



In-Office Marketing Strategies

Technological advances mean that today's business owners have effective ways to attract, manage and maintain clients. This article takes a look at two of the most important tools for medspas—on-hold messages and educational video loops.

Photo: Brooks Ayala

By Chelan David

Medical aesthetics businesses use a variety of marketing approaches to bring in new patients/clients. Once the phones start ringing and the waiting room fills, the challenge is to manage and maintain those clients. How do you educate new and potential clients on all of the services you have to offer?

“Focusing on education rather than procedures will allow a facility to build the long-lasting relationships that are essential for sustained prosperity in this business,” advises Janette Daher, director of education and consulting services for The Ageless Aesthetic Institute (www.agelessaestheticinstitute.com).

Two of the best ways to communicate with patients on all of the services you have available are on-hold messaging systems and in-office informational videos.

On-Hold Messages

“Technology is redefining how products and services are marketed,” says Rick Hodges, president of Audio Marketing Systems and VoicePaint (www.voicepaint.com), and the current president of the International On-Hold Messaging Association. “On-hold messaging is a vital service for retaining and educating callers. Companies spend countless hours and dollars getting their phones to ring and yet they’re often ill-equipped to handle the calls once they come in.”

A CNN survey found that the average hold time when calling a company with two or more telephone lines is 55 seconds, and 90% of those callers hang up within 40 seconds if there isn’t something to engage their attention while they wait.

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According to Michael Dougherty, president of MJD Patient Communications (www.mjdp.com), “message on-hold systems are a great addition to any practice. The machines hardly ever break down and your messages don’t have to go out of date.” He says that “good

sages can be changed for only \$595. That means you could recoup your costs if just one patient makes an appointment based on the message.”

“The initial investment for an on-hold messaging system is small when you consider its potential to generate new patients and addition-

“All medical spas and laser centers should have an on-hold message that states the hours of operation, describes services and products offered, and gives background information on the medical director and facility,” states Daher.

“The key to a great on-hold messaging program is custom content,” adds Armentrout. “We encourage clients to choose information, content and music that reflect their practice image. Callers should feel they are getting to know the practice and physicians better every time they listen to an on-hold message. This makes them more likely to try, re-visit and refer.”

Choosing a company. “Today’s cutting-edge on-hold systems are developed using digital technology. The clearest, most professional-sounding, most reliable systems are designed with digital flash memory,” says Armentrout. “They also have the ability to retain message content during power loss.”

Dougherty recommends that medspas purchase on-hold systems from a company that specializes in medical and spa procedures. “They will know how to write a script that will produce results for you,” Dougherty says. He also suggests avoiding production contracts—if the company you buy from doesn’t write good messages, you can still go to someone who will.

“On-hold messages should inform and move listeners to act—without sounding like a sales pitch,” continues Dougherty.

Like Dougherty, Mitchell and Armentrout advise practice administrators to work with a company with expertise in medical aesthetics. “The medspa should choose four treatments they want to promote and let the company create a professional recording,” Mitchell says.

But this doesn’t mean that you or your staff should write on-hold messaging programs, advises

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scripts work even though most patients are only on hold for an average of 32 seconds. On-hold messages let patients know they are still connected to your office and keep them informed about your procedures and product offers. If only

al treatment acceptance among patients,” says Neil Armentrout, president and CEO of TeleVox (www.televox.com). “Generating even one additional cosmetic treatment as a result of a caller hearing an on-hold message would cover the cost of a Vox On-Hold system. Callers who are listening to engaging messages are more likely to remain on the line and less likely to be annoyed at being asked to hold. It is an effortless way to subtly promote your practice. Marketing messages are better received when mixed in with messages about office policies and information about the doctors and other personnel.”

Message content. The messages should promote the facility’s experience and inform listeners of past results, says Margaret Mitchell, president of Aesthetic Marketing Concepts (www.aestheticmarketing.com) based in Marietta, Georgia. While you will want to occasionally change the message to add new procedures, and may want to highlight a special promotion every now and then, for the most part the information should be durable. “In addition, the message needs to encourage the listener to schedule a consultation when the receptionist comes back on the line,” says Mitchell.



Photo: Maria Tejero/Digital Vision/Getty Images

▲ On-hold messages should inform and move listeners to action—without sounding like a sales pitch.

