

YOUR PRACTICE / BUSINESS

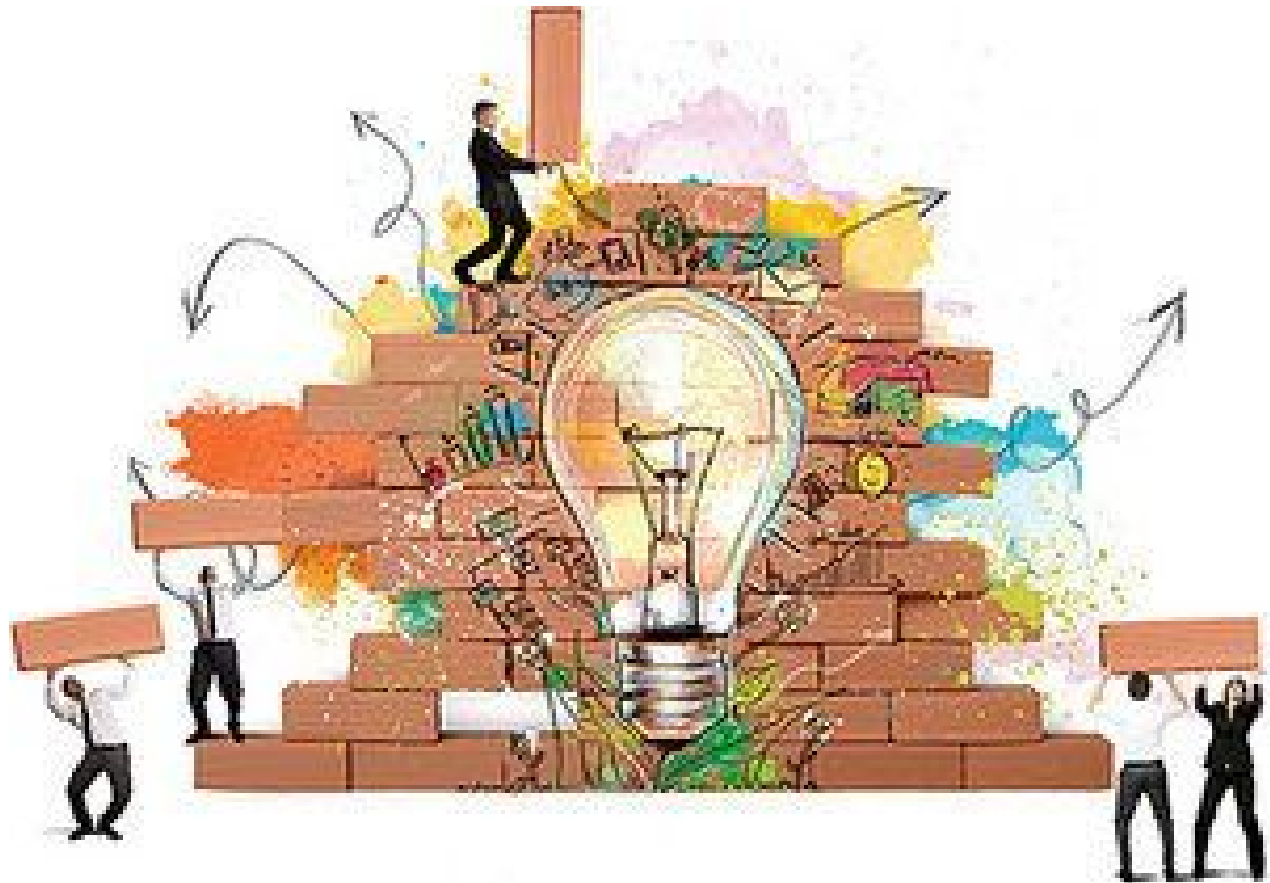
If You Build It, They Will Come

UNDERSTAND AND APPLY YOUR "WHY"

Perry Nickelston, DC, FMS, SFMA

Well, not so much. That might work in the movies, but in the world of a professional service business, it's a whole different ballgame. In the classic "Field of Dreams," Kevin Costner's character, Ray, is in jeopardy of losing the family farm to bank foreclosure. The ghost of baseball legend [Shoeless Joe Jackson](#) tells Ray to build a baseball field in the middle of his cornfield. If he does, baseball players from the past will show up to play and people will pay to watch. Ray eventually builds the field and at the end of the movie, you see hundreds of cars lining up to see the game.

Try that in today's business world and you will probably be standing in a field / room all by yourself. Why? Because too many "fields" are already out there. Professional competition in the marketplace is stiff. People are distracted with marketing overload and are numb to noticing you. Granted, you might have a leg up in the marketplace *if* you find a great location. But it won't help for long if you neglect the underlying reason people choose to see you in the first place.



Hint: It's not about the services you provide. People don't come to see you for chiropractic. They come to see you for pain relief. But even that's not the fundamental reason. Pain keeps them from doing something they desperately want to do: "I just want to play with my kids and not be in pain." Playing with their kids is the emotional driver. "I want to run again without my knee hurting." Running is the emotional driver. You can get people to do anything by two methods: manipulation and inspiration. One works in the short term; the other works for life. I think you know which one does what. If you are going to build it, do it the right way.

Know Your *Why* - and Then Share It With Staff and Customers

In his best-selling book, *Start With Why*, [Simon Sinek](#) talks about the "Golden Circle." The center of the circle is where your *why* is located. The next ring in the circle is the *how*, and the outermost ring is the *what*. The majority of people in business start from the outside and work their way in. They focus on what they do and how they do it. According to Sinek, that's backward.

