The 7 Stages of Practice Building

Brian Whetten, Ph.D.

Selling BY Giving

Selling BY Giving

The 7 Stages of Practice Building

Welcome!

This workbook is for you if you are a coach, counselor, healer or conscious entrepreneur, you're committed to turning your calling into a successful career, and you're either **starting**, **stuck** or **stressed**.

One of the most important tasks in being a conscious entrepreneur is to know what to do – and in what order. It's like if you're baking a cake – you really want to have a proven recipe, rather than figuring it out through trial and error.

The Fast Path to a Full Practice is that recipe. With it, you're going to get clear on where you're at, where you want to be, and what what the simplest, fastest, step by step path is for you to get there. That way, instead of feeling like you need to master everything, you can focus just on the few things that are next for you.

The Fast Path to a Full Practice

The painful truth is that there are thousands of coaches, counselors, healers and conscious entrepreneurs, who have been following their purpose, working really hard, and investing in growing their business – but who aren't creating much in the way of results.

For example, I (Brian) recently had a conversation with a terrific, committed, caring woman we'll call Christine. She was interested in signing up for a high level program with me. She had a clear calling to be a business coach, and over the last three years had invested more than $70,000 in different marketing programs, trainings, and business coaches. She'd even spent a year in a mastermind working with one of the more well known experts in the industry – but after all this investment, she had yet to create a single dollar in revenue.

As we slowed down, it turned out that Christine had been investing in all sorts of programs that would have been appropriate if she already had a $100,000 a year business as a coach – but she wasn't there yet. She hadn't yet developed any experience working with individual clients and delivering value to them. Instead, everyone kept telling her to "build her signature system," "optimize her brand" and "grow her list," so that she could create a "scalable business," "craft her messaging," and start generating "passive income." But this was insane! How could she possibly create a signature system and master all these advanced marketing systems, without first slowing down and serving some individual clients?

Now, everyone involved – including Christine, her coaches and her teachers – had the best intentions. But she wasn't able to figure out what the right next steps were, for where she was at.

Christine had been working on stages 1 and 2 (Student and Intern) but had been investing in building systems that would only have value once she had completed the first 5 stages and was working on the Teacher stage. Her role models were all at the 7th stage – but what worked for them was almost exactly the opposite of what would work for her. As she slowed down, and focused on just what was in front of her, everything changed.

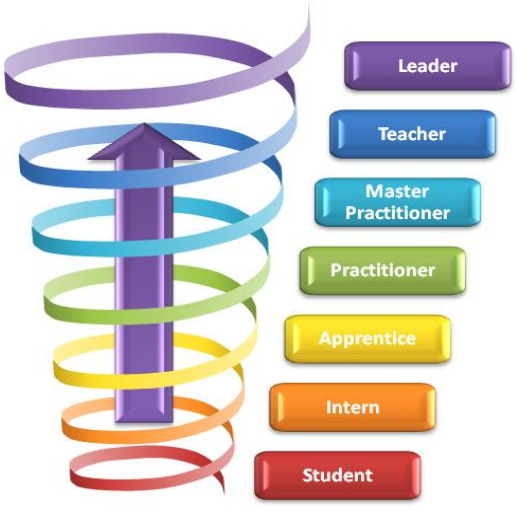
Over the last ten years I've have had the opportunity to coach hundreds of the top leaders in our industry, including best selling authors, seven figure business owners, and the heads of five of the top coach training institutes. In doing so, I've had the opportunity to learn from them, behind the scenes, regarding what their path to success really looked like. And in virtually every single case, there have been a set of seven simple, straightforward steps that they followed.

As I saw the same pattern repeated, again and again, I discovered these seven stages of practice building. Each person may have a different pace as you go through them – some may go really fawst, some more slowly – but they must be completed one at a time.

The Seven Stages of Practice Building

These stages aren't something we just achieve, like crossing an item off our to-do list. And they're not something we just learn, like reading a book. Instead, practice building is more like a martial art.

It's an art form, which involves first learning the theory, then learning the core skills, and then making these skills a matter of regular, consistent practice. As such, we've also patterned the stages off the martial arts model of different belts, each of which is earned based on demonstrating a certain level of mastery.



