



12 Steps to Success

Can you imagine a life as a successful massage therapist? A life where you start every day bursting with enthusiasm and energy with the knowledge that you actually get PAID to do the job you love. A job where you have no boss, no set hours and can take holidays whenever you like. A job about which you feel passionate, inspired and motivated. And moreover a job where you are able to earn more than enough to pay your bills, feed your kids, go on holiday and save for your future.

Sounds pretty good, doesn't it? The good news is that all these possibilities are at your fingertips with the career of massage therapy. The even better news is that there are plenty of great role models out there; massage therapists who are doing exactly this – having fulfilling careers, loving their lives and making good money. The slightly less good news is that there are thousands of massage therapists who are doing exactly the opposite – earning poor money, working too hard, never taking any holidays and ultimately becoming despondent with the profession they once loved.

Where do you stand on those 2 extremes? If you are truly living the life you love then congratulations – no need to read this article! But if you are one of the thousands of massage therapists in the UK who are not yet living their life to the full then read on.

I have a unique insight into business success, as over the past 3 decades I have built several successful massage

practices in many different parts of the world, plus co-founded from scratch one of the UK's largest massage therapy training organisations, Jing Advanced Massage.

Along the way I have made many mistakes, knocked my head against a few brick walls and gone round in a few circles. Reflecting on the past 30 years and with the benefit of seeing thousands of my students struggle with similar issues around business, here are my 12 steps to true success as a massage therapist.

1 Ensure your current skills are good enough

It is an unhappy fact that many massage therapists in the UK are not able to make a good living from the profession because their current skill level is not adequate. There are 2 common problems that I see time and time again with therapists:

- Their initial training has only taught them how to do a relaxation massage and they feel ill-equipped to deal with pain conditions.
- Their initial training has taught them poor body mechanics resulting in chronic pain in the hands, shoulders, wrists and back.

The harsh reality is that it is extremely difficult to build up a thriving practice if you only focus on relaxation massage. How do I know? I tried! At the beginning of my career I only offered relaxation massage and although my clients loved my treatments it was difficult to persuade them to come on a recurring basis. Stress relief is not enough of a priority for most working folks to get them to pay for treatment regularly.

However, the skill that really gets people coming through your clinic door and keeps them coming is the ability to properly address chronic pain. Chronic pain is the business of complementary therapists everywhere –

osteopaths, chiropractors, acupuncturists are all dealing with the same problems. Back pain, neck pain, RSI, headaches – the list is endless.

The ability to fully understand and successfully treat chronic pain is the hallmark of a successful practice. So your foundation to success is really about making sure your current training is up to scratch. If it's not, there are plenty of opportunities in the UK to top up your training. Our own approach involves a fusion of trigger point, myofascial release, stretching and self-care that aims to reduce client pain in 1-6 weekly treatments. Learning good advanced techniques that get results was the key to building up my own practice quickly and easily and thirty years on is still the reason people come to see me.

2 Visioning and planning

"If you don't know what you want you often end up where you don't want to be."

Most successful businesses start with a dream. An idea of how things can be different from how they are now. But many of us do not allow ourselves the time to fully inhabit that dream, to flesh it out and to visualize the possibilities of a different life. Dreaming allows you to play out in your mind your possibilities of success and anticipate any difficulties that might crop up.

Both ancient wisdom and modern psychology are united in their agreement that visualisation can enable you to achieve your life goals. Most self-help, productivity and business books talk about the importance of setting your vision – this is really a form of mental rehearsal where we imagine a certain situation and how it will look and feel.

So allow yourself time to think, to dream, to draw to scribble, to talk about your vision to friends and to keep it ticking away at the back of your mind. As Eleanor Roosevelt famously said "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams".

3 Practicalities

Once you have a sense of your dream through visualisation you need to start bringing it into reality - otherwise it just stays as a dream!

Here are the main practicalities you will need to sort out:

Premises: Decide where are going to work from - Home? Rented clinic room? Mobile? There are pros and cons for each one – if you want a fun talk through of our own experiences check out this Jing TV episode www.jingmassage.com/articles/where-to-set-up-your-massage-practice-home-or-clinic/.

Equipment: Make sure you have all the necessary equipment to give a professional massage: table, clean linens, massage wax, music system, consultation forms. (check out www.jingmassage.com/latest/back-to-basics-the-art-of-advanced-massage-rachel-fairweather/ for more details).

