

FIVE PATHS TO SUCCESS FOR PSYCHICS AND PSYCHIC ENTERTAINERS

by Richard Webster [©2008]

I've spent most of my life working in the psychic field. Every now and again, someone asks me what he or she should do to achieve major success as a psychic or psychic entertainer. Funnily enough, it took me years to think along those lines myself. I started out doing whatever it took to make enough money to keep my family housed and fed. It was only once I'd been working in this field for some time that I began to think about setting goals, creating a business plan, and running my enterprise as a business. I finally came up with five pathways to success. I hope one or more of them might be your path to success.

I live in a small market, which means that I've always had to be a generalist. Consequently, I've worked in all five areas. I've no idea if I would have done the same if I'd lived in a larger market. In the early 1980s I had ten business cards: magician, psychic entertainer, stage hypnotist, hypnotherapist, pianist, Brookfield Press (publishers of books on poetry and New Zealand history), Brookings Agencies (distributors of Tarot cards, crystal balls, and occult books), palmist, horoscope parties, and ghostwriter (writing books for other people). It was almost like, "Take a card, any card." I was always aware that if I'd devoted myself fulltime to any one of these activities, I'd have probably made more money, but I have a low boredom threshold and enjoy the stimulation and excitement of having several things on the go at the same time.

I've had my share of ups and downs making my living this way, but most of the time I've done exactly what I wanted to do. However, I must admit the two happiest moments in my working life were when I stopped performing children's magic shows for sports clubs, and when I stopped reading palms. I did both of these for years, because I needed the money. When I no longer needed to accept every gig that came my way was a definite high spot in my career. The magic shows for sports clubs in my market meant being a babysitter for a hundred rowdy kids aged between 5 and 15. The parents usually drank beer while I performed and enjoyed their kids' efforts to disrupt the show. I enjoyed reading palms at one time, but I did too many for too many years and eventually burned myself out.

There are, in my opinion, five main ways to achieve success in the psychic field: performing, teaching and speaking, giving readings, becoming a bizarre magician, and marketing yourself as a genuine psychic.

Suggested reading:

THE PSYCHIC BUSINESS

KING OF THE SMALL TOWNS

PLAN FOR SUCCESS: A Business Plan for Magicians

PITCH BOOKS: How to make extra money selling books after your show

Performing

This is where the true psychic entertainers are. The other areas can be improved with the addition of entertainment flair, but your audiences will consider you a psychic, rather than a psychic entertainer. A psychic entertainer performs mentalism in a variety of venues. These range from close-up all the way

to trade shows and theatres. For several years I performed close-up mentalism at the Stamford Plaza Hotel in Auckland. It was at the time our only five-star hotel, and I was paid extremely well. It was also a useful way of obtaining bookings for a wide variety of other work. Over the years I also performed mentalism in people's homes (home psychic parties), at conventions, theatres (with a one-man show), corporate events, social clubs, and night clubs.

Stage hypnotism shows always made me more money than anything else in the performing field. Although the prospect of performing a hypnotism show might seem intimidating if you haven't done one before, they are in fact very easy to do. However, I suggest you take a reputable hypnotherapy course first. I didn't, and had to learn the hard way. It's a good investment to learn the basics properly, and then you can always set up a part-time hypnotherapy practice to provide cash flow during the quiet times.

As I lived in a small market I couldn't rely on mentalism or hypnotism shows for a fulltime living, unless I was prepared to spend my entire life on the road. When people ask my wife and me how long we've been married, I usually reply: "Thirty-five years, but it's actually twenty-five as I'm away so much." Sadly, this is probably true. In the early years, in particular, I used to spend a huge amount of time on the road. It's okay when you're single, but it's not much fun when you're married.

You can make a good, comfortable living as a performer, but only a few people can turn that into a fortune. Kreskin, is, I would imagine, an example of someone who has. If you want to retire rich, you probably need to pursue one of the other paths as well, or instead.

Suggested reading:

ENTERTAINING MENTALISM

LADIES NIGHTS

HOME PSYCHIC PARTIES FOR FUN AND PROFIT

PENDULUM POWER FOR THE PSYCHIC ENTERTAINER

PSYCHOMETRY FROM A TO Z

COLD READING FOR THE MAGICIAN

Teaching

I got into teaching psychic development classes by accident. I lost most of my money in the stock market crash of 1987. We had to move to a cheaper home, and take out a mortgage again. Also, at that time, virtually all of the more lucrative performing gigs dried up, and I was struggling to bring up a family and pay a large mortgage as a children's entertainer, psychic reader, and Ginsu knife demonstrator. Not one of the high points in my life. I placed a small advertisement in the local giveaway paper advertising psychic development classes in the hope of earning enough money to pay my mortgage that month. I achieved that easily, and was amazed at how popular these classes were, right from the start. The first classes were held in my recreation room at home, but I had to move them to a local community centre to cater for all the people who wanted to attend. I expanded into other classes — palmistry, numerology, auras, memory training, etc. — and then started offering one-day workshops — past life regressions and astral travel seminars. If my writing career hadn't taken off, I'd still be doing these, as there is a steady demand for them all the time.

