TOOLKIT 31
Setting up in Practice

Thinking of setting up a practice?

Where to begin
You have completed your 3 year course and are now ready to build up a Shiatsu practice.

To begin with, you need to sit down and honestly assess what you want. Do you want to just do home visits, have a clinic at home, work in a clinic or elsewhere? What set up costs are needed and do you have access to the funds? What area(s) would you like to work in? Is there a particular group of people you would like to treat? Where do you want to be in 5 or 10 years’ time? What kind of lifestyle do you want?

All of these questions need to be answered before you make your dream become a reality.

Be honest with yourself and be prepared to accept that you may make some mistakes along the way but that is all part of learning.

Mobile Practice
This is probably the simplest business to set up but as with everything it has its advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages:
• Low running costs
• Keeps your work and home life separate
• You can treat people who are not able to leave their homes

Disadvantages:
• You will need reliable transport. If you are considering public transport then think about whether you can carry your futon and couch roll
• If using your car then you may need business insurance
• Personal Safety. Who will you be treating and where?
• The clients home may be unsuitable for treatments e.g. cleanliness, pets, distractions, lack of space

Spas
Advantages:
• You are based in one place so can cut down on travelling costs
• Professional set up that is probably already established
• Equipment supplied
• Disabled facilities
• Security of a job
• Clients will be supplied for you
• Clients will usually have disposable income
• Your clients are there by choice to improve their health
Disadvantages:
- Allocated/restricted time to treat clients
- You may be required to sell products and this can be difficult with Shiatsu e.g. oils
- You may not be allowed to be self-employed so this will not satisfy your desire to set up in business
- Usually low paid

**Working from Home**

Working from home can be very cost effective but we would strongly recommend you allocate a room specifically for Shiatsu which can be laid out as a treatment room, free from pets and children playing etc.

Advantages:
- No travelling time or cost
- Relaxed atmosphere
- Complete control of your working environment

Disadvantages:
- You will need to inform your home insurance company if you are running a business from home and this may increase your premium.
- Separating out business costs from personal costs such as heating, electricity, gas, water etc
- Having strangers in your home. Think about your personal safety and security
- Distractions from neighbours, pets, children, telephone and visitors
- No separation between your personal life and your business
- Restrictions such as a covenant on your home to say that you cannot run a business from it
- Complaints from neighbours about parking
- Your home may not be seen as a professional clinic by the client
- Isolation

**Renting a Room**

This is a popular choice for Shiatsu practitioners as your business is separate from your home life and you have a professional base.

Advantages:
- Low cost. You may only pay by the hour or pay a percentage of your earnings. No unexpected bills from the utility companies
- No responsibility for the maintenance of the property which can be costly
- If the room is within a clinic then the practice will be established and maybe have a client base already
- If other practitioners are also renting rooms then there is a chance for networking and support
- Reception support

Disadvantages:
- You may have to share the room and the other practitioner may not leave it in a clean and tidy state
- Competing with practitioners of other therapies based in the same building
- Rent increases
- No say in the rooms décor or appearance
- Conflicts with other practitioners in the same building
**Having your own Premises**

We are sure this is most practitioners dream and several have fulfilled their dream. However, this is a big commitment and we are sure that someone who has established a practice will tell you it is a lot of commitment and worry to begin with.

Advantages:
- You have complete say over the appearance and décor
- You can choose your location and signage
- Professional image
- You could gain income by renting out rooms
- No travelling around
- A separate work / life business
- Being your own boss
- A base for all your Shiatsu equipment and materials

Disadvantages:
- Cost of the lease or purchase of the building, including legal fees
- Financial problems until the business is established as you still have all those costs to pay
- May need permission for change of use (talk to your local Planning Department)
- Requires a long term commitment
- You will be responsible for the maintenance of the building
- Knowing the legislation such as Health & Safety and electrical inspections
- The clinic needs to be open all the time so you will need holiday cover if you are working there alone

**Location of Clinic**

Location is very important and you need to think about where you want to be. Do you want to work in an urban or rural area? How far away from home?

Town centre clinics can be excellent for passing trade and people knowing you are there but this comes at a price with higher rents, business rates, parking etc. Will the noise be a problem when treating?

Think about where your clients can park or whether you are on a public transport route.

Working in rural areas can often produce more word of mouth referrals as the communities tend to be small and everyone knows each other.

Are you in a crime hotspot? Is security adequate? Insurance premiums vary considerably area to area so it may be worth doing your homework here before committing.

**Partnerships**

Another option is to go into partnership with a colleague(s). If you decide to do this then make sure you choose your partner(s) carefully and don’t let the excitement of the possibilities cloud your judgement. It is crucial to draw up a partnership agreement beforehand that you both agree with. Give yourself plenty of time for this, and get it checked by a lawyer or at least an accountant.

