when partnering with a health-care provider. You may even have to wear a uniform or scrubs as part of the team. This can be awkward if you have never been employed before or if you started off with self-employment.

You may come across other massage therapists that complain about low pay at the chiropractor's office. The general feeling among these therapists is that while chiropractors that they work for are getting handsomely rewarded from clients, they offer a low percentage to the therapists.



There is no doubt that even as an employed massage therapist, you have to be compensated fairly for your services. And there is nothing wrong about negotiating fair agreements, because after all, you are a skilled massage therapist.

But before you buy into this low pay and unfair compensation narrative, you should look at the benefit you are getting, i.e. the chiropractor is paying *all the overhead* expenses. These include rent, utilities (electricity, water, heating, and cooling), taxes, marketing, and maintenance. It's likely that he's also paying for a receptionist and computer system, along

with an appointment software package. If you were to operate on your own, these costs will easily take up a hefty chunk of your earnings.

So even if you are hired on an hourly basis, you should not underestimate the advantages of not paying overhead. This is especially important in considering how much you should be getting paid.

- **Making Friends with the Receptionist**

This is known as getting your foot in the door. Since every trip outdoors is a networking mission, you should always have a handful of business cards whenever you visit offices of medical practitioners.

Even if you can't access the person in charge, make it a point to talk to the receptionist, as he/she is the gateway to the doctor. At least leave behind a card, if not a letter of introduction. You can even invite him/her for a free introductory 30-minute session so he/she can get the first-hand validation of all your claims.

- **Working at a Hospital**

Like the chiropractor's clinic, your local hospital is also a great place for networking and also for finding employment opportunities. As awareness of the therapeutic benefits of massage therapy is increasing, hospitals across the US are beginning to embrace this practice into the larger spectrum of patient care that they offer.

In fact, the demand is also coming from the patients' end as well. More and more people are considering alternative and holistic medicine in addition to the standard medical care they are receiving.

The trend in healthcare is going strongly toward treating the person who has the disease instead of the condition only. And as studies show the effectiveness of massage in helping cancer patients, hospitals are beginning to add therapists to their staff. This can provide you with unique experience, whether you are hired by the establishment or get referrals from doctors.

Along with cancer patients, many hospitals are using on-site massage therapists to help expecting mothers as well. This is known as pregnancy massage or pre-natal massage. This is administered to pregnant women to help them relax, soothe nerves and relieve strained back (especially in the second and third trimesters, when the extra weight in the belly strains the back).

Only specially trained therapists should administer prenatal massage so that the mother or the child is not harmed in any way. That is why such massages provide the recipient extra care and support. The massage therapist ensures that the woman's body gets all the cushioning and support it needs.

**Note:** There is also Post-Partum Pregnancy Massage after the delivery is through. The purpose of postpartum pregnancy massage is to help the mother get her body back to its pre-pregnancy condition. Realigning the body weight and toning the skin over the belly that got stretched during pregnancy achieve this.

Pain management is also one of the top reasons why people go for massage therapy sessions. On average, every 8 out of 10 hospitals are offering massage as the leading choice in complementary and alternative therapies<sup>13</sup>. And most of these hospitals are offering massage therapy complimentary with their patient-care services.

All in all, massage therapists in hospitals are not only helping to heal patients but they are also helping the admin to take better care of their patients. What's more, a soothing massage helps to significantly remove the phobias and other negative feelings surrounding medical procedures.



- **Referrals from Sports Trainers**

Along with the healthcare industry, massage therapists can find tremendous opportunities for networking and career advancement in the world of sports and athletics. Of course, this precludes that you have the necessary skills required to offer massage therapy in this industry and the fact that you have done adequate market

research to understand the earning potential.

The latter is a defining factor when you have to decide whether a career in sports massage meets your professional goals or not.

If you specialize in sports massage, networking with sports organizations in your area can become a good source of business for you. Be sure to check with your state massage board, to see if you will be required to have any special training in order to work specifically as a Sports Massage Therapist, as some state's require special licensing. Moreover, joining a professional massage organization can also help you out in this regard.

Along with sports medicine facilities, sports massage therapists can also get referrals from hospitals. You have to show that you are experienced as a specialist in sports rehabilitation techniques and that you have over the course of your career, developed an understanding of therapeutic care for sports-related injuries that limit physical activity.

Working with athletic trainers or hospital staff, you should have the ability to communicate with your team the descriptions, severity of the injury, progress of the treatment, rehabilitation, and anatomic terminology you use. This includes successfully making the distinction between a strain and a sprain.

You should immerse yourself in research. Read journals that are considered authoritative in these circles. And while conversing, only focus on well-supported benefits and structural effects of massage therapy that can help athletes heal sports related injuries.

Some of the journals that are followed widely in the sports medicine industry include “The Physician and Sports Medicine”, “Athletic Therapy Today” and “Training & Conditioning”<sup>14</sup>.

For example, you can talk about how sports massage helps achieve improved patterns in sleep and also spotting areas of tension and soreness and treating them before an injury occurs. These are the ‘tangible’ benefits of sports massage, as rest and muscle strength are the core strengths of an athlete.

The same goes for the structural benefits of sports massage, such as:

- Tissue flexibility
- Muscle relaxation
- Improved range of motion
- Reduction of cramps and muscles spasms
- Myofascial trigger point relief
- Neuromuscular tender point relief
- Reduction of adhesions
- Enhanced collagen

Getting certified or having advanced training in one or more of these skills will prove beneficial to you. Even if you have been trained in basic Swedish massage, proficiency in these skills can easily be integrated into the standard treatment procedures in athletic rehabilitation. Hence, even having basic knowledge of the effects of heat and cold, will prove to be beneficial.

Another helpful tip is joining a sports medicine association, such as the National Athletic Trainer’s Association. Like any other trade association, joining such clubs helps you network and to stay updated on current education, research and techniques.

But what may be most important in getting sports massage referrals (besides the massage techniques) is a good understanding of the kind of sports your clients engage in. You may

need to know, for instance, the training regimen and competitive practices about a sport so that you can ask relevant questions and suggest the right treatment. When you know the training schedule of your clients (i.e. when they do weight training or aerobics, and when their competitions take place before which they intensify physical activity), you will also be able to determine the optimal time for administering massage therapy.

Of course, no one is asking you to actually be a player yourself to get in-depth knowledge (though if you play the game yourself, it will be all the more better), but at least have a basic understanding.

It is important to make a good first impression on professionals that you hope can provide you referrals and income generation opportunities. You can do this by staying updated on the latest research in this particular discipline. When you make it a point to stay current with research, you will develop credibility, which is of the essence when the aim is to develop professional relationships with healthcare providers.

And while the therapeutic benefits of massage are established, only refer to those benefits that *you know* have been documented. Even the slightest exaggeration (even if it's innocent), can ruin your credibility, especially when you are conversing with healthcare professionals.

- **Facilities for Senior Citizens**

Massage therapists have great opportunities in facilities that care for the elderly. In fact, what should interest you, as someone looking for new modes of practice in this field is that newly built care facilities around the country have started to add wellness centers to their sites.

Who can provide massage therapy for older adults?

- A licensed massage therapist
- Massage therapists who have completed specialized training to work with older adults



- Physical and occupational therapists, as well as licensed physical and occupational therapy assistants

If you fall into one of the categories listed above, it can be advantageous to research into this option. Nursing homes are also increasingly hiring on-site massage therapists for their residents. And many new massage therapists are looking to old-age care as a means of specialization and as a viable option for income.



Currently, most of the massage therapy sessions in this regard are being called in and paid for by the elder residents themselves. However, the families of these individuals in large numbers are realizing the benefits of massage therapy geared especially toward elders and are arranging sessions for them as a way to show their love.

This has become a great gift idea as well. Many people take a break from sending in material goods from time to time and instead give their loved ones at nursing facilities a unique and relaxing experience by sending in a massage therapist.

And like all types of massage therapy options we have discussed thus far, massage for senior citizens can also prove effective for a variety of health conditions common in aging adults along with enhancing relaxation, such as increasing circulation in muscles and other tissues and reducing agitation in amnesia patients. Enhancing relaxation in itself is highly beneficial, especially for adults who have high blood pressure, as well as being able to help them with pain relief.

Of course, this is not to suggest that elders with health problems are the only candidates for massage therapy. They can benefit from a massage therapy session even when they don't suffer from a severe physical debilitation.

For example, along with increasing circulation to skin and tissues, massage therapy enhances feelings of wellbeing and relaxation. Stress is what many elders in nursing homes experience and in this scenario, massage may offer them the perfect way to relax and reduce feelings of loneliness and anxiety. It has been shown that the more massage therapy sessions elders receive the more they experience significant improvements in mood, decrease in anxiety, and boosts to wellbeing, self-control, vitality and health in general.

Massage therapy also offers emotional benefits for elderly clients. When living in nursing facilities, these individuals tend to feel lonely, even when they have the best amenities available to them, especially when they have few visitors. In such a case, a human touch becomes increasingly important for these people, and nothing exemplifies the power of the human touch better than massage therapy. Hence, the emotional need for physical interaction is one of the greatest 'by-products' of massage therapy and sometimes it can be as important as the physical benefits.

This is because sometimes the physical conditions are simply the manifestations of a person's loneliness and the stress that comes with it. And a good massage therapist, as we learned earlier, also interacts with his clients during sessions. This gives the client a 30 to 60 minute special moment in their otherwise mundane lifestyle where someone gives them their full attention.

You cannot expect the nurses, aides and doctors at these facilities to offer this in-depth and meaningful interaction, as sometimes they only can offer a few minutes between patients. Hence, the massage touch therapists become real visitors who are visiting the place for the express purpose of interacting with the individual. This is where your communication and listening skills may reap the greatest fruit.

Try to start a conversation before the session and hold their hand while you talk. You can talk about serious topics or just ask them how their day was. When they find you focusing all your attention on them, they will automatically be attuned to the ensuing session.

All in all massage therapy, in addition to fighting off loneliness, can help elders cope with depression, feelings of isolation, lack of self-esteem and anxiety.

**Note:** Not all elders can go for massage therapy, as there are some health conditions that prohibit its use. It is always best to make sure you are communicating clearly with the elder and their physician to ensure you're not performing massage with a contraindication that they might have.

- **Yoga Studios (don't forget about Pilates/Zumba/Crossfit)**

Finally, you can also approach yoga studios and other fitness centers within a 10-mile radius to find massage therapy clients. The same networking rules apply here as well. You have to explain why your massage therapy expertise can benefit the specific fitness establishment.

