

NYR Leamington Guide to marketing your therapy business.

For therapists, marketing often gets squeezed by competing pressures; time pressure (“I need to maximise my fee earning” there isn’t enough time”), cash pressure (“I can’t afford a website or brochure “), administration, et cetera.

Additionally, marketing is often outside the comfort zone for someone who enters the profession to be a practitioner, not a marketer. But *every* business needs marketing - if you don't reach out to your customers, how will they know you are there? Without allocating sufficient time and resource to marketing, your business **will** fail.

This document gives you some ideas for using marketing to make your business more successful, whether you are starting out or have a more mature business. Remember - you do not need to have a large budget to make marketing work (there are lots of free tools out there) - but you **DO** need time.

Stage one

Before you even start, please allocate sufficient priority to marketing your business. *How much is enough?* For your business to thrive, you should spend a minimum of 30% of your time on marketing activities.

It is helpful to translate this into the number of hours that you will spend on it per week, whether it be one or 20. Then diarise it. Which days are your marketing days? At what time? What will you be doing on those days? Be specific and be disciplined with yourself.

Stage two - planning

Every business, however big or small, needs:

- An objective; where you want your business to get to (quantify and time it)
- Strategies; how you're going to get there.
- Plans; this is the nitty gritty stuff - what you are going to do to deliver the strategies. Your plans should all be smart; specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timed.

It's vitally important to go through this process, as it will help to inform you what it is you need to be doing and why. Without this, your efforts at marketing will have no context, you will have no idea of your priorities or where to focus your energy. This means your efforts will be less effective and even worse, they may well be wasted.

An example of an **objective** would be: *by the end of 2015 my business will turn over £15,000.*

An example of a **strategy**; *I will recruit 15 new clients by August 2015 or I will increase the frequency of repeat bookings to 50% from 25% by July.* So your associated plan might be...?

Your marketing plan does not need to be a huge document, in fact it is a good idea to try and keep it all on one page to keep it concise and easy to refer to (which you should do often!). You may well have a lot of this in place already if so, great! Is it documented? It a

good discipline to record it as you will then have something to check your progress against.

We would suggest that your marketing plan should cover a 12 month period, but you might also want to do this for five or even 10 years to help you shape up a route map for your bigger life goals.

Use numbers!

In setting out your strategies, it helps to get a measure of the size of your task. For example how big is the gap between where you are now and where you want to be? How does this translate into numbers of new clients or hours of treatments per week/Month/year?

By putting things into numbers you can 1) Check that your plans/ambitions are realistic and 2) have something to measure your performance against.

Stage 3 - Strategies

For a therapy business, the strategies are fairly straightforward - put simply your strategies should be based on **fishing** for more clients and **farming** your existing ones.

Both strategies are equally important and you need to keep the marketing engine running on both all the time. If you stop fishing, your business will run out of fuel quite quickly. If you don't farm, you will have to work twice as hard at fishing!

Fishing

To continue the analogy, the further you cast your net the more fish you will catch. But you do need to think in terms of both quantity and quality, and of course the investment.

There are lots of ways of reaching customers, some of which are free and others which cost a fortune!

At one end of the communication scale is **broadcast** activity where a single communication reaches a large audience. This is useful for creating awareness of your offering, but because it's less targeted it is *less effective for generating response*.

In local marketing a radio advert radio ad or a generic leaflet would count as broadcast. Right at the the other end of the scale would be **one-to-one communication** for example talking directly to an individual client or prospect. Of course, you would expect this to have a much higher success rate but it requires much more time and effort to communicate your message.

The important thing to take from this is that there are roles for both but you do need to be really clear on why you are using a technique and what your expectations are in terms of results. For example:

A 'broadcast' communication of 500 generic leaflets outlining your services handed out at a festival might be read by 250 people and of those maybe one or two might book a treatment as a result. Cost £50, Cost per client £25.

A 'targeted' communication of 500 leaflets selling your services with a motivating time-limited bridal offer that you hand out at a wedding fair might be read by 250 people and resulted in 10 bookings. Cost £50, cost per client £5.

So in summary, it is important to be balanced with your plans:

- Balanced between awareness building and response generating
- Balanced between fishing and farming
- Balanced in terms of applying your limited resources of time and money

Look beyond the store

We can provide support in store with marketing materials, distributing your own materials and through our own channels for communicating with customers e.g. our website and email newsletter et cetera, however please recognise that this is a relatively small pool to fish in and it is finished quite hard!

You should absolutely not rely on NYR as you're soul source of new clients, rather you should consider any clients coming via NYR as a bonus on top of your own activities.

Marketing tools to consider using:

- Brochure outlining your services and what makes you different.
- Tactical leaflets
- Your own website - can be free or very low cost.
- Local networking
- Recruiting ambassadors - referrals and recommendations are the most powerful; tool of all!
- Identifying target groups to approach - are there clubs, social groups, other groups you can identify that your services can help?
- Using third-parties to help you reach new customers - Groupon, Living Social, Wahanda - but treat this with caution!
- Listings - make sure you are on all free listings
- Talks and workshops - a good way to showcase what you do to people who are interested.

Farming

Effective farming of your client base can transform your business and is often under exploited by therapists. Look at this example of what happens when you increase visit frequency:

You have 100 clients. 20 clients come monthly, 80 on average every four months. They generate you £1800 per month.

Now you put in place some motivating customer communications and package offers (let's ignore any marketing or offer costs for now).

The pattern changes to:

- five come fortnightly instead of monthly
- 15 come monthly
- 10 come twice monthly instead of every four months
- 70 stay the same

Your income goes up to £2137 per month - up 19%. So you can see that you can afford to spend some money on a motivating offer and still be in credit.

To farm properly you need:

- **a data strategy** - how are you going to capture and store client data in a way that make communication easy for you. What data is important? How will you use it?

At minimum you need name and email information. You may also want to capture birthdays (how about a birthday message offering a special treatment?) and client history - it may be useful to know who your best clients are.

- **a communication strategy** - what are you going to tell your customers and how often, and how are you going to reach them? Remember that they are *your clients*, so you already have a connection with them - if you have interesting things to say they will read it!

We would recommend an *enewsletter* - it is free and you can build and manage it yourself. There are several online providers you can consider - our preferred one is Mailchimp which is free and easy to use, and delivers professional results. You can also use it to hold your database and get useful response info.

You could also add *social media*, (Facebook, Twitter etc..) into the mix for engaging with your clients (and potentially other target people). It's free but can be time consuming relative to the returns you get. The same applies to blogging - but if you love using social media, why not?!

Stage 4 - Measurement

Measurement is vitally important - please ensure that you can measure what you do.

How much are you able and willing to spend on getting a new client? £10, £15, more? Once you know this, you can assess everything you do against it to determine what works and what doesn't. Never find yourself in the position of doing more of the same without knowing whether it works or not.

Finally...

Many people view marketing as a *cost* but it is much more helpful to think of it as an investment. If you make a considered investment, (of both your time and money - its not ALWAYS money!) and if you plan it out properly, you should expect to see a return on that investment.