

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A GUERILLA TO RETAIL

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*Retailing products to your clients need not be intimidating or frightening. In our profession, it seems as if many therapists feel retailing makes them aggressive, or "Sales Guerilla". The truth is, many massage professionals have learned the benefits of offering follow-through products for their clients, and you can too.

It's not as difficult as you might think, even if you're just not a "salesperson" type.

Think about the message you are hoping to convey to your client about you and your practice. These traits are all positive and strong emotions you either share with your client or strive instill in them in regards you what you have to offer. You want your clients to feel safe in your care, and that you are indeed the expert. You want to convey confidence in your care and build that client loyalty. You want to be seen with integrity and gain your client trust. And above all else you want that client to know YOU BELIEVE you can help facilitate pain relief, stress relief, aid in management, and provide sound treatment and advice.

So if you have worked hard to make all these things come together and you have begun to build this rapport with your client base, WHY is it so darned terrifying to offer items for retail?

*The truth is you don't have to be a professional salesperson to be able to fluidly offer and explain information about a product. When it's done with honesty, integrity and with the intention always on the client's well- being, it will feel natural. When your heart is in the right place, and your *intention* is to provide health and wellness for your client, it will come through. People can feel when someone truly is sincere and has good intentions. *No one in their right mind wants to ever feel like they have been SOLD.

*Here are a few ways you can make the word "sales" less scary. Thinking of yourself as a salesperson is perhaps not the proper way to approach successful retailing. Many therapists just aren't wired that way. Thinking of sales as something **extra** you do outside of treatment really is not accurate either, because providing solutions for your client's issue is part of the treatment and should come as a natural progression in your assessment of the client.

When a client is discussing issues of concern about their health, chances are, in addition to the proper treatment methods to pursue, you also might know of a product that will help them. Encourage questions, after all, **you** are the professional, and shouldn't you feel compelled to offer the client relief when you know of something that can help? You are a healer, first and foremost. And as a healer, it's natural to want to provide solutions to problems causing pain and discomfort. The first thing to identify is the type of therapy your services provide. Is your practice geared toward sports massage, relaxation massage, eastern therapies, holistic, energetic, spa, rehab or something else entirely? Once you have established what kind of market your clients comprise, you can begin to select products appropriate to your practice, as well as offering the greatest possibility of sell through.

*Let's use sports massage as an example. Products appropriate for retailing in this type of environment would be hot and cold packs, analgesics, stretching tools, muscle relaxing bath soaks, exercise balls and so forth. The clientele for this type of massage would be more inclined to buy these types of items from their therapist because this is in the same realm as the therapy they seek from you. For these sports buffs cleanliness is also important, and maybe you share with them how to clean their equipment in an eco friendly and green inspired way. If you are offering more indulgent treatments, offering items such as body scrubs and candles might work well in this space. Appropriate relaxation products such as essential oils, buckwheat pillows, lamp rings, bath salts, sugar scrubs, salt scrubs, and scented lotions would be ideal retail items for spa, holistic and energetic therapy types.

*Speak about products of which you have firsthand knowledge. Perhaps you have used a brand of topical analgesic that has assisted you in relieving muscle pain. Maybe you have found relief in using a hot or cold pack on a joint that caused you trouble. You might have used exercise balls or resistance bands to help stretch your muscles and tone problem areas. Your recommendation of a product, relaying your own personal knowledge and experience reads as truthful and competent; not pushy or money-driven. As a professional, your clients look to you to be knowledgeable and make recommendations about their self-care, as well as the care you provide in your treatment. Be sure you share with them ways they can benefit from some of the products you can provide to them. Listen to the cues you receive from your clients. Listen for phrases that begin with: "Oh I love the way my skin feels!" "What was that wonderful scent you used?" "I wish my skin could feel this soft all the time." "I want to get some of that stuff you used on my shoulder, it really relieved the pain." These are all cues signaling the type of products your clients would buy following a treatment

*The same can be said of "pampering" products you can retail as well. It's far easier to describe the benefits of a sugar scrub when you have experienced one for yourself. This philosophy can apply to virtually any product you will want to offer as retail goods. For instance, if you want to offer pillows, be sure you have had the experience of sleeping on them as well. When you speak of a product using descriptive words outlining what the product does, as well as its benefits, it will make the customer feel more comfortable with their decision to try it. *Typically, people make buying decisions based on how a product or service will make them feel. This can range a gamut of emotion from joy to awe, love to humor. The goal is to evoke a positive emotion about a product through your own words and truths. If you can relay this information from personal experience, you inevitably will see a rise in your retail revenue. You also will feel good about the recommendations because you are certain about the quality and result of the products you offer.

