

The Practitioner-Entrepreneur Guide

Going from practitioner to entrepreneur without betraying your values

Julien Giraud · Psychology · Strategy · Action

> **Who this guide is for**
> You're a coach, therapist, psychologist, or independent consultant. You're excellent at what you do. But nobody in your training ever taught you how to make a living from it at the level of what you're worth. This guide is written for you — not for a generic entrepreneur, nor for a marketer disguised as a practitioner. For you, who wants to build a solid practice without losing the soul of what you do.

INTRODUCTION — The real problem

You don't have a marketing problem.

You have an entrepreneurial identity problem.

Most independent practitioners who struggle to grow their practice don't lack skills. They lack a framework for integrating two identities that seem contradictory: the practitioner, focused on the other person, on ethics, on the relationship — and the entrepreneur, visible, assertive, results-oriented.

This tension is real. It's not in your head. It's in your training.

You were taught to support people. Not to build a business.

This guide is an attempt to fill that gap — not with marketing techniques imported from the corporate world, but with an approach rooted in psychology and in respect for who you are.

PART 1 — Understanding what's really holding you back

1.1 Entrepreneurial impostor syndrome

Impostor syndrome is well documented in the helping professions. But it takes a particular form among independent practitioners: it isn't "I'm not competent enough at my job," it's "I'm not legitimate enough to sell myself."

This nuance is fundamental. You can be an excellent therapist and freeze the moment you have to state your rates. You can support your clients with rare depth and still not know how to explain what you do in two sentences.

That's not incompetence. It's an incomplete professional identity.

What you're probably feeling:

- Discomfort at the idea of "selling yourself"
- A sense that talking about yourself is a form of arrogance
- Rates set below your real value out of fear of rejection
- Difficulty turning away clients who aren't aligned
- A sense that commercial success betrays something essential about your profession

What it really means:
None of these feelings is a character flaw. They're responses conditioned by a training that valued self-effacement, absolute altruism, and distrust of anything that looks like selling.

1.2 The most common limiting beliefs

"I can't charge much because people who need help don't have money"

This belief mixes up two separate things: your ethics (helping those who need it) and your business model (keeping your practice alive). You can have an

ethical pricing policy AND charge what you're worth. They're two separate decisions.

"If I do marketing, I'll become someone I'm not"

Ethical marketing isn't manipulation. It's clarity. Explaining precisely what you do, for whom, and with what results — that's respecting the intelligence of your potential clients.

"Good practitioners don't need to sell themselves — word of mouth is enough"

Word of mouth is an excellent source of clients. But it isn't enough to build a stable practice and to choose your clients. And it only really works if you're first very clear about what you do and for whom.

"I need to take more training before I really launch"

This is the most sophisticated form of procrastination. One more training won't fix an entrepreneurial identity problem. It can even make it worse by delaying the moment you take action.

1.3 The dual identity: practitioner AND entrepreneur

The real transformation isn't becoming an entrepreneur instead of a practitioner. It's integrating both.

A practitioner-entrepreneur:

- Supports clients with the depth and ethics of a practitioner
- Positions and structures their practice with the clarity of an entrepreneur
- Knows that their impact also depends on their economic viability
- Understands that paying themselves properly is a condition for their work to last

This integration doesn't happen overnight. It takes work on beliefs, on posture, and on concrete decisions. That's exactly what this guide sets out to explore.

PART 2 — Building your foundation (Psychology)

2.1 Knowing your real strengths

Not your degrees. Not your certifications. Your strengths.

A strength, in the positive psychology sense, is a natural way of being that gives you energy when you express it. It's different from a learned skill (which you can master without ever really thriving).

Exercise — Your three strengths as a practitioner

Answer these questions in writing:

1. At what moments in my work do I lose track of time?
2. What types of clients or situations call on what I do best?
3. What do my clients say about their experience with me — in their own words?
4. What do I do naturally that other practitioners find difficult?
5. What do I always come back to, even when I try other approaches?

The answers to these 5 questions outline your real strengths. They're what should sit at the heart of your positioning.

2.2 Clarifying your non-negotiable values

Your professional values aren't what you want them to be — they're what you're willing to defend even when it's uncomfortable.

Exercise — Your red lines

Answer these questions:

1. What would I never do, even if it made me money?
2. What type of client do I turn down — and why?
3. What bothers me about the way some colleagues practice?
4. What do my best clients have in common — in the way they are, not in their problem?

These answers define the ethical framework of your practice. They'll allow you to make aligned positioning choices — and never feel like you're betraying

yourself by being an entrepreneur.

2.3 Your relationship with money

Money is one of the most loaded topics for practitioners. It deserves to be explored honestly.

