

How to be a Successful, Happy Chiropractor in Five Minutes (aka The 7 Things it's taken me my whole career to learn!)

1. Being a great adjuster doesn't guarantee being a busy Chiropractor

I've met hundreds of chiropractors since I graduated in 1997, some of them very successful and some struggling. I always imagined that the ones that were struggling just needed to practice their technique a bit more, such as S.I. and C.T. adjustments or go on a particular course.

In my first year out I attended the extremities courses, SOT technique, local PRT seminars, both BCA conferences and not long after Applied Kinesiology, believing I needed to know more. In my naivety, I believed that to be busy and successful I just had to be a "good chiropractor".

I remember being surprised when I observed successful chiropractors only to find they weren't always what I imagined. Some had more energy than others, some wore lab coats, some were relaxed, some informal; however many were **not** the WORLD'S BEST ADJUSTERS as I expected them to be. **The one thing they all had in common was their ability to communicate effectively with their patients.**

2. I'll be busy and happy if I take over an existing patient base

I'd hate you to fall in to this trap like so many of my friends have. The truth is, looking after someone else's patients is one of the more stressful ways of starting your career. You're constantly compared to your predecessor by the patients. You'll hear comments such as "My last chiropractor didn't do it that way", "That was different!" or the worst thing, just an awkward silence that hangs in the air! You'll try really hard to mimic what their previous chiropractor did, only to find they've gone out to reception and asked to see someone else. Once or twice might knock your confidence a little bit but imagine it happening over and over again! It's extremely difficult to keep hold of someone else's patients and very demoralising when they all disappear.

Now imagine you're the first chiropractor that a patient has ever seen. They have no preconceived idea about what you should do, and you become the "hero" that finally listened to them, found their problem and helped them get the answers they'd been looking for. How different would your time in clinic be, having a diary full of these patients, not to mention their friends and family too? It may seem like this is the hardest way to get busy, but life is so much easier afterwards!

There is a common saying within Chiropractic. You can choose "Easy, hard or hard, easy!"

3. How to choose your first associate position

There are many types of chiropractic clinics out there: Wellness, vitalistic, mechanistic, pain based, technique specific, low or high volume. Then there are other considerations such as rent a room or fully mentored, location and surrounding competition, large team or small intimate practice, employed or self employed options to name but a few.

I knew that one day I'd want to own a practice with a large team and so I chose to work in that kind of clinic to learn all I could. There was little mentoring available however and I didn't know other places offered it. Now with the benefit of hindsight, I wish I'd considered other aspects of my first recruitment package. It took me a long time to unlearn some habits that were holding me back and were unhelpful for my patients. **The clinic you work in when you first graduate will shape the kind of chiropractor you become.**

4. Don't get hung up on the percentage

The majority of associate positions you are offered will involve some kind of percentage in the remuneration package. It's often a key piece of information used by applicants when choosing one offer over another, as it appears to be an easy thing to compare. But times have changed.

Nowadays, many positions include the cost of registration, association fees and insurance. It may be that you would benefit from a clinic's proven mentoring programme which is very difficult to put a financial value on, and if you find yourself in a quiet clinic with little or no support, a higher percentage can still result in a low income. If the financial package on offer is important to you, a great question to ask could be "**How much did your last three associates earn in their first year?**"

5. Check who your neighbours are

When deciding on a location for your first associate position, it's wise to consider how many other chiropractors, osteopaths and physiotherapists will be on your doorstep. Although you know the differences between these professions, the general public has little to no idea and will seek the help of any of them for the same conditions. Densely populated areas can be appealing initially, however if there are many practitioners in that location all speaking to the same audience, becoming busy and successful becomes harder to achieve. Consider less obvious regions of the UK as modern infrastructure means that nowhere is that far away. In addition the cost of living can vary enormously between different areas.

6. Image is everything!

Imagine you're in the market for a new laptop. On your high street, there is a typical family owned computer shop alongside an Apple store. The family owned shop has a wide variety of seemingly random computers and accessories in their window, while the Apple store has their customary sleek decor and layout. Which one, if you weren't an expert, would attract your attention giving you the most confidence that you'd leave with a reliable product that does what you want it to? Apple's phenomenal success clearly demonstrates this.

Marketing of products and services has changed and market leaders such as Apple, Virgin and Starbucks understand the importance of strong branding, consistency and amazing customer service and then apply it to everything.

Choosing a clinic that demonstrates the importance of marketing and having a strong identity means that they understand what is now required to succeed.

7. Learn from people that are already successful

Determine for yourself what constitutes success to you, and then seek out clinics that reflect that. Do you imagine success as caring for a certain number of patients per week, or perhaps it's how many new patients a clinic attracts? Could it be simply the number of other chiropractors working in a clinic or the length of time the clinic has been established for? Decide for yourself, and then seek them out.

An alarming number of chiropractors quit the profession in their first few years after graduation which is a tragedy. Choosing the right position when you leave college will mean that chiropractic will become an amazingly rewarding career because you will be given the tools to become successful and have loads of fun! I hope these seven things have inspired you to find your dream position.

Yours in health

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