1. Red Belt – Student

The first level of mastery involves being a *Student*. During this stage, the primary focus is on both theoretical and practical education. It involves mastering modalities and tools. While graduation is usually marked by the acquisition of a degree or certification, the core goal of this stage is to develop **trust in the value of what you've learned**.

For coaches, this often involves receiving a certificate from a coaching academy. For therapists, it means getting a professional degree. For healers, it means completing a training program in one or more core different healing modalities (i.e. acupuncture, energy healing, massage therapy, etc.).

Key: The most important thing to look for at this stage is to make sure the education you're investing in has a strong enough experiential component. Many of the higher priced, more

traditional programs come with a strong brand or cachet, but then place too much emphasis on theory instead of practical skills.

2. Orange Belt – Intern

After graduation, the second level of mastery involves being an *Intern*. During this stage, the primary focus is on getting real world experience with clients or patients. You get your orange belt when you've gotten positive feedback from at least five regular, repeat, individual people. The core goal of this stage is to develop **trust in your ability to provide exceptional value**. You can do this by working with unpaid, partially paid, or fully paid clients or patients. The money isn't the important thing here. What is important is that you are working with *regular*, *repeat*, *individual people*, so you can evaluate their progress over time.

Key: The biggest challenge of this stage is our tendency to think that exceptional value is something we *do to* our clients or patients. We think that value lives in us, instead of realizing the truth that value lives in the client. This causes you to shift from looking for clients or patients who are a great fit, to somehow thinking you should be able to provide exceptional value to everyone you see. So the key is to learn how to slow down, connect, and have Value Conversations with potential clients or patients, about the value they'd like to receive. It's to ask the question, "IF we had total trust that we could create exceptional value in this area, what changes would you want to create?"

3. Yellow Belt – Apprentice

The third level of mastery involves being an *Apprentice*. During this stage, the primary focus is on learning how to enroll your first paying clients or patients. You receive your yellow belt when you've completed at least three months of regular, individual sessions with each of your *first five paying clients*. The core goal of this stage is to develop **trust in your ability to get paid for your services**.

This stage is where the rubber really meets the road, and it's the place where many practice builders hit a major stumbling block on their path, because they've never invested in learning how to actually enroll clients.

Key: When people start trying to get paid clients, they often think they need to do a lot of marketing – they think they need a fancy web site, a monthly newsletter, Google advertisements, the perfect business cards, etc. This is not true. *Please* don't invest a lot of time or money in traditional marketing programs! They rarely work, particularly at this stage of the game. Instead, the key is to learn how to get in the circle of conversation and have heart-centered Value Conversations and Enrollment Conversations with the people who are already in your web of trust.

© 2016 Brian and Nicole Whetten

4. Green Belt – Practitioner

The fourth level of mastery is where you come into your own as a *Practitioner*. During this stage, the primary focus is on building your business to the point where you can afford to leave your day job and pursue your calling full time.

You receive your green belt when your practice is making enough money to cover your basic expenses (i.e. at least $3000 a month for 3 months in a row). The core goal of this stage is to develop **trust in your ability to support your basic financial needs with your practice's income**.

After graduating with their orange belt, many practitioners do a "cliff dive" into their new career. They quit their day job, commit themselves to working full time on their new business – and then start freaking out as they watch their savings drain away. This pattern makes it much harder to build a successful business, because the fear of not having enough clients or patients is one of the strongest things that keeps you from getting new clients or patients.

Key: At this point, it's essential to learn a complete system for building your business that is both effective and energetically aligned with your core values. You can either create this system by trial and error or you can invest in learning it from someone else.

5. Blue Belt – Master Practitioner

The fifth level of mastery is where your ideal practice really starts to show up, as you step into your authentic self-confidence as a *master practitioner*. During this stage, it's time to create your dream practice! How many hours per week do you want to spend with people? What types of clients or patients do you most want to see? How much do you want to be making? You receive your blue belt when your practice is full, you have a waiting list for new clients, and you're creating an abundant income for you and your loved ones. The core goal of this stage is to develop **trust in your ability to enroll clients at will**.

