

Is There A Magic Bullet For Growing Your Practice?

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You have made the decision that you want to grow your ADR, mediation and/or collaborative practice.

You want to attract more referrals for collaborative and mediation cases, spend less time in court and do more work that is in alignment with your interests and values.

You have decided this is the year that you will transform your practice. However, there is one glitch; you already have a busy practice and you do not have a lot of extra time.

What you would really like is a fast solution, a “magic bullet” to help you make this transformation.

Is there a magic bullet for growing your practice? Something fast and quick that you can do or buy to help you transform your practice.

The answer to this question is the same as the answer to the question of how you would transform any other area in your life.

Health and fitness is one example that comes to mind. Let’s say you wake up one day and decide that you are not satisfied with your health status, including your weight, diet and level of physical activity. You want to feel and look healthier.

You might be tempted by the latest health fad or “quick fix” diet; however, you know from prior experience that the only effective way to increase your health and fitness is through ongoing, consistent attention to your diet, weekly physical activity, and a stress management regimen. In other words, to truly transform your health requires personal commitment and discipline.

The same process applies to transforming your practice. It will only happen through personal commitment and discipline and it will require taking a step back from the day-to-day activities of your busy practice and answering the following three questions:

- Where are you today in relation to your practice goals?
- Where do you want to be in the next 12-24-36 months?
- How you will you get there? (What is your plan?)

Where are you today?

The first step to transforming your practice is performing a self assessment and answering the following questions:

1. Why do you want to grow your collaborative/mediation practice?
2. Why is this important to you?
3. What are your greatest strengths and opportunities for growing your practice?
4. What are your greatest weaknesses and barriers for growing your practice?
5. What are three things that, if you could do them better, would dramatically increase the success of your collaborative or mediation practice?

Use the answers from number 1 and number 2 to clarify and internalize why it is important for you to transform your practice. Knowing these answers will help you to make the personal commitment necessary to transform your practice.

On those days when you just do not want to go to the POD or group meeting or make that follow up call, look at the reasons you gave for wanting to grow your practice. How important is this to you? How badly do you want this? Connecting the activity to your personal values will help to motivate you to make the call, attend the meeting, etc.

Where do you want to go?

In the book, *First Things First*, Steven Covey says, “You must first have a destination to reach one.” Where do you want your practice to be in 12-24-36 months? Write these goals down and review them frequently. Use the goals to help you reach monthly or quarterly benchmarks.

Track referrals, calls and new cases. Monitor your success and continually update your plan to accommodate what is working and not working. Embrace the journey and have fun along the way. Much of the excitement of making a transformation is the journey to get there.

How will you get there?

Identify your strengths and opportunities and integrate them into your plan. For example, if you are an excellent writer,

use your strength to write articles to increase your visibility among your target market. If you are active on a board and well known in the community, how can you leverage this visibility to grow your practice?

At the same time, be aware of your greatest barriers and weaknesses to growing your practice. If your greatest barrier is lack of confidence in your new skills as a collaborative professional, how will you address this barrier in your action plan?

To create your plan, identify the three to four most important strategies for growing your practice, and then execute them consistently.

If you were going to transform your lifestyle to be healthier, you might choose among the following activities -- walking 4-5 times a week, limiting alcohol intake, eating less sugar or fat, increasing time to meditate and relax , etc..

Similarly, if you want to transform your practice, you may want to choose from among the following critical strategies:

- Master your core message so it is clear what you do and the value you provide
 - Update your website so it effectively communicates your value and message
 - Identify your target market
 - Increase your visibility with targeted referral sources
 - Write articles of interest to your target market
 - Give presentations to groups who could benefit learning about collaborative practice or mediation services
 - Achieve excellence in your practice
 - Participate in your collaborative/mediation community.

In summary, there is no magic bullet or quick fix to growing your collaborative and/or mediation practice. The good news is you can build a practice that is in alignment with your interests and goals by making a commitment to transform your practice and doing the activities that are consistent with that goal. The key is to take the time to be clear on your goals and implement the strategies that will bring you the greatest return on your investment of time and resources.

“It has been said that the difference between the major and minor leagues is just a matter of inches and consistency. That is essentially true of the difference between excellence and mere adequacy in poetry or surgery or anything else.”

George F. Will, newspaper columnist Liz Ferris, founder of Ferris Consulting, specializes in assisting attorneys, mental health professionals and financial specialists to grow their practice through result-oriented marketing and practice development strategies. She has worked with attorneys, collaborative professionals and mediators across North America to implement effective strategies for increasing awareness and demand for their services. Elizabeth can be reached at <http://www.ferrisconsult.com>

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