Questions to explore:

- What was the first sentence you told yourself when you read the word "money" in this guide?
- What did you hear about money in the family you grew up in?
- What do you believe (truly, not rationally) about people who make a good living in the helping professions?
- If you charged double your current rates, what do you think would happen?

There are no right answers. But there are honest answers — and they're the starting point for a healthier, more aligned relationship with money.

PART 3 — Building your positioning (Strategy)

3.1 Positioning — what it really is

Positioning isn't a slogan. It isn't a marketing niche. It's the precise answer to three questions:

1. **For whom?** — Who specifically is your work for?
2. **For what?** — What real problem do you solve — not the symptom, the source?
3. **Why you?** — What makes your approach different from that of other competent practitioners?

Strong positioning doesn't exclude — it attracts. When you're very clear about who you work for, the people who recognize themselves come to you with an intention already formed. You no longer have to convince — you only have to confirm.

3.2 Defining your ideal client

Not an imaginary marketing persona. A real person — or a profile built from your best past clients.

Exercise — Portrait of your ideal client

Think of your best client — the one with whom the work was the deepest, the most fulfilling, and the most transformative.

Answer these questions about them:

Situation

- What is their profession, their professional context?
- How long have they been practicing?
- What is their current income level?

Problem

- What exact words did they use to describe their problem when you first spoke?
- What had they already tried before coming to you?
- What kept them from solving this problem on their own?

Motivation

- Why did they choose to work with you specifically?
- What result were they hoping for — in their words?
- What result did they get — in their words?

Psychology

- What were their fears before starting?
- What convinced them to take the leap?
- How would they describe their experience to a friend?

This portrait is the basis for everything — your message, your content, your sales page, your discovery calls.

3.3 Putting what you do into words

A good positioning statement follows this structure:

I help [who] to [concrete result] through [your difference].

Examples:

- "I help independent therapists build a stable practice aligned with their values, through work on entrepreneurial posture and the psychology of performance."
- "I help certified coaches step out of invisibility and attract aligned clients, without ever feeling like they're selling themselves."

What it isn't:

- "I support people who want to feel better" — too vague
- "I'm an ICF-certified coach with 10 years of experience" — that's you, not them
- "I help people find their potential" — says nothing about the real problem

Exercise — Your positioning statement

Write 5 different versions. Read them out loud. Keep the one that makes you say, "Yes, that's exactly it."

3.4 Building your offer

A clear offer answers these five questions:

1. **What?** — What does the client concretely receive?
2. **How?** — What's the format — one-on-one sessions, group, hybrid?
3. **How long?** — How long does the program last?
4. **What result?** — What's different for the client at the end?
5. **At what price?** — And why is that price fair?

The most common mistake: offering single sessions

Single sessions create a transactional relationship and unstable income, and they make any in-depth work impossible. If your work involves lasting transformation, your offer needs a duration consistent with that transformation.

The core offer rule:
One single flagship product or program. Clear, complete, at a price you fully own. Everything else is secondary.

3.5 Setting your rates

The basic formula:

> Rate = (What you need to live on) ÷ (Number of clients you can support properly)

Example: You need $4,000/month. You can optimally support 8 individual clients per month. Your base rate: $500/month per client.

This isn't your ceiling at all — it's your floor.

Pricing mistakes to avoid:

- Copying colleagues' rates without analysis
- Lowering your rates to "be accessible" *(it doesn't solve the accessibility problem and it devalues your work)*
- Offering discounts before anyone even asks
- Never raising your rates, even after years of additional experience

The golden rule:
Your rate should allow you to give the best of yourself. A rate that's too low breeds resentment. An aligned rate creates commitment on both sides.

PART 4 — Taking action without sabotaging yourself (Action)

4.1 Deciding under uncertainty

One of an entrepreneur's most important skills is the ability to decide without having all the information. Practitioners, trained in analysis and caution, often struggle with this zone of discomfort.

The over-preparation trap:

There's no perfect moment. There's no extra training that will make you "ready enough." There's no perfect website to build before you launch.

There are imperfect actions that create real information — and that information lets you adjust.

The 70% rule:
When you're 70% ready, it's time to act. You'll learn the remaining 30% by

doing.

4.2 Managing emotions in sales situations

Most practitioners experience discovery calls or sales conversations as moments of evaluation — "Am I good enough?" That's the wrong frame.

The right frame:

A discovery call is a conversation of mutual qualification. You assess whether you can truly help this person. They assess whether they want to work with you. Both are legitimate. Neither is in a position of superiority or inferiority.

