

Adopting a competence-based approach to help achieve excellence in independent healthcare

How Skills for Health's competences helped a small physiotherapy practice in the independent healthcare sector become more professional – at the same time enabling the owner to create a blueprint for franchising the business across the UK, resulting in being earmarked by HSBC as 'The franchise to watch in 2008'.

Established in 1998, Therapyworks is a physiotherapy service based in the Vale of Glamorgan. Registered with all major private health insurance companies, each of Therapyworks' physiotherapists are Chartered practitioners and members of the Health Professionals Councils. Many work in the NHS as well as being employed in private practice at Therapyworks and the majority hold post-graduate qualifications in their areas of expertise.

Services offered at the centre include most forms of manual therapy; sports injury management; electrotherapy; acupuncture and other techniques.

Business Need

Therapyworks' owner, Hywel Griffiths, is looking to expand his successful physiotherapy practice through a franchising model – opening in excess of 50 Therapyworks franchises across the UK within the next five years.

In Hywel's experience, many physiotherapists working in the NHS would be interested in being involved in private practice, but they are unsure how to go about it. Hywel originally came from an NHS background and had to learn by his own mistakes when he started his own practice. His goal is to help other physiotherapists make a smoother transition into private practice – ensuring they have the right tools to help them be successful.

Challenges

- Therapyworks operates within a sector that is heavily bound by professional regulations.
- The practice is staffed by time-pressed professionals who split their time between working for the NHS and working at Therapyworks.
- Whilst clinically excellent, Therapyworks' specialists may not necessarily have all the business skills required for private practice.
- Therapyworks had limited existing knowledge of current best practice – in physiotherapy and in business.

The Solution

Having established Therapyworks' business objectives, Skills for Health suggested a five step process:

Step 1 – break down day-to-day tasks into competences and core competences. This should cover all areas, including PR and marketing; meeting and greeting people at reception; arranging appointments for treatment; dealing with insurance companies; processing payments; and doing the banking and book-keeping – in each case examining every aspect of how each individual job is best done.

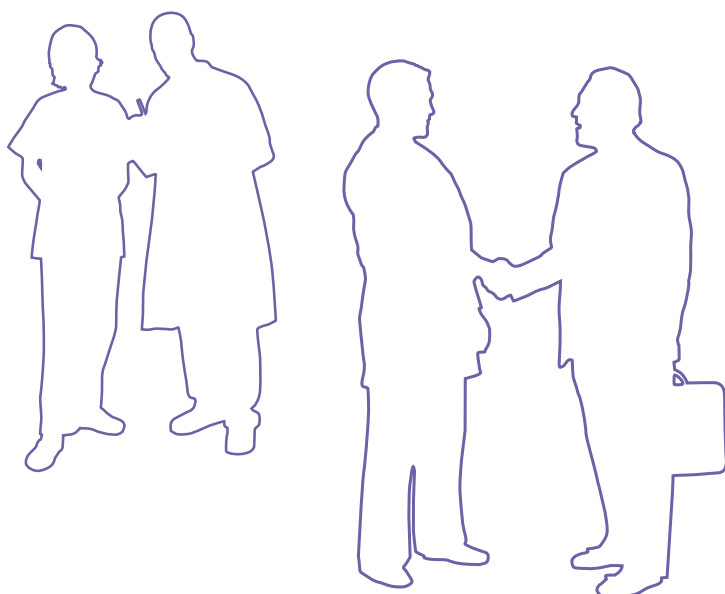
Step 2 – identify best practice; both inside the NHS in relation to clinical skills and competences for Therapyworks' specialists and outside the NHS in terms of best practice for small to medium sized enterprises. The former should cover all the technical aspects required by physiotherapists and the latter should examine topics such as communication, sales, marketing, administration and finance.

Step 3 – map relevant Skills for Health competences and those from other sectors with the practice requirements – creating a competence matrix for each area.

Step 4 – create an 'operations manual' to record all the above for future reference.

Step 5 – review, review, review! Processes should be constantly reviewed and refined to ensure that the business is always improving and staying ahead of the competition.

Completing the above process with Therapyworks took around six to nine months.



The Benefits

Therapyworks identified a number of benefits from working with Skills for Health to adopt a competence-based approach to business growth:

- It made the existing business more professional and provided a formal structure that can be easily replicated.
- It resulted in a set of clearly identified competences which are tailored to the needs of each area of the business.
- It informed the creation of an operations manual which defines all aspects of the business.
- It increased staff confidence and commitment and assisted in staff development.
- It helped improve services and patient care.
- It enabled the development of a structured franchise opportunity which will allow others to start their own physiotherapy practices.
- It established a framework to allow the business to make the most of new opportunities as commissioning procedures evolve and NHS contracts are opened up to private service providers.
- The use of competences and the backing of Skills for Health gave Therapyworks more credibility and led to HSBC providing financial backing and naming Therapyworks 'The franchise to watch in 2008!'

“ Prior to contacting Skills for Health I had felt very much alone. They have been absolutely fantastic in sharing their knowledge of competences and best practice and were extremely supportive throughout the entire process. They could have just told me to speak to the DTi and left me to it, but they went out of their way to help.

Working with Skills for Health has made Therapyworks more professional. It also gave our business plan added credibility as far as our investors were concerned. It helped to give us a proper structure to the existing practice and has provided a blueprint that we can now replicate as we open up Therapyworks franchises across the UK. ”

Hywel Griffiths, founder, Therapyworks



Looking to the Future

A successful franchise is repeatable and systems led – ensuring quality and consistency. Therapyworks is currently working towards making its operations manual available online within an easy to operate interactive environment. The vision is that physiotherapists working for the business around the UK will have access to their own online portfolio so they can map their own skills and identify where they need additional learning resources.

Not only will this approach demonstrate to potential Therapyworks franchisees that the business is compliant, it will also illustrate that great emphasis is placed on franchisee development. The ultimate aim is business success for Therapyworks' franchisees, coupled with the best possible patient care.

Skills for Health has developed a bank of national workforce competences which describe the skills and knowledge required to carry out a task or function effectively. They are designed to underpin and be integral to accredited and non-accredited education and training programmes. Since competences describe what individuals need to know and do, whoever is performing the task, they can be used in many different ways.



Skills for Health is the Sector Skills Council for the UK health sector, encompassing the National Health Service, independent healthcare providers and voluntary organisations. Its purpose is to implement solutions that can deliver a skilled and flexible workforce to improve health and healthcare.

Use the interactive guides to find out more about competences and how to use them at: www.skillsforhealth.org.uk