1 of 10 patients says, ‘I would like to know more about a procedure,’ or ‘I didn’t know you offered that,’ then the system is helping your practice grow.”

“On-hold messages are an inexpensive way to promote specials and seasonal offers,” adds Harvey Schmitt of Practice Profits (www.practiceprofitsinc.com). “Our mes-

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Armentrout. "Look for a provider with in-house scriptwriters who can consult with the practice for necessary information and then completely develop custom messages," he says. "Additionally, it is important to think about the longevity of your messages. Ideally, you want to purchase a system that can be used for years to come. Make sure you know the length of the on-hold program that you are receiving with the system. If the programs are too short, callers are more likely to hear the same message each time they call, giving the program a shorter shelf-life."

Finally, be aware that on-hold message systems need to be integrated into your phone system. "We usually walk the owner through that process," says Schmitt, "but sometimes we have to get the equipment manufacturer involved. It's a good idea

for the practice administrator to find out up front what is involved in integrating an on-hold messaging system with the current telephone equipment."

Informative Videos

"Every day your waiting room is full of patients who have come in search of your expertise. All you have to do is let them know about the sophisticated procedures available right there in your office," says Daniel Leonard, president of New Century Medical Productions (www.ncmproductions.com) in St. Cloud, Minnesota. "Up to 90% of your patients do not know one-fourth of the procedures available to them at your office. This can all change easily by providing your clinic with a waiting room video loop."

Video loops range in price from under \$100 for a slide presentation to more than \$50,000 for a customized film showing the physicians and staff of a particular facility at work on a wide range of procedures.

"A comprehensive film loop can cost \$10,000," says Schmitt, "but that cost is negligible compared to the losses you incur every day by not telling patients about services other than the one that prompted their visit. Unlike a printed brochure, which the patient has to read, the video loop provides information to the passive patient in the guise of entertainment. All of my clients, without exception, tell me that they have patients continually thanking them for letting them know about other procedures via video loops in their waiting rooms."

Video content. A picture is worth a thousand words and many patients wait up to 35 minutes in the reception area. "Keep your presentation simple and easy to understand," advises Dougherty. "Avoid flashy graphics that can distract from the message."

"A professional looping video is



▲ On-hold systems need to be integrated with your phone system.

Courtesy Aesthetic Marketing Concepts

key," says Leonard. "Not only does it look very professional in waiting rooms and/or exam rooms but, more importantly, a properly designed looping video provides patients with information on your specific services and expertise."

"Doctors spend their lives gathering information," notes Schmitt. "They tend to want to show their procedures in detail. We advise against that. Your video loop needs to be more like a commercial, designed to get patients to ask for more. Once you have their buy in, you can show them more if they want to know. Our marketing research indicates that patients really don't want to know all of the gory details. They just want to know that the procedure can solve their problem. Too much detail in a video loop can actually chase patients away."

"All of our video segments last two minutes or less because we have found that it is very difficult to hold someone's attention for longer," continues Schmitt. "In that two-minute segment we present the problem, introduce the solution and prompt the person to some kind of action. You can tell when a video loop is doing what it should by the questions you get from patients."

Dougherty further advises that you should avoid sound. "Silent presentations with text tend to keep viewers engaged—they must actively participate by reading the text messages that accompany the footage." Furthermore, unsolicited, repetitive sound or voice can have an undesirable effect on staff and patients alike.

Do the procedures shown on the loop need to be done by



Courtesy Televox

▲ Great on-hold messages reflect the image of your practice.

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Show and Tell

Another new marketing tool for medspas and aesthetics practices is Spot Runner, a relatively inexpensive way to promote your services on television. Here's how it works: A business owner goes to the Spot Runner website (www.spotrunner.com), chooses a business category and selects from among the generic, pre-taped video ads with pre-written voiceover text. The copy can be customized to communicate the appropriate message. Once the ad has been determined, Spot Runner formulates a media plan based on how much the business would like to spend on airtime and which media markets it wants to reach. Spot Runner then completes the necessary production work, buys airtime and delivers the video directly to the applicable stations. While Spot Runner provides an affordable outlet to get a generic advertisement out to the public, experts offer some cautions. "To avoid confusion, aesthetic business owners need to get a guarantee from Spot Runner that competing businesses will not be allowed to use the same message in the same market(s) for a specified time," explains Janette Daher, director of education and consulting services for The Ageless Aesthetic Institute. Overall, though, Daher considers Spot Runner a good marketing vehicle. The professionally produced ads cost as little as \$500; the cost for airtime varies depending on the markets you want to reach.