The most common emotions and what they signal:

Emotion	What it signals	What to do with it
Fear of rejection	Identity tied to the outcome of the call	Separate your worth from the outcome of the conversation
Guilt about stating a price	Belief that money contradicts helping	Work on your relationship with value
Urgency to convince	Fear of not having enough clients	Diversify your sources of prospects
Relief when someone says no	Fear of not measuring up	Explore what's fueling that doubt

4.3 Leadership in the client relationship

Being an entrepreneur in the helping professions also means knowing how to hold a clear frame with your clients, including when it's uncomfortable.

What leadership in the client relationship involves:

- Turning down a client who isn't aligned with your approach, even if you need the income
- Stating your rates without apologizing

- Ending a program when it needs to end, without stretching it out for fear of the void
- Telling the truth to a client who isn't progressing, even if it's hard to hear
- Upholding your terms and conditions, even under pressure

This isn't rigidity. It's respect — for yourself and for your client.

A client who doesn't respect your frame won't fully benefit from your support. A practitioner who gives in on everything out of fear burns out and loses the ability to be truly useful.

4.4 Building aligned visibility

Visibility isn't promotion. It's service rendered in advance.

The principle of ethical visibility:
Every piece of content you publish should bring real value to someone: a reflection, a tool, a new perspective. This isn't a content strategy. It's a way of being consistent between what you do in session and what you share with the world.

Choose ONE channel

LinkedIn for professionals. Instagram for the general public. A newsletter for a deeper relationship. A podcast for people who like to listen. YouTube for people who like to watch.

No one channel is better than the others. There's one that suits you. Choose it, commit to it for at least 6 months, and measure the results before diversifying.

The useful content rule:

- 60% educational content: what you know and what your ideal client needs to know
- 30% positioning content: your point of view, the stands you take
- 10% conversion content: what you offer and how to contact you

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4.5 Word of mouth, on purpose

Word of mouth can't be managed — but it can be prepared.

What you can do concretely:

- Ask every satisfied client for a testimonial at the end of the program

- Clearly explain to your current clients the profile of people you could help
- Thank people for referrals and qualify them
- Create a simple system so referrals turn into clients (a clear contact page, quick replies, a structured discovery call)

PART 5 — Building for the long term

5.1 Avoiding solo-practitioner burnout

Burnout among independent practitioners often has three sources:

1. A one-to-one-only model
When every dollar earned depends on an hour spent with a client, there's no leverage. The practice can't grow without you working more. The solution: gradually bring in group formats or self-paced resources.

2. No peers
Practicing alone with no space for supervision or exchange with colleagues creates an isolation that erodes both the quality of your work and your motivation. It isn't a luxury — it's a professional necessity.

3. Confusing your practice with your worth
When your identity is entirely tied to your practice, every lost client, every hard month, every criticism becomes an existential threat. Building a solid identity outside your practice protects you against this kind of burnout.

5.2 Milestones of a healthy practice

Stage 1 — Clarity

- Positioning defined and tested
- A clear core offer with a price you fully own
- 3 to 5 clients supported
- First testimonials
- One active visibility channel

Stage 2 — Expansion

- Clients who come to you without you looking for them
- Stable income that covers your needs

- A well-oiled discovery call system
- Starting to think about complementary formats (group, resources)

Stage 3 — Sovereignty

- You choose your clients
- You turn down what doesn't fit, without guilt
- You have a clear vision of where you're going
- Your practice nourishes you financially AND humanly

5.3 Questions to ask yourself regularly

Every quarter, take the time to answer these questions:

About your practice

- Do my current clients match my ideal client?
- Do my rates cover my needs and reflect my value?
- Does my model allow me to rest, keep learning, have a life?

About you

- Do I get up in the morning wanting to go to work?
- Do I have spaces for supervision or exchange with peers?
- Do I feel I'm growing as a practitioner AND as an entrepreneur?

About your vision

- Three years from now, what does my ideal practice look like?
- Are my current decisions bringing me closer to that vision or further from it?
- What do I need to start, continue, stop?

CONCLUSION — Integration

Going from practitioner to entrepreneur doesn't require choosing between the two. It requires integrating both.

Integration isn't a state you reach once and for all. It's ongoing work on your beliefs, your posture, your decisions. It's exactly what successful practitioner-

entrepreneurs do to build a solid practice without losing what brought them to this work in the first place.

You came into this work to help. To truly help. Sustainably.

For that, your practice has to hold up. It has to be viable, clear, and carried by someone who respects themselves enough to set fair rates, turn down what isn't aligned, and keep learning.

That's what it means to be a practitioner-entrepreneur.

This guide is the foundation of PSA coaching — Psychology · Strategy · Action. If you want to go further with an outside perspective: julien-giraud.com

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