

**The Seven Biggest Business
Mistakes Made by
Therapists, Coaches and many
Solo Professionals
and
How to Avoid Them**

A Free Report

by Jane Duncan Rogers

**Discover how to get more clients
and build a stronger business**

RichThinkers™
THE SOURCE OF TRUE WEALTH

Introduction

Back in 2001 I owned my own complementary health clinic. I had a great team of over 40 practitioners, renting out ten rooms between them, creating the largest complementary health clinic in the UK outside of London. All were highly dedicated and caring professionals, some of whom were very successful in their practices, and others who were just struggling along. I loved the way they cared about the health of their clients. I cared about the clients too; indeed our slogan was 'the healing begins the moment you walk through our door'. I had also worked as a counsellor in private practice, and so knew the challenges of building a thriving business from both the practitioner and clinic points of view.

But I was frustrated by the many practitioners who were apparently unable to earn a decent living through their practices. Some supplemented what they did with part-time jobs elsewhere, others relied on benefit-type support to pay the bills, and yet others depended on their partners. Some blamed the clinic for not supplying the clients; others blamed themselves for not being good enough.

I sold that clinic in 2004, for personal reasons, and since then have been exploring and learning about many aspects of business in other fields. I'm now running RichThinkers, which focuses on supporting you in thinking richly and building a sustainable business, at the same time loving what you do and helping others.

If you're interested, I am totally committed to helping you changing your thinking and experiencing more success.

If you identify with this situation, or even if you're doing OK but want to do better, this report will give you seven ways to start to do it differently. I hope you feel inspired to take action and I welcome you to RichThinkers!

A handwritten signature in red ink that reads "Jane". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent, tall initial 'J'.

NB The examples given are mostly in the health field but the principles apply whatever business you are in.

Number One: WHO AM I TO CHARGE THAT MUCH?

Self-employed people often undervalue themselves and this manifests in various ways including not charging enough, ignoring existing clients, and not feeling able to ask for referrals and so on.

Fees

I think I've probably heard every reason under the sun as to why it's not OK for a practitioner to put up their fees. As a clinic owner, his was usually in response to the room fees being raised; and even when practitioners knew that this was an annual occurrence, by at least the amount of inflation, it was apparently very hard for them to adopt the same principle with their own clients. Why? It's got to be because they didn't, deep down, believe they were worth it. But if you look at your peers who are charging more than you, is it because they are better than you? Or is it because they value themselves and their service more highly? It's a sobering question to ask yourself. After all, why should your client value you, if you don't value yourself? Obviously there's a lot more discussion available here, but I would say the moral of the story here is, it is almost always appropriate to increase your fees, even if only by a small amount. As an interesting exercise, you might like to just think about how it would feel if you were told to put up your fees by thirty pounds.

Neglecting your clients

OK, OK, I'm hearing shouts of denial here! 'I don't neglect my clients!' But what I mean by this is that instead of regarding your relationship with a client to be something that is to be nurtured and where trust can be built up, after one session the client is often ignored. This happens in the form of waiting for the client to ring to make another appointment. Why? Is it because to contact them would be too pushy, or what? Could you not ring or email to say you've got a special offer on; or it's springtime and to celebrate you're offering a friend of theirs a session for free? After all, if you really believe that what you're offering is the bees' knees, then why on earth wouldn't you want to tell everyone about it?

Not specializing

Are you a jack of all trades? Often I see people who have trained in reflexology, reiki, healing, massage, aromatherapy, etc etc. This may be very interesting for the therapist, who learns a lot, but it can be the death knell for getting more clients. Most of the therapists who are highly successful are those who are treating for one thing only, either one modality or one type of problem. They are focused on this one treatment, and it makes it much easier for clients to talk about them and refer them to someone else. As a friend said to me recently, if he was given a card for a dentist, he might be interested; but if he was given a card for a dentist specializing in mercury free treatments, he'd definitely be interested. Focus your energies on becoming a real expert in your subject or market of choice,

and you will be far more successful than if you spread yourself too thin. If you notice yourself objecting to this idea because you're afraid you'll lose clients, then I especially encourage you consider specialising.

Number Two: STAYING HIDDEN BEHIND THE SOFA

Working from home

If you work from home, this is particularly important. It isn't necessarily a mistake to work from home, it's just that if you do, then you need to balance that with extra peer contact or other support. Self-employed people by their very nature are often those who consider that they are the best person for a job, or subscribe to the notion 'if you want a job done properly, do it yourself', and for these very reasons are often brilliant at what they do. After all, the client wouldn't want to put themselves in the hands of someone who didn't have very high standards, would they? However, the dangers of working alone are that you can lose sight of where you're going; you easily can get lonely; you lose out on the kind of wisdom generated when other like minds get together. You also lose out on the opportunity to consistently build your practice and your business by being accountable to a group of people, or another person. It is much easier to get something done, especially if it's something you're procrastinating about, if you have the support of someone else in achieving that. Plus it's easier to put yourself out there with the support of colleagues. Imagine there's a networking evening on in your locale. By the time 8pm comes round, and you're supposed to be going on your own, how likely is it that you'll just somehow not get around to getting out of the house on time? Is this something that applies to you?