Although time consuming initially it can save you a lot of valuable time and energy further down the line if disputes happens, which often do to some extent.

Make a list of your ‘perfect partner’ which should include personality, ethos, business skills and experience amongst others. As well as legal advice take advice from friends, family and other colleagues as they already know your personality and can judge objectively on the harmony of the potential partnership. You will have to work with your partner(s) often, both in the business and on the business, so it’s important you get on well together as this will affect your own Ki. You might not
be able to find someone who ticks all the boxes but make sure the ones that don't get ticked are not high priority.

Advantages - as running a clinic plus:

- Someone to
  - share the rent costs
  - share ideas (1+1 can sometimes = 3 )
  - cover holiday periods etc
- Mutual support

Disadvantages - as running a clinic plus:

- More costly to start up; legal fees
- More time consuming to start up; partnership agreement, roles and responsibilities etc
- Have to be able to compromise
- Not really your own boss
- Everything has to be decided by both parties
- Potential disputes down the line

**Accounting**

Not everyone has a head for figures. If you are self-employed then you will be responsible for your own tax and national insurance whether you do it yourself or employ an accountant (see Toolkit 1 for further advice on accounting). You will need to make the time to do the paperwork and be strict with yourself to keep up-to-date with it.

**Money**

- Discipline yourself to keep a separate pot of money aside to pay yourself.
- Know the minimum amount you are willing to work for. If someone tries to push you lower, it is ok to say no.
- Consider doing work for free only if it will benefit your own business in the long run. Sometimes it can be great for building connections and lead to future business. Make a judgment and ensure you avoid a loss.
- It is alright to say no sometimes. Don’t feel like you have to take every client at any cost. Clients appreciate honesty. Even if they do choose a cheaper option, they may remember you for future work.
- Clients don’t always realise the amount of time and effort that goes into producing something. Be transparent and educate them so they understand why it costs what it does. Tell them how long you trained for!
- Review your prices every 6 months or so and change them if appropriate. In some cases it may be appropriate to review prices by area e.g. rates are more expensive in London. You can also consider charging different rates for larger commercial or domestic jobs e.g. if working in a luxury spa, and are able to set your own rate, clients will expect to pay more.
- Provide written contracts with a clear cancellation policy to ensure you are not left out of pocket if a client does not turn up for an appointment.

**Insurance**

It goes without saying that you will be insured as a Shiatsu practitioner. However, think about other insurances you may need when you have your own business such as business insurance, business car insurance, sickness insurance, buildings insurance and healthcare insurance.
SWOT Analysis

Once you have considered what sort of business you would like then you will need to analyse it. Your analysis will enable you to see if you are going to target the right sort of client and that you are establishing yourself in the right location. Your analysis will need a formal and focussed approach.

A SWOT analysis is in a way an extension of thinking in terms of pros and cons and will look at your strengths and weaknesses compared to those of your competitors and considers your opportunities and threats that your competitors and the world outside your clinic present. Use bullet points when considering your SWOT to begin with.

STRENGTHS

This section describes the positive qualities that are within your control and add value to your business or give you an edge over the competition. Examine what will make your clinic stand out and encourage clients to visit you. This could include location, your training, membership of the Shiatsu Society etc. You can also include strengths that are not your own such as having a friend or family who can do your accounts or handle social media for your business.

WEAKNESSES

These are the negative factors within your control which will reduce your ability to gain and maintain a competitive edge. Identifying these aspects will enable you to address the problems. Problems could be your lack of experience in running a business, having limited resources, a poor location etc. What can you do to improve these deficiencies? It is important that you are honest with yourself here. No-one likes negativity but considering these will benefit you and become a positive.

OPPORTUNITIES

These are factors that may present themselves but which are external to your business and the areas that you can exploit to your benefit. If someone is opening up a health centre near to your clinic then you may see this as a threat but could you get an opportunity from it such as networking or referrals? Do you feel intimidated at being newly qualified? Well don’t! Your studies are fresh in your mind and someone having 20 years’ experience does not make them a better practitioner than you. Just look at people driving to confirm this.

THREATS

Like opportunities, these are external factors that you cannot control. However, you need to consider them so they become less of a problem. Competition is always a threat, for example, another Shiatsu practitioner may be opening up a clinic in the same town, however, you consider that you are in a better location so you can decide to stay where you are. It may also be a positive in that more people will get to hear about Shiatsu in the area. If another practitioner is more successful than you then try to assess why. Are they in a better location? Do they offer more flexible working hours? Do they run promotions?

Where to go for further advice?

