

BLOWING YOUR OWN TRUMPET



If blowing your own trumpet, tooting your own horn, or strumming your own banjo makes you feel uncomfortable, we have good news for you: You don't have to do it.

BY ROD SOLAR AND LAURA LIVESEY

When you started your private practice or clinic, you may have had some concerns or self-doubts. “Can I live up to my patients’ expectations? Will they like me and listen to what I have to say? Am I cool enough to be the owner of a practice?”

The answer to these questions is: Probably not. But the great news is that you don't have to be. In this article, you will learn how to position your patients as the heroes of their stories and position yourself as your patients’ guide. Why? Because of social proof. In other words, “When you say it, it's marketing. When your patient says it, it's true.”

Humans are social animals. As such, we are more likely to do something when someone presents us with evidence that others have done it and have been successful as a result. This behavior is particularly apparent when we are unsure of what to do.

THE INTERVIEWEE-INTERVIEWER RELATIONSHIP

As you undoubtedly remember from any job interview or application process, it can feel incredibly uncomfortable to sit in front of a total stranger and babble on about yourself. Most people would agree that having to sell yourself by highlighting your greatest achievements can feel unnatural and awkward—especially in the medical profession, where such grandstanding can feel unethical. Luckily, the interviewee can showcase his or her thoughtfulness in the question-and-answer section, when

given the opportunity to ask questions about the company.

Let's imagine your website as the interviewee and your patient as the interviewer, except there is neither a question-and-answer section nor friendly chitchat. Your first instinct likely is to flaunt your finest assets and showcase what sets your practice apart from your competitors’ practices. But how do you do so without patients thinking that you are a narcissist? Equally, how do you make a great first impression without leaving everything up to the imagination? The answer is to show the interviewer that you care about him or her and, at the same time, subtly demonstrate how you intend to complement and enhance his or her life. It's a fine line to walk.

Many physician–practice owners attempt to live up to the expectations

that they think their patients have. They think that they need a powerful figurehead plastered all over their website and social media accounts. The sad thing is, many individuals who have aspirations to start their own business will cower away from doing so because they do not want to be in the limelight. They have the great ideas and possess all the necessary skills and knowledge, but the prospect of having to portray themselves as a heroic figurehead makes them feel uneasy and unworthy.

As owners of businesses that help to improve people's lives, cataract and refractive surgeons possess some heroic qualities. Your patients look up to you because you have the ability to bring them out of a disadvantaged or flawed visual state and help them achieve a better quality of life. But you are much humbler and more

AT A GLANCE

- ▶ Cataract surgeons don't have to present themselves as heroic figureheads to attract patients; rather, they should be guides for their patients.
- ▶ To be a guide, make good use of social proof by positioning the patient as the hero, expressing empathy toward patients, and demonstrating competence and authority.
- ▶ Integrating these three social proof techniques into marketing materials can help cataract surgeons to relieve patients of doubt, prove their own value, and show patients that they understand their problems and have the competency to solve them.

selfless than a heroic figurehead: You are a guide.

HOW TO BE THE BEST GUIDE

Position Your Patient as the Hero

Remove yourself from the spotlight. When first visiting your website, patients don't care that you had always dreamed of becoming an eye surgeon or that you have followed in the footsteps of your father. These are nice details for the "About Us" page, but patients haven't come to your website to learn about your personal life. Patients visit your website to see if eye surgery can improve their quality of life. They might be about to embark on a transformative journey of vision correction, and your role is to guide them there.

Map out the patient journey.

Using snappy and emotive statements, demonstrate your ability to reliably take your patients from a frustrated *before* state, to a fulfilled *after* state. (For more information on before and after states, see our article in the July/August issue of *CRST Europe* at bit.ly/1119CRSTESolar.) Feature images of patients in their before state (with glasses) and images of happy patients in their after state (without glasses). This serves two purposes: (1) It helps to create an image in the patient's imagination, and (2) it breaks up blocks of text.

Curate testimonials. Select three of your best patient testimonials to feature on your website, and keep them brief. If you need help curating testimonials, one resource is our Essential Template for Transforming Testimonials Into Leads (<https://www.liveseysolar.com/how-to-get-testimonials/>). According to a Nielsen global study, 92% of people trust recommendations from their peers, and 70% trust a recommendation from someone they don't even know. Be sure to add a high-quality photo to boost perceived credibility.¹ Video testimonials are incomparable when it comes to generating credibility and engagement.

Display patient reviews. According to the Pew Research Center, 82% of Americans read reviews before

making a buying decision.² A healthy mix of positive and negative patient reviews is more trustworthy and can even improve conversions.³

Use influencer endorsements and quote celebrities. As long as you're transparent about it, performing free surgery for people with high social media influence and asking for honest feedback in return is a no-brainer. People tend to transfer the positivity that they associate with a social media influencer onto those who are associated with the influencer. This is called the *halo effect*. If celebrities have raved about a procedure, quote them as ambassadors for the service. Just don't claim credit for doing their surgery if you didn't.

Express Empathy

Another responsibility of the guide is to empathize with patients. When you are feeling sad or frustrated in life, you are not looking for a solution right away—you just need someone to vent to. Using simple but empathetic statements shows patients that you recognize their problems and understand their feelings.

Demonstrate Competence and Authority

Trust can make or break a relationship. To demonstrate that patients can trust you with their eyes, you need to prove it. You can do this by displaying what we call *credibility indicators* on your website in addition to other marketing materials. Credibility indicators include statistics; awards and badges; media mentions, accreditation, and other associative logos; and backing up your claims with studies.

Statistics. The best way to show a potential patient that you're competent is with statistics.

- On your website, you can highlight:
- How many satisfied patients you have helped;
 - How much time you have saved them;
 - How much money you have saved them; and

- Your patients' visual outcomes.

Awards and badges. If you've won awards, including the logos for those awards on the bottom of your website page can quickly signal to your patients that authorities have recognized your special achievements.

Media mentions, accreditation, and other associative logos. If you've worked with institutions or are a member of professional associations, placing these logos on your page provides social proof that you are respected and helpful. Showing how you've been featured in the media can also showcase that publishers value your opinions.

Backing up your claims with studies. More and more people today—especially millennials—are scientifically literate. Expose your visitors to hard facts and numbers backed by expert social proof by footnoting to studies.

CONCLUSION

By integrating the three social proof techniques outlined here into your marketing material, you are relieving your patients of any doubt, you are proving your value, and, most important, you are showing them that you understand their problem and have the competency to solve it—all without blowing your own trumpet. ■

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2. Smith A, Anderson M. Online reviews. Pew Research Center. pewresearch.org/internet/2016/12/19/online-reviews/. December 19, 2016. Accessed November 12, 2019.

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