

Seven Success Strategies



for
Massage Therapists

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Seven Success Strategies for Massage Therapists

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What is Success?

Dictionary.com defines “success” as follows:

1. the favorable or prosperous termination of attempts or endeavors.
2. the attainment of wealth, position, honors, or the like
3. a successful performance or achievement: *The play was an instant success.*
4. a person or thing that is successful. *She was a great success on the talk show.*

I think that something is missing from this definition. Let’s just say it is a good starting point. I don’t think that it doesn’t clearly defines what success is. And who can do that? I think that each of us has to define what “success” is for ourselves.

One person might think that s/he is only successful when s/he achieves a six figure salary, a huge house by the ocean and a Lexus in the driveway. Another person might think that they are successful if they live comfortably and are debt-free, but have lots of time for family, friends and to do the things they love to do.

Action Step: What is your definition of success? Go ahead take a few minutes to think about what has to happen for you to be successful. Write it down below. (Just a note, you can always change your definition of success in the future. As we evolve as a person our values and beliefs change, therefore, our definition of “success” may also change.)

My definition of success is _____

Now that you have your definition of success, read on to find out about seven strategies to help you achieve your success.

Success Strategy #1 AWARENESS

If you were to describe yourself, I am reasonably sure you would not describe your physical self but your compassion and desire to help others. It was those qualities, not your physical looks that brought you to massage therapist as a career in the first place.

When helping others, we tend to lose awareness of ourselves and can face burnout or repetitive use injury in a very short time; and find ourselves leaving the career we love.

Therefore the first discipline we must make peace with is self-awareness. You can only give to someone else what you have in excess.



When you are giving a massage, when your hands and mind are focused on your client, you are amazing. Your training, gifts, and compassion are directed to one simple goal . . .to help your client. For this type of focus, you pay a price of energy and physical strength. In order to be able to replicate this focus, time after time, without burnout or repetitive injury, you need to have the discipline of awareness.

Healing awareness usually disengages when you finish with a client and doesn't reengage until hands touch the next client. Self-awareness takes a back seat during the treatment. Even before your hands leave the client, you need to awaken your self-awareness as you disengage your healing touch. This is where discipline begins. You are the only one who can take care of yourself. Your body tries to accommodate the mind's directives, so if the focus never returns to your body, your body suffers.

Your final, finishing touches are opportunities to refocus or reground your separateness and remove your energy from your client's while

leaving the client with your intent for peace and wellness. This brings you both out of the healing state into every day life and your awareness of your client is now caring awareness rather than healing awareness because, even though you have physically and energetically removed yourself from the client, you still have the final tasks to conclude:

- gentle conversation to make sure they feel wonderful and pleased with their session;
- water for them to drink with encouragement to drink enough to help their muscles stay relaxed;
- payment for your wonderful services;
- rescheduling for the next time; and
- a gentle goodbye.

To fully activate your self-awareness, while you are waiting for them to dress and leave the treatment room, focus on:

- How do you feel? Give separate consideration to your hands, arms, shoulders, etc.
- Do you need food, water, a bathroom break?
- Do you need to stretch in order to loosen your muscles?
- Do you need a quiet time to recharge the healing energy you so generously give?

When you have totally finished and the client has gone, **even if another client is sitting and waiting for their session**, take a few minutes for yourself. (You may want to consider scheduling at least 15 to 30 minutes between clients, so you can still stay on schedule.)

Pay attention to what is “in the moment”. What is Right Now? Do not think of what you should be doing, could be doing, or what you aren’t doing. Pay attention to RIGHT NOW.

While you are changing the linens, stretch and move your body. Shrug those shoulders, rotate the head, and massage the hands.

While the next client is changing, drink water, go to the bathroom and move gently while you are doing it. Don’t rush and dash around.

Treat yourself gently and with the same courtesy you extend to your clients.

If you intend to do massage as a career until you retire, pay attention to the above suggestions. You will find that your clients will return again and again to a well-balanced, healthy, caring therapist. Until I sold my practice in July 2006, I still saw, on a regular weekly basis, clients that started with me when I started my business in 2000.

Treat yourself as seriously as you do your desire to help others.

