

HEALTHY WEALTHY & SMART PRESENTS:

Strictly Business Virtual Conference

Creating and Building Your Physical Therapy Practice



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After working as a staff physiotherapist for 7 years, 3 of those being as a clinic manager, I took the leap, quit my job and decided to start my own practice. I was doing far too much work for my previous employer, almost building the business for them at their newest clinic and decided I should do it for myself. Some of the work was started while I was still employed, but to really concentrate on starting up I had to leave my job to immerse myself fully into this big endeavour. The plan was to have a 1400 sq ft clinic with 4 private treatment rooms, provide 1 hour assessments and 30 minute treatments. I was going to hire a full-time admin right away and not expecting to hire anyone else for 20-24 months until the business had grown enough to take on another Physiotherapist. As of March 2015, the business has now been open for 20 months, we are now 3 Physiotherapists (including me) and have a total staff of 6! Needless to say, the business has grown much quicker than expected. Good problem to have, but also a lot of work. I would say that my biggest failure in the process was not planning enough on 'bigger picture' things early enough. At the moment, I'm not only doing business development, marketing, but also have to worry about Human Resources and staffing, on top of treating clients. Having no business background, which is the unfortunate side of our Physiotherapy education, I've had to learn things on the fly. Thanks to the online community (Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook), resources on the web, book suggestions and some continuing education courses on the business side of healthcare, I find that I'm navigating through things with greater ease. With all the growth and the addition of staff members, I'm currently in the process of developing different systems in the business. This way, regardless of who is at the desk or if a staff member leaves, someone new can be trained fairly quickly in how we do things at our clinic. For our clients it means that they get the same experience regardless of who is working. This is especially important if one

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day I want to step away from the business or decide to sell it, the business won't be about me but rather about the excellent service we provide and the one on one attention our clients receive.

The most successful thing that I've done for the business would be using networking (not just in-person but also online – Twitter is very handy for that! Connect with me - @JasonBPT) as a good leverage for referrals. This process started long before opening my practice, I had joined the local Chamber of Commerce when I was managing the clinic of my previous employer. Over the past four years, local businesses and the community were starting to get to know me and people started to take notice. I was getting a good amount of referrals while working for my previous employer and when I started my own business, the referrals continued. At this point, since I've become well known in my community, I don't have to be as active with my networking. I pick and choose what events I attend, but still continue to support local community groups and organizations. This exposure has put me in a position of being an 'expert', people who come in to see me already have confidence and trust that I can provide them with some help. They are more likely to buy in to the treatment plan and tend to get better faster!

Jason Bellefleur is a multiple award-winning Physiotherapist and the owner of Bellefleur Physiotherapy (www.bellefleurphysio.com). He is very involved in his local business community and has been sitting on the Board of Directors of his local Chamber of Commerce for 3 years.