

Seeing Clients: Some Notes on When and Where

Written by Bob Mulligan

Monday, September 21, 2009 - Last Updated Monday, February 21, 2011

Just in the last few days I was rereading *“How to Start, Maintain, and Expand an Astrological Practice”* and it occurred to me what an excellent book it really is. And on every topic there is always more to say. Chris McRae’s chapter “Planning Time and Space” is so practical and insightful; I decided to pen a few ideas by way of expansion on these ideas.

When we enter the practice of astrology as a consultant, one of the first decisions we make is where and when to see clients. We can see clients: in our home, in an office, in another type of venue, in their home or office, or exclusively over the phone.

Home Office vs. Office Building

I have personally had an external office in an office building and seen clients exclusively there. Sometimes I have had a separate office and an office in my home...but the majority of my working adult life I have had primarily a home office.

A separate office from the home has many advantages; you have a clear division between your work space and your private space; this helps keep you focused on business during working hours and also helps you stay oriented toward your family in your personal time.

An office in the home has some advantages and disadvantages. The biggest advantages are that it is possible to get to work quickly and to get away from work quickly; you have a very short commute. The big disadvantage is that it is impossible to keep your personal life and your professional life entirely separate. Your clients will see something of your personal life and you must keep any portion of your home that your client will have access to immaculate. Your home office must be separate from the rest of your house and create a feeling of privacy.

If you work from your home, it is very important that you have carefully defined work hours and that you resist doing anything personal in home during work hours. The dishes and laundry will always be there to be washed, but not during working hours. You have to pretend that you are actually in a different location.

Telephone Based Practice

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You can have a telephone based practice which doesn't require you to have an office anywhere. There are astrologers who practice this way. It saves you the cost of having to pay for a separate space and you don't have the worry of making a place in your home presentable.

You do have to be comfortable with dealing with clients in an auditory space without seeing them in person...although...Skype may change this as it becomes possible to talk with clients on your computer and see them on webcam simultaneously. I have done this with clients in foreign countries and it is very interesting. Also, with a telephone based practice you still have to have a reliable telephone which is in a place which offers enough privacy so that you can concentrate on your client; and it has to be comfortable enough that you can work from it many hours a day.

Alternatives

There are astrologers who are running practices where they are offering services to their clients through email...this may be the new model but I can tell you it is not so easy to establish a real relationship with your clients in this way ... many astrologers that I contacted doing this are running marketing based practices where they are primarily sending out prewritten computer generated reports that carry the pretense that it is personally written for you. But, this may be the way of the future.

It is possible to see clients at an alternate venue, like a metaphysical bookstore, the library, or meeting rooms. The only astrologers that I have met running their practices this way have astrology as a second profession.

It would be possible to have a practice where you went to see your clients at their home or office. I have heard of astrologers trying this out but I haven't seen anyone earning a living this way yet.

Setting Your Schedule

Regardless of where you see your clients, you still have to have a time to see them. You need to plan your schedule. This means you have to set your hours when it will be possible to do charts for people, have time for other job related functions: like chart calculating, answering phone calls, accounting, banking, emails, answering mail, marketing, etc.

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Make sure that you have enough time to complete the tasks which need to happen every day: such as accounting and answering inquiries. Also, plan to see clients when you are at your best; when your mind is sharpest and you will do your most profound work. By all means make sure that you plan time off; you must make sure that you get what you need for yourself; otherwise you will not be at your best for your clients.

As Chris McRae said "Working for oneself has a major pitfall which involves the efficient and effective use of time." 1 She goes on to explain that we have to be good employers as well as good employees. This is not so easy; many astrologers allow their clients or lack of them to dictate their working hours. It is very important to set regular work hours, then report for work just as if you were going into an office and would have to explain yourself to the boss if you were late.

If you don't have a full schedule on a working day, remember that these are hours that are meant to be used to acquire clients; also, there are many things that go into a successful practice besides seeing clients that have to be scheduled into your day somewhere.

Plan your daily schedule and make sure that any task not completed in one day gets repositioned on another day so it doesn't just get lost in the shuffle of events.

Many astrologers practice without an assistant. I started practicing as a full time astrologer in 1974. From my first day in practice I have had an assistant; this has always been someone that I paid to do certain tasks that had to be accomplished but it wasn't cost effective for me to do myself. A good assistant frees you to spend more time doing what you do best, seeing clients.

Yes, I'm a Libran and relationships mean so much to us; coming to the office every day when there is someone else who is showing up for work at the same time is a big perk, but it always seems to make perfect economic sense. My assistant, Katie, prepares chart for my client work, updates client files, does the accounting, collects money, pays the bills, answers the phone, goes to the bank, post office, office supply store, etc. She sets my schedule and keeps the business running smoothly. She proofreads everything I write and should probably be writing this section, on scheduling, since she is so good at it. But, she has her job and I have mine. Astrology is the most rewarding job that a person can have if they are organized so that all the pieces of the job work together. I've enjoyed the learning curve for 34 years and plan on many more.

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(1) How to Start, Maintain, and Expand an Astrological Practice” page, 22.