Success Strategy #2 NUTRITION

Nutrition is the intake of nutrients and their subsequent absorption and assimilation. The first thought response to the word nutrition is **food** and indeed food is important; however, nutrition comes to us through all of our senses. The body is fed food. The mind is fed information. The spirit is fed tranquility. All work together in harmony to maintain the balance of a healthy three-



part body - physical, sensory or emotional (PSE). When the PSE environment is fed, it either absorbs needed nutrients or eliminates what is not required. Each part is of equal importance.

The PSE environment is continuously responding to stimulation provided second-by-second through breathing in oxygen and releasing carbon dioxide through exhalation; processing food into nourishment and eliminating the unusable; or through the skin which both absorbs and eliminates everything from air to physical contact. This continuous bombardment by stimulation (sounds, sights, smells, tastes, sensations) is filtered through our experiences as well as the body systems to determine what is necessary or interesting enough to be retained and incorporated while the remainder is released and eliminated.

When the PSE environment is overwhelmed by unnatural or unwholesome substances, it severely overtaxes the complete system, creating opportunity for discomfort, disease or total breakdowns.

Everything we assimilate into ourselves affects our day-to-day energy. This includes the hurried meal, the quick soda or coffee instead of water, the angry motorist, or the late client.

Only you can ensure that the nutrition you eat, read, dream restores rather than depletes your balance. Remember you often have to change habits and thought patterns to establish balance. While change can be an unwanted guest, remember that your own healing ability must first be directed to yourself before it can be utilized to help others. Change is worth the reward.

Guidelines for a Healthier You

In order to maintain our inner healing force, the right input is needed for the body to function at its fullest potential.

Some guidelines:

- Stay within 10 pounds of your best weight at any given age.
- Eat a high percentage of fresh foods. I recommend keeping your diet at about 75-85%
- Consume adequate roughage.
- Drink water (not soda, beer, coffee or caffeinated tea) in sufficient quantities for you.
- Take a day off every week and sleep without the alarm.
- Read articles or books that stimulate your mind.
- Help the lymphatic system through exercise and deep breathing.
- Get regular massages.
- Remember you are a 3-part person and need to nourish all 3 parts.

Recommended Reading

How can you let go of old patterns and find a kinder way to treat yourself?

Three books I have found particularly helpful in changing my eating habits are:

1. [The Seven Pillars of Health](#) by Don Colbert, M.D.
2. [YOU: The Owner's Manual](#) by Michael Roizen, M.D. and Mehmet Oz, M.D.

3. [YOU on a Diet](#) by Michael Roizen, M.D. and Mehmet Oz, M.D.

These books gave me a better understanding of my inner body needs and have made a direct impact on my energy levels. I was also surprised to find it easier to change thoughts and attitudes when my body was receiving what it needed. It is well worth the effort.

Evaluate Your Diet

They say that a healthy body means a healthy mind.

This may or may not be true...but I know that I feel more 'sluggish' if I have spent the day eating fast food and 'rubbish'.

We all deserve little treats every now and again...but if you can't keep off of the sweets (with white sugar) for at least one whole day then you are not going to be doing your concentration many favors.

You don't need to drastically alter your diet - just pay a little more attention to what you eat as convenience or comfort food.

This process is the same as most things that help us improve our lives...change a little, and often...and the results will start to multiply.

The hardest part is always the first step.

Action Point:

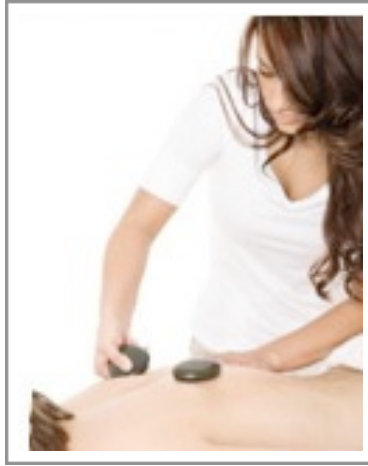
How can you start today by slightly changing what you eat?

I know that this isn't as always as easy as it sounds (I would be the first to admit this!)...but, as they say 'a healthy body equals a healthy mind'.

The more I learn about success...the more I have become aware of the impact that eating too much junk food has on my ability to do what I really want to do.

So...just begin small...and start cutting back on one thing at a time...and try to go out for a walk more often!

