

Seven Steps to Grow Your Practice at Little to No Expense

The costs of marketing your practice can certainly add up, and therapists typically feel uncertain about how to approach this challenge. Here are some methods you can choose from to build your practice. All are time-honored approaches that have been successfully employed by business owners in other fields. Whether you're just starting out or want to grow your client base, this list of reliable approaches will involve minimal cash outlay.

1. Establish the value of your work

Exactly how do you help people? In order to promote your practice, you'll need to describe the tangible value of your work, so that you and your clients feel convinced of it.

What should clients expect when they come in for an initial visit? What can you explain about your methods and style so they know whether you're a good fit for them?

What results can people anticipate when they complete a series of sessions with you?

Once you're able to articulate the answers to these questions, you'll probably find you can easily engage callers who are looking into your services.

2. Practice an elevator speech

This classic exercise is well-known in the business world. Imagine explaining your work to a stranger in the time it takes to travel a few floors on an elevator. Go beyond, "I'm a therapist" or "I help teens and families." Rehearse this brief speech in your mind and write it down several times. What types of clients would you like to serve? Explain what you'll help them accomplish.

3. Network with colleagues

Seek out other professionals you'd like to get acquainted with. You may feel shy; start with one person you already know or a friend of a friend. Be prepared to let them know what you've been up to and why you got in touch with them. Find out how you can help the other person too. As you hear about the practices of other therapists, you'll learn about the differences among your peers and develop a sense of which clients are a match for each colleague for future referrals.

4. Track your referral sources

As clients contact you, identify where they got your name. Figuring out the source of your referrals will show you the results of your marketing efforts and identify which activities have been most effective.

5. Thank you notes

Sending a “thank you” sounds so very simple, perhaps trivial. However as hand-written notes become increasingly rare, they help you stand out and remind people you are a resource. Leaving a phone message or sending a card when you receive a client referral from a colleague will reinforce the connection between you and the other professional.

6. Client summaries to referral sources

Doctors serve a high volume of patients daily, and a positive relationship with even one physician group could go a long way toward filling your practice. Few therapists successfully connect with primary care doctors and relevant specialists, yet most of us overlook the obvious; our clients typically see at least one doctor, and with proper permission you have a valid clinical reason to correspond with their physician. Sending a written summary of your client’s care to doctors will probably soon become a routine practice expected of all therapists and counselors, but why wait?

7. Write or tell of your expertise

Writing an article or composing a talk for a small group is one of the best ways to spread the word about your ability to help. Preparing a presentation or crafting a written piece will definitely take an investment of time but once you’ve accomplished a task like this, you’ll feel increased clarity and confidence about your work. This will strengthen your ability to comfortably tell people about your services and find the clients who are the right match for you.

These methodical and time-tested ways of developing a practice are not necessarily complex, yet many therapists find they are tough to carry out. If you find you need support or more detail on how to put these ideas to work for you, I invite you to talk with me during a free 20 minute Practice Advising session. Just email createyourprivatepractice@gmail.com to plan a time.