

How to build and market a successful hypnotherapy practice

by David Botsford

We have all been to hypnotherapy school. We have all learned how to use hypnosis and allied techniques to enable a client to achieve his or her goals. We have all received our certificates. However, one area which is usually touched upon lightly, if at all, in the schools, is marketing, practice building and career development: how to get real people in the real world to hand over their money to you in return for your services.

Yet this is the most essential knowledge any of us can possess. The hypnotherapist can have all the ability, skill, knowledge and dedication in the world, but without the knowledge of how to get paying clients through the door, his or her career will be a short one. Indeed, some 85 percent of people who set up as hypnotherapists in the UK are out of the field within twelve months because they do not get enough clients to make it pay. That is a tragic waste of potential. The remaining fifteen percent who do survive their first year usually have to “re-invent the wheel”, finding out what works and what does not by a process of trial and error. That process is long drawn out, often frustrating, and - usually - expensive in terms of money wasted on such outlets as paid advertising and fancy colour printing.

Many capable, knowledgeable and dedicated hypnotherapists with the real power to help people are just about scraping by month to month. If they had a systematic, proven marketing plan - and the commitment to put into practice and see it through - their incomes could increase dramatically.

It is essential to know how to build a successful one-to-one hypnotherapy practice. However, even when you have built a fairly regular one-to-one practice, you can become “the victim of your own success”. The more effective and faster you become at enabling your clients to achieve their goals, the quicker you lose them. When you enable a client to successfully stop smoking, or overcome fear of flying, or manage stress, or lose weight, in one or two sessions, that client has no need to come back to you. So you have to go out and promote your services from scratch to a brand new set of potential clients. Anyone in business will tell you that it takes at least five times as much effort and cost to acquire, and sell to, a new customer as it does to sell to existing satisfied customers who have already bought from you. (Whether you like the fact or not, you are in law and in practice just as much a business as a car dealer, a pizza delivery service, or a “one-armed bandit” slot-machine hall.)

The hypnotherapist seeking maximum financial success must go beyond one-to-one therapy to the more lucrative areas where large sums of money can be made - and indeed are being made by a few hypnotherapists. These hypnotherapists possess nothing you do not already have within yourself. You probably have as much knowledge and skill as they do. If not, then continuous study and practice can make you just as informed and skilful as them, perhaps more so. Nor did they necessarily start out with a lot of money. Indeed, starting out in hypnotherapy by committing large sums of cash can actually be counter-productive. The new hypnotherapist with significant capital is often tempted to pour vast sums into the black hole of paid advertising, rather than commit to the proven

methods which involve a lot of work, and can take time to pay off, but cost little in terms of financial outlay.

These areas include:

- producing and selling your own information products (books, CDs and DVDs);
- running self-hypnosis workshops, either general or on a specific subject (such as weight control, emotional well-being, or past-life regression);
- giving talks to local groups (where you can sell products and sign people up for workshops);
- and providing corporate training for companies (such as stress management and smoking cessation).

These “spin-offs” not only bring in increased revenue themselves, they also result in a stream of new clients seeking one-to-one therapy with you. Those relatively few hypnotherapists who are consistently and repeatedly doing these “spin-offs” enjoy much higher incomes, and have more one-to-one clients, than those who restrict themselves to merely seeking individual clients. However, when you go beyond one-to-one and start producing your own products and events, it does take considerable work to reach the people who could benefit from them. You have to know precisely the steps to take in order to achieve success in these areas – and how to ensure that every penny you spend gets you the maximum possible financial return.

Here are ten guidelines on how to market your practice to get paying clients through the door, and then move beyond one-to-one therapy towards those projects which bring you long-term financial success.

1. You must be very good at getting real results for real people in the real world.

Every hypnotherapist stands or falls on the results he or she gains in enabling clients to attain the goals they desire. The client who comes to you to overcome fear of flying must actually – in the real world – walk onto the plane on his or her next flight and enjoy that experience. The client who wants to lose weight must actually – in the real world – change his or her eating and exercise habits and become slimmer. The client who wants to become a non-smoker must actually stop smoking – and stay stopped. And so on. It is not enough that clients feel relaxed, good about themselves and optimistic about the future – valuable though those feelings certainly are. They must also experience the positive transformation they are seeking in daily life. It is the hypnotherapist’s responsibility to become as effective as possible in enabling clients to achieve that transformation.

