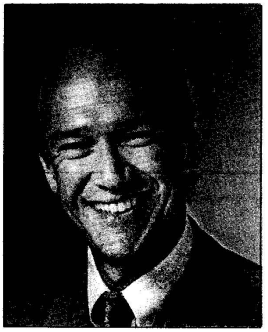
Entreprenuership

Generating Rolfing Clients

The Results of a Study

by Jeffry Galper, Ph.D.

With thanks to guest columnists Jeffry Galper, Ph.D. and Sarah Emory



Jeffry Galper, Ph.D.

Through the summer of 1988, Rolfer **Thom Walker** (Burlington, Vermont) and I conducted a study of the process by which new clients come to us. Our new enrollments for that period, and therefore the size of our study sample, totaled 46 people. We conducted the study to better understand the process through which people hear about Rolfing and eventually decide to be Rolfed, and through this understanding to do better at bringing people to Rolfing. In reporting the results in *Rolf Lines* and in making a few generalizations and interpretations of these data, I make no claims to any scientific rigor and offer the material to the community in a spirit of stimulating thought and experimentation among practitioners.

Exactly 50% of our new enrollments started with a contact which we initiated, versus a contact which the client initiated. In these 23 cases, we began the enrollment process by making a call to someone whose name we had been given or by speaking with someone we knew or had met about the possibility of their being Rolfed. This kind of outreach to potential clients is important for both Tom and me. However, I did more of it than Thom. I initiated contact with 58% of my new clients during this period, whereas Thom was the initiator with 41% of his new clients.

How did we obtain the names of that 50% of our enrollments where we initiated the first contact? Not surprisingly, 67% of them came from clients or former clients. This reflects the fact that we have developed an organized approach to encouraging our clients to refer others to us or to suggest people for us to contact; and in various, specific ways we acknowledge clients who do refer others to us.

Another 24% of the people we contacted first were people we ourselves knew or had met. Here Thom and I differ considerably. Thom got 90% of his outreach contacts from clients or former clients; and Jeff got 50% of his contacts this way and drew 50% on encounters with people he knew or had met. This may reflect the fact that I have lived in Burlington for a number of years longer than Thom, may reflect some personality differences, and may reflect the fact that my involvement in Werner Erhard's seminar program puts me in contact with people who are predisposed to Rolfing.

Fifty percent of our new clients during this period initiated the first contact with us. Of these 36% heard of us from a friend; 25% had attended a Rolfing demonstration at some point; 25% learned of us from a T.V. or radio show or a newspaper article; and 12% learned of Rolfing from an advertisement. However, while advertisements were not a big source of initial information for this group, 58% of those who contacted us first found our phone number in an advertisement or a brochure they had picked up. It seems as though the advertisements and brochures alone do not enroll people—which is no surprise—but they do serve a valuable function as a directory.

Whether we reached out or the client reached out first, in only 22% of the cases was there a face-to-face meeting prior to the first session. Clearly, skill in using the phone is critical. Fifty-four percent of all clients did receive some literature from us after the initial contact.

From the time of our initial contact with a client, regardless of whether we or they made it, an average of 3 months passed to the date of the first session. This suggests the value of a good system for tracking people through the enrollment—a process that begins with the first contact, may involve sending literature or inviting the person to a subsequent demonstration, probably has a phone call or two in the middle and concludes with an appointment being kept for the first session.

Clients reported knowing of Rolfing for an average of 3 1/2 years prior to the initial contact, at least in enough depth to have a general idea of what it is all about. This reinforces the notion that

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much of what we do by way of outreach and promotion does in fact lay the foundation for later enrollments and also reinforces the value of sticking-with-it in a steady and stable way with a targeted community or targeted population.

All this has reinforced the obvious for us, which is valuable in its own way. We are still in the position—at least in our community and I suspect in many of your communities—of needing to generate the activity that brings people to Rolfing, given our intention to have a consistently expanding practice for ourselves and associates. Our outreach, whether direct or indirect, is crucial. Furthermore, each of our enrollment activities pays off, to differing degrees, but enough to make a difference when added together. Also obvious, but worth reiterating is that the good work we do with our clients, combined with some encouragement of our clients to think of others who might want to be Rolfed is very important in having new people enroll.

