

Emerging from 2020 – positive stories from the world of aesthetics

BY PAM UNDERDOWN

2020 was the year of shifting our mindset, pivoting our business and our priorities, whilst quickly adapting and responding to change, uncertainty and negativity. For some, this past year brought extraordinary hardship and suffering and for others, unexpected, but welcome opportunities. Most of us have probably experienced a mixture of both. No matter how you were impacted in your business, or your home life, 2020 was a year that no one could have foreseen.

If I had one objective for you in 2021, it would be to make your business as immune as possible to the ups and downs of lockdowns, global pandemics and the economy.

The aesthetic business owners who have made it through this year with minimal strain knew something key to this:

1. How you run your business in the good times dictates how well you survive the bad times.
2. You can – and should – always plan for the unexpected so that you can pivot when the world throws its curveballs at you.

In this article I would like to introduce you to two of our amazing clients who have used both lockdowns in 2020 as opportunities to learn, change, grow and adapt both their business and their mindset. They will share their learnings, insights and experience on how they didn't just survive the last 12 months but thrived through it. I hope that the following helps to strengthen the 'immunity' of your business in 2021.

Julie Scott, owner of Facial Aesthetics with 25 years of cosmetic experience, says:

"Prior to the first lockdown, I had not had more than a two-week break from treating patients in over a decade. So, needless to say, being closed and not being able to inject was alien to me! Having a drive and focus is so ingrained in me that being told I couldn't operate my business for the foreseeable future filled me with dread. Knowing this, I realised I could go one of two ways: curl up and feel sorry for myself or turn the situation around and look at it as an exciting challenge. I made a very bold statement at the beginning of that lockdown that I was not going to let it define me. From that moment on, I decided to become an even more creative thinker and focus not on what I couldn't do but on what I could do.

My first focus was how effectively my team and I could stay in touch and connected with our patients. We digressed from solely clinical content and connected with patients on a more human level through videos on various social media platforms. The aim was to start relevant and hopefully engaging conversations that would lift people's spirits. For those patients that don't get involved on social media, we sent out a weekly 'Touching Base Tuesday' e-newsletter compiling all the content we'd created over the last seven days along with any updates as to the business or reopening. For our most loyal patients, we posted out a small care package with hand sanitiser and other goodies and sent them checking-in texts throughout the summer. This way we felt we were trying to communicate in every way possible to reach our patients, and

we made it clear that patients could reach out to us at any time as well. And in fact, during the more monotonous weeks, several patients did call just for a chat!

In terms of developing content, we brainstormed what our patients might like to hear about, read about or find out about during lockdown, remembering to be sensitive to the mood. Therefore, our content mainly revolved around self-care, and our patients seemed to devour the tips, tricks and product recommendations we provided. And like many other clinics, we offered Zoom or Skype discussions for both existing and new patients – not to be confused with consultations as this is something that can only be done face-to-face in my opinion. Between the social content, virtual chats and individual connections we made, we maintained patient loyalty, ensured our books were full upon reopening, and generated enough retail sales to keep us on track for our yearly targets despite the four-month closure.

So that was how we worked IN the business, but this was also a golden opportunity to work ON the business. Therefore, the other way that we used this opportunity was to assess all the gaps and leaks that were in our systems, and then plug those leaks. We analysed our processes and streamlined them for when we reopened, including making changes in how we document paperwork, manage the diary and keep the clinic clean. We also began the process of raising the bar and registering our clinic with the CQC, whilst I personally had the time to complete the work for my Level 7 qualification in Injectables for Aesthetic Medicine. We even had the opportunity to enter the Aesthetics Awards and were

thrilled to find out later in the year we had been shortlisted. Finding the time for these tasks would have seemed impossible under normal, busy circumstances, so we took advantage of this gift of time.