Networking

To some people this is a word with a bit of a negative aspect. But it's not about anything other than meeting people, and being willing to tell them a bit about yourself. Of course you would tell them about your business, because that's a large part of your life. Imagine you're at a party, having fun, and you meet someone new. One of the likely questions you'll be asked is 'What do you do for a living?' Because you're at a party, and enjoying yourself, you start telling them what your profession is and why you love it. If they're really interested and asking questions, you'll easily go into more detail and expand on your particular method, or where you work. But what is it that happens when you think you're 'networking'? Some people just clam up, and can't say anything.

So next time you're at a networking event (yes, you are going to go to them!), imagine you're at a party and just chatting about what your passion is. Clients come to someone whom they trust, and even when they've never met you before, having an interesting conversation and making a connection is more likely to result in a new client down the road than if you never manage to get to the event in the first place. So stop hiding at home behind the sofa, and get out there! Check out www.theathenetwork.com for info on networking for women, and explore online social networking sites such as MySpace, Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.

Public speaking

For those of you who'd like to improve your public speaking skills (another good way to meet people), you could join Toastmasters, an organization that encourages people to improve how they speak in public, for whatever reason (www.toastmasters.com). This is all done in an atmosphere of immense support and positive regard, which is crucial. You'll not only have the opportunity to become more confident, but you'll also be meeting new and old faces each evening, and having the chance to develop relationships.

Number Three: BURNING UP, BURNING OUT

This applies to all self-employed people and small business owners, but ironically is just as prevalent in the healing professions. For instance, the combined results of 25 studies suggest that the suicide rate among male doctors is 40% higher than that among men in general. When in my clinic, I noticed that some therapists didn't take proper breaks; they found difficulty in pacing themselves between clients, or using the time creatively when they didn't have clients.

Burn out

Often burnout applies to those that are frantically busy but it can also apply to those people who are just trying to keep the wolf from the door, in whatever way possible. Health practitioners, for instance, often act as quasi-counsellors, listening to other people's pain, and this in itself can be a huge stress. Then there is the stress involved in needing clients in order to pay the bills. Hence nutritional therapists may overeat on food that is bad for them, chiropractors may not take care of their own backs well enough, and financial advisors put their own money in poor investments. No-one is expecting you to be perfect, of course, except perhaps you! And that is usually what is at the bottom of this - for those who are healers in the world, it can be very difficult indeed to let yourself be the receiver of healing. Can you do this, and how good at it are you? If you are not in the health professions, this question still applies – how good are you at receiving support?

Never giving yourself your own medicine

This is one of the antidotes to burn out. Not much to say on this one, except do it! If you think you can't afford it, download my free e-book, 7 Steps to Thinking Rich

(www.7stepstothinkingrich.co.uk)

to help you change your attitudes about money, or set up a swap with your peers. It is really important to take a dose of your own medicine here. I'm glad to say writing this has just prompted me to arrange an Alexander Technique session for myself!

Number Four: WHO'S IN CHARGE OF YOUR MONEY?

Accurate records

Mr Micawber, a character from Charles Dickens, said, 'Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure nineteen pounds nineteen shillings and six pence, result happiness. Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure twenty pounds and six pence, result misery.'

That is, expenses higher than your income = life is challenging (a nice way to put it!).

Income higher than expenses = relaxation and enjoyment.

So in order to know whether you're going to be challenged, or relaxing and enjoying your life, you need to know what your income and expenses are. Most self-employed professionals know the amount of their income, because that's the nice bit! Many don't know the cost of their expenses; the true cost, that is. For instance, if you're running a seminar about your specialisation, you might forget to factor in the cost of the advertising, making your profits (the amount that really matters) unrealistic. It's so easy to take some money from people (especially if it's in cash), think you're rich, then deduct the expenses later and realize that in fact you're out of pocket, or only just broken even. So put yourself in charge of your income/expenses, instead of them in charge of you. If you don't know how to do this, there are systems you can learn to help you manage your finances, and I strongly encourage you to use them.

