

Enhancing patient services

Why is it you can often struggle to innovate when it comes to marketing or enhancing customer service?



Innovation is the art of introducing something new, and cataract and refractive surgery have an impressive history of innovation. Think: Phaco and small incisions Foldable IOLs Refractivisation of cataract surgery Customised ablation Femtosecond LASIK SMILE As an ophthalmologist, your practice constantly challenges you to think divergently, come up with new solutions for patients and pivot when initial ideas fail in order to achieve the results you want. It's in your nature. So why is it you can often struggle to innovate when it comes to marketing or enhancing customer service? Perhaps you just need some inspiration. Here are some useful ways you can foster innovation within your practice: **Be a conscious consumer.** Whenever you're engaging with any business as a customer, ask yourself, what's the story they're selling? Who is the ideal customer they are trying to attract? How do I differ from that? How do I fit? What stage of the sales funnel am I in? What phase of the customer value journey am I at? Hundreds if not thousands of messages impact you every day. Consume consciously and you'll be on the way to picking up valuable ideas and lessons from your daily interactions with companies. **Maximise everything.** When you see robust marketing communications or experience superior customer service, ask yourself – how could I apply this to my practice? How would I make this even better? How could I make this even more customer-oriented? **Copy existing ideas.** You don't need to reinvent the wheel or be the first person in the world to come up with an original plan. The most creative people also tend to be excellent copiers. The famous composer Igor Stravinsky supposedly said: "Immature artists copy, great artists steal." That doesn't mean to plagiarise. Instead, find inspiration in the work of others, then use it as a starting point for original creative output. What great ideas already exist that you could apply to your practice? **Generate lots of bad ideas.** Self-censorship is the thief of creativity. Don't reject your ideas too early. Just get them out (write them down, speak them out) and only evaluate them on their merits once you've spent all of your creative juices. **Embrace constraints.** Some would argue that constraints are a necessary condition for innovation to occur. How can you make the boring, sexy? How can you get attention with no money? How can you stand out in a sea of established competitors? How can you make a commodity feel like an experience? When faced with limited options, you've got to think your way out of a little box – and therein lies the breakthrough. Remember, ideas are typically free and when executed with enough flair and passion can bring huge rewards even on a tight budget. If you're an ophthalmologist with an innovation that enhances patient services, you should enter the **ESCRS Practice Management and Development Innovation Award 2019**. Shortlisted entrants will be invited to give a presentation on their projects at the 37th Congress of the ESCRS in Paris. The winning entrant will receive a €1,500 bursary to attend the 38th Congress of the ESCRS in Amsterdam, The Netherlands in October 2020. Go [here](https://www.liveseysolar.com/) to enter. <https://www.liveseysolar.com/>

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