

AFMTE Awards
New Teaching
Credential

In April, the Alliance for Massage
Therapy Education (AFMTE) awarded
its new credential, Certified Educator of
Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork, to six
massage therapy educators, they are the
first people to complete this certification.
The recipients are Sandra Sue Cochran,
Phil DeBorsh, Ann Kinnairt, Margaret
Franko, Nicole Anthony, Sandy Glover,
Lason and Rebecca Faraway.
We are pleased to acknowledge the
outstanding educators who attained our
educator certification demonstrating
competence in the Core Competencies for
Massage Therapy Teachers," said AFMTE
President Ann Dawson, the first
recipient of this
different
not received physical contact over
the duration of the study.
The team examined a biochemical



Babies Need Healthy To
P
on activity – and a recent study from
the University of British Columbia and BC
Children's Hospital Research Institute has
shown that how often a baby is touched
has long-term implications for the child's
development, even at the molecular level.
In the study, "Epigenetics consists of
neural cells," humans, published
in Development and Psychobiology,
researcher had parents of 24-week-old
babies document the next four years of
the children's lives, keeping track of their
behavior, such as crying, sleeping and
eating. The parents also kept track of the
long they spent caring for the children,
ways that involved bodily contact, such as
holding them.

The Corporate Massage of the Future

Wellness Programs are Revolutionizing
On-Site Services

By Stephanie Bouchard

TIME TO READ: 9 MIN

In 2005, Tiffany Richards had just returned from touring with Cirque du Soleil as a massage therapist, physically wiped out from daily massage work on the troupe's athlete-performers. She had noticed that corporations were taking an interest in employee wellness and were beginning to hire massage therapists to offer chair massage in their corporate offices.

For more information, visit massage.com

67% of companies surveyed plan on expanding their well-being programs over the next three to five years.

— 2018 Health and Well-Being Survey from Fidelity Investments and the National Business Group on Health

She saw an opportunity and launched her corporate massage business, The Back Rub Company. She had just taken her Phoenix, Arizona-based company national when the 2008 recession hit. Business slowed down, but in the years since the end of the recession, her company has grown. According to market forecasts, the demand for massage as a component of corporate wellness programs spells continued possibilities for companies like Richards's.

The Back Rub Company now has about 400 independent contractors throughout the country and last year was the company's highest-grossing year since its founding. "Corporate wellness is so big now," Richards said.

In fact, corporations across the U.S. are expanding their wellness programs, which means they are hiring massage companies to provide on-site chair massage as part of the well-being services they offer employees. For this article we spoke to leaders at three national massage companies that serve businesses large and small, to explore what you need to know about this expanding niche.

Driving the Demand

A desire by companies to leverage wellness programs to help their employees be healthier and more productive, which may reduce health care expenditures and absenteeism, is driving the demand for corporate massage.

According to the ninth annual Health and Well-Being Survey from Fidelity Investments and the National Business Group on Health, a nonprofit organization advocating on national health policy on behalf of large employers, companies are increasing their employee wellness program benefits. The 2018 survey found that 67% of companies surveyed plan on expanding their well-being programs over the next three to five years.

Further, a report on the corporate wellness market from Grand View Research, a company that creates market research reports and performs consulting, found that the intended result,

on the part of employers, of corporate wellness programs is a more productive workplace comprising healthy employees — meaning employees who cost the company less in health insurance costs and who call in sick less often.

"The corporate wellness initiatives target particular health risk factors such as stress, obesity, smoking, diet, lack of exercise, etc.," the report stated. Of note, though, are the results of a study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* in April that indicates workers who participated in a wellness program learned to watch their weight and to exercise, but "no significant reduction" in health care costs was determined, as reported by the *New York Times*. However, the study's author admitted their study is not the final verdict on workplace wellness programs.



The Back Rub Company massage therapist Sonia works on a corporate client at HOM Inc., which operates housing programs for people experiencing housing instability.

COURTESY OF THE BACK RUB COMPANY



COURTESY OF INCORPORATE MASSAGE

Teachers at Voyage Academy in Clinton, Utah, were treated to massage by Incorporate therapists Pauline Youngberg and Tracy James during the Taking Care of Teachers event.