Therefore the effective hypnotherapist cultivates an attitude of continuously improving, tweaking, honing and working on techniques with clients, always seeking to optimise the success of the outcomes they desire. Initial training at hypnotherapy school,

essential as it is, is merely the foundation-stone for the development of effective hypnotherapy.

After each session with a client, ask yourself: how could the therapy be adjusted to connect even more powerfully with the client's experience? How could it be sped up? How can I best educate the client with techniques he or she can use in everyday life in order to maintain the desired goal?

My education in hypnotherapy began after the end of my training. This is not to denigrate my teachers – far from it. It merely points out that there is a great deal to be learned after qualifying. Since then, I have attended countless seminars and other hypnotherapy events, watched videos, listened to CDs and read countless books. Informative as they have been, the most valuable education has come from clients themselves. By closely observing and listening to them, and by discussing with them what approaches connect most powerfully with their experiences and help them achieve their goals most effectively, they have taught me far more than any course, book, CD or video. This continuous interaction with clients has led me to modify my approach to hypnotherapy greatly from the way I was originally taught. With what might be called “classic” hypnotherapy, the therapist induces trance, tells the client's unconscious mind what to do and then awakens the client, with the expectation that he or she will go out and the positive outcome will have been achieved. Yet I soon found that the results from such an approach are too haphazard and unreliable for my liking – or my clients'.

So I started to incorporate a number of powerful techniques which give the client control over both conscious and unconscious experiences in order to be prepared for any and every situation after the therapy session. These include self-hypnosis, cognitive self-talk, sub-modalities and other NLP concepts, and yogic methods. Also, I learned to make the session into a continuous dialogue between the client and myself, listening to what the client says and constantly adjusting the therapy to ensure its effectiveness. Thus the therapy became simpler for the client to deal with, faster, and more closely connected to his or her individual experience and goals. I learned that in a situation where the client's actual experience says one thing and what is taught in a hypnotherapy course or book says another, work with the client's experience, not what the course or book says “should” be happening.

In the teaching of music, a good teacher will point out the student's weakest points and urge the student to practice and work on them so hard that they are turned into the student's strongest points. It is the same with hypnotherapy. If a hypnotherapist's work has room for improvement in some area, then the thing to do is actively work on it: examine the session and techniques used, study the books and other materials, sharpen the approach and practise until that improvement has been achieved.

In order to successfully market your services, you must have excellent services to market.

2. Your marketing must address the existing wants of potential clients, educating them as to how hypnotherapy can help them

Your potential clients – like everybody else – are permanently tuned to the radio station WII-FM - What's In It For Me? People are mostly interested in – and willing to spend money on – things that benefit themselves. Your potential clients already have the

desire to lose weight, control pain, stop smoking, manage stress, improve their sporting performance, achieve personal fulfilment, or whatever. They have plenty of choices other than hypnotherapy as ways of attaining that same desire. They have probably not considered hypnotherapy as a means of achieving that desire. They think about coming to see you only when they hear someone talk about you, or see your promotional materials or an article by or about you, or hear you speak. Your task in marketing is to move them from “thinking about it” to booking an appointment and paying you money.

In order to do that, you must educate them as to how hypnotherapy can enable them to achieve their desires, and why they should choose you in particular. So focus the main thrust of your marketing on meeting the potential client where he or she is. Discuss the realities of his or her experience in an informed, factual way, which the client recognises as true from real life. Talk about the client’s existing goals, and only then explain how hypnotherapy can achieve those goals. Describe how hypnotherapy can enable them to become slimmer, gain bodily comfort, manage stress, pass exams, become non-smokers, and so on. Communicate in terms potential clients can believe and understand. Provide your phone number, e-mail address and website and encourage the potential client to contact you, whether to book an appointment, buy a product or enrol for a workshop. Make it as simple as possible to contact you and buy from you.

