

10 Low-Cost Ways to Market Your Practice

by APApractice.org

Most thriving psychology practices have a strong client base and a steady stream of referrals. One key to success is having a solid marketing strategy, which should be a major component of your business plan.

Marketing your practice involves all ways that you communicate and build relationships with potential clients. This article summarizes ten inexpensive ways to drive business to your door by reaching out effectively to people who could benefit from your services.

Start with your professional image.

Every person you interact with is a potential client or referral source. Every document and communication from your practice is a marketing tool that can make or break a potential referral.

Define how you want others to perceive you and your practice, and be sure your materials and the way you present yourself are consistent with that image. Systematically evaluate your promotional materials, letters, reports, voice mail messages, office decor, and the way your office phone is answered. Make any necessary adjustments to fit the image you want to convey.

Develop a "sound bite."

Be able to explain who you are, what you do, and the benefits of your services in less than 30 seconds. Many opportunities will arise where you need to be able to give a concise summary of your practice. Write it down and rehearse it until it rolls off your tongue effortlessly.

Use a business card.

Business cards are very inexpensive marketing tools, and every professional should have them. You must distribute your cards to make them effective. Always carry your business cards with you and give them out liberally.

Use your promotional materials internally.

Your current clients are one of the best sources of new referrals in the future, and word of mouth goes a long way. Put your marketing materials in your waiting room. Arrange stacks of your business cards, practice brochures, and other promotional materials in your waiting area so your clients can easily pick them up and give them to friends, family members and coworkers.

Identify potential referral sources and start building relationships.

Get to know primary care physicians, obstetricians and gynecologists, school principals and counselors, lawyers, religious leaders, and other mental health professionals in your area. Connect with these potential referral sources both informally through community involvement and more directly by sending them a brief introductory cover letter along with information about your practice.

Give psychology away.

Identify a variety of topics that you are an expert on and can talk about for at least 30 minutes. Offer to give free lectures, workshops, and presentations for PTAs, chambers of commerce, and other community groups. Many APA members have

found it helpful for gaining community visibility and referrals to become involved with the association's public education campaign, Talk to Someone Who Can Help.

Write something.

There are a variety of potential options for getting published. Though not for everyone, contributing to peer-reviewed journals is one possible route. You could offer to write pieces on a professional issue for your state psychological association newsletter. Or you could contribute an article to a local newspaper. Having your writings published is a great way to enhance your visibility, build your arsenal of promotional materials, and hone your writing skills.

Get free press.

Write letters to the editor or op-eds for your community newspaper on topics within your areas of competence. Learn how to write good press releases for your speaking engagements. Knowing and engaging your local media contacts can help boost your public profile.

Network with your colleagues.

Join relevant professional organizations, participate in their activities and events, and serve on a committee or in another leadership role. Being active in the American Psychological Association, your state, provincial, or territorial psychological association, and APA divisions related to your interest areas is a great way to stay up-to-date on current developments and network with other psychologists who might send business your way.

Be visible in the community.

Be active in your community and network with non-psychologists. Participate in your homeowners association, PTA, and other community organizations and take part in community activities. Visibility is important. The more people you know, the more sources of referrals you have.

*Reprinted with permission from **APApractice.org**, the official website of the APA Practice Organization. For more information about issues and topics affecting the practice of psychology, including articles such as "Do's and Don'ts in Marketing Your Practice" and "Build Your Client Base With a Practice Brochure" visit APApractice.org.*