



L I G H T
C E N T R E

**HOW TO BUILD A SUCCESSFUL PRACTICE
AT THE LIGHT CENTRE**

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Part 1: Introduction

Whilst the Light Centre provides one of the best possible environments in which to build a practice, if you want to be successful you will also need to be self-reliant and put in place your own marketing plan.

Because the Centre has so many teachers and practitioners to look after, the only possible person that can put the required energy into this plan is 'you'.

This pack describes ways in which you can make the most of the opportunities that the Light Centre presents. If you follow it closely you will have an excellent chance of building a successful practice.

Why Should You Practice With Us?

The Light Centre was established 17 years ago with the idea of providing a comprehensive, one-stop shop for mainstream, holistic and preventative healthcare, providing local people with all their private health needs in one place and providing health practitioners with a space where they can work together as a team.

On a broader level, the Light Centre seeks to present the very best of the health world and put it together in a cohesive framework, so as to enhance the reputation and provide further credibility for a more preventative approach to healthcare.

We believe that rather than waiting for disease to strike, people should monitor their health and be supported in putting together, and continually working on, a health-improvement plan; one that embraces physical, functional and mental aspects, and encourages a healthy curiosity for, and understanding of, life and our own sense of purpose.

By providing a diverse range of classes, therapies, contemplations and experiences, we provide many pathways to self-awareness and thus self-development. Every different discipline at the Centre attracts a different audience, but all act as gateways to each other and together they open up a world of self-discovery and a chance to better understand and thus release ourselves from the tensions and pressures of the modern world.

This is the core philosophy of the Light Centre and one we look to share with our teachers, practitioners, health specialists and partners.

Objectivity

Alongside our preventative philosophy we also seek to be objective and structured in our approach to health. We have for instance, developed our own health screening service so that all our customers are able to measure their physical, functional and mental health at an affordable price.

Having such a diverse and cohesive range of services, together with an objective and measurable approach to health improvement, makes us unique in London and possibly the whole country. Our bright and spacious buildings and friendly staff create a welcoming and positive environment for change and our well-sited locations put us right where people need us most.

There really couldn't be a better place to build a practice.

What this means for you

Whilst the opportunity to build a practice within the Light Centre is second to none, success will not happen on its own.

Firstly, it goes without saying that a practitioner needs to be competent and able to demonstrate positive results in order to retain their clients. If a good proportion of your customers are not coming back for a second visit or completing their treatment plans, then your practice will struggle to get off the ground.

For most clients their journey to better health is going to be a lifetime pursuit. Being a holistic practitioner, you should thus be working within a 'holistic' plan and be able to demonstrate the progress you are making towards their goals. In this way you will retain clients.

Once you have built a stable of long-term customers who are working to plans, you will inevitably start to get many more customers through referrals and it is by word of mouth that you will eventually establish yourself.

In this respect the marketing of your practice will be nearly all *front-ended*, i.e. all the effort will come in the first few months, after which you will probably be able to live off the subsequent referrals for the rest of your career.

Part 2: Setting Targets and a Timeframe

Doing the 'Hundred'

If you are a competent practitioner who can demonstrate measurable results, then experience tells us that you will need to create around *one hundred* positive client experiences before subsequent referrals become your main source of new customers. You thus just have to work out *how* you're going to get these first one hundred people through your door.

In some ways you could look at these first *one hundred* customers as your pathway to success. As such, how to get people through the door should be your first thought and not necessarily how much to charge them.

Never Leave a Slot Unfilled

If you have one, six-hour slot at the Centre and your appointments last one hour, then you will have space for six client experiences per week. If you fill your slots with clients then it will take you a minimum of four months to reach your *hundred*. If you have two slots then it will be just two months and if you have 30 minute appointments then it's just a month.

Filling every slot during this 'marketing period' should thus be your sole goal, which, given that you are probably going to be able to live off the subsequent referrals for the rest of your life, should absorb the rest of your week when you're not actually in clinic.

How to Fill all Your Slots

In the catchment area of our centres there are hundreds of thousands of people, nearly all of whom are unhappy or dissatisfied with some aspects of their health and nearly all of them willing to pay some money to do something about it.

Most people are now aware that medicines and other orthodox treatments are only capable of treating the symptoms of their problems and won't deal with the underlying causes, but most haven't yet been given the advice, attention and support they need to make an alternative or more preventative choice.

To attract a hundred new customers you are going to need to make meaningful contact with at least ten times this number, so how do you find and communicate with these people and how do you go about convincing them to try your approach?