A 'making people better' business or not? (For those in healing professions)

The other point to make about this is that many therapists and healers make the mistake of thinking they are in the business of getting people better, and therefore they've succeeded when the client doesn't need to return anymore for treatments. Obviously you want to give treatments to ensure the wellbeing of the client, but what is there to stop you actively promoting another business model alongside this, one of emphasizing preventative treatment? You could offer your clients incentives to see you regularly, perhaps every quarter, or monthly. I definitely used to feel pleased when someone had clearly come to the end of their counselling sessions with me. Problem was, it meant I lost a client! If this is crucial to you from the monetary point of view, then it can easily interfere with how you put across your services. While there may be an argument for counselling/psychotherapy to not come under this umbrella, certainly for many complementary health therapies, the client would do much better if they came for regular, preventative treatments. One of our practitioners in the clinic used to have people sign up for regular check-ups. She called them MOT's and likened their bodies to their cars, needing regular maintenance. What do YOU do?

Becoming conscious of your spending

If you really want to be in charge of your money instead of it in charge of you, for a minimum of a month record all you spend and what on. Keep a notebook with you at all times so you can

write down at the time of spending what it is on, and whether it is cash, debit card, credit card, cheque (remember them?) or bank transfer. This applies to all spending not just business stuff. At the end of the month look and see how your money has been spent. (If you want an analysis sheet to help with this give us a call.) The point of doing this is that instead of arriving at the end of the month wondering where it has all gone you will find that you now have the information necessary to make choices about how you spend your money (and if you are like me you will feel really pleased with yourself for having done it. It's a great feeling).

Number Five: MARKETING/SELLING – YUCK, DIRTY WORDS!

Mmm. Well, I've definitely made this mistake myself! Not that it has to be a huge mistake, because there are many solo professionals just jogging along making a 'good enough' living and not concerning themselves too much about their future, or if they really are living the way they want to. But if you want to have this business of yours be sustainable, and provide you with a good living now and into your future, then you'll have to get used to the idea that marketing is really good for you! And what that means is that you have to stop thinking you've got the best treatment available for all those people out there, and start to find out what they really want! This might mean being willing to be a bit humble; and to adapt your service if necessary to meet what your clients want. Or at least to adapt how you are promoting yourself. Marketing is finding out what people's problems and needs are and helping them to solve them. If you do this, then selling becomes much easier as you are simply offering potential clients an opportunity to buy something that is likely to meet their needs/wants.

Brochures

This is a very common way for people to promote themselves. We had loads of them in our clinic. It can be a very effective way of communicating your services, if you get it right! This means that you have to have a headline that jumps out at the prospective client by saying something that identifies their problem and offers a solution. It also has to be great quality,

otherwise you're giving the message that your services are less than perfect. Also ensure the message is about your client, not about you, ie instead of telling what you can do for them, focus on what they will get by using your services. If you're not used to thinking like this, you need to practice, because it's really easy to slip back into the old ways, doing what you've always done, and getting what you've always got. Check out www.hypnoticwriting.com for guidance on writing good copy.

Websites

You need a website! People are at least as likely, if not more, to type in 'Massage in Oxford' when looking for a local practitioner as they are to look up the Yellow Pages or its equivalent. So having at least a one page website is a must. If you haven't yet got a website, do some research first. And if you have, re-look at your website often to make sure it's giving the message you want it to give. If you're frightened of doing this, join with others and do it together. With websites, the single most important thing to be clear on is what you want your site to do for you. For instance, if you want it to sell products primarily, then it must be designed as a selling site. If you want it simply to provide information about you, then it has to be designed for that. In order to get clear about its purpose, you need to be clear about what you are wanting to sell (ie your services) and to whom. What's the purpose of your website? Ask around for recommendations, and make sure you get a site you can simply amend yourself just by typing in new copy when you want to. Visit intuitivewebsites.co.uk and websitesthatgetclients.com for more information.

Building relationships, building business

Marketing is really all about building relationships, because people buy from others whom they trust. So knowing who your target market are, what their problems are, and how you can solve them all have to be identified. This market is known as your niche; a great free course about identifying this can be found at www.brandingyou.org. Once you're clear about your niche market, you can begin to build these kinds of relationships through your website, brochure, business cards, vouchers, free offers, discounts etc.

When my husband Philip started his individual psychotherapy practice in the late eighties, he was living in Oxford where there was no suitable place to advertise what he was doing. So he set up a monthly news sheet, targeted towards people interested in the alternative healing, green and personal development market place, so he had somewhere he could advertise. He also set up monthly networking events for him to get his face known (this was all before the internet existed), and gave regular free talks on various aspects of his work. As he built relationships, so clients began to come to him steadily. I'm not sure he realized he was focusing on a niche market, but he was certainly reaching out (ie marketing) to those people interested in personal development and exploring their inner lives. And it worked. Plus he made a lot of new friends.

