

The Feng Shui of Practice Management

Our field needs tremendous support in practice management. We are one of the only occupations where degree-seeking students will have to be competent practitioners and savvy business people immediately upon graduation. This would be okay if we had third party reimbursement like other physicians, nurse practitioners, chiropractors and physical therapists. But because we don't have such reimbursement readily, it makes it more challenging to get started and stay afloat in practice within the first few years. In a world where in most practice management courses the love of money rules, how can the ethical Acupuncturist make a decent living?

The first step towards the solution is that you must have the desire to seek the knowledge you require for success. If you know you are weak as a businessperson or in marketing, then you need to align yourself with the appropriate people to help you create success. In order to do this, you must temper your ego, for if you are arrogant and self absorbed you will surely fail. Sometimes it only takes a call to another successful L.Ac to help you on your way. Books like *Points for Profit* by Honora Wolfe have a plethora of great ideas to utilize in the startup and marketing of your practice. To this end, in my experience, building a professional support team (PST) is one of the foundational strategies for ultimate success.

The PST consists of professional associates that legally, financially, clinically and morally advise you in manifesting your dream. A business medical attorney, a savvy CPA, accountant, banker, business/marketing consultant, financial advisor, medical doctor, senior acupuncturist or OMD, spiritual advisor and other mentors are the positions you want to fill on your team. You will rely on the team to advise you in times when you need to make crucial decisions, in strategic planning and to carry you through the rougher times. No one likes to be alone especially in times of turmoil and disharmony and a good team can

buoy you up through sound counsel.

Secondly, you have to be able to accept the fact that you must spend money to make money. Whether it is for equipment, additional training or advertising, the expense is well worth the result. The key here is to spend wisely and to ask the right questions.

For instance, in print advertising the first questions I ask are how much does the publication print and where is it distributed. Look through the publication, find a similar practitioner and call them to see what kind of response their ad is getting. If you happen to speak to the front office person, you have hit a home run, for the front desk is the place where marketing efforts are first realized. This person will most likely honestly and proudly inform you of the success or failure of a particular ad campaign.

As far as advertising expense, it is crucial in today's world to have a solid website with adequate ranking in the search engines. If you don't, then you will most certainly lose out on your piece of the e-commerce pie. More and more patient consumers are searching the internet for information about acupuncture and other forms of natural medicine. Why shouldn't you have the top ranking when a potential patient googles acupuncture and your local city? Finding a professional webmaster and graphic designer make all the difference for a successful marketing image.

Thirdly, you must obtain and maintain a level of confidence with the public about your professional stature that eclipses everything else. People need to believe that you indeed know what you are talking about despite the fears you may have to the contrary. Whatever it takes for you to develop this necessary skill is what you must do to be wildly successful in your practice. For instance, if public speaking is scary for you then you might need to take a course with Toastmasters.

The patient consumer wants to be able to totally trust and believe in your professionalism. We must dress and act the part of a health care advisor. We are not friends or partners to the patient, we are practitioners and need to command a certain degree of respect in order to be successful. Would you let your child or loved one be operated on by a surgeon wearing crumpled clothing and dirty shoes? Our professional image is affected not only by our demeanor with the patient but also our personal appearance.

Lastly, the use of a modern style feng shui is extremely beneficial in the setup of your office as well as other marketing material design. The principles of yin/yang balance, five element theory, unobstructed flow of qi and the use of the power map (bagua) is ultimately a winning combination. By using modern school feng shui you can manipulate qi in your space like you manipulate qi in your patients using acupuncture and herbs. By having better qi flow and aesthetics in a space your clientele will grow by leaps and bounds.

There are many other factors to a successful practice but in my opinion, there is no substitute for hard work and perseverance. Plant these seeds, and diligently cultivate your garden of success and watch your practice grow. Good luck in your journey to a successful practice!

*Christina Captain,
M.A., M.S.O.M., A.P., S.L.P.*

Christine will be teaching at AAOM's Conference in October. She owns a practice in Sarasota, Florida called the Family Healing Center and is the Advisory Board chair at East West College of Natural Medicine.