

How I built a Massage Therapy practice using research.
By Mary White

After 15 years of running a business practice in Central Massachusetts, my husband and I moved to Cape Cod four years ago. We love the ocean and are passionate about sailing, so it was all about being near the water. It was a leap of faith. Although I was worried about starting a new practice, I hoped my years of experience would stand me in good stead.

So here I was in a new place and I knew all of four people. It's great to be passionate about what you do and have good hands-on skills, but I was unsure about how I would get new clients. The days of buying ads and listings in the yellow pages are gone. A website was needed for certain. But, then what?

I found myself forever thankful for the people I have surrounded myself with in my professional life and who I look up to as my peers. I have learned so much from all of the leaders in our field. Be it from taking classes or reading articles, I felt empowered by the knowledge I had acquired from my connections.

A large part of my practice has always been based on sports massage. I pulled up research on sports massage, made information sheets, and secured an invitation to speak to some running clubs. Before I knew it I, too, was off and running as a sports massage therapist with a budding practice. Then I did the same for chair massage. I was amazed at the studies out there. I used part of the abstract language for my marketing along with quoting the data, who conducted the study, and the positive results.

I then looked up local companies online that touted "great HR benefits." I made appointments to speak to the HR managers. I took the research in order to share with them how their employees can be more productive, less stressed, and have increased morale in the workplace. You get the picture.

Before I knew it, my chair massage service was one of the HR benefits for some of these companies. Some of them use my services for employee appreciation days as incentives or as an HR benefit allowing me to go to the business site on a regular basis. This is something I never did at my old practice. I imagined using it to market myself, however, once I got going with it and saw how lucrative it can be and how much fun it is to work behind the scenes in companies, I decided to allocate one day a week to chair massage. The ethics that come into play when working offsite were something I had to learn quickly.

It will be four years in January since we moved to the Cape and I am happy to report that my practice is as busy as I can handle. I work four days a week in the office, seeing many athletes and chronic pain clients, then of course go into a workplace one day a week. Had I not had the knowledge base of published research on my chosen massage modalities, I would have been at a loss to make a supporting case for my chosen field based on its professionalism.

We read every day how bad the economy is, but I read once that it is those who market themselves in a down economy who will survive. Use your down time as work time to explore the research. There are great sites out there that are easy to navigate. Once you're educated, go out and share the word. People really do want to hear it. We have always known that we can make them feel good, now we can share the scientific evidence about why they feel good.