Success Strategy #3 IMPORTANCE OF BODYWORK FOR YOURSELF



Most of us became massage therapists because we have a need to help others and because we want to help others get out of pain and into wellness. We also believe in the healing power of touch.

In our desire to be the very best, our time is spent trying to improve our techniques, our businesses, and our facilities. We often overlook the need to maintain the homeostasis of our bodies.

During massage school, your body became accustomed to having the benefits of regular massages or bodywork. Once you finished school and are involved with the various activities of growing your business, it is very easy to neglect getting massages or bodywork for yourself.

How long has it been since you last received a totally relaxing massage?

When you do get a massage, do you totally relax or do you spend your hour trying to figure out the new, wonderful, interesting, how do they do that technique?

Keep Improving

Now don't get me wrong, I do believe that we should continue to improve our skills. But not during **your** massage time. When your mind is fully active, your body can't truly rest and relax.

Reasons for Regular Bodywork

Think for a moment about your technique you learned and practiced when you first started out - perhaps you had a routine that you always did. Just as your bodywork techniques have evolved, your body has adapted itself to your method of massage and the repetitive movements you do every day.

In fact, your body probably could perform an adequate massage without any conscious interaction with your mind. This type of "unthinking" massage is what we want to avoid. Getting regular bodywork is the best way to prevent "unthinking" methods sneaking into our work.

Each client deserves our focus and full ability each and every time we do a massage. In order to ensure that, you have to guarantee that your body is able to provide what you will require of it.

As therapists, we can become like our worst client . . . so busy "doing" that we have forgotten how to relax. This imbalance will eventually lead to burnout and total fatigue.

This is a very scary place for a therapist who wants to continue doing massages or bodywork until they retire or die as I have heard some therapists attest to.

So, how to prevent this? Just getting a regular massage sounds too easy. There must be something else, some enlightenment, some dragon to slay, something difficult. No. Regular weekly or monthly bodywork is all it takes. (Didn't you just finish telling your last client that?)

Remember that keeping yourself healthy is keeping your business healthy. And it is a wonderful experience!

Success Strategy #4 REST

I can hear you yelling at me already. “When do I have time to rest?” This can become a theme song of massage therapists. It seems like there is seldom enough time to get half the important things done, let alone spend any of our precious time resting.



I have discovered that resting doesn't actually have to be sleeping. With resting, you have a number of options.

Different Resting Options

Stretching can be restful, especially if you have been doing a number of massages back to back.



Stretching between your appointments is an easy way to relax those tight muscles and the exercises you find helpful can be passed on to clients who experience tight, painful muscles.

Massage sore pressure points with an essential oil blend that is designed to help relax or calm the body.

Try 20 drops of Lavender (relaxing and uplifting) and 20 drops of Sandalwood (relaxing and calming) in 2 ounces of carrier oil (my personal favorite is Hazelnut Oil.)

Your use of Aromatherapy will also enable you to speak confidently to your clients of what you have experienced.

Lay down on your massage table. It feels just as good as your clients have told you. Just lay there for 5 minutes, taking deep breaths. You will be surprised how much better you feel.

Meditation is one of the nicest ways of resting for a short period. Allow your awareness to rest in quiet. Allow your busy mind to gradually desist from bothering you and rest, even for a few minutes.

This can be done with open eyes, looking at a picture that pleases you or with closed eyes. I find I drop into meditation quicker by looking at my favorite ocean picture and letting the beauty of the picture capture my mind and still it.

Breathe deeply. Slowing down an automatic movement is an easy and excellent way to center and relax your body. As you slow your breathing, you can alter the way you are feeling or thinking and discover a new sense of stability and calm. To breathe freely, your belly should be relaxed; your back straight and your shoulders down with a relaxed diaphragm. With conscious effort, take a deep breath, hold it for the count of three then slowly release. Do this at least six times.

Open your mouth wide and let the jaw relax. Keep your head still then move your lower jaw around into as many shapes and positions as you can without strain. This will reduce the tension in this area. It is amazing how this helps the neck and shoulders.

Get adequate sleep. This may be the hardest one to actually do. At least three nights a week try to get adequate sleep. Since “adequate” is different for each of us, if you are really rested after four hours, then four hours is what you need. Most of us, however, require closer to eight or more (I know I require about ten, yes, ten hours). Whatever you need, get it. It really makes a giant difference in your massages and your health.

