

BRIGHT

IDEAS



Writing a Great Ad for Your Holistic Business

By Daryl Kulak

Placing a small advertisement in a national magazine can cost you thousands of dollars. How can an ad be worth that much?

Advertising is a gamble, but it is a worthwhile gamble. It takes careful planning and something much more difficult: patience.

In this article, we'll ask holistic advertising experts from around the country their opinions on how to put together a great ad for your holistic business.

Remember that advertising is one piece to your marketing puzzle. It is an expensive part, so you need to balance it with other inexpensive methods, like speaking to groups and writing articles for local publications. "Use advertising in conjunction with other methods," says Michelle Vandepas, author of *Marketing for the Holistic Practitioner* and a business consultant in Colorado Springs, Colo. "If you place an ad and then sit back waiting for the phone to ring, you're wasting your time."

That's not to say advertising is optional; just balance it with other strategies.

Who is Your Audience?

"My focus has always been on women around the age of 40 who have high demands on their bodies like raising kids and working professionally," says Amy Roberts, business consultant and author of *Massage Therapy Success*. Understand the people you want to work with. Focusing your business on a particular market segment will always help you become successful in your practice.

"Look at your clients," Vandepas says. "What do they have in common?" Find out how you can create a focus that will supercharge your advertising efforts.

"Targets that are too general don't work well," says Megan McDonough, business expert and author of *Infinity in a Box: Using Yoga to Live with Ease*. "Here are some examples of target audiences that are too general, based on a survey I conducted of yoga teachers: primarily adults, anyone interested in yoga, anyone who wants personal attention, those who are on the cusp of a larger awakening, etc."

"However," McDonough explains, "here are some examples of focused target audiences from that same survey: women with eating disorders and body image

issues, teenagers, stay-at-home moms, seniors, pregnant women."

Once you have a focus, find the publications that those target individuals read. For my business, the Simplicity Institute, the target audience includes holistic health professionals who are likely to take my classes or be interested in business coaching. Therefore, this magazine, *Massage & Bodywork*, is perfectly targeted for my advertising. Precisely for that reason, you'll notice ads for my company in this and previous issues of this magazine.

The worst places to advertise are where your ad won't stand out. "Avoid the directory sections in local newspapers," says Colleen Holloway, consultant and author of *Success Beyond Work*. "These directories often aren't categorized, so your ad will just blend in with the funeral homes and bookstores. Don't waste your money on these types of listings."

Local, holistically-focused publications can be tremendous vehicles for locating a focused audience for your holistic service. But don't place an ad that just says "massage" or "naturopathic services" or "reiki." Holloway says, "In a holistic publication, now you're competing with all the other holistic practitioners." This means it's even more important to focus your message for your audience.

What Works?

Our experts offer us tremendous ideas for what will help your advertisement stand out and sell. Here are a few:

• Give Them a Reason to Call

"Give them a reason to call immediately," Holloway says. "One of the best ways is to say 'same day appointments' in big letters. It will motivate the client to act right now, on the spur of the moment, and come in for a session. Other phrases that work are 'emergency appointments' and 'weekend and evening hours.'"

Holloway says free gift certificate delivery is another strategy she's used successfully. "Gift certificates are nice, but often they are a last-minute idea for clients. On Christmas Eve one year, I had to leave a party to deliver gift certificates across town. The customer was so thankful because it was his last chance to have presents for the next



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morning, and all the stores were already closed. And it was worth it for me, because he bought six of them.”

• Include a Free Report

You can also provide an added bonus. You might offer free services in an initial session, but there are other creative freebies you can include, too. “What about a free report on the 10 mistakes most people make when choosing a therapist?” suggests John Shoemaker, holistic consultant and trainer in Florida. “What a powerful way to get people to call in. Then you have them on the phone, and you can begin finding out more about their problem and introducing what you do.” Writing the report is easy to do, or you can even purchase such a report over the Internet or get help from a friend. Pick a report title that will resonate with your target audience, write the report, then place your ad mentioning the free offer.

McDonough provides us with another example: “For a pregnancy-focused massage therapist, she might provide a free report on simple massage techniques couples can employ during pregnancy to solve specific situations,” such as nausea and pain.

• Put Yourself Last

Carefully choose your heading for the ad. “Every ad should read like an effective classified ad,” Shoemaker says. State in bold letters at the top what problem you solve. Then put your contact information toward the bottom in smaller type. Most therapists do this backwards. Their names, business names, and qualifications are at the top, and the problem definition is nowhere to be found. Your clients cannot connect to you without knowing the problem you solve.

• Be Patient

Molly Gordon writes in her book *Authentic Promotion* that we must be patient in our marketing efforts. Here is a story from her book that illustrates this point (she credits the original story to Jay Conrad Levinson):

- The first time a prospective client comes across your offer, she doesn’t even see it.
- The second time, she doesn’t notice it.
- The third time, it is a faint blip on her radar.

