

# Marketing 101 for Aspiring Yoga Teachers

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How many classes do I need to teach to make a living? Can I make a living teaching yoga? Which studios should I work for?

You are passionate about yoga or you wouldn't be a yoga teacher. The first shift in your attitude is to think of teaching yoga as your new career and that you are now a business owner. If you want to thrive and feel fulfilled in this growing industry you need to have a marketing plan and work it like a business to create visibility. You are now a yoga-preneur and it's important to make sure that yogis and non-yogis know about you. It's ok to do something you love and earn a supplemental income but just how do you make a sustainable living? How do you turn your yoga teacher training investment into a viable career? That's where marketing comes in. Marketing is just a tool to spread the yoga gospel.

Let's start with an overview of the yoga market. According to a study commissioned in 2012 by Yoga Journal, 8.7 percent or 20.4 million people practice yoga in the United States. That's an increase of 29 percent over the 2008 survey results. Of non-practitioners, 44.4 percent are interested in trying yoga. Additionally, practitioners spend \$10.3 billion a year on yoga classes and products, including equipment, clothing, vacations, and media. By looking around in a yoga class you have probably noticed that women rule in the United States, 82.2 percent of practitioners are women while 17.8 percent are men. The majority of today's practitioners (62.8 percent) fall within the 18-44 age range. Close to half (38.4 percent) of the today's practitioners consider themselves beginners.

The top five reasons people are motivated to start a yoga practice were flexibility (78.3 percent), general conditioning (62.2 percent), stress relief (59.6 percent), improve overall health (58.5 percent) and physical fitness (55.1 percent). These statistics tell you that yoga is a growing industry and that you have made a good career choice. It's up to you to make yourself known to yogis and potential yogis, and to encourage them to attend your classes.

If you want to be successful in any field, you need to market yourself. Here are 10 tips to get you started on the road to becoming a thriving yoga teacher and earn a living at what you love.

## Identify Your Yoga Niche

You love yoga but which piece of it are you most passionate about? Go inside and think about what excites you the most and keeps you inspired. How do you differentiate yourself from other teachers? What is it that makes you unique that will cause you to stand out in the yoga teacher crowd?

Do you like to teach a particular *yoga style* or a different niche such as seniors or athletes? You may or may not know what you like to teach yet but try to identify it and concentrate on being the top of the field. The sage advice is to teach what you love and don't try to be everything to everybody. Know your strengths and become an expert in that niche.

Successful yoga teachers position themselves as the *expert* on Sanskrit, chakras, yoga therapy, seniors or backs, and are asked to teach workshops on those areas throughout the region and United States. Identifying your niche and living it can help shape your career.

### **Write a Yoga Bio**

Every yoga teacher needs a bio but writing about *you* can be challenging. Writing your bio is a big step in identifying your yoga niche. Show people how interesting you are in the first sentences of your bio and make them want to read more. Be authentic. It should sound as though you were in a conversation. There's no need to list everything you have ever done but you are limited on space so be clear and concise about accomplishments and goals.

Ask yourself these questions to get your creative juices flowing.

- Why were you motivated to become a yoga student and teacher?
- What is your yogic philosophy?
- How has yoga changed your life?

Sit down at your computer or pad, and start writing. Write down everything that comes to mind when answering these questions because you can polish it later. Finish by adding credentials; teacher training, master teacher workshops and topics, and association affiliations. Most students don't know what the 200 RYT acronym means, you might consider spelling it out.

When it comes to bios, one size does not fit all. Prepare three bio lengths that can be used for different venues.

Your website – 2-4 paragraphs

Studio website – 1-2 paragraphs

Events – 2-4 sentences

### **Establish an Online Presence**

You will need to invest in a simple website to establish an online presence and to grow your following. In today's electronic age unless you have a website many people don't believe you really exist. A website will legitimize your offerings, services and products. It helps you develop online relationships and gives you a way to connect with current and potential clients. And the most important piece of all is it elevates you to the expert level in your niche. You will reach more people and give those people something to find when they Google you.

