



QUALITY

OVER

QUANTITY

Stop Chasing Clients!

3 Steps to Choosing Quality over Quantity
For a Professionally Satisfying Career

By Irene Diamond

IS YOUR DEFINITION of practice success to be as fully booked up with as many clients as possible? For the first 15 years in practice, I had that goal. I chased clients just like every other practitioner I knew of — and prided myself on scheduling as many appointments as I could with anyone and everyone.

A private-practice doctor friend suggested, “Always be available,” so unless it was a request from what would be my ninth client of the day, I squeezed in everyone who wanted to see me. I was exhausted!

Although my niche was professional musicians and athletes, if Sally the schoolteacher or Sam the gardener contacted me I would ask them a few questions to understand their goal and then schedule them. As my practice blew up into a multi-practitioner wellness center, we continued to book anyone who requested an appointment, whether they really were a match for us or not.

We focused on volume — believing that being fully booked with a waiting list was the Holy Grail. I now call that business model an open-to-the-public practice.

Typical Practice Problems

As our practice volume grew, we began to experience many drawbacks. Do you experience some of these same problems we did as an open-to-the-public practice?

- Clients you really don't like.
- Complainers who never seem satisfied.
- Clients who don't say anything — but you have a funny feeling something went wrong.
- Secretly worrying about getting bad online reviews that can ruin your business.
- Clients who show up late or cancel at the last minute, and then argue about paying for their missed session.

3 Steps To Transition To A Precise Private Practice

1 Identify and select only dream clients whom you do your best work with based on your clinical skills, knowledge and experience.

2 Define the structure in which you'll provide your services. (Single sessions or multi-session packages, as examples.)

3 Screen new prospects for suitability prior to scheduling them. It is a partnership with both parties' consent. When you're 100% confident you will be good partners, accept them. If a prospect is not a fit, refer out.

—Irene Diamond

- Clients who come for the new-client special but never come back.
- Worry about planning your marketing calendar, holiday specials and other promotions.

I thought these problems were just part of dealing with the public. I had no idea there was any alternative to the stress, worry and client-churn we and so many other practitioners experienced. Even though we had hundreds of clients we loved who showed up on time and paid their bills, I began to crave a new, simpler business model.

A Better Business Model

Therapy clinics across the globe have transitioned to a precise private practice, meaning they only accept clients by referral. (Learn more about Irene's Diamond method of building a practice filled with dream clients in “The *MASSAGE Magazine* Interview,” this issue, page 20.)

A precise private practice focuses on quality of service and client selection over sheer volume. Imagine how much happier your hand-picked clients will be when they receive precise care to reach their goals through a pre-agreed therapeutic experience.

Our Diamond Pain Relief & Wellness Center now operates as a precise private practice. To begin the transition, I emptied two huge file cabinets of charts on clients who had come in for just one or two sessions. I re-worded our marketing to single out and attract only our best-fit dream clients, raised our fees, and referred many people to other practices.

Yes, it was scary — but we ended up with a much more streamlined business model, perfectly matched clientele, more consistent revenue and a lot less stress.

One of my academy members, Stephanie Pile, whose practice, THE Pain Relief Specialist, is located in Arlington, Virginia, shares her experience of transitioning to a precise private practice: “My bank account and I are very happy! With a precise private practice structure, I now choose the precise clients I most enjoy — and only work on the days and times I want.

“I confidently offer a guarantee, and clients pay me top dollar for results, not for my time,” Pile added.

The Therapist Chooses the Clients

The relationship with clients differs between the two business models.

Most open-to-the-public practices compete for prospective clients to choose them over other businesses. The opposite



Irene Diamond (right) provides business coaching to Amber Fraga, owner of Native Touch. Diamond specializes in helping practitioners transition from an open-to-the-public practice to a precise private practice.

happens for precise private practice owners, because they are in the driver's seat and get to choose the client.

A typical role of an open-to-the-public therapist is that of a service provider, fulfilling clients' requests, such as "Please start with my face and finish with my feet." On the other hand, the precise private practice therapist is instead an advisor, commanding higher fees and greater respect.

They have a fiduciary duty to suggest what they see is in the client's best interest to reach their clinical goals. Clients trust them, feel safe, stay, pay and refer.

When we are in the position to choose whom we accept in as a client, we don't spend time overcoming objections or trying to convince clients to book with us. They seek us out.

My coaching client in Florida, "Jeanette" (who wants to stay anonymous due to the exclusivity of her practice), agrees. "I noticed a shift in the type of clients reaching out to me after changing to a precise private practice two years ago," she said.

"Instead of simply answering their 'How much do you charge?' question, clients appreciate being heard through the precise qualifying questions and

application process," she added. "They trust me to support them."

As a solo practitioner, massage therapist and professional photographer Amitava Sarkar, of Houston, Texas, says he prefers to filter potential clients before he schedules them because, "I want to be sure, number one, my skills and experience are a good fit for them and, number two, I can meet the client's expectations and goals."

There is not just one way to run a business — but if your definition of a successful practice is being relaxed, not worrying about dissatisfied clients or your marketing, and having more free time, I suggest you consider transitioning to a precise private practice where you have more control and are able to command the fees you desire. **M**

Irene Diamond (irenediamond.com) is an expert business coach, business investor, consultant and continuing education instructor who shares best-business and client-retention practices for wellness professionals. A bodyworker since 1988, Irene developed The Diamond Method, which encompasses Active Modulation Therapy and Active Muscle Massage.

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