Part 3: Getting the Basics Right

There are four basic steps that all therapists should take before starting their Light Centre marketing campaign:

1. Have a website linked to the Light Centre site and all other LC therapists
2. Register your business and website with Google
3. Produce leaflets for display in the Centre
4. Start some Google Advertisements

Website

Many people find a local therapist through a search engine and in our locality 90% of these searches will be made via Google. It is thus essential that you have a website and that the Google spiders consider it to be relevant to the typical search words people will probably use to find you.

You will of course already have a page on our website, but because our website is necessarily generic to many therapies, it will not be specific enough to get you noticed. It is thus essential that you create a website that is more specific to what you do.

It can literally be one page like a flyer and in many ways you're better off if it is just one page that you rarely if ever need to change.

Websites are very easy to set up yourself and it is far better that you know how to create it and therefore how to update it yourself than rely on someone else to do it for you. If you can use Microsoft Word then you can also set up your own simple website.

The internet is full of free and simple website-creating tools. Just do a search.

The only other thing you need is a company to host your website, i.e. a bit of server space where your website sits. Most website creation tools offer to host your website as well.

Choosing your Website name and Setting it up

Most online searches for a therapist will consist of the name of the therapy or type of therapist and the location of the searcher, e.g. "physiotherapist" or "physiotherapy" plus "Belgravia" or "Victoria" or "City of London" or "Marylebone" etc. If you want to capture these potential clients you thus need your website to be as relevant to these words as possible.

If you haven't got a domain name yet then it should, if possible, include these key words e.g. www.physiotherapycityoflondon.co.uk, or at least www.joblogspphysiotherapist.co.uk. Using these search words in your website name will greatly help your relevance to important search strings.

It used to be that having a '.com' or '.co.uk' website was important, but now it can be 'anythingyouwant'. What's most important is that you include the most likely keywords people will use to find you in the name.

If you already have a website that doesn't follow this protocol then you should seriously think about starting another one that does!

Next, the website should have as many other websites linking to it as possible, as this is one of the other key ways that Google determines your relevance. Of course, the first link should be to your Light Centre page and vice versa.

After this you should make sure that your professional body and all associated directories of therapists link to your front page. You should also set up a Facebook page and link it to your website.

In creating these links it is essential that the 'link itself' carries all the key words that you think your customers will search for, e.g. [Joe Blogs, Physiotherapist, Light Centre Monument, City of London](#).

Creating nodes

Being a Centre with 400 other therapists, the most obvious and successful website strategy is for all our therapists to link to each other's websites.

If you haven't done this yet, then you should do it as soon as you can. Simply create a list called 'Other Therapists I Work With' and link to each other's websites.

Registering your Business with Google

When a customer types in a search request into Google for a particular type of therapist in a particular location, Google will display a local map and highlight the most relevant practitioners. Many people click on these highlighted therapists so it is essential that you are there.

To be listed you first need to register your practice and website with Google. You can set up your Google profile here:

<http://www.google.com/business/>

When asked for your business details, make sure to include your profession and perhaps location and when asked for the address try to use the Centre's street number and postcode *without* linking it to the Centre's name (otherwise you won't be considered a separate entity), e.g.:

Jill Blogs Belgravia Massage
9 Eccleston St, Belgravia, SW1W 9LX

Be sure to list your *own* website as your primary page and *not your page on the LC website*.

Producing Leaflets

The Light Centre has produced a series of templates to help therapists create their own leaflets and display them in the Centre. To create a sense of harmony, only therapist leaflets that use these templates are displayed.

Having leaflets in the Centre will not in itself guarantee you any clients, but as part of a successful marketing strategy it is important to have this presence.

Most importantly these leaflets should be given to your existing customers so they can promote you to their friends and colleagues. They can also be put in gyms, doctor's surgeries and other places where potential customers might look for someone with your qualifications.

The price of these leaflets ranges from about £50 to £200, depending on the quantity, type of print and quality of the paper you choose. There are always at least two price options given by our printers.

When writing the text for your leaflet, it is important to remember that you are not allowed to make any health claims that are not substantiated by research. This means that you cannot claim to treat a particular illness unless you refer to the peer-reviewed research that supports your claim.

Advertising

Most advertising is expensive and difficult to predict the results. If you have an extremely well-crafted advertisement that really speaks to people, that has been properly tested to ensure that it will get sufficient results and has a tracking process, then it might be worthwhile, but otherwise you should avoid this form of marketing, at least until you have done all the other things in this pack.

