

Getting Started

WHO ARE YOU?

“So how did you end up in massage school anyway?” Bet you wish you had a dime for every time you had to answer that question. Well, if it’s any consolation, there are students at 900 other schools going through the same thing. You probably have a stock answer (“I like helping people” or “I’m good with my hands”), but have you really thought about how or why you chose this calling? In the ABMP Educational Services team’s travels to massage training schools, we have heard all types of reasons. But the most important one is yours. Why you chose massage school may determine what happens in your massage career.

One of the hardest things for people to do, regardless of their occupation, is to acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses. Even so, this is an excellent place to start when planning for your future. Are you an extrovert or the shy type? Do you like meeting and greeting or prefer solace? Knowing where you feel most comfortable will help you concentrate on specific work settings or environments. Here’s a little secret you may not have realized - massage is a lot like sales. You’re probably thinking, “What? I left ^*#@\$\$^ sales!” It’s true - a good massage therapist is a salesperson. What are you selling? Yourself. The majority of ABMP members report that their No. 1 method of attracting new clients is word of mouth. You have to please someone to be referred. Knowing what you do well, and even more importantly, what you don’t, is critical to your success as a therapist.

So how do you find out who you are? Well, it’s a little more complicated than looking in the mirror. Here’s one way. Write down some adjectives describing yourself (funny, tall, serious, outgoing). Try to think of as many as you can. After you have a list, shrink it down to 10. Pick descriptions you think are most accurate (beautiful and modest should not be 1 and 2). Now keep five. After that, keep three. Keep all your lists. Next ask two friends, relatives or associates to do the same for you. Be sure to pick someone whose opinion you trust to be fair and honest. Don’t pick your mother, grandmother, or an employee. It’s important to receive honest, yet constructive feedback. When you’re finished, compare the lists. Does yours agree with theirs? If not, how do you feel about the differences?

After doing that, dig out your old psychology textbook from college (or head to the library and check one out). Look for something called the Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator test. This shouldn’t be taken as gospel, but it’s a pretty good indicator of your general personality type.

So now that you know who and what your are, what do you do with the information? Good Question. We’ll answer part of it in the section called **Successful Business Practices**.

Meet The Professionals: Cherie Sohnen-Moe

Cherie Sohnen-Moe is a trainer, consultant, author and successful business owner since 1978. Her company, Sohnen-Moe Associates, Inc. is a full-service personal and professional business consulting/coaching firm. She holds a degree in psychology from UCLA and has extensive experience in the areas of business management, training, and creative problem-solving which combine well with her ability to support others to achieve what they want in life.

She is also a healing arts practitioner, although her major focus is on writing and facilitating workshops. Her articles are published in national and international magazines. She is the author of ***Business Mastery***, now in its third edition with 70,000+ copies sold to date and recommended by more than 500 associations and schools

worldwide (with 200+ schools requiring it as a text). Cherie is an active member of many professional and community organizations. Among her honors, she has received the Distinguished Service Award from the American Society for Training and Development, the Outstanding Instructor Award at the Desert Institute of the Healing Arts and is listed in several editions of Who's Who.

Many of you already have a copy of *Business Mastery*. We thought we'd ask Cherie a few questions about how she helps practioners and what advice she might have for current students.

Q: *How did you get involved with helping massage and body work practioners?*

A: I used to be bodyworker, and I saw how many of my colleagues were struggling with developing their practices. I love what bodywork does. I was committed to helping others succeed at it because I saw how much they and their clients enjoyed it.

Q: *What needs do therapists have when they contact you?*

A: Everything! Actually, their primary needs are usually client development and marketing. This is especially true of newcomers to the field. The long-timers that come to me are usually at a different stage - their business is shifting, or they're buying or selling a practice.

Q: *Do you have an idea of what skills therapists should continue to focus on after school?*

A: I really think they need to pursue two tracks. The first track is business skills - many schools teach business in their programs, but therapists can always have more exposure to the business side of their career. I think time and practice will reinforce their physical skills and create a comfort level for them. The second area would be to find a technique or modality (or more than one) that stimulates them to learn more and allows them to continue to refine their skills and knowledge.

Q: *What are the biggest problems that new massage therapist face, in your opinion?*

A: I find that many of them are overwhelmed by the challenge. It does certainly seem to be a daunting task, but I try to help them realize that they don't have to conquer the world in six weeks. Another thing that students may encounter is the challenge of converting their freebie clients (family and friends) to paying ones. They shouldn't be ashamed of changing their policy. They are becoming professionals and part of becoming a professional is charging for services.

Q: *Where do you see the profession going in the next five years?*

A: I think there will be more job opportunities-massage and bodywork will continue to be accepted and utilized more frequently. I also think there will be more separation between "relaxation" and "medical" massage and bodywork, which will invariably cause tension. I think it's important for the bodywork community to come to terms with the different types and accept the differences, not use it as a point of conflict.

Q: *If you could tell a typical student in massage or bodywork school three things to do now, while in school, what would they be?*

A: First would be to start getting their business organized NOW, or at least as much as possible. Be sure to seize on the momentum you have from school. The second would be to target the market they intend to serve, and to begin establishing a network of connections. This will help you hit the ground running when it's time to get started. Lastly, I would suggest they do some first-hand research and explore their possibilities - find out who the employers are in their area, what the competitive environment looks like, what modalities are represented in your area. All of this will be time well-spent.

Thanks Cherie.