



**Business Support
& Development**

Actions speak louder than words



James Butler is Director of Painless Practice, providing assistance to osteopaths who want to develop their practice to meet current challenges – through one-to-one support, CPD training and published materials. James co-authored the BOA's widely-acclaimed Business Development Handbook and speaks widely on practice building techniques.

THROUGH MY LECTURES to final-year osteopathy students and a range of other CPD events for qualified practitioners of varied disciplines, I speak to four or five hundred professionals in complementary health each year. A significant number of those subsequently take up the opportunity to have a follow-up conversation on a one-to-one basis. Of course, I also have the hundreds of client conversations each year.

In the last month, I have had emails arising from two such conversations that stand out from the crowd as examples of just what is possible in practice promotion. To preserve their modesty, let me call them Bill and Ben. Bill and Ben are both 2009 osteopathy graduates, setting up their own practices, one in the South, one in the North. In the three or four months they have each had great success, indeed one of the emails said "Growth has been good, with takings of £1,200 in the first month, £2,200 in the second and £4,000 in the third". Good? That's brilliant!

So, what has made them so successful? Having met both of them, it is clear they are proactive, determined men, with a clear plan of where they want to go. But the biggest characteristic I can see, is that they have got on and taken action. Rather than thinking, talking or worrying about what they could do, they have got on and done something.

Like me, many of the people I speak to find this more difficult, so I thought I would share how I overcome my own inertia and get things done:

Align your actions to a vision

If you have the big picture of where you are going, and it is something you really want to do, it is much easier to take the day-to-day actions that will take you there. That's what gets Lance Armstrong on his bike training every day, for example.

Have a plan

Planning takes your big picture and translates it into things that need to be done in the short to medium term. Such a plan should be

specific on what needs to be done and, importantly, when they need to be done. Longer or larger tasks should be broken down into manageable chunks. "Get website" can be broken down into find a web designer, research other websites, attend James' training on websites, design the look, write copy etc.

Have an external reference

It helps me to have someone else to whom I am accountable, like when I had a boss. At various times I have used my wife, a business coach, a colleague or a friend – all can help. It seems human nature that we are less happy to let someone else down than we are to let ourselves down! Alongside this, we can have a reward structure to treat ourselves when the job is done.

Know your rhythm

I'm not sure about Bill and Ben, our two success stories, but I have found over my working career that there are good and bad times for me to do tasks. I am brightest and most creative at the start of my day, and I am an early riser. So if I need to write something, or think something through, I need to do that in the morning. More mundane tasks, or tasks that bring their own energy (like client sessions), can be done later.

Book the time

I definitely find that actions are more likely to take place if I carve out time in my diary to make it happen. When running your own business, it is just too easy to get distracted – by work stuff and family stuff. As practitioners, it is too easy to let patient work and other admin creep into your marketing time. Diligent scheduling and discipline allows you to get stuff done. Don't underestimate what is involved – Bill's email said: "perhaps I underestimated exactly how hard and constantly you need to drive things onwards and upwards".

Just Do It

Of course, what separates Bill and Ben from the crowd is that they just got on and did it. I am sure they faced all the same time pressures and challenges as we all do (I am fairly sure they have families and other responsibilities). Yet they took action, with strong intention, and they saw the deserved results.

What action do you need to take in your practice?

Oh, and I couldn't resist one last quote from Ben: "Our conversation and your book have been a huge help".

I couldn't put it better myself!

If you want ideas on how to develop your own practice, and communicate the right message to your potential patients, please visit www.painlesspractice.com and subscribe to the free e-newsletter, or call 01491 659073 to discuss what support you need. James is delivering regular CPD events for the BOA, visit www.osteopathy.org for details.

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