



Three Vital Reasons for Creating the Right Before-and-After Photos

Cheryl Whitman

There are three vital reasons for creating the right before-and-after photos for your website, and for in-practice photo albums. Each of these reasons help bring more business into your practice, and create more satisfaction among patients. In today's intensely-competitive aesthetic market, the importance of having the right photos cannot be overstated.

REASON ONE: CREATING TRUST

For any practice, the most important—and the most risky—patients are first-time patients. They don't know what they're getting into, or what to expect. Not having been treated by the physician, their insecurity over having a first or another aesthetic procedure is compounded by their fear of the unknown... doctor.

Consults are trust-building, but if a prospect hasn't been pre-sold by either a family/friend recommendation or by the practice website, they may not show up at all. An exceptional set of before-and-after photos is a remarkable trust-builder, because, done right, it shows the doctor at his or her best.

However, most websites fail to deliver on "done-right" before-and-after photo galleries, usually by "glamming it up"—using clothes, hair-styling and cosmetics to artificially "enhance" the "after" photos. When people see through this, trust is significantly eroded.

In Hollywood, each movie or television production company has someone on-set who is responsible for what's called "continuity"—to make sure that scenes shot at different times and dates match up. The actress is in the same position on the same set, and she has the same hair-style, the same clothing, the same make-up and the same accessories.

Take a page out of the Hollywood playbook and have someone with a discerning eye make very sure that the ONLY difference between "before" and "after" is the results of the procedure.

Background, clothing, hair and make-up, lighting—all must be the same, with only the procedure highlighting the difference.

That comes across as honest, and it builds credibility.

Two other things you can do is write a sentence or two with each before-and-after, noting the problem—and the solution. This helps prospects better understand what was done, and why. The other credibility-builder—though not always possible—is to have a comment from the patient herself, praising the results and giving her name. If she's willing, don't list her as "J.R. from Oklahoma"... but instead, give her name: "Janet Rankin from Tulsa."

REASON TWO: MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

One of the most significant challenges with new patients is helping them to realistically see what is possible—and at least give her a hint of what is not possible. In sales, and in aesthetics, it is far better to deliver more than the patient expects, rather than over-promising and under-delivering. Effective before-and-after photos allow the doctor to manage expectations during the consult, by pointing out what is possible, while explaining what is not possible.

REASON THREE: ASSISTING PATIENTS IN DECIDING WHAT THEY REALLY WANT

Some patients think they want the moon, the stars and the sun—they think they want an extreme aesthetic make-over. However, an effective before-and-after gallery or photo album allows the doctor to sell the "less is more" approach to a more natural kind of aesthetic procedure.

This may sound like "managing expectation (Reason Two)", but it is both different and vital. Before receiving an aesthetic procedure, the patient should know what she really wants, so she'll be thrilled when the doctor actually delivers on the treatment promise.

CONCLUSION

Creating trust is obviously the most important pre-sale step any doctor must take. Prospects who don't "trust" are unlikely to become patients—and for good reason. While the consult is the ultimate arbiter of trust—where the doctor uses his or her charm, experience, empathy and understanding to create a sense of confidence and trust—without a before-and-after gallery that will help persuade the prospect to call for a consult, business will be lost.

In marketing, this is known as "opportunity cost"—the business and patients you lose when a prospect doesn't call for a consult. A strong before-and-after that is believable, credible and truly informative will overcome the risk of incurring a punitive "opportunity cost" and strengthen your practice as a business. It will create satisfied clients—and that, in turn, creates both return business and valuable patient-to-prospect referrals.

The information found in this article is based on a fuller discussion of this issue found in the latest edition of Cheryl Whitman's ground-breaking book on marketing and managing aesthetic practices, "Beautifully Profitable/Forever Profitable," available from Cheryl's website www.beautifulforever.com or from Amazon.com. ▲