A website is one part of building a relationship. Don't be afraid to share what's going on with you. If you aren't sharing your knowledge online and actively seeking to contribute to the community of people that need you most, you aren't fulfilling your whole potential.

Websites are easy to launch and not as expensive as you might think. There are several companies that specialize in yoga related websites including YogaMarketing360.com and RuYogaDesign.com. Consider including a blog as part of your website too. Blog entries don't have to be long but be prepared to post new content regularly. The more active you are on the internet, the higher you will rank in Google searches and more people will find you.

To build your brand recognition be careful to keep all of your marketing pieces consistent; website, Facebook, LinkedIn, business cards and print materials. These relationship builders should have the same look so there's no mistaking the owner. Build your website with a strategy of how to get people to it by putting a marketing plan into effect.

### **Expand Your Reach**

The web is the ultimate equalizer. If you want to expand your reach and grow your class size, it is essential that you use the web to its maximum potential. Social media is a *free tool* that enables you to market your offerings, engage with students, and find other yoga professionals to network with.

Social media can help you:

#### Serve your students

Teaching yoga is about being of service to students so hang out where they are. A good way to serve your students is to let them know about the things that matter to them.

#### Build relationships

Taking the conversation out of the studio and onto Facebook is a great way to connect with your students and build relationships off-the-mat. Your Facebook page is available 24/7, so even if they only get to your class once a week, there is a sense of continued connection.

#### Expand your reach

Social media platforms encourage sharing – that's what it's all about. If your students like something you post on Facebook, chances are they'll share it with their friends. Now without any effort on your part, you are in front of more potential clients.

#### *Establish a Facebook Page*

A Facebook page is different than your personal profile. Your personal profile is where you post pictures of your last vacation, chat with friends, and maybe share what you had for lunch. Your Facebook page is something you create to highlight your professional life and services, and engage your target market. This would be the place to post your upcoming hip openers workshop in the events section. The studio is promoting your workshop but you need to do your part too. Your page is meant to accumulate fans and potential clients.

Your personal profile can be converted to a business page or you can have both. If you convert, your *friends* become *likes* and after you reach 100 followers you will have access to statistics. Statistics will reveal the demographics of your followers and which posts they like most by sharing or commenting. This statistical information can guide you to posting what your followers like best and will most likely share with their friends.

Facebook is meant to be a conversation with your followers. Create posts 3-5 times per week and content should be a combination of pictures, quotes, yoga news and information about you. Ask questions and poll about hot topics. It doesn't always have to be yoga related. People want to get to know you, so personality must shine throughout your posts.

### *Set up a LinkedIn Profile*

A LinkedIn profile is a combination of a yoga and business resume. Depending on your security access, people will be able to see a snap shot of your career. Join groups on LinkedIn to foster relationships and pick up tips for developing your yoga business. LinkedIn groups normally have job postings and various topics of discussion that you can comment on. You can also start your own discussion to find out what your peers are doing. Your remarks on these discussions are another way to establish yourself as an expert.

Consider joining groups that center on social media and email marketing not only yoga. General social media and email marketing information can be easily transferable to yoga. Some of the more active groups you might want to join are Social Media Marketing, The Yoga Network, Yoga Instructors and Practitioners, and Yoga Alliance.

### **Develop Yoga Business Cards**

Even in the electronic age you still need a simple business card. Your card can be easily designed and printed through an online provider. Keep it simple with your name, email, cell, website and your specialty. Don't include your class times or the studios where you work because it will most likely change. If someone wants to connect with you they will text, email, call or check your website for class times and locations.

Each time you hand out a business card to a potential client, ask for their contact information and when you can reconnect. Follow up within two weeks or whatever time period they gave you. Be prepared for that text, email or call with your next step. If they are new to yoga suggest a fundamentals course or a private series with you. Carry your business cards with you always, in your purse and yoga bag, and hand them out. Remember it is ok to talk about yourself because you are spreading the yoga gospel.

