



Introduction

I distinctly remember when the idea for this project was conceived. It was November 1998 and I was in the middle of massaging a client. It took a further eight months before I did anything about it and, when I eventually got started, it took me until mid 2001 to finish. So much for the goal of six months I had set for completing the project!

Many ideas evolved over time, while others remained true to the original concept. One unchanging condition was that the people interviewed and written about had to meet a particular set of criteria - they must be running their own business and have been doing so for a minimum of two years; their business had to be in the field of complementary therapies; and they had to have displayed a level of professional and ethical behaviour in their chosen field.

The complementary therapies industry covers a vast array of natural therapy modalities and only space constraints restrict me from including many more stories in this work.

Listening to these people's professional lives unfold and going through the highlights as well as the challenges was a cathartic experience for me. So was writing their individual stories. I hadn't been in business very long when I started this project and was going through a major period of professional growth and development. Finances were very tight and at times I surprised myself how I survived (a common enough story, it turned out). I needed to hear how other people had survived and gauged their progress and success. The more I listened the more it reinforced my own drive to keep going. I had to follow my dream of running a successful complementary therapies business.

I also knew that, if this was how I was feeling, surely others just starting out in complementary therapies, whether they were in the process of setting up a business or wanting to pursue it as a career, had similar feelings.

These stories provide an insight into how people have established themselves in their chosen professions, their achievements and challenges, what they believe are the positives and negatives about being a complementary therapist, and what they consider success to be. Hopefully the stories also will improve readers' understanding of the different modalities embraced under the complementary therapies banner.

I have deliberately steered away from labelling natural therapy modalities as “alternative”. I don’t believe modalities embraced in natural health care should be seen as “alternative” to the orthodox medical model, as this description indicates a separation. I believe complementary therapies, as the name suggests, stand alongside the orthodox model, with the potential to enhance and benefit. I feel that, in time to come, there will be no division between the orthodox and complementary therapies models, only integration.

My hope is that medical practice and natural therapy modalities will be seen purely as “health care disciplines”. This is a phrase coined by osteopath Paula Henderson and is very apt as it does not favour one model over the other, nor is one more worthy than the other. The focus is to be on the patients and their individual needs.

Rather than providing statistics on success and failure rates, or offering marketing strategies on how to establish a business in the field of complementary therapies, I have chosen to make this work a collection of stories collated from interviews I have had with the selected industry based people. Essentially I wanted the words contained in these pages to provide some practical advice in an easy-to-read and easily understood format with pertinent information from businesses already established in the industry.

I hesitate to call this project of mine a book, preferring to think of it as a survival tool. As I have already mentioned, writing these stories gave me the will to continue on this exciting and, at times, arduous journey and I am happy to say that I am still succeeding on my terms.

Whether you are considering a future in complementary therapies, studying in the field, or at the point of setting up a complementary business, these stories will help you on your way. My goal in telling these stories is to inspire you, the reader, to take action in pursuing your dreams as well as assisting along the journey toward success.

Aromatic wishes

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