

## The Entrepreneurial Secrets of a Thriving Homeopathic Practice

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**Abstract:** The author, a licensed holistic health practitioner, details the many requirements for a successful professional homeopathic practice, the many qualities a homeopath needs foster to develop a busy practice. More than just well-honed homeopathic skills, the homeopath must also be a creative entrepreneur as well as a pragmatic manager. She cites six qualities of the successful homeopath – knowledge and experience, self-confidence and decisiveness, the ability to develop and maintain long-term relationships with our patients, marketing skills, focus and commitment, and fiscal responsibility.

**Keywords:** homeopathic practice, developing a thriving; entrepreneurial skills and homeopathic practice; homeopathic practice, running as a business.

Homeopathy has been called an “art and a science.” What about homeopathy the business, or the homeopathic entrepreneur? If you are skilled in all of the artistic and scientific aspects of homeopathy including material medica, repertory, case taking, analysis and prescribing, your appointment book should be full. Correct? The answer is yes, if you are also running your practice like a business.

Many well-known artists are geniuses at their craft, but handicapped when it comes to bringing their art to the marketplace, getting the right price for their work, building relationships with their audience. That is why they have agents to represent them. They focus on their craft and let the agent sell their expertise. That sounds nice, doesn't it? It would be wonderful if we could just focus on our patients and homeopathy and just know that the phone will always ring. The reality is that we must put ourselves out into the competitive marketplace so that potential clients know that we and homeopathy exist. In a homeopathic business, we wear many hats and some are more flattering on us than others. Within your practice you will play each of these roles, and sometimes all in one day.

### The One Man/Woman Homeopathic Band

Homeopath, Psychologist, Salesperson, Administrator, Secretary, Financier, Bookkeeper, Publicist, Window Washer.

This is a lot to juggle while staying focused with your patient, keeping current with your cases and studies while managing to stay grounded within your own life.

### The truth is that eighty percent of entrepreneurs shut down their business within the first five years. Why is that?

This is a typical scenario.

Joe Smith's favorite hobby is working on cars. He decides to open a small mechanic business. He finds a space and signs a lease with the plan that he will soon be busy and be able to afford his newfound expenses. Joe begins getting clients and is doing nice work. After all, he loves working on these cars and it shows in his pristine results. Soon he is getting busier which he is happy about. However, all of the sudden he finds himself getting backed up on his jobs that he is unable to complete on time. Clients are beginning to get impatient. He wants to hire someone to assist him, but he cannot afford to. He starts coming in earlier and earlier and does not leave his small shop until late into the night to catch up. His lack of sleep starts catching up with him. Joe realizes that this hobby he once loved has now become his job. He has never worked harder in his life, yet he can barely pay his bills. Joe's family is complaining that he is never home. What is he to do?

Joe has fallen prey to the \***Entrepreneurial**

**Myth** - The fatal assumption that an individual who understands the technical work of a business can successfully run a business that does technical work.

Just because we love homeopathy is not formula enough for a successful, longstanding practice. Being a homeopath is stimulating, fulfilling, rewarding and exciting. Yet now what we love is also our job. Maybe we did not count on the disappointments, the patients that don't get better, difficult, rude or very needy patients, late night case analysis, calls during evenings with family and vacations, overhead expenses, marketing, selling yourself, slow weeks with too much time and crazy weeks with no time....

For most of us, homeopathy *is* our passion, our path in life, but the reality is it is also our bread and butter and we need and deserve to make a living for our hard work. If the masses are to learn about the immense healing capacity of homeopathy, homeopaths must succeed in their practices so that they can afford to continue. If they fail, nearby potential recipients of homeopathy may never have the opportunity to experience its powerful benefits. We must learn to find a balance between being the homeopathic practitioner and the homeopathic entrepreneur so that we may build a flourishing and healing homeopathic practice.

