

A Thriving Practice

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In less than a year in full-time private practice, I had a full caseload of my ideal clients, networked and found my referral sources, and created a successful six-figure business. Here's how:

Raise your hand if you have a business or marketing degree? I know I don't. Like most therapists, I have a degree in counseling, psychology, marriage & family therapy, or social work. And those degrees do not spend much (or any) time in graduate school preparing us for the business side of our careers. Those degrees have prepared us to be AMAZING clinicians, which you are. However your potential

clients cannot benefit from your services, let alone even find you without these necessary skills such as networking, growing our niche, and having an abundant mindset.

On a weekly basis I find myself saying "I'm so lucky" for the success I have had in private practice. Then I quickly correct this statement, as it has not been luck; it has been work. Hard work. None of which I learned in

school. I had to educate myself on how to promote a business. How to think of myself as a business in a helping field, where it is often considered "taboo" to want to be successful and make money for being a therapist.

Let me sum up my experience and most helpful strategies! No reason to re-invent the wheel when there is a process that works.



In This Guide:

- My Go-To Marketing Strategies
- The Private Practice Mindset
- To Niche or Not To Niche

Networking

From this point forward, we are replacing the term networking with connecting. There seems to be a negative association with networking which prevents some from even moving forward.

Here is the great news: as therapists, we are already skilled at connecting with others! Now let's put that to work and connect with people that could grow our business. Share your story, your passion, your services, and products to those that need to know and could benefit. Here is how I networked:

Connect With Your Referral Sources

Create a list of providers that you would like to connect with. Who are the providers that see your clients before they find you? This could include pediatricians, OBGYNs, churches, school counselors, etc.

For example: I specialize in the treatment of anxiety disorders so I reached out to physicians that specialize in gastrointestinal disorders, a physician that specialized in dizziness, and OBGYNs of anxious new moms.

Now how do you feel the most comfortable reaching out to them? By phone? Walking into their office? By letter? I have found no right or wrong answer other than not reaching out to these potential referral sources at all. Find the method that feels right for you and begin sharing why their clients need you!



My Go-To Marketing Strategies

If you are like many therapists (or any Average Joe for that matter), you cringe when you hear the word “marketing.” It feels anxiety provoking, uncomfortable, or possibly sleazy. Why is that? Does marketing sound like you have to sell yourself? Do you worry you will come off like the used car salesman or telemarketers you dread interacting with? My goal is to help you think of marketing in a different way that feels authentic to you and no longer “icky.”

I have defined some of the

most beneficial marketing strategies not only for myself, but for any business. I have tailored them to our field and how to get over our own internal barriers. They are categorized into four main groups and then broken down into smaller tips and tricks:

- Networking
- Website
- Online Profile
- Social Media

Networking (cont)

Coffee and Lunches

When possible, I meet a colleague for lunch or coffee. The more opportunities you have to meet someone, they can learn about your business and you can learn about theirs. Another connection is made and a possible referral source.

Groups

Off the top of your head, how many therapy or business groups are you a part of? Whether online or face-to-face, are you meeting people, talking business, and promoting what you do? If not, start today! Join Facebook groups (or start your own like I did), start a consultation group, join the Chamber of Commerce, or other business organizations.

Emails

Email communication is the

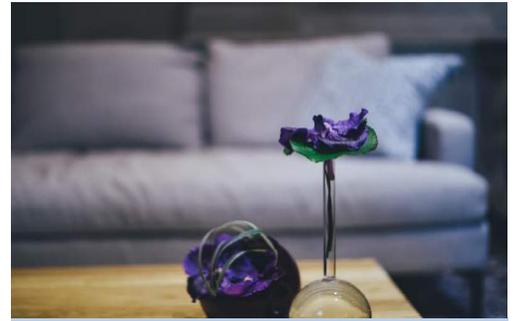
quickest and simplest form of communication, and along with texts, how most communicate today. When I began my business, I emailed over 150 school counselors and attached my business card. Who can you reach out to?

Meet Your Fellow Therapists

We will discuss the fear behind becoming friends with your fellow therapists more in the Private Practice Mindset. However please know: this is a good thing. It is helpful. It leads to referrals. If you believe that your local therapists are the competition and enemy, this is the scarcity mindset, which does not build successful businesses.

Thank You

Lastly, a simple notecard thanking a physician for their referral reminds them of your practice. With a few more business cards included ;)



Online Profile

If you have a Private Practice, you have most likely heard of PsychologyToday. So why is a PsychologyToday profile so beneficial and helpful to obtaining clients? 1.) Most of our clients do their own research into finding a therapist nowadays, 2.) They do so online, and 3.) PsychologyToday is the first website that appears on a Google Search.

Here is what that means: When your ideal client searches for a therapist in your town, PsychologyToday is the FIRST website (and often second AND third) that pops up. If you are not subscribed, you are possibly missing out on many clients that need your services.

Cost? I pay \$30/month for my online profile. For \$360/year, I only need *2.5 sessions a year* to make it worth that cost, and I typically receive at least *2-3 calls per week* from this profile alone.