For instance, you can outline that yoga and massage therapy go hand in hand. Both offer documented health benefits and when combined, they can really help increase the overall quality of life for clients.

Some common benefits of yoga and massage therapy include:

- Reducing stress
- Increasing flexibility
- Pain reduction

Moreover, just like massage therapy there are many different types of yoga as well. A great way to network with a local yoga studio is to join as a member! Many massage therapists practice yoga to stay healthy. The same goes for gyms as well.

- **Gyms and Fitness Centers**

When it comes to fitness, you will have to follow more or less the same guidelines in dealing with clients that would follow if you were a sports massage therapist. If your client got injured during a workout, you have to listen carefully how he describes his condition, and then guide him in the necessary procedures for treatment.

When you ask the right questions and listen to the answers carefully, you will be able to determine some important information, like: specific problem areas that need to be addressed during the massage, the type of pressure that the client can handle, what areas to avoid and any medical or health issues that a person might have.

**Note:** Unless the fitness center is a big building with several spacious rooms, the atmosphere may not be conducive to massage. Alternatives include:

- Opening a massage therapy center near the fitness center
- Offering call-in services for gym members
- Offering chair massages in the lobby

This next section will deal with the 3<sup>rd</sup> option.

### *Chair Massage*

We have mentioned chair massages in passing when discussing types of massages therapies and networking opportunities. But there is a good income potential as well in these seated massages of 10- to 20-minute duration.

Typically chair massages can be provided anywhere, as they can be performed over clothes and don't require massage oils applied to the clients' bodies. The chairs on which they are seated are specially made for this purpose where the client sits with his/her face resting in a cradle facing downwards. The chair offers support for the arms. This allows the arms and back to be completely relaxed.

Because of the camp-style nature of the massage, it is becoming highly popular in places where people need quick relief from stress, especially at the workplace. By offering stress relief on the spot, a timely chair massage can prevent spasms.

Organizers of corporate events arrange chair massages for attendants as free perks. However, the trend is mostly of employers bringing therapists in to offer chair massages to their employees to improve productivity onsite and to lower time off work due to body pain or injuries. Sometimes companies offer employees paid time-off so they can get massage therapy. These are opportunities that you can capitalize on with a massage chair.



Along with working as a massage therapist at a workplace, the chair massage market also offers one-time gigs and even stationary spots at retail centers. You get some experience providing chair massage at corporate events.

The chair massage market is divided roughly into three categories: one-time events (like sporting events, health fairs or garden shows), the workplace and retail centers. Providing chair massage at events is the most popular and the easiest way to get started.

This is becoming a notable trend, as people are arranging entire parties, weddings and even Christmas events on the massage theme. And since you don't require too much space with chair massages, you can offer these services in a variety of settings. Many therapists have made chair massage their primary gig as they set up shop at booths, kiosks or small retail areas in shopping malls, airports, and other areas where there is a lot of pedestrian traffic.

Then there is also the emerging spa party scene, where you target events as diverse as bridal shows, sports leagues or sorority and fraternity gatherings. The key is to utilize the tools learned here, no matter what location you may be using.

## **Staying Connected**

When you engage in networking on a daily basis, it is a subtle, yet powerful way of improving your brand recognition. Think about it: who will people think about when they need massage therapy, someone they see at events or someone who is completely cut off from the community outside of his spa?

## **Things to Remember**

For the most part, networking isn't expensive. For simple trips around town and meeting new people, you are bringing in new clients without expending your marketing budget. But of course, you are spending something in lieu of the money saved and business earned: your time. And if you don't keep a tab on it, you may be spending more time on networking than necessary.

This can happen in the early years of your business as you go from one group to another, meeting and talking with people, in the pursuits of obtaining new prospects. However, you may come home physically drained without a clue of what you have achieved.

So, you need to network while also maintaining balance. There is an optimal amount of networking to do and the effort is not going to be reimbursed by the number of referrals you receive. Never blur the line between the time you spend networking and the benefit you get from it.

## **Further Avenues for Networking**

- [Networking In Your Massage School](#)

When you are starting out as a massage therapist, forming connections with people will help you feel more grounded in your practice. The bonus is that your list of contacts, along with a deeper communication with the community, grows as your business grows.

This is necessary if you are getting people talking about all the services you offer. This word of mouth is essential for those massage therapists who don't have a marketing budget in place just yet.

However, there is one place you might be missing in the early days of your massage therapy practice, a place apart from your private circle: the massage school that you graduated from.

You see there are plenty of benefits to be gained from what the instructors and administrators in massage school have to offer, besides the courses. Your teachers will not only instruct you in the various facets of massage therapy, but may also know key skills like spa management and hiring.

Their collective experience can help you acquire in-depth knowledge of the industry, which also includes networking opportunities. This is an amazing way to kick-start your career as a massage therapist. And you never know if your instructors run a spa themselves and have a vacancy open or if they can provide you with a recommendation that can help you land your first job as a massage therapist.

But that's not the end of it. Once you get out of massage school, even if you have started working, maintain contact with your classmates and faculty. Catch them at a seminar, or arrange monthly lunches with individuals or groups.

An easier method is to simply stay in touch via social networking websites like LinkedIn. LinkedIn for instance, is a great online resource for massage therapists like you to learn about opportunities in the field, while networking with your peers without straining yourself physically. Simply by adding your teachers and classmates to your email and social networking accounts, you can find new opportunities with minimal effort.

- **Networking While Educating Yourself**

As a massage therapist, you will have to renew your massage therapy license every 1-2 years, depending on your state regulations. This obviously involves taking some mandatory

CE courses, just like this one. However, don't just view this as a tedious exercise for getting some credits and moving on in life. And don't just take whatever courses are available at a local spa or online. In fact, treat this like a networking opportunity.

Let's say you want to specialize in sports massage. However, you do not find any relevant courses. Look for all the alternate options. Maybe your local massage school is offering courses in reflexology or Thai massage. While this may not be directly relevant to your sports massage practice, note that the examples used, namely reflexology and Thai massage both follow intricate therapeutic principles you can use to enhance the healing effects of a sports massage.

This will definitely help you grow as a massage therapist who is able to satisfy clients every time. But more than that, while you are taking classes to renew your license, you will come across other therapists and instructors who can help you with networking opportunities that assist you with following your career path further down the line.

And it is also possible that one of your instructors is a travelling lecturer who goes from region to region at the request of schools who want them to teach their specialized courses. If possible, try to befriend such teachers and learn as much as you can about them. It is these kinds of massage therapists who can truly teach you how to become an expert in your respective field.

- **Networking With Other Massage Therapists**

Massage therapy seminars and conferences can be incredibly resourceful and beneficial. This is where you can meet popular massage therapists and get in touch with colleagues from other parts of the country and receive first-hand information on the regulations and earning potential in those regions. In addition, you may get to view videos and lectures that offer invaluable lessons that you can then incorporate in your practice.

Once you come across known experts in your field and talk to them, you will see that they bring a treasure of knowledge and experience to the table. Not to mention, when you are



networking with other professionals at such events, you can gain a lot of essential knowledge in a short amount of time, which otherwise you would get after scanning journals or books or attending your local massage school.

- **Networking While Travelling**

Your networking efforts may sometimes involve travelling across the nation to meet other experts in the industry. This is a valuable networking opportunity. Make it a point (i.e. if your schedule allows it) to learn about local practices (such as the healing art of [Lomilomi in Hawaii](#)), or visit a famous massage school or institute (such as the [Touch Research Institute in Miami](#), or the [Guild for Structural Integration in Colorado](#)).

Doing so will boost your creativity as a massage therapist. You will learn the intricacies of different techniques and how they work on the human body. The more you learn about these things, the more your skills will improve and *clients will notice it*.

All in all, whether you are getting certified, attending seminars or travelling to another state, you are only bringing invaluable first-hand knowledge, discussions, and experience back to your practice. These may not be massage networking opportunities in the traditional face-to-face arrangement, but you will gain a lot from this direct experience.

- **Churches (Community Center, Synagogue, or Any Religious Center)**

If you are religious, you already have a place for networking, which you probably haven't noticed: your church (or the institution of your respective faith). No matter which faith-based group you belong to, the chances of forming genuine connections (the essence of marketing) are multiplied. That is because personal affiliations run deeper in these groups than, let's say, a chess club.

There is no doubt that shared beliefs are an incredibly powerful unifying force. As part of such a community, you will find it easier to gain trust of prospective clients.

**Note:** This technique only applies if you are already part of a faith system.

Showing up unexpectedly at a church where you are not a member and

talking about your massage therapy business may not go over so well with your local congregation!

- **Rotary Clubs**

The [Rotary](#) was formed for the very purpose of improving one's professional network and to meet business and professional acquaintances at regular intervals. And on the virtue of being the oldest service club in the world, the Rotary membership encompasses professionals from a variety of professions, from community leaders to executives and even people holding political positions.

The central principle behind Rotary is fellowship, which is why people become members. You not only get to link yourself with others, but the projects initiated by the club allow you to form long-lasting friendships with rotary members in virtually every major city in the world. But this is only one aspect of professional networking that joining the local Rotary club offers you.

Consider the community services opportunities you get (we will later discuss how this helps boost your business) by becoming a member. Healthcare, for instance, is one of the primary causes that the Rotary clubs works for and this in turn is where you can contribute through your expertise.

We have talked about travelling as a massage therapist and forming relationships nationwide. Well, this is where Rotary membership helps you out. The club has presence in 200 countries with over 34,000 local clubs. This gives you another avenue to network as you travel from state-to-state. The local rotary will always welcome you in.

Not to mention, you get firsthand information of everything important that is taking place in the community, the country and the world at large. This is a great way to stay in touch with current issues, but also helps you to engage in conversations with all types of people whom you come across.

## Offer To Talk For Free At Your Local Library about the Health Benefits of Massage

Moving on, most massage therapists also gloss over a local hub for networking: the library. With the ‘Silence’ sign hanging on the wall, how do you go about networking at the local library?

Well, libraries always provide speaking opportunities to experts in various fields and this is one avenue you should definitely explore. Such events often bring together local and regional interest groups in a common space, giving you a tremendous networking opportunity in the library where you can share your unique take on your subject matter while simultaneously gaining valuable experience.

