



beyond PRACTICE MANAGEMENT

Dr. Shelley Simon is the owner and founder of Beyond Practice Management, a coaching and consulting firm based in Portland, Oregon. Her

clients include chiropractors, dentists, physicians, hospitals, and business professionals. Dr. Simon helps clients with issues related to productivity, profitability, practice marketing and management, and enjoyment of their work. Unlike programs that focus primarily on tactics, Dr. Simon helps her clients achieve sustainable practice growth by developing better leadership, management, marketing, and communication skills.

It is my understanding you came across Action Plan Marketing materials back in 2006. What was going on in your business at that time?

I was in the generative phase of my business. I had a relatively vague idea of what I wanted to do about marketing my business. In the beginning of 2006 I took my first run at creating a robust web site. I was still defining my target market and figuring out what their problems were and what I could help them achieve in terms of tangible outcomes.

I asked for feedback from people I trust and they told me that my materials, while interesting, didn't get to the heart of what my services could actually do for potential clients quickly enough. I didn't have the "what's in it for them" factor developed well enough to keep people on my web site. This wasn't easy to hear, but I was curious as to what they were talking about. To me my materials were beautiful and well written but I had a feeling that people were right, that something was missing from my message.

Around that time someone suggested I take a look at Action Plan Marketing. Their materials talked about messaging and how to better appeal to what my potential clients were interested in and help them understand how I could help them get the kind of results they were looking for. Robert Middleton seemed to have the understanding, the materials, and the process for effective marketing.

I understand your exposure to those materials ultimately led you to a massive redesign of your web site.

Absolutely. I bought the materials and signed up for a Marketing Action Group. Then, I just really got it. I understood that there is a language to marketing and that my effectiveness would be determined by the extent to which I could learn that language. I used Robert's process to redesign my web site which took 2-3 months of intense effort. I was able to maintain some of my design elements, but the language of my pages, what the key message was, what my offers were, and the way people moved from page to page were totally changed .

And this was from being part of the Marketing Action Group, or was this from using the Web Site Toolkit?

It was both. I had all of the materials. I followed the Web Site Toolkit and I worked with a writer who was fluent with the format. It took a number of months to make those changes, but since that time (just over two years) I have not had to do one thing to it.

Obviously your web site has been a great tool for you to promote your business.

Yes, it's been really great. But it's not just a web site that I got from these materials. It's owning the language of marketing. It's understanding the process of marketing and being able to apply it appropriately to people with different needs, different agendas, or different problems – and who want different kinds of solutions. Using a marketing language where you are attuned to someone else's needs is the secret to human communication. At the same time, it is a marketing strategy for moving people closer to a decision to do business with me. Now I feel like my marketing is a contribution to people rather than something I'm selling to them.

That is quite a shift, isn't it?

A huge shift. Marketing used to bother me. Who me, market? And now I realize it is just part of human communication. How we represent ourselves, how we get to know people, how we see if there is a match between their needs and our offering . . . it's just good communication.

What I love is that you had almost no background in marketing and yet through these materials you were able to take the mystery out of marketing.

That's exactly it. In fact, I wrote an article, *Marketing is Not a Mystery* for a chiropractic audience. There is a lot of mystique about marketing and yet, it has formulas. That's what I've learned. Not formulas that smell of self interest. It's just good communication. I'm not selfless. I wanted to build my business quickly, effectively and successfully and I've been able to do that. I know as long as I keep recreating myself according to some basic rules and formulas in marketing and communication and understand what value I offer to people, I'll be fine. Essentially, people need help.

You also went on to become an Action Plan Marketing Coach. What have you been able to take from the Certification process that you now use to help your healthcare clients?

The basic principle of marketing - *what's in it for me* - is so oriented to healthcare practitioners who need to be attuned to their patient's needs and goals. They need to stay focused on what's in it for their patients rather than what's in it for themselves as practitioners. These marketing principles are very applicable to how doctors educate and interact with their patients on a daily basis. I have been able to translate and adapt these materials for healthcare providers and they've learned to use them effectively.

Someone I interviewed recently said this approach takes selling out of the marketing process. Would you agree?

I think it is much easier to sell to someone who is ready to buy. I also have a number of clients who are business professionals outside of healthcare who need to understand marketing. Similar to doctors, they believe they should not have to market and that their good work should speak for itself. This marketing model helps them work around that mindset and begin to view marketing as good business and an essential strategy for success. Many of these clients work with other business people to help them enhance profitability, and yet they often don't walk their own talk.

Action Plan Marketing materials are adaptable to a variety of professionals because they teach basic formulas and truths that are rooted in human nature, relationships, and communication. It continues to surprise and delight me that there are these basic principles and formulas that I can follow to understand people's needs, regardless of their background.

It sounds as though the Action Plan Marketing principles you've learned and applied have impacted your business a great deal.

Without a doubt it gave me traction in my business very quickly. It was knowing who my target was and speaking directly to them in a language they understood. It helped me understand what my marketing strategies were and weren't, and how to position myself. It just worked. In addition to my web site, I've used these materials for a coordinated campaign to market my business. My articles, advertisements, and the consultations I offer to prospects are all shaped by the materials and the principles I've learned. As a result, I had a full practice within a year and have a waiting list. I am extremely profitable. This is my business. This is how I support my family.

ACTION PLAN MARKETING

For more information on the products and services of Action Plan Marketing, go to www.ActionPlan.com

Our first recommended program is the "Action Plan Marketing Club" and then the "InfoGuru Marketing Manual," followed by the "Web Site ToolKit."