



# \$60K+

## 5 Massage Therapists Share the Strategies They Use to Earn to an Above-Average Income

By Allison M. Payne

AS A MASSAGE THERAPIST, you know how much your massage therapy work is worth—but are you being rewarded for your talent and expertise in the form of big paychecks? Chances are, even though you're already working hard, your income could use a boost.



Edward Miano, LMT

“You can only work so many hours and you can only work on one person at a time, so success in massage is in a sense self-limiting,” said Edward Miano, LMT, owner of Healing Hands



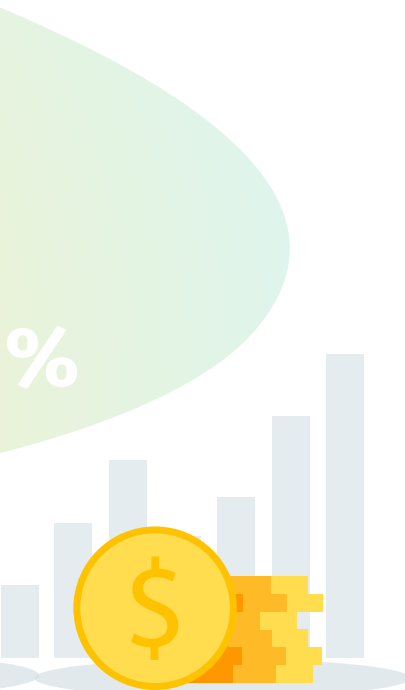
Kimberly Gregorzek-Medeiros, LMT, BCTMB

Bodywork in Boston, Massachusetts. “You can book yourself to death or you can charge more, but at some point everybody reaches a maximum ceiling.”

We spoke with several high-earning massage therapists who have broken through that ceiling and asked them to share some of their secrets with you. To connect with high earners, MASSAGE Magazine put a call out on social media asking for input from massage therapists who make \$60,000 or more net income per year. Five of the people who answered that call are interviewed here. Try one of their make-more-money strategies to transform your business in 2022.

### First, Forget About Discounts

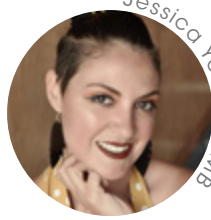
Most of the therapists we spoke with for this article had a general consensus about discounts: If you offer a high-quality massage and good customer service, you don't need them. “When you give people value, they're happy to spend their money on you,” said Kimberly Gregorzek-Medeiros, LMT, BCTMB, owner of Ocean Essence,



Michael Stechly

Michael Stechly, owner of Michael Stechly Wellness in Chicago, for example, tacks on \$25 extra if he has to travel outside a four-mile radius of his home. He also makes small rate increases each year to account for inflation.

Jessica York, BCTMB, owner of Breathe Bodywork in St. Clair Shores, Michigan, considered the competition when setting rates in her practice. “I was very cautious,” she said. “I looked at the menus of approximately 20 to 30 other places offering massage at the time, and their service offering types, and I kept my prices \$5 under ... and I think that gave me an advantage because at the end of the day, for a lot of people, even if they have the best therapist on the planet, you still have to be able to afford to go to that therapist.”



Jessica York, BCTMB

### Introduce Yourself

When Gregorzek-Medeiros bought her business, it came with a client list; when business was slow, she tried to get those clients back in the door by calling each one of them personally—and her strategy paid off.

“I had time because my phone wasn’t ringing yet,” she noted. “I reached out to each one of those individually and introduced myself, told them [the practice was] under new ownership and I have this whole new vision and that I’d like to welcome them to check us out. [It] cost me nothing to start getting clients in the door.”



Neal Tinney, EMT-P, LMT

Stechly also believes in the power of the personal touch, and makes a point of calling potential clients he’s met at events; he says he has a 90% success rate with getting those clients to book a massage. Also, he works in a private health club and uses their membership list to contact potential clients and offer his services.

“I create a rotating cold-call schedule, so I don’t call too many people and annoy them, but in six years of me being there,

I’ve never once had someone pick up the phone and say, ‘How dare you cold-call me to check up on my health and wellness?’ he said. In his experience, he added, most clients appreciate the calls.

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### Target Tourism

Miano spends his summers on Martha’s Vineyard, which gets about 150,000 tourists per year during the summer months. In such a place, massage is in high demand and he can easily charge higher rates for his work. An added bonus? He gets to spend his summer at the beach.