If you are not a confident speaker, the following tips may help you:



- To start off, you need be clear on your goals. Ask yourself what your true motivations are behind speaking at a library event. Do you want to avail the speaking opportunity to further establish yourself as a leader in your industry? Are you launching a book on massage therapy and want to share some excerpts from it to interested people in the audience? This is where you should start, i.e. knowing your goal. This helps you plan the rest of the speaking process with relative ease.
- Next, you need to write down the material that you are going to share. For the most part, a talk at the local library may not involve multimedia, but if the opportunity is there, you can make a PowerPoint slideshow of your most important points. But

presentation is not what you should be focusing on at this stage. How do you go about writing your speech?

Of course, you are the expert massage therapist and the average listener doesn't know what goes on in this ancient therapeutic discipline. You can talk about the various health benefits of massage therapy. It would be better if you can anticipate questions that your audience may have with regards to massage therapy and write your material in a way to answer those questions in a logical and coherent manner.

Indeed, the best way to excel at a speaking engagement is to be prepared at all times. Think about what you can say to a person who stops you in the middle of the road asking about what you do. Think about your elevator speech as well. These will offer you amazing ideas when you have to speak at a local library or any other event.

You can also use material from newspaper articles and blog posts you have written previously. Maybe you want to reiterate some information or offer some additional insight that the editorial limitations of the respective publication may not have allowed you to include.

Finally, as you network at industry events and conferences and engage in conversations with people, you will not only get interesting ideas about what to speak on, but also you will develop confidence when expressing yourself in public. And by watching other massage therapists speak, you can get a fairly good idea of what works and what doesn't.

- Capture yourself on video. Yes, this is also an amazing way to give speeches nowadays. You don't have to be physically present. With a webcam and VOIP service, you can speak to your audience without being there. But in the context of a local library, it is better that you are there.

Video technology can then be used to shoot your own speech. This serves several benefits. For instance, you will have readymade content for your blog. This can be

viewed by organizers so they can see how good you are at public speaking, which will only broaden your networking horizons. Not to mention, watching yourself on video helps you realize your strengths and weaknesses as a public speaker.

- Finally, this tip deals with what you have to do after you have given your first library speech. We have discussed recording yourself and uploading the speech on your website. Well, depending on your career aspirations and the direction you want your massage therapy practice to move in, you should consider making a dedicated page for speaking engagements on your website.

Speaking at massage therapy related events will boost your brand recognition in amazing ways. Direct the visitor to your videos and write-ups of presentations you have given. This will give organizers a fairly good idea of what you can do at the event.

You can also list all the places and organizations that have invited you to speak. And last, but not least, get testimonials of people who have booked you or have heard you at these events. Follow up with your contact information, and you are good to go!

**Note:** You will not necessarily be paid for speaking at places like the local library. However, don't consider this to be a loss, since ultimately you will get new clients via public speaking.

## **Toastmaster Clubs**

Like the Rotary, your local toastmaster club is also a fine place to network professionally. In fact, the exposure you get at a toastmaster club helps you develop skills that have been discussed in this section.

For instance, let's start with public speaking, which is something that this club trains you to excel in. All members receive a Competent Communicator's manual, which is basically a list of the speeches you have to give. This provides the necessary stimulus for you to get

straight to the action and giving around a dozen speeches will definitely make you a better speaker.

Even as you practice for your speeches, you will improve and also grow your confidence to the point where you will become less reliant on your notes. Of course, this is not what you should aspire to do, for the aim is to become a better speaker, with or without the notes.

Not to mention, you get immediate constructive criticism from fellow members and this feedback helps you evaluate what you did right, what you could have done better and how you can improve next time. As a busy massage therapist who cannot take out time for speaking lessons, the toastmaster club can help you in this area immensely. But that is not all.

You also become a better listener. Don't forget that you will also have to sit through speeches given by other members and you will be expected to offer your insights. This will prompt you to pay attention to what people say and if this becomes a habit, you will connect even more deeply with your clients before, during and after each massage therapy session.

Not to mention, a notable aspect of the speech evaluation process in the club involves the word usage, which will help you become a better communicator, writer and marketer.

The toastmaster club is also a great way to sharpen your entrepreneurial skills. You can be chosen for leadership roles within the club, such as President, VP of Education, VP of Public Relations, VP of Membership and Treasurer. The skills to be learned in this regard will definitely help you manage your business better. Part of this includes HR skills like hiring people, which is the key to the success of any business.

Finally, coming back to our original discussion, the toastmaster club helps you expand your network, as you meet new people from a wide range of industries.

## **Write Massage Related Articles for Your Local Newspaper (HOA News or Other Local Paper about Massage)**

We have already discussed why you should get yourself published in local newspapers, magazines, and journals on massage therapy, or a subject that is related to it. Below we will go into some detail on what this entails.

You may have written essays in school or won a short story contest in college. But when it comes to writing articles for a newspaper, you will have to use a different writing style.

To start off, there is only so much space each publication has to offer for contributed articles, so you have to hook your readers from the first line. That means getting straight to the point. Waiting for the third sentence to show your readers what the piece is all about means losing major readership.

But that is not all, for you also have to pay special attention to the *length* of this opening sentence. For the most part, you have to close the opening line in just 22 words. Some publications may allow you to use at most 40 words for the first sentence, but not more than that. But it is ideal that you still keep it under 25 words.

This doesn't mean that you forget using periods and go all-poetic in the rest of the article. Stay put on the principle of being concise, and don't exceed 2 to 3 sentences in each paragraph. This leaves a lot of 'white space' on the page, which is beneficial for the readers for it is easier on their eyes while reading.

Moving on, since the subject is massage therapy or something related to health or psychology, there will be some technical details in your article. This can also include quotations from authorities on the subject or even popular writers.

So, when you are adding quotations, pay special attention to accuracy. Crosscheck your sources thoroughly to avoid any instances of misquotations. While obviously you already know this, it is easy to be tempted by assumptions and laziness when facing a tight deadline!

Lastly, many people forget this but it is critical to put your qualifications and contact information at the end of your article. Listing your license number, along with your website and phone number and the aforementioned professional-looking photograph, should be included in any kind of editorial article that you do. It also can be extremely beneficial to include a call-to-action in the newspaper. Some kind of special offer with a time limit; this will help to pay for the ad/article in the event you have to pay for it. So offering a special offer to those readers, will help to bring in some quick cash to help pay for your ad.

Once you are done writing, proofing and editing the article, you have to send it to the respective newspaper you think best reaches your audience. But when you are approaching the editor(s), remember that queries sent to newspapers and magazines tend to differ from the ones sent to publishing houses.

When you are pitching a novel or even a non-fiction book, the query tends to be a bit elaborate, where along with the letter you may even have to mail a synopsis and/or selected chapters. Failure to do so can cause the manuscript to go unnoticed.

But when you are pitching to a newspaper, your query letter should tell the editor why they should consider your article for their publication. You must familiarize yourself with that publication and explain why your article would be of interest to the readers.

This may involve a bit of market research. You know already how to do market research for massage therapy clients, but here you will have to find publications that cater to your target market, along with their editorial. Review the kind of pieces they usually feature (fiction, non-fiction, humor, etc.) and research whether they accept contributions or not.

Other things to look for include:

- The style of the articles
- Average word count
- Use of language
- The political, ethnic or religious leanings of the publication



- Whether articles on massage therapy have been printed or not, and if so, how frequently

Considering the last point, even if your local newspaper has already printed articles on massage therapy (or a related topic that you want to write about), it is still worth a try to pitch your piece. Maybe you are approaching the subject from a unique angle. And besides, ideas are already limited. If 100% originality were the criteria, there wouldn't be much to read in this world.

You may also need to send a writing sample, or you can just send the entire article as it is, along with a brief description of what you do professionally and why you are qualified to write on the topic that you pitched.

If (and when) you get the approval, you will have a deadline to meet. Failure to do so may end your relationship with this precious media contact once and for all. This fear can work brilliantly for getting your fingers on the keyboard. But even if then you don't find the will to write, see the advice further in this section on hiring professional writers.

Finally, timing is also crucial. Usually, both summer months and the holidays present great opportunities for contributors. Since most people are on holiday and generally difficult to contact even when available, your contribution will be preferred by editors who are finding it hard to fill their papers with something newsworthy.

## **On Dealing with Rejection**

No, it's not rocket science. Simply writing a 500-600 word article and a query won't automatically get you published. Depending on the publication you choose, you will be competing against dozens, if not hundreds, of contributors (some of them massage therapists like yourself).

Great writing, on its own, wouldn't land you on the lifestyle page. The lesson here is that you need to expect rejection. Since you make a living as a massage therapist and not from writing, this should be easy for you!

## Ignore All Advice Given Above!

There are guidelines in the world of content marketing and publishing that work most of the time, making them worthy of consideration. However, there is no 100% foolproof formula for getting your article published.

So, if you are the creative kind, you can try out these alternatives to the article writing as listed above:

- **Go Against the Flow**

While it is crucial to follow the newspaper or magazine's tone and editorial policy when writing an article for personal branding (a key aspect of native advertising), you can still attempt going outside the publication's themes and styles. In fact, some writers have achieved success by submitting a fiction piece to a non-fiction publication, but of course, being true to the main theme. Who knows, maybe the editor will look at your non-traditional approach and original take on the subject and prefer you to other contributors. This brings us to our next point...

- **Write a Story**

While this may not be a viable approach idea for a newspaper, you can present your subject matter in story form. In fact, using a story form is one of the most effective methods of content marketing. Consider 'The Man in the Hathaway Shirt'<sup>15</sup> or the 'Himalayan Walking Shoes'<sup>16</sup> from Seinfeld.

- **Just Write**

Here I paraphrase Dr. Hunter S. Thompson:

I think the trick is that you have to use words well enough so that the (publication is) rendered helpless by the fact that it's good. Read full quote here<sup>17</sup>. If you really bring expert-class material to the table, well, you can shift the odds in your favor as far as getting published in a newspaper is concerned.

Before we close this section, there is a 4<sup>th</sup> alternative as well...

## Using Professional Help

Some people have genuine writing talent, even if they don't pursue it professionally. Moreover, there are plenty of resources in bookstores, libraries, academia and the Internet that teach you how to write for marketing and brand building.

Many tips have been shared in this e-book as well. However, there are times when businesses need to call in professional content creators. The following is a list of all the instances when a businessperson like you may be in a need of professional help. Note that this information also pertains to online marketing as well:

- Writing is hard work. If you want to make yourself known as a brand via content marketing, then it calls for some serious typing action. This becomes hard if you don't connect with what you are doing, don't have the gift of writing or when you simply don't have the time.

Most of the time, this is purely psychological, where the thought of sitting down in front of a keyboard irks you. If that is the case, don't do it. Concentrate instead on your strengths (you are a massage therapist after all!), and hire a writer to help you with this aspect of marketing.