Just one thing to keep in mind, the less sleep you have shorter than eight hours a night - the more it affects your output. You have to look at the overall impact to see that falling asleep in front of the TV every night is not good for you!

You may be one of those people that can 'naturally' cope with very little sleep - but the rest of us need to make sure that we have a nightly 'oil change' to keep our minds in gear and working efficiently.

As you noticed, most of these don't take but a few minutes to do. It is the remembering to do them that is hard. Rest well.

Action Point:

How can you ensure that you have a decent amount of sleep every night?

Here are some ideas:

- Take a bath
- Use lavender essential oil on your pillow
- Dim the lights and close the curtains/blinds in your bedroom an hour before you want to go to sleep.
- Have "blackout" curtains or blinds installed in your bedroom so you can sleep without having light come into your bedroom waking you up too early (especially as we move from Winter into Spring).
- Soundproof your room as much as possible – turn the telephone ringer off.
- Get one of those "white noise" machines.
- Use ear plugs.
- Read a book before falling asleep. Just make sure it is not a book that is going to get you all revved up so that you have to stay up half of the night finishing it.
- Go to bed earlier...rather than getting up later. That way you can make the most of the beginning of the day...and begin achieving things before most people even get going!
- Listen to peaceful music.

Getting enough sleep is as essential to your success as the amount of work that you do.

Success Strategy #5 LEARNING

When is enough learning enough? There is so very much to learn you can never know it all.

So what should you be learning?

Good habits

Having good habits is almost as easy as having bad ones.

To ensure continuity with your clients, script each experience your client has during your time with them. Then revise this script until everything is just perfect. Then practice your script.

Good habits give grace automatically and save us from errors that hurt wallets.

Ask yourself the following questions:

1. How do I greet my client? Do I focus on them or is my attention on other things?
2. How do I take histories and other information? Do I listen and ask questions? Do I understand what they have written? If there are contraindications, how do I proceed?
3. How do I offer instructions and ask the questions that encourage the client to relax and be comfortable? Is my tone caring or demanding? Are my instructions brief, brisk and time dependent or consistent and through each time?
4. How do I perform the massage or bodywork? Am I focused on the client or am I thinking of food or other things?
5. How do I finish the massage or bodywork? Do I end the massage with a gentle ending or am I just happy to be finished?

6. How do I receive payment? When the money is handed to me what do I do with it and what is my expression? Am I uncomfortable accepting money or is the money a pleasant ending to an enjoyable and enjoyed massage?

7. How do get your clients to [rebook](#)? Do I ask when they want to come back or do I assume they will call?

8. How do I say goodbye? Do I indicate in some way that I am happy to have been with them and look forward to the next opportunity to serve them or am I already focusing on the next client?

Good work ethics

By establishing good habits, you will strengthen your work ethic. When you follow a script (a step-by-step way of doing things) you eliminate the common pitfalls that can damage your image and prevent loss of clients. Be consistent. Be on schedule. Be great. That's your job and you are good at it!

New massage techniques

Stress is the most frequent, serious health and beauty robbing complaint that clients bring to their practitioner. Any technique that helps reduce stress is an instant winner.

Out of the thousands of [continuing education courses](#) offered, find classes that blend well with what you already do or something that has a great interest for you.

New target marketing

Try expanding your [target market](#) -- perhaps men, baby boomers, and/or children.

Men

Men are an untapped segment of the massage market and are becoming comfortable using the benefits of massage for stress, pain and relaxation.

Baby boomers

Baby boomers are another overlooked market. There were actually 76 million births in the United States from 1946 to 1964, inclusive, the 19 years usually called the "baby boom."

Massage therapy is particularly valuable for the problems associated with growing older.

The benefits of massage encompass conditions that may arise with age, such as muscular stiffness, arthritis, tendonitis, bursitis, and respiratory problems such as asthma and emphysema.

Massage encourages circulation, decreases muscular stiffness, and helps to decrease inflammation that may rest in the joints. Massage can help provide the elderly with symptomatic relief and enable seniors to extend the vitality in their lives.

And they have the disposable income available and can benefit from massage.

