

right fit for what you offer.

Another aspect of purpose is commitment. Highly successful practitioners are deeply committed to the daily operation of their practice. They maintain a consistent intention by showing up, both physically and spiritually, in the treatment room and in their business. They take their work seriously, and they don't allow distractions and time-wasters. They are committed to using their practice as a forum for engaging their highest potential.

Especially in this day and age, it is so easy to allow all of the negative messages about the economy and the state of the world to deflate our commitment. My sense is that now, more than ever, it is vital that you commit to serving as a role model of inspiration and strength to those around you. You may have already noticed that these are the qualities for which so many of your patients are longing right now. If you can embody purposeful living and exude inspiration to your patients, your practice and your patients will benefit tremendously. After all, your personal presence is often what helps patients change as much as any protocol or technique you are using.

Systems

This second crucial ingredient is a bit more nuts and bolts, but it is also absolutely vital to your long-term success. You need systems in place in order to ensure the stability of your practice. A system is basically a procedure you implement into your practice that will yield a predictable result. Below is a brief list of various systems you need to have in place.

- Marketing systems
- Patient-education systems
- Patient-retention systems
- Patient-recall systems
- Bookkeeping systems
- E-mail contact systems

Even if you are an exceptionally skilled acupuncturist, if you don't consistently and methodically market your practice, educate your current patients and reactivate old patients, your practice will be compromised. Successful practitioners consistently use systems such as these to ensure that their practice grows as they desire, regardless of the economy or any other external factors.

Learning how to systemize your practice is likely not something you were taught in acupuncture school. If you have been beating your head against the wall trying to figure out why your practice is unstable or why you struggle to maintain adequate patient volume, please know that it is not your fault. The truth is that you were never taught these critical skills. It is never too late to learn how to implement systems in your practice.

Support

Every single successful practitioner and business owner with whom I have ever worked has stressed the importance of building a team of colleagues, mentors, coaches and support staff to help them achieve their goals. It is amazing to me how many acupuncturists are still out there trying to wear all the hats in their business and basically doing it alone.

I understand that you may have wanted to own a practice because you are independent and you didn't want a boss. But it's also important to know that the full potential of your practice can only be

actualized with the help of other people. The top 5 percent of practitioners out there have support staff like a receptionist and bookkeeper. They also have a network of other practitioners to whom they can refer when necessary. Many of them have used the services of business and life coaches. They have also worked closely with experienced practitioners and mentors to strengthen their clinical skills. Most of the top practitioners I've known) have invested a lot of money and time to develop both personally and professionally.

Now, take a close look at these three crucial ingredients and honestly assess for yourself if you have weaknesses in any one of these. Are you totally clear about your purpose and committed to your success, no matter what? Do you have the right marketing and practice management systems in place to create predictable and consistent growth for your practice? Do you have a team of people around you who can guide and support you every step of the way to expedite your growth process and make it more enjoyable?

When you have all three of these ingredients in place, your practice is destined for success.

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