



In

PRACTICE

Featured Physician

Vincent P. Marin, M.D., F.A.C.S.

UNDERSTANDING THE KEY COMPONENTS TO A THRIVING PRACTICE IS WHAT MAKES THESE TOP LEADERS IN THEIR FIELD GREAT EXAMPLES FOR ACHIEVING SUCCESS

*By Christine Lapointe, Contributing Editor & Advisor,
& Laura Jackson, Aesthetics 360°*

Live & Learn

As Vince Marin was nearing the completion of his residency in June 2005 as Chief Resident of Plastic Surgery at Baylor College of Medicine, the Texas Medical Center, there was one thing which continued to resonate in the back of his mind. He knew, as he had always known, San Diego was his home and was ultimately where he wanted to practice medicine. What Dr. Marin hadn't expected was how long it would take before he would get there.

Having become familiar with the Dallas area, he knew a great opportunity when it came his way. The offer to join a successful, prestigious and well established plastic surgery practice in Dallas was just too good to pass up. Dr. Marin accepted the position of Director of Cosmetic Surgery and Skin Care at Gunther Center for Aesthetics and Cosmetic Surgery. And so, San Diego would have to wait just a bit longer. The opportunity to work

within a premier practice gave him the chance to experience first hand how a well oiled marketing driven practice dedicated to plastics and aesthetics functioned. The next three years flew by for Dr. Marin. While he focused on expanding his extensive surgical experience with secondary (revision) nasal surgery, one of the most challenging operations in the field of aesthetic surgery, he also paid particular attention to the business side of being a part of a successful practice.

Marketing techniques and business development strategies were something he found of particular interest. The professional approach to advertising, PR, and marketing were appealing but also a bit overwhelming in terms of size and scope. "I concentrated on not only learning to be a good surgeon but to absorb what I could about how they ran the business. I still had the desire to have my own practice back in San Diego someday."

After three years of living and working in the Dallas market, the draw of life in California and the bonus of having his family nearby won out. In July of 2008, Dr. Marin moved back to his old stomping grounds in San Diego. It quickly became apparent that a few things had changed since he left for university and medical school – San Diego was now one of the most competitive plastic surgery and cosmetic markets in the U.S.

The country, Southern California in particular, was also slipping into one of the toughest and most devastating financial crisis experienced in a generation. Dr. Marin had to ask himself, “Was this really the ideal time to open a solo practice geared heavily towards that discretionary dollar that was becoming harder and harder for the American consumer to part with?” To test the waters, in this now fiercely competitive market, Dr. Marin joined a large, family run, multi-specialty practice. It was the chance to learn a bit more, not only about what it takes to do business in this version of his beloved San Diego, but also to expand his idea of what he wanted his own practice to someday embody. The chasm of differences between the Dallas plastics based practice and this facility could not have been wider.

As a tutorial, this study lasted approximately two years and was invaluable when Dr. Marin considers it in conjunction with his experiences in Dallas. “Without these two very different experiences, I would not be as certain about how I want to run my own practice. Not only what I want for myself but how I want my patients to feel about their experience with me.”

When we caught up with Dr. Marin, he was days away from stepping into his new practice; and we had a few questions to fire in his direction.

How would he market himself and his new practice? How would he communicate to his existing patient base and reach out to new, potential clients? Would he tackle this himself or hire it all out? What were his expectations for growth in this economy?

MARKETING

With marketing dollars not as readily available as he would have liked, but armed with a strong long-term plan, Dr. Marin talked us through it. While traditional advertising such as radio or print were options in the previous practices he was involved in, Dr. Marin told us he knew a strong web presence would be his best choice initially. Looking at his marketing budget and various

platforms for delivering a message, internet marketing made the most sense right out of the gate. “I’ve always been interested in the internet. As a way to educate and communicate it is

“Without these two different experiences, I would not be as certain about how I want to run my own practice. Not only what I want for myself, but how I want my patients to feel about their experience with me.” – Vince Marin, M.D., F.A.C.S.

ever evolving. In my current position we see 70-80% of our new patients coming to us from the internet and the remainder through word-of-mouth referral. In my past position we were very successful communicating with new and existing patients through the internet. So it is clear to me, internet marketing is going to play a major role in my marketing plan.” A strong web presence meant Dr. Marin would need to build a website to reflect his philosophy and practice image. He would also need to take on internet marketing practices designed to create branding and consumer awareness. “If you build it, the leads do not necessarily come. There are internet marketing strategies which need to be incorporated in conjunction with a nicely designed website.” Included in these strategies would be paid search, social media campaigns, and strong search engine optimization.