Children

Children of all ages can benefit from massage. Have a class to show mothers how to do gentle massage for their children, or a class to show older (8 – 10 years) how to massage feet. Mothers will love you.

New tools and equipment

Learn the basics of [Feng Shui](#) to add [balance and harmony](#) to your facility and room. It really, really works!

Clients love new things whether it is new massage techniques, [spa treatments](#) or new retail items.

Try to add a new something every six months. It keeps things fresh and exciting.

Add-ons that Increase Revenue

Home care products. If you already use something your clients love (music, oils, lotions, etc.) have a few of each available for purchase. It is an impulse buy and you will be surprised how quickly these sales add up.

Create a signature treatment that is uniquely yours and turn your concept into a brand name and image.

Consider new trends using stones and energy. The newest trends are usually advertised a lot which increases public consciousness. So adding a trend can have \$\$ benefits if it blends with your current modalities.

Learn the basics of [Reflexology](#). It is a great way to enhance your business with very little expense or equipment. You can add a small bit to each massage and offer a full Reflexology treatment as part of your service menu.

Use The Internet for Learning

How much time do you spend on-line researching other massage practices or complimentary businesses? One hour per week? Two? You have at your disposal more information that can help you become successful than at any other point in history.

Yet - there are as many poor and unsuccessful people as there have always been. Why? Well, there are still as many lazy people as there have always been - that's why!

You know the 80-20 Rule. Twenty percent (20%) of anything whether it is business, people, make/do 80% of whatever (in this case make money, do the work).

I challenge you to be part of the 20%. Spend time on the internet – at least one hour per day. I probably spend on average 15-20 hours per week on the internet researching and reading – everything from evaluating other Web sites (not just Massage Web sites either), researching what is “hot” right now (it sparks ideas of new marketing

campaigns), and reading articles and eBooks (on everything from marketing to publicity to spiritual – basically anything I think that can help me build my business or improve as a person).

There are thousands of articles, Ebooks, courses and audios available for FREE on the Internet. The advice contained from a small cross-section alone would be more than enough to change you life. That's if you learned from it, of course!

And that's the problem. You put very little value on it because it is free.

BIG MISTAKE!

Action Point:

In what ways can use the no-cost resources available on the Internet to help you get to where you want to go?

Use the resources that are free to enable you to make better judgments when it comes to paying for information...and never underestimate the power of a well-written article by an 'unknown'!

Success Strategy #6 MARKETING

Marketing is an attitude. It requires work and it must be done almost daily. Every thing you do, say, and think when you are with a client is marketing . . . for your benefit or to your detriment.

Although marketing may seem mysterious, marketing can be summed up in one word – communication.

1. Be able to express clearly and concisely what you and your business do. Write it down and practice saying it. It should be about 30 words or less. You can be a verbal billboard for your business.
2. Make your business cards and brochures communicate your message. The first impression potential referrals may receive is often your business card or brochure. Use quality paper and colors that connect throughout your business. Business cards and brochures create your visual image.
3. Your brochure expands on the information on your business card and provides an opportunity to detail your strengths. It can serve as reference material, but it should also show the way to the solution to a problem you can solve. By offering benefits rather than features you answer the unspoken question of potential clients, “What do I gain by using this massage therapist as opposed to John Doe down the street?” This gets them to you. Your ability and skill keep them.
4. Leap into cyberspace! Having a presence on the Internet gives potential clients a chance to learn more about you and get comfortable with who you are even before they meet you. It is also a way for new people to discover you or even generate media coverage and free publicity. So if you don't have a Web site, create one. It doesn't have to be complex. Start out simple. Answer these questions in your Web site – Who? What? Where? When? How Much?

For more information on Web sites, read my book [Creating a Prosperous Practice. Spending Little or No Money Marketing.](#)

5. Perception is everything. Your clients' perceptions are not necessarily your reality. However, you do have to understand how your clients perceive your business. Keep your eyes and ears open for comments or clues about their perceptions. Read between the lines of what the client is saying to you. Or you can ask what they like best about your work and what would be of benefit to them. Or use a written survey, which I like because it gives a level of separation for honesty on their part, especially if the survey is anonymous. I have gotten my feelings hurt a couple of times, but on the whole, surveys have worked very well. Creating the quality perception is in your hands.