3. It’s always easier to write a cheque

Paid advertising is the most expensive and least effective way of getting clients. Advertising salespeople claim that you just need to write them a cheque and paying clients will trample each other over in the rush to see you. Rubbish. Paid advertising is more efficient than any incinerator as a means of burning through money. When your advertisement appears, you usually get more sales calls from advertising salespeople than from potential clients. People are so deluged by the ever-increasing flood of commercial messages that they are unlikely to notice yours. Even if they do see it, people generally disbelieve paid advertising and distrust advertisers. They have no way of differentiating you from the numerous other hypnotherapists advertising in the same place. Even if people see your ad and are convinced to choose hypnotherapy, they will often then “shop around” to see who provides it locally at the lowest price. So you pay for the advertising and the cheapest hypnotherapist in town gets the clients.

The effective ways of getting clients, selling products and signing people up for events involve little or no financial outlay on your part – but they do require a fair amount of work. They can take time to develop and sell before you see significant financial returns. It takes a considerable amount of time and effort, and a certain amount of money to produce your own products – books, CDs and DVDs – but in the medium to long run they can make you a fortune. Apart from the revenue they bring you from sales, products increase your credibility and get you new clients from people who have benefited from them. If you become an effective public speaker, there are countless groups who want to hear what you have to say – and you can make good money from selling your products at the back of the room and signing people up to events, as well as getting one-to-one clients with no financial outlay on your part.

4. Have a strategic marketing plan right from the start

The more specific, detailed and concrete is your conception of where your career is headed, the more certainly will it be realised, and the more money you will make. In the early stages of your career, work hard at building up a one-to-one practice. At the same time, lay the groundwork for the longer-term projects that bring you greater financial rewards: public speaking, products, group events and services to the corporate market. Develop a realistic, definite plan as to where you want to be a year from now, five years from now and ten years from now. Start taking the actions which make that future a reality. Develop your own self-hypnosis routine in which you visualise, feel, affirm and future-pace that future so that it becomes an inner reality in your unconscious mind. By working on specific plans and making them happen, you are using your time as productively as possible. Most hypnotherapists – certainly those in the early years of practice – have quiet times when the phone doesn't ring. When you have specific goals to work for – producing products, writing articles and press releases, arranging speaking engagements, promoting events and setting up corporate training – you are using every hour productively and profitably, whether individual clients are coming in or not. Successful hypnotherapists always take a pro-active approach. They never passively wait for clients or anybody else to contact them.

5. Be a unique individual, not a commodity.

Every hypnotherapist has something unique to offer the world. Your life experiences, your enthusiasms, your insights can be applied to your work so that what you offer your clients, and those who hear you speak and buy your products, differentiates you from every other therapist. Once you have mastered what others have taught you, through courses, books, CDs and DVDs, think what you can do to put your own stamp on your therapy. Develop your own techniques based on your own insights, knowledge, experience, enthusiasms and beliefs. They will be all the more effective because they are coming authentically from their inventor.

Also, consider which issue that hypnotherapy addresses that interests you most. What area are you particularly inspired by? It could be pain control, mind-body healing, working with children, sports hypnosis, past-life regression or something else. A good strategy is to become a real expert on that particular area. Read the literature on the subject written by others who have studied it (not just hypnotherapists) and become as well informed as you can. Attend workshops, lectures and other events on the theme – again, not just those organised by hypnotherapists. I have learned a vast amount which I have incorporated into my practice by reading books and attending events which do not even mention hypnosis.

Then develop your own way of dealing with the issue, combining what you know about hypnotherapy and allied techniques with what you have learned from your studies. On a basis of real knowledge and understanding of the issue, you can be bold, innovative and confident in developing and promoting your unique approach. The chances are that you are as good as – possibly better than – any hypnotherapist dealing with the same issue. Write articles, reports or - better still - a book on that particular subject, describing your unique perspective on that issue. Give talks on it to interested groups – and have

those talks recorded and put on CD. While giving a talk, take the opportunity to listen to those attending and learn from them. You are likely to learn as much from them as they will from you.

Thus you can become the hypnotherapist of choice in your region – possibly nationally – whom people flock to visit because of your expertise in that particular issue. Many hypnotherapists have built highly lucrative practices by this method.

Conversely, place little reliance on those forms of marketing where you come across as one hypnotherapist among many. Examples include the Yellow Pages, yell.com and other Internet listings, the hard-copy directories found in public libraries, and press advertising where several hypnotherapists place ads next to each other. The potential client searching through these listings has no way of distinguishing you from the others, and will usually choose – if at all – based on price. Selling on the basis of low price – a “race to the bottom” – is the worst thing you can do, both for your clients and yourself. “You sell on price, you die on price.”

