

Time for reflection

In the first in a series of six articles, **Pam Underdown** shares a number of strategies to help you to master the business of aesthetics and be on your way to achieving what you want for your business. This month she explores how the summer is a perfect time to reflect how on how your business is performing...

The summer is often a time of relaxing and reflection, where busy aesthetic professionals just like you take some much needed time off from their business. If you are like many business owners that I speak to, you are probably feeling in desperate need for a holiday right now? If the first half of this year has been productive and profitable for you, then a few weeks of quieter bookings may be a welcome relief to get off the hamster wheel. However, if your business is new or you are struggling to fill your appointment book, then a potentially quieter few weeks is another worry to add to the never ending list.

If your business isn't performing how you hoped it would by now and you know that something needs to change, then summer is the perfect time to take a step back, reflect, work out what is stopping you achieving your goals, what's getting in the way, distracting you or eating away at you – before you can move forward. Start by taking a day out of your business to assess everything with someone you trust. Get everything out into the open and be brutally honest with yourself. It is critical to know your exact starting point, where you want to be by the end of the year and what you need to do to ensure that the second half of the year will reward you for all of your hard work. If you don't have a spouse, a business partner, mentor or coach who understands business and what you are going through, then ask a trusted friend or colleague to help you. This person will need to help you to open up, view your situation objectively without judging you and then

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work with you to formulate a plan of action that will really push you forward.

When I work with a one-to-one private client, we spend our first day together going through a very detailed discovery session, where I ask a lot of questions about the individual, their business, what they are looking to achieve and why. This person can often have the weight of the world on their shoulders, particularly if they don't have a business partner, or a supportive spouse to talk to. During this session I am privileged when my clients open up to me to share their dreams, worries, disappointments, emotions and ideas. Everything comes tumbling out as the need to talk and unburden themselves is often so great, that the individual can move from a feeling of utter despair, worry or loneliness to feeling relieved, energised and able to see the future clearly.

So if you are feeling that things just aren't going the way you want them to, here is the first part of a six step process to ensure that the second half of 2016 is your best six months yet:

1. Book a day out of your business and make sure you can't be interrupted or distracted. Don't just sit in your office, treatment room or at home, go to a hotel, a library, anywhere that will enable you to be focused and objective. You could even take time out to do this exercise on holiday (I did!) – but only if you don't have children to run around after. Turn off your phone, emails, notifications and other distractions and then start by looking at the facts, figures, treatments, patients (number of new and returning patients, average spend etc), team performance and morale, your time at home and at work, your income and how you are feeling about your business and your life in general.

Is your business profitable? Are you earning what you deserve every hour? Do you have enough of your ideal patients returning and referring? Do you have enough time to deal with everything, or do you need to find some help and delegate tasks? Are you friends and family feeling neglected? Are you feeling worn out and demotivated? Be honest and document everything. If you genuinely don't know where to start, then email me and I can send you a detailed audit that will help you to see where the gaps (opportunities) are.

Then document everything you do in your business and put an hourly rate next to each >



one. For example: treating your patients could be a £200 an hour task, but doing your ironing could be a £10 an hour task and admin or social media could be a £20 or £30 an hour task. Ask yourself if you enjoy each task, is it something you are good at, or is it a task that you dread, or don't have the talent for? Be thorough and be very honest.

2. Work out where you want to be. For some they simply need more time, not more patients. For others they will need more structure as their business feels out of control and for some it will mean better marketing and more patients. No matter what your dreams and goals are, this is your time to start building your business the way that you want it to be.

If your dreams and goals are in your head, get them down on paper. We hear a lot about the importance of goal-setting but most of us don't have clear and measurable goals written down. As the saying goes, "Any road will get you there, if you don't know where you are going." The more detail you write down, the easier it will be for you to work out a plan of action to achieve them.

Use "outcome based thinking" – which simply means working out where you want your business to be by the end of December. What do you need to earn by then? How many days do you want to work in your business and how much time off do you want? What does this mean in terms of number of new and returning patients each month, each week, each day and hour? If you need to increase your profits, how can you ensure your patients return more often and spend more? If you need more time, what does your ideal day look like? Are you making the best use of your time? What can you do to outsource or delegate certain tasks that are preventing you from achieving your goals?

3. How are you going to get there? Having dreams is one thing; actually accomplishing them is quite another, especially when relentless fantasising may actually reduce your chances of achieving your goals. Bridge this gap by breaking your goals down into small actionable steps and assign realistic time frames to each. Continue to break big steps into smaller and smaller steps until goals seem less daunting and achievable.

Start with quick fixes, those things that you know you should be doing but aren't: are you rebooking and referring all patients? Are you following up all leads quickly, or are some falling through the cracks? Are you structuring your day and your week to make sure you have enough time to work on your business and your marketing, or are you wasting time on Facebook, procrastinating and being too hard on yourself? We all have a little voice in our head – sometimes its pushing



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us forward and being positive, but other times its holding us back and telling us we aren't good enough, or we don't have enough time, or that certain things are just not possible.

Disney came up with a great metaphor for that little voice in cartoons years ago –the angel on one shoulder and the devil on the other one. Which one are you listening to? Which one is your 'real' little voice? Most of us can achieve so much more if we can learn how to manage that voice and ignore the one that is holding us back. A great book if you really suffer with negative self-talk is "Little Voice Mastery" by Blair Singer.

Going through this process will help you to understand which things have been eating away at you subconsciously and holding you back. If you are constantly placing an incredible amount of pressure on yourself to meet your commitments, you could be making bad decisions out of panic, fear and survival mode. These poor decisions mean that you will take on business that you know isn't worth the effort, or you drastically cut your prices just to get patients through the door. Doing this over a long time seriously affects the quality of your work, your attitude, your focus, your happiness and your ability to deliver the highest level of service to your patients.

Going through this process, being honest with yourself and getting everything out of your head and down on paper, is the first step towards focusing on strategic growth. It will enable you to put measures in place to grow properly and make the right decisions, not panic decisions. In my next article I am going to share with you the next three critical steps in this process, in the meantime, I hope you find this process eye opening and useful. **AM**

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Pam Underdown is the founder and owner of Aesthetic Business Transformations, a business growth specialist working exclusively to help medical aesthetic business owners increase their profits and reduce their costs. Pam has more than 25 years' business development, sales and marketing experience and has been specialised in the aesthetics industry since 2005.