

"Marketing Therapy: Stop Sabotaging your Marketing"

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By Allison Bliss

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As a CEO or business owner, have you ever felt like your mind was going in circles when trying to decide what you should do next to grow your business? Have you agonized over how to get more business, express your value, minimize your risks, and realize your dreams? Then it's time for what I like to call "marketing therapy". This process will help you unlock the issues that are holding your marketing strategies back, so you can achieve success and make more cash ... even during this bedraggled economy.

WHAT ARE THE COMMON ISSUES?

Common issues relating to marketing include a fear of rejection - this is most common when you're conducting sales. After a company has been in business for 15-20 years, the issue of burnout and complacency often arises. You know you're stuck when you never can seem to find the time to unleash that marketing strategy you'd planned which, of course, is the issue of procrastination--the queen of issues for so many of us! "Marketing therapy" resolves the core issue underlying that procrastination. Often it surfaces as a marketing strategy that really isn't a good fit for your particular business or skills. Sometimes you just need that step-by-step knowledge required to take action.

Conversely, the fear of success, or of growing too fast, typically comes from the overwhelming worry that you'll have to work even more hours than you're already cramming into each day. There's another surprisingly common issue (to which women, in particular, often fall victim) - that of feeling like a fraud, or that you really "don't know what you're doing, and they'll find out soon."

If you're a business owner with 10+ employees, you'll often begin to feel 'disassociated' with your company, since you're spending more time managing your employees, payroll, and systems rather than focusing on the beloved product or service that prompted you to launch your business in the first place. Depending on the size of your business or organization, and the length of time you've been in business, the issues will be different. Even non-profit Executive Directors experience a kind of 'dependency' issue feeling torn between their obligation to their programs, members, and funders while simultaneously being answerable to their Board of Directors--or feeling let down by their Board's lack of help.

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FIND ME SOME BETTER CLIENTS

Often, your perception (as a business owner or CEO) is that your marketing strategies or promotional materials aren't working, when the underlying cause is actually some unresolved issue. Sure, the strategies or communications may not be strong enough to ensure company growth in this depressed economy. But it's crucial to ensure that underlying issues aren't crippling the good marketing that you're doing. That's exactly how our services help.

For example, lately I have had many companies ask for help in finding "better" clients, rather than "more" clients or revenues. Frequently, this request is a signal that the CEO and/or the company's employees are not enjoying their work with customers, or that the customers (or clients) are feeling unsatisfied, anxious, or are difficult to please.

When we analyze the business, our team of designers, writers, researchers, and strategists often uncover a basic issue with communications. Quite often the clients are not being kept in the loop, making them feel that they have no "control." This, in turn, creates an undercurrent of negativity that revolves around how the CEO and employees discuss clients' projects, how they communicate with clients, and the fact that maybe the client is simply a bad fit for that company. It's a vicious cycle, and becomes even more so over time.

HOW CAN A COMPANY SOLVE THIS ISSUE?

First, we recommend a communications evaluation. It starts with an impartial review of how a project was sold, what was communicated & promoted, what sales discussions were held with the client, how estimates were prepared, and what interactions took place, from inception to completion. As someone who is not ingrained in the company's business processes, a marketing expert or consultant can easily see at what level the issue or misfit is occurring, so that it can be resolved. Some typical options are to:

- Establish project tracking forms that communicate regularly with the client on the progress of each project.

- Remove the negative undercurrent of distrusting clients from all promotions, estimates, sales, employee beliefs, and communications. Spend time up front getting to know what your clients expect, as well as their visions and goals. You'll all enjoy each project much more along the way.

- Revamp your marketing strategies to reach out to a clientele you will enjoy, be challenged by, respect, meet your goals with - whether those are financial or creative goals - and who will really appreciate what you offer. So many subliminally negative marketing communication issues are rooted in CEOs or employees not feeling appreciated for their work. (Note: to resolve these issues, see item on "client surveys" below)

- Retool your promotions to ensure you are communicating authentically with the clients you want to attract.

- Establish client surveys throughout the duration of a lengthy project, or at the end of shorter projects, to ensure you're meeting your clients' needs, and that everyone is satisfied. Be sure to review these with your employees, too! Allison Bliss Consulting has an unbiased, third party exit interview process that powerfully strengthens your positioning at the same time.

"GEE, I DON'T HAVE ANY MARKETING ISSUES?"

We all have issues with our businesses. In fact, I've never met a company that didn't. I believe that if your company doesn't have some kind of issue, then you're not trying hard enough! I have a real

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compassion for this situation, because I know we all get buried in issues that we can't see ourselves, yet they require help. Just as therapists cannot conduct therapy on themselves, we business owners need an outside, objective viewpoint, too. That's exactly why I believe it is critical to work this 'marketing therapy' into any strategic marketing campaign.

