

## Experts Identify Effective Patient Outreach and Retention Techniques

“Not only do medical practices and medspas need to be at the top of their game in regards to their services, they need to make sure their marketing efforts are top notch.”

“With the changes in managed care insurance laws, more practices are entering into the aesthetic field than ever before,” stated Mara Shorr, B.S., CAC VI, vice president of marketing and business development at The Best Medical Business Solutions in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. “Not only do medical practices and medspas need to be at the top of their game in regards to their services, they need to make sure their marketing efforts are top notch,” she continued. “In addition, even if a practice brings in significant amounts of money it means nothing if they aren’t keeping their costs in line. Small things add up.”

While the number of practitioners entering the field can’t be controlled, physicians can employ effective methods of attracting and retaining patients. Word-of-mouth promotion may still be the gold standard in marketing, but it is not the only tool in a successful practice’s armamentarium.



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In the digital realm, a professional website is still central to the practice. “You can have the best aesthetic services in the world, but if no one knows about them,

your beautiful, first class facility will be empty,” Ms. Shorr pointed out. “A strong website and high search engine optimization (SEO) rankings on Google are more important than ever before. Your website represents you in the virtual world, and patients are pickier than they used to be.”

To maintain that website at a high level of functionality, SEO is still very important to understand and utilize. Some SEO programming is practically a requirement for the smooth running of most professional, public facing websites, so it is worth investing in SEO implementation. “It is possible to bring some SEO programming in-house, which involves training and can empower your staff to control everyday marketing activities,” stated Candace Crowe, president and creative director at Candace Crowe Design in Orlando, Fla.



**Candace Crowe**  
President and Creative Director  
Candace Crowe Design  
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“SEO is always important,” maintained Jennifer Kilkenny, director of operations at Total Social Solutions, LLC, in Las Vegas, Nev. “Since SEO technology is always being upgraded, your website is never truly finished. New content consistently needs

to be going out. It needs to be professionally written and optimized for search engines and readers, including a version for smartphone viewing. Although one can successfully convert people all the time from Facebook and Google Plus, your website is still home base.”

In addition, social media outlets like Facebook, Instagram and Google Plus have become important channels for marketing services and procedures, Ms. Shorr indicated.



**Jennifer Kilkenny**  
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“Social media is now very influential and affects how people view aesthetic services,” Ms. Shorr explained, adding that they now work well on multiple digital / online platforms. “They can be used to encourage people to respond to marketing events. For example, recall when Instagram caused a great deal of conversation about Kylie Jenner’s much talked about lips. This was followed by news of lip plumping injections. In another example, selfies are causing people to be more concerned with how they look in photographs than ever before. You can tap into this and other ongoing trends when you are connected via social media.”

“People want their aesthetic providers to use social media. This is true even if as patients they never re-tweeted a message or liked a post,” said Ms. Kilkenny.

In addition, sophisticated online consultations have finally come of age. Zwivel Online Cosmetic Consultations (Paramus, N.J.) offers a web-based portal that provides an interactive platform allowing cosmetic patients and physicians to prescreen and interact with each other online prior to a full in-office consultation, saving both parties valuable time. The company offers two HIPAA/HITECH-compliant, private and secure products: ZwivelBasic™ and ZwivelPremium™. ZwivelBasic is free for both aesthetic practitioners and patients. Practices just place a “Start Your Consultation Now” widget on their website. Through ZwivelPremium, patients will be able to utilize the company’s sophisticated search features to quickly locate an appropriate practitioner, while physicians can pay a monthly subscription fee to use enhanced features.

Offering patients a way to stay in touch with the practice digitally is key to success these days, but sometimes feedback can be a problem especially when it comes to online reviews published on Yelp or another review site.

“Dealing with negative online reviews can be incredibly challenging,” stated Ms. Kilkenny. “I’ve seen legitimate situations where negative reviews were posted that were completely unwarranted. While the panic can set in for a practice when you start to see that, don’t take it personally. You can’t make everyone happy. Sometimes a public response is appropriate, and sometimes not. You have to handle these situations on a case-by-case basis. A lot of people don’t trust Yelp, but it is a risky business to ignore it.”

Practices should always focus on trying to elicit more positive reviews, Ms. Kilkenny added. “Offer your customers perks or a freebie if they write a positive review about the practice. Make sure that you respond to the negative reviews in an organized, methodical way. Don’t ignore them. If you start to see a pattern in those reviews, take a close look at why.”

As physicians and staff turn to Facebook, Twitter, a YouTube channel, Pinterest or other social media platforms to garnish potential patients, experts agree that marketing to mobile devices, such as the iPhone should not be overlooked.

“Many people are using mobile devices as their primary Internet device,” Ms. Crowe noted. “They use smartphones to search for businesses, which includes searching for their new or current aesthetic practice.”

No matter what avenue is taken, the upshot is to differentiate your practice from the competition, Ms. Kilkenny indicated. “There’s a medical spa on every