



Drew Freedman

Drew Freedman, 37, owns The Boston Bodyworker clinical-massage practice, which he has operated for more than 10 years. He has two locations in Boston, Massachusetts, with a staff of 12 massage therapists, two chiropractors and an acupuncturist. The practice offers orthopedic, neuromuscular and sports massage, myofascial release and Kinesio Taping. He lives in Boston with his wife, Michelle, and daughters Olivia and Lilah.

Q: How do you define business success?

A: When you create an environment that's enriching for you, your staff and your clients, where you can still enjoy quality time with your family, you know you're on the right path. Early on, I learned if you only place value on money, you're destined to have problems with client retention and staff retention. Keeping rates affordable encourages repeat business, while paying your staff well equates to low turnover and a more consistent business image. The value in those things is stronger and longer lasting than money.

Q: What is the most rewarding aspect of being a massage therapist?

A: The unique awareness therapists gain about humanity. We spend hours with complete strangers, often using rather uncomfortable techniques to address their issues. Yet, we are able to learn so much about them due to the trust that's established. You quickly learn that judging people simply at face value is often futile. It's a very rare perspective we are privy to. It makes me a better therapist, a better boss and certainly a better husband and father.

Q: What was the worst business decision you have made?

A: Holding on to a therapist for too long simply because I liked him. He was one of the first people I brought on in the beginning—a great guy with a huge heart and a strong desire to work. The problem, however, wasn't with his bodywork, rather his "unique" personality. I had been tracking new clients at a rate of 15 to 20 a week, yet somehow I was bleeding money. I soon realized new clients seeing him were not rebooking because they felt he represented what The Boston Bodyworker offered. I eventually did the numbers, and I lost close to \$60,000 in one year from not cutting the cord sooner. As a business owner, you often have to make decisions that are not very popular among staff. He was very well liked, but he had to go. To this day, it was one of the hardest things I've had to do.

Q: Why did you choose to market your practice with a clinical focus as opposed to one more centered around relaxation?

A: Because clinical is the kind of work I do and enjoy. I put into practice very early on not to do bodywork I felt was not enjoyable to me. I grew my practice much slower because of this, but at the end of the day, I enjoyed every massage I gave. I also enjoy getting a good massage, but I don't need a fluffy white robe, chamomile tea and a foot soak. There's a place for that; it's just not our niche.