

## BREAKING INTO THE AESTHETICS BUSINESS

# Map out your marketing plan

In the fifth of her essential series for doctors in the aesthetics world, Pam Underdown (right) shows how to create a marketing strategy



A MARKETING STRATEGY is essential for focusing your energy towards the right actions that will deliver on what you want to accomplish. There's no need to over-think it or over-do it.

The focus should be making sure that your treatments and services meet patients' needs and that you are able to develop long-term and profitable relationships with them.

You will need to create a flexible strategy that can respond to changes in the marketplace and your patients' perceptions. Keep it simple: often the simplest and best ideas can be overlooked. And keep it brief: 15 pages at the most.

Before you begin, establish a deadline for when you want to complete your plan and put it into action.

Then establish your team's roles and responsibilities. It is also critical to work out how much you have to spend, as that can have a major impact on the strategies you decide to implement. Once you have these items in hand, you're ready to put your plan together.

**Part 1: Discover where you are now. Where do you want to be? What is getting in the way?**

Having a clear idea of what you want your business to be at the start means you are more likely to achieve your goals.

It is important to have a clear understanding of your ideal patients, your market place, your competition, the treatments and services you wish to offer, the way you want to market yourself, your brand and your image, the type of patients you wish to attract and how you are going to attract them.



## GET A TEMPLATE!

If you would like a template to use for your marketing strategy, please send an email to [info@aesthetic-bt.com](mailto:info@aesthetic-bt.com) quoting 'Independent Practitioner Today'

Begin your marketing strategy document with an honest and rigorous SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis.

Then ask yourself:

- What do I want to achieve? Then set clear, realistic objectives.
- What are my prospective patients really buying (hope, confidence)?
- What motivates them to take action?
- What is the buying journey

they will go on? How can I ensure my business is there, every step of the way?

- Which treatments and services are the most profitable?
- What's the best way of communicating with my patients?
- How can I continuously monitor and improve my customer service?
- How will I price my treatments and services?
- Could changing my products or services increase sales and profitability?

**Part 2: Decide whom you are going to attract and how you will attract them**

Your marketing needs to cut through the thousands of media messages that your prospective patients are seeing and hearing every single day.

How will you cut through the noise? Ensure you are using patient-focused language that talks directly to the patient's pains, wants and emotions. Don't forget that your patients are looking for a transformation and results. They will only ever buy what they want and not what they need. So find out:

- What are the top three biggest problems they face?
- What do they want more than anything?
- What is the No.1 'result' you can help your patient achieve?
- What will the higher emotional benefits be?
- What will it cost them not to make the change?

Make sure your marketing is human, authentic and, above all, personal. A big brand will spend millions trying to get you to connect with their logo, but it's far easier for humans to recognise a face.

Your prospective patients will use the web and mobile to instantly research a treatment, product or service anywhere, anytime. Is your business visible in all of the places that your prospective patients are spending time?

We live in a very transparent world and your prospective patients are forming powerful and quick impressions of your business after seeing pictures, videos, posts, and reviews. Is everything they see and read about you giving them a positive impression?

**Part 3: Define your vision, your goals and objectives and your competitive advantage.**

What are your goals? You need to define them very clearly. They may be financial or they may be aspirational, such as awards and recognition. Whatever your goals are, the key is to be very clear and time-specific. Setting bite-sized goals will keep you focused, motivated and on track.

If you don't have a competitive advantage that matters to your prospective patients, they will only be able to tell the difference based on price alone.

To create a unique competitive advantage and to stand out from the crowd, you need to answer the following questions:

- What do you do that is different to your competitors?
- What do you offer that no one else does?
- What do you do better than anyone else?

Recruiting like-minded individuals is essential if you want to make sure your vision matters as much to your team as it does to you.

**Part 4: Design your sales funnel and marketing plan**

Ensure your marketing is useful and can be found. Write useful, educational articles that can be commented on and shared.

There are two types of prospective patients: those in the market for a treatment immediately and those who are gathering information and aren't ready to buy yet – which can take up to two years.

What can you offer those who aren't ready to go ahead yet? Perhaps a taster session during 'Love your skin Wednesdays' or a free skincare guide. Either way, ensure they are on your email database to build the relationship, trust, credibility and liking.

**Part 5: Develop your tactical plan of action and your marketing skills**

Once you have decided on your marketing strategy, draw up a tactical marketing plan to set out how you plan to execute and evaluate the success of that strategy.

Your plan sets out the aims, actions, dates, costs, resources and who is responsible for what. Decide which areas need monitoring and improving.

Will you measure based on emotional benchmarks, so you know the impact your clinic has emotionally on every patient? Or will you measure it by performance: how quickly your phone is answered?

Will you measure by financial targets or by patient feedback? Ask each new patient how they heard about your business and why they chose you over and above your competitors.

Test small, spend small and fail small first, then scale up. Test all of your marketing first before scaling. Nothing is worse than launching a full-blown campaign and spending a fortune, if it doesn't work. Regardless of the size of your campaign or available resources, there is no excuse not to test small first. By getting feedback from real patients early on, you can save yourself considerable time down the line by addressing any issues early.

Marketing plans shouldn't be set in stone. And it's not the end of the world if your marketing mix doesn't work as well as you had hoped initially.

What's important is to track every performance detail you can, not only with testing and statistical analysis but also with the old-fashioned ear to the ground.

Once you have knowledge about what works and what doesn't – you can then refine your plan and your strategies as you go, learning and tweaking accordingly. It is impor-

tant to remain focused on the end goals: growth and profit.

Continuously develop your skills. Every skill is learnable and your ability to master the marketing and the business side of your business is key to your survival.

**Part 6. Deliver results**

If you look after your patients – they will look after your profits. Return patients and referrals are what make a business successful.

Start by delivering a superior patient experience and establish

how you can maximise each patient in terms of return visits, average spend and referrals.

Ask yourself how you will ring-fence your loyal brand advocates to ensure they return and refer. What can you add to enhance the results for your patients? What can you offer that will encourage them to see you each month? What can you do to increase satisfaction?

Your loyal patients are your brand advocates and should be treated like gold. Don't take them for granted.

Reward for loyalty with points for every pound they spend. The key is to reward them with something they've never had before to introduce them to something new that will encourage regular returns. Be careful what you give away. Work out the figures and make sure it's profitable. ■

*Pam Underdown is chief executive at Aesthetic Business Transformations*

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