- Commercial writing, in some form or the other, is actually necessary for businesses nowadays. Despite how incredible your massage therapy is, it will not create a buzz if you can't communicate your message to your clients. This actually necessitates the need for professional help.
- You want to save time. Even if writing isn't a problem for you, there is only so much you can write on a consistent basis while also taking care of other important aspects of your business. Sure, you can pull some all-nighters every now and then and go on a writing spree, but for the most part this leads to burnout and poor quality.

However, in content marketing, it is the volume and frequency of high quality that helps you build authority and client connection. Of course, if the requirement is one newspaper article and one flyer copy every month, you can easily pull that off on your own. But if you are maintaining a blog, printing brochures on a regular basis and writing your own massage therapy e-book, then it is better to get some assistance from someone that has the time and expertise to help. Remember, writing so much that it takes you away from your massage therapy career, is not the goal!

- Sometimes, you just need an expert. You may know how to write, but you may not know the ins and outs of getting published. And while you can create magical blog posts, you may not know how to optimize it for search engines.
- Sometimes you need a fresh approach to the topic. The simple fact is that you are too close to your business. And in the case of a highly personalized service, such as massage therapy, you may be running the entire show on your own.

In fact, what you may consider to be the most significant aspect of your business doesn't strike a chord with the audience, while you, in the grand scheme of things, ignore that one essential benefit that differentiates you from your competitors.

A classic example of this is the first Dove ad created by David Ogilvy in the 1950s. To get an idea of how to write the ad, this legendary copywriter sunk deep into research on how the soap was actually made. He found out that the Dove soap contained 'one-quarter cleansing cream'. Thus, the copy read 'Dove creams your skin while you bathe'.<sup>18</sup>

By identifying this feature, Ogilvy was able to turn it into a remarkable and unique benefit, which turned Dove into one of the most recognizable American products to this very day. A skilled blogger can do the same for you.

- Finally, you have to pay for perfection. You see, it's not just being good at something. When it is your brand image that is at stake, you can't simply settle for

good. The same holds true for your content. You have to make a great impression, or else. This entails great headlines, killer hooks, well-structured copy, to-the-point message, strong calls to action and bold use of words. Professional writers spend years perfecting all these little details that collectively form a powerful brand.

## Wellness at the Workplace

There are no exact figures on how many companies employ on-site massage therapists or what the earning potential is. However, one thing is evident from the trends and that is companies of all sizes are realizing the benefits of massage therapy when it comes to employee motivation and retention. Remember that a company's main goal will always be to increase profits; if their employees are sick with back-related problems or stress and can't work, they lose money. When attempting to work in the corporate world, remember to present your solution to the company's problems. They want happy and healthy employees because those employees will work hard for the company, thus resulting in profits.

Some of the big names that have started to incorporate massage therapy in their employee programs include Boeing, Eddie Bauer and Google<sup>19</sup>. What do employers have to say?

Basically, the benefit that business owners see in offering chair massages to employees is that it is a cost-effective way of removing work-related stress, thus boosting productivity and reducing the number of days off work. Work-related stress is the primary cause of stress in North America. The annual costs to employers in stress-related healthcare and missed work are over \$300 billion!<sup>20</sup>

Chair massages in particular help companies that by nature have to ask employees to work long hours on certain days throughout the year, such as tax firms. In this context, even offering monthly massages to employees goes a long way in sustaining their energy levels. It goes to show that the company cares for and values the hard work that the employees put in.

This not only helps them generate goodwill within the workforce, but also offers them a competitive advantage over other companies. And as more people learn about the health benefits of massage therapy, they will actually appreciate their employer's efforts if they arrange the services for them.

Other factors that are traditionally ascribed as motivation for employees include bonuses and overtime pay. However, the average employees view these things as their right, which they have earned by working hard. However, something like massage therapy which not only helps employees relax, but also aids in improving their productivity so that they can earn bonuses and overtime, will be seen as an employer's goodwill.

And since we are talking about the corporate scene, this opens several doors for networking and boosting your massage therapy practice, even in a 10-mile radius. The drill is the same: Approach the company, offer your services, explain the benefits and be professional.

You can make this more effective through various means. For instance, you can give presentations of the corporate benefits of massage therapy at the local chamber of commerce or any other business association you are a member of. Focusing on how the corporation benefits, especially something as significant as employee motivation, will definitely generate the interest of employers.

Another way that may not give you similar exposure but is definitely an effective way to enter the corporate scene is to target companies where you already have contacts. Peruse your list of friends, families, church members, and business associates and try to look for those that hold supervision, Human Resources (HR), and managerial positions in local firms.

They can offer referrals to the decision makers in these companies and go a long way in compelling executives in hiring you onsite or at least referring employees to your services.

And if you don't know decision makers or people of influence, don't worry. Just take a look at the many clients who you have serviced since you started your practice. You may

have a client's job information, even if not the specific company they work for. Out of these clients, pick those who specifically asked you to treat for work-related stress.

Next, short-list those that came or still come for repeated sessions and who have clearly told you that your massage therapy has helped them better cope with their stress at work. Ask them if there are others at the office who can use some stress relief as well. Who knows, maybe your praise may reach the manager who is looking for ways to improve employee productivity even when he cannot lower their workload.

You can strike gold if you contact a company that is already looking for a massage therapist as a part of its wellness program. They will be more receptive of your advances, and you can go a long way in getting them to hire you or refer to you by offering a demo or a free massage.

### **Who Pays for A Corporate Chair Massage?**

The cost of a chair massage can be either paid by the company, the employees themselves or both. While the second and third options may seem odd, it has been seen that employees are happy to be given the time to get a massage during work hours, especially since they might not be able to take the time out otherwise.

Some therapists also have a tiered pricing arrangement with the company where about \$60 per hour is fixed as a base, which will be adjusted depending on how much time they spend giving massages.



In this arrangement, the company is charged a higher rate, perhaps \$70 per hour, if the therapist spends fewer than, say, three or four hours at the company. For the most part, the standard payment is \$1 per minute, plus tips.

Another payment system is that the therapist is onsite once every two weeks (or as designated by the company), and employees can pay \$20 for a 20-minute massage in the weeks that they are not due for a company-paid massage.

Considering these rates, you then have to decide whether such an arrangement will work for you or not. To make this decision, you will have to factor in:

- Investment costs
- Time involved both on-site and traveling to/from
- Travel costs (which will obviously include fuel)

Then you have to see depending on the standard \$1 per minute rate, how many massages do you need to do a week to cover your costs? It will be better if you are able to break these costs down into the numbers of hours that you will have to work on a daily basis. One of the great advantages to being paid by the hour, is that you know just how much money you'll make in a given time period.

It is important to make calculations of these numbers so that you can see the worth in becoming a door-to-door, or rather an office-to-office, massage therapist. You should also contact your massage therapist friends whom you know have worked in the chair massage business and ask them these questions.

Also remember that since you will be working in a corporate environment, invest in equipment that will make you look like a pro. If you are looking at chair massage just as a marketing tool for your table practice, then you will want to invest in a lower-end chair, which you can get for under \$200. But if you think chair massage could become an important arm of your practice, look at something more substantial. A really good massage chair can cost \$300 to \$500.



Other expenses are limited. For chair massage, you don't need massage oils, linens or some of the other items associated with table massage, but you will need a supply of hand wipes and face covers and a nearby trash receptacle since you will be changing face covers after every client. Be sure you wipe down your massage chair in between clients; even though they are clothed, they will still leave residue from lotions or perfumes on your chair so having hand wipes with you is another cost you'll need to plan for.

Keeping this in mind, you may be able to price a chair massage at the same hourly rate as a table massage at some events. The organizers may be willing to pay this rate because they are getting an affordability benefit; i.e. several people can share a timeslot and not have to commit to the full hour.

## **Offer Massage Demonstrations for Groups**

Nothing is more powerful when it comes to convincing your potential clients to spend money on what you have to offer than a demo. When executed perfectly, a demo helps potential clients visualize and experience how their life would be better by getting regular massages.

You can offer massage demos to groups at your spa, clinic or a yoga studio or gym. Try doing demos at health fairs or the chiropractor's clinic. In fact, everywhere you go to network, there is potential to spread the word via massage demos.

Wherever you plan to set up your 'act', remember these essential guidelines to help you turn demonstration into sales:

- To start off, a good demonstration is where you are able to speak directly to the clients' unique problems and desires. You have learned this in the initial sections of this e-book where you read about targeted marketing and sketching out the profile of the ideal client. Well, do the same when you are giving demonstrations.

Find out the income group, lifestyle and interests of the group who will be waiting for a demo. Are they athletes or yoga enthusiasts that want massage therapy to

further enhance their posture? This will help you make a ‘customized’ presentation rather than a general one and (ideally) each member of the audience will be able to understand the benefits of massage therapy as it would pertain to their unique condition.

While you stand there promoting your services, remember that it is all about the client. It is the client who needs to visualize what it is like to be on that table and what the session will offer him.

So, while you will use technical terms and even talk about the anatomy, make sure you make it the client’s story. Incorporate a lot of ‘you’ and ‘your’ in your conversation. You can also use words like ‘guided deep breathing’ or ‘subtle stomach exercises’, but don’t forget to tell your audience how these moves will soothe them physically (and mentally!), which in turn will help to lower stiffness in their body, etc.

- Rehearsal is of immense importance. You are an expert massage therapist. Nobody can provide the same experience to a client like you can. And you have honed your craft both as a student and a professional massage therapist.

But that still doesn’t downplay the necessity of rehearsal. Remember that there is a lot of room for fumbling during a massage demonstration because you are multi-tasking. Along with performing a live massage, you also need to maintain the proper angle so that the audience can clearly see what’s going on and also gauge their interest in what you are doing.

That is why you should at least rehearse three times before hitting the ‘stage’. And this is counting the rehearsal you will do *on site*. While you may not be able to perform a mock massage before the actual demo on the site, you can at least visit the place to study the angles, lighting and equipment.

See what the place is offering and what it is not. Showing up on the main day and then finding faulty equipment or poor lighting will only reduce the impact of the demonstration.

When you fumble like that, the audience will think that you didn't prepare well beforehand. That is a 'D-' (if not an 'F') on your professional report. Remember that the audience is not watching a product demonstration in the literal sense of the word.

When it comes to massage therapy, *you* are the product. So, if you falter and exhibit a lack of confidence, then you as a product will fail to make impact on the client. But even worse will be the fact the audience thinks that your fumbled demonstration is what massage therapy is all about! That way, it would be impossible to bring them back.

