



massage at the office: 6 steps to make it work

As I drove home from work one evening, I kept shifting in my car seat, searching for relief for my aching back. I had spent the day sitting at my office desk, my body tense from being poised over a computer screen. Not surprisingly, I was suffering from back pain by the end of the day.

It made me empathize with all those people whose daily toil taxes their bodies. Like many people, lack of movement at work causes most of my body issues: sitting too long in one place, coupled with neck and shoulders tight with daily stresses, deadlines and duties. Then there are others like those working at delivery

services who suffer from moving *too much* at work, spending their days doing heavy lifting.

These examples make it easy to see that business and massage are naturally linked; they fit together like cause and effect. Articles like *Working Mothers* magazine's 18th annual survey of the "100 Best Companies for Working Mothers" show that 77 percent of select corporate environments already offer massage therapy at work. Initial research is discovering massage therapy's relationship to productivity, mental alertness and attendance. Since these things affect the bottom line, businesses are starting to pay attention.

RESOURCES

For more information about workplace massage, go to www.amtamassage.org/etouch/etouch0306m.html.

If you're marketing massage therapy, going after corporate business makes perfect sense. Rather than convincing 10 or 15 people of the benefits of massage therapy, in theory you only have to convince a handful of people at one company to get all the clients you can handle.

Going after big business doesn't need to be intimidating. You can approach it like any other marketing initiative, step-by-step.

Step 1: decide which companies you want to work with

This decision can be based on geographic location, type of companies you know or like, or simply companies that have the money to afford this employee benefit. Local business publications and business news articles are good places to begin your research. Use a search engine like Google™ (www.google.com) to find the company's website to get more background about the company. Oftentimes, you will be able to find the right people to contact on the website.

Step 2: find the right contact

When looking for contacts, try

departments like benefits and human resources. Don't be afraid to include the names of upper management, such as the president or vice presidents, on your contact list. Often they're the ones who control the company's purse strings. When you call these companies, be friendly with the receptionist and really think about what you're going to say before calling. If you don't already have their e-mail addresses, be sure to get them before you hang up.

Your conversation might go like this: *Hello, my name is [Jean Bailey] and I'm with [insert business name]. I am putting together some benefit information for your company, and I want to make sure it gets to the right people. Could you please direct me to the appropriate contacts?*

Just be sure to keep it simple, short and respectful of the other person's time. After all, he or she is doing you a favor.

Step 3: decide on a contact strategy

I like to include three areas of focus: mail, telephone and e-mail.

MAIL: Make sure your mailing is simple, direct and can break through all

the clutter people get buried in these days. Your lead sentence or headline should get their attention. Immediately after this, you need to give them the WIIFM ("What's in it for me?")—in this case, the company) and explain the features and benefits of massage. Remember to write this piece from the perspective of what it can contribute to their business. Words like productivity, attendance, employee reward and incentive are good to include.

TELEPHONE: Let a couple weeks go by after you have sent the letter. Then follow up with a phone call. Put together a script or at least key thoughts you want to cover in the conversation. Be prepared to leave a voice mail with your telephone number. Again, keep it short and simple: *Hi this is [Jean Bailey] from [your company name]. I'm following up on the mailing I recently sent you. I'm providing some select businesses with research on how therapeutic massage is helping businesses in areas of productivity, attendance and job satisfaction. In addition, I outline some innovative ways to reward and motivate your*

Understanding the Sales Process: 5 Steps to Sales

1. AWARENESS. People can't use your services until they are aware that you exist. There are many ways to create awareness, from signage to promotional articles in your local newspaper. You must announce or alert people to your services.

2. COMPREHENSION. Your target market must understand what it is you do. They must comprehend what massage therapy offers or contributes to their lives. In the case of getting a company to sign on for your services, you need to highlight how massage therapy can benefit the company by helping the employees.

3. CONVICTION. Your next challenge is to explain how your services will affect your prospect's life. Give them the

WIIFM (What's In It For Me?). Your challenge is to convince potential clients that you can make them feel better.

4. ORDER. The next step is to lead your prospects into ordering. This often takes reaching them time and time again and keeping your services at the top of their minds. You can often nudge them into ordering by offering introductory offers or making your service accessible and convenient.

5. REORDER. Here's the real report card. You have a customer, but you must convert him or her to a repeat customer. All the elements of your service must come together, from your skills and professionalism to the environment and pricing.

employees with massage therapy. Please call me at [phone number] for more information or to arrange a short, informative presentation.

Often, you have to leave multiple voice mail messages just to get an appointment. Be sure to change them slightly and keep them short. And keep in mind it's a bit of a numbers game: The more people you call, the more likely you are to get an appointment.

E-MAIL: Again, follow up with the same information you gave in the voice mail, and keep it short, simple and direct.

Your objective is to communicate the benefits of workplace massage several times, convince him or her that you have important information and establish the foundation of a business relationship.

Step 4: convince the decision maker

Once you reach someone authorized to accept or deny your services, you must persuade him or her that there is a real benefit to setting up a 15- to 20-minute meeting to present more information, ideas and a system for providing the company's employees with a great benefit that will help them perform better.

Step 5: prepare for the meeting

If you are successful in convincing the decision maker, it's time to prepare for the face-to-face meeting. I have three words of advice for you: professional, professional, professional. Have your materials ready, including essential information to leave with them. Keep your meeting to 15 minutes and dress, look and act like the true professional you are.

I recommend using a presentation piece to help you stay focused. It takes some pressure out of the meeting and helps you remember your



key points. A simple approach might be to purchase a folder that converts to a presentation easel. You can turn it horizontally and secure it at the bottom to form a miniature flipchart.

Simple bullet points (three to nine per page) should lead the decision maker(s) through the logic and compelling reasons to incorporate massage into their business benefits. You should also prepare a packet of information about massage therapy and business to leave behind.

Finally, be certain to include pricing and various packages to purchase. Based on the size of the company you could suggest service plans ranging from several days a week to once a month.

Step 6: follow up

Always follow up with a thank-you note or an e-mail to the person(s) you met with that day. It's a great way to recap the meeting and reemphasize the key points you wanted to get across.

And remember, it's great if you make the sale at your first meeting, but even if you don't, keep trying! To a sales professional, "no" just means "not yet."

Continue to send new information on business and massage therapy as you come across it. After all,

When making follow up calls, be prepared to leave a voice mail. Be respectful of the recipient's time by keeping the message short and simple.

you are trying to build a relationship with this company and relationships always demand time, patience and persistence.

Making it work

Massage at businesses is an idea whose time has come. Be part of this important movement. Take the time to consider this wonderful opportunity to bring massage therapy to all those people who leave their jobs stiff, sore or physically spent. It could be a real win-win relationship. ■



Jean Bailey has 27 years of corporate marketing and advertising experience and has held key positions with several Fortune

500 companies. She teaches marketing and sales for a Chicago-based massage therapy school and lectures and consults on marketing and communication for other health-related businesses. Jean is also a certified reflexologist and maintains a small private practice.