

PRACTICE *Strategies*

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Niche markets

Telephone coaching for cash draws new client market

Coaching for cash is leading Patrick Williams to new client markets while helping him move away from managed care.

"I got into coaching to get free from managed care," says Patrick Williams, who left a successful psychotherapy practice to become a personal and business coach. "Managed care dictates who we can see, and it takes patient choice out of the picture. Managed care has caused general unhappiness and a loss of professional integrity."

He accepts cash-only patients. "Non-managed care gives the option of a reduced fee, total patient confidentiality, and it enables the patient to take responsibility for mental wellness."

Williams offers his coaching services over the telephone. He charges an average fee of \$300 monthly for four 30-minute sessions. His average caseload is 20 clients weekly. 'Spot coaching' of five to 10-minute calls

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between sessions is available as needed, along with e-mail and fax messages. That's a base of \$6,000 each month with low overhead.

Key clients are business professionals, sales executives, and lawyers who have little time for scheduling and keeping office appointments.

"It's a matter of shifting the hat that you wear," says Williams. "Coaching becomes an avenue to make the shift. It is a chance to do something energizing. Therapists are change agents and coaching is a natural way to use therapeutic skills."

Williams says good communication skills are a must in coaching. "Coaching gives clients an ear to hear ideas. It challenges them to do

Coaching niche offers new option for therapists who feel stuck

more and it validates them,” says Williams. “It reaches those who don’t seek traditional therapy. A large percentage of these people seek a coach for life’s obstacles. It reaches out to those who still believe there is a stigma attached to therapy.”

He stresses the differences between telecoaching and therapy, however. “I do not do therapy over the phone. I deal with emotional issues, but if someone has an ongoing problem and is blocked, I refer them to a therapist. Some things need long-term, intensive therapy.”

Telecoaching cuts office expenses. It can be based anywhere where there is a telephone and computer connection. Scheduling is flexible, and there’s no drive time or parking hassle. Williams sees it as an option for other therapists who feel stuck and want a chance to work with a different set of clients.

“Coaching provides an opportunity for clients to become better in business, to increase profits, to reduce life stresses, to stay focused on goals, to have fun and above all, to win at the game of life.”

Eager to share his success, Williams offers two types of training for other clinicians. The first is a \$60 audiotape series that includes interviews with 14 other practitioners who have built successful coaching businesses.

His teleclasses, taught by telephone with support materials, include two levels of training in personal and business coaching; instruction on developing specialty programs such as coaching for students, family businesses, and executives; and practice development lessons that cover business, and lessons for computer and internet skills.

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