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7 Steps to Recession Proofing your Natural Therapy Business

BY Lawrence Ellyard

If you are finding it hard to make ends meet in your natural therapy business you may find help is not far away. Industry expert, Lawrence Ellyard who is the author of The Secrets of Spiritual Marketing offers some down to earth advice on marketing your natural therapy business without compromising your values.

Truth be told, most natural therapists are excellent at what they do. They have undertaken all of the training in their chosen field, have spent hours in clinical practice and in many respects they are experts in facilitating their natural health therapy. However, not all is well for the wellness professionals. When it comes to promoting and advertising their natural health therapy practice, most therapists are less than capable of effectively promoting and marketing what they do.

One of the primary reasons why natural therapists lack the ability to effectively promote themselves is simply due to the fact that little or no time is devoted to learning about marketing or advertising, (perhaps a few short units on business practices at best).

It makes sense then that in order to successfully build a practice where we not only bring in new customers and clients but retain our existing clientele that we need to receive an education in achieving this.

Marketing by definition is the art of selling and is defined as being the business of delivering goods (your services) from you (the producer) to the consumer. Spiritual marketing is defined as a way to share what you love to do and be financially supported by providing your services in order to help others.

Whether you like it or not, if you are running a business, no matter what it is, you are in the business of marketing it. No matter what you do, every profession involves helping others solve their problems or offers a service to improve their lives.

Because most natural therapists have little education about advertising and promoting their natural therapy practice, they often look to what everyone else is doing. The result is more advertisements that fail to be effective simply because almost everyone is copying everyone else's badly written and poorly designed ads. The good news is, there is help.

To be successful in your natural health therapy practice you need to solve your clients problems through your experience and training. However, in order for you to help more people, they also need to know you exist.

The opportunities for natural health practitioners to make a living in the wellness industry are better today than ever before and conversely there are many more wellness industry practitioners in practice. This presents a great variety of natural therapy options in the market place for consumers, which also equals greater competition for natural therapists. How will you make your business stand out from the crowd?

The following are seven simple steps you can take right now to help market your natural therapy business.

1. Keep in touch with your existing clientele every 90 days.

When it comes to finding new clients some statistics report that it is ten times harder to obtain a new client than it is to get a repeat purchase from an existing client for your product or service. With this in mind, we can do many things to retain our existing clientele and entice them in many exciting ways to purchase again and again.

Create a database of your existing clients (if you have not done so already) and offer an e newsletter providing news about your services and a special offer to entice your previous customers to come back and do business with you again. You might offer a discount off their next treatment or create a compelling up-sell to an additional treatment or service. Remember to keep track of birthdays or anniversaries of their first treatment and create a compelling offer to bring them back.

2. Provide Excellent Customer Service

You are only as good as your last treatment. To ensure your customers come back and refer new customers to you, make sure you provide an excellent service and give 100% each and every time. We can extend this level of service to promptly replying to calls (if missed) and providing an efficient and friendly service. You may wish to obtain the services of a call centre for any missed calls if you are in a session. Alternatively, work from a clinic where a receptionist receives enquiries for you.

For email enquiries, the faster you can respond the more likely you will be to secure new business over your competition. Remember, your customers are one click away from your competitors websites so ensure you respond quickly to any enquiry and reap the rewards that comes with speedy service.

Remember your clients' name, always thank them for their business and treat them like they are the people who keep you employed, because they are. Bottom line: The Customer is King, or Queen, as the case may be.

3. Ask for Referrals and offer Rewards

Provided you have offered great service, your customers will be happy to refer you. To ensure they do there are several things you should offer. Start by asking. At the end of your session, ask your client what they thought and if they are happy, then ask for them for referrals. Let them know your business is mostly shared by word of mouth and that you'd really appreciate it if they could hand out some of your business cards to friends.

I am a strong advocate for handing out not one but five business cards. It goes without saying that your business cards should have all you contact information and the services and benefits you offer.

You may also wish to add a space on the reverse of your card where it states: Referred by... where the person who refers can write their name. Any referrals that come in as a result of your previous customer sharing your services with others can be recorded and offered as compensation in the form of a small gift; or a discount off their next treatment and, at the very least, an acknowledgement for their referral.

4. Get your brand out there

This simply means having an easily recognizable presence and continuity across all your promotional materials and advertising. You will need a logo which defines your service. This does not necessarily mean it has to be a graphic, a logo can be your business name but written in a stylized form. You will need business cards. You will need a website; your logo on your email signature; signage at the place where you work and perhaps even mobile advertising such as signage on your car.

It makes sense that you should employ the services of a professional graphic designer and web master in order to create a uniform and professional image. Basically, get your

brand in as many mediums as possible and become a recognizable and reliable source that people will come to rely on, know and trust.

5. Create an award winning website

You may be a sole practitioner however, this does not mean you don't need a website. The internet is fast becoming the main avenue where people research services and, unlike display advertising that can cost thousands per month, your website once established can contain unlimited pages of useful information that can convert those who are looking into customers for life.

Ensure you register a website domain (URL) that reflects your business. Make sure your website is content rich, meaning it has interesting articles and news related to the services you offer. Utilize the internet to its fullest and get involved in online social networking; write a Blog, use Twitter; Youtube; Myspace and Google Adwords to name a few.

Create an Online booking form for your customers; register with search engines, make your information user friendly, leave out industry jargon and gain a hunger to learn more.

6. Network your business

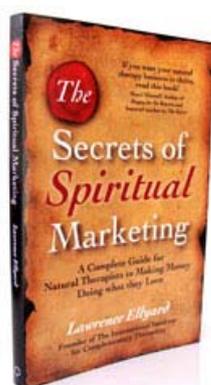
You will be surprised just how many opportunities there are to network your business. Form strategic alliances with other practitioners who are not your direct competitors but have access to networks and are prepared to share your benefits with others. Advertise in e newsletters from other business owners. Try a combined mail-out with other practitioners. Become a sponsor for a major industry event or get a company to become your sponsor. Write articles for industry related publications and alternative health journals. Always carry business cards (I mean everywhere). Let everyone know what you do and most importantly how what you do helps others to solve their problems.

7. Ask for testimonials

Ask your existing clients to give you a testimonial and ensure you have their permission to use these in your promotional materials, on and offline. If you have few existing clients, offer a free treatment to new customers in exchange for a testimonial. Try to receive endorsements from high profile people, such as authors, industry experts and alike.

Testimonials offer great credibility. Remember a person is more likely to try your services if they know others have benefited from your services already.

Of course these seven steps are just the tip of the ice berg in terms of the full scope of Spiritual Marketing. But if you only apply some of these suggestions you will see a measurable change in your natural therapy business for the better.



Lawrence Ellyard is the author of nine books. For more information about The Secrets of Spiritual Marketing, visit: www.spiritualmarketing.com.au