Hence, rehearsals and location checks are vital. And always have back-up supplies if something fails to work.

- Finally, you have to give a call-to-action. You have to close the deal. You just gave these people a physical demonstration of what it feels like to book a session with you, which makes this moment the right one to close the sale.

When you don't ask them to do anything, it gives off the impression that you are not confident about your services and that you lack the passion for it. On the other hand, if you truly believe that your services are something that clients need to bring betterment in their lives, you will become an evangelist for your massage therapy practice!

## Creating Massage Demonstration Videos

You can also give massage demonstrations online via recorded videos. These can be uploaded on your website so that all potential clients can view them in the comfort of their home, and you wouldn't have to make the physical effort of giving a demo every time.

This is a good way of adding unique content to your website and if you upload these videos to your YouTube channel, your online visibility will increase. Of course, when you are making a demo video, the recording and playback quality matters a lot. Also know that if you choose to do the videos yourself, you can use video editing software to cut out any mistakes and make a polished video for your viewers.

But if you're going to do a lot of videos or choose to do videos that are of great length, it is better to hire a professional video maker/editor. The demo itself does not need to be long and you can post short 10-minute clips. But note that a video demo may not give all viewers a 'copy-feel' and the hands-on experience that a live demo offers.

But videos have their own relevance. Consider the fact that along with potential clients, your video demonstrations will be viewed by massage therapy students and budding practitioners. This will not only bring more visitors to your website, but they might also share the clips on their social networks with their peers, thereby giving you more exposure than you paid for!

The lesson to be learned here is that using technology correctly, you should be able to make a killer impression in person. This is what ultimately contributes to your brand in the long run.

When you are giving out demonstrations (for free), you are giving potential clients a taste of what the work is like. You are able to enter into their comfort zone and eliminate their fears.

## Offer Discounts

Offering discounts is one of the most popular ways of not only capturing the attention of clients, but also compelling them to buy your services. When exposed to marketing, the prospect of saving money garners an almost immediate reaction from potential clients. In our [section on pricing](#), we saw how it is not always the best idea to lower your prices in order to win more clients.

In fact, there is a school of thought that considers introducing discounts regularly actually has a negative impact on your business. You not only appear desperate for business to some clients, but in effect you are making them accustomed to paying you lower rates every time. This is not a good way to do business.

However, the efficacy of discounts can also not be discounted, especially when you are targeting new clients who may lower their guard to your advertising if they are getting a good deal.

The best way to offer good deals to your clients throughout the year is to balance these two scenarios. But even more important is to be money minded. Don't be like those massage therapists that are simply not confident in what they have to offer. You must believe from the beginning that your massage therapy service is something that adds value to your client's life and you have the right to receive fair compensation for it. And ultimately, you are a tax-paying citizen and a licensed worker, which entitles you to all luxuries of life.

Some massage therapists offer discounts on a regular basis because they think they don't *deserve* to be paid higher. The more serious disadvantage such an attitude causes is the devaluation of your brand. Never forget that there is a fine line between promoting your brand (and offering clients good value on their money) and diluting your brand.

You have to make the client realize the value of paying the full price for your service. Compromising on this aspect means compromising on the essential ingredients that make your business stand out.

Even the client who came into your business via discounts may never become a repeat client that will pay the full price. A prime example of this is using the GroupOn or Living Social coupon systems. Many therapists I've talked to have used GroupOn. Typically the way this works is you offer a coupon at a severely discounted rate; let's say \$30.00 for an hour massage. GroupOn needs to make money, so they typically take between 40-60% of that fee. Yes, you'll get customers and likely be inundated with phone calls, but

unfortunately, few of those clients will become repeat clients. These are the types of clients that are just out “looking for the deal” and will hop from one therapist to another. And you’ll only make on average about \$15.00 per client. I haven’t talked to any therapist who has used this system effectively to land long-term clients. The only way to utilize the benefits of discounts without ruining your revenue stream is to offer discount deals through partners (e.g. buying a certain meal at a restaurant will give clients a discount coupon for massage therapy) or to venture into new markets.

You know which clients to target and you know how deep their pockets really are. You have multiple price packages to cater to different kinds of clients, which gives them the option of opting for a lower price package without you having to compromise your earning potential.

The bottom-line is that you should never give away your services, unless of course you are volunteering. All your discount offers should add real value to your business. This means you should have a system in place to retain new clients that enter your business following a promotion (courtesy, professionalism, business cards, referrals, etc.). In this scenario, you are not losing anything, but you are actually gaining future business.

And if some clients are always expecting a discount, well, let them take their business elsewhere. They don’t appreciate what you are doing for them, so don't waste your time with such clients. Even if you lose a few clients, your brand value will solidify in the long run as you only cater to higher paying clients. But when you devalue your own business, you will lose to competing therapists who value their practice even lower than you.

On the other hand, offering discounts can be beneficial at the start of your career when you don’t have a large clientele or an established practice. Hence, it makes sense to use massage coupons and discounts as you trying to jumpstart your practice. At the start of your business, you don’t have enough capital, but you do have time. So, you are trading the value of your time as an advertising expense.

But even then you should never stop valuing yourself highly and focus on never giving away your services. There are many ways to get people to try your service and add value when building up your practice.

For instance, you can offer them something extra to try you the first time without lowering your standard rate. You can offer extra time, almost 5 to 10 minutes on top of the hourly massage session. If clients are willing to pay, then you know you are attracting the right kind of people instead of those who wouldn't stop asking for a discount.

Another option to attract new clients who have not experienced your massage is to offer them a full 100% money back guarantee. Instead of reducing your value to overcome their first time concerns, offer them all their money back if they are not satisfied with the session. But once again, you can only achieve this if you have confidence in your own work that you are willing to put your income on the line. Instead of sounding arrogant, potential clients will actually find this appealing.

Finally, you also attract first-time buyers without dropping your rates by offering add-on products that don't cost you as much as their perceived value. Massage related items include aromatherapy candles that you can purchase for a lower price at wholesale and offer them as added value items for first timers. But, more on this in the next section.

Having higher value means that you will get the same amount for working less than if you were to work your tail off at discounted rates. Not only will this stunt the growth of your business, but it can also burn you out.

## **Offering a Maintenance Program**

Many massage therapists offer a maintenance program for their clients. In this program, they offer a discount if clients prepay for a package of massages or if they visit a certain number of times each month. This is a good trade-off, since you are bringing value to your business.

First, there is the peace of mind that you have several appointments booked for the near future. Secondly, with the promotional offers, these clients will become repeat clients and that means added income each year.

The cash flow situation also improves if clients are prepaying. For the time being, you are getting venture capital for services you have not yet provided. You can invest this money to grow your business quicker. Hence, offering promotional pricing becomes an opportunity for greater benefits.

**Note:** When offering massage coupons and discounts, note that they can also be an advertising cost. In most cases, you can write them off of your taxes if you keep track, but you need to check this with your accountant. The point is, in the pursuit of winning clients via discounts don't forget the advertising costs as well, which can bring down your short-term earnings more than you calculated.

## Offer Related Products

As a massage therapist, your main source of income will be the actual sessions you take. Even if you have other people working for you at your salon, the bulk of the earnings will be based on client bookings.

While retail items are primarily used to get clients to book more orders with you, or at least refer you in their circles, you can also boost your income by selling these products. These sales can substantially increase your net profit.

Bundle a massage with a special product, like aromatherapy oil or a pain gel, and let the client take home what's not used in the course of the massage. Moreover, in the case of a chair massage where a 10-minute session may not earn you that much per massage, the sale of a product can help you balance the rates. Then clients get something special in the treatment and they get to take something home.





You can sell retail products. These can be purchased at wholesale prices directly from the manufacturers, which you can then sell to the clients at a profit. Many massage therapists shy away from selling to their clients, but you don't need to be bashful about it and it will bring in an additional income stream. You can start by selling products that have direct relevance to your massage therapy practice. Even in this limited niche, you will find a variety of products to sell as add-ons or offer as promotional items, such as aromatherapy candles, essential oils or pain-relieving gels.

Since these products have direct relevance to what they are experiencing on the massage table, they will really want to know about the products, which can make the selling part easier, i.e. if you feel awkward about sales.

If a client had a really wonderful experience, you can get them to take some interest in how they can extend the experience beyond the clinic and take the magic home by purchasing such and such product.

In fact, you can use product sales, instead of the actual massage sessions, as a primary point of bringing clients into your business. If the companies whose products you sell offer marketing support, you can list your spa or clinic as a location where clients who search online can get those products. That way, clients who love shopping nearby may end up at your place to buy the product and this can lead to a massage therapy booking.

Do note that add-on products need not be restricted to essential oils and aromatherapy candles. You can branch out to any product that seems compatible with your business. A great example in this regard is herbal tea. Salons, yoga studios and similar locations often serve tea to clients who are waiting for their turn. You can also offer different varieties of tea free with a massage package. And you can even stock packages on-site and sell them to interested clients. In addition, Pinterest has a LOT of DIY information; you can make a foot scrub or some other spa- or relaxation-related item. It doesn't have to be big or expensive; it just has to be something extra that creates that special experience for your client. You may even decide instead of selling this item to the client, you would give it to them as a thank you gift...again this will be very memorable for the client and separate you from other therapists.

Of course, when you don't have any place to store inventory, you can always sell retail products online. You can offer your website for an affiliate program for a tea/candle/oil company. They will place ads on your website, from there the clients can place orders directly with the company and the therapist gets a percentage of the retail price. This is an effective way of making a profit without investments or having inventory stock on hand.

You can also opt for a pay-per-click (PPC) campaign. This is where a company places its ads on your website and pays you each time a visitor clicks on them. This way you earn money even if the visitor doesn't buy the product. If you choose to pursue this option, be aware that to be successful you must be dedicated to keeping your website up to date. You will also need to work at promoting your website in order to get more visitors.

Do note that since you are also becoming a vendor along with being a massage therapist, make sure that you have all the tools that make buying easy for the clients. These include things like a credit card machine. To make things more convenient for clients, you can even incorporate mobile payment options, such as '[PayPal Here](#)' or '[Square](#)'. These are small devices that plug into the headphone jack of a smartphone and let clients make credit card payments. That way, a lack of cash wouldn't stop them from purchasing products or getting

a message from you. Before embarking on selling products, be sure you have a conversation with your accountant to discuss additional tax implications; i.e., some product sales would require you to file an additional sales tax report.