The following links can be invaluable when starting up in business and are also very beneficial to practitioners who have already established a business.

**HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC)**

[www.hmrc.gov.uk](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk)  Tel: 0845 010 9000

The HMRC website is an excellent information source, very easy to navigate around and is extremely useful. They can also supply you with disk calculators to work out your tax and payroll for you.

Did you know HMRC run free workshops all over the country? Contact your local branch for further details.
If you are newly self-employed HMRC have a new guide that will help you to calculate your first tax bill. The guide is designed to encourage you to set money aside for your tax. The guide contains a table with approximate amounts that should be retained for tax and Class 4 National Insurance contributions. [www hmrc.gov.uk/selfemployed/rr1.pdf](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/selfemployed/rr1.pdf)

**Federation of Small Business**

[www.fsb.org.uk](http://www.fsb.org.uk)

The Federation of Small Business has many benefits including legal advice, support, discounted insurance, credit card etc.

**Business Link**

[www.businesslink.gov.uk](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk)

Business Link run groups in all areas for local business men/woman. You usually get together one (very early) morning a month and can share business advice, give presentations etc. This is a great way to make local business contacts such as printers, insurance brokers etc. You also promote your business within the group. There tends to be a loyalty between members of these groups so when they are stressed or have a bad back they will come to you for treatment.

The equivalent for Scotland is ‘Business Gateway’ at [www.business.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.business.scotland.gov.uk)

**My Business**

[www.mybusiness.co.uk](http://www.mybusiness.co.uk)

Visit this website for information on hiring, keeping the best people, a good knowledge of recruiting etc. Further subjects also useful.

**Business Start-Up Tax**

[www.startups.co.uk](http://www.startups.co.uk)

Like it or not, tax is here to stay and it is very important that you are aware of exactly what you’re liable for to ensure you manage your finances appropriately – and keep the inspector at arm’s length! You will find some useful tips and pointers on this site as well as a more comprehensive guide. There is a very straightforward section on the subject entitled ‘Dealing with Tax’.

**Websites**

Whether you are a budding Bill Gates or a total technophobe, having a presence on the web could be key to your business success. The Society offer websites at a very reasonable rate – just £36 p.a. If you would like a free 2-week trial then please contact the office. See the Website Toolkit for further information.

**Telephone Systems**

[www.telecomsadvice.org.uk](http://www.telecomsadvice.org.uk)

This is an independent website for small UK businesses, remote and small office home office workers. It covers the practical applications, benefits and relative costs of using UK business telecommunications, including fixed telephone line, mobile phone services, broadband, VoIP, plus other Information Communication Technologies. This useful and informative site also includes a number of handy fact sheets designed to help small firms set up and implement their own telecom systems themselves.

**What are the inner blocks to your success?**

By Adam Eccleston, Professional Success Coach. adam@one-goal.co.uk
As a success coach, I primarily work with people and business on achieving their short-and long-term goals. I always point it out to my clients that they are the ones who will ultimately achieve their goals – not me. Sometimes I'm left with a look of worry on their faces as if they thought I was just going to magic their dreams up on a plate.

My role as a coach is not that, it’s ultimately about helping people overcome their own self-imposed obstacles so that they can reach their goals quicker. So why work with a coach if you’re only going to have to do the work yourself. The answer is that you don’t often consciously know how you are limiting yourself until I help you check your inner blocks by shining a light on them. This article is part 1 of a 2-part series. Firstly, I will get you thinking differently about the goals you have failed to achieve as well as expose some common blocks that hold people from their desired success. Part 2 will focus on a profound technique you can use to remove the obstacles that get in your way.

**Common blocks to success**

Common blocks to success are the stories, excuses and most frequently the sad reasons why people do not live a better life and do what they really want to. Instead many people play small in life and settle for less than they are capable of achieving, rather than take the plunge, they will opt for safety. Common blocks are:

- Fear of Success
- Fear of failure
- Avoiding conflict
- Daring to be different
- Wanting to always be accepted by others
- Belief that success is bad
- Belief that money is evil
- Belief that you’re not worthy of your goal

There are many more to list but hopefully you get the idea. One thing I will point out about the above blocks is that many of them are very illogical and don’t make sense: e.g. fear of success and that money is evil. Because they make little sense on the surface, this is their true power to hold you back without you even knowing it. And because you wouldn’t usually suspect them to present you don’t even question their existence. Their highest power is that they can even trick you into believing that they help you. This is why my work as a Success Coach is about shining the light to help people make a change.

**Your task before Part 2**

I want you to either think of an existing goal you have that you haven’t achieved yet but in some way you feel that your progress is slower than expected or choose a new goal for the future. Choose a short-to medium-term goal (2-12 months) and most importantly list the action steps you need to take. Chances are that if you don’t make good progress towards your goal it's because you didn’t take the required action and that is because your blocks got in the way.