6. Go out and approach the people who could send you clients.

Many people in your area could benefit from your services. These people are already in touch with institutions which could refer you – if you can convince those institutions of the value of what you offer. The obvious examples are doctors’ and dentists’ surgeries, hospitals, pharmacies and other conventional medicine establishments. With them, your best bet is to go in offering your smoking cessation services. But you have to be highly effective at actually getting smokers to quit in order to build credibility with health professionals. You might be interested to know that the Home Study Version of the Smoking Cessation Mastery Seminar is now available. More information is at www.selfhypnosiscd.co.uk/seminar

Also, think what services you could offer to existing customers of businesses and other institutions in your area. Driving schools could make your services available to nervous students. Local training colleges, and particularly schools of law, accountancy and medicine, could inform their students about how you can help them memorise a mass of material and overcome exam nerves. Boutiques selling maternity dresses could offer your smoking cessation services to expectant mothers who want to quit smoking. Travel agents and local airports could let nervous flyers know that you can enable them to fly with calmness and confidence. People visiting golf courses, gyms, tennis courts and other sports facilities could be interested in how you can improve their sports performance. Use your imagination and you will think of numerous other examples. You must ensure that you can indeed achieve excellent results in these areas – and then go out and approach the establishments concerned. Many – perhaps most – will not be interested. You might experience rudeness or hostility here and there on making your pitch. But once you have found those who are interested, work hard to achieve successful results for the clients those places do refer. Where appropriate, you can work out a commission system where the establishment gets a proportion of every fee as an incentive to keep referring.

7. Learn to use the press and media

By effectively using the local media, you can become a local mini-celebrity whom everybody in your town or district associates with hypnotherapy. The local press and broadcasting want local news, or a local angle on a national event. If you can provide them with what they want, you can get excellent local newspaper and magazine write-ups, and radio and television appearances. An obvious example is the annual National No Smoking Day. If you run a group smoking cessation event on that day, you are very likely to get good local media coverage. Any time some other issue you deal with hits the national news (such as a health scare about over-eating, or a rise in the rate of stress or depression), you can contact your local media and either have your own article published or get them to write about you, or both. You have to establish contact with the relevant journalists. It is helpful if you can prove your credibility in some way (for example, by having produced some writing or a CD on the relevant subject).

You can let the local press know when you are giving a talk to a local group, and often they will print it as a news item. Not only will such publicity bring you new clients, you can also build up a portfolio of publicity – both articles you have written and coverage the press has written about you – which further increases your credibility.

8. As soon as possible, go beyond one-to-one therapy to running groups and providing corporate training

One-to-one therapy is where you learn to be an excellent hypnotherapist. That is where you discover what works and what does not, and develop your skill to its zenith. However, it has limitations if you depend on it for your livelihood. Some clients book an appointment and do not show up. Others give you rubber cheques or invalid credit cards. There are usually several quiet months in the year. Occasionally the media promotes some absurd scare story about hypnosis that kills business for several weeks. So you have to go beyond one-to-one therapy to the more reliable and lucrative sources of income.

You can organise a group, either to learn general self-hypnosis or to deal with, say, weight loss or depression or past-life regression. It has obvious financial advantages over one-to-one therapy. If an individual client books an appointment and does not show up, the session does not happen and you take no money. On the other hand, if you organise a group, then if five people enrol and three do not show up, you still have an event with the remaining two, and still take some money. The larger the group, the more money you get. So financially it is much better for you than one-to-one therapy. However, you do have to work hard, produce excellent publicity and actively promote your group in order to get people to sign up for it. And of course you have to ensure that everyone attending the event perceives it as value for money. You must learn how to harness the power of group dynamics and use that to maximise the effectiveness of the event for those participating.

The largest financial rewards come from providing training to the corporate world – stress management, smoking cessation and perhaps sales training and general management communication skills. It can be a hard market to crack. There is also the problem of slow payers. Some corporate trainers have to do as much work in hassling companies for payment as they put into the training. There have even been cases where

companies have gone bankrupt and left the trainers completely unpaid. So it is not always a bed of roses.