## Network Marketing

Many therapists have effectively utilized network marketing to bring in another stream of income into their massage therapy practice. Network marketing, also known as Multi-Level Marketing would be comprised of companies like Mary Kay, Tupperware, Avon, Melaleuca, Young Living Essential Oils, Scentsy Candles, Amway, Usana and Advocate. There are literally thousands of these types of companies, many of which have been in business for 20 years or more! Some people have had a negative experience with these types of companies; some have been promised “quick rich results” and that’s that an inaccurate representation of these types of businesses. They also mistakenly call them “pyramid schemes”. In truth, they are not pyramid schemes at all, but instead a business model that works effectively for rewarding those team members who are motivated in helping others. The simple fact is you won’t make any money, if you don’t help other people. The “pyramid” thing comes in, because of the way many of them are structured and people have a misunderstanding about what that really means. But in reality, our entire lives are structured in a pyramid fashion. Our families, typically have someone at the helm, whether that is a father figure or in some cases, a mother figure. Our government certainly uses a pyramid model with the President of the United States being at the top, so does the corporate world with a CEO being at the top, executives, managers and clerical staff being lower in the totem pole.



**“No Thanks! Looks like a Pyramid Scheme!”**

The network marketing business model works, because companies don't pay for traditional advertising. If you think of a huge company like Pepsi, they literally spend millions upon millions of dollars in advertising each year. In network marketing, the company relies on the "networking" and "marketing" from loyal customers, people who have used and love the product enough to want to share with others. Then the company will reward them with a small commission for doing so. When was the last time Pepsi sent you a check because you talked about the newest soda? It doesn't happen! The truth is, that we all do networking and marketing every day! When you visit a new restaurant or see a great movie, what do you do? You tell your friends, get on Facebook or Twitter and post about it. But do those companies reward you for that referral? Not usually. But in network marketing, when you've got a great product that you tell others about, the company will send you a commission check for sharing their product.

The other reason this business model works, is because of the residual nature of the compensation plan. As mentioned previously, you get paid when you help other people. But you also get paid, when those people help other people. When working at a traditional job, you get paid for the hours you work; this is known as "trading your time for dollars." If you work in a spa or even own your own massage therapy practice, you'll get paid when you do massages. But in network marketing, when you get to a certain level, you'll receive residual income. Residual means that you'll get a check each month, whether you work in the business or not. And in the massage therapy industry that can be fraught with ups/downs, this is a very nice thing to have! Being able to rely on a few hundred extra dollars (or extra thousand dollars) per month can be great to fill in the gaps when you have a slow month while doing massages.

As someone who has been in the network marketing industry for over 10 years, I would encourage you to take a serious look at this business model to bring in another revenue stream. Here are some tips for getting started:

- ✓ Find a product that you love and one that can be related to massage therapy. Essential oils are one type of product and I personally use and recommend Young Living. But candles might appeal to you in which case Scentsy might be an option. I think there are even tea and coffee related companies and those might appeal to you. If you're really into health and want to recommend health related products to your clients, you might consider Usana or Advocare or another type of wellness company. If beauty is your thing, perhaps Avon or Mary Kay would appeal to you and your clients.
- ✓ Do your research. There are many great companies out there and then there are those that are not so great. Don't get caught up in the marketing hype; do your research to ensure you're aligning yourself with a great company and that they are sound financially.
- ✓ I personally wouldn't consider a company that is less than 8 years old. Yes, sometimes you can make some great money when you get in on the ground floor of a company, but in my experience those "flash in the pan" type of companies will fade out in a year or two. It is best to stick with a company that has been around for a while and has longevity, as well as leadership that has remained constant.
- ✓ Be sure that whoever is sponsoring you into the company, is going to be a good support system. Support from your team members, is going to be CRITICAL in your success or failure. Making sure you're going to be part of a good team is important so that you have someone who can guide you and train you appropriately.
- ✓ Make sure the company offers great training, both locally in your area and also regionally or nationwide. Most good companies will have local trainings periodically as well as national events 1-4 times a year. If you want to succeed in this industry, training will be important for you. It's also critically important to make sure the company offers good marketing tools for you to ensure your success.

- ✓ Is there a genuine need for the product or service? With many health and wellness companies, there is a LOT of competition. Make sure your company offers something unique that not a lot of others are offering, so that you've got something of value that will appeal to others.

Lastly, it's important that you know that great successful businessmen like Robert Kiyosaki, Donald Trump, Jim Rohn, J. Paul Getty and Warren Buffet all recommend and endorse the network marketing industry as a viable business option. So if you've got a goal of having your own business and want to earn residual income, please consider this powerful industry as part of your business model.

## e-books

Finally, we cannot gloss over the list of promotional items without factoring digital products, and the most popular of these are e-books, which massage therapists can easily integrate on their (or the publisher's) website.

e-Books, in the wide ranging arsenal of electronic products, have amazing potential, both as a stand-alone product and a way to boost business even when distributed as a 'freebie'. Writing and publishing e-books is relatively easier than hiring traditional publishers, but the overall impact on your marketing strategy is significant nonetheless.



e-Books can be as short as 5000 words, equivalent to the average word count of 15 blog posts or articles. Of course, you will have to maintain the necessary flow between different sections of the e-book. But you can keep them short and to the point.

Some suggestions for topics you might consider:

- 'Simple Tips to Reduce Stress'

- ‘How Massage Therapy Affects Employee Productivity’
- ‘How to Improve Muscle Flexibility’

And the list goes on and on. Depending on your practice, these titles will be easy to cover in a concise e-book. In fact, if you have written newspaper/magazine articles and blogs, or given talks at public events, you may already have enough information to consolidate into book form. This can significantly cut down the time it takes to create a digital product.

Of course, since e-books have offered everyone a simple method of getting published online, writers from every nook and cranny are promoting their writing online. This may include some of your massage therapist colleagues as well.

That is why it is ideal that you distribute the e-book for free. This will prompt people to order or download it. Later on, if you want to continue with e-book publishing as part of your massage therapy enterprise, you can start charging money. That way, you will have an added stream of income from your digital products.

But note that even when your first e-book is successful, it is still not a good idea to price your e-books extravagantly. This is true especially if readers can get the same information from elsewhere without paying anything. Hence, since writing is not your primary source of income, giving your e-books as free digital downloads will help boost your popularity with your clientele while you can also venture into new markets.

You see there is something about books that creates trust and builds authority almost immediately. If you have written a couple of thousand words on a topic, people are going to automatically assume that you are an authority in your niche.

## **Promoting Your e-book**

But you have to make sure that the content is topnotch. And please avoid promoting yourself excessively. Of course, the ultimate purpose is to promote yourself but there are right and wrong ways to do it. The right way to do it is using yourself and your business

as an example or illustration to support your content. And when relevant, insert links to your website and also add some contact information along with a CTA for the readers to get in touch with you.

Other ways you can use your e-book for promotion is to include a preview on your website (or the website where you have published it). This can be the cover page or the first few pages or even the preview of each chapter. Then, you can add something like '*Subscribe to our mailing list to get the complete e-book for free*' or '*Sign-up for three massage sessions this month and get this e-book for free*'.

And don't forget to market your e-book outside your website as well. Social media is the platform you should leverage. Share links of the e-book on all your social networking accounts to maximize readership.

## **Special Groups Where You Are Able to Talk or Demonstrate**

If there is a golden rule in networking, it is staying in touch with your clients. And while this principle will be explored in a bit more detail in Section 4, here we will discuss how you can approach your existing clients for networking opportunities.

You see, making contacts and getting new business is your lifeline. And to end all communication with a client after the sale has been made is detrimental to your lifeline. Hence, you should strive to stay in touch with all your clients and nurture those relationships.

A great way to do this is to invite selected contacts to some of the networking events that you attend. This allows you to physically meet your contacts periodically while you are reaping the fruits of intense networking.

When you meet your clients outside your spa or practice, you can in turn ask them if they can help you find networking opportunities in their own communities and workplace. You can even volunteer to give a talk or provide a demonstration at these places.



## Volunteering

As a person who specializes in healing human pain, you, as a massage therapist are the right person to contribute to society in your humble capacity. Yes, a massage therapy session is a treat and a luxury, but in its essence it is a therapeutic science that heals people both physically and psychologically.

The awful reality is that there are many people out there who can't even afford to pay \$20 for 20 minutes of massage. They don't have time and money to spare. But why should they be left out? And while we are still learning about networking, there are greater benefits to be reaped by volunteering as a massage therapist.

If you feel that you need to give back to your community (which you should), you have the perfect set of skills that many organizations in the not-for-profit sector look for. Of course, volunteering at such organizations requires qualifications, experience and professional insurance.

So, whichever organization you approach, do check their requirements and conditions for volunteers. Being a volunteer requires personality skills that you have already been using in your massage therapy business, such as being helpful, adapting, open and accepting.

You can get updates on volunteering events in your area from massage therapy associations like the [American Massage Therapy Association \(AMTA\)](#). However, you will have to be careful to balance your time between your business and volunteering.

Even when you are giving back to the community without earning anything and giving time that you could have used to earn a few extra dollars (in massage therapy time is literally money, since you are virtually earning by the minute), there is a lot you achieve on a personal level.

Think of volunteering as 'quality time' in your professional life. Consider the fact that you get a break from your hectic schedule while you gain new perspectives on your practice

and life in general. Helping others selflessly allows you to transcend the negativities in your own life. It is an overall positive experience.

In fact, volunteering can help you achieve self-actualization as defined by Maslow's hierarchy of needs<sup>21</sup>, where you incorporate human values in your personality. Maslow's hierarchies of needs are in the following order: physiological, safety, love/belonging, esteem and self-actualization. The physiological needs are our basic human needs, such as food to eat or water to drink. Self-actualization is on the other side of the spectrum and involves a person reaching their highest potential in a given area.

Volunteering also takes you back to the basics. The fact that you need to be passionate about what you do in order to make your business successful has been repeated time and time again in this e-book. Well, a great way of finding out whether you still have passion for massage therapy or not is by doing it for free.

If you really enjoy your volunteering experience, congratulate yourself, because being a massage therapist is part of your very being!

Moving on, volunteering also helps massage therapists come out of their 'caves'. Assuming that you work independently, giving your time for a cause allows you to be part of a team, even if only for a few hours.

Speaking of a few hours, the extra time you spend giving massage sessions, you are exposing more and more people to the benefits of massage, reaching non-paying clients and even those who wouldn't link massage therapy to touching human lives on a deeper level.

