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Avery's "Corporate Touch" is the Bottom Line in Stress Management

"How you run your body is how you run your business. That's the bottom line."

That's also the corporate concept for Brother Suzanne L. Avery's new business venture, Corporate Touch Massage Therapy Professionals. Avery says the parallel first came to her, a new graduate, while sitting at her desk in her first career as a production planner in Indianapolis, Indiana.

A 1981 graduate from Indiana University School of Business with a degree in marketing/management, Avery was initiated into Alpha Pi Chapter. Her career path began in production and inventory control and included office/marketing management for a CPA firm, trade brokering in Chicago, Jazzercise Franchisee and now founder/director of Corporate Touch. They all have in common "how you run your body is how you run your business..."

What is it that Corporate Touch provides? Namely, stress management for bodies in business. The primary service is on-site therapeutic, seated massage although other services such as conflict resolution are available to individual businesses as well.

What is "seated" massage? And why on-site? Seated massage or "chair" massage is just that—a 15-20 minute back, neck, arms, hands, shoulders and head massage utilizing a special, ergonomically designed massage chair. It involves no table, sheets or oils and takes

place directly through clothing.

"Most often it takes place in the conference room or an extra office," says Avery, "although we have also been in kitchen/break rooms and hallways. People tend to not mind where we set up, but are just glad to partake."

The convenience of being on-site is a big drawing card although Corporate Touch Massage Therapy Professionals are also found in coffee shops, Nordstrom stores and salons. This not only accommodates the general public for those aches and pains we all get, but is conducive to the business professional with a home office, including stay-at-home moms.

"One thing I've noticed with our sites is also the convenience. A person may be hurting and/or not able to turn their head as freely as normal, but the pain isn't quite bad enough for them to make an appointment for massage therapy," said Avery. "With the ease of popping into the coffee shop when they're already out running errands or on their lunch hour, they are much more likely to stop and do something about it."

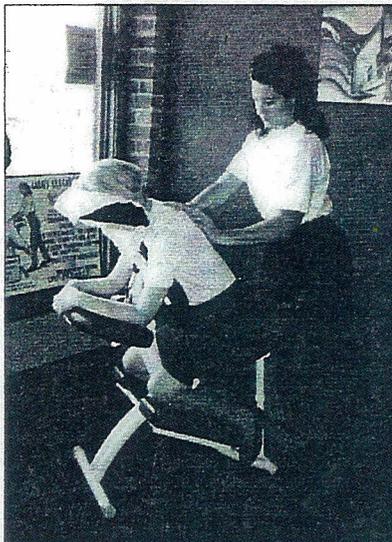
"Therapeutic massage helps maintain overall health and well-being, clears the mind, improves focus and invigorates," says Avery. It also assists in reducing heart rate and blood pressure, increase blood circulation, lymph flow and endorphins, the body's natural painkillers. "It simply helps to reduce stress and 80 percent of disease is stress related," says Avery. The bottom line is healthy workers = lower health care costs = increased productivity and profits.

In addition to the physi-

ological benefits, Avery believes Corporate Touch services also are a reminder to stand still. "It's like trying to run a business without a business plan," she says. "You can do it, but not for long. Our bodies are much the same way. You can override them, but not forever. On-site massage won't disrupt your workday, yet provides an alternative to a coffee break and takes about the same amount of time."

When asked what is the hardest part about running her business, Avery quite honestly admits, "Practicing what I preach. If I'm not running my body the way I want my business to run, then watch out! There are going to be delays and mishaps. The one thing probably we all can remember being shocked about in business is that many were not run according to our textbooks. After seeing so much reactive management, especially in manufacturing, I realized there is a time to stand still instead of waiting for a standstill."

Avery is a lifetime



Suzanne L. Avery, Indiana-Bloomington, is founder of Corporate Touch Massage Therapy Professionals.

Deltasig and former historian and senior vice president for Alpha Pi Chapter in Bloomington. She contributes much of her enthusiasm for corporate wellness to her involvement in the Fraternity.

"Especially since I.U.'s campus is so large, the smallness and the professionalism of the Fraternity provides a connectedness we all crave," she says. As a collegiate member, Avery as historian resurrected the chapter's newsletter which served to keep Brothers in touch. Avery said serving as vice president and heading membership drives was an invaluable experience for successful teamwork. "Just as it is in corporate America and life, we all bring different gifts to the table and the miracle of it all is when we do come together for one purpose," said Avery.

What sets Corporate Touch apart is that it not only serves corporate America, but is set up to build individual practices for massage therapists. "I've seen too many

good therapists quit or get burned out because they didn't know how to make a go of it," said Avery. "They are very good at what they do, but either didn't know how to do their planning and marketing or just didn't take the time. That's where we come in, servicing the individual practices." Corporate Touch focuses on making each therapist

successful by providing marketing plans detailing locale, corporate contracts and advertisements.

A unique concept that is also distinctive of Avery's company is a pre-paid "stress management card." Similar to a pre-paid phone card, these gift cards can be purchased in advance and may be used at any Corporate Touch location.

Avery has observed that her local corporate clientele is made up of progressive, fast-growing companies with management that realizes the importance of their most valuable asset—people.

Colleen Higgins, wellness manager for Reebok, International, said: "We've tried stress workshops in the past, but employees here prefer the massages. Massage has proven to be the best way to open the door on the whole stress issue—better than classroom workshops."

Corporate Touch is a member of the American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA), the largest and oldest national organization representing the massage therapy profession. Membership in AMTA is limited to only those massage therapists who have demonstrated a certain level of skill and expertise through testing and/or education. All AMTA therapists must agree to abide by the AMTA Code of Ethics.

On-site therapeutic massage is an easy wellness program to participate in. As Avery says, "All you need to do is relax and enjoy. And remember—how you run your body is how you run your business, that's the bottom line!"▲