

# Message to homeopaths: Business matters

by Richard Eaton LL.B



Richard is a retired barrister, a mentor of new small businesses and a full member of the Institute of Enterprise and Entrepreneurs. He writes a quarterly online blog for the College of Medicine which may be found in the Complementary section of its website. In his February 2017 blog, he explored the potential cost-effectiveness of complementary or alternative medicine within the context of integrated healthcare provided by the public health sector (NHS).

Richard Eaton explains how practitioners can help to defend their professional freedom by adopting a business approach to their practice.

As its title suggests, this article is aimed at new practitioners of homeopathy but it's likely that established practitioners will also find at least some of its suggestions helpful. Please note that where shortened website addresses are mentioned below their full web-link addresses may be found at the end of the article.

Last year was a challenging time for all practitioners, made even more so by the unwelcome intervention of the Advertising Standards Authority Ltd. This year will be more challenging than ever, as practitioners strive to assess the implications of 'Brexit' and how these may affect the freedom to practise and to receive homeopathy.

As usual, much of the popular press continues to present an unbalanced and misrepresentative view of practitioners and of homeopathic remedies, a fact that is eagerly exploited by those ambitious to have them discredited and banned. I have yet to see any mention by press or broadcast media of *The World Health Organization Traditional Medicine Strategy 2014 to 2023: Strategy Document* which provides:

... As the uptake of T&CM (Traditional and Complementary Medicine) increases, there is a need for its closer integration into health systems ...

The strategy document later refers

to homeopathy. Nor have I seen reports that the Swiss Government has found homeopathy to be effective and cost efficient. ([anbinternational.org](http://anbinternational.org))

Contrast this with the column written by a leader writer in the *Times* on Tuesday 13 December 2016, captioned: 'Prince Charles's homeopathy fad is joke medicine'.

There has, in my view, never been a time of greater need for practitioners to 'fight their corner', for instance by promoting their profession and effectively organising the management of their practice.

To this end, I urge practitioners to accept that running their practice is, in essence, subject to the same commercial criteria as apply to the trading of any (small) business. The knowledge, experience, professionalism and ethical standards of a practising member of the Alliance of Registered Homeopaths are, of course, acknowledged and to be congratulated. Nevertheless, now more than ever, practitioners need



▷ so, introduce them to your practice. Sign up to supportive online business newsletters and memberships such as *enterprisenation.com*.

Use, amongst other things, the feedback from your clients (see above), prepare a client database and create a Marketing Plan (*fsb.cobwebinfo.com*) and a Business Plan, including cash-flow pages (*www.gov.uk*). You will have a much better chance of achieving your business goals if you first write them down.

Ask yourself: When and why did clients seek my services and how can I keep in touch with them? Distribute print, or, better still, e-newsletters; maybe use *constantcontact.com*. Write articles about homeopathy for professional journals and general healthcare-focused magazines. Produce a well-designed, good quality brochure and publicity material, both in print – see, for instance, *moo.com* – and also online.

**Social media**

Make use of social media platforms. Although new practitioners are likely to be familiar with what needs to be done, it's possible that this may not be the case with their more established professional colleagues. Record a video about yourself and your business and post it on YouTube. Link this to your Twitter and Facebook accounts. Your 'followers' might then 'comment', 'like' or 'retweet' to their 'followers', thereby promoting your professional status and business. Create, or, if you already have one, keep updated a (free) LinkedIn business account profile.

A website that is well designed and informative is a vital marketing tool. It is a worldwide 'shop window' as it informs your clients (existing and prospective) about you, where you are located, what you do and when you do it.

Keep your cyber security under constant review and seek advice and support from websites like *cyberware.gov.uk* and *getsafeonline.org*. Your business

# It is true that 'people buy from people' so you need to build good rapport with your clients

will be processing client's personal and health information, so ensure that you comply with data protection legislation (*ico.org.uk*).

There are many other business processes that could assist your practice, especially if you decide to diversify into the manufacture and sale of homeopathy-based products (for example, homeopathy first-aid kits or specific treatment packs) or to associate your business with other professionals, for example at a veterinary practice (*www.bahvs.com*), NHS practice or hospital.

**Looking forward**

I hope that you have found this brief article useful and thought-provoking. I anticipate that, over the coming years, the freedom to practise homeopathy, whether or not independently of the (so-called) conventional medicine sector, will, to a significant degree, depend upon the adoption of a business-focused approach by practitioners.

Where appropriate, perhaps established practitioners of the

Richard Eaton's book *Business Guide for Health Therapists: How to find what you need to know* is available:

- as an e-book (with hyperlinks) from various digital stores at *www.books2read.com/BG4HT* (priced at less than £6.00) and
- in print (as a coil-bound paperback book) from *www.lulu.com* (£5.99).

Alliance of Registered Homeopaths will be prepared to mentor new members to help them to achieve this.

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