One possible exception to this is Google Adverts which, *if done correctly*, can be an inexpensive way to attract geographically specific customers and boost your website relevance.

It can also help you to test the words and phrases that most attract your potential customers and can then be successfully used in other forms of advertising.

There is a science behind Google Adverts that makes them extremely powerful, but it is important that you *understand the science* first before spending any money.

Part 4: The Actual Marketing Part

The Limitation of Printed Materials

Whilst it is obviously important to have your written materials and info pages in place, these materials *on their own* are not going to bring you many direct clients. They should thus be seen as an essential foundation for your marketing campaign, but **THEY ARE NOT THE CAMPAIGN ITSELF**.

Even *if* people read these materials, the message hasn't yet been tailored to their needs and hasn't yet created a relationship with them, something that is vital to converting most interested parties into paying customers.

Customers like to get a feel for their practitioner before they commit to seeing them and they normally have questions they need to overcome before they are willing to act

For this reason, the actual marketing of your practice requires you to *speak in person with your prospective customers forming a relationship and building rapport*. Your written materials then become a support to this process.

In our experience, written materials represent only 20% of an effective marketing campaign. Engaging directly with people constitutes the other 80%.

Find out about your potential customer

To be able to effectively engage with potential customers, you first need to find out something about them and what problems they are trying to overcome. You then need to consider what benefits a recovery from these problems would bring them and then explain to them how your practice can help them achieve these benefits.

Knowing and describing what 'benefits' your therapy can offer is the starting point for effectively engaging with people. Saying that you are a psychotherapist for instance, will not generate as much interest or conversation as saying that you help people 'overcome stress', which in turn might not be as engaging as saying that you 'help people leave their work in the office'.

Promoting one or two key outcomes of your therapy is a more effective approach than listing a whole arsenal of treatments. You may be able to do lots of things, but this doesn't really speak to people and they will anyway be quickly overwhelmed if you give them too much choice.

Focussing on a few key outcomes will also allow you to target your potential clients better and talk more directly to them.

It has been noticeable over the years that therapists at the Light Centre who have focused on a niche have been more successful than those who offer general treatments. It allows them to stand out from the crowd and look more unique.

There are so many potential customers in our catchment areas that even concentrating on extreme niches can be a successful strategy.

Offer measurable results

It can be very helpful to convincing someone to try your treatment if you're able to 'measure' the extent of their problem and also able to demonstrate 'measurable' change afterwards. Helping people to see the extent of their problem can be the motivator they need to act and can be a good way to first engage with people.

For instance, Chiropractors often take a posture machine to events to show people their asymmetries and imbalances. The person gets a photograph and some explanation of how chiropractic treatment could address these problems. This 'free gift' encourages reciprocation and acts as a powerful marketing tool for them, allowing them to go to companies and events and instantly interact with lots of people.

Where to Talk to People

Once you've worked out what outcomes you want to promote and how you're going to demonstrate the improvements, you are ready to start talking to people and attract your first *hundred* customers. But who should you talk to and how do you best persuade them to come to your clinic?

The first people to get on-side are the receptionists at the Centre. But simply giving them an experience of your therapy is not going to be enough. They need to know what 'specifically' you are good for and perhaps 'one' kind of customer you particularly want them to refer to you. They also need to know how to describe the 'unique' benefits of seeing you (over other types of therapists) and what outcomes the customer is likely to notice as a result.

Next, you need to engage with other teachers, practitioners and partners in the Centre. You should try to create a few two-way alliances by finding commonalities and showing colleagues how you can enhance and augment their work. Alliances happen within an environment of mutual respect and understanding, which will only happen by *really* getting to know them.

Of course, working with other therapists is also rewarding on many other levels and will help you to grow and learn.

Next you should make sure that you are maximising your interaction with people who come to Light Centre for classes or the café at Light Centre Monument or other service providers. This will work best if you take part in these activities yourself (therapists can go to classes at Monument for just £2).

Venturing Outside the Centre

But despite the obvious appeal of interacting with people *within* the Centre, many Light Centre customers are already fully engaged in executing their own health plans, so by far the best results will come from venturing *outside* the Centre to find people who are yet to start a holistic health plan. This means joining local groups, going to local events or offering your services to organisations or companies when they have events or wellbeing days.

An obvious strategy is to give talks to groups. Your talk should be about how they can achieve a benefit (such as undoing desk-related posture problems), rather than a general talk about your therapy. A well delivered and informative talk that finishes by offering your solution to the identified problem, can generate 'a lot' of new clients.