Number Six: HAVING A SELF-EMPLOYED JOB

One of the problems with being self-employed is that if you don't turn up to work, the money doesn't come in (as I'm sure you've realized!). While the benefits of being self-employed are many, the downside is that there's often more work to be done than when you were in a job; it just feels better because it's all for you. But on top of seeing the clients (the nice bit!) or making the sale, there's the promotion, the book-keeping, the general administration, the professional development, the marketing, etc etc. And it's all dependent on you – unless you set it up differently.

Don't try to get more clients!

What! Is this the opposite of what I've been already saying? Not quite; but as I mentioned before, you're only ever going to be able to cope with a certain number of clients before running out of time to see them in, or energy to see them with. This means that by its very nature self-employment is limited. Thinking big means expanding your thoughts to include how you could bring in more money, and have a healthier business, without half killing yourself in the process. Robert Kiyosaki writes about this very well in 'Cashflow Quadrant', where he identifies the attributes of a self-employed person, and suggests ways in which the individual has to develop in order to become someone who can run a business that is not entirely dependent on themselves. Ask yourself is there a way I could sell my

services somehow without them being entirely dependent on my presence? For instance, if you use particular blends of oils, how could they be promoted to your market? Could you make a CD or MP3 download of how your particular service works? Could you put together an information package of something you know your clients would value? There are lots of ways, and new ones appearing all the time, for you to grow your business in this medium.

A vision and plan

Whatever you decide to do, you need to not only have a strong vision to keep you going through the tough times, but you also need to have a plan to get you there. This plan could of course be the application of the Law of Attraction, for those of you interested in that. (Read 'Ask and It is Given' by Esther and Jerry Hicks for a great book on the subject). But in my experience, the Law of Attraction works in tandem with things being taken care of in a logical and methodical manner. So identify your vision, and ask yourself what are the things that need to happen to get you there. This will be your plan. Obviously there is a lot more to doing all this, and keeping focused on your vision is a skill in itself. However, being clear about your vision is absolutely essential if you want to get somewhere in particular with your work.

Number Seven: THINKING ABOUT WHAT YOU DON'T WANT

This could equally apply to the whole world's population not just the self-employed! This is the most pervasive thing I see going on. So many people set themselves up for failure, even if they know all the tools of the trade re marketing and selling etc, by not having the right attitude. It is so important to focus on your strengths and shine the light away from your weaknesses. This doesn't mean ignoring your weaknesses, it means acknowledging them, but not paying attention to them. Many self-employed professionals focus on the negative aspects of their business, then they wonder why they're not more successful.

Inner and Outer Tools

My experience of this is that to be successful in any field, you need both inner and outer tools. Outer tools would be things like membership of your professional organization; proper training; knowledge of marketing, promotion, selling; ongoing professional development; administration skills; amongst others. Inner tools are things like your attitude of mind; your ability to observe yourself without judgment; capability to remain calm under stress; strategies to help you move from a negative mood to a positive one, and to change one set of thoughts to another set; self-awareness and ability to adapt your thinking. While you can do a good job with outer tools alone, often real fulfilment only comes with the application of inner tools as well.

Likewise, if you don't have enough of the outer tools, you'll be inadvertently limiting your abilities to bring more success into your life.

For instance, if your problem is not enough clients for you to live the lifestyle you wish, and you think thoughts such as 'I never get any new clients', 'I wish I was like so-and-so, she always has plenty of clients', or 'It's just this area - it's difficult to find clients here as there's too much competition', then you're shooting yourself in the foot. People come to people who are successful, or portray that image. Act as if, if you need to, but those kind of thoughts need to be addressed. They will almost always be symptoms of feelings of lack, beliefs about being hard done by etc, and these can be addressed.

Conclusion:

So, you're now at the beginning of the next phase of developing your business, both with the inner and outer tools of success. What's your next best step?

I know from my years of working with clients that some people are hugely self-motivated, and can set themselves goals, do what it takes to get to them, and continue moving forward. But I also know that most people need a bit more. I certainly do! In fact, **most people need ongoing support, inspiration and motivation.**

I invite you to consider joining one of my coaching circles where you will

- be helped with maintaining a positive attitude
- get support to take your business forward
- identify what is hampering your success and move forward
- learn lots of practical information re having your business be more successful

Whatever you decide, commit yourself to putting at least 3 ideas from this report into action. Your desire to serve, your passion for your work and your particular talents I have no doubt deserve to find a wider audience. These ideas I've shared with you will enable you to do that .

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

May success visit you and your business right now!

A handwritten signature in red ink that reads "Jane". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent initial 'J'.

Jane Duncan Rogers

www.richthinkers.co.uk