

# Why it is vital to train front of house staff

Most commonly, the focus on adequately trained staff within aesthetics revolves around the practitioner. Gilly Dickons details the necessity of front of house staff being trained to ensure they are able to answer patient queries as the face of your company

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Staff possessing the knowledge to answer queries reflects well on the practitioner and allows the patient to make informed decisions

**A**s a nurse practitioner, I encourage you to ask yourself the following questions: would I treat someone using a product I am not familiar with or am not trained to use? Would I feel comfortable simply talking to a client about a product I have no knowledge of?

If you are a practice manager, would you expect to be able to juggle the demands of the day-to-day business without the appropriate experience? It is my sincere hope that your instant response to these questions is 'of course not'. I am sure you will agree that appropriate training and experience is essential to achieving success in any role. So, why is it that many clinic owners do not focus on training

staff who are in a patient-facing role? Often, inexperienced staff members are left to meet and greet high value clients, answer those client calls and respond to new enquiries, ultimately resulting in lost new business opportunities and client retention issues.

## **Recruiting new staff**

Recruiting staff who have previously worked in an aesthetic clinic should ensure that clinics are in a strong position as they should have relevant experience that has enabled them to build essential skills, such as exceptional customer service, relationship building and broad product knowledge. When recruiting someone from a different sector, it cannot

be assumed that because a new employee has been a receptionist or a front of house person in a different environment that you will be able to throw them in at the deep end and entrust them with your front of house from the get go. This could be damaging, not only for the person you have recruited, but for your client relationships and, ultimately, your overall business. While some people may thrive at being thrown in at the deep end, most



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people need to feel their way into a new job role, ensuring that they feel confident and knowledgeable.

Clinics should recruit from a wide variety of customer service backgrounds and embark on an extensive training program to ensure that each team member is equipped with the knowledge needed to provide the service that clients have come to expect from us. To secure new enquiries, it is vital that staff can answer questions and provide reliable information about treatments offered, the clinic, the practitioner, prices, down-time and anything else that can be discussed outside of a consultation, which means some time needs to be spent training them in their enquiry handling skills. This will greatly benefit your practice and will enhance your staff's skillset.

### **Fountain of knowledge**

Ensuring that staff have sufficient knowledge of you, the practitioner, and the treatments offered, will enable them to answer any questions posed by either clients attending the clinic or enquiries from over the phone, via email or on social media. In terms of phone calls and online responses, knowledge of your skills, training and background, along with the treatments and products that you offer, are crucial to overcoming any objections that potential new enquiries may have prior to making any booking. Not only does this help callers feel at ease, enabling them to make informed decisions, it also reflects on you, demonstrating the skills and professionalism that patients can expect from your clinic. Consider as well, that by upskilling and building your staff's knowledge they will be able to fully service enquiries without disturbing you for answers, allowing you to get on with your treatments.

With a combination of soft selling skills and product training, you can ensure that your staff will have the ability to up-sell products such as cosmeceuticals to clients while they are in reception. You can go a step further and encourage your staff to use these products themselves, they should then be genuinely excited to share their experience with your patients in reception. Your reception area should provide a natural environment

for conversations to evolve about products that may be on display and it is very natural for a client to assume that your receptionist will have a degree of knowledge about the products and treatments on offer.

### **Building rapport through first impressions**

First impressions are critical in establishing relationships—a poor start could mean that prospective new clients turn to another clinic or, even worse, you lose a valuable existing client because a member of staff has left a poor impression. Educate your staff so that they know exactly what first impression you want them to deliver to callers and visitors into clinic alike. Remember your staff will not know what you want them to say or do unless you spend time training them and equipping them with the tools for the job.

Here at Aesthetic Response, we believe there are several steps that are critical in the training of our team, here are a few of them:

- ▶ Understanding and using unique selling points: Identify 4–5 key points about yourself/the practitioners, the clinic itself and the treatments offered. Then, train staff to refer to these in their conversations to enable them to promote the clinic and secure those valuable consultation appointments. This is the 'why' that they need to provide the caller, the reasons they should come to your clinic instead of going to a competitor
- ▶ The importance of listening: listening skills are critical to building great relationships—remember, we have two ears and one mouth! Train your staff to be great listeners and they will be able to unravel and identify the client's true needs, rather than their immediate 'wants' to build and secure confidence in your team and your business
- ▶ Equip staff to overcome objections: anyone responding to new enquiries will be faced with objections and it is important that they learn to handle them rather than fear them. Objections are an opportunity to build a relationship with the enquirer and

may be related to price, appointment availability, accessibility/location/distance, fear of pain or problems after treatment or a lack of support from a partner or loved one. Suitable responses should be established for staff to provide if they are faced with these objections—in other words, empower them

- ▶ The importance of data capture: staff need to ensure that they capture the contact details for every new caller. Not everyone will be ready to book a consultation during their first conversation and you need to be able to follow them up. It is also important for you to know where the caller has heard about you from, especially if you are running different adverts, online campaigns and events, so the following information should be collected from the caller:

- ▶ Name
- ▶ Telephone number
- ▶ Email address
- ▶ Where they heard about you.

Show your staff how you want data to be captured from each call that is logged so that you can analyse the efficiency of your lead generation and marketing campaigns. Consistent data capture across your team will allow you to track conversions and enquiries better so you can watch your business grow. Remember, in line with GDPR guidelines, ensure that enquirers opt in to receive follow-ups from the clinic.

It should not be assumed that new staff members are going to be equipped with this knowledge simply due to a previous job role. From day one, training should be offered to ensure that the best possible experience is being given to the many callers that are spoken to.

Training your staff to an excellent standard will ensure that you see rewarding outcomes both for your practice and your staff. With staff up-selling treatments and products and using their exceptional customer service skills, your conversion and retention rates are sure to increase, while your staff will be motivated and confident in their role.