As a homeopath with an eleven-year practice in San Diego, I want to share with you what has helped me build a busy practice. As founder of The Homeopathic Academy of Southern California, I have had the opportunity to work with many homeopathic students that are about to embark on their new career and life as a Professional Homeopath. The questions I have received were not just "will I be able to choose the simillimum? They were more like, "Will I be able to survive as an entrepreneur?"

Michael Gerber, author of the *E-Myth Revisited*, has found through working with hundreds of businesses over the last fifteen years that successful businesspersons must carry these three qualities within them.

### **The Entrepreneur, the Manager and the Technician**

The Entrepreneur is the visionary, dreamer, innovator, risk taker, idea person, opportunist who lives in the future and loves change.

**The Manager** is the pragmatist, keeps business in order, is the problem solver, dislikes change; he is the problem anticipator and controller.

**The Technician** is the craftsman, doer, physician, artist, scientist, teacher, and performer. *'If you want it*

*done right, do it yourself'* is the motto of the technician.

The **Entrepreneur** paves the way, the **Manager** keeps the business on track, and the **Technician** does the work.

I liken this to the Three Kingdoms in homeopathy.

The Entrepreneur is like the *Animal* - the risk taker, bold, competitive, protective of his pack, focused, persistent, passionate, goal-oriented. The Animal says, "How high can I jump?"

The Manager is like the *Mineral* - He is performance driven, keeps business in control, commitment oriented, has organizational savvy, and analyzes risk. The Mineral says, "How much will it cost me?"

The Technician is like the *Plant* (The Homeopath) - the artist and scientist, creative, intuitive, passionate and compassionate, sensitive to others' needs, soulful, rescuer. S/he embodies an acute awareness. The *homeopath (plant)* needs the *animal* to search for clients and forge new territory and the *mineral* needs to keep everything in check. Success depends on the ability to draw on each of these three.

We all study and practice in the plant (or technician) area. Most of us will be stronger in one or two of these sectors and have much room for improvement in the third. In my own practice, I had to really work on the organizational and pragmatic area. I have an impulsive and excitable side to me that says, "Ok, let's do it. That sounds like an adventure." That is the entrepreneur in me. On occasion, the mineral part of me should have been yelling, "Slow down, do you really need to be doing all of this?" (Not that I would have listened.) I have put a lot of effort into improving in the managerial sector with good results. The trick is to really be honest with yourself about which of these three sectors need more attention, then do what is necessary to become more skilled in that aspect. For instance, if you are weak in the finance area, take a small business accounting class or hire a business consultant from your local small business association. If do not have the first clue about sales or marketing, brainstorm with other small business owners from your chamber of commerce, read some books on small business marketing, or hire a small agency to help get you off the ground. Eventually you will learn what works and what doesn't.

### **Six qualities that make a good homeopath and successful practice:**

1. **Knowledge and experience** are obviously the most important aspects of homeopathic practice. Education, clinical experience and study are key

elements that you should continue to nourish until the day you stop practicing. These elements alone are not enough to build a long-standing successful practice. However, continuing education will keep our minds fresh, motivated and stimulated.

## **2. Self-confidence and decisiveness.**

Patients can tell if you are solid in yourself and strong in your decisions of prescribing for them. Which statement do you think patients will feel more secure with? In an uncertain shaky tone, "Well, um, lets try *Arsenicum album*. It should help you." Or, "The remedy that I have chosen for you is *Arsenicum album* 200C," presented clearly in a strong and confident voice. Patients need to feel that you have certainty in your work with them, even if you are not 100% set in the big picture. It is alright if you have to make a change down the road in their case. Just be strong and decisive on what you are recommending in the present. They will trust you more if it is obvious that you believe in yourself and your actions. Building their trust is important so that clients will hang in there with you through the process.

## **3. Developing and maintaining long-term patient relationships.**

The patient comes to see you for a consultation. You give him what you feel is a good remedy. He comes for one or two follow-ups and then he doesn't return. He has experienced homeopathy, but to a very small degree. We all know that healing takes time and we need to encourage patients to make a long-term commitment to their health and well being. You need to put your low-key sales hat on. Take time with patients in your very first meeting to discuss their goals and the commitment that is necessary from both of you.

