

The Shiatsu Society (UK)

Notes from Marketing Forum at Congress 2008

Present: Jamie Hamilton, Angela Giles, Jane Groombridge, Kay Marino, Martin Julich, Samantha Haywood, Tamsin Grainger.

The aim of those present was to get more clients!

Jamie: Been practicing for 5 years. Now has a clinic and wanting to publicise it. It is a Shiatsu only practice, and he works 5 days per week. He has been advised to seek out 6 professional shiatsu practitioners and find out what they do to publicise themselves. Aims to make enough for at least one salary from his shiatsu.

Angela: Does shiatsu from home in the evenings, and during the day she works with businesses carrying out work station assessments. She had hoped to incorporate shiatsu but it hasn't been as successful as she hoped. She would like to expand her client base to be able to work at home during the day too.

Kay: Works voluntarily at Cyrenians on the advice of her teacher. She's very happy with that. Works with staff and clients. Also works at other peoples' homes. She has set up a studio at her home to work from and sees occasional clients there. Has had a business card designed, but lost confidence in getting it printed and distributed.

Martin: Very experienced and utilizes most of the marketing methods we talked about, or has done in the past. Looking for new ideas to expand his client base.

Jane: Works from home, and occasionally other venues. Has a small number of clients at present. Has used many forms of advertising in past, but feels that some of her old methods weren't working any more.

Between us we use a wide variety of marketing methods and it was the sharing of these ideas that inspired us:

Networking/ Word of mouth: speaking to people that we know and telling them what we do, in the hope that they will pass on the information or refer.

Leafletting: dropping leaflets through peoples' doors. Between us we had many different sorts, including using a magazine style format incorporating questions and answers about shiatsu.

Websites: see Shiatsu Society offer, swap shiatsu sessions for web design / hosting etc.

European Shiatsu Week: see Shiatsu Society website for ideas

e-mails; letters: mailing out to those who we know or who are already on the mailing list. It is good practice to ask everyone who attends a session to fill in a sheet with their personal data, as long as there is a Data Protection Act clause in it for them to sign to give you permission to keep their information. You must be a Data Controller if you keep computer records – this isn't expensive, and is relatively simple to enroll for, especially once you get enrolled for the first time, then it's just an annual renewals.

<http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/layer?topicId=1074412952&tc=000KW021506737>

Giving talks / lecture demonstrations: with local groups such as the Women's Institute, or with specialist groups such as Alzheimers Scotland etc.

Taster sessions: Open Days, Businesses / schools (either the company pays or the individuals).

Introductory Courses: some are confident, some not. Issues around 'doing it right' were aired.

Business cards: remember you can get them done free if you do not know anyone who will design them for you (for money for in return for shiatsu). <http://www.vistaprint.co.uk>

Newspaper Advertising: All found that they got very little response as individual practitioners advertising their practice. Some people found some return from advertising for their school. However, sending out a good, clear press release and offering a free session to a journalist in return for a write-up has been very successful for some.

Health fairs, Dentist fairs: big and small. Some like them and get a good response, some feel that they get no clients, others feel that it is an awareness raising exercise and well worth the effort. N.B. it is hard work as there is almost always a queue and you must be strongly boundaried to ensure you get lunch and adequate breaks!

Special offers: 3 sessions for the price of 2; book 4 sessions and get the 5<sup>th</sup> free; 10% off sessions in March; money off your next session if you refer a friend; if you are a regular client then you can have a sitting session at our annual open day for free; complementary sessions for regulars.

Gift vouchers: especially for Xmas, Mothers' Day etc.

£10 off voucher for the person it is sent to, or for a friend of theirs, and if they give it to someone else then to let us know and we will 'reward' them.

Business groups: where you meet regularly with other business people in the area (can be small businesses, womens' businesses etc). Often have to pay a substantial sum, but members have had success in expanding their businesses this way.

Working at hotel/business health clubs or spas these can be both a new work place, but we can also reach more people by using their mailing list, notice boards etc.

Yellow Pages: some people get referrals from yellow pages and some don't. We spoke about [yell.com](http://yell.com) and some felt that it is very expensive for the minimal return.

When working at clinics it was noted how useful it is to give free sessions to reception staff as, like everyone, once hooked on shiatsu they give great recommendations to prospective clients who are unsure which style of massage to choose.

Also that working at a clinic wasn't as successful at combating the 'loneliness of the long distance shiatsu practitioner' as people had hoped. Networking (such as Shiatsu Society Interactivity meetings) is more effective at this.

We talked about the people who stop coming for shiatsu, and how we might monitor the reasons for that, and several people said that they do send their lapsed clients a special offer to tempt them back once time has passed.

Auditing is important, we agreed, to keep a note of who we have sent things to, who has replied, and who has booked as a result of publicity or mailing.

It was noted that a basic rule states that you must keep going with something at least 3 times before you can expect to get a result. i.e. deliver leaflets to peoples' doors 3 month's running in order to be able to discover the benefit, or otherwise, of this method; or mount 3 consecutive introductory days in order to build up public awareness and start to get enough people attending.

Quite a few of us were unhappy about talking about shiatsu in public, which raised the issue of personal development:

- training for marketing courses are useful and often offered for free by local Business Gateways; or working together with other practitioners who were happier about doing this

- supervision for looking at areas where we have a lack of confidence, clarity, or boundary issues. Also for talking over how and what to charge, and dealing with personal reasons why charging folk for sessions can be so hard.

We had a long discussion about Reiki being such a household name and how we could get shiatsu just as well recognized. This discussion went round in circles and was rather based on supposition about Reiki! We did all agree that we want shiatsu to be better known.

There was some discussion about different experiences of working at clinics and trusting that those venues will be good enough, clean enough etc. for our businesses to expand.

There are many marketing books and websites where you can get help in this area. One example is: <http://www.wellbeingbusinesssecrets.com>

Finally we spoke about a definition of shiatsu, and were reminded that many members of the public don't know what shiatsu is, so we can choose to market ourselves by headlining, the benefits of shiatsu not the word 'shiatsu'. The front of the leaflet could ask: 'Do you suffer from back pain? This is just one of the ailments that shiatsu can help with'; or 'Do you have neck or joint pain? Shiatsu can help'; or 'Do you have a sports injury? Shiatsu is beneficial in sports injury recovery'; or 'Are you stressed? Shiatsu will aid relaxation. Tackle your stress before it leads to other more debilitating health issues' This is because, **as a result of the new research findings, we can now officially state that "Shiatsu is beneficial in helping with back, neck and joint pain, sports injuries, and stress"**. We are actually the leaders now. No other complementary therapies (not acupuncture, not Reiki) can state this, as we are the only ones to have done this type of research. We can blow our own trumpet with confidence!

The Shiatsu Society is here to help with practitioners' marketing:

1. see the 'promotions' area of the 'members' part of the website for ways to promote your practice;
2. the 'communications / marketing' part of the 'members' part of the website;
3. and from the 'communications...' part you can also click on various other pages such as 'Tips for Practitioners'.

Shiatsu Society leaflets that are available to buy:

- Guide to Shiatsu (saying what shiatsu is etc);
- GP (General Practitioners);
- NHS (National Health Service);
- exhibition packs for health fairs and displays;
- and there will be new ones available soon, one on the research project findings, and one on what results clients could expect to get from Shiatsu (both produced by the ESF).

There are also professional-looking exhibition display boards available for free from the Shiatsu Society by contacting the office.

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