

First impressions count

How to help prospective clients to know, like and trust you

by Tracy Karkut-Law MARH LCHE



Tracy Karkut-Law graduated from the Centre for Homeopathic Education in 2007 and practises in East London. She is a tutor at the Southern College of Homeopathy and offers mentoring and courses for homeopaths who want to build a thriving business. As well as being a homeopath, she's a mother and a blues music DJ.

As homeopaths, holistic healthcare and healing are at the heart of what we do, but it doesn't begin and end there. When you stop and think about it, customer service plays an equal part in our work, or it should do. Take a few minutes to remember a time when you experienced exceptional service. What made it feel that way?

Here are a few key factors that I know I look for when I'm a prospective customer:

- generosity
- warmth
- ease
- clarity
- consistency.

These are all values I aspire to. I'm always reviewing my practice and looking for small ways to improve what I offer in each of those areas. I believe that having a mutually respectful professional relationship plays an important part in the healing process. Put simply, who you are as a person is as important as what you offer as a homeopath.

First impressions

I know that whether someone comes to me via a personal recommendation or through a web search, they are going to be checking me out and I want to be sure they get a great first impression. People do

business with those they know, like and trust. This sounds simple but it's something that can be easily overlooked.

It's important for people to know what homeopathy is and how it works, but that information isn't necessarily going to be enough to make someone decide they want to work with you. They want to see if they like you, and decide whether you're the right person for them to work with. You're going to be spending time together regularly so the relationship part is at least as important as the homeopathy.

Generosity

The simplest way to encourage someone to get to know you is for you to offer them value upfront. This might initially be in the form of content: blog articles or newsletters to inform or inspire them. Another way is to give them the option to discover more about

▷ working with you, without needing to book and pay for an appointment first.

On my Radiant Business courses, I recommend giving people the option of a free 30-minute call. I don't know about you, but 30 minutes is a big chunk of my time. There is a lot I can do in that time, but I regularly give it away for free.

I have a booking button on my website encouraging people to contact me for a free 'Discovery Call'. I first set it up as a free 15-minute call. When I increased it from 15 minutes to 30 minutes, the response was immediate. My enquiry rate went up from an average of one per month to one or two per week. That was a big increase. I can only guess that a 30-minute call sounds more appealing and worthwhile.

Warmth

A friendly, smiley professional photo will speak volumes about you. Your photo needs to be on the front page and a decent size so your potential new client can see you and connect with you. Read the copy on your website out loud. If it doesn't sound the way you speak, change it. When the words you write reflect the way you speak, it's easier for people to get to know you.

Whenever I see a free call booked in my schedule, I send a short friendly email to say hello. An automatic email goes out from my booking system too, but this one is a personal one from me. It lets them know that I know we have a call scheduled and I'm looking forward to meeting them. I thank them for arranging the call and confirm that I will phone them.

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I also include my phone number in case they need it.

Ease

I try to create space around a 'Discovery Call' so that we don't have to rush, especially if we start late for some reason. The free call is always (for me) over the phone. I like Skype, but there can be technical glitches with video calls and I want to avoid that if I can.

I listen and ask questions to gather additional information but I don't take notes. It's not a consultation. It's a chance for them to tell me what is going on and for me to say whether or not I feel I can help. The main thing I keep in mind is that they have not yet formally decided whether or not they want to work with me. I am not trying to 'sell' homeopathy or be 'persuasive' in any way.

Towards the end of the call I ask whether they have enough information to decide whether they'd like to go ahead. If they say yes, this

is the time when I give them more details about my hours and my fees. Only then will I open up my laptop and schedule them in via my booking system. Sometimes people say they want to think about it, or sometimes I might feel I'm not a good fit for them so I'll offer to refer them to someone else.

Whenever Tracy sees a free call booked in her schedule, she sends a short friendly email to say hello

I'm always reviewing my practice and looking for small ways to improve

People say how much they appreciate that call. Being generous with time allows us to build up trust, and that's a valuable thing at the start of a client-therapist relationship.

Clarity

My client-therapist agreement sets out my terms and conditions of service. I set it out early on as it sets the tone for our entire professional relationship. Everything I say in this agreement can also be found on my website on my 'What to Expect' page.

There is also a synopsis of the client-therapist agreement on my client information form, for them to sign. My client therapist agreement includes:

- What to expect from working with me
- What to expect from homeopathy
- Confidentiality
- My schedule
- How to contact me
- How to make and change bookings

- ▷ • Details about payment
 - My late cancellation policy
 - How I store and handle data.
- (If you'd like me to send you a copy of my client-therapist agreement, I'm happy to share. Please email me.)

Consistency

I do my best to ensure that I make a consistent impression whichever way people choose to contact me. Take a moment to reflect on how new clients get in touch with you. Is it by telephone, or through a

contact form on your website? Do they book in directly through your clinic or your online booking site? Perhaps, like me, you'll have a combination of all of the above. There's no right or wrong way, everyone is different.

Take some time to consider whether you leave a consistent impression. By phone: do you have a personally recorded message? By email: do you have an auto-respond? Mine is always on. I update it with my schedule each week.

Small changes can really elevate your practice



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By clinic: do you ask your reception team to take down the email address so you can send an email to say hello, and attach your client-therapist agreement? By booking site: Likewise.

It happens rarely for me nowadays, but I sometimes receive a new enquiry by text or through Facebook messenger. If I do, I always ask for an email address.

If this isn't how you work at the moment, perhaps you'd like to try email as your main method of communication. It can be helpful if you want to create and maintain stronger professional boundaries with your clients.

Know, like and trust

I hope I've given you some new ways to think about customer service, and especially how to make a great first impression. You might want to make a few notes for the steps you want to include on your on-boarding process, or even make a checklist for yourself.

Small changes can really elevate your practice, and that has to be a good thing for you and your clients. When you make it easy for a prospective client to 'know, like and trust' you, you're well on the way to a strong foundation for a positive and lasting therapeutic relationship.

You can contact me at tracy@homeopathywithtracy.co.uk, and you can also find more information about me and my work at homeopathywithtracy.co.uk and yourradiantbusiness.com. □

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