

Thinking Outside the Box to Reach a World-Wide Market

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I want to share with you one of the most important lessons I learned in building my own practice over the past several years and in coaching so many acupuncturists to expand their entrepreneurial skills and knowledge. What I see time and again is that acupuncturists are very passionate about the clinical end of their practice but don't have much regard for the business end of their practice. I see this as a major reason why acupuncturists so often struggle to build a thriving private practice. I have observed time and again that practitioners who commit to understanding marketing and practice management are the ones who have the most success in clinical practice.

A big part of contacting your entrepreneurial spirit has to do with accessing your creative resources to initiate marketing strategies that many would consider totally out of the box or even downright weird. Look at it this way: If you are doing what 95 percent of the other acupuncturists are doing to build their practices then you can expect to get the same results as everyone else gets, which are mediocre at best.

If you want a big practice, you need to start thinking big in the way you market your services. What this boils down to is learning how to position yourself as an expert and package your services in different ways. Marketing has a lot to do with standing apart from the competition so that your practice becomes the obvious "go to" clinic for the target market on which you want to focus.

On a bigger scale, I highly recommend that you have at least one product or service you offer that can target a global audience instead of just your local community. This is especially true if your practice is in a really small population base, as many practitioners find it extra challenging to maintain a high-volume practice when their city or town has less than 15,000 people. Tapping into a world-wide audience will blow open the financial potential of your business and it can help you market more effectively to your local population. Here are a few ideas that should help fuel some new creative insight into your practice that will hopefully inspire you to start thinking on a much bigger scale of what is possible as an entrepreneur and practitioner:

Write a book or e-book: Have you realized that virtually all of the leaders and pioneers in the field of Chinese medicine are authors? Writing a book is one of the easiest and most effective ways to convey expertise and build an international following. When your patients see that you are an author, they will immediately trust you more as a leading resource on health and wellness. Writing a book may seem like a daunting task.

I recommend that you start writing health articles or blogging on a regular basis and then combine your content over the course of a year and use that as book material. You don't have to be a scholar and write a 500-page exegesis on Chinese medicine. In fact, if your goal is to use your book as a

marketing tool, simpler is better. Remember, what may seem completely obvious to you is often mind-blowing information to your patients. If you look at it this way, writing a book can be quite easy, especially if you get the right coaching and guidance along the way.

Learn Web 2.0 marketing: If you know how to market effectively on the internet, you can create an enormous following of people from all over the world who love your content and who consider you to be a true expert in the health and wellness field. This will, of course, create a positive ripple effect back to your practice and give you the opportunity to really branch out and diversify your business opportunities and your income.

Along these lines, I highly recommend that you learn how to use Web sites like Twitter and Facebook, and that you learn the art of blogging. Another great strategy is to create joint venture partnerships with other prominent figures in the health and wellness industry and cross-promote each other's work. In this way, you can build a Web site that markets products, books and services that anyone in the world can access and benefit from.

Offer coaching to people around the world: I will preface this section by saying you should look into your state laws before you pursue this strategy. Doing wellness coaching is what I could call a "gray zone" in the rules and regulations for most states. I have seen quite a few practitioners implement this idea, so it seems to be a generally accepted practice as long as it is set up correctly.

Most of the acupuncturists I have worked with have very natural coaching abilities. In fact, the acupuncturists I have seen enjoy their work the most (myself included) are the ones who really embody the role of being a wellness coach, facilitating greater awareness and life balance, as opposed to just a technician solely eliminating pain.

Unless you already have a large network of people from around the world, this strategy will only work if you understand Internet marketing. The Internet is just an incredible medium to connect with a huge market of people who are looking for ways to improve their health and well-being. There are three distinct advantages that phone coaching can offer your practice: You can do it from anywhere, you can offer group coaching, and you will often attract higher-quality clients.

What other ways can you think of to diversify your services and tap into a much bigger audience? The more creative you are, the more fun you will have and the more you will enjoy your work. Even more so, if you couple this newfound creativity with the right marketing skills and knowledge, your business income could easily double.

It took me about four years of constant learning and experimenting to really implement what I am sharing with you here. Yes, this is a big learning curve, but what I have seen time and again is that many practitioners feel a sense of empowerment and liberation when they finally step into their entrepreneurial wisdom by learning how to expand their influence. It's also comforting to know that this process can be greatly expedited if you have the right mentoring and guidance.

So, where to begin? I recommend that you start by creating a clear vision for what you really want in your practice and your life. Do the inner work first. See if your mind can really hold the possibility of being a leader who touches the lives of countless people. Then honestly assess for yourself what's blocking this from becoming reality. What limiting beliefs are you holding onto? What excuses are you making? Most importantly, what can you do right now to free yourself internally from anything that is obstructing your ultimate vision for your practice?

Start perceiving your acupuncture credential as a symbol of creating a profoundly positive impact on a global scale. As Gandhi said: "[You have to be the change you wish to see in the world.](#)" You have a very direct path to doing just this, but if you really want to be a part of the revolution toward greater health and balance, you can't think small. The world needs you to own your greatness. On a personal level, embarking on this path is why I decided to become an acupuncturist in the first place. Perhaps the same is true for you.

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