### **Loyalty Matters**

When building a yoga teaching business develop a few, meaningful places to teach and really contribute at those venues. Don't wear yourself out by driving all over to teach. Studio owners are looking for teachers who are willing to put the time in to build a class. Concentrate on building your classes at one or two studios that are not close to each other, at least 10 miles apart. You will ultimately have larger classes if you stay consistent at fewer studios. Studio owners want to employ yoga teachers that are professional, loyal, serve the student community, and show up on time prepared.

If you want to teach at a specific studio, start practicing there on a regular basis and get to know the teaching staff. To get a foot in the door, offer to host free marketing events for your niche at the studio. If senior yoga is your specialty, host a free class where students can learn about an upcoming series. If it's free, students will come but it's up to you to make them want to return. Show the owner you come with ideas to help build the class and that you can contribute to the overall business. Help the owner develop her business and it will develop your business.

## **Honor the Practice**

Honor the practice of yoga by serving the student. It's not about the teacher, it's about the practice. If the student receives what she needs from you, she will return and bring her friends.

Ask yourself why students are coming to your class and keep coming back. What does your student need, why do they come to you, craft sequences that fits that model. It needs to serve them and improve their lives. It is a true reflection of what you are really offering. They need to want what you have to give. Solidify your mission. A teacher may be great at cueing poses but if she isn't friendly, students will not return. Teacher's personality, style, and ability to relate to students are key differentiators.

Listen and observe your students. Your class plan might not be right for the students that walk in the room on any particular day. Modify your plan to fit their needs. Arrive 30 minutes before class to greet your students, learn their names and set up your props. If you have a hard time remembering names, write their names on a piece of paper and take it into the yoga room. If possible put their names in a grid as they set up their mats.

Always be available before and after class for a time to get to know your students. Start a conversation by asking: which pose was their favorite from class today, if they are feeling they are making progress or are they getting what they need from the class? A little yoga research can go a long way in building a relationship. Students will appreciate that you want to know what they think.

## **Build Your Own Database**

Eventually you will probably want to send out a professional looking email to invite your yoga network to one of your workshops or a special class at a studio. In order to accomplish this, you will need an email list. Start compiling a student email list but ask your yoga studio owner for permission first. Always respect the studio owner by discussing your plans with her/him. When you are ready to try email marketing, sign up with an email provider such as Constant Contact. Constant Contact currently offers two months free for up to 100 email addresses. If you don't have the technology savvy yet to produce your own email format and content, Constant Contact has partners that can provide the service that you need.

Email marketing is one more way to reach your current and potential clients. Combined with a website, social media and print, email allows you to communicate your message to more people.

## **Be Professional**

One in ten yoga studios fail so please understand that it is very hard to operate a successful studio. Support management by being a professional. Treat your yoga career the same way you would any other career. Apply for a registered yoga teacher (RYT) designation, get your insurance in advance, return emails and voice mails within 24 hours, and be reliable. Take your role seriously while still cultivating your skills.

Appearance, punctuality and consistency are an important part of being a yoga professional. Do more than is expected of you at the studio. Straighten the props and turn out all the lights before you leave. When you commit to a regular class, show up prepared and take your enthusiasm into the room. Don't gossip about other teachers or studios because *it will* get back to the owner.

## **Promote Yourself**

In order to thrive, yoga teachers need to know how to talk about themselves. Have your 30 second elevator speech ready to tell people what you do. Put time into developing a clear and concise message, stay consistent and your passion will shine through. This elevator pitch is designed to get a conversation started. It's up to you to keep it going.

Set realistic goals for your business that are based on a measurable and actionable plan so that you don't lose your commitment. Two of the most important aspects for success are building confidence and eliminating guilt. Set up a schedule to evaluate your goals every six months. It's ok to succeed and have a sustainable living.

Start using some or all of these techniques to become more recognized in the yoga community and build your classes.