

# From clinician to creator: taking your brand to the next level through experience-based marketing

BY BLAIR FRENCH

**Woman with Plastic Surgery “addiction” on how it nearly destroyed her marriage (and her face)**

Huffington Post, 4 November 2015

**Cosmetic Crisis Waiting to Happen**

BBC News, 23 April 2012

**I was blinded by fillers: One woman’s horrifying story of what can happen when an anti-wrinkle injection goes wrong**

Daily Mail Online, 10 September 2015

Stories such as the ones mentioned above are uncommon in the aesthetics industry, but you would never know it from reading the papers or watching the news. Nothing spikes ratings like outrage, and unfortunately, happy, healthy patients rarely make headlines.

New patients entering your clinic come armed with an opinion of you, your practice, and the aesthetics industry as a whole. And with most media coverage focused on the dangers of medical aesthetics, it’s crucial for clinicians to enter the conversation proactively through the development of strong brand communications.

I began my career working in the luxury hospitality industry, where I learned a great deal about the fastest way to hotwire a connection with one’s brand community: experiential marketing. Years later when I began my role as VP of Marketing at Intraline Medical Aesthetics, I committed myself to putting these same principles into practice to gain market share for our company while building lasting relationships with our clientele. Today, I’m excited to share a five-step strategy that can help your brand to do the same.

To begin, let’s take a look at what the term experiential marketing means.

## See for yourself

While traditional marketing (for instance, print ads, radio, or television) seeks to communicate your brand values



to clients through visual and verbal cues, experiential marketing allows the consumer to *experience* the brand through the optimisation of real-life interactions. It’s the difference between someone telling you a story versus being there in the flesh; you may trust the storyteller but there’s no shadow of a doubt when you were physically there to watch it all unfold.

The good news is that, as a clinician, there are a multitude of opportunities for new and existing patients to experience your brand essence. Every time your product or service comes into contact with an individual, you have the opportunity to create a consumer experience – positive or negative. Leave no stone unturned; taking advantage of every touch point with your brand community to provide a consistently strong representation of your brand values will not only drive new business to your clinic, but keep patients coming back for the long-term.

## Step 1: Do your homework

As a clinician, you are a brand. Your clinic is a brand. And the experience you offer is your brand essence. This ranges from your visual marketing cues (logos, website, business cards, patient

treatment take-home info, etc.), to your interior office décor, to the ‘vibe’ your patients feel when they walk through your doors. Take the time to clearly define your brand before trying to communicate your message to your core audience.

The first and most crucial component of this step is to determine your ideal patient. Think age group, socio-economic demographic, gender and style aesthetic. You want to define your ideal patient with broad enough strokes that several different types of individuals can fall within the category, while also narrowing your vision enough that you can speak to your audience with a singular, coherent message.

Next, analyse your competitors. There are over 8000 facilities in the UK performing aesthetic treatments, and, as Anthony Robbins says, “success leaves clues.” Take stock of what has worked for your competitors and find ways to improve upon their strategies and customise to suit your needs. You may consider also examining leading brands in other industries – particularly those that share your target audience. How have they succeeded in connecting with their brand community, and how could you put this into practice within your own

marketing strategy?

One of the most valuable tools that you have at your fingertips is the opinion of your existing clientele. Consider asking patients to conduct a customer survey.

Ask questions such as:

- What three words come to mind when you hear our clinic name?
- What do you most enjoy about your experience at our clinic?
- What could we improve upon?
- What celebrity do you think best represents our company?

If you're uneasy about 'bothering' patients by asking them to fill out the survey, consider offering an incentive: for instance, being entered into a draw for a prize or a discounted treatment. Keep in mind as well that in asking for your patients' opinions, you're engaging them in the creation of your brand. Letting patients know that their opinion matters is an excellent way to increase their interest and investment in your brand.

## Step 2: Define your brand personality

Once you've completed step 1, you will have a rough outline of your 'buyer persona'. You may find it helpful at this point to identify a celebrity whom you feel personifies your ideal patient. Assigning a face to your buyer persona provides a visual cue to ensure that everyone on your team is on the same page about your target market. For instance, a more youthful brand might identify with Jennifer Lawrence, and a more distinguished brand with Cate Blanchett.

Now is the time to dig deep and assess your ideal patient's goals, desires and affinities. The idea here is to determine your ideal patient's needs – both as a consumer and as an emotional being – and meet those needs at every opportunity. Develop a set of 'feelings' that you would like to foster in your patients before, during, and after every interaction with your business, and think about ways in which you can encourage these emotions.

One way to accomplish this is to begin by identifying all the contact points you have with new and existing clients. Your list might include your website, telephone bookings, appointment reminders, post-treatment literature, as well as in-person interactions before, during, and after treatments. Add value to each of these touch points by ensuring that your messaging is consistent across all platforms. Provide staff with 'speaking points' to work with when interacting with clients, and communicate to all



team members their important role in 'bringing the brand to life'.