“I have three to four months of the year where the fees are very good and the work is very enjoyable,” Miano says of his summer sessions, which sometimes even take place on the beach or on clients’ boats.

### Earn Another Credential

“I really recommend diversifying your trade portfolio as much as possible,” says York, who is licensed as a massage

which offers massage therapy, skin care and wellness services in North Kingstown, Rhode Island.

Bargain sites, such as Groupon, can be a good way to get first-time clients in your door, but it’s possible they will remain one-time clients; many people use Groupon to search for deals and won’t return to your practice if it means paying full price.

However, Neal Tinney, EMT-P, LMT, owner of Massageology LLC in Middleburg, Florida, says Groupon has been good for his business: “It’s brought a lot of people into our practice that may have never come in before,” he said.

### Raise Your Rates (Within Reason)

If you charge more per massage, you’ll make more money—provided you’re in a market where people will have the money to pay higher rates. You don’t have to have just one rate, either; you may want to charge one rate in your studio and a higher rate for outcalls.

“Find something you love.... so many therapists want to keep accumulating new skills and they just keep adding.”

therapist and a cosmetologist.

Prior to becoming a massage therapist, Stechly already had a degree in culinary arts, and uses healthy cooking as part of his business, targeting high-end clients in the Chicago area. “I am a personal chef and I do private parties and events,” he said.

### Offer Membership

York offers a membership model with a twist—clients who leave her two reviews online become “VIPs,” who then receive perks such as a discounted rate, a free half-hour massage or facial on their birthday, and other VIP-only specials and perks. Her clients were thrilled, she says, and her business started ranking higher in web searches.

### Teach

Miano teaches a couple’s massage class that he says has been “amazingly successful.” The class involves a three- or four-hour commitment, but he sometimes makes the equivalent of a whole day’s worth of massage sessions—without actually having to do any massage himself.

“The work is much less strenuous on my body because [the clients are] by and large working on each other,” he explains.

### Specialize

“Find something you love.... so many therapists want to keep accumulating new skills and they just keep adding,” said Miano.

Is there a technique you practice that no one else in town offers? Use that to attract clients. For example, York became the only therapist in her area to offer bamboo massage, and also distinguishes herself by running a spa that is all vegan.

### Quit Wasting Space

When Gregorzek-Medeiros opened her business, only one room was being used as a treatment room, while the other was used for storage. She moved out the items and added a massage table, and was able to hire another massage therapist to use the room for sessions. She also added an infrared sauna in an “awkward corner” of her practice space.

“Don’t have wasted space,” she says. “Lounges are great, but if no one’s sitting in them, put a table in there and make some money.”

### Be Great, and Be Yourself

York says potential clients gravitate toward honesty and authenticity, which you can communicate via social media.

“People want to see what’s behind

the scenes. They want to see what’s real. And so being really authentic on social media and utilizing things like your local Facebook and community forums and reaching out, introducing yourself, making those grassroots marketing connections—that’s what’s going to really set you apart from everybody else, because they’re going to want to visit your business instead of going to just their local massage franchise,” she said. “They’re going to want to support your endeavor because of you, who you are as a person.”

### Wait, Watch ... and Make Your Move


Gregorzek-Medeiros had been working as an independent contractor for the owner of a practice and had earned as many raises as it was possible for her to get; it was then she decided to make the jump into owning her own practice.

Buying a wellness business circa 2008 could have been a disaster in the downturned economy that marked that time period, but she had been saving her money to strike out on her own and saw her chance. She bought a spa that was failing, turned it around and made money despite the recession.

“I changed the model of the business, added the words therapeutic massage to the title, started networking with local fitness professionals and chiropractors and anybody that was in wellness to start to send me clients,” she said.

“When everyone else doesn’t see an opportunity, that’s your chance.” **M**

**Allison M. Payne** is an independent writer, editor and proofreader in central Florida. Her articles for *MASSAGE Magazine* include “Massage in Physical Rehabilitation: A Focus on Clients’ Comeback” (November) and “This is What We Know About Long-Haul COVID-19 Survivors” ([massagemag.com](http://massagemag.com)).

 Is it time to expand? Find out in “the Guide to Hiring Massage Therapists for Your Practice,” by Lozelle Mathai, on [massagemag.com](http://massagemag.com).

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