

10 key tips to building and maintaining a successful business

The success or failure of your business depends upon your drive, commitment and knowing how and why to engage your customers. To be clear about your vision, your product and your market and at all times be professional and a good communicator.

To help you get going there are **10 key tips** when it comes to building and maintaining a successful business. These can be reviewed annually, as your goals change and your business grows...a little like SMART planning!!!

1. **Be clear** about the product you are selling and why it works. Be clear to your clients about the service you are providing, what they can expect for their investment into you. People come to you because they think they are buying into something...Buggy Fit, Pilates, and Yoga, whatever. They stay because of you ...what you offer, your customer relationships, your knowledge base. The product will get them in the door, so keep your copy lean and mean, no fancy words, just tell them how it is and what you can do for them!!
2. **Team Baby**©. Taking an active part in what I fondly call Team Baby©. Research shows that women who are supported during pregnancy and labour often have a better birth outcome and are less likely to suffer from postnatal depression. Let Antenatal Educators and Midwives know about your work. Offer to give free talks on Pelvic Floor or the work you do. The more team spirited you are the more people are likely to refer to you. Building links in your community is a sure fire way of keeping people coming in through the door and referring their friends.
3. **Keep the flow.** Cash is the key to your business and to keep that money flowing offer your client's incentives but without undercutting yourself. You could block book people in classes of 4- 6 weeks at a time or at the start of every month when people have just received pay checks. These rates are offered at a cheaper price than you drop in rate which is usually about £1 - £1.50 more. So for example you want to charge £8 a session to they sign up and pay up front for £32 and if they are going away for holiday that month they can chose to pay the drop in rate of £9 - £9.50 a session. So it's a win win for both you and the client. Another good tip is signing newbies up on a slighter higher rate but including a "free" overball, theraband etc

with the class. Then when they come to their second month you give them "discount" as committed clients. It's a feel good result.

4. **Up, Up and away!!** Every year put your prices up 50p ...£1... whatever, but put them up!! If you don't clients will grumble about it when you do. Spring is a good time of year to do that, just after the start of the new tax year. Always offer incentives at this time too, like buy 4 classes and get one free and it keeps your clients connected. Be flexible in your approach with money and always give added value to your work.

5. **Be Sociable.** Keep marketing a priority. In the early days when you want to get people in the door you need to find good leads to get you going.

A teacher I know was invited to give a talk at The Women's Institute on Pelvic Floor and there wasn't a lady in the room under 70. Waste of time she thought I'm not going to get clients from this. How wrong was she!! After finding their pelvic floors amidst hoots and giggles they went on to refer nieces, daughters and daughter in laws. So it is surprising what new sources you can draw your client base from!! Our business is predominantly female centred and networking and referral is the faster way to build your business over leafleting and posters. Free Friday – invite people to bring a friend for Free Friday (or some other such header where their friend can do the class (one off) as a taster. People are more likely to stay in your class if they have a buddy to train with and this is especially good when you are trying to build classes on off peak days or off peak hours. There are many angles to sell your business and creativity is the key. As Deeprak Chopra says " Dont think outside the box...take the box away"

6. **Social media** can be a great way to promote my business and get more people to connect with you and begin to trust your brand. The current ten top social sites are: Facebook, Youtube, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Tumblr, Instagram Reddit. The key here is to find the best way for you to communicate e.g. Instagram pictures of healthy meals from recipes you are suggesting for your clients or a client working out with you is a good way to get people's interest. Youtube is great if you are a Vlogger and prefer the spoken word over the written word. LinkedIn can raise your profile and get you linked in with other professionals where you also have the opportunity to blog. Try out and few and devote no more than 30 mins a day to updating a site

or adding something new. The most important point to remember is not to promote or self yourself directly but to add value to what it is you are already offering. Creating quality content with interesting information is the way forward.

7. **Have integrity.** People are paying you for your knowledge and expertise and you got into this job because you wanted to help people, change their lives, right? BUT people really don't like a know it all. Creating a balance between all that wonderful information you worked so hard to gain in your qualification and being integral towards your client is an art form. What will serve you is your willingness to go on learning both professionally and from your clients. Never discuss your clients with others in a negative way and never ever badmouth another colleague, even when the clients are talking negatively of so and so down the road....keep quiet!! When we listen to our hearts and not our egos life becomes simple and people are drawn to you. They know they can depend on you and trust you.

8. **The 70% rule.** Body language makes up to 55% of the way we communicate to people , with tonality at about 38% and the actual content at 7%. (M.Argle et al., British Journal of Social and clinical Psychology). Keeping your body language open when engaging with clients, using active listening (nodding or making a small sound when they are talking shows them you are interested in what they have to say), smell good, look good. You are part of the product you are selling after all. Communicate well and follow through on information client's give you. Your client could be new to this, just had a baby, feeling overwhelmed, tired and the last thing they want to now is how many muscles their pelvic floor has. Always communicate with the client using their language and frames of reference and from their view point to build strong bridges or trust and rapport. Teach the client from their preferred learning style initially and over time develop their other skills. Keep it simple...say what you mean and mean what you say...always.

9. **Pay it Forward.** Most instructors who have been in the business longer than you are generous with their knowledge and can be willing to let you pick their brain. How do you deal with problem clients? How do you deal with dips in the holiday periods? How do you engage new clients? What set backs have you had? How did you overcome them? They have usually been there and survived it so don't be afraid to ask. Chats over coffee and banana muffins not only help you avoid pitfalls but develop strong relationships with your peers. Remember to pay for the coffee and when a new instructor asks you for help always pay it forward.
10. **Referral of Power.** Often we have clients who argue with us that they will continue to run, lift heavy weights or do 1000 cunches. It can be difficult to sign post some clients to what is not only a safe exercise choice for them but for baby too. When you have a Referral Of Power you aren't citing just from your experience and training as a teacher but as what the experts are saying is safe. Updating your knowledge regularly with CPD is vital and keeping a list of good sites is just as important as well as signposting your clients to these guidelines in your Facebook pages, Twitter, Website, instagram whatever social media you are using get the message out there. Here are a few to get you going.
- <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/pages/pregnancy-exercise.aspx>
- <http://pogp.csp.org.uk/publications/fit-safe-exercise-childbearing-year>
- <https://www.pelvicpartnership.org.uk/pgp-national-guidelines>
- <https://www.rcog.org.uk/guidelines>
- <https://www.midirs.org/>
- <http://www.babycentre.co.uk/>

Most of all be authentic and love what you do, then you can never go wrong !!

Rachel Rafiefar Dip Ed, Master Pilates Instructor