## Step 3: Create distinction in your brand

Differentiating your brand from that of your competitors is crucial to your company's success. One of the simplest ways to do this is to determine the most important aspects of your brand and amplify them.

A case in point: Mandarin Oriental Hotels was struggling to differentiate their brand in an industry where many competitors closely shared their offering – great locations, excellent suites, and first-rate service. One unique aspect of the Mandarin brand was their celebrity clientele. Subsequently, Mandarin launched an ad campaign featuring everyone from Lucy Liu to Helen Mirren to Morgan Freeman, effortlessly communicating the idea that Mandarin's hotel experience represents five-star service at its finest.

## Step 4: Start to build your brand elements

It's important that you have thoroughly completed steps one to three before beginning this step. Doing your homework first will ensure that every single detail of your branding is on strategy and aligned with your goals. Even if you're working with a designer or ad agency to bring your brand vision to fruition, you'll need to have some basic direction to set them on the right path. I recommend you begin by considering these five fundamental elements:

### Brand lexicon

What words would you like to associate with your brand? What words would you like to steer away from? For instance, at Intraline we prefer not to use the word 'change' in association with our treatments, choosing instead words like 'improve', 'enhance', or 'correct'.

### Colour palette

At this stage it's helpful to look again to other brands you feel have succeeded in their messaging. Choose colours that are easy to replicate across a number of different mediums and stay away from trends. Take a look at [www.pantone.com](http://www.pantone.com) for inspiration.

### Fonts

This is one area where 'less' is always 'more'. Don't be tempted by that swirly calligraphy font – it may not apply well to smaller type or multiple mediums. Go classic and clean and you won't be disappointed. Visit [www.fonts.com](http://www.fonts.com) to get a sense of what's current.

### Image library

Comb through stock photography sites such as [www.istock.com](http://www.istock.com) and pick out a few images that convey the feelings you're trying to evoke in your branding. Choose clean, bright, and uncomplicated imagery.

### Logo

Your logo is one of the most important things that you will need to create. You'll want to keep this design very simple as it will need to be used across so many different platforms. Avoid too many colours or complicated drawings with too much detail. There's a reason why so many successful brands use a simple, typographical logo.

## Step 5: Develop a strategic direction

Now that you have a solid foundation developed for your branding, it's time to plan out the ways in which your brand essence will be communicated to your audience. When rolling out your marketing strategy, remember: it's better to do less, well, than it is to do more, poorly. Avoid getting overwhelmed with complicated media buys too early; focus instead on taking off manageable bites and building your marketing slowly.

### Head to the web

What do patients do when they begin considering a cosmetic treatment? They Google it. In today's marketplace, having a web presence is a must, making your website an excellent place to begin rolling out your brand communications. When creating your website, focus on these four areas:

#### Visual design

Have you ever visited a website that was so confusing, you didn't know where to look? Keep the visual elements of the site clean and simple to avoid confusion. Your design should utilise your brand colour palette, imagery and fonts in a way that elicits the emotional response you're seeking from your ideal patient. The design should also be easily navigable. Remember the 'three click rule': If a person must click more than three times to find the answer they're looking for, they're more likely to leave the site and search elsewhere.

#### Content

Providing your audience with valuable content is the easiest way to position your brand as a 'trusted advisor' while also increasing readers' length of stay on your site. Consider updating your content often as this will assist in your Google rankings (i.e. make it more likely that patients will be able to find you via Google). Writing a blog that shares news, events, additional training you are undergoing, and even

before / after photos is an excellent way to accomplish content goals.

#### Calls to action

Begin with the end in mind. To which section would you like to guide patients on the website? For instance, if you want patients to book a consultation, then make sure that the path to the booking page is clearly defined and easily accessible. This area of web design is called UX or User Experience and it is worth working with a reputable web development company in order to orchestrate it properly.

#### Credibility

It is important for you as a clinician to showcase your training, as well as your team's. Create a 'Team' or 'About' page that highlights your team's accomplishments and professional backgrounds. Don't forget to include links to relevant published journal articles or professional affiliations that will affirm your professionalism to your clientele.

Now that you've built an incredible website, you can begin to connect with your audience on a more regular basis via social media. There's no need to be overwhelmed with numerous channels; at first, simply begin with one (Facebook and Twitter are the most common). Wondering what to write? Sharing links to new content on your website and current news about the company are both excellent ways to begin.

### Don't stop

Once you've implemented your brand strategy, continue to push your team to develop new and exciting ways to add value for your clientele. Think full-cycle, and remember that your relationship with a patient does not end after they've finished their treatment.

Keep patients returning to your practice for the long-term by reinforcing the emotional bond at contact points between visits. Automatic follow-up emails containing post-treatment care information are an excellent way to remind patients that you care about their wellbeing after the point of purchase, and it's interactions such as these that turn a one-time patient into a lifelong brand ambassador likely to refer friends and colleagues to your practice for years to come.



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