

Marketing Psychological Services Can Be Professional-And Even Easy

By Rick Crandall, PhD

Marketing's Negative Image

If you're like most psychologists, you dislike the idea of selling and marketing for a number of reasons. When you think of marketing, you may picture a sleazy used car salesman, or pushy people on the phone at dinner time.

I have good news for you. This article will show you why marketing can be comfortable for you, and *how* to start marketing your practice.

The way some people do marketing *deserves* a negative image, but there is a positive way to approach marketing. Marketing is about building relationships and helping people. You already have great training in those skills. You can serve others in an honest, socially responsible manner. You can improve your marketing without being pushy or using "hard sell" tactics-and you can even enjoy doing it!

When you market effectively, you control your own destiny. You're not dependent on provider lists, or taking "just anyone" who comes through the door. You can build the kind of practice you want.

Don't Apologize About Your Services

If you provide a valuable service, you should be proud of it. When you speak to people, your enthusiasm for what you do will make a positive impression. *Marketing isn't sleazy if you're not!* You're helping people by letting them know what you do. Why be apologetic when you can be a passionate crusader for better mental health and stronger families?

What Is Marketing?

I define marketing as "anything you do to get or keep a client." If you have an existing practice, your best marketing strategy is doing a great job for clients, as well as showing you care about them as individuals. (Remember part of the definition is "to keep a client.") There is nothing sleazy about delivering great service, and it produces repeat business and referrals. These are the best kinds of marketing.

If you're starting a practice, you will need to do more marketing outreach, as it is harder to get a new client than to keep an existing one. However, your goal is still to develop long-term relationships that will help others, while producing business, referrals, and professional relationships.

Marketing also gets easier over time. Effective marketing sets up systems that become less work for you as they become simpler and routine to apply. The kind of marketing that I'll explain here should fit with your professional activities.

What Methods Work for You?

Marketing methods will differ in results depending on both your target audience and how good you are with each strategy. The method that works best for you is usually determined by your comfort with it.

Starting Your Marketing Program

There are literally hundreds of specific ways to market your practice. Let's look at two general approaches for contrast.

The standard ways you might learn from a marketing book are to hire a consultant, buy advertising, mail brochures, create a web site, and so on. The trouble with these methods is that they cost money, and

don't showcase what you're really good at. If you spend your budget this way and don't get results, you'll fail.

The best ways to market are not "standard" methods covered in a marketing book, but those that give people a chance to get to know you and demonstrate your knowledge and approach. The first methods I recommend you pick from are writing, speaking, and networking.

Writing Articles: Writing can be done in professional newsletters to obtain referrals from peers. It can be done in newspapers and magazines to reach potential clients directly. Every year around this time, therapists do articles in the local paper about holiday related depression.

Speaking: Speaking can be done at many groups, from local Rotary Clubs to parents' groups. A California psychologist speaks to many professional groups and associations on the topic of trauma. People often hire him to do similar talks for their local organizations.

Networking: Networking can be done in a variety of ways, such as calling local physicians, contributing to online groups, and serving on the boards of organizations. Putting yourself in contact with new people give them a chance to get a "feel" for you, and you have a chance to obtain new clients and referrals.

Summary

Many marketing methods can work. Perhaps the most important elements of your marketing program will be getting over feeling that marketing is a "bad" thing, deciding what you're willing to try, and getting out there and doing *something*. Doing something always works better than doing nothing!

Rick Crandall received his PhD in Psychology from the University of Michigan. After an academic career, he now writes and speaks on the philosophy of building good relationships and serving your clients as the heart of dignified marketing for any professional. This article is based on his book Marketing Your Services: For People Who Hate to Sell (<http://www.ForPeopleWhoHateToSell.com>). Dr. Crandall may be contacted at rick@rickcrandall.com