Sinek says, "People will not buy what you do, until they know why you do it." Start with *why*. That doesn't mean just telling them why you are doing something; it means actually showing them. In a nutshell, it's authentically walking the talk. You must relate everything back to the emotional action trigger for each individual while staying true to your practice "why." Obviously, you must first know your "why," but more importantly, your staff and customers must also know. It's the compass that keeps a team together - a common goal guiding people in the same direction.

Take my "why," for example: My business name is "Stop Chasing Pain." The name automatically tells you my "why." I combine that with the following mission statement: "Helping you do what you love better, harder, faster, stronger and longer." People who don't know me, know my why. It's not just about the pain relief; it encompasses quality of life.

I don't mention this to promote myself, but to lead you in the right direction. Weave all that into the what and the how of *your* service circle. Your mission statement should communicate the target you are striving toward. Don't make it a fluff piece that says a lot, but doesn't mean anything. Keep it short, direct and applicable, and post it everywhere for staff and customers to see. Communication with staff is vital to the lifeline of any business. They are on the front lines every day and their interaction with customers represents the "why" of every company.

By the way, you've probably noticed I use the word *customers* instead of *patients*. Why? Because they can choose whom they want to see for service. That's a customer. This small change in perception will have an immediate positive impact on your business.

1. Send a Handwritten Note to Customers

Old-school ways of communication have more impact. Which one feels more personal to you: sending a welcome email to your new patients / customers or sitting down to handwrite a personal "welcome" letter? It's a no-brainer. Handwritten notes take time and effort, and are therefore more personal. So, why do we continue to do the easy one? Because it's easy and everybody else is doing it. Send handwritten notes to establish a personal connection and bond with your new and existing customers. Notes include:

- Welcome to the practice
- Thanking you for being a customer
- Thinking of you
- Congratulations on... [insert appropriate life-changing event]
- Glad to see you're getting better

What's the *why*? The staff knows this is how you welcome new customers into the family and make the existing ones feel valued. Customers remember how you make them feel. You stand out from the crowd. Standing out is how you corner the marketshare in professional service.

2. Add a New Modality

[Laser therapy](#) is my favorite go-to modality. I jokingly say, "If you come to see me with pain from a hangnail, I am going to use laser therapy for it." Customers like to know you're on the cutting edge, providing the latest and greatest in patient care. I love laser for its healing properties and fast pain-relief outcomes. Customers know how much I love it. It's in my voice, my actions and my marketing. My staff shares the same passion for the technology. Apply this to any modality you choose in care programs.

What's the *why*? Providing the best services for customers. Price is not a factor. You get the best for the best. Period. You can't expect to build the best house on the block with inferior tools. Customers see you as an industry leader and game changer when you earn it.

3. Add New Staff

Start thinking of your staff as family. In the beginning of a new business, you may find yourself spending more time with your work family than your real family. There is a sense of community and "tribe" support when you have a close-knit staff who trust one another. Human beings crave value, appreciation and community. Talk to any business leader; they will tell you value and appreciation trump money as the linchpins to loyalty. Someone can always pay staff more, but establishing a family environment that makes coming to work not *feel* like work is a rarity.

Sense of belonging weaves its way into patient interaction and overall business perception from

your customers. You can sense an environment when you walk into any professional business. How many times have you gotten a "gut feeling" simply from walking in the front door and observing how staff interacts with one another?

Every new staff member should be welcomed with a special lunch or dinner with the existing staff. A "Welcome to the Family" sign should be put in the reception area and existing staff / you should make a concerted effort to introduce the new staff member to customers.

What's the *why*? It's hardwired into our nature to be involved in a supportive community. Establish the foundation for that to happen and watch the magic unfold. A happier work environment fosters business loyalty, camaraderie, profitability and longevity.

4. Always Show Gratitude

Last, but not least, is the most important factor in the bunch: giving thanks for the privilege to serve others. Success is not about finding the next "big thing" or "magic fix" to accomplish your goals. Give thanks to your staff, family, friends and customers. The universal law of attraction says we attract into our life the things we think about and focus on. Don't you want more of what you are thankful for?

When you are consciously aware of your blessings and are grateful for them, you are focusing more on what you do want in your life – and are attracting more of those things into your life.

Practice success often comes down to getting out of your own way. The biggest barrier is your mindset: focusing on the problems instead of looking inward. When we think about what we are grateful for, our minds open up to new possibilities with a perspective of improvement and opportunity, rather than challenge or issue.

What's the *why*? Gratitude spreads. Listening to others share what they are grateful for has immediate impact on you. Gratitude builds community. At your next staff meeting, instruct each and every person to do the following: "Make a list of five things you are grateful for right now." These can be big things (e.g., relationships) or little things (e.g., you smiled at someone today).

Do the same with each customer when you are in the room with them. Ask them to name something they are grateful for in their life. People in pain often lose focus of everything except their pain. Take their mind into gratitude. It's simple, easy and free.

Start from the center of the *why* circle and work your way out. Pick any area of your business / personal life and start applying the circle. Sound too simplistic? Well, simplicity works, but people don't realize how easy it is to make something simple. In the world of business, small equals big. Small steps in the right direction can make big waves. Championships are won by mastering the fundamentals. In the game of business, your fundamental *why* makes all the difference in winning or losing.