Of particular note for massage therapists, according to the Grand View Research report, the stress-management segment is forecast to be the fastest-growing segment of the corporate wellness market. The report said that corporate wellness programs at medium-scale companies, those with 100 to 999 employees, will grow fastest during the forecast period of 2018 to 2025. The report also pointed to yoga and meditation as two of the most preferred corporate services.

Massage is also part of the trend. “Corporate massage is absolutely a growing niche,” said Amelia Wilcox, founder and CEO of Incorporate Massage, a national corporate massage company based in Salt Lake City, Utah. “Companies are starting to really understand the value

of taking care of their people, and that includes their physical wellness as well as emotional health.”

“Having a massage service at work checks a lot of boxes for companies because their employee morale improves, stress levels go down, and people even start taking fewer sick days,” she said. She added that massage is also a recruiting and retention tool in a tight job market.

Types of Massage Programs

Companies of all sizes and in all industries are offering corporate massage on-site to their employees. The programs vary.

Some companies — usually smaller businesses — will hire massage therapists to visit on-site once in a while or for special occasions. For example,

CPA firms often will hire massage therapists during tax season when everyone is working long hours, or a professional services office will hire massage therapists to come in during Administrative Professionals’ Day.

Other mid-sized companies will schedule regular times for massage therapists to be on-site. These businesses have traditionally set aside a conference room or other space where massage therapists set up for a couple of hours — but as more companies expand their wellness programs, those companies are often dedicating a room to massage or other wellness activities like yoga or relaxation.

“We have a lot of clients that, before, we used to just take our massage chairs and they’d set us up in an empty conference room,” said Richards. “Now, 50% of our clients have dedicated rooms for us.”

Some companies arrange for massage therapists to be on-site and pay for employees’ massages. Others subsidize the cost of the massage, where they pick up the bulk of the cost and the employee picks up a small amount, maybe \$5 or \$10. At other companies, employees pay the whole cost.

Massage Therapist Requirements

No matter what their size, companies want massage therapists who are licensed, have liability insurance and are qualified and trained in chair massage, said Kathleen Goggin, CEO of Corporate Oasis Massage, a national corporate massage company based in Cleveland, Ohio. They also must have the proper equipment for the work and be professional in every way.

That last requirement can’t be stressed enough, said Goggin, Wilcox and Richards. Corporate massage is not the same animal as working in your own private studio, they said.

“I remember when I had my own massage studio, I’d throw the lotion bottle on the table and I’d massage barefoot,” said Richards. “But when you’re working at a corporate account, you have to take into account that they are professional people

and you're in a professional environment. So, the flip-flops and the hair in the face and all that — that doesn't fly."

Companies want the massage therapists they hire to come into their facilities to reflect the professional business environment, Richards said. That means massage therapists need to be dressed appropriately — no tank tops, no shorts — and they must, *absolutely* must, be on time and reliable.

Richards has had a lot of experience hiring a variety of massage therapists as independent contractors for corporate work and events like trade shows. She expects the massage therapists she contracts with to be licensed and insured, timely, well-groomed and professional.

She has learned the hard way that specific instructions are necessary. In the early days of her business, she had to send therapists home because of inappropriate dress when they showed up at corporate offices wearing booty shorts and see-through tank tops. She's also had therapists who cancelled on her within 15 minutes of the scheduled start time.

To avoid such scenarios, her therapist contract specifies things such as that the

therapist must arrive 20 minutes prior to start time and what attire they can wear.

Your Business Structure

If you think you would enjoy conforming to a professional environment and are considering working in the corporate massage niche, you need to figure out your business structure. Options include working part-time or full-time as an employee or independent contractor of a corporate massage services company; performing corporate massage on your own as a side line with one or two small clients in addition to your private studio practice; and running your corporate massage business, which will mean hiring employees or independent contractors.

Goggin said it's necessary to weigh the pros and cons of working for yourself or someone else. If you run your own business, you get to make all the decisions regarding who you work with and how you market your services. You will also be responsible for the company's marketing, finances, and failure or success. If you do decide to go out on your own instead of working with a corporate massage company, you can find corporate clients

through your own marketing efforts and through referrals, such as from local health and wellness companies, word of mouth, or from any of the clients you see individually in your own studio.