Admin: Happily for those of us who are not lovers of paperwork (guilty!) there is very little admin involved in being a massage therapist. However, you do need to make sure you have these basics under your belt:

- Register as self-employed with HMRC <https://www.gov.uk/set-up-sole-trader>
- Make sure you have the right level of professional insurance (There are many out there but we always love the family firm Balens <https://www.balens.co.uk/>)
- Register with the CNHC so the public know you have the minimum standard of competence to practice <https://www.cnhc.org.uk/>
- Get a diary – electronic or paper – to book people in!
- Organise some system for keeping all your client's details so that you can contact them en masse in the future with marketing information. This could be electronic (a "group" on your smartphone, a spreadsheet, or a paper book. You will need emails, phone numbers and addresses.

Set up professional contact points: voicemail and email. This might sound obvious, but there are a staggering number of massage therapists out there who have an inappropriate email address or haven't taken the time to set up a welcoming voicemail on their phone. If that's you then sort it now!

4 The price is right! Get your pricing right from the start

Charging appropriately seems to be a very emotive and difficult task for many massage therapists. Massage therapists tend to charge very low fees in comparison with other bodywork professionals; there are still massage therapists charging in the region of £25 an hour, whereas osteopaths and chiropractors charge more in the region of £20 for 20 minutes. A graphic designer typically charges in the region of £65 an hour for their time; a business consultant up to £200. Do we really feel that our value is only a fraction of these other professionals?

I feel that all massage therapists should be charging a minimum of £45 an hour for their time; this still makes us incredibly good value compared to other bodywork professionals. Don't be fooled by thinking that if you charge less you will get more clients; most clients will come to you for the results you give them, not whether you charge £5 less than the person down the road.

For more reading and tips on pricing check out <https://www.jingmassage.com/blog/how-to-make-35k-as-year-as-a-therapist-and-take-the-summer-off-by-rachel-fairweather/>





- Offer free chair massage to a local business
- Take your massage table to your local park run/football team/running club and do free post event massage work
- Do a talk on stretching at your local running club
- Massage your local yoga teacher for free and give her or him some half price vouchers to give to their students
- Do an offer for Christmas/Valentines day/Easter/Black Friday

5 The power of word of mouth: TTP! TTMP!

So now you've got your basics in place you are ready to start getting some paying clients. Funnily enough the clients don't walk through your clinic door by themselves – you have to go out, find them and convince them that they need a massage!

This is where a lot of people come unstuck. They just don't know how to get those clients in. They spend a lot of time designing and writing leaflets, business cards, websites or Facebook pages....but still nobody calls or emails.

The great news is that you don't need a fancy website or social media page to attract new clients – your biggest marketing tool is with you right here right now. It's called your mouth!

The best business tip I was ever given was TTP! Then TTMP! (Talk to people! Talk to more people!). Start with people you know – at every social occasion, meeting, workplace gathering, stranger on the bus, ride in a taxi, let the people you are talking to know what you do. Tell them with passion and enthusiasm. Let them know what your therapy can do for their life, bad back, arthritic hip, RSI, headaches. Get the word out! It's your duty! If you get the opportunity, book them in there and then on your phone for an appointment, or take their details if they are interested and give them a follow up call.

6 Get clients through the door with a great deal

You also need to give potential clients a good reason for coming to see you in the first place. Good deals are wonderful for attracting people to your business. This could be a half price or very cheap massage. Make sure your deals are **time limited, a one off only and have a deadline**. For example, you could offer a £10

massage treatment to get people through the door. In your advertising make it clear that this offer is for the first treatment only and only available until the end of the month. Use that £10 treatment to give your client a great massage and re-book them (at full price!)

7 Business cards, leaflets and brochures oh my!

Once you have started putting into operation your TTP and TTMP, then it's great to give people a physical something to remind them of you.

Designing and printing business cards has never been easier (check out www.moo.com for some great quality and value for money cards). Similarly, designing a simple leaflet is easy and cheap with basic computer software.

Remember that it's not getting the business cards or leaflets done that gets you the clients (although it's a good start) – it's what you then do with them subsequently. Putting brochures around town or doing a mail out will give you very little return for your time – for each 100 leaflets you mail out you can expect maybe one phone call and then you still have to convince the client to come to you!