Comments, questions, and shared experiences are welcome.

Adv. Rolfer Jeffry Galper, Ph.D. is the Director of Rolfing Associates in S. Burlington, Vermont, and serves on the Rolf Institute Board of Directors.

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Practice Building

by Sarah Emory

When I asked to write an article on entrepreneurship from a "young" Rolfer's point of view, the request was a marvelous coincidence: two weeks before, I had been thinking in a concentrated way for the first time about what I have always labeled the "woo-woo" aspect of building a Rolfing practice.

After almost three years, I am still a new Rolfer, and practice building has been a very present concern for me. Like most of us, I've had to sift through talks and demonstrations, advertising and networking, educating the community and educating myself. What I've noticed about all these activities is they work. What I also noticed, early on, was there was something else working as well. I'm still not sure what that something is, although; I have some ideas I'll share here. This article is an inquiry, not an exposition; and if any of it resonates with anyone out there, I'd love to hear your ideas, experiences, and/or insights.

Early in my practice I began to noticed how the state of my health also seemed to affect my clients. I don't mean I was giving them the flu; I mean, pure and simple, they disappeared when I wasn't feeling well. I didn't even have to tell them I wasn't feeling well; I wouldn't even have to see them. Somehow they knew I wasn't up to working, and they would call and cancel. And it also seemed during these times, cancellation calls were all I got. No one called to make an appointment or inquire about Rolfing. I watched this happen repeatedly for over a year and finally had to admit it was consistent.

At this point, I began to wonder if this phenomenon could work the other way. That is, if I took excellent care of myself, would clients come out of the woodwork? After another year's experimentation, the answer is a resounding "Yes!" I only have to hold the intention of taking care of myself, and clients appear.

Concurrently, I had seen time and time again, that my level of excitement about Rolfing also had an effect on my clientele. Now, of course, this is obvious in some areas. When one does a demonstration feeling tired and unenthusiastic, it stands to reason people will not respond as eagerly as they would to someone who is energetic and excited about the work. Again, what I'm talking about are situations in which people respond without having direct contact with me.

Two years into my practice, this was the gist of my research into the "other side of practice building." Then recently, I was looking through my appointment book for the previous year. As I reviewed each month, remembering what was happening in my life at the time, I was struck at gut level with the fact that my clientele at each given moment was exactly what I could handle, given the circumstances. It was so clear and so unfailingly consistent that I couldn't ignore it. Immediately I had an image of myself as a broadcasting tower, somehow, on some level, broadcasting to the world: "Here's what I need. X number of clients will do quite nicely, thank you."

This gave me a lot to think about. My first thoughts were about becoming more aware of my broadcast at any given moment. My next thoughts, of course, were about becoming Program Director for this broadcast. Could I take a greater hand in determining the contents of the broadcast? I felt like I had just been given my next year's research project.

In the days that followed, I became clear that the things I had been observing for the last two years—my health, self-care and enthusiasm—definitely had an effect on my broadcast. It seemed I was already on my way to becoming my own Program Director and D.J.

Then I began to think in terms of intention. In Rolfing, I had seen that with clear intention I could affect changes which my hands alone weren't capable of. So, it seemed possible that the simplest and most powerful way to effect my broadcast would be with my intention. I began by simply and consciously holding the intention, "I am a Rolfer. I am available to do Rolfing." The phone began to ring. I explored making my intention more specific in terms of client numbers, clients per day, etc. The phone kept ringing. I tried different ways of staying present to my intention—even writing it down on paper and carrying it in my pocket. The phone is still ringing.

It's very tempting to draw conclusions from this short experiment. The only one I am willing to consider at this time is that intention seems to be as powerful a component in practice building as it is in Rolfing. It's going to be fun to play with this. Give me a year, and I'll let you know what I've observed.

Sarah Emory is a Certified Rolfer in Seattle, Washington.

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