When we next meet you will learn more about what really stops you from living your best life and fulfilling all the goals you have. I will also be very excited to share with you a profound technique I use to accelerate my clients’ progress towards their goals.

Helen Keller famously said; “Life is either a great adventure or nothing at all”.

Remember ships were not built to stay in the harbour, their calling was to sail the seas battling with the waves and exploring all the world has to offer. Like ships, I believe we have a purpose in life to explore, expand and grow. But unfortunately our blocks to success become the No 1 reason why we play safe and ultimately choose an average life when a fantastic one was always an option.

I encourage you to set a goal, set your sails and do what you were built for!
Further Reading

All of the other Toolkits available on the Society’s website at http://www.shiatsusociety.org/members/tips-practitioners


E-myth Revisited - Why Most Small Businesses Don't Work and What to Do About It
By Michael E. Gerber
**Top 10 Business Mistakes – and How to Avoid Them**
*Created by the Million Clients Company*

**Using this document**
We want this document to stand the test of time so when you refer back to it, the information is still relevant. Therefore, as some business requirements are updated, we have omitted details of any obligations that you may be required to follow. You are strongly recommended to research the latest legal requirements or speak to business specialists should you wish to follow any suggestions that appear within this document.
This document contains our personal opinions and is provided in good faith. We are not liable for any business decisions you make or for the results that those decisions bring. You are not under any obligation to implement any content within this document.

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**Introduction**

We want to help your business succeed. We hope to do this by sharing our experiences and by promoting your services or products through our contacts.

This is the first guide that you will receive. More adviceguidesinformation will be sent to you if and when your services or products start being promoted through our retail contacts. This way, you receive the information in a suitable timescale.
We create this guide to highlight the errors that some businesses make so you can avoid similar pitfalls. We hope that all readers will benefit from the following information in some way.

**Mistake 1: Not being popular**

The current popularity of your business can directly influence the number of customers you gain in the future. This is because it can impact upon on what potential customers think of it.

**How might your current business popularity affect you?**

To demonstrate potential repercussions for an unpopular business, imagine a scenario where a home-owner wants to hire a builder for a renovation project. One of the first things they may do is ask friends or family for recommendations of builders who have provided a good service to them before. This approach can automatically give a potential customer confidence. A business that has not previously provided a service for friends or family may never even be considered by the home-owner.

Taking this further, imagine what might happen if the home-owner asks two builders to come to the property for more information and maybe provide a quote. One builder has worked constantly for many months. The other builder has not had any work and is struggling. If all other things were equal and assuming the work wasn’t urgent, many people will probably want to use the services of the busier business.

If your business is popular, it can instil confidence in customers who are thinking of using your services or products. The benefits are two-fold:

1. People who have already used your services or products may recommend you to others.
2. You can demonstrate to potential customers that you are a busy and successful business.

**How can your business be more popular?**

There are many ways that you could make your business more popular. You could:

- Advertise your business, encouraging people to use your services or products.
- Build relationships with local businesses and encourage their customers or staff to use your services or products.
- Have your services or products promoted by reputable companies.

Once a business has become popular, they can communicate with their customers that they have, for example, served a number of people in the past month or that they sold a number of products in the last quarter. This information could be communicated via a poster, an email, a casual mention in conversation, etc.

**How we can support you**

Receiving our support means your services and/or products could be promoted through some of the UK’s largest online retailers. This can represent a significant advantage to your business.
More new customers using your services or products can mean your business is being recommended to more people. This could give you access to an even larger number of potential customers than those initially generated.

Your business could also enjoy the kudos of being promoted by large, credible retailers. A casual mention to people that you now sell your services or products through a specific retail partner could indicate to customers that you have an established professional business that is both popular and successful.

**Mistake 2: Missing the Internet chatter**

Facebook (www.facebook.com) and Twitter (www.twitter.com) can help your business build close relationships with current and potential customers. If your business does not currently use these websites then it could be missing out.

Every day, thousands of people across the UK use Facebook and Twitter to share information. Could a fraction of them share information about you and your business? If they did, it could significantly increase the awareness, and potentially the sales, of your services or products – without you spending any money.

**Exploration leads to discovery**

If you have never used these websites before, you may want to visit them. You can then browse how other people and businesses use these channels.

Once you have understood how they can be used, you can start developing your own pages on these websites and communicating with current and potential customers.

**Communicate with many people, all at once**

The messages you send to people via Twitter or Facebook could be passed on and eventually be read by many more people. Equally, any feedback that people provide to your business via Facebook or Twitter could be read by many people too. This is a simple way to tell people about your business.

