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Giving Voice

By Keith Eric Grant, PhD, NCTMB

"Excellent teachers are enthusiastic learners. They are risk takers. They use reflection as a means of integrating experience and creating meaning. They give voice to that meaning through their teaching practice.

Most importantly, they listen to and foster the diverse voices of their students. Finding and giving voice is used as a metaphor for learning on the level of understanding. The concept of voice is developed with reference to the performing arts, social science and health care. Finding voice suggests the integration of knowledge experience and personal insight in an authentic manner. Giving voice is the confident expression and sharing of that learning."

- *Gail Hart*⁵

Paradoxically, people move into the practice of massage seeking both independence and interpersonal connection. Independence follows from opportunities within massage to run your own business and be paid directly by your clients. Interpersonal connection follows from working to assist clients in improving their own health and quality of life, and in the opportunities for networking with and offering support to colleagues. In running a successful business, such networking and marketing are essential survival skills.¹⁰ In the arena of networking and professional collaboration, changing technology is rapidly changing our professional world. This column is itself one of the products of such change.

Information can now flow from person to person faster than maple syrup flows on hot pancakes. Where once we were effectively limited to regularly consulting with a handful of other nearby massage practitioners, today we can reach out and instantaneously access the combined knowledge of others from around the world. A number of international and regional email lists, such as Body_Work, bring professional networking possibilities to our fingertips.² Practitioners now have immediate access to a much

greater pool of clinical experience, and a much wider spectrum of educational and ethical viewpoints, than ever before. Tips on marketing, publications of the Internal Revenue Service, and other small business resources are readily available online. I maintain a short list of some of these resources on the McKinnon Institute Web site.^{1,7}

Technology is changing not only what we do, but who we are. For those growing up in the "net generation," those who have never known a world without extensive and mobile communication technology, the hand-held phone and messaging device has literally become an extension of the hand. Especially in Europe, which has preceded the United States in use of short message service (SMS) technology, the ever-present handheld has become the tool for gesturing in person, and for arranging meeting places and times. Its prevalence has literally changed the dexterity of its wielders' thumbs, now used in tandem for quickly entering messages with minimal motion.⁶ For those now entering school, the early experience of multimedia, nonsequential information gathering has changed learning styles and abilities of students to sit comfortably through slow linear presentations, a factor that educators have had to acknowledge in creating courses.^{3,9}

Technology is also rapidly changing the information balance we have with organizations. Traditionally, we received professional information and opinion at periodic conferences and via formally edited printed publications. The backflow of opinion was contained in the much more limited section of letters to the editor. While these downward flows of information are still present, they are now joined by other currents. In the realm of massage governance, state and local agency laws and regulations are increasingly available online. It is relatively easy, albeit a bit time-consuming, to scan agency reports available only in hardcopy and make them available online. Current news reports on massage are a simple search away. Throughout civic life, the advent of Web-based "blogger" pages (derived from the term "Web logger") is stirring up discussion and making resources and opinion available at a fraction of the costs of traditional media.⁸ With the rumblings of massage politics shaking through the soils of California, I also have joined my own blogger pages into this modern journalistic phenomenon.⁴

With many more sources of original information directly available to us, much less has to be accepted on faith. We have more pages to read, and more colleagues to question, than we free minutes in our days. Never before has it been as easy to question and debate until we are confident of our sources. Never before has it been as easy to find our individual voices with which to offer opinions. I urge each of you to use these opportunities to communicate, learn and help shape the world around you.

"The most important step in building support for your one-person business is giving back more than you get. It's not really a matter of keeping track in some kind of accounting ledger. It's more a function of the attitude that you adopt in the way that you treat yourself and those around you. People tend to mirror the way that they are treated. If you show an interest in helping and sharing, those around you will start helping you and sharing more with you. If you empathize with other peoples' situations, they tend to empathize more with yours. If you work with others to solve a problem you have, by sharing information and creating a collaborative solution, they will start including you in their own problem solving efforts. If you give those around you the latitude to solve problems in their own way, rather than telling them how to do it, they will start letting you solve problems in your own way. If you give others factual descriptions of what bothers you, rather than blaming them, they will respect you more and be a great deal less defensive."

- Claude Whitmyer and Salli Rasberry¹⁰

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