I tell my patients that we are partners in their healing process and we need to work together. It is necessary for you, the business owner and homeopath, to offer great customer service so that the patient will want to come back. Whether they are doing well or not, we want patients to come back for regular follow-ups. They will want to stay connected to you if you have built a nice rapport. If they do not feel heard or taken care of, you may never see them again. Our success should not always be based on how many similimums we have found, but how many patients count on us through the years. We are their support system and we want to create long-lasting patient relationships. Yes, we want them to get well. That is the purpose. We also want to be the one they call each time a new problem arises. Beyond your meetings, you will hear from them through all of their referrals.

If the patient trusts you, you are much more likely

to get a good case and build a long-term patient relationship. The connection can start from the moment they enter your office. Take some time to ask yourself these questions.

How are you at greeting your patients?

Do they have to wait long in your waiting area?

How comfortable do you make them feel in your office?

Do you show sincere interest in their presence?

Do you share your concern for their well-being?

A good connecting statement would be: "I want to help you get better and I will do my very best."

Remember: Patients share their lives at such a deep level with us. They are their most vulnerable and most exposed with you. Do not take for granted this experience that unfolds in front of you. This can be a mutually beneficial relationship.

## **4. Marketing.**

You could have the most incredible widget in the world, but unless people know about it, its capabilities will never be realized. The same goes for your practice. Your target market, your potential customer base needs to know who you are, what you do and what you can do for them. I could talk for hours on this topic alone because there are many ways to market yourself and your practice. Today in my business I am looking at the whole picture, just as we do in our homeopathy. Marketing is key, a very important part of the equation, but bringing all these aspects together is the secret of success. If you have a great set-up and you give patients a very healing experience but no one knows about you, your patient base will be small. If many people have heard about you, and they come and have a poor or disappointing experience, they will most likely not come back. So you need to give them the 'Full Monty'!

One of the most important aspects of marketing is being able to represent yourself and homeopathy at any given moment. How many times are you queried, "What is homeopathy anyway? Is it herbs and vitamins? The questions do not lend to a simple five second answer. You need to say it clearly and concisely so that your audience will comprehend you and not glaze over. If you say, "Well, um...", you lost them at hello!

Prepare a thirty second, two minute and ten minute description of "What is Homeopathy?" Homeopathy is not easy to describe. I do a game with myself with new patients. I try to explain it a little differently with each one. Otherwise, my tubercular self gets bored saying the same thing over and over and it is good practice for me to deliver an eloquent impromptu description. I might start off by saying, "Homeopathy is a method that treats the whole per-

son” or “Homeopathy is a science that goes back 200 years.” or “It is used by millions all over the world.”

Here are some additional marketing ideas that have worked for my practice.

1. Develop a patient data base of mailing and e-mail addresses.
2. Create flyers (post at health food stores, kiosks, cafes, yoga studios, children’s shops..., direct mail to client list)
3. Direct mail postcards and brochures on homeopathy in general or on specific issues; such as, Menopause, Winter Ailments and Children’s Ailments.
4. Give free lectures at health food stores ( or any store that will let you speak).
5. Magazine and Newspaper Advertisements
6. Public relations is free advertising. Send press releases to local newspapers alerting the public of your lectures.
7. Gift Certificates for sale and as a donation for schools and causes.
8. Quarterly direct mail newsletters
9. Networking with other health professionals; such as, massage therapists, psychologists, holistic health practitioners.  
(Give these practitioners a complementary initial case taking so that they will give homeopathy a try and refer their patients.)
10. Referral program with your twenty-five most devoted patients.  
(I will give a patient that has referred me several clients a complimentary follow-up to show my appreciation for their referrals. They appreciate that, too!)
11. Check-up phone calls to see how current and past patients are feeling. This little effort goes a long way in developing rapport and trust with your patients.
12. Direct mail follow-up cards to remind patients that follow-ups are essential for successful homeopathic treatment of chronic issues. Sometimes patients need to be reminded that their case needs to be monitored for the best results.
13. Treat every client in a professional manner with kindness and compassion. Your sincerity will keep them coming back and referring their family and friends.

