

Module 12 – Overcoming Challenges

Common Challenges

Even though you are passionate about your new business, there will be challenges to overcome every day. There will be days when all of the stars seem to align and other days when you feel like throwing in the towel. If you want to succeed, you must identify potential problems before they occur and develop a strategy for dealing with them. Moreover, you have to deal with the tedious details of running a business or run the risk of being caught off guard.

Non- Compliant Clients

Non-compliant clients are a challenge for most nutritional consultants. Clients come to see us because they want help with a specific problem, yet we offer a possible cause and solution and they fail to implement our suggestions. They may come back to see us time and time again with the same excuses. It can be one of the most frustrating aspects of our job, but it doesn't have to be. During step eleven, we talked about how to identify your clients 'real' motivation for coming to see you. Once you have established this, you must continue to remind them of their objective and tell them that you believe they have what it takes to achieve their objective with your guidance and support.

Part of the time you spend talking to your mentor each week may be spent dealing with specific challenges related to client compliance and retention. The guidance and advice of a seasoned professional who has dealt with many of the same challenges may provide a different perspective.

Retaining Clients

It is not uncommon for a client to hire a nutritional consultant, pay for their time for the initial session, and disappear, never to be seen or heard from again. Unfortunately, that client may not have been ready to address their issue or make the necessary changes. Remember, generally people are used to a quick fix when it comes to their health. Alternatively, clients who do not get results after a few sessions may not return because they are not convinced that their money is being well spent or they do not feel compelled to implement your recommendations. Always follow up with a phone call and email to try to schedule subsequent appointments. However, if they do not return your call or email, accept it and move on. Spend your precious energy and resources on the clients who do need and want your help.

When to Let a Client Go

It is never easy to make a decision to let a client go; however, sometimes it is necessary. If you are working with a client who repeatedly fails to implement your suggestions or misses appointments, cancels or re-schedules appointments with no regard for the value of your time, fails to do their 'homework', is repeatedly draining your energy, speaks ill of you to others, or is negative about the process, it may be time to end your working relationship with that person. It is never easy to make that decision, but it may be necessary from time to time. Always remain professional, state your case, and remain open to the option of working with them again if circumstances change.

Setting Boundaries

It is important to establish boundaries and codes of conduct when working with clients. Right from the beginning, establish what is expected of your client and what you will offer in return. Put your policies in writing and present it to the client once they decide to start working with you. Ask them to read and sign it and keep a copy in their file for future reference, should a dispute occur. Policies may include information about your refund policy, payment schedule, appointment and cancellation policy, etc.

Maintaining Records

Each practitioner must decide how he or she will maintain client records. Accounting records may be maintained easily and efficiently with QuickBooks or a similar accounting program. Insurance companies may require hard copies of client records or files to be kept and stored for a period of 5-7 years, in case of a future lawsuit. All client records must be maintained in accordance with current privacy laws.

Maintaining Insurance

It is important for all practitioners to maintain general liability and errors and omissions insurance. You may also require additional insurance for your office or commercial property. Speak to CANNP or an alternative qualified insurance agent to make sure you are protected in the unlikely event of a lawsuit.

Day to Day Operations

Day to day operations will vary for each practitioner, depending on whether you choose to work from home, away from home, full-time or part-time, with other practitioners, with employees, or alone. Before you start your business, it is a good idea to decide how many hours per week you plan to devote to your business. How many hours per week will be spent servicing clients, researching, soliciting new business, accounting, marketing, networking, program development, ordering product, working on the website, social networking, paying invoices, banking, and so on. If you pre-determine how much time you would like to spend on each task, you will be able to manage your time more effectively and you are more likely to be more productive during your working hours.

Action Challenge Twelve

1. Decide on your policies. Create a simple form for clients, indicating your policies regarding refunds, appointments, expectations, payments, etc. Have them read and sign it before they hire you!
2. If you are not already using a software program, research your options. Decide which one you will use to maintain records and purchase the software as soon as possible.

3. If you have not already done so, develop a privacy policy to assure clients that you respect their right to privacy and have a system in place to guard their privacy.
4. Ensure that your insurance policy meets the changing needs of your business. Read the fine print of your insurance policy and understand the legalities.
5. Create an Operations manual for your business. Your manual should outline the day to day operations of your business. This manual will allow another person to take over your practice for a short time, or if you choose to hire an administrative support person or another nutritional consultant they will be able to understand the inner workings of your business without spending countless hours of your valuable time on training.