

Marketing Your Therapy Practice

When looking to get your name out there and develop referral sources, there are three fundamental steps:

1. Define your niche
2. Identify your best referral sources
3. Develop ways to connect with/market to these referral sources

Defining your Niche

It is extremely important to be very specific in defining your niche because how you define your niche will dictate much of the rest of your marketing. Many therapists fall into the trap of defining their niche too broadly. The problem with this is it is that there is nothing for potential referral sources to remember. Instead, define 1 - 2 specific aspects of your practice - that way potential referral sources will have something specific to remember about you (this doesn't mean that these are the only types of clients you will accept).

Clarifying Questions:

1. Is my niche:
 - a. Geographic
 - b. A specific form of therapy/treatment
 - c. Working with a certain population
 - d. Working with specific mental health issues
 - e. Some other way to identify/delineate what I do
2. What is one thing I do that is unique?
3. What can I utilize from my background that would be helpful in my practice?
 - a. Is there something about my background that connects me with a specific population?
4. What distinguishes me from other therapists?
5. Who (what population) have I worked well with previously?
6. What needs do I see going unmet in current or potential clients?
7. Where is my passion?

Identify your Best Referral Sources

The next step is to identify potential referral sources. Be as creative and open-minded as possible in thinking about who would need what you provide (or who these people would be in contact with).

Tip: Find a mentor or colleague to work/consult with – someone who shares your focus area.

Clarifying Questions:

1. Who could really use my services?
 - a. Individuals, organizations, profession groups, etc.
 - b. What "Pain Point" am I helping people resolve?
2. Who would people who could really use my services be in contact with?
3. How have my current clients found me?
4. Who have I received referrals from in the past?
5. Are there ways to go directly to my potential clients?
 - a. Website; social media; Google adwords; CounselingCalifornia.com; PsychologyToday.com
 - b. Profession Groups - what other professionals would have contact with my potential clients?

Developing Ways to Connect with/Market to these Referral Sources

This is where the proverbial rubber really meets the road. The fundamental goal here is to get your name known among people who stand a high probability of needing your services or having clients who would need your services. The big question is: exactly how do you go about this? Before you decide on specific techniques and approaches, it's important to look at two factors:

1. What forms of marketing are you best at and what are you most comfortable with?
 - a. You could have the best marketing plan in the world but if it's just not you and you're too uncomfortable implementing it, it's worthless.
 - i. Think about what you enjoy and what comes naturally to you.
 - ii. Also, think about what gives you a sense of accomplishment even if it doesn't come naturally to you (in other words, what would be helpful for you to learn).
2. What will be most effective in reaching your target audience?
 - a. "Where" is my target audience located?
 - i. "Where" are they both online (Facebook groups, etc.) as well as in person?
 - b. What are their interests and/or issues they deal with in their practice?
 - c. Who have I gotten the best response from in the past? Why do I think that I got this positive response and how can I leverage/build on this?

Once you've worked through the fundamentals of what you're best at and how to effectively reach your target audience, the next step is to come up with specific approaches. I think it's helpful to have both broad (macro) and specific (micro) approaches to reaching these individuals/profession groups:

Specific (Micro):

1. Networking - put yourself out there at networking events:
 - a. Don't always hang out with the same crowd – push yourself to meet new people
 - b. Practice describing what is unique or significant about what you do (elevator pitch)
 - c. Don't be afraid to show your passion for the work you do
 - d. Review the 'alternative networking' questions below
2. Schedule lunches, coffees and other get-togethers with potential referral sources
 - a. Informal get-togethers allow other professionals to get a sense of who you are & what you do.
3. Go to meetings where potential referral sources will be:
 - a. To market with therapists: CAMFT (LA, OC, SB-LB), AAMFT & APA South Bay
 - b. To market with other professionals: South Bay Bar Association (southbaybar.org); Employee Assistance Program (eapa-la.com), Doctors (ama-assn.org), etc.
4. Send personalized "Thank you" notes for any referrals (even ones that don't turn out)
5. Build and support your referral network by using e-mail to connect professionals who provide 'complimentary' services. Work on ways to add value to their practice.
6. Actively use e-mail to send items that would be interesting to potential referral sources.

Broad (Macro):

1. Send out e-mail newsletters that provide helpful tips and describe what you do
 - a. Make sure that there is something beneficial for the person receiving the newsletter.
2. Social Marketing – LinkedIn, Facebook (including Facebook Groups), Twitter, YouTube, etc.
 - a. Think about how you market your services online - what is your "brand"?
3. Start a database of potential referral sources (either physical addresses or e-mail addresses)
4. Write articles for publications/newsletters or speak at places your referrals sources will be
 - a. This helps both get your name out there and establishes you as an expert.
5. Networking/Lead Groups
6. Press Releases – for a new office, an event or a book/pamphlet/etc.

Alternative Networking Questions:

Networking events can be very dry and even boring. If all you discuss is the typical "what do you do; here's what I do" the chances that anyone will remember you are minimal. Instead, try to engage in real, interesting conversations with people and then pepper what you do and how you do it into the conversation. Here are some ideas on how to start more interesting conversations:

1. Tell me what you love about what you do?
2. What is something that you're really proud of professionally?
3. How did you meet your spouse?
4. What was your favorite vacation and why?
5. Tell me something most people don't know about you.

Worksheet - How am I going to start marketing my practice next week?

Identifying your Best Referral Sources

1. Who could really use my services?

Individuals/Types of Individuals: _____

Profession groups: _____

Organizations: _____

2. Who would people who could really use my services be in contact with?

Individuals/Types of Individuals: _____

Profession groups: _____

Organizations: _____

3. Who have I received referrals from in the past?

Individuals/Types of Individuals: _____

Profession groups: _____

Organizations: _____

4. Are there ways to go directly to my potential clients?

Developing Ways to Connect with/Market to these Referral Sources

1. What forms of marketing am I best at and what am I most comfortable with?

2. What one "Micro" approach am I going to start utilizing and how specifically will I use it?

3. What one "Macro" approach am I going to start utilizing and how specifically will I use it?