#### 5. **Focus and commitment.**

Keep your commitments to your patients. Keep up with your cases and prescribe remedies in a timely manner. If you say you will complete a case in a few days, then do your best to do that. If you are running behind, call them. They will appreciate your conscientiousness. Return phone calls in a timely manner.

Patients will come back just from your professionalism and prompt responsiveness. Keep your word to yourself to do the work.

#### **A Story About Focus**

At the time that I was running the school full time and keeping a full patient load while living my life as a single mom, I was very committed but going in so many directions that my focus was very diluted. Everyone got a little bit of me until I had nothing left. This was the turning point for me - when I was completely honest with myself on where my passion was and got really clear on what direction I wanted to take and what was most fulfilling to me. I knew that working with my patients and teaching was most important and most stimulating to me. I realized I needed to focus on one area or I would eventually crash and lose everything. Even though I love the school and am really happy that I devoted that time into building it, I knew that there were now some very qualified and hard working homeopaths in our community who could carry the torch from there.

One of the main things I learned over this time was the more focused my energy was in one direction, the more powerful and successful the results were. Have you ever experienced that? That was a big lesson for me. Just because you are good at many things does not mean you must do them all!

What did I do? I wrote a **Mission statement**. This is a great tool to get focused on your direction, philosophy and goals. Take some time and really think through what your purpose is in homeopathy. What do you want to create for yourself and others? Once you have created a clear mission statement, put it on your desk, your mirror, your refrigerator until you have taken that mission into your being and it is diffused into your practice.

#### 6. **Finance.**

Budget your overhead, office rent, remedies, computer and programs, travel and seminars and any other foreseeable expenses. How many patients do you need to meet your expenses? How many patients do you need to turn a profit? Set a minimum goal, a realistic goal and an ultimate goal. How many patients can you realistically handle per day? How many new patients can you handle per week? Reassess this every six months. If you stick with your budget and bring all these qualities together, soon your ultimate goal will be your current reality.

The final and most important tip:

**Take care of the homeopath.** Take it from a tried and true workaholic. Working 24/7 does not make you a better homeopath. After several years of living and breathing only homeopathy, I realized I


had become a boring, monomaniacal woman who was missing out on life. Get a hobby. Have some fun! There have been studies done on Fortune 500 Corporate Presidents regarding working straight through or blending in a personal life. Contrary to what you would think, those that took more vacations were more successful! Get away from your work and you will cleanse your mind and return with more enthusiasm than before. All my creativity comes when I am away from the phones and computer. Your clients like to converse with you and if all you do is work, you will have nothing to talk about! Find ways to replenish yourself and work within boundaries. How many patients can you see and still have energy left over for your personal life?

Your business will ebb and flow. Some months you will be so swamped you are begging for a reprieve and others will be so slow you are willing to see patients whenever they can come. "You can only come at 3:00 a.m.? Fine!" But when it is slow, I always look at my six qualities of a successful homeopath and practice. Where am I slacking off? Am I not as attentive as I need to be? Am I not taking enough time in working through my cases? Have I been lazy in the marketing arena? Am I taking care of myself?

As your patients grow and flourish, so will you and your practice.

Take a moment before each session with a client to remind yourself of the sacredness of the exchange that is about to happen. In terms of mathematical probability, the odds of two people coming together at any given time are literally over a billion to one. This is not a chance event, and part of your job as a healer is to embrace the importance of the moment and recognize its potential to completely transform both yourself and the patient.

*\*The E-Myth Revisited: Why Most Small Businesses Don't Work and What to Do About It* by Michael E. Gerber;

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