Of course, you won't have to sit on a couch and analyze childhood issues - it's not a psychotherapy session that is required. But, if together your consultant and you can uncover what struggles your company has, and dig out any issues that might be holding you back, it's possible to discover some powerful methods for harnessing your company's strengths, your employees' contributions, innate wisdom, and resources, and for getting the best results, period. It's rooted in your own innate intelligence as the company's founder, which sometimes gets bogged down by your day-to-day operations, by rusty marketing that isn't producing results, or by issues buried beneath the surface of your management structure. When you, as the owner of the business, simply "feel" that something isn't on track, it's exactly the right time for this marketing therapy/strategy tune-up.

HOW CAN YOU OVERCOME THE FEAR OF REJECTION THAT SALESPEOPLE POTENTIALLY FACE?

Here's one technique for you, as a solo entrepreneur: Consider that calling a potential customer is not about talking them into something they don't want. Instead, it's a wonderful opportunity to help someone with the perfect solution you have, and make his or her life easier with your product or service. Look at it as helping people, rather than pushing something on them. After all, that's why you started the business—so you could help someone do something in a better way.

I think my favorite story about handling sales rejection is from my little brother, Peter, who put himself through law school by selling dental products as a telemarketer. He just hated this job. He didn't like getting the phone slammed down in his ear, like most of us do with telemarketers. He really didn't like making sales, period. But he needed to keep his job. Accordingly, he developed a character that helped him cope—he called himself "Clint Bond," who was a combination of Clint Eastwood and James Bond. Clint Bond gave my brother a sense of confidence and allowed him to disassociate personally to overcome his fear & loathing of sales - suddenly, HE wasn't getting the rejections; it was his character who was getting the instant hang-ups.

Of course, I don't recommend that you use someone's name other than your own. But in Peter's case, it really didn't matter what his name was, as long as he represented the company and its products properly. The fact is, he did quite well after developing this approach, and as a result he's now a successful lawyer! Seriously, though, whatever works for you that is honest and ethical is fine.

If your company has a sales staff, the breakdowns often happen when there is not an efficient system for conducting sales, getting your promotional literature out the door, ensuring proper follow-up, project tracking and management, and seeing each job through to completion with a simple method for the owner to track progress. It's simple to correct once the issue is identified.

WHAT ABOUT THE ISSUE OF FEELING LIKE A FRAUD? HOW COMMON IS IT?

You might be surprised at how many people feel this way. As a business owner, typically you will experience this feeling during the first 1–3 years of your business's growth. This is especially true in the professional services - you may find that a competitor has released a study before you, or has "built a

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better mousetrap" in some way. You may start to feel like you don't have all the answers, or you may find other products in the marketplace that are just as valuable (or more so) than yours, and may even be less expensive. Any of these factors can induce you to begin feeling like a fraud in some way.

This issue can often manifest itself in your marketing - you might respond by charging far, far too little for the value you actually bring to your clients.

The solution is for us to look at your positioning—how you're unique in your offerings. Then it's possible to determine the value you bring to your clients, so you can resolve this issue and improve your revenues. The hard part is, you rarely know you're doing this when you're doing it! That's exactly why we created "marketing therapy" programs to help CEO's and owners with these issues.

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Building a Successful Massage Therapy Practice, One Step at the Time

By Annick Lemieux, LMT

If just like me, you have already been in this business, you won't be surprised to hear what I am about to tell you: dream and reality is a tidbit different. Did you graduate from massage therapy school with your motivation level up to the ceiling...dropping down to the floor in a matter of couple months? I did.

To be honest, when I got out of school I expected something absolutely different. I dreamt of the freedom of being my own boss. But, I forgot to take into account the enormous number of sacrifices that had to be made to bring this wonderful dream to reality. I made many mistakes before I discovered the missing link to success.

Are you aware of how important marketing is for the long term life of your massage practice?

Do you take daily actions to constantly find new clients and improve your clientele retention?

Do you realize that, as a self-employed, if you don't put a huge emphasis on marketing and make it a top priority, one step at the time, your business is devoted to fail sooner or later?

If your answer to these questions is "No", then you should be sure to take care of this little but important detail. Start today!

I suggest you to use your business card at all time, be out and about, get famous into your field of expertise, educate general public to what you do, have a professional image, be proactive!

The list does not stop there. Can you add some more ideas to it? And remember, the hardest action is always taking the first step toward your dream success. Now, stop reading and go marketing!

Annick Lemieux is LMT at the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork. She owned her private practice and worked internationally for Luxury Spas Onboard Cruises Ships. She also the author of the complimentary MaSsagE-ZinE, a publication dedicated to educate and help other professional Massage Therapists willing to build and keep their thriving practice. For more

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massage marketing tips and information, visit her website www.massagesolution.com

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