

The Washington Post

Business Rx: Approach just in need of a little massaging

By Special to Capital Business
Monday, June 14, 2010; 28

The Entrepreneur

Serendipity led licensed massage therapist Fanny Mandelberger to her career niche in 1985. She headed to New York to pursue a degree in occupational therapy, but started to explore more creative avenues. Mandelberger ended up in a massage therapy program at the Swedish Institute. One of her early clients happened to be a performer in the Broadway production of the musical "Cats," and that person offered to put in a word for her. That led to Mandelberger's first contract to provide massage therapy to the cast of "Cats" and her light-bulb moment -- that there was a business opportunity to specialize in massage for the performing arts industry.

"I always loved theater, and I've always been a huge supporter of the arts," Mandelberger said. "Somehow that opened up opportunities for me through word-of-mouth."

Her "Cats" contract was followed by gigs with "Starlight Express," "Miss Saigon" and the nationwide and Canadian tours of "Riverdance." She handled the contracts herself, and when other shows expressed interest, she hired independent contractors that she trained to work with singers, dancers and musicians.

Mandelberger originally called her company Massage on Broadway but changed the name to Massage Off Broadway when she relocated to Florida in 1996 and later moved to Washington.

The pitch

Mandelberger

"Massage Off Broadway has been servicing the performing arts industry nationwide for more than 25 years. We pioneered the idea of providing preventative care during a show's entire run. Injury prevention and enhancing performances while being cost-effective is our specialty. We serve more than just theater productions -- we work with the entire performing arts industry, including film, music, dance, theater and arts communities.

"We are a team of independent contractors highly trained in the needs of the performing arts industry, from the artists to the crew to the administrative and development staff. Doing business with Massage Off Broadway is effortless as there is one contact person who customizes the contract with the client,

Advertisement

BETHESDA, MD \$1,995,000
MLS: MC7311342

CHERYL KURSS
202-363-9700

CLICK HERE FOR DETAILS

SEE MORE LISTINGS
FIND AN AGENT

LONG & FOSTER REAL ESTATE, INC.

The advertisement features a red header with the location and price, a dark blue middle section with a photo of a house and the agent's name and contact info, and a red footer with navigation links and the Long & Foster logo.

whether it be an individual performer or the whole cast and crew. We do all the billing, scheduling and all correspondence. We are nationwide, so when a show tours, they make one phone call and a client gets serviced in our conveniently located offices nationwide, on site at the hotel or at the venue.

"I'd love to have every production nationwide have Massage Off Broadway as their premier massage therapy provider. The main challenge is convincing a show's producer to include this service to their cast and employees as part of the overall production budget. We'd love to explore additional marketing strategies and figure out which ones work best for us."

The Advice

Asher Epstein, managing director, Dingman Center for Entrepreneurship at the University of Maryland's Robert H. Smith School of Business

"It sounds like you've done a great job building the business, and your issue is really communicating your value proposition to potential clients. You want to get to the point where you're making an enterprise sale to the production company, rather than a consumer sale to individual performers and artists.

"Companies typically spend money to either grow their revenue or reduce their expenses, so build your value proposition around how massage helps save on expenses. Happy employees equal lower turnover, and by offering this benefit, organizations will see their employees take fewer sick days, incur fewer missed performances and stay with the company longer. Focus on trying to get the value proposition for your services around that, and use data to make the argument. Link your value proposition to how massage can save production companies revenues and increase theater productivity and how much money a performance brings in through ticket sales, longer runs, etc.

"To actually market your services, think about ways to get in front of the decision-makers. Find touch points through the people who influence the producers -- perhaps their assistants or production investors. You could also think about taking a longer-term approach for business development and reach out to the performing arts industry at the academic level to establish relationships with the people who will go on to run theaters and production companies.

"For packaging your services, in many ways you're offering a vitamin, not an aspirin -- you're offering something that makes people feel better, but it's largely a preventative care. Is there a way to link your service with other preventative solutions and build your services into a more rejuvenating process -- similar to how baseball pitchers have a specific regimen to keep their arm in shape? Voice therapies or other things specific to the performing arts industry?"

Reaction/next steps

Mandelberger

"This creates an outline and framework to really strengthen my value proposition. I will pursue the connections that I already have with producers and other influencers in the performing arts industry, and it is a good idea to forge relationships even with students in academic programs.

Above all, I want to weave this in so it still aligns with my values and keeps to the principles of my mission, which is all about giving care to the performing arts industry."

[View all comments](#) that have been posted about this article.

Post a Comment

[View all comments](#) that have been posted about this article.

You must be logged in to leave a comment. [Login](#) | [Register](#)

Submit

Comments that include profanity or personal attacks or other inappropriate comments or material will be removed from the site. Additionally, entries that are unsigned or contain "signatures" by someone other than the actual author will be removed. Finally, we will take steps to block users who violate any of our posting standards, terms of use or privacy policies or any other policies governing this site. Please review the [full rules](#) governing commentaries and discussions. You are fully responsible for the content that you post.

Sponsored Links

[iPads for only \\$13.58?](#)

Breaking News: iPads are being auctioned at 95% off retail. Learn how!
[SwipeBid.com](#)

[Refinance Now 4.0% FIXED!](#)

\$160,000 Mortgage for \$633/mo. Free. No Obligation. Get 4 Quotes!
[Mortgage.LendGo.com](#)

[Penny Stock Gaining 5000%](#)

Sign up for Free to receive alerts about the next stock to jump 5000%
[www.PennyStockGains.com](#)

[Buy a link here](#)