

## HOW TO RUN A PRIVATE PRACTICE

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Medicine and money are often uneasy bedfellows making the running of a private practice a unique challenge. Combining the highest standards of care and ethical behaviour with income generation and business management in a competitive market place seem almost mutually exclusive goals. A thorough training to acquire competence in all relevant aspects of surgery and a primary motivation to achieve the best possible outcome for each patient is the foundation upon which all else is built. However success also requires careful planning, organisation, patience, commitment, investment and strength of character.

Aesthetic surgery is labour intensive with patients needing a great deal of support before during and after surgery. Consulting rooms (the surgeon's office) should be warm and welcoming rather than overly clinical whilst large enough to incorporate areas for examination, photography, suture removal and secretarial space. Support staff are vital – at least one secretary and one nurse, each competent efficient, reliable, blessed with limitless patience and an easy personality. Such individuals are hard to find! An in-patient and operating facility, as well as fulfilling the necessary technical standards, must be sympathetic to patients undergoing this type of surgery.

Good communication and record keeping are essential. Notes should be typed so as to be legible and clinical photographs well lit and comparable. A system allowing the surgeon to view photographs instantly with a patient is invaluable and easy to achieve in this digital age.

A secure and successful practice takes time to build. It is unwise to overcommit oneself financially at an early stage and so be tempted to operate on unsuitable individuals. Marketing and advertising may have a place in the modern world but spin and image should never replace substance. Web sites are valuable as tools to impart information but should not be used to tempt individuals into surgery.

In general, if a surgeon is competent, offers excellent service and remains above all a good doctor and an honest individual, loyal patients will follow.