

EIGHT STEPS TO ATTRACT AND CONVERT PATIENTS (THAT CAN ALSO IMPROVE YOUR LOVE LIFE)



Attracting new patients is surprisingly similar to dating.

BY ROD SOLAR AND LAURA LIVESEY

When you are looking for a new partner, it's crucially important to follow a sequence of steps that helps to build trust and earn respect until both parties are happy to make a commitment. Skipping or failing to acknowledge a step in the dating process can land you in a world of trouble. The same is true when you are looking for new patients.

You wouldn't storm straight up to a stranger in the street and try and hold his or her hand, would you? In the same way, you wouldn't expect prospective patients to commit to parting with their hard-earned money for your services before they're sure you are capable of the job. Slow and steady courtship is always necessary and is actually part of the fun—when you know how to do it properly, that is.

For these reasons, we adapted the following guide from an eight-step relationship-building strategy to illustrate the process of attracting, converting, and keeping patients until they become your biggest promoters. And, to make things even more interesting and memorable, we decided to continue with the dating metaphor throughout this article because, well, why not?

STEP NO. 1: ATTRACT

U Be where the action is. Let's imagine you're single and looking for a suitable partner. Staying at home isn't likely to find you the love of your life. Once you've established your target market, you need people to know you exist. To do this, you need to be where the action is. At the very least you need to be active

on an online dating site, or, better still, hang out somewhere your dream date would go, whether that's your favorite bar, a weekly yoga class, or the Port de Saint Tropez.

For a private practice, this means advertising. At this stage, all you need to do is attract momentary attention. This can be accomplished by writing blog posts to appear in organic searches, paying for clicks, posting and sponsoring social media, or advertising on any other channel that puts your service, offers, and solutions in front of your ideal patients.

Content that gets attention is content that your future patient has already been thinking about, presented in a way that entertains and informs. Why not create a blog post about your 10 most frequently asked questions, speak at an event, or share testimonials from happy customers on social media channels to attract that first sideways glance?

STEP NO. 2: ENGAGE



Get to know each other.

Don't worry, you don't need to pop the question yet. You just need to engage in conversation. Whether that's online or in person, a little chitchat to uncover a bit more about each other is the perfect way to get things moving.

For the owner of a practice, this engagement begins immediately after someone first realizes you exist and continues throughout that person's entire experience with your brand. It is the ongoing interactivity you have with potential patients via multiple channels that causes them to realize how much they have in common with you,

appreciate the unique aspects of your business (the sense of humor in your communication or the caring feeling on your website, for example), and realize that perhaps there is a connection between you. Your practice might pop up on their Instagram one day and on YouTube the next. Engagement is about consistently communicating the essence of your brand while playing around with different content, platforms, and media to see what kind of material resonates—gets the most, likes, comments, and shares—with your target patients.

STEP NO. 3: SUBSCRIBE



Swap details. In the dating world, this typically means it's time to slide into the

DMs (*direct messages*, for those of you who've been out of the dating scene for a while). Swapping phone numbers and/or Instagram or Facebook accounts is a small commitment that enables you to keep in touch with each other.

In business terms, the exchange typically means creating a *lead magnet*. A lead magnet is something simple, yet valuable, that you can give away in exchange for a prospective patient's email address. For example, you might provide a free downloadable resource or invite the prospect to take an online suitability test or access your private blog. In return, you get a ticket straight to their inbox.

STEP NO. 4: CONVERT



Spend time or money. If the messaging is going well and you're enjoying one another's company, why not deepen

your commitment and invite your potential lover out for a casual coffee to get to know each other a little better? It's the perfect low-key date that won't pile on too much pressure and scare him or her off.

A free consultation, webinar, or event invitation are the business equivalents of a coffee date. These are high-value, low-risk commitments that encourage the prospective patient to invest a small amount of time or money. These encounters allow patients to sample your service without feeling like they're in too deep.

STEP NO. 5: EXCITE



Woo and pursue. If the coffee date went well, it's time to ramp things up with some romance. Cook a nice meal, buy a small gift, or arrange a surprise activity. Thoughtful gestures will not only give your love interest those all-important butterflies; they will also help to paint a picture of what your life together would look like.

Wooing applies to vision correction too. Once a prospective patient has invested, you don't want him or her to get cold feet while waiting for treatment. Use this time between consultation and treatment to tantalize the patient's imagination. Personalized marketing material should congratulate your patients on their suitability, reiterate and validate the many long-term benefits of their decision, and exhibit the many

happy patients who have walked the same road before them.

STEP NO. 6: CLOSE



Seal the deal. The relationship has been going really well, and it's time to make things official. You're no longer just a couple of part-time love birds, you're an exclusive item and proud of it.

In our parallel story, your patient has now signed all of the paperwork and has committed to undergoing treatment at your practice.

STEP NO. 7: REQUEST



Get people talking. In a relationship, this is the lovebug phase. Your date is beaming with pride and can't wait to show you off to his or her family and friends.

This is how you want your patients to feel. You want them to be so delighted with their results that they want to refer their loved ones to you. Make it easy for your patients to spread the word. Point them in the direction of trusted third-party review sites and ask for testimonials.

STEP NO. 8: ADMIRATION



Receive rave reviews. At this stage in a relationship, your new paramour may as well have your name tattooed on his or her forehead. You're pretty much all he or she wants to talk about.

A little cringeworthy perhaps? Not in the business world!

Words of admiration from your patients are the ultimate signal that their experience with you from the moment they first interacted with your practice, right through to aftercare and beyond, has been nothing short of superb. At this stage, you no longer have to prompt them to spread the love, they're singing your praises to everyone they meet because they truly believe in you and your service. This is the most efficient and cost-effective advertising method there is.

CONCLUSION

Simply following these eight steps one by one isn't always enough. If you are struggling to attract and convert new patients or finding that things fizzle out somewhere between steps number 1 and 8, online tools such as our 8-Step Patient Relationship-Building Strategy on liveseysolar.com can be valuable resources for further guidance. ■

LAURA LIVESEY

- Director, LiveseySolar Practice Builders, London
- laura@liveseysolar.com; www.liveseysolar.com
- Financial disclosure: Employee (LiveseySolar Practice Builders)

ROD SOLAR

- Director, LiveseySolar Practice Builders, London
- rod@liveseysolar.com; www.liveseysolar.com
- Financial disclosure: Employee (LiveseySolar Practice Builders)