If you choose to work for an established on-site company — which is probably the best decision if you aren't positive this niche is a good fit for you — these are the primary pros and cons of this type of work:

- The clients aren't yours; they're the clients of the company you are contracting with — although some companies will allow you to take on as your own private clients people you have met while doing corporate work for them.
- If you work as an independent contractor, you have to save a percentage of your income in order to pay your taxes.
- You earn less working for someone else than if you did the legwork and obtained your own clients.

Unleash the power of CBD



Ground-Breaking Discovery

Natural, effective, and not mind-altering. CBD derived from industrial hemp is known to help ease symptoms of arthritis and chronic pain as well as help decrease stress and anxiety. Add to your treatments and help clients on the road to recovery.

LAB + BLENDS™
Health and Wellness
By BIOTONE

800.445.6457 | lab-blends.com

TIME TO READ: 2 MIN

At a Glance: Corporate Wellness Massage Providers

Corporate Oasis

This Cleveland, Ohio-headquartered company creates on-site wellness massage plans for companies and coordinates massage events nationwide.

Number of MTs: 100-plus

Employment Type: Independent contractor.

Pay: \$30 to \$45 per hour. Therapists arrive 15 minutes prior to a session or event and are paid for all the time they are on-site. They receive paid breaks and an unpaid lunch break.

Services: On-site chair and table massage; lunch-and-learn workshops on such topics as “Is Technology Killing Your Hands? — Quick Techniques to Relieve the Pain”; a hands-on class on couples massage; a mini-workshop on giving one’s teen or pre-teen a clothed neck or back massage.

Incorporate Massage

This Salt Lake City, Utah-headquartered company works with massage therapists nationwide via shift notifications sent via email and text; an employee can accept by responding to the text or by signing into their online portal to accept a shift.

Number of MTs: 1,000

Employment Type: Employee.

Pay: This company declined to answer our questions about how much massage therapists are paid, but said they are paid per hour on-site, whether they are massaging or not. This company also provides a monthly wellness benefit for a free hour of massage each month, and an employee assistance program where employees can get counseling or other help they need for free. (In order to be eligible for benefits they have to work 40 hours in a month.)

Services: Chair massage; spa services including table massage with optional hot stone or deep tissue; facials, wraps and scrubs; a membership model with price points dependent on services and hours per month.

The Back Rub Company

This Phoenix, Arizona-headquartered company coordinates the work of a variety of wellness professionals at companies throughout the U.S.

Number of MTs: 400

Employment Type: Independent contractor.

Pay: This company declined to answer our questions about how much contractors are paid, but we were told the pay is “competitive” and that therapists are paid for the time they perform massage.

Services: On-site chair massage; home-based mini massage-and-spa sessions; on-site fitness classes in cardio kickboxing, belly dance, yoga flow and more; cooking and weight-loss workshops.

- You don’t have to find clients.
- You have a flexible schedule.
- You pick and choose when you want to work and there’s a mix of regularly scheduled work, one-time work and seasonal event work.
- You can continue to maintain a private practice while working for the corporate massage company.
- You don’t have to deal with filling out paperwork, arranging contracts, researching and handling local and state laws, getting permits and other red-tape tasks.
- You get paid. It’s not the same as a weekly paycheck, though (unless you’re working as an employee rather than a contractor), so the money is not as dependable. However, you don’t have to chase clients for payment or possibly take legal action against them to recover your costs.

Toward the Future

Corporate wellness programs represent a new opportunity for massage therapists. Whether you want to strike out on your own or add corporate massage to your career plan as a contractor or employee, the growth of this market is expected to continue. **M**

Stephanie Bouchard is a freelance writer and editor based on the coast of Maine. She frequently reports news and features for *MASSAGE Magazine*, and her articles for *massagemag.com* include “Software Engineer Turned MT Shares the Secrets of Corporate Massage Success,” and “This Grant Program Makes Sure Cancer Patients Get Massage” (both, *massagemag.com*).

Read “To Successfully Market On-Site Massage, You Must Understand Corporate Culture,” by chair-massage inventor David Palmer, at massagemag.com/corporateculture.