If you have moved into a new town centre location, take your brochures around to the local shops, but make sure you talk to someone who works there – the owner if possible to let them know what you do. Introduce yourself, offer them a free treatment, see if there is a way you can send each other business! Give them to friends to recommend you to other friends. Give out free treatments or consultations at a local workplace and pass on your business card to everyone you touch. Get the word out there but always with a face behind the card.

8 The golden secret – rebooking

With a bit of word of mouth and a great offer you should be starting to get a few people through the door. The secret then is to keep them coming!

It's a well-known fact in marketing that it is far easier to KEEP a client than attract a new one. The mistake I see therapists making time and time again is not rebooking their clients – you need to do it there and then at the time of payment.

To get return clients you will need a reason for them to come back. This is where the proficiency in treating chronic pain comes in. The multi-modal soft tissue approach (the Jing method) that we teach aims to reduce client pain in 1-6 weekly treatments. After pain has been reduced (usually around week 3) then we lengthen the time between treatments, now seeing the client once every 2 weeks. Once pain reduction has been maintained, ideally clients are moved onto a once a month maintenance schedule.

So, take a deep breath, get out your diary – and the next time you get a client make sure you book them in again before they leave.

9 Social media: facebook, twitter, instagram

If you are in fear of Facebook or terrified of twitter then just get a grip as you are missing out on one of the biggest free marketing opportunities of all time. Social media is the biggest way to get your message out to hundreds of people within seconds.

Setting up a professional Facebook page or Instagram account is usually a lot quicker and easier than designing a

website (that's our next step!). Chances are you are already using one of these platforms for your personal use so you already know how to set up a Facebook page (or know someone who can help you!)

Remember your professional account should be SEPARATE from your personal account (unless you are happy with your clients seeing you a bit tipsy at Auntie Joan's wedding) and the content you post should be professional not personal.

Once you have a page set up, be engaged. Post content, engage with other pages that may attract potential clients and post any offers on there.

10 Build a SIMPLE website

It can be easy to fall into a void of procrastination paralysis when designing a website which is why I have it as step 10.

Remember to start a practice you just need a very basic site – a few good pictures, some information about you and your approach and your contact

details. You can also add more content later (blogs, videos, news items).

Again it is fairly easy these days to design one yourself – check out squarespace.com and wordpress.com for beautiful websites you can easily design and maintain without professional help.

If this is REALLY not your thing or you don't have the time or energy then find someone else who can do it for you. There are loads of reasonably priced website designers out there; or do a trade with a friend who is good on tech and design.

11 Think of new ways to reach people

To keep your business thriving you have to be constantly reaching out to new people. There are so many ways to do this. Remember each time you reach out to people with a free or low cost offer, the aim is to EITHER to re-book them for a full price offering OR to get their contact details so you can reach out to them in the future. Here are a few ideas:

12 Work your database

Once you have started getting more people through the door you need to keep reminding them that you are there. Reach out to your clients regularly through a monthly email newsletter with interesting articles or your recent offers. Make it easy for people to come back to see you and give them reasons to do so.

Rinse and repeat!

Once you start rolling with the above then you just need to keep following the same steps. In a nutshell, attract new clients with a tempting offer then rebook and keep them! Although you always have to keep an eye on client numbers, after a while your work will start to speak for itself and word of mouth will happen more naturally. Remember you don't need any special skills to market yourself, just the plan I've given you and some hard work! So just go for it and good luck! Welcome to your new life!

Rachel Fairweather is author of the best selling book for passionate massage therapists – 'Massage Fusion: The Jing Method for the treatment of chronic pain'.

She is also the dynamic co-founder and Director of Jing Advanced Massage Training (www.jingmassage.com), a company providing degree level, hands-on and online training for all who are passionate about massage. Come and take part in one of our fun and informative short CPD courses to check out the Jing vibe for yourself!

Rachel has over 25 years experience in the industry working as an advanced therapist and trainer, first in New York and now throughout the UK. Due to her extensive experience, undeniable passion and intense dedication, Rachel is a sought after international guest lecturer, writes regularly for professional trade magazines, and has twice received awards for outstanding achievement in her field.

Rachel holds a degree in Psychology, a Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work, an AOS in Massage Therapy and is a New York licensed massage therapist.

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