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Business Basics: Using Newsletters to Build Your Practice

By Jon Lumsden, LMT

Editor's note: Jon Lumsden has created thousands of newsletters for chiropractors, physical therapists and other health care professionals throughout the United States and Canada.

He is now focusing his efforts on creating massage newsletters and expanding his company, Food For Thought Health News. Jon completed a 625-hour program in massage in 1999.

If you intend to build and maintain a viable massage practice, focus your attention on the areas that can help guarantee your success. Your clients are your greatest assets -- taking the time to educate them can pay big dividends through the years.

In helping hundreds of health practitioners promote their services over the last 13 years, I have found that the periodic newsletter is one of the most effective marketing tools available. This article will discuss how sending a newsletter to your clients can help you achieve your practice goals.

Newsletters are perceived as good news, so they are more likely to be read. Surveys have indicated that newsletters are well-received, and one of the most effective ways to stay in touch with your clients. If you have important information to share with your public, why not use the most inviting format? In today's information age, you are competing with a constant deluge of data, so make your message stand out!

The better educated your clients are, the more priority they are inclined to give to your services. Most massage clients have a limited knowledge of the benefits you can provide for them. Through your newsletters, you can raise your clients' understanding and appreciation of the advantages that regular massage offers. By sending regular communications to all your clients, you are planting seeds of knowledge that will develop into business for you.

Send regular reminders that you are there to deliver. Another plus is that newsletters are a great way to remind your clients that you are there to help them. We all know how hectic life is for most people today. There are so many things to accomplish each week -- it's easy for your clients to get distracted and just not get around to booking that next appointment. Each issue that you send to your client base will help keep you at the forefront of their lives.

Additionally, newsletters are wonderful for promoting gift certificate sales or special offers, encouraging referrals, and informing your clients of new developments in your practice (new services, etc.). It ensures that you get valuable, timely information to all your clients in one easy mailing.

Develop a long-term relationship with your clients. As competition grows in the field, doing little extras like sending a newsletter can help to build a loyal following that helps you to achieve a secure practice. It's such an easy way to let all your clients know how important they are to you and how much you really care about them.

Is it cost-effective? You will spend in the neighborhood of 50¢ per newsletter in supplies (paper, copy service, folding, postage, etc.) to create and mail an 8½ x 11 two-sided issue. If you enjoy writing, you can invest a few hours of your time to create each issue; buy professionally prepared issues through a specialized newsletter service; or hire a local typesetter. If you choose not to create your own, you will probably spend an additional \$20 - \$50 per issue to acquire your artwork (the ready-to-print master copy). If you send four to six issues each year, your total outlay per client household will run from two to six dollars annually (based on approximately 100 clients). When you consider that you expect your clients to spend hundreds or even thousands of dollars with you each year, investing a few dollars in developing them into better clients seems a natural choice.

However you proceed, make sure your newsletter presents a professional reflection of your practice. Your periodic publication acts as your representative in your community. Each issue could be passed on to your clients' friends and serve as an introduction to your services, so demand a high-quality presentation. If you choose to write your own, be sure to keep it simple and to the point. Address client interests and focus on the benefits your services provide. Don't try to crowd too much into any one issue -- just share a few ideas each time. Get feedback from some of your positive-minded clients and friends to see if your message and your layout are conveying the image you want.

Make a commitment to your practice by sending your newsletter regularly. When you send your newsletters consistently, you demonstrate to your clients a level of professionalism and commitment that says you are establishing your presence in the community and you can be counted on to be there in the future. Just as consistent massage contributes to a healthier body, consistent communication leads to a stronger practice. Try a series of newsletters in your practice and see for yourself.



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