



Do you ever get the feeling that this is the best you are ever going to achieve in private practice, the best you can expect to feel as an aesthetic professional... and it isn't as good as you had hoped?

Is this as good as it gets?

Pam Underdown gives her advice on what to do if you are feeling disillusioned when it comes to your business

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As a business coach, I have had the pleasure and privilege of meeting so many highly capable, highly skilled and highly talented aesthetic professionals but very few have achieved the success they originally set out for. Most feel like they are on a constant roller-coaster; haphazardly getting through each day – firefighting and never feeling in control. They are constantly worried about the future of their practice and go through all sorts of emotional highs and lows.

The truth is, all of us eventually reach a point where despite our talents and gifts, we find ourselves stuck in some way. The level of thinking that got you to where you are today, will not get you where you want to go ultimately. If you really want to get back on track to achieving the success you always hoped for, it's time to ask yourself some questions and do some critical thinking...

QUESTION 1: What happened? Where did I go wrong?

Is your biggest problem an actual problem? Or is it a symptom of a different problem? For example, a money problem can often be a symptom of poor planning, poor marketing, a fundamental lack of business and finance knowledge or a combination of all three.

Lock yourself away in a quiet room, turn off your phone and write down a list of your strongest points and your weakest points. How can you improve your weakest point? What is the biggest problem holding your business back right now? And what is the root cause that is creating the problem in the first place?

Get together with your team or, if you don't have one, your partner, business partner, or a trusted friend to brainstorm at least three solutions (remember you can't brainstorm on your own!). What is the one change you can make right now that, if you implemented it, would prevent the problem from happening in the future?

Typically, the weakest link in a business holds it back and it's usually the thing you resist getting involved with. The thing you always back-heal to someone else. For example, most aesthetic practitioners focus entirely on the delivery of their treatments and completely abdicate the business and marketing side. Then the inevitable happens.

QUESTION 2: Is my practice designed to succeed?

We live in a world where successful outcomes are designed to occur far more than they are desired into existence. A contestant on a TV cooking show wouldn't guess at a recipe if they wanted to win. They would follow a proven recipe with the right ingredients used in the right sequence. Otherwise it just doesn't taste (or look) the same. Whether you are cooking or growing your practice, you want the outcome to be as predictable as possible – which means it's best to follow a proven recipe. You need a blueprint that is proven to deliver accelerated, sustained and profitable growth. You need to surround yourself with people who understand your challenges and can give you the right resources and support.

QUESTION 3: When will I feel successful?

What success means for you, is different to another practitioner. For some it's increasing client retention, for others it's about maximising profitability. It all depends on the maturity of your business, your vision, your aspirational goals and your ambitions for your future. If you can't articulate a clear vision and purpose – you'll quickly lose sight of what you're working towards and, crucially, why you're even bothering.

QUESTION 4: Am I investing enough money in the right areas?

The primary purpose of a business is to attract, retain and maximise the right, profitable customers. Everything that contributes towards this is an investment and anything that doesn't is a cost. Every time you want to spend money, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is this an investment or a cost to our business?
- Is this helping us to deliver our goals? Or;
- Is this detracting our focus or de-railing us?

Doing this process alone will stop you from spending money on things that won't make a difference (such as expensive new clinic décor) and help you focus on what will.

QUESTION 5: Am I really willing to pay the price?

The majority of business owners won't achieve the results they desire, simply because it's easy to say, "I should", but, in reality, most simply aren't willing to pay the price that is necessary to do what they "must". Are you ready to commit to continuous learning – business, marketing and finance – not just clinical education? To constantly push yourself >

out of your comfort zone? To spend time working on your business at the same time as working in your business? To make your business systems dependent and not people dependent? Even if you never plan to sell your business, don't forget that you are an investor of it: an investor of time, energy, emotion and money – so build it in the right way and keep fine tuning it.

QUESTION 6: Would I be a patient of mine?

Are you thinking "inside-out"? or "outside-in"? Great businesses think outside-in - the customer is the focal point of everything they do and how they do it. They are fanatical about looking at themselves through their customers' eyes and ask self-challenging and probing questions. They don't become complacent.

QUESTION 7: Am I spreading myself too thin?

As business owners, what we say "no" to is more important than what we say "yes" to. If the request doesn't serve your business and your future, say "no". Sammy Blindell from 'How to Build a Brand' once said to me "Just because you can, doesn't mean you should". The more successful you become, the more people will want to be part of it. Look at every opportunity strategically, ask yourself – will this help to grow your business and brand, or will it detract you from it?

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QUESTION 8: What's more important – progress, or perfection?

Having disciplined execution is the main difference between high performing businesses and those that are struggling. You could spend an eternity writing a business plan – but if you fail to implement it, you won't get anywhere. How good are you (and your team) at disciplined execution? We all sometimes over complicate and over engineer things – especially in business. This can lead to procrastination, fear or lack of action completely. When you feel overwhelmed you tighten up and lose momentum. Great business leaders are great simplifiers – they seek to un-complicate and de-clutter as a primary objective. Remember to focus on progress, not perfection.

QUESTION 9: Do I have my eye on the ball?

Measuring the right detail allows you to make proactive, informed and well-educated decisions about how you can deliver profitable growth. Most businesses don't have any measurements in place to begin with; are measuring the wrong things; or are not paying enough attention to what the measures are telling them and how this subsequently informs their decision making and their ability to drive their business forward. A great analogy for determining which

measures are important and which ones aren't is your car dashboard where you see the following:

- A speedometer – for driving safely and within the law
- How much fuel you have to keep going
- Your sat nav – so you know where you're going and how you are going to get there

It's no different to a business!

QUESTION 10: Am I emulating the successful practices?

The speed of change, the increase in competition, the demands of the aesthetic patient – all mean that you need to change your thinking to stay ahead. If you aren't part of a group such as the British Association of Cosmetic Nurses (BACN), or British College of Aesthetic Medicine (BCAM) then you need to learn from people who have already accomplished what you want to do. You need to learn from their mistakes and successes, so you don't have to pay the high price of making the same mistakes yourself.

One of the many reasons my client workshops are so powerful, is that we have a group of non-competing aesthetic professionals all sharing and learning from each other and not just from me. This type of "mastermind" group provides quick solutions to problems, as the other people in the room have also had to deal with the same challenges at some point.

If you have 10 people who have had the same challenges, then you get 10 times the lessons, 10 times the experience, 10 times the answers and 10 times the advantages. If you surround yourself with practitioners who want to take their business to a higher level, then you will naturally rise up to that level more rapidly than you could have done one your own. **AM**



Pam Underdown is a business coach, trainer and mentor working exclusively with aesthetic professionals worldwide. Her company, Aesthetic Business Transformations, provides a fully supported system of programmes, tools and resources to dramatically increase your trust and credibility, create more happy patients and take your practice from chaos to control. Aesthetic Business Transformations is now officially recognised as an accredited provider with the CPD Standards Office. To learn more about Pam's forthcoming workshops visit www.pamworkshops.co.uk