



Massage Today

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The Hidden Costs of Purchasing Massage Tables

By Linda Riach

There is an inclination among massage therapists, both experienced and inexperienced, to purchase inexpensive equipment. The reflex to save money on the spot is natural, but can cost you dearly in the end. Too often, with cheap massage tables, you get what you pay for. To avoid the hidden costs of tables, here are some issues to think about to ensure that you get the right table to maximize your practice. After all, aside from one's hands and training, the table is the single most important tool upon which the practitioner's whole livelihood hangs.

Table Use

When purchasing a table, the first question to ask is, "What purpose will the table serve?" Will the table be used only for massages? If so, what type? Or will the table be used to offer other services, as well? If so, you'll want to consider a table with features that support each modality and functionality, such as padding, height adjustability, even a backrest. A less expensive table that is not as accommodating can cause you to incur greater costs, since an unequipped table cannot perform all the functions you will need. The wrong table will create a poor experience for your client and put undue strain on your key business investment - your body. If your table cannot accommodate your usage needs, you will have to purchase a second table, which will add an additional unplanned expense to your practice.

Practitioner Comfort

For the practitioner, a good table can mean the difference between a healthy career and a painfully stunted one. In this case, a "good table" means one that reflects your physical attributes and ergonomically supports your body mechanics, including your height, weight, strength and modality. In other words, you want a table that reflects your physical reality and allows you to service a thriving client list without suffering physical burnout. A well-designed table can turn your day-to-day practice into a lifelong career!

If you are not a sole practitioner, poor table choices can cost you one of your most valued assets - your employees. Ergonomically unfriendly tables can take a toll on your practitioners by creating "wear and tear" on their bodies, making the workplace unbearable, shortening their careers and increasing your turnover rate! Poor-quality tables can lead to ongoing frustration for your massage therapists; it sends the message that you don't care about their comfort or longevity. These factors contribute to costly staff turnover. Don't forget, word-of-mouth is an important marketing tool for a massage business. Employees - past and present - talk.

Client Comfort

One good massage experience is often enough to keep clients coming back, which generates greater, ongoing revenue for you. All it takes is one bad appointment, and you will probably never see that customer again. Well-made, comfortable tables will enhance the massage experience for the client, helping to take it to a whole new level. Ironically, a great table "disappears"; the ergonomics of a great table go unnoticed during a massage and keep the attention on the treatment-where it belongs. Foam quality; table width; getting on and off the table with ease; and bolsters, all contribute significantly to creating client comfort. In short, a great table is the foundation upon which a great massage is built.

High-quality tables positively influence efficacy. In terms of table features and accessories, the right tool for the job can make the difference between helping or hindering a client's health and well-being. A good table, designed with both you and the client in mind, will enhance your therapy and help the client achieve greater wellness.

Safety

While there are reputable companies that manufacture and import tables from overseas, some questionable companies that offer less expensive tables often do so because they have less invested in them: less testing, less design and development, lower-grade materials and lower safety standards. Some of these are manufactured in underdeveloped nations, for low wages, in substandard conditions. Massage therapists that are willing to gamble on safety and table quality are opening themselves up to costly liability, years of potential litigation and a ruined reputation.

Safety is not the place to cut costs for you or your clients! Check with your sales representative about the company's commitment to safety standards, testing and weight-acceptance ratios. Do not underestimate the

reputation, customer service and stability of the manufacturer. Who is going to honor a warranty if the table company goes belly-up? You want a table from a company that will answer your questions and be responsive to your needs. A table is a big investment for anyone, and a good one can last you a lifetime. Reputable table companies should back up any claims they make.

The Life of the Equipment

Better equipment lasts longer. Investing in top-quality equipment designed to last for years will go a long way toward creating goodwill among staff and clients, and generate additional cost savings over the life of the products. While it may be easier to buy less expensive equipment in the short run, in the long run, the high-quality tables cost less and actually pay you back in increased return business. Less expensive tables often have shorter life spans. Further, higher quality tables often come with lifetime guarantees, so you don't have to buy a table twice if you do experience any type of table-related defect or failure.

When considering purchasing a table - in essence, finding the right foundation upon which to build your business - consider all the real and hidden costs. Remember that investing in a table that supports its purpose, your employees and your clients will give you a great return over the life of the table. With that in mind, it is a good idea to resist the urge to save money now, rather than invest in the health of your business over the long term.

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