Know how you want your business to be perceived and effect any necessary changes to reconcile those differences. The things outside are easy to change. What needs to be changed inside requires greater effort.

There is a lot more to marketing than what is presented here. If you want to take your business to the next level, you need to become an expert on Marketing. In [Creating a Prosperous Practice, Spending Little or No Money Marketing](#), you will learn to create a Marketing Plan, and lots of low cost and no cost methods for marketing your business.

Success Strategy #7 FUN!

In Success Strategy #3 – Importance of Bodywork for Yourself, I talked about how we as therapists can become like one of our worst clients. We can become so focused on our business with all of the hats that we wear as Practitioner, Accountant, Marketer, Webmaster. You know the old adage, “All work and no play, makes you very dull.”

In order to avoid burnout, I suggest you do take time for yourself and have some fun. “FUN” is like “SUCCESS”. Everyone has their own definition for it. But allow me to give you some suggestions that will hopefully foster your own ideas of fun:

1. Have a picnic with your significant other
2. Go to the movies with your significant other
3. Take your kids to the movies
4. Play with your animals
5. Take a nap
6. Listen to music
7. Go shopping (If you don't have the money, don't go on a shopping spree but the purchase of a special item would be a nice thing to do for yourself.)
8. Do your hobby (Don't have a hobby? Take up one. Here are some of mine to get you thinking about what you might like to do. cooking, photography, making greeting cards, Creative Memories Scrap booking, dancing)
9. Play your favorite sport
10. Take up a new sport
11. Take a long walk
12. Go dancing

Another thought as I close this Success Strategy is that you must allow yourself a vacation.

I talk to so many Massage Therapists who haven't been on vacation in years. This is not good. We must allow ourselves downtime to relax, rejuvenate and re-group (I get some of my best business/ marketing ideas while on vacation or right after coming back).

You might be saying to yourself, “Yeah, that would be nice, but I can’t afford a vacation.” Whether it is a monetary issue or a feeling that you can’t be away from your clients, my answer to both, is that you can’t afford not to take a vacation.

Your clients go on vacation and expect that you will do the same. They will be there when you return.

Now, I will admit that my first year in business, I didn’t take a vacation and I worked 7 days a week and very long hours. My second year in business, I was only able to take a few mini vacations (3-5 days). By the third year, I was back to taking a couple of weeks a year. However, my last few years in my practice, I took between 4-7 weeks vacation per year and didn’t lose one client because of it. Planning is all you need.

As far as the monetary issue goes, there are lots of ways to take inexpensive vacations. How do you think that I can afford to go on 4-7 weeks vacation per year? You may want to look into the following:

- Renting a week timeshare on Web sites like e-Bay. A lot of times you can get very inexpensive weeks that way because people who own timeshares aren’t able to use one of their weeks so they usually just sell it for their yearly maintenance fee.
- House swap. There are lots of Web sites out there catering to people who want to swap their house for yours (some are free to join but some involve a fee to become a member.)
- Receive emails from last minute travel deal Web sites like www.TravelZoo.com. I get these emails weekly and you wouldn’t believe the incredible deals.

I have enjoyed writing these strategies for success. It is my wish that you can take the information present here and use it and assimilate it into your own life and massage practices. It may even lead to your success strategies.

If you like to share with me how you used the information here or other success strategies you have implemented, I would love to hear

from you. You can email me at
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To your success!

About the Author

Linda Steele is a trainer, consultant and successful business owner. Graduating from Marymount University with a B.B.A. in International Business, she has over 10 years of training, development and management expertise gained while working for DocuPro, a financial data company. She is an entrepreneur and business owner, serving as President/CEO of MassageWorks, Inc.

Linda has completed training to practitioner level in Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP – the technology of how people think, behave and achieve excellence) which provides an important grounding in the dynamics of personal change and achievement. She is a graduate of Tony Robbins' Mastery University.

She authored "Creating a Prosperous Practice Spending Little or No Money Marketing" published January 2004. She has been a massage therapist since March 2000. She is a member of ABMP.

Linda has now expanded her educational activities to share with other massage therapists and bodywork professionals the secrets of building and maintaining a thriving practice. She is an approved provider for NCBTMB for the following course: Ethics, Marketing, HotStone Massage, Reflexology, Reiki and Lypossage.