If you are not a regular visitor to these websites then consider that people may be communicating about your business on these websites right now. And, without a presence on these websites, it can be virtually impossible for you to interact with these people.

**Managing the channels**

Getting a page on, for example, Facebook, can be just the first step. For example, you could your page to:

- Explain more about the products or services you offer (and their respective benefits).

- Offer advice in your particular field of specialism (e.g. restaurants could include recipe ideas, details of foods in season, or wines to accompany specific meals).

- Answer any customer questions you receive.

Interacting with people through these websites, en masse, and demonstrating that you are meeting their need could represent a significant opportunity.
Your next consideration may be in getting people to interact with your Facebook page. To achieve this, you could incentivise your customers to visit; maybe asking your current customers to become a fan of your Facebook page.

**Managing your presence**

Business that benefit most from Facebook or Twitter often view these channels as central to how their business communicates with customers.

You can change your user preferences on Facebook so it becomes easier to manage. For example you could set it to automatically receive an email when someone writes a message on your Facebook page. This can give you the opportunity to respond to comments in a timely fashion.

**How we can support you**

You can receive our guide ‘Using Facebook for your business’ which offers step by step advice on putting your business onto Facebook. It offers practical information on setting up, and growing your Facebook page.

**Mistake 3: Not listening to customers**

Businesses would fail without their customers. With this in mind, it is a great shame that many businesses do not take the time to understand what their customers want and do not set out to meet their needs.

**Communicating with customers**

A helpful (yet often overlooked) exercise can simply be to regularly talk with customers and listen to their opinions. This can help the business keep in touch with its customers and ensure it is moving in the right direction. With a knowledge of what customers want, everyone in the business can tailor the work they do to better meet customers’ needs (which can lead to attracting more customers in the future).

**Learning about your customers**

Imagine how helpful it would be to know the answers to these questions:

- Why do people choose your services or products over those of similar businesses?
- Why do customers use your services or products again and again?
- What is it about your services or products that customers particularly like (and probably more importantly, dislike)?

An easy way to find out the answers to these questions and more is to simply ask your customers when they experience your services or at the time they purchase your products. This can give you a useful ‘taster’ for how they feel. A more formal process may involve creating a questionnaire which asks specific questions and probes key areas relevant to the success of your business in greater depth.

**The power of the questionnaire**
Researching your customers with the aid of a questionnaire can be extremely valuable. You can gather vast amounts of information about them and, with accurate interpretation, can align your business more closely with their requirements.

Creating a questionnaire from the beginning may seem daunting. To make it more manageable, you can break the process down into a series of smaller steps.

First, consider writing a list of what you want to find out about your customers. When you have a list, you can place each point into one of two columns: ‘interesting to know’ and ‘helpful for future decisions’. Although some things will be interesting to know, it may be worth only asking questions that will influence your business decisions/development in the future. That’s because longer questionnaires may result in fewer people completing it.

Once you have a definitive list of what you would like to find out, you can start grouping them into natural categories. For example, categories could include:

● Why do customers use your services or products? Knowing this information could help you identify new reasons why people may use your business – which could help you create more appropriate adverts in the future.

● What do customers honestly think of your services or products? This can help you understand how loyal they may be to your business or what might motivate them to continue spending money with your business. It can also highlight the key benefits your services or products provide – again this could be used in future adverts, etc.

● Who uses your services or products? What percentage of your customers are men/women or younger/older? Knowing this can help you focus on attracting the right people to your business in future.

What do the results tell you?

Imagine a restaurant that offers mid-pricing dining. They may have noticed that revenue had decreased over a period of 6 months. To find out why, the owner of the restaurant conducts a questionnaire of diners over a 7-day period. The research shows that people have started using a lower-price restaurant that recently opened in the local area. This basic information (yet which may be surprisingly common), can be extremely powerful.

Now they have this information, they can combat the situation. It may mean the restaurant develops some ways to get clients returning. It could introduce a ‘special meal deal’ on a particular day of the week, expand the items at the lower priced end of the menu, or start communicating other benefits about the menu (such as healthiness or ingredients used) more strongly instead of price.

Without conducting a questionnaire, the restaurant could gently (or steeply) decline. No-one would have understood why the decline happened and, as a result, the people may not be able to do much about it (unless by luck rather than accurate insight).

How we can support you

Our Marketing Handbook gives useful step by step advice on writing questionnaires. It also contains numerous template questions you could ask clients and what the answers might mean for your business. It can also help you get the most from questionnaires and the answers they generate.
Mistake 4: Not knowing the goals

Goals help us clarify what we want to achieve and ensure everyone within the business is moving in the same direction.

