

**A THERAPIST'S GUIDE TO SETTING
UP A BUSINESS
(or working for yourself)**



**By
Barbara Bailey**

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INTRODUCTION

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This is a practical, no-nonsense, easy-to-follow guide aimed at the newly qualified or experienced therapist wishing to go into business with their eyes wide open!

This guide seeks to inform you of the unfamiliar aspects of a new business such as business marketing and planning, health & safety, your legal responsibilities to others, accounting, self-employed taxation and much more.

I set up my own business on a very meagre budget and had to seek out the very best ‘value for money’ products. I also invested in numerous costly advertising campaigns and would have definitely benefited from a similar guide when I first started - I can honestly say that I have not only experienced the pitfalls, but have worn the tee shirt on many occasions! So don’t waste time and money on costly products and advertising that doesn’t work.

This ‘must read’ Guide is specifically written for Therapists wishing to avoid the pitfalls and expense of going into business.

So read on, save time and money, and don’t get bogged under!



1. Getting started

Setting up our own business is hard enough in any industry. When the industry is as competitive as health and beauty, the challenge is even greater.

No matter how good your skills, how successful your course or how eager you are to get started, translating the hard work of training into a successful business is something that many newly qualified professionals are unprepared for.



Complementary Therapist



Beauty Therapist



Reiki or Healing Energy Practitioners

Some courses cover the basics of setting up a business, but many do not. Even those that do, only devote limited time to the practicalities of starting and running a business. Understandably, their emphasis is on delivering health and beauty training, not to assist you further down the line with business start-up know-how, so the information in this Guide will help to get you started.

Don't give up the day job

Having made the decision to work for yourself you will be keen to build your business as quickly as possible. But building up a stand-alone business to provide you with a living wage is a slow process and relies on word of mouth, networking and business skills, as much as your ability. *So don't ditch the day job!*

Most therapists start by gradually building up a practice in the evenings and at weekends, while still in full-time employment, and look to reduce their employment hours as their client base grows.



Why not consider part-time working?

Experienced members of staff are the key to any successful business and most employers are happy to consider part-time employment, rather than lose a valuable and experienced member of staff. So consider reducing your hours until you feel comfortable enough to ditch the day job.

Do's and Don'ts at a glance:-

Do

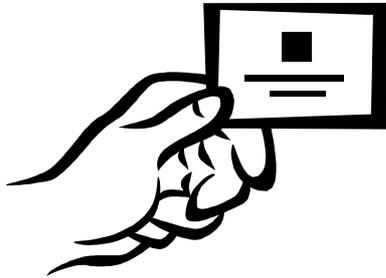
- Do target your market. Take the time to research and target your market; it is quicker to build a business if you find your niche market.
- Do self-publicity. Keep a set of inexpensive business cards (have your price list printed on the reverse) and get in the habit of handing them out!
- Create your own leaflet; this is inexpensive and is self-publicising (*see Section 9, page 35*).
- Take small steps. Set yourself aside some 'me-time' to go through the book and take small steps nearer to achieving your goal.

Don't

- if you're offering massage services, don't place an advert in the newspaper unless you want to be pestered by dodgy people at all hours;
- don't spend money on expensive glossy brochures to distribute randomly around the neighbourhood;
- don't underestimate how much time, effort and planning it will take to develop a business;
- Don't give up at the first hurdle – persevere, as it will get easier.



2. Business name



There is no need to register a Business Name unless it is a limited company but you mustn't attempt to confuse or gain advantage from a name. Also, the name must not try to make inappropriate association to such as the crown, local authority or other branded businesses.

What's the best type of name for my business?

There's no one-size-fits-all formula for picking a great business name. The best name depends on a host of considerations - some as obvious as the kind of business you do, others as unique as your own tastes and style. There are, however, a few guidelines that will steer you in the right direction. A good business name should:

- be distinctive
- be memorable
- be easily spelled and pronounced
- suggest the products or services you offer; and
- distinguish you from your competitors.