

# LASER-TARGET YOUR MARKETING WITH PATIENT AVATARS



Understanding the characteristics of your ideal patient can help your promotional efforts succeed.

BY ROD SOLAR AND LAURA LIVESEY

To market refractive surgery, you must define your ideal patients. This means knowing who they are, where they spend their time online, and what their real-life challenges are. One of the best ways to achieve this is to create a *patient avatar*. The process forces you to really think about your market and flesh out a representative example of your ideal patient so that you can make marketing decisions with him or her in mind.

A patient avatar will affect nearly every aspect of the marketing processes of your practice, including the following:

- **Content Marketing and SEO:** What blog posts, videos, or lead magnets should you create to attract and convert your avatar?
- **Paid Traffic:** Which advertising platforms should you purchase traffic from, and what targeting options should you use?
- **Copywriting:** How should you describe offers in your email marketing, ads, and promotional letters to empathize with your avatar's problems, reflect his or her hopes, and compel him or her to book surgery?
- **Email Marketing:** Which avatar should receive a specific email marketing campaign?
- **Bookings:** What questions should you ask to help your avatar convert

to booking initial appointments and surgery?

This list is just an example of areas to consider. In fact, every part of the marketing process that touches the patient will improve when you are clear on who your patient avatar is.

Although every refractive surgeon should aim for a specific target market, we remind our clients that it is not a *market* that books surgery, but an individual *person*. It pays to gain a clear understanding of the characteristics of that person so that you can find and present a message that moves him or her to action.

## MEET GERRY

In our book, *Growing Your Practice with Presbyopic Patients*,<sup>1</sup> we introduced customer avatar examples of target customers for practices offering refractive surgery. We will explore one of these, Gerry (Figure), to provide an example of how an avatar is created.

Gerry is in the Generation X age group. He is interested in a surgical solution that will enable him to compensate for his newly developed presbyopia. We have crafted Gerry to be representative of many patients we seek to attract, but we are sure he will not fit every practice or situation. In this article, we give you the tools to create your own avatar that will suit you and your practice.

There are five main elements of a patient avatar, as shown in the Figure. To complete them, you might need to survey or talk with existing patients to accurately flesh them out. Let's look at each section for Gerry in turn.

## Goals and Values

Make a note of the goals and values that are relevant to refractive surgery. You can use this information to drive copywriting, content marketing, and email marketing. For example, because Gerry has an active lifestyle that includes traveling abroad with his family, you could draft an email to this avatar that promotes refractive surgery with the subject line, "How laser eye surgery can improve your next family holiday abroad."

## Sources of Information

This section helps you determine the best places to advertise and the targeting options you should use to reach your avatar. On advertising platforms such as Facebook, you can often laser-target your audience by focusing on these niche interests.

## Demographic Information

Applying demographic information will bring your patient avatar to life. Basic demographic information such as age, sex, and location will help you paint a clearer picture of your ideal

patient, but the exercise of filling in the *Quote* field (Figure) can be particularly helpful to get inside the mind of your ideal customer.

The demographics of your patient avatar are also useful when you are choosing targeting options in advertising platforms.

### Challenges and Pain Points

This section helps you develop your service offering as well as the copywriting and creative assets you will use to compel your ideal customer to action.

When offering laser eye surgery to Gerry, for example, it would be beneficial to talk about solutions to his challenges and pain points. For example, your marketing letter could include copy such as, “Are you tired

of losing your glasses while on holiday, or having to pack multiple pairs? Lose your glasses for good with laser eye surgery.”

### Objections and Role in the Booking Process

What are the most common reasons your ideal patients give you to choose not to proceed? You need to anticipate these objections in advance and address them in your marketing, on the phone, and face to face, if necessary. For example, if you know that Gerry is concerned about downtime, you could send an email with a subject line such as, “Get back to your life after LASIK the next day.”

You must also consider your avatar’s influencers. If Gerry is married, does he usually make major decisions like these in consultation with

his wife? Ensure that you account for that trait in your marketing process, and invite Gerry’s spouse to his appointments so they can make a joint decision.

### Build More Than One Patient Avatar

We recommend that you develop three or more customer avatars that reflect the typical patient types you wish to treat, so that you can speak separately to their interests and address their pain points and challenges. You should have at least one avatar for every core service you offer.

Follow our example to describe and illustrate your avatars, turning each one into someone to whom you and your team can better relate. Create a patient avatar for every lucrative market segment you have. Each avatar will have a distinct set of goals, different sources of information, unique pain points, and different objections.

Ready to take advantage of the power of patient avatars? Get a copy of this free patient avatar worksheet for your practice. You can use the same one we use for every one of our clients when we begin planning their marketing campaigns. Go to [liveseysolar.com/patient-avatar-worksheet](http://liveseysolar.com/patient-avatar-worksheet). ■

1. Solar R, Livesey L. *How to Grow Your Practice With Presbyopic Patients* [ebook]. London: LiveseySolar; 2018.

## Customer Avatar

### “Gerry”


<p><b>GOALS &amp; VALUES</b></p> <p><b>Goals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intends to establish his own adventure travel operator side-business within the next 12 months</li> <li>Wants to visit 50 countries by his 50th birthday</li> </ul> <p><b>Values</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staying fit and healthy</li> <li>Traveling</li> <li>Supporting his wife’s charity program</li> <li>Spending time with his kids and building a strong bond between them</li> </ul>	<p>Age: 47</p> <p>Gender: Male</p> <p>Marital status: Married</p> <p>Age of Children: 2 (Age 12 and 14)</p> <p>Location: London, England</p> 	<p><b>CHALLENGE &amp; PAIN POINTS</b></p> <p><b>Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wearing glasses or contact lenses affect Gerry’s work and hobbies, especially international travel</li> </ul> <p><b>Pain Points</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gerry notices that his near vision is not as crisp as he remembers</li> </ul>
<p><b>SOURCES OF INFORMATION</b></p> <p>Books: 1001 Places to Visit Before You Die, Lonely Planet Travel Series</p> <p>Magazines: Outdoor Photographer, Escapism Magazine</p>	<p>Quote: “Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all.”</p> <p>Occupation: Education</p>	<p><b>OBJECTIONS &amp; ROLE IN THE BOOKING PROCESS</b></p> <p><b>Objections to the booking:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Possible side effects could affect his travel, and his work</li> <li>Concerns of needing too much down-time</li> </ul> <p><b>Role in the booking process:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gerry will likely involve his spouse in decision making before getting the treatment</li> </ul>
<p>Blogs/Websites: Personal travel blogs, National Geographic Traveller, <a href="https://maketimetoseetheworld.com/">https://maketimetoseetheworld.com/</a></p> <p>Conferences: The Adventure Travel Show</p> <p>Gurus: Simon Calder, BBC’s Travel Expert; Anthony Bourdain</p> <p>Other: N/A</p>	<p>Job Title: Head teacher</p> <p>Annual Income: £65,000</p> <p>Level of Education: University Graduate</p> <p>Other: N/A</p>	

Figure. Gerry is an example of a customer avatar.

### ROD SOLAR

- Director of LiveseySolar Practice Builders, a practice development consultant company in London, United Kingdom
- [rod@liveseysolar.com](mailto:rod@liveseysolar.com)
- Financial disclosure: Employee (LiveseySolar Practice Builders)

### LAURA LIVESEY

- Director, LiveseySolar Practice Builders
- [laura@liveseysolar.com](mailto:laura@liveseysolar.com)
- Financial disclosure: Employee (LiveseySolar Practice Builders)