To emphasise the importance of goals, imagine a football match without any goals in which to score. Players would simply run around kicking the ball to each other with no objective. Matches would never end and there would be no result. A goal can give everyone within your business a purpose and a definite result to work towards.

How you could set goals for your business

A popular method for setting goals follows the acronym SMART. Following this approach means your goals are:

● Specific – Pinpointing exactly what you want to achieve can help everyone be clear.
● Measurable – You need to know if you have achieved your goal or not. Therefore, a goal stating ‘increase sales a lot by the start of next month’ may not be as effective as ‘increase sales of incense sticks by 20% by July 1st’.
● Attainable – The goals you set for business should be attainable. Equally though, they need to stretch the people involved and help to move your business forward. As every business is unique, an attainable goal for one business may not be attainable for another.
● Relevant – Is the goal relevant to what you want to achieve personally/professionally? Before you omit to a goal, you can think whether it’s what you really want to achieve. Again, this will be personal to your specific circumstances or business.
● Timely – You need to have a timescale within which to achieve your goal. This can help create an end-point when you will know whether you have achieved the goal or not.

Breaking down your business into goals

Goals can be set on an annual, a monthly, a weekly, a daily or even an hourly basis. It may be useful to start goal-setting by writing down all the goals you would like your business to achieve within the year. Once these main goals have been defined, you can split them into goals which you would like to work towards during a specific month, breaking it down further on a weekly basis too.

The same SMART approach can work regardless of the timescale you apply to each goal. For example, if your annual goal is to increase the scale of your business by 200 new customers, then you can start breaking this down to a monthly target (maybe 17 new customers a month or maybe more new customers in your busiest times of the year and less in your quieter times).

Once you know what your goals are, you can then start identifying how you want to achieve them.

To help you create a plan for generating 200 new customers within the next 12 months, you could write down answers to some of these questions:

● What can you do to gain new customer?
● What help or advice would help you get more new customers?
● Who could help you achieve your goal?

How we can support you
The Million Clients Company could help your business achieve goals based upon increasing the number of customers your business serves and creating more revenue-generating opportunities. We can do this by promoting your services or products through our retail contacts.

The advice we give you could also help you raise the profile of your business and achieve other business goals you may have.

**Mistake 5: Not maximising communication**

Good communication can help people learn more about your business. When people are aware of and interested in your services or products, they may be more likely to purchase.

Many businesses do not use some of the most powerful communication tools available. They may be experts at creating posters, in using business cards, etc, but there are many ways to communicate to customers. Businesses that restrict themselves to only a few channels could be losing revenue-generating opportunities.

As an example, imagine you have a nail salon business and you notice that few people have treatments on a Tuesday morning. You decide to solve this by offering a 50% discount to those people who book a service for forthcoming Tuesday mornings. To tell people about your special offer, you create a poster and place it in a prominent place within your salon. You also give a promotional leaflet to your clients when they pay for their treatments.

These can be very good methods and may be successful. However, there may also be some flaws to the idea.

- You may predominantly be communicating to people who already know about your services or who are already experiencing your services or who are already experiencing your services on a regular basis. This could mean you simply encourage customers who were booking in on a Saturday and paying full price, to book in on a Tuesday morning and pay less. To overcome this, you may look to communicate with those people who have never used your business before or maybe used your business services 6 months ago and not since – these people are ‘lapsed’ and would never see your poster or leaflet. The special offer may encourage them to come back to you.

- People may not notice or read the promotional literature. Leaflets and posters can often blend into the background. To overcome this, you may wish to consider a more direct method of communication. Direct marketing is delivered straight to a customer (or former customer) and encourages them to act.

**Methods of direct marketing**

Gathering customers’ email addresses and mobile telephone numbers (and gaining their permission to use this data for marketing purposes) can give you the option to tell a wider audience about special offers, useful information, advice after-care services, interesting articles, etc. This can be a useful way of maintaining a relationship with your customers. Equally, there are numerous ways to maintain contact with customer: text messages, emails, post are three popular methods (and can be successful for many businesses). Storing customer data for these activities may require compliance with the Data Protection Act so we strongly urge you to seek up to date advice on this point.

**The power of text messages**
Businesses text messaging can be incredibly powerful as the texts are direct, instant and often aim to encourage a fast response – which can be valuable if you are looking for an instant sales boost or your service venue is quiet on a particular day.

For example:
10% off a haircut if booked by 2pm today. Call 0207 111 2222 for details. Terms apply. Text STOP to 12345 to stop offers.

Having worked to get a client to use your services, or a customer to purchase your goods, it may be a missed opportunity if your business did not communicate with them again. Direct marketing such as text messages, emails or letters through the post, could help you maintain the relationship.

