



# Accelerated Ascent

**Gilly Dickons** from Aesthetic Response on measuring and accelerating growth in your aesthetics business

Whatever the size of your practice and regardless of how long you have been established, it's important to ask yourself, "am I satisfied that I'm achieving the best possible results in terms of revenue growth? And am I maintaining annual growth in line with the sector average, exceeding it or lagging behind?"

For those of you who are confidently, and regularly achieving growth in line with the rest of the marketplace you may be surprised to hear that your revenue growth could, with the right support, exceed this sector average.

Should your practice be struggling to chase this growth target you will be relieved to know that there is support available to give you a helping hand to accelerate your growth and get you on track!

If I have managed to get your attention and you want to find out more about how you can accelerate your growth, I have a few tips that may be of help.

### REVIEW YOUR CURRENT SITUATION

The first step that I would suggest is that you review your current situation and identify the gaps in your practice. This will involve assessing the current use of your own time as a business owner and practitioner and then assessing your current staff. As a practitioner your number one role is to utilise your skills to treat clients – this is where your revenue is driven. If you are tied up with your books, on the phones, trying to learn marketing skills these are all distractions from being in the treatment room generating income. If you have staff to support you in clinic you need to know how well they are doing in terms of filling your diary – what are their call outcomes? Front of house relationships with clients? I would recommend that you mystery shop your front of house staff on a regular basis and that you undertake client feedback surveys at least once a year in order to highlight any gaps in your service. Here's what a couple of our clients found when they reviewed their practice:

Eve Bird, Botastic, an independent practitioner said, "I think my biggest problem was people phoning for an

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appointment and me not answering the call, and then trying to get back later on in the night by which time it wasn't convenient for them. What we do is so specialised and people find time to phone us when nobody else is around and if we phone back on an evening when their husbands are there in the background they don't want to talk. So it was realised we were missing an awful lot of clients by not being able to answer the phone."

Kirsty Child, practice manager for Dr Natalie Blakely's Light Touch Clinic, commented, "When calls come into the clinic, there is often a patient standing in front of you, or something going on that distracts you and it's difficult to give the potential new client on the phone your full attention and that this made it hard to give great customer service to the patient standing in front of us, without losing a potential sale over the phone".

As you can see these are both practices with differing needs. As an independent practitioner Eve was struggling to juggle everything herself and as a result was missing new client enquiries, whereas Kirsty was aware that the clinic was losing valuable new client calls as herself and her staff were often tied up with clients in the clinic or on another call. Once you have identified the gaps you can then look at what external support services you can contract in, for example accounting and book-keeping, SEO and website marketing, call handling, PR activity or HR agency support. Be specific about the issue you are trying to address.

### THE COSTS OF CONTRACTING THE RIGHT SUPPORT

Once you have identified the support you believe would be of most benefit to help you to achieve the uplift in growth you are looking for, you then need to look at the costs. This in itself needs to be a carefully thought out exercise as it's not simply about the monthly invoice to the business, it's about the cost benefit ratio – the true cost may be what happens if you don't take the step of letting something go.

Keely McBride, Face Perfect Clinic, had this dilemma when she heard about our services and was considering the support that we offer. She said, "At first I just thought it's a lot of money and it's too expensive; I can answer my own calls, I don't need somebody to do that for me. But then when I actually thought about it, I realised you've got 66 hours a week covered and if I employed a receptionist, it would cost a lot more than that."

We put this question about costs to Kirsty, who has been using our overflow and out of hours service to support the Light Touch Clinic. She said, "Our Aesthetic Response invoices are not the cheapest, but we are getting five call handlers for less than the price of one full time member of staff each month, so it's absolutely worth it. They genuinely know as much as our receptionists. We previously used an answering service who just took messages and we had to ring the patients back. I love that AR can book appointments, answer queries and take payments, as this helps to alleviate the >



pressure on our reception team. They also make outbound calls as needed, so if a patient calls on a weekend and we aren't able to give them a ring, then I know that we can provide AR with the information and they will make that call for us.

"In the time that we have been working with AR, we have seen a rapid growth in the business which has led to us moving to larger premises. Without a doubt, we could not run our clinic as successfully without the support that AR provide us with."

Frances Turner-Traill of the Frances Turner-Traill Skin Clinic shared her experience of the support: "I've been a customer of Aesthetic Response since its conception. In that time I've grown from being a mobile practitioner to having two clinics with a large database. Aesthetic Response have been integral in my journey and I doubt I would be where I am without their services."

#### IN CONCLUSION

It may be that, on reflection, you would benefit from the type of service that AR offers, or that you go on to establish the need to have someone managing your PR, social media campaigns, or to have an HR support company in place as you try to manage an expanding in-house team. Once you have identified any gaps that may be hindering your practice development take action to put the right support in place and see what happens to your growth trajectory. **AM**



**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.