If you already had an extensive career in a particular field before you entered hypnotherapy – say, banking, or retailing, or the emergency services – then your experience and knowledge stands you in good stead in providing training to companies in that industry. You know at first hand the problems faced by people in that line of work and how to solve them. You can “speak their language” both in selling your services and in the actual provision of the training. By focusing on one particular industry in which you have experience, you can position yourself as the local expert in corporate training for that field. Provided that you are providing excellent training which really meets the employees’ needs, you only need one massive nation-wide company – such as a clearing bank or retail chain store – to be set up for life. The biggest companies have a constant intake of new staff who can benefit from your services.

9. Create quality products at a low cost and high profit margin

You already know a great deal about how people can improve their lives through hypnotic and allied techniques. By putting that knowledge down on paper in the form of a book (or at least a booklet or ring binder), on CD and maybe also on DVD, you are turning your service into a product. That product can potentially make you a fortune. Through your Internet website, you can reach people all around the world who want to stop smoking, lose weight, manage stress, and so on, but who could not possibly visit you for a one-to-one hypnotherapy session. You go beyond merely receiving *active* income to creating *passive* income. *Active* income is where you have to physically be there and do the work – for instance in one-to-one therapy – in order to get paid. *Passive* income is where you are making money 24 hours a day, seven days a week, without having to physically be there, even while sleeping. Believe me, it is a great feeling to wake up in the morning, check the e-mails and find that you’ve made £200 while you were asleep!

You can make quality products for a modest financial outlay – but they do require a fair amount of work to do well. Once you have them, they are yours for life and will never become obsolete. As long as I live there will be people who want to stop smoking, lose weight, overcome pain and depression, manage stress and maintain their health – and I have CD sets they can buy to achieve those goals. Apart from the revenue derived from them, the fact that I have produced them increases my credibility in dealing with clients in one-to-one, group or corporate therapy. People I have not previously met, but who have bought a CD set, call me out of the blue and become one-to-one clients.

10. Give talks to groups

The single most effective marketing technique is the art of effective, informative and entertaining public speaking. There are literally dozens of groups in your region who regularly need speakers. There are services clubs (including Rotary, Round Table, Women’s Institute and Chambers of Commerce), business and psychic/holistic trade fairs, and local groups specific to your area, all of which seek outside speakers to address them. If you can give an interesting, well-informed talk on hypnosis – or, even better, on a specific field such as weight loss or stress management or pain control that particularly

interests that group – and you can involve your audience with demonstrations – you can become the leading hypnotherapist in your local area. You can sell products, get individual clients and sign people up to your courses. Best of all, you get the undivided attention for the duration of your talk of decision makers from local businesses and professional practices who could benefit from your corporate training services. And given the difficulties in reaching such individuals through regular commercial selling methods, that is a very enviable position to be in! There is no better way of reaching the corporate market than through giving such talks.

When you give talks to groups, and people are inspired by what you say and want to take advantage of your services, you become the therapist of choice. Those in the audience are hardly likely to look in the Yellow Pages for a cheaper alternative – unless they're the sort of cheapskates you don't want as clients anyway.

These, then, are ten ways to market and build a successful hypnotherapy practice.

If you would like to achieve maximum success in 2008 and beyond with individual, group and corporate smoking cessation through hypnotherapy, you might be interested in the Home Study Version of the Smoking Cessation Mastery Seminar. This “seminar in a box” consists of eight broadcast-quality DVDs with menus, three audio CDs and a CD-Rom containing the PowerPoint slides for your presentations and seminars, together with over 300 pages of written material. The seminar covers every aspect of hypnotherapy for smoking cessation, and includes four complete live smoking cessation sessions with actual smokers wanting to quit.

The Home Study Version of the Smoking Cessation Mastery Seminar will cost £497 after 30th September 2008. Until then, however it is available for only £397. It includes a 100% money-back guarantee for 12 months. At any time up to a year after the date of purchase, it may be returned for a prompt and courteous refund.

If you would like to order the Home Study Version of the Smoking Cessation Mastery Seminar, or would like more information, please visit www.selfhypnosiscd.co.uk/seminar or send an e-mail to sales@selfhypnosiscd.co.uk

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