Lastly, this was the perfect opportunity to strengthen relationships within the aesthetics industry. I pitched articles to journals and was thankful when companies not only wanted me to write but produce educational videos and get involved in webinars too. It was wonderful to be able to give back to suppliers and training companies and offer them support during a time that was incredibly challenging for them as well. But of course, all of this positive creativity was underpinned by the support and encouragement that I received from my colleagues – especially my business coaches Pam Underdown and her husband and business partner Adam. Without them, their ongoing personal guidance and support and weekly connection calls with the rest of their client group, there would have been a much steeper hill to climb.

When the effects of this pandemic really began to sink in, I said that I would not allow it to define me or my business. However, writing this reflection I take that back... it did define us. It defined us by showing that we are resilient, focused and that we will always find the positive in any situation. When the clinic reopened in July, we welcomed back our wonderful, loyal patients, and have continued to be incredibly busy and consistent since then. When we closed the year in December, I looked at all our achievements during 2020 – and it was with very proud eyes!"



<https://facialaesthetics.co.uk>

Dr Mayoni Gooneratne, owner of The Clinic by Dr Mayoni, says:

"Lockdown for me set me off into my 'doing mode' and I was most content doing that since it meant I didn't have to actually 'be' with what was going on. It was a terrifying time for my family who are all doctors, and of course for my young family. However, after the dust settled, we fell into a comfortable familiarity with the imprisonment of the gentle walls of our home. The morning began with slow cuddles and talking. Words of sadness and honesty exchanged between both my husband and me and our three children. The reality of not seeing their beloved grandparents. Or teachers or friends. The real was replaced by virtual.

For me, my attention went from the doing, to suddenly settling into a daily Zoom with my team at 10am. Initially it was to share mutual stories and understand each other's shock. Then this gave way to a reliance on each other and the familiarity of the regular

informal catch ups and some training. We each took it in turns to read and present a journal article we had read. I presented a new topic of the week. And then I would also invite various brands to talk and teach us about topics we would never have had the time to cover normally.

It was a time for learning about the virus, how my business was doing and who was really who in my team. It sorted out the 'wheat from the chaff' across the world, I think. It made us realise what was important. My staffing experiences have resulted in me making some radical changes to how we run the clinic and it has also inspired me to set up a training academy.

Together with the world, I had to take a long look at how my business would survive. I also wanted to ensure that it would serve my community better. I needed to morph and grow and provide services that we really needed within the local area. Virtual consults became our norm,

and this generated a significant revenue from skincare sales, and still does. We also could reach much more remote audiences and my furthest patient is in the Outer Hebrides! Luckily, she's patient when it comes to postage.

I have also gone on to create Human Health which is a range of services to maximise my patients' wellbeing. We will be launching in the coming weeks.

Lockdown has also given me the chance to look at what my five-year business and personal goals are. Working together with Pam and Adam has given me the tools to really lever my life and business in the direction I want it to go. I am sure there are many more bumps in the road, but the work we have done together has brought me closer to trying to future proof my businesses as much as possible."



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As we all know, the world has shifted in ways that no one could have imagined, and for Julie and Mayoni, that shift presented a moment of reckoning: one that has challenged and tested them – and ultimately enabled them to emerge stronger, happier and more purposeful (and profitable) than ever.

As they start implementing their 2021 annual plans, Julie and Mayoni can clearly see the indelible lessons of the last year. They have discovered the depths of their strengths and weaknesses, and now, they can set goals that are reflective of those. They have learned the advantage of being nimble and responsive, but most importantly, they have proven to themselves that they are more than capable of navigating discomfort.

Their secret? They made their desired end outcome significantly bigger than

the obstacles standing in their way. Their new confidence, focus and determination reminds me of a powerful saying: "The life you're living today is a reflection of the decisions you were making five years ago. The life you'll be living in five years will reflect the decisions you're making today." Julie and Mayoni (and indeed all our clients) have a deeper understanding of and appreciation for those words now.

As we emerge from this long winter, please do remember that even the hard lessons – the ones that push you to discover what you're capable of achieving when things go sideways – are something to be grateful for. What have you learned about yourself through this time? And what are you going to do with that new knowledge as you work to reshape and replan for the remainder of 2021?

I wish you the very best of success and every happiness for 2021 and beyond!

AUTHOR



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