How we can support you

The Million Clients Company can help business keep in contact with current or former customers.

We can send out a text message to 10 customers of your business who have agreed to receive such promotional materials. This represents a wonderful opportunity to share information about your services or products directly to customers.

Mistake 6: Missing chances to earn more

Earning revenue from customers can help you achieve your financial ambitions. You may therefore wish to identify areas where you could increase the money you make from each customer who uses your services or currently purchases a product. Two methods may assist you in this.

● Upselling
A customer walking through your door represents a wonderful opportunity to encourage them to buy more items than they may have anticipated buying. This process is called ‘upselling’. Restaurants can do this when people come for a main meal and they get asked if they would like a drink, a side order of vegetables or an extra portion of salad.

● Cross-selling
Cross-selling occurs when someone purchases a service or product, and they end up purchasing something additional in a related area. For example, if you are a masseur, then you could cross-sell oils or classes so customers can learn and perform some useful massage techniques themselves.

Planning to sell more

If you have not previously upsold or cross-sold, it could be worth planning your approach so it comes across smoothly and naturally when you are with customers.

You could consider what services or products you would upsell or cross-sell to each customer.

You may then wish to spend a few moments thinking how you might introduce this to customers. For example, if they originally purchase a scented candle, what could you say or do to encourage them to purchase candle holder? Thinking of your approach, then refining it over time may help you eventually develop a successful process for upselling or cross-selling.

Increasing frequency

A customers’ relationship with your business need not finish when they have made a purchase. In fact, many successful businesses may consider that a buying customer represents a wonderful
opportunity to increase revenue further. It may therefore be worth thinking of reasons why a customer should return to you more regularly than they do currently. If you have their contact details you can contact them again to encourage a revisit for future services or products. For example, visiting a hair salon every 4-5 weeks could help clients maintain healthy hair and ensure they look their best. These could be useful messages to promote to those customers who currently only visit your salon every 8 weeks or longer.

**How we can support you**

The Million Clients Company can promote your products and services to some of the UK’s major retailers. This could lead your business enjoying many more customers coming through your door. Each of these new customers can represent a wonderful opportunity to upsell and cross-sell your services and products - helping your business increase revenue.

**Mistake 7: Not using Public Relations**

You can use Public Relations (or PR) to tell other people about your business, story, promotion or message without a significant financial outlay. PR is therefore noticeably different to advertising which have been purchased.

**Creating a successful press release**

A press release is a popular starting point for communicating your PR activities. It is a tailored piece of business literature that gives journalists relevant information about the story you wish to communicate. They are often the primary communication tool for telling journalists about your work so it can be a very useful document.

There are some useful tips which could encourage a journalist to read your press release:

- Write in the appropriate style. Press releases are different to leaflets, brochures, websites and other promotional literature your business may use. Not adhering to commonly used (yet very simple) writing style can prevent your press release from being read or taken seriously.

- Follow a recognised press release format. There are a few common techniques that can help create a successful format. This can include the use of headings, indentations and line spacing. These straight-forward tips should help make your release more readable and accessible.

**Communicating your message**

Newspapers and magazines have a ‘lead time’. That is, the time between the deadline for submitting a press release and the time it takes for the publication to be available for people to read. You will need to take lead time into account if you want to communicate time-sensitive information such as a sale or special offer. You can decrease lead time problems by distributing your press release through the internet. This is because many websites rely on sharing news stories quickly. Placing your press releases on the internet could also increase the potential number of journalists and members of the public who see it. This means your story could be on the internet within hours – influencing people to use your services and products.

If you choose to send your press release for publication in newspapers and magazines, then you can follow up its sending with a telephone call to the relevant journalist. This can also be a useful opportunity to build rapport, determine if they have received your press release and answer any questions they may have about it.
How we can support you
The Million Clients Company has created many press releases which have generated coverage on television, in newspapers, in magazines, and on the internet. Business that receive our support can use our guide which offers advice on writing a press release in an appropriate format and in a style that can help communicate messages effectively.

Mistake 8: Ignoring the competition

If your business fails to communicate the value of its products or services, above that of other business, then people may spend their money with competitors.

Who are your competitors?
If customers do not spend their money with your business, then they could be spending it on a mortgage or rent, on food, petrol or on social activities such as cinema tickets, music or concerts. The list of essential and tantalising purchases is almost never-ending.

In a wider sphere, anything that people spend money on could be considered ‘competition’. To make the idea of competition more manageable, it may be worthwhile focusing on those businesses which offer similar services in a similar catchment area to your business. For example, if you are a massage therapist specialising in treating back problems, then you may consider all other massage therapists within a 20 mile radius of your business as your competition. Equally, you could consider any other therapist who works within this area and helps relieve back pain as a competitor.