Barriers to Commitment

So, you're standing in front of an individual or a group. You've identified their specific needs and goals and you've started to tell them how you can help them to meet their health targets. Now, how do you turn their growing interest into an appointment?

Most importantly, you need to know what their barriers to commitment are. You need to be able to identify and understand these potential barriers as they arise and be able to overcome them. Once all their barriers are satisfactorily addressed they will almost certainly become your client.

Are They Convinced Yet?

Despite the smile on people's faces and their nods of approval, you may not yet have convinced them that you are the right person to address their problems.

Perhaps they don't yet see how your type of therapy will improve their lives? Perhaps they are not yet convinced that you are capable of producing the results they are looking for?

If you suspect this, then you'll need to find a way for them to express their doubts so you can continue to address them.

Often a person who asks difficult questions is much more likely to become a client than someone who doesn't engage with you at all. Stimulating engagement and eliciting questions is thus preferable to just talking to people.

Making offers

Even if they're convinced about you and your therapy, another barrier to commitment might be that they perceive you as being too expensive for them, or perhaps they think that seeing you once might force them to commit to seeing you again, even if they don't have a positive experience.

Having an offer or guarantee to tell people about can be the factor that seals the first appointment.

Pricing

Whilst its very important to have a 'rack rate' for your therapy which is stated on your leaflets etc, whilst you're building your *hundred* you need to look at remuneration as a bonus rather than a fixed goal.

During the first session many people are worried that they will pay you a significant amount of money and not see any benefit, or they may be unsure about how many sessions they might need to commit to and thus what the total cost will be. This is a barrier that you need to satisfactorily address.

Bearing in mind that having the person be an advocate for you is probably more valuable to you than the therapy fee, you may approach this a number of ways, e.g.:

- “Don’t worry about the fee, for the first session you can just pay me what you like at the end of the session”
- “I always offer a money back guarantee to anyone who doesn’t see ‘x’ benefit after the first session”
- “Why don’t you come and see me so I can assess the problem and give you some specific ideas/advice. There will be no charge for that and we can then decide whether to go ahead with any treatment”
- “You know I really think I can be of use to you. How about I charge you just half price for the first session and you can see if it’s for you or not?”

This kind of personal offer needs to be created to address the person’s ‘specific’ concerns, something that is impossible to do through promotional materials alone.

No Time!

If you’ve convinced them of you and your therapy and found a way to overcome their financial concerns, the last likely barrier to their commitment is either procrastination or a worry that they don’t have enough time right now to address their problems. In either case you need to find a way to get them to act.

Usually this means simply asking them whether they’d like to make an appointment! Its as simple as that. If they’re not ready then ask them when they think they will be ready and make a note to call them.

This can all sound a bit ‘American’ in its approach. But if handled sensitively it can also ‘help’ people to make decisions when they would otherwise let things pass by and probably continue on a pathway to ill-health. If you believe in what you do then you are simply helping them to help themselves.

Testing your Messages and Offers

If you are methodical in your marketing then it’s possible to almost *guarantee* that you will be successful!

The way to do this is to always know how much each form of marketing cost you and how many paying customers it generated. You then keep testing new wordings, offers and methods to compare their success rates.

If, for instance, you paid £100 to print 1000 leaflets with a particular offer and you get four new customers, then each new customer cost you £25, (not forgetting the time and cost of distributing them). If you find that, on average, your customers eventually come to you three times and pay £60 per session, then each one has cost you £25 for a reward of £180.

Next you could try a different leaflet with a different offer and see which one was more successful.

This strategy is particularly useful in Google Adverts where you can quickly and inexpensively test multiple wordings and multiple offers against each other to find out which ones are most attractive to potential customers.

Once you've found your most successful words and offers, you can then turn up the spending on your leaflets or advertising, *knowing* for certain that it will generate customers at a predictable rate and cost.

In this way, your marketing can be a virtual *guarantee* of success!

Turning a Client into an Advocate

When a person has had a good experience with you, they need to know that "you'd like them to tell other people". In some cases they will do this naturally but in most cases they won't. Having done all the hard work of finding a new client, it would be a shame if your efforts to find them didn't generate any further referrals.

Make sure that you 'at least' give your leaflets or business cards to your customers. You could also offer them an incentive such as a free session when they recommend a friend.

Part 5: Additional Marketing Ideas

Find a Partner or an Associate

If you are unable to fully fill your slot/s yourself or you tend to go away a lot, then it could be worth thinking about teaming up with another practitioner or finding an associate.