When you look at retailing as part of the natural progression of your treatment, it makes offering peripheral products far less intimidating. When you can relay positive and truthful information about your products, how they work and the results you have experienced, you aren't "selling." You are sharing useful information about products to fulfill a need in the daily life of your client. When you feel confident about your product offering, you will find your ability to share comes more naturally. Your customers will certainly appreciate it and so will your bottom line!

*The second piece to a successful retail program is presentation. Let's start with your waiting area. Maybe you have thought about making a small array of items available to your clients after their massage, but you are just unsure about how to make them attractive without seeming overwhelming or pushy. *Start with a well placed Menu of Services with all your prices and descriptions clearly stated. If there is a holiday nearing, capitalize on this and use it in your menu offering. The good news is that you can create tasteful and elegant displays for your chosen retail items that enhance the calm and serenity of your treatment room or facility. *Merchandising and displaying items for resale such as gift certificates and other smaller items in your practice need not cost a fortune. A few well-placed items, some planning and a little imagination can create an atmosphere of pampering, self-indulgence and continued self-care for your clients to take home with them.

*There are a myriad of ways to display your chosen lines; the key is simplicity, as will keep the "cluttered" feeling to a minimum and allow the products to be the true stars of the display. Additionally, lighting your displays is important too, and shadows kept to a minimum.

*Often, finding related props that can help create a certain feel in your display is not as hard as you might think. Natural elements are easy to find and can assist in creating an attractive display. Here my treatment room is inspired by Bali, with Natural woods and fibers, contrasting textures, and exotic floral. The candles are spice and wood toned and can enhance the mood of the room. Another example, should your treatment room be reminiscent of the ocean, retail a sea salt scrub, then shells, sea sponges and beach glass could be scattered on the shelf to reinforce the feeling of the ocean. These things are easily found at a local discount store. While you are there, purchase a few baskets to create ready-made gifts for your clients to purchase.

*For some, it can feel awkward to discuss price with a client who might be interested in your products. Taking the guesswork out of the pricing by clearly labeling shelving and products can simplify the whole process for both you and your client. By clearly defining the price of your goods with appropriate and professional signage, you are allowing the client to make decisions based on their own economic situation. This will alleviate the uncomfortable questions about price and allow your client to make the choices appropriate for their financial circumstance. *Too many signs can give the appearance of a yard sale environment. Avoid hand written signs and price stickers. These techniques do not present a professional appearance, and can detract from the image you would like to present to your clients. You can print labels and signs easily from any PC. Doing so will add a streamlined look and feel, with a more desirable effect on your sales.

*Clean and thoughtful placement of your products speaks volumes about you. A display with ample product appears well-kept and maintained. Avoid allowing only one of any item to be presented because doing so makes the item seem like an afterthought rather than a promoted feature. Items should be grouped in minimums of threes whenever possible. Three is a number that will provide ample product stock, as well as a pleasing aesthetic look.

*Baskets are a time-saving way for your clients to shop for special occasions, such as baby showers, holidays or other events. Create your baskets with a theme in mind. Some ideas might include "Home Spa Night," which could have an array of soothing teas, a salt or sugar scrub, a foot treatment, some soothing music, a candle and a loofah sponge. When packed into a basket, covered in organza and tied with a ribbon, this inexpensive gift becomes more than a gift of a few products; it is a gift of relaxation that would be appreciated by anyone! By having this ready-made gift available for your client, you have just made their gift giving easier, and have increased your own income!

*The third piece in a successful retail program is pricing. You likely will be buying your retail products from the same place you buy your professional products. Often, your professional supply company might offer specialized pricing for select retail items. Spending your time trying to match *professional* pricing found in *professional* catalogs and advertisements is not necessary unless you are trying to retail your goods to other professionals in your field. Your pricing should be a fair "consumer" market value for your product offering, keeping in mind a few important points. One: you will be offering specialized professional products clients typically can't find in their local discount department stores. Two: your professional advice and suggestion also accompany that product sale. And three: your client likely will never frequent the supply company catalog or Web site from which you purchase your products, and likely will never see the pricing offered from them. Offering your products at an increased price is not bad business. Typically, the Manufacturers Standard Retail Price (MSRP) is a good indicator of pricing for your retail venue, and should be available from your supplier. The client is benefiting from your expertise, instruction and personal evaluation of the products you offer, so make sure you don't sell yourself short!

*Keystoning is a great rule of thumb. This is a retail term and it simply means to double your overall investment, and charge that price. Simply put, take what you paid, factor shipping, and double it. TA DAAA.... This should be your price.

By following these simple guidelines, you can make retailing a natural part of your therapy practice. It isn't difficult to share information about products you believe in and can talk about from a personal perspective. This type of sales approach is real and honest, and is greatly appreciated by your clients. I encourage you to ask questions of your suppliers to find the right product lines for your needs. You can start small with a few key items you think would be beneficial. Whether you begin with a little or a lot, the important thing is just to start. You will be glad you did!