You and your competition
When you have defined who your competitors are, you can assess the advantages and disadvantages that each business has (including your own). To achieve this, you can consider why people might spend money with your competitors. Then, why people might not spend money with them.

At the same time as looking at your competitors, you can think of reasons why people may like to spend money with your business. Finally, you can consider the reasons why people may not wish to spend money with you.

Communicating your advantages
Having built a picture of your business and the competition, you can compare your advantages with the disadvantages of your competition. It could then be worth promoting these key advantages in your adverts, posters, etc. The quality and quantity of these points can lead to more appealing communications.

For example, if one of your main advantages is that you are more affordable than other massage therapist, you could put your prices in your adverts.

How we can support you
A significant advantage you may have over your competition is that you receive support from The Million Clients Company. The contacts and advice we can provide could help your business grow faster and larger than your competition, and we could help you get more customers. Our support can help place your business in a stronger position than your competition.

Mistake 9: Lacking consistency
If you walk into any McDonald’s in the world, you can order a Big Mac and be extremely certain of how it will taste. The level of consistency that McDonald’s achieves can give people confidence to visit them time after time.

So with that in mind, an interesting question to consider is: how consistent is your business?

When we use the term consistent, we are focusing on the consistency that clients experience when they interact with your business. Are they seeing the same message throughout their experience with your business, or does it differ on who they meet, when they come, etc? If so, where do the differences occur and why do they take place?

To help you assess the consistency of your business, you could pretend to be a customer and experience your service or product as they would. If, for example, you run a manicure business, the steps could include:

- The booking process
- The first impressions when they walk in to your nail salon
- The greeting they get when they open the door
- The quality of the service they receive
- The overall impression they have of the environment (what they see, hear, feel and smell during their treatment)
- The process of leaving your salon
- Any after-sales service or care they receive

This list is by no means exhaustive and your business may have many more steps. However, the principal is the same. And interestingly, it may surprise many that the actual service that people purchase is probably only one part of the experience that customers will have with your business.

Once you have an impression of what your customers may be thinking at each step, you can consider whether it delivers consistency.

How we can support you

As part of the support you receive from The Million Clients Company, you can receive a Marketing Handbook. This will explain how you can take a closer look at your business and identify what it represents to other people. The Marketing Handbook will also help you delve deeper into the journey your customers take. Plus, it offers several practical suggestions on how you can deliver a seamless approach to your business, including:

- The service or products you provide
- The environment they take place in
- The promotional activities you do
- The prices you charge

Mistake 10: Not using testimonials

Word of mouth (when people talk to other people about a business) is considered by many to be one of the most powerful ways of generating more customers for a business.

With this in mind, you could be asking yourself a question: How can potential customers listen to positive messages about your business?
There could be a relatively straight forward answer. You may be able to gather positive customer feedback yourself and pass it on to existing and potential customers.

Gathering several testimonials can have the added benefit of highlighting to potential customers that your business is very popular (which, as we have seen, can help to attract even more customer). Therefore, many businesses aim to collect and communicate as many positive testimonials as possible.

**How you can use testimonials**

Positive testimonials can be very powerful so you may want to communicate them in several different places, including:

- On your website
- On the back of your business card
- As a recording on your telephone message (if you have one)
- On promotional flyers, brochures etc.
- In presentations you do or give to potential customers or business partners
- On posters around your business premises (where customers may see them)

**Getting the answers that you want**

If customers go through several steps during their experience with your business then you may wish to communicate testimonials about different aspect of your services or product. To do this, you can focus your testimonials on a specific area of your business. For example, you could ask customers to answer the question ‘Please explain how thorough the consultation process was’. Alternatively, if you are faced with a larger or more popular competitor, you could ask your customers to answer the question ‘Please explain why you chose our business instead of a competitor’.

**Seeking approval from clients**

If you wish to communicate a testimonial that a customer has provided, you will probably require their written permission before you can use it. This is something you may need to consider before preparing any documents for gathering testimonials.

**How we can support you**

Those who receive support from The Million Clients Company can receive a template testimonial questionnaire. They can then use this to gather testimonials on their business. It can also inspire them to create their own testimonial questionnaire too.

In addition, our handbook offers advice on how clients can give focused feedback, how your business could gain their permission to use their feedback and how testimonials might be used to promote your services and products.

**Conclusion**

We hope that this guide has given some useful advice and helps your business develop. Please feel free to keep it for future reference. If some points are not currently relevant to your circumstances or business, maybe they will be in the future.
The Million Clients Company offers free advice to businesses who want our support. You will receive this advice directly into your email inbox at appropriate times.

In the meantime, we will be working hard letting our retail contacts know about your services and/or products.