There is also a steady demand for good speakers on psychic topics. At one time I offered a talk to business groups on how they could use their intuition to become more effective executives. I discovered that people pay much more money to hear someone speak than they will to watch someone perform. The hours are better, too, as most talks are in the daytime. If you specialize in business conventions, you get to spend time in luxurious resorts as well.

You can even make money giving free talks to clubs and organisations in your area. Your talk is an opportunity to sell your other services (shows, private readings, workshops, seminars, books you've written, products you've created, etc.). It's a good way to increase your speaking skills, and gain visibility in your marketplace.

After dinner speaking is another lucrative field. I still do several of these a year (a humorous talk on graphology) because they are so much fun to do. You need to be funny and entertaining to become successful as an after dinner speaker.

Suggested reading:

MONEY-MAKING PSYCHIC DEVELOPMENT CLASSES

THE ASTRAL TRAVEL WORKSHOP

CASHING IN ON PAST LIVES

USING YOUR INTUITIVE EDGE FOR FUN AND PROFIT

HOW TO MAKE MONEY GIVING FREE TALKS

Private Readings

I've already mentioned how I burned myself out doing too many of these. There is a steady, consistent demand for private readings all the time. Everyone has problems in their lives, and many people turn to psychic readers in the hope of seeing a happier future, or at least a way out of their current difficulties. The problem I found is that you never deal with happy, upbeat, positive people as they are understandably consumed with their problems. Many of them want to lean on you for the rest of their lives. You can make a reasonable living as a psychic reader, but if you're going to do that, you should definitely offer readings as an entertainment, as well.

Another possibility is to advertise private readings by mail. This used to be extremely lucrative, and is still possible today. However, with so many free readings available over the Internet, plus thousands of people trying to sell paid readings, I doubt if it would be as lucrative today as it used to be.

Cold reading skills are not enough. I can't believe a lot of the rubbish that's been written on this subject over the last decade. It's obvious these authors have never made a living as a psychic reader. In many cases, I doubt if they've ever given a paid reading.

You need to learn a system, such as the Tarot, palmistry, or numerology. These are all systems that the general public is familiar with. Find a system that you like, practice it, and start giving readings. Tell people you're learning and give free sixty-second readings. Gradually lengthen them as you learn more. Before you know it, you'll be able to give full-length readings whenever you wish. It takes time and effort, but once you've got it down, you'll have a skill that you can use for the rest of your life.

Once you've learned a system, learn another. The second system needs to be an unusual or uncommon method of giving a reading. Paper readings, flower readings, knee readings, and banana readings are all good examples. This means you'll be able to offer something that no one else in your market can. This will differentiate you from all the other readers in your area. Naturally, most of the time you'll be giving palm or Tarot readings, but every now and again you'll be able to do, say, a banana reading. This will please the people who are looking for something different, and will also start people talking about you and your psychic reading talents.

You can differentiate yourself in other ways, too. You might use a pendulum to clarify a point in your readings. You might teach your client how to use the pendulum and determine the answer to her question herself.

Suggested reading:

HOW TO BUILD UP A PSYCHIC PRACTICE WITH FULL LENGTH COLD READINGS
COLD READING THE FUTURE WITH NUMEROLOGY
COLD READING VARIATIONS (good for choosing a second system)
AURA READING FOR FUN AND PROFIT
THE MAIL ORDER PSYCHIC
GEMSTONE READING FOR PROFIT by Hobrinn

Readings as Entertainment

This is a highly lucrative occupation, and it amazes me that more people don't do it. If I had my time over again, I'd forget about private readings and specialize in readings for entertainment.

Entertainment readings are brief (3–5 minute) readings conducted in a social setting, such as parties, corporate functions, hotels, and resorts. As the readings are considered part of the entertainment they need to be positive, cheerful, and happy. Palmistry and Tarot seem to be the most popular types of readings, but you can offer almost anything, as long as you can get through a large number of people quickly.

When I did this there'd usually be magicians performing close-up magic as part of the entertainment. They'd be paid about a quarter of what I received, and once their time was up they were finished. Almost always, I'd be held over for another hour or two to try to cater for the demand. I always worked on my own. However, if I were doing it today, I'd employ a team of readers. That way I could have several readers at larger functions, and make money from all of them. I would also be able to cover several functions in the same evening. Sheila Lyon and Mark Sherman, two enterprising psychic readers from the Pacific Northwest, have devised a method of performing group readings, and can entertain hundreds of people in one night on their own.

I keep saying I hate giving readings. That's not always true. I still enjoy giving brief readings in a social setting (when I'm getting well paid), or if it helps me sell books. A few months ago, I spent an enjoyable — and incredibly lucrative — two days giving flower readings at a flower show. Since then, I've had several phone calls from people wanting me to do flower readings for their functions. One of them was determined to have me at almost any price, so I have an extremely lucrative few hours coming up in a couple of weeks. The demand is certainly there, and if my writing career suddenly ended, I'd be pursuing this field in earnest.