Moreover, if someone has any inhibitions that massage therapy can only take effect if you are at a spa where there is oriental music and aroma (these do add to the experience), you can demonstrate that massage can work for them in their surroundings as well. This once again increases the number of people who will try out massage therapy this year, and many of them will come to you.

## Track Your Progress/Sales

There are several ways to track the progress of your marketing campaign. First, start by observing how many calls/emails/website hits you get. When you start your massage therapy practice, the *purpose of all your marketing efforts*, be it speaking engagements, getting referrals or paying for online or local ads, is to get that first phone call. And when you get that call, you have to be ready for it.

Be sure you have a consistent notation system to take down essential information. One of the most important components of a successful call is having a rehearsed brief description of your massage therapy business (20 seconds max.), along with answers to questions you anticipate potential clients will ask you.

***Be sure to ask the caller the source of their referral.*** This should not be an afterthought, but an essential ingredient of *every* phone call you take, simply because you have to know how that person found your business.

Of course, some callers naturally start with “*Hi, I just saw your ad online...*” or something like that, but you should write down where exactly how they found you:

- Newspaper
- A seminar that you spoke at
- Referral by a friend or a client (make sure to send that person a Thank You card!)
- Your website
- A Google search (or other search engine...which one?)
- Facebook Ad
- A postcard you mailed them

Why is this necessary? This one simple question lets you know which marketing strategy is working best for your business and which one isn't. You will know which campaigns

are giving you a good return on investment (ROI) so you can resume them while discontinuing the ones that are simply wasting your money.

And last but not least, you can track progress with the revenue earned. First, calculate how much revenue you are currently earning per month. And if you have been in business for a while, review your earnings over the same time period in past months.

Based on these current and historical trends, calculate projected revenue that you expect to make over the duration of your marketing program. Now compare your actual results with your anticipated results and you will see whether marketing has made any noteworthy change in your client base or not.

## **Section 3 – Entrepreneur**

### **Opening Your Own Practice or Spa-What You Need to Know**

This e-book was not written for students of massage therapy. Rather, it is aimed for professional therapists to teach them how they can market their skills to become financially successful. We have covered the marketing aspects of business in-depth in the previous sections. Here we will talk about things you need to know when



you graduate from massage school or leave a full-time job to open your own private practice. Although numerous examples have been given throughout this e-book on how to increase your clientele and your revenue, this section will deal specifically with owning your own massage therapy practice.

### **What It Takes to Be an Entrepreneur**

It is entrepreneurial spirit that is keeping the economy running. When dedicated people finally decide to venture into their own business, most of the time with considerable financial risks, new economic opportunities are created.

However, starting your own massage therapy business is not easy, particularly because there is always an inner conflict where part of you cautions against running your own gig and causes you to focus on the ‘security and stability’ that full-time employment provides.

Ultimately, to start your massage therapy business, you need to prevail over all internal conflicts. However, this does not mean completely ignoring the conflicts raging within you. In fact, paying heed to the different ideas inside your head and bringing them together will help you manage your business better.

So, while the entrepreneurial mindset in you is always looking for new opportunities and seeks to take charge, you need to attune it with the managerial and administrative aspects of your personality.

For example, while exploring new options, like opening another spa or incorporating another style of massage, you also have to deal with the day-to-day tasks of facilitating existing clients, such as maintaining your equipment, replenishing your supplies, and various other tasks while simultaneously keeping things under budget.

The managerial role also includes the ability to root out problems and working with others to find a solution to those problems.

But most importantly, don't forget that unless you are solely operating as manager over your own staff of massage therapists, you will also be assuming the role of an employee, providing massages that keeps bringing in more business. The role of the therapist will often collide with administrative tasks.

One of the first things you'll need to do is to work on estimating what it will cost to start your business. This could be made into an entire e-book all by itself, but we've covered some basics in prior chapters about estimating your expenses. The Small Business Administration has a LOT of free information on their website that can help you to calculate this information.<sup>22</sup>

## Hiring Others

No matter what capacity you are operating in, you may have to hire some people. Maybe you are too busy shifting back and forth between clients that you have no time to look after the administrative tasks or maybe you need someone to follow-up with clients after you are done with marketing and networking.

Even if it is a small area of your business that needs some management, hiring someone can be a great idea, if your business can support the added expense. Of course, this is not easy, for hiring staff involves these important steps:

- Making hiring decisions
- Defining hiring criteria
- Drafting employee policies

To start off, knowing when to hire someone is not rocket science. For the most part, you simply realize the need automatically, whether you are a sole practitioner or owner of a spa.

As stated above, you may be working long hours and you simply are unable to meet the scheduling demands of your clients. If you cut back and turn some people down, you can avoid burnout, but then you will also lose business. Hence, adding staff is a far better idea.

But it is not just the independent massage therapists that may face this problem, for even full-scale spas can experience surging demands that their existing staff is unable to meet. Often therapists are available, but clients demand for a female therapist instead of a male one and sometimes they call for specific modalities, such as Thai massage, which causes even the available employees to miss out on giving massages.

However, hiring is not everyone's cup of tea and it can be a daunting experience if you have never done this before. A helpful option is to call your accountant to help you with the paperwork that is involved in hiring staff. This will relieve you of a significant duty so that you can better focus on the hiring process. You also need to distinguish between employees and independent contractors. Both bring different legal requirements for you as the employer, and each require specific accounting and tax forms.

Once you have made the decision to hire, you have to analyze the structure of your business so you know how many staff members you need to hire and how much to pay them. A great starting point in this regard is estimating what the new employee will be earning from each massage.

If you think you will be earning \$70 per massage, you will have to factor in the total cost of each massage. These include taxes, office space rental, utilities, cost of supplies,

scheduling costs, phone bills and all money spent on customer service. Once you factor in the costs of each massage session, you will be able to determine the pay scale of the new employees you plan to hire.

But then there is an equally, if not more, important determinant: the skill of the new employee. You don't just need another human being on the floor. You need to make sure that the person is skilled, for this is what most contributes to the success of your business, regardless of how busy your schedule is.

Your marketing and networking methods will bring in client after client each day, but what is the point of all the hard work if the therapist you hire isn't skilled enough to retain them in the business? In this scenario, hiring an inexperienced and unskilled employee actually causes you to *lose* business.

In the short-term, hiring a skilled and experienced massage therapist may actually cause a financial problem. This is because these therapists usually demand a pay rate that is above average, which may not seem feasible, as it will lower your net profit.

But in the long run, working with such therapists means low staff turnover and a boost in the quality of your services. The quantity factor will also be dealt with, as that was the reason why the extra therapist was hired in the first place.

### **Matching Expectations**

Even if the employee you hired has all the right qualifications, problems can still arise, especially if the expectations of both parties are not matched. This is why you need to be really thorough in the interview. What is it that you really want the employee to do in the company? When the applicant knows exactly what is expected of them, he/she will be able to judge whether working with you is feasible or not.

For instance, the employee may be an excellent massage therapist with expertise in various modalities. However, he/she may not be good with people. But customer service is of the



utmost importance in your business. This is an example of a conflict that can arise when job requirements are not fully discussed during interviews.

The people you hire are a part of your brand and the existing clientele will look at them as your representatives. So, don't hire staff members whom you can't trust to carry your name forward and represent you in a positive manner.

This is perhaps more important than education and experience. While you will obviously have some minimum requirements for candidates, it is during the interview process, that you will find out whether you want this person to represent you.

References also come in handy. But even more than that, you can learn about a candidate if s/he is part of an organization like AMTA. Check if your applicants are part of a recognized massage therapy organization and also obviously check to ensure their license is in good standing with the state board of massage.

### **Providing Benefits**

If you are just beginning to hire staff, it may not be feasible for you to provide benefits. But in the long run, offering benefits can help you get the cream of massage therapists in your area working for you.

When you offer benefits like health insurance, retirement accounts or paying for continuing education, you will easily increase the response whenever you have a job availability posting in your area. Providing something other than a salary or hourly wage will make you an employer that therapists want to work for.

There are other less expensive ways in which you can make your employees feel good about working for you, which in turn helps with retention. You can, for instance, create a professional and fun environment for your employees, such as organizing quarterly events for the entire team.

## **Drafting Employee Policies**

This follows from the point on stating your expectations clearly from the outset. Once the offer is through, setting up employment policies is helpful for everyone. They clearly inform all your employees what is expected of them without any ambiguity. The policy should include the duties of the employee along with the compensation agreed upon.

**Note:** You should also let your employees know that they are operating ‘at will’. This means you can terminate whenever you deem it is necessary. Of course, laws of termination vary from state to state, so check what your state allows you to exercise in this matter.

If you are responsible for all marketing and bookings, you can introduce a non-competing clause in the policy to protect the interests of your practice. The same goes for enforcing rules about keeping client’s information confidential at all times. Employees should be educated on these policies from the get go.

Other than that, sample things to include in employment policies include spa attire, pay periods, work holidays that your practice observes and parking. As with paperwork and other legalities, consider working with a human resources consultant to put together a professional employee manual that addresses all your needs as an employer.

## **Interviews**

If it is your first time hiring people, it is a great idea to draw on the experience of your first interview if you have worked as an employee before. Of course, this wouldn’t make conducting the interview any easier, but you will gain some familiarity with the process. For a massage therapy job, you can break up the interview into the verbal Q & A along with physical demonstrations. This is where you ask the candidate to provide you with a massage so that you can get a feel for their skills.

Be sure to take some time to research the interview process. Set up some standard questions that you know you would like to ask before conducting the interview. Review those

questions to ensure that they are all legal questions and are relevant to the job. For example, it is illegal to ask a person's age, but it is legal to ask if they are 18 years of age or older.

## **Termination**

Even with the best screening processes, all businesses end up with an employee who has low integrity and a careless attitude toward work. And no matter how patient you are personally, when it comes to your business, there are points where you have to draw the line. In fact, termination should never be on personal grounds (unless in really serious circumstances).

Sometimes, an employee is a nice person, but he/she is not benefiting you from a financial standpoint. This is measured by the satisfaction rate he/she provides to clients, which in turn is gauged by the client retention. If you are toiling day and night to bring in new clients but they are just not making another appointment, you have to ask yourself if the salary or per-massage wage you are giving this employee is worth it. Reaching out to clients to get their feedback would be a good approach here; you really need to understand *why* they are not returning.

A good way to approach termination in this scenario is to be clear on the fact that you have done all things possible to counter the situation, such as offering on-the-job training and clearly instructing the therapist to be friendly with clients.

