

**SPECIAL REPORT**



# Welcome to the 'next normal'

AS THE AESTHETICS INDUSTRY SLOWLY STARTS TO GET BACK ON ITS FEET POST-COVID-19, NEW YORK MARKETING EXPERT WENDY LEWIS SAYS YOUR PATIENTS NEED EMPATHY AND NEW WAYS OF COMMUNICATION MORE THAN EVER.



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**A**s people all over the world conclude their periods of social distancing and isolation, it is clear that the coronavirus pandemic has left its mark on our physical, mental and emotional health. The so-called “new normal” or “next normal,” as you prefer, has left many of us living with heightened stress levels, longer work hours, increased feelings of hopelessness, and questioning everything we once held dear.

Few to no practitioners were prepared to face the unprecedented environment brought on by COVID-19. Those who have reacted quickly and incorporated strategies

to adapt to the vast changes they are faced with will emerge successfully and be well-positioned to thrive in the future.

## The E word

As the next normal has emerged, I have been impressed that most people have shown unexpected resilience. Many of us have been willing to adopt long-term behavioural changes that will last well beyond this period. We have learned how to properly wash our hands, open doors with our elbows, and sneeze and cough into our arms.

## • AESTHETIC PRACTICES NEED TO RISE TO MEET THE CHALLENGES WE NOW FACE. THE BEST WAY IS TO TAKE STOCK OF YOUR ENTIRE BUSINESS MODEL FROM THE GROUND UP. •

We have adapted to sheltering in place, working from home, living in workout clothes rather than heels and designer outfits, home schooling one or many children, foregoing dining out or meeting for drinks, going to the gym, and having a vacation. We have also gone without manis/pedis, hair appointments, and neurotoxins for weeks to months which has left some of us unrecognisable.

Moreover, we have also become more charitable and kinder to each other. Family and friends have emerged as most important. Living in New York City, where kindness is not our strong suit, it has been a welcome change. Showing empathy for others is actually very underrated. My hope is that this change will stay with us for awhile at least.

The same is true for aesthetic practices. Your patients need to know that you genuinely care about them. Empathy should resonate throughout your patient communications, social media and all marketing, as well as the care you provide. If you think there is room for improvement in this area, now is the time to make improvements because patients need some extra TLC more than ever.

### Planning for success

Aesthetic practices need to rise to meet the challenges we are now faced with.

In my view, the best approach is to take stock of your entire business model from the ground up. Think of this period as an ideal opportunity to

develop strategies that will ultimately make your practice stronger.

COVID-19 has necessitated that all practices will need to make changes that may range from structural to reconfiguring your space. For example, waiting rooms may become obsolete in the age of social distancing.

Do some real soul searching. Do you have the right team on board? How can you tighten your belt to be more profitable? Look at your clinic objectively. Does it look like an aesthetic practice or is it outdated and showing signs of wear? Next, do a competitive analysis. Take stock of the treatments and products you have on offer. Is anything missing that you should add to be competitive in your market? Are there products or equipment that you can't sell or don't use? See if you can trade them in for something that will work better.

Now, review all of your marketing materials from your clinic website and branding (logo, colours) to social media channels and e-blasts, etc. Convert print materials to digital to meet the new patient demands.

Be mindful of the need for making your clinic more efficient through the use of technology. Add a chatbot to your website to answer patient questions 24/7, for example. Strive for a no-touch or low-touch clinic, which entails removing clutter, brochures, product testers and eliminating as many hard surfaces as possible that need to be continually disinfected after patients touch them.

### Future of aesthetics

Consumers are looking for critical milestones to resume their former activities with ease, such as large group gatherings, long trips and crowded recreational facilities.

The absolute fact is that many are waiting for medical authorities to signal their approval of treatments to combat the coronavirus, and a vaccine to come to market. If that happens in 2021, the long recovery we are facing now may come full circle in a much shorter timeframe. However, it's too early to hang on to the hope that a vaccine will be widely available that soon, or ever for that matter. In the meantime, try to strike a balance between what worked before and what needs to be changed now to succeed in the next normal.

One thing is certain; vanity is built into the human condition. We can count on consumers having an insatiable appetite for self-improvement, age-reversing and beautifying therapies. This will never change. Therefore, the aesthetics industry will surely come back better and stronger in the near future. We just have to make good decisions to hang on through this transition period.

I look forward to seeing you on the other side. **AMP**