Boosting business skills: advice from two preferred partners in the industry

To support practitioners who are running a clinic alongside providing cosmetic procedures, the Private Independent Aesthetic Practices Association has built relationships with services which are beneficial for those needing business support. In this month’s article, Amy Senior shares insights on the aesthetics industry from two preferred partners—Aesthetic Response and the Journal of Aesthetic Nursing.

Following the success of the Private Independent Aesthetic Practices Association (PIAPA) Step Ahead meetings and the varied content they offer, it has become increasingly clear that there are so many aspects that go towards making a successful practitioner or clinic, and that many of the skills required cannot be obtained from medical education alone. Many of our members come to us for direction or assistance in all sorts of business-related areas, including accounting, clinic marketing, admin, social media, and education and training.

Members of the small team at PIAPA have often found themselves on learning curves trying to find the best resources and people to advise in these subjects, as well as learn how to enhance these skills independently. This is why we have formed a list of preferred partners, offering various assets and services that could be very beneficial to our members who for the most part are independent practitioners trying to run a business while keeping on top of their education too. Two examples of these preferred partners are Aesthetic Response, who recently spoke at our Step Ahead in Aesthetics conference, and the Journal of Aesthetic Nursing.

Aesthetic Response is a service designed to field calls and enquiries from new and existing patients through a trained team with specific knowledge of aesthetic treatments. The company was launched 5 years ago when the two directors, Ann Pullen and Gilly Dickons, both already working in aesthetics, marketing and management, realised how difficult it was to balance a successful working life as an independent practitioner with so many roles to perform outside of the treatments themselves.

Since its first publication in 2012, under the guidance of editor Natasha Devan, the Journal of Aesthetic Nursing has become an invaluable resource, providing evidence-based and peer-reviewed content on key treatment areas, from cosmetic injectables to light-based therapies. The journal also explores crucial professional issues, such as revalidation and accreditation. Picking up the journal just once a month helps to keep practitioners up to date and enables them to feel included in an ever-changing industry.

To hear their thoughts on the aesthetics sector, PIAPA posed some questions to Aesthetic Response director, Gilly Dickons, and Journal of Aesthetic Nursing editor, Natasha Devan.

What’s the most vital advice you would offer to an independent practitioner?

Natasha: Read as much as you can and always look for the evidence base behind treatments. There’s always new procedures and products coming out, and the only way to decipher whether they are worth offering is if there is evidence to show their efficacy and outcomes. Aesthetics is all about attracting patients who will become loyal to your service, and the best way to do that is to offer treatments that have been proven to get results.

Gilly: A practitioner needs be able to juggle many roles, including injecting, HR, accounting, call handling, marketing, PR and planning. Based on this reality, I would suggest that they focus on what they are good at and free up the time to maximise on this strength by outsourcing or employing people with relevant experience wherever possible.

How would you improve the aesthetics sector?

Natasha: I would encourage practitioners to undertake more research in the same way as health professionals from other specialties do. I think it is important for all practitioners to experience critique of their practice to reflect and improve on their skills, and in turn enhance outcomes for patients. It is also essential for practitioners who are often isolated to be challenged.

Gilly: This is an exciting sector to work in and in reality is still in its infancy. There needs to be more focus and value placed on business skills to help practitioners to grow strong, sustainable businesses in this increasingly competitive market. Also, there is a need for regulation, not only to protect the consumer, but also to support and place value on skilled medical practitioners in their role offering aesthetic treatments.

What are your thoughts on aesthetic membership groups?

Natasha: Membership groups are vital for networking and sharing knowledge. In a field where many are practising alone without the support of peers, these groups can offer great support and inspiration. Conferences and regional meetings give practitioners a golden opportunity to build regional support networks and learn from those who are experienced in treatments they would like to know more about.

Gilly: The support that can be found in membership groups is of immense value to practitioners who would otherwise be quite isolated in their roles. The sharing of best practice can only be good for the sector as a whole.

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