When you start your practice, enrollment is usually a mystery. Sometimes clients or patients show up, but you never really know how or why. You've earned your blue belt when you've learned how to "go to the client store." As in, when you want food, you go to the grocery store. When you want new clothes, you go to the clothing store. And when you want new clients, you go to the client store.

You're able to "go to the client store" when you have the skills and the systems in place so that when you want a new client or patient, you know the specific actions to take which will bring them to you. You've mastered the art of the invitation, you're comfortable having Referral Conversations, and you actually *like* having Enrollment Conversations. You've also usually created a Signature Speech as well. Bringing in clients has become a comfortable, familiar, enjoyable process.

Key: Becoming a master practitioner requires learning how to build the business you want in ways you truly love. Each piece of your business – from pricing to value to motivation to

positioning to marketing to enrollment – needs to be something you are good at doing and that you LIKE doing. Otherwise you'll experience a constant push-pull between wanting to grow and then wanting to pull away. You'll procrastinate and struggle, rather than being in abundance and flow.

6. Indigo Belt – Teacher

The sixth level of mastery naturally starts after you've filled your practice and have a waiting list. At this point, we naturally find ourselves called to start working with groups rather than just individuals, as a way of serving a larger audience. During this stage, the form of your practice may change radically, as the majority of your income starts coming from group classes, speeches, information products, books and the like. There are many more recipes for success at this point, as your mastery of the earlier stages has prepared you for a joyful, expressive, co-creative dance with Spirit.

The core goals of this stage are to develop **trust in your ability to enroll groups of people both cleanly and effectively and to function as an entrepreneur**. A practitioner asks the question "*what can I **do** that will create value?*" The entrepreneur asks the question "*what **systems** can I create that will create value?*" A practitioner gets paid by the hour. An entrepreneur gets paid as a function of the total value they've created for people.

Keys: Developing an entrepreneurial mindset, learning how to cleanly and effectively enroll groups of people at a time, and creating systems that address an acknowledged, underserved need.

7. Purple Belt – Leader

The seventh level of mastery involves stepping into a leadership role and building an organization that serves anywhere from hundreds to tens of thousands of people per year.

I don't know if you ever truly "complete" your purple belt, as every time we step into a given level of mastery, loving, leadership and service, another level of opportunity to serve opens before us.

This stage is magical, while also involving many of the same types of conflicts, challenges and learning opportunities that you experience in the earlier stages. Some core goals of this stage include **developing trust in the systems you've built for enrolling people both cleanly and effectively, as well as building your organization to the place that you're not needed for day to day operations.**

In other words, your organization can keep functioning at a high level even if you decide to get on a plane and go to Hawaii for a three month vacation. Being a Leader is a joy. It's a dance. It can be challenging at times and there's always opportunity for more learning and growth.

And on the whole, it's about as much fun as you can have with your clothes on.

The Bigger the Vision, The Smaller the Steps

If you want to build your business in full integrity, and truly be of service to the fullest extent possible, remember that the bigger the tree is, the deeper the roots need to be.

The tree is your business – the work you're doing in the world. Your roots are your spiritual foundations, as well as the level to which you've learned to build your business in clean, conscious, effective, enjoyable ways.

Keep your big vision! Own your calling. And keep moving forward, one step at a time, so that by the time Oprah comes knocking at your door, you're ready to grab her hand and go.

All our best,
Brian and Nicole

Selling BY Giving

Visioning Exercise

Imagine that it's a year from now, and we're meeting for a celebration dinner, where you're sharing the miraculous changes you've created in your life and your business. We sit down together, and you share the story of where you're at now and the impact you're making. What is that story?

What does your business look like? How many clients or patients are you seeing? What types of results are they receiving? How much are you making a month?

What does your business feel like? How do you feel about showing up to "work" every day? How do you feel about serving your clients or patients? How do you feel about the other pieces of your business?

How has your life changed? What vacations are you going on? What are you most excited about? What is your business allowing you to do?

How have you changed? What is different in the way you show up in the world? How has your confidence or self-love changed? How have you grown in terms of your authentic leadership?

What belt have you received? What's the highest stage you've completed?

What's next? What's your vision for the next 12 months, now that you reached your first level goals?

© 2016 Brian and Nicole Whetten