someone on your staff? Some doctors think so, and there are companies that will come to your practice and film you and your staff doing whatever procedures you want to show. This option

boomers than any other demographic segment," says Daher. Of course there are other important market segments as well. Acne treatments and hair removal procedures, for example, tend to be

“Some doctors think it’s important that the video show them and their staff at work, but the cost of this can be huge—\$20,000 or more.”

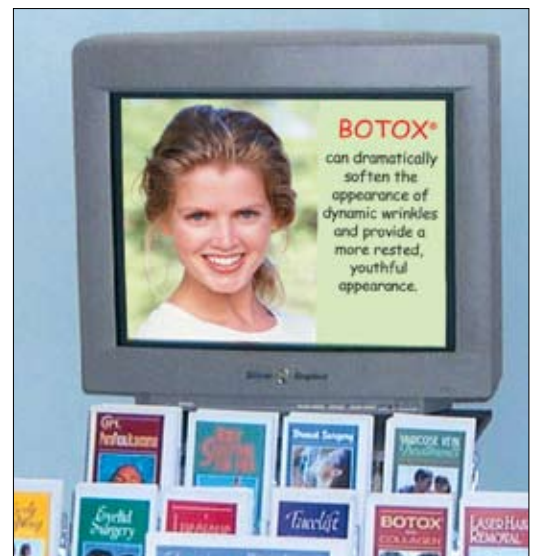
is much more expensive than a video loop that uses generic footage and adds an introduction and pertinent information about your business.

“Some doctors think it’s important that the video show them and their staff at work, but the cost of this can be huge—\$20,000 or more,” says Schmitt. “Another consideration is that the end product is less flexible. If the technology changes and the film must be updated a few years later, it will be hard to edit in new film of the doctor whose looks have changed. Generic film footage can be updated more easily and much less expensively.” Unless you have a signature procedure that isn’t covered by any off-the-shelf professional video, the additional expense of starring in your own video production may not be worth the cost.

When choosing the services you feature in your video loop, consider the demographics of your patients. “The likelihood of converting the interest or preference into a sale is higher among baby

popular with younger consumers. Keep different patient groups in mind when deciding which services you will feature.

Choosing a company. The video you show clients needs to convey the same image that your facility as a whole is striving to project. There are several firms that specialize in creating videos for medical spas, and some device companies have professional footage of treatments available that can be strung together as a loop video. The first question is whether the company can provide video of the procedures you want to show



▲ MJD Patient Communications offers more than 75 procedure presentations.

Plug and play video loops like these from MJD Patient Communications can be used throughout your facility. ➤



and whether the images meet your standards for content and quality.

"You're better off choosing a company that creates a variety of customer pieces rather than one that just does videos," says Schmitt, "because it will probably do a better job of informing your patients. With any marketing piece, whether it's a brochure or a video loop, you must first capture the patient's attention, inform them in an entertaining way and then encourage them to act.

"Be sure to work with a company that excels at content and offers quality," Schmitt continues. "Content is the accurate portrayal of the procedures or services. Quality refers to the clarity of the picture and the images included. People are acutely aware of quality these days, and your patients

will judge your professionalism in part by the quality of the video loop you show in your waiting room."

Cost is another consideration. Prices vary widely but so does the quality of the video loops available. Do your homework before making a decision. And don't forget to consider costs for updating the video loop. You are sure to want to add new procedures and information as you grow.

"One of the services we offer is a 12-month warranty that gives a practice the ability to make changes as the business evolves," says Schmitt. "During that first year, we can add new treatments and take out any that aren't having an impact on your patients.

We can also add and delete staff bios. In addition, we offer a subscription service that lets you continue to get limited free updates even after the first year."

If you make a significant investment in a professional video loop that truly reflects your practice, you will want to make sure you work with a company that will be around to provide you with updates and ongoing needs. Investigate the track record of any company you work with and don't hesitate to ask for references. ✦

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