

Gilly Dickons, business development director and founder of Aesthetic Response on why call management is crucial to making a good first impression

A good reception

You only get one chance to make a great first impression! Without doubt one of the most important factors that will affect your business growth and development is that you do make a great first impression.

In a sector that is continuing to show good solid year on year growth there are more practitioners than ever wanting to take their share of the market. As the market place becomes more competitive it becomes harder to gain and maintain new clients. Our natural response to driving the business is often to upgrade our website, contract SEO support, produce newsletters with special offers, even to offer Groupon and voucher deals – all in pursuit of new clients. Have you stopped to consider where else you can make an impact on your growth and revenue, also your client retention? I believe the first impression, which is created by the first point of contact for your business, is the place to start.

Is it time for you to review your approach to this area of your business? A great place to start is to put yourself in your clients shoes, whether new clients or existing. Run through what happens when they try to call you, think the steps through carefully – are there any gaps?

- They should get a response within a few rings by a knowledgeable person who can book them an appointment there and then.
- You should have time to spend with a prospective new client who has a lot of questions.
- You need to have a well-trained receptionist who can answer questions as well as ensure that the caller feels like the most important person in the world at that moment in time.
- Callers should receive your undivided attention and not be rushed to get off the phone. Your receptionist needs to be able to softly secure the appointment booking.
- Evaluate how much of a role your answer machine has to play in servicing your clients.

In this highly competitive market place it is no longer safe to assume that a new enquirer will simply book with you because you are 'good' at the treatment, because you have won an award, or have a great looking website. If that were the case the accepted industry gold standard conversion of call to initial appointment would be much higher than 60%, and we certainly wouldn't see the average figure of 45%! This whole industry is built on a foundation of trust and solid

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relationships, engaging the client from the very first contact will enable you to achieve high conversion rates from 75%-90%. If this is not the figure you are currently seeing in your practice, just imagine how much of a contribution this can make to your revenue and growth!

To summarise these are the key areas for you to consider:

- Running your practice off a mobile phone – how effective is this?
- Using an answer machine during normal office hours – does this put clients off?
- Understanding your cost per lead – is your marketing investment paying off?
- Training your receptionist thoroughly – they are your clients' first impression of your service
- Take time to talk to prospective new clients – are you able to accommodate these longer calls?
- Accessibility – are you available for your valuable existing clients to make appointments easily?

- Review your call handling provision regularly
- Continually assess your call to appointment conversion and your client retention statistics, ensuring that you are making the most of all opportunities.

If you take the time to review these areas, and you ensure that you have addressed any issues I believe that you are guaranteed to maximise on your revenue growth. Whether you handle your practice calls yourself or employ part-time or full-time staff, it is worth bearing in mind that you do not have to have all of your call handling provision in-house; outsourcing your enquiry handling to "virtual reception" providers who are highly knowledgeable and experienced in aesthetic practice can provide you with a very effective "best practice" service to the benefit of your clients. With peace of mind that they are in safe hands, you can prioritise your own valuable time to achieve other practice and personal goals, in-line with your business growth plans.

>> **Gilly Dickons** is the business development director and founder of Aesthetic Response. Gilly's extensive insight into the aesthetic arena arises from a career spanning 23 years in client servicing, with both TMG and Allergan. With a passion for delivering excellent customer service, Gilly's expertise in call handling management is proving instrumental in aiding aesthetic practices in growing their businesses. Based on the principle that first impressions are the starting point for building a successful and profitable client/practice relationship, Gilly has equipped her team with the skills needed to focus on maximising new client opportunities across all of the aesthetic practices they service.



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