Working with a second person can make the task of building a practice much easier.

It is best not to directly employ another therapist or go into a formal partnership as this rarely works, but mentoring a less experienced practitioner or forming an alliance can be mutually rewarding.

Take on More Slots

Once you've managed to build up one slot, it makes sense to start another. This increases your presence and importance in the Centre, gives you more variety of times to offer your customers and allows you to see some clients twice a week (if appropriate). Having both a morning and an afternoon slot will give you the greatest flexibility.

Outside of your slot times you can also book ad hoc hours either from the Centre (if we have any free space) or from other therapists. Having a favoured therapist who you regularly swap times with will increase the options you can offer a customer.

Line Yourself Up to Benefit from Corporate Campaigns

Companies have a duty to look after their staff's health and many are aware that the workplace is often the source of their staff's problems. Health insurance only serves to catch the problems when they've already happened and the in-house services most companies provide are disparate and uncoordinated.

Most companies would like to provide their staff with a more proactive approach. They will often organise wellness events and offer incentives to staff. Try approaching companies to find out if there are any wellness activities you could fit into, or ask friends about wellness opportunities at their companies.

Online Opportunities

Most products and services are now available online and this provides opportunities and threats for therapists too.

Talking therapies are obviously most conducive to online consultations, but video conferencing can also be helpful for staying in touch with clients when they don't need to come to the centre. It can also be a good way to give talks, or free initial advice to clients who haven't yet made a decision to have treatment.

This is a medium you should be interested in and think carefully about.

Creative Pricing

Most therapists charge by the session, but clients aren't so interested in how many sessions they need to come to, they instead care about the results.

There is a growing trend to charge customers a set figure or a monthly fee no matter how little or much of your time it takes to get some *measurable* result. The measurable part could be the removal of pain, or a certain change in a test result.

If you decide to charge this way and you're extremely confident of your skills, then you could also offer a money back guarantee should the results not be achieved.

Part 6: Getting Support

New Therapist Inductions

The Light Centre runs occasional network meetings for therapists. This is an opportunity to meet other therapists, discuss your practice and ask questions pertaining to our general support. If you haven't yet attended one of these meetings then please ask us and we'll tell you the next date/s.

Don't Delay, Start Today

Although the information in this pack is relatively straight forward it can sometimes seem a little daunting. Remember that a job begun is a job half done and the willingness to start is usually the biggest hurdle.

Please be aware that the Centre cannot do any of these things for you. If you are really stuck then you can email me (mark@lightcentre.com), but if you have specific questions that can wait, then it's best to bring them to a networking meeting.

If you are organised and work hard then you will undoubtedly be successful and once established you will be able to enjoy the fruits of your labour for many years to come.

Good Luck....

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LIGHT CENTRE PRACTITIONERS SUPPORT

TICK LIST OF TASKS

- Buy a domain name and some server space for your own website. (page 5)
- Create your own simple website *yourself* using online tools. (page 5)
- Focus the name and content of your website on the search words a client is most likely to use to find you. Use the name of your profession / skills and the area you practice in as much as possible. (page 5)
- Link your website to your profile page on the LC website and vice versa. (page 6)
- Create a page of links to other LC therapists (page 6)
- Get as many directories, professional bodies etc to link to your website using a link phrase that contains your name, profession and location. (page 6)
- Register your business and personal website with Google+. Use the LC address but not the name. (page 6)
- Use the LC template to create your own leaflets for display in reception. Use them to give to existing clients and promote yourself externally. (page 7)
- Get to know Google Ads and start testing adverts on low-cost search strings. (page 7)

- Decide what benefits you can create for a client rather than services you offer. (page 8)
- If your skills are generic and its thus difficult to target your marketing, then pick one or two niche areas to work on. (page 8)
- Create a plan to create face-to-face opportunities to talk to prospective clients. (page 9)
- Consider what offers you are prepared to give to remove the typical barriers that people often have to making an appointment. (page 10)

- Create a table showing every slot you want to fill over the next few months. (page 4)
- Give targets to your marketing efforts in order to fill these slots. (page 4)
- You have 7 days between sessions to fill your slots. Make this a priority over income (without devaluing your practice). (page 4)
- Make sure that those clients who have a positive experience with you are motivated and well equipped to tell others. (page 12)

- Be methodical in your marketing. Keep records of how much time and money you spend on each marketing initiative, how many clients it attracts and how much these clients subsequently spend with you. (page 11)
- Come to the LC therapist network meetings to get support, increase your marketing skills and make contacts. (page 15)