If you would like to try it for 6 months **FREE**, email me your name and email address, and I can send you a referral link:

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Website

Think back to the last time you needed information on a business. Was it a menu for a restaurant? A product at a store? The price for an oil change? We go to the business's website for this information. If there is no website, we move on to the next business.

I could create an entire guide on what to include on your website and how to catch your ideal client's attention. At this time though, I am just going to emphasize that this is an absolute necessity! Clients want to look you up and if they cannot find the information they need easily, they will find somewhere they can.

Social Media

Whether we want to admit it or not, we are in the age of social media and our clients are on social media...all of the time. I think about how often I look up a company on Facebook, purchase a product because I saw their Facebook Ad, or began following a company because I connected with their posts. I have received numerous referrals that stated that they saw me on social media and they felt I was the right fit. *The first tip:* don't try to do every social media avenue. Pick one or two. *Second tip:* don't pick a social media avenue that you don't like or feel uncomfortable with. You will be posting a lot, so you want to choose an avenue that is painless for you.

Social Media Posts

Make every post intentional and think of how you can connect with your ideal client. What articles do they want to read, what tips do they need, and services do you recommend to them. Target that audience.

Facebook Ads

Boosting my posts or creating an ad has been shown to be financially advantageous. For a minimal cost (you choose the amount, but for example \$4/day for 7 days), you pick who you want to target and where. I pick what age range, the radius around my office, and even what these potential clients have searched for in the past. I have received new clients from these Facebook Ads, as can you!



A Private Practice Mindset

I remember the fear when I first went full-time. Wondering if I would have enough clients, if my schedule would be full, if I would have a paycheck, and if my business would survive. Due to these worries, it led to this scarcity mindset that I needed to schedule every referral that called, whether or not they were the right fit for me. A mindset that there are not enough clients available and we are all in competition with each other.

Quickly through time and experience I realized that this mindset does not lead to a successful business. It actually results in the opposite. A more stressful

caseload as we are not seeing our ideal client. Fewer referral sources as I had not connected with colleagues. And a less hopeful perspective, which impacts success.

Let's talk about a mindset of abundance: There are enough clients for everyone. Clients that want to see me will see me. Working with my fellow colleagues actually results in more referrals.

If this feels foreign or false, I understand. Scarcity comes from a place of fear, but there is no truth to those worries. I encourage you to adopt an abundance mindset with the trust that those thriving businesses before us have seen it work!

To Niche or Not To Niche

This has been a longstanding debate: Should we, as providers, be “generalized” and market to everyone? Or should we pick a specialty, have an ideal client in mind, and market to that niche? Which is going to be better for our 1.) business, 2.) fill our caseload, and 3.) leave me feeling fulfilled at the end of the day because I am doing work that I am actually competent in?

I am sure you can already tell which way I am leaning but let me tell you why. First, that generalized practice is coming from the scarcity mindset. Doing it all is an attempt to reach “everyone” in fear of not missing out on one single client. This is the provider that checks every diagnosis/population on their PsychologyToday profile, or lists every diagnosis on their website, indicating that they “treat it all.” This actually has the opposite effect.

Imagine when you have sought out services for a physical or mental health concern. You may have asked friends for recommendations or you searched online. Let me ask you: Did you go for the provider that was “good” at 30 different things or extremely well trained and specialized in that one thing you were needing treatment for? I know whom I am going to see.

Second, when it comes to branding, we want your name, picture, and business to becoming associated with that niche. When someone asks me for a referral for eating disorders in my area, I can tell him or her the name of a referral. When someone asks me for a grief therapist in my area, I can tell him or her a name. If they ask for a couples counselor, again, I have a name. Do you know whose names I cannot come up with? Someone who does everything because I am not sure what their “thing” is or what they are really great at.

If you worry that your entire caseload will only be one population, which you fear could be monotonous, that is not the case either. Other clientele will still find you and call you. However your schedule will wind up around a 70/30 balance of ideal clients to other populations. Ultimately, you have the right to accept whom you want but it finally becomes a caseload of clients that you look forward to coming to work to every day.

So tell me, what is your niche? Can you get it down to one population or diagnosis? I understand how you are feeling right now reading this. It was so scary for me the first time I edited my website and profiles to narrow down my niche. I worried that I was going to miss out on possible clients. But the opposite happened! My ideal client I was looking for was finally able to find me.

When you market to everyone, you market to no one.

About Amanda Petrik-Gardner, LCPC-RPT-S

Amanda is a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor, Board Approved Supervisor, and Registered Play Therapist-Supervisor, in Private Practice in Topeka, KS. She specializes in the treatment of anxiety disorders both in-office and online. Amanda has her undergraduate degree from Kansas State University in Psychology and her Master's degree from the University of Kansas in Counseling Psychology. She is trained in cognitive behavioral therapy for anxiety disorders, Exposure & Response Prevention for OCD, Trauma Focused CBT, Trauma Focused CBT for Childhood Traumatic Grief, Prolonged Exposure Therapy for PTSD, Eye Movement Desensitization & Reprocessing, Parts 1 & 2, Gottman Method Couples Counseling Levels 1 & 2, and more. Contact Amanda for more information on her services, supervision, and consultation.



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