- The fourth time she faintly recalls having seen it before.
- The fifth time she actually looks at it.
- The sixth time, she brushes it off.
- The seventh time, she reads it through and says “Whatever.”
- The eighth time, she says, “Sheesh. You again?”
- The ninth time, she wonders if it amounts to anything.
- The 10th time, she will ask a friend about it.
- The 11th time, she will wonder if it would really work.
- The 12th time, she will think to herself that maybe you’ve got something there after all.
- The 13th time, she thinks there might be more than meets the eye.
- The 14th time, she will remember that she has wanted this for quite a while.
- The 15th time, she is intrigued but she realizes she can’t afford it.
- The 16th time, she thinks to herself, “Hmm, some day.”
- The 17th time, she decides to learn more.
- The 18th time, she swears at her own poverty.
- The 19th time, she checks her account balance.
- The 20th time, she buys.

Doesn’t 20 times seem like a lot? You need to count the total times potential clients see your offer, whether through advertising or one of your marketing methods (speaking, writing, etc.). Not so overwhelming now, huh?

The thing to remember is you need to advertise often to get results. So often, I hear holistic practitioners say, “Oh, I placed an ad in that paper once, but it didn’t work. So, I stopped.” If you’ve said this before, change your thinking. Marketing is like water wearing away a stone. One splash of water will never wear away solid rock. But constant splashing in the same place will eventually wear away the rock, in a gentle, smooth way you might not even notice until later.

Once you’ve chosen your publications, budget for advertising for a year. If the publication comes out quarterly, monthly, or bimonthly, assume you’ll be advertising in all the issues for that year. Once the year is over, evaluate whether you felt that ad worked or not. A smaller ad done all year is always more effective than a single ad run once. →

What Won't Work

Our experts also weren't shy about explaining the worst ways to create advertisements.

• No Holistic Buzzwords

"The biggest mistake practitioners make is they use jargon or fluffy words that make most readers' eyes glaze over," McDonough says. "Look through any holistic directory, and you will see this mistake over and over again."

Here's a jargon-heavy line: "We offer transformative, energizing therapy for your spiritual journey." What's the offer? What do these words mean? Most potential clients who read this line will not be interested enough to find out what this person is offering. Would you?

I like to put jargon in perspective for holistic practitioners. You understand holistic jargon. You understand the various modalities (neuromuscular, craniosacral, homeopathy, pranic healing, chakras, etc.). Most of your potential clients will not.

Do you understand computers? If not, maybe this example will help you. Imagine two computer consultants who wanted to help you with your website. One said he could provide you with a "dynamic HTML layout including Java applets, ASPs, JSPs, and a high-traffic, database-driven, content management system." What can he do for you? Are you even sure he builds websites or not?

The second computer consultant says she can "build a website for you that will bring in new customers and make you look like a true professional." Which consultant are you likely to use?

Think about "holistic buzzwords" as you create your ad copy. Think about how alienated you felt with the first computer consultant. Do you want to create that impression for your prospective clients?

• Reduce Clutter

More is better, right? Isn't that the American way? It doesn't work for advertising, that's for sure. Keep the number of words to a minimum. The more you can say with the fewest words, the better.

The ad should contain:

- The problem you solve.
- A call to action.
- Your name, or the name of your business, or both.
- Your contact information.

Anything beyond that is starting to get wordy. Yes, if you have an open house announcement or something, include that. But don't clutter your ad with every therapy you offer. Keep it simple.

• It's Not About You

"What won't work is to talk about yourself," Roberts says. "And don't put your qualifications up front either. This is a guaranteed strategy to bore potential clients. Qualifications are essential, but they don't work as a marketing strategy."

Show your qualifications in small type at the bottom of the ad. "To the layperson, qualifications mean nothing," Holloway says. "Potential clients want you to explain how you are going to help them."

Write a Great Ad

Writing a great ad is hard. It takes practice and patience. But the rewards can be great, if your effort is focused.

If you still feel lost, feel free to contact the people mentioned in this article. I've included a resource directory below of the holistic marketing consultants who helped me put this article together. [M&B](#)

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Resources

Molly Gordon, author of *Authentic Promotion*, 360/697-7022 or www.authenticpromotion.com
 Colleen Holloway, author of *Success Beyond Work*, 888/748-5167 or www.successbeyondwork.com
 Megan McDonough, author of *You are Infinity in a Box*, 413/477-0932 or www.urinfinityinabox.com
 Amy Roberts, author of *Ignite Your Massage Business*, www.massagetherapysuccess.com
 John Shoemaker, author of *50 Ideas to Get 100 Holistic Clients*, 850/942-6945 or www.moralcapitalist.com
 Michelle Vandepas, author of *Marketing for the Holistic Practitioner*, 800/682-0402 or www.consciousdestiny.com



You might offer free services in an initial session, but there are other creative freebies you can include, too.