

TODAY'S PRIVATE PRACTICE

Marketing and Who You Are

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Don't feel discouraged if marketing your practice seems daunting at first. There are many ways of getting the word out, some of them more naturally suited to who you are and some not. You will want to identify strategies that fit well with who you are. Each of us is unique and will use a different approach.

At the same time, some of us may need to get over our blocks about marketing. Irrational beliefs will impede your progress. One of my coaching clients, a bright and talented psychologist, was struggling to move forward in starting his private practice. He was experiencing fear and reluctance. As we explored the cause for this, we uncovered the irrational belief that he had, which was: "I am not good enough. I am not talented enough as a therapist." Knowing him, this was not true. Together we were able to work on this interference and soon he was taking the steps he needed to effectively build his practice.

At the root of our fears are doubts and negative beliefs about ourselves and the world. These thoughts impede you from operating outside of your comfort zone. They can act to paralyze you. Eliminating any irrational fears you have that weaken your resolve and ability to act is an important step.

See if any of these negative beliefs sound familiar:

- "I'm not good enough."
- "It will never work."
- "That's only true for others, not for me."
- "I can't change."
- "I can't be successful."

Once negative beliefs are identified and dealt with, you will want to find a set of marketing strategies that fits well with who you are. There are many good strategies for marketing a private practice, including direct contact, networking, public speaking, writing, promotional events and advertising.

The suitability of a particular strategy can depend on the situation. Direct contact with potential clients may be an inappropriate strategy for a psychotherapy service. Therefore, it may be good to rely more on networking and referral building. However, it can be a good strategy to use for connecting with referral sources.

The selection of strategies also depends on who you are and your preferences, strengths and abilities. For example, a poor public speaker would do well to focus more on writing and publicity instead. To what are you naturally drawn and what will you actually do? For example, if you are outgoing and enjoy talking to people, choose actions that will get you to networking events. If you choose activities you like or are willing to try, you are more likely to do them.

Utilizing effective strategies may involve getting out of your comfort zone and learning some new skills. This was definitely true for me. I was not highly comfortable or skilled at networking several years ago, but it has become a growth area for me that has helped build my practice significantly.

Get Out of the Office

One mistake I see many practitioners make at the start of their private practice is that they select only passive marketing strategies in finding clients and referral sources. They wait for people to come to them, rather than take a more active approach to go out and meet people.

Marketing strategies can be active or passive. Sometimes our fears of not knowing what to say, appearing foolish or being rejected cause us to gravitate towards passive approaches.

Passive marketing strategies include sending out letters, brochures and newsletters, writing articles and advertising.

Active marketing strategies include attending networking venues and events, calling contacts and leads, meeting people over coffee or lunch and giving presentations to organizations.

Guess which strategies are more effective? While passive marketing strategies have an important place in our practice-building efforts, the active strategies are much more effective.

So, get out of the office!