

Mental Health's Negative View of Marketing

By

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Recently, a board member of a state counseling association to which I was about to present a day-long seminar on practice management and marketing said she was uncomfortable with “advertising” my books and with my “attitude of self-promotion.” If I am guilty of “advertising” and “self-promotion,” so be it. I am not ashamed.

The mindset of many mental health providers, most especially my fellow psychologists, is that we are too good for “advertising,” “self-promotion,” or “marketing.” Somehow these activities are beneath us—even unprofessional. For example, the American Psychological Association (APA) does not sponsor continuing education credits for seminars specific to “Practice Development.” I have one word to describe clinicians with this negative view of marketing: “Poor!”

I fervently challenge this attitude. The old adage “Build a better mouse trap and the world will come to your door,” simply is untrue. You may design a new and better mouse trap, but if no one knows about your invention, you will not be able to distribute it.

You cannot help the client you don't see. You may be an excellent clinician. Yet, if only a few persons know of you, you won't be successful and many clients will not get the benefit of your services.

Ph.D., Psy.D., EDD., MD., NP., MA., MED, MC, MSW, MFT, LPC, LCSW, etc..
Psychologist, psychiatrist, therapist, psychotherapist, psychoanalyst, analyst, clinician, counselor, marriage and family therapist, family therapist, social worker, coach, etc..
Therapy, counseling, psychotherapy, CBT, DBT, psychoanalysis, analysis, EMDR, family of origin work, solution-focused treatment, medication management, etc. Above, are the credentials and titles of professionals who offer private mental health services and the types of services that can be provided. Obviously, the average client/patient cannot differentiate among all these providers or comprehend the various forms of treatment. They likely will be lost in the “alphabet soup” and will be incapable of appreciating one provider over another.

Unless you promote yourself, deserving clients will likely not find you in the morass of initials, titles, and services. The other day, while channel surfing, I very briefly watched an infomercial for a vacuum cleaner. The emcee did not say that I should buy this vacuum cleaner because it was as good as any other cleaner; instead, the emcee said I should buy it because it was the best vacuum available today. Providers of mental health services must promote themselves to rise above the “alphabet soup.” We need to let potential clients know of our training, experience, and expertise. Why would any client

select a therapist unless that client believed that professional was distinctive and special in some way?

To stand out from the crowd mental health providers can and should do things that “brands” them as an “expert”—such as write articles, speak on the radio, speak professionally, or write a book, etc. By engaging in such activities you are advertising and self-promoting—all in a professional, ethical manner. If you won’t promote yourself, who will?

Larry Waldman, PhD, ABPP has practiced successfully in Phoenix for over 35 years and is the author of “The Graduate Course You Never Had: How to Develop, Manage, and Market a Thriving Mental Health Practice—With and Without Managed Care.” Dr. Waldman offers seminars on this topic to mental health associations across the country. He also has written: “Who’s Raising Whom? A Parent’s Guide to Effective Child Discipline,” “Coping With Your Adolescent;” “How Come I Love Him But Can’t Live With Him: Making Your Marriage Work;” and “Too Busy Earning Your Living to Make Your Fortune? Discover the Psychology of Achieving Your Life Goals.” He can be contacted at 602-996-8619 or at LarryWaldmanPhD@cox.net. His website is TopPhoenixPsychologist.com.