If the employee is performing up to par, sometimes simply asking them what's wrong and engaging in the ensuing communication can disrupt the behavior that is causing the problem.

Be sure to always monitor your employees and give regular feedback. This also proves crucial in reducing issues that can lead to termination while also offering employees room for growth. If you want to make this more professional, conduct performance evaluations after every quarter, or at least twice a year, where you praise good work and take action

against any negative aspects. Be sure you check with your state's labor organizations to ensure you're following proper termination guidelines, if that becomes necessary.

## Being Your Own Boss

In the preceding paragraphs, we saw that starting your own massage therapy practice involves wearing different hats. When you are your own boss, here is how you can blend together the different aspects of your personality and achieve greater self-management.

To start off, concentrate on your strengths. Do an honest self-evaluation and ask yourself what you do well and in what areas do you lack. Only when you do this will you realize the need for help.

You might realize that you really need an administrative person; someone who is super organized (because this isn't one of your strengths) and who can help with scheduling and following up with prospects and existing clientele. As the massage therapist, perhaps your time is best used doing what you love: massage. So don't be afraid to hire someone who has the strengths that you lack; someone else's strengths are likely your weaknesses and vice versa.

### **Thoughts on Motivation: Pushing Yourself into Self-Employment**

Before closing this section, it is important to touch on an important element that keeps most massage therapists from starting their own business: fear.

Remember the lesson on how clients pay for an emotional benefit rather than going through a rigorous financial analysis before buying a product or service? Well, the same concept holds true for emerging entrepreneurs.

You have all the financial data in front of you. How much you will make in one year, what the average earning potential is in the industry, how many clients you have and so on.

But still there is fear looming at the back of your head. '*What if I fail?*', '*What if I go bankrupt?*', and '*What if I never find a job again?*'

While these are all genuine concerns, fear, for the most part in the business world only leads to forgone opportunities, lack of creativity and you ultimately end up loathing the one thing you love doing and are good at: healing people with massage therapy.

And while prudence is necessary to avoid a financial setback (but there are no guarantees), sometimes the best way to build your business is to push yourself into it.

Fear and stress are biological traits that we have adapted from thousands of years of evolution and these are for our advantage, not to hold us back from progress. And our brains work the sharpest when we are in a fight-or-flight position.

When a person leaves his/her job and starts a small business with minimal savings, *there is no choice* but to build it by all possible means because he/she will starve to death if they don't do so. And this fear will force them to become better with numbers, deliver great massage sessions day in and day out and learn better communication skills when dealing with prospects and clients.

Sometimes, it is just procrastination that exists between our current job and our future as a self-employed massage therapist. While working full-time delivering massages at a popular spa, you will think to yourself: *'I have a fixed income. It's not much, but there is stability. Plus, I also don't have to deal with administrative issues.'*

Just because you don't want to come out of your comfort zone, you are giving up your career as a self-employed massage therapist. There isn't anything wrong with that, but if your aim is to do the latter, then just do it!

## **Section 4 – Other Tips for Success**

### **Getting Clients to Return to You**

#### **The Fortune is in the Follow-Up**

You need to keep track of your past clients and their information in a systematic manner so that you can see which clients haven't shown up or haven't been contacted for a long time. Following up on these clients is necessary. You can send emails or a hand-written note, card or letter. A friendly call is also not a bad idea, and you can even shoot them a message on Facebook or send them a quick text. You can use email marketing to keep in touch via email. Also, you might use the Calendar feature on your phone to put a reminder to yourself to touch base with them in a month or two if you haven't heard from them.

It is a simple fact of life that people are busy. All they need to schedule another appointment is a friendly reminder that you are still there to help them deal with their stressful lives. Ideally, you can inform them about a new discount you are offering or a new technique you've learned. Each point of contact will then become an opportunity to strengthen relations and enhance your recognition among your clientele.

When you stay in touch with clients regularly, you actually make them accustomed to hearing from you at certain times. For instance, if your drill is to call them every 2 months or so, they will come to expect it. This a powerful way to get return business and referrals as you always stay in touch with clients. In fact, if they don't hear from you for long, they may forget about you and go somewhere else – this is never good!

So, don't forget that you have to take the initiative in this scenario—you must stay in touch with them either by phone, text, email reminders or direct mail postcards. This will make an impact on your clients. They will feel that yours is a business that cares for them, which makes them likely to prefer you to the competition. A failure to do so, on the other hand, will cause the clients to leave your business, as they will assume that it doesn't matter to you if they exist or not. Never make your clients feel this way.



The following are some of the most effective ways of getting clients to remember you:

- ‘Thank You’ notes: These can be handed directly to the clients when they leave after a session or you can send them via email, direct mail or even a text.
- Email Marketing Reminders: Create an email list of clients (and even prospective clients as long as you have their permission to send them emails!) you want to stay in touch with and keep them updated on your latest offers, blog articles or new techniques that you’ve learned. [Constant Contact](#) and [Mail Chimp](#) are two great websites that offer email marketing newsletter options. These are exceptional ways to stay in touch with your existing and prospective clients by sending out helpful articles and special announcements related to massage and health.
- Birthday discounts or special announcements for holidays/events
- Free gift incentives for referrals. These can be VERY powerful for getting your clients to refer friends and family to you. Just simply offer your clients an incentive; give them a nice discount or some extra time for every person they refer to you. Happy clients will talk about you to other people and spread the word about your amazing massages! This is very powerful marketing for you and best of all, this word-of-mouth advertising is FREE and while it might take longer to build your business, it is definitely effective.

## Keeping Current

While subscribing to trade publications can help you stay conscious of current industry updates (see below), there are other ways in which you can keep yourself updated as well. This is necessary if you want to stay on top of your game.

You should devote at least an hour everyday to peruse the blogosphere and social media to see what's going on in the lives of your clients, what your competitors are up to, any technology that can affect your industry and news regarding legislation. Secondly, being a member of organizations like AMTA also helps you stay updated on whatever is important for massage therapists.

**Note:** Since you need to be a people person to build your network, also stay in touch with whatever is happening in the world of politics, sports and entertainment so that when you are networking, you can converse with your prospects intelligently about current events.

## Why It's Important to Subscribe to Trade Publications

While mass media publications have a wide readership, it is still important to subscribe to trade publications because they have a targeted readership. More often than not, business marketers simply ignore the fundamental nature of trade magazines as communication tools.

And since all content in trade journals (even the advertisements) is directly related to your industry, following these publications not only helps you stay in touch with what's new in your industry, but also enables you to discover new marketing opportunities.



You can subscribe to the following publications:

- [Massage Magazine](#)
- [Massage Today](#)
- [Massage and Bodywork](#)
- [Massage Therapy Journal](#)



## Beware of Malpractice

One of the top reasons why some people are hesitant to get a massage is due to the physical nature of this service. Inappropriate touching not only will offend your clients, but can also put you at the opposite end of a lawsuit and even land you in jail.

In order to prevent this damaging conduct, you must maintain appropriate boundaries and develop open communication.

Malpractice and/or liability claims are generally categorized into malpractice, criminal or civil. You can be taken to court for unintentional or intentional acts that result in some type of harm to the client.

Also note that this harm also includes nonphysical contact with a client, e.g. inappropriate jokes, crude gestures or demeaning comments about a client's undergarments. Flirtatious behavior also counts.

Apart from a legal factor, there is an ethical principle involved here as well. You see, health care professionals are held to higher standards due to the personal interactive nature of this field. But you have to note that sexual misconduct is the number-one type of claim against massage therapists.

You can avoid any issue in this area by setting up boundaries and maintaining professional conduct. Dress cordially and professionally and keep all greetings formal. Make sure that

your client is properly draped and always give them sufficient time in private to change before and after the massage.

Communication also plays a part here. Listen to your clients attentively and comfort them through a routine professional protocol in treatment procedures. When explaining your treatment plans for the client, make it clear what you are going to do, explaining again what you are doing while doing it and then telling the client what you just did.

Finally, and most importantly, get malpractice insurance to avoid legal troubles for unintentional behavior. A professional membership with the AMTA or other massage related association, will often include liability insurance. You should visit with an attorney to see what insurance products work best in your scenario and location.

## **Conclusion**

There you have it!

Congratulations, for you have just completed the most extensive online guide on marketing for massage therapists. Hopefully you have learned some new things, while timeless lessons from your massage school days would also have been reiterated.

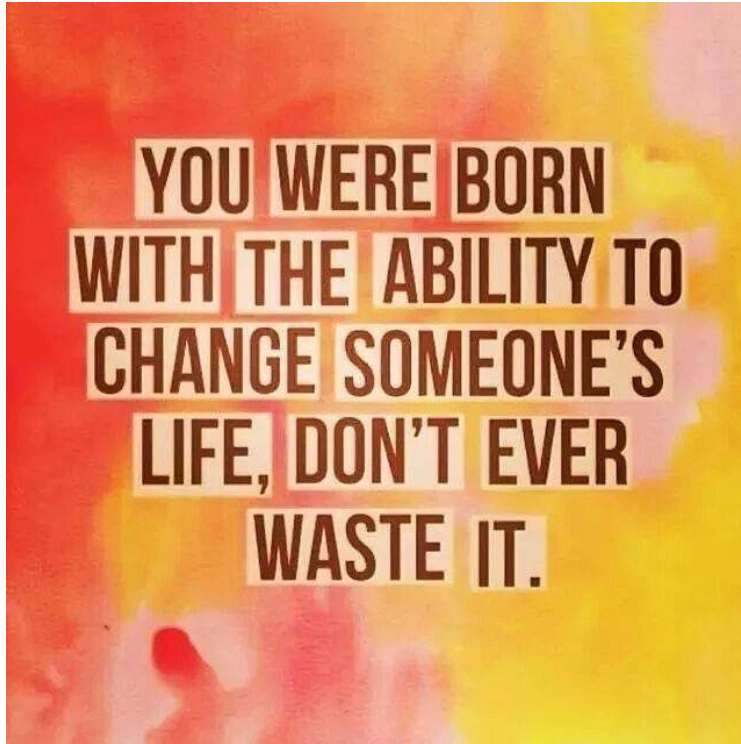
In the end, remember that it is the experience, the vigorous practice of performing massage therapy day in and day out, that will ultimately help you succeed financially. All the tips in this e-book are just a stage to project your true talent.

So, go on and heal the world and earn wealth in the process. Good luck!

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**THANK YOU for taking this e-book class. I hope you found this e-book class to be informative and helpful. I am available to offer support to you, so please don't hesitate to get in contact with me if you have any questions!**





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