Suggested reading:

READINGS AS ENTERTAINMENT
QUICK AND EFFECTIVE COLD READING
QUICK READINGS WITH NUMEROLOGY
COLD READING VARIATIONS
ASTROLOGY FOR THE PSYCHIC ENTERTAINER
YOU ARE A RAINBOW! (tick sheet)

Bizarre Magick

This is a difficult field to make money in, but a few people have been extremely successful in it. Sybil Leek is a good example. For many years she was the “face” of Wicca (then called witchcraft) in the United States. She made a fortune from her readings, more than sixty books on a variety of psychic topics, and her public appearances. She played the part to the hilt, appearing in public with a flowing

cape, loose gowns, and a pet jackdaw called Mr Hotfoot Jackson who sat on her shoulder. She also wore a crystal necklace that had been left to her by her psychic Russian grandmother.

Other examples are Anton La Vey, founder of the Church of Satan, and Aleister Crowley. All highly colourful characters.

Séances would be a logical thing for bizarre magicians to present. You might offer re-enactments of traditional séances or conduct genuine séances. One person I know was left a fortune by an elderly lady who regularly attended his séances. I love séances, but they are not for me. I giggle far too easily.

Ghost walks and haunted houses are another good area a bizzarist could explore. Two young entrepreneurs are currently doing well in my city with a haunted house. They provide dinner, followed by a tour of the house in which all sorts of frightening things occur. They started out offering this one night a week, but it has now turned into a seven-day-week business.

The main problem for me in making a fortune as a bizarre magician is the necessity to always be “on.” You can never take off your mask and be a regular guy. That is also a problem with the final path.

Suggested reading:

THE PSYCHIC BUSINESS

KING OF THE SMALL TOWNS

Genuine Psychic

This is the hardest, but potentially most lucrative, path. You need to declare yourself a psychic, and live with that twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, year after year. I’m sure you’ve seen people on TV communicating with the dead and providing messages for the living. They’re following this path. I’m not discussing ethics in this article, as I want to provide an overview of the different ways it is possible to make money in this field. (I’ve written about ethics at great length in my books.)

Entertainment comes into everything we’ve mentioned so far, but being a genuine psychic transcends that. I would never want the burden of being “psychic” all the time. Early in my career I worked small towns with a one-man psychic show and presented myself as a genuine psychic. (Incidentally, I happen to believe that I’m psychic. I believe you are, too. We all experience hunches, feelings, flashes of intuition every now and again.) Anyway, I found being labelled a psychic far too heavy to carry. I’ve met several high-flying psychics, and virtually all of them have told me how hard it is to be “on” twenty-fours a day. Once I gave up the psychic label, my shows improved enormously. They became much more entertaining, and incidentally, more commercial. I had more fun, too, as I didn’t have to claim or prove anything. I wish you all the luck in the world if you want to pursue this particular path. It wasn’t the right path for me, but it might be for you.

Well, those are the five paths as I see them. I’m sure there are more. If you find fame and fortune in this field following any of these, or a different path, I’d love to hear about it.

If you're interested in any of my books on the subject, the best place to go is Doug Dymment's fascinating Web site: <http://www.deceptionary.com>.

Unfortunately, there is very little information in print on how to become a psychic superstar. Here are a few other books that will help you on your path:

THE SHIELDS EFFECT by Tony 'Doc' Shiels. The subtitle: "How to Become a Psychic Superstar" says it all. This book is essential reading, and until recently was very hard to find. Fortunately, it has been republished by Adventures In Astonishment, 49 Mercury Building, Aytoun Street, Manchester M1 3BL, United Kingdom. Their Web site is: <http://www.theshielseffect.com>.

THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MENTALISM by Robert Nelson. This book was originally published in 1944, but there is still plenty in it to make it worth studying. Track down a copy of the revised edition (1967), originally published by Nelson Enterprises, and later by Micky Hades.

THE MENTAL MYSTERIES AND OTHER WRITINGS OF WILLIAM W. LARSEN, SR. The chapter on working resort hotels is worth the price of the book. Published by The Genii Publishing Company, 1977.

MAXIMUM ENTERTAINMENT by Ken Weber. This book can transform you from a competent performer into a superstar. I have watched the author turn average performances into works of art. Published in 2003 by Ken Weber Productions, 1983 Marcus Ave. #221, Lake Success, NY 11042. His Web site is: <http://www.ken-weber.com>.

GYPSIES GO ROVING, THE BOOK OF ROVING, and STAND-UP DIVINATION by Sheila Lyon and Mark Sherman. This trilogy details their methods for giving quick palmistry (and other) readings to large groups of people. Highly recommended.

Obviously, you'll have to study everything you can find on the path you choose. Also read as many motivational books as possible, as well as books on business planning, sales skills, goal setting, business promotion, and every other aspect of running a business. It wouldn't hurt to read some books on investment either, as you'll have plenty of these when you become a psychic superstar.

This is one of a series of occasional essays produced by Richard Webster, 8 Napa Court, Shamrock Park, Manukau 2016, New Zealand (esp@psychic.co.nz).

This reprint of Richard Webster's essay courtesy of

Doug Dymment

www.deceptionary.com

