

Don't you know who I am?

RAISING YOUR PERSONAL PROFILE WITHIN THE INDUSTRY CERTAINLY HAS ITS PERKS, BUT MAKE SURE YOU'RE KNOWN FOR ALL THE RIGHT REASONS, SAYS **KATE DONOVAN**

Reality television of the *Big Brother* variety has nurtured a new breed of "celebrity". Seeking fame for notoriety's sake, some of the contestants appear to crave attention to such an extent that they risk making themselves fair game, and their private lives tabloid-fodder.

As a result, the press has become further empowered and its ability to make, then break a career or personality more apparent.

For aesthetic medicine practitioners looking to raise their profile, both with the public and their peers, it is vital to remember that by carving a prominent position for yourself, you are automatically laid bare to scrutiny. However, it is also important to understand

that avoiding networking, knowledge sharing and other profile-raising opportunities can be detrimental to your business and to your professional development.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

When approached cautiously, being well known can have numerous benefits both for your business and the industry as a whole.

Increasing awareness of your work and practice can be achieved in numerous ways. Networking is essential, and being overly protective of your work and knowledge can impact negatively on your success. Dr Patrick Bowler, cosmetic doctor, director of Court House Clinics and co-founder of the British Association of Cosmetic Doctors (BACD), says, "The biggest

pitfall is to be blinkered and isolated, which is a danger to the professional and clients alike."

Networking opportunities are easy to come by, and include attending conferences and exhibitions, becoming active within associations and entering awards.

Contributing to industry journals and magazines will also give you the chance to demonstrate and share the research and work that you are doing. Publishing clinical studies can help raise standards and levels of treatment across the industry.

Bowler himself is no stranger to being recognised both within the industry and outside, thanks to activities such as setting up the BACD with Dr Rita Rakus, and writing his consumer book *The Nervous Girl's Guide to Nip and Tuck*.



USER PROFILE

Via our online poll function, we asked for your thoughts on the best way to raise your personal industry profile, and the results were...

- Contributing to magazines/journals: 37%
- Networking at events: 29%
- Speaking at conferences: 24%
- Entering awards: 10%

Have your say. Vote in our next poll, at www.aestheticmedicineamagazine.co.uk

Dr Patrick Treacy, medical director of the Aitesbury Clinic, warns, too, that the danger of making yourself the star of your clinic is that you potentially create a non-sellable product. Without the endorsement of the well-known clinician, the clinic can possibly lose its value. "If people want, for example, to self-title their clinic, then they should be very careful about their long-term plans," says Treacy.

THE GREATER GOOD

Although involvement with the BACD should be for the right reasons – the good of the industry and patient safety – it can also benefit the profile of you as an individual and that of your practice. Curran says that by being part of the BACD the practitioner adheres to certain standards, a commitment to quality that is recognised by public and peers alike. "Individually it does help when you are promoting yourself," he says. "Patients get the reassurance of knowing that you are a member of the group."

The networking element is also important. Curran says that when you are talking to other members you are always "up-skilling" and "up-learning" and the contacts made can be beneficial for cross-referrals. Getting to know practitioners with the highest standards can boost business both for practices looking for referral partners and individual practitioners looking for business sent their way.

Mark Haswell, a specialist prosthodontist with a special interest in dental implants and a partner at Stradbroke Dental, understands the need of a high profile for cross-referrals. He says that recommendations rather than advertising are key to building and sustaining a business and so he is dedicated to raising the profile of the practice.

Cross referrals are important for both aesthetic medicine practitioners and aesthetic dentists alike. Uchenna Okoye, cosmetic dentist and clinical director at London Smiling Dental Group, explains that doctors who specialise in fillers, adding facial volume and improving skin health, may be looking for a dentist

to work with to maximise the improvement of an individual's entire facial aesthetics. She emphasises that it is important that aesthetic medicine practitioners trust who they choose to work with. "If you are going to involve someone else in your business, you need to be sure they know what they are doing," she says.

By raising their profile and demonstrating the extent of their facial anatomical, skeletal and muscular understanding, dentists can show aesthetic medicine practitioners the benefits of working together on cases.

Speaking at conferences and in articles will certainly raise a practitioner's profile, but it is vital that you are confident in your ability before taking such a public stance. Treacy says, "If you are going to put your head out there on a parapet, so to speak, you have to be sure of what you are talking about." One inaccurate statement made on stage can have a dire impact on your credibility. Treacy also stresses that earning a place on the speaker circuit won't happen overnight, he says it takes time to gain the trust of your peers.

STRIKE A POSE

Alongside traditional ways of getting yourself known, modern methods can help you to communicate with a whole new audience. Treacy posts videos on content-sharing website YouTube. He says that he does so in order to raise the profile of the industry and boost its positive reputation, especially in light of insufficient regulation.

Cosmetic dentist Okoye has taken part in two series of popular Channel 4 programme *10 Years Younger* with no regrets. She says, "I have been doing this work for 15 years and am doing what I have always done. The only difference is that the cameras are there." Her faith in her own ability is essential on such a public platform and she advises against making television appearances when you are starting out and are not grounded in experience.

Haswell says that although TV appearances are likely to send business in your direction, the nature of the programmes may mean that patient expectations are unrealistically high.

Raising your profile both within the aesthetic medicine industry and to the public can have benefits for improving standards and technique, boosting the profile of aesthetic medicine with the consumer, and in bringing business to your clinic. However, practitioners must keep their behaviour in check. Curran says, "It is the duty of any doctor who thinks that they are capable of leading on issues of standards, safety and regulation to actually stand up and take action. It is also their duty to make sure they do so with the best intentions, not simply for self-marketing." ■

Also involved in research and studies within the field, Bowler has had five papers published in peer-review journals. "I think this type of work is essential to verify to the public and the medical world that what we do has scientific evidence to back up claims," he says.

Importantly, Bowler stays alert to the scrutiny one opens oneself up to by going public. Getting a name for yourself can draw criticism from those who are less savvy in promoting themselves and their business. Bowler says, "I have certainly experienced some extreme professional jealousy over the last 20 years. I always took the view I must be doing something right to receive such criticism!" Bowler has always been very much in favour of knowledge sharing and suggests that the public demand for cosmetic treatments is such that there will always be plenty of work for highly-trained, industrious professionals.

BY ASSOCIATION

Bowler is among many practitioners who advocate a pro-active approach to involvement with associations. Dr John Curran, cosmetic doctor and former BACD president, has been an active member of the BACD since its beginnings and explains that its work is about raising the profile of aesthetic medicine as an industry rather than those of individuals.