WEB STATISTICS

@ Pew Internet Project estimates that between 75% and 80% of Internet users have looked online for health information. This estimate is also in line with Harris Interactive's latest data on health information seekers (81% of internet users; 66% of all adults).

@ According to Pew Internet and American Life 78% of home broadband users researched health information online.

@ Forty percent of e-patients with chronic conditions say they or someone they know has been significantly helped by following medical advice or health information found on the internet. By comparison, 29% of e-patients with no chronic conditions say they or someone they know has been significantly helped by online health information.

@ Over 55 million people researched a health topic in each month of the first quarter of 2007. - Pew Internet & American Life Project

@ According to eMarketer by 2011 about 83.2% of the baby boomer population will be using web. The baby boomer population is estimated at about 70 million people.

@ E-Patient is NOW a vocabulary word for medical marketing experts and constitutes research to understand reach and engagement. Are we all E-Patients Now? Have you ever done research on webmd?

@ 46% of Internet users say they will use the Net next time they have a medical inquiry, a figure statistically indistinguishable from the 47% of Internet users who say they will contact a medical professional. - Pew Internet & American Life Project

So we learned a dynamic website would need to be combined with the proper processes to drive leads, incorporate the right interactive tools, and be an educational resource. It should also be a consumer friendly place to engage in questions. Dr. Marin admits that while he was involved in all of the final decisions, he left the actual design phase of his website creation to professionals.

COMMUNICATING

“My primary role is guiding prospective patients through the myriad of cosmetic enhancement procedures and interpreting the information in a personal context. Patients cannot successfully be treated without first establishing a high degree of trust and respect.”

“My primary role is guiding prospective patients through the myriad of cosmetic enhancement procedures and interpreting the information in a personal context. Patients cannot successfully be treated without first establishing a high degree of trust and respect.”
– Vince Marin, M.D., F.A.C.S.

It was a large commitment on Dr. Marin's part to venture into solo practice. However, to commit to an internet marketing strategy as his largest mechanism to reach new and existing clients meant being obligated to devoting much personal time to the project. Creating unique content for a website and interacting on a personal level with patient questions means losing a lot of personal time to the business up front.

“I know what I want my patients to understand about each procedure I offer. It is important for them to read my words and understand their options. The education process is where the doctor/patient relationship begins.”
– Vince Marin, M.D., F.A.C.S.

Being involved in the creation of content and continual updating of a website is something Dr. Marin was not willing to hire out or trust to someone else. “I know what I want my patients to understand about each procedure I offer. It is important for them to read my words and understand their options. The education process is where the doctor/patient relationship begins.”

How else did Dr. Marin see himself communicating with new leads and at the same time insuring a continued connection to his current database of patients? This step in the process was a huge concern for him as he moved closer to his independence. The management of incoming leads and the maintenance of long-term patients could potentially be problematic in a small practice with limited time and staffing resources. This led Dr. Marin to another revelation. He would have a need for a “counselor” to assist in the communications and interactions with patients.

This role proved to be essential in increasing the “close” rates with patients. Because of its unique job description the position would be



Before (left) and After (right) Rhinoplasty Procedure.
Photos courtesy of Dr. Marin.



Before (left) and After (right) Breast Augmentation.
Photos courtesy of Dr. Marin.



Before (left) and After (right) Liposuction Procedure.
Photos courtesy of Dr. Marin.

difficult to fill but would be a key component in building his new practice. “A productive consultation is one of the most important steps in the process of selecting the right surgeon. I enjoy talking with patients who have done their research. Ultimately the consult must be tailored to the individual.” Dr. Marin found sharing overhead with another physician but still keeping the practices separate was a great solution to this conundrum. They would share staff and space but market individually.

However, he would still need to monitor all the processes he put into place and ensure communication with patients was seamless. He would need a tracking program of some sort. An internal process that incorporates an automated tracking system for all leads and easy communication promoting long-term patient retention would be key.


IMPLEMENTING

Having the unique combination of an Ivy League academic background and experience in a highly dynamic plastics practice has given Dr. Marin insight into the balance needed between the medical practice and the marketing program. He believes in putting trust in the proper individuals to create success. For example, hiring an expert in web design and allowing another person into the consultation process with his patients. With tight resources initially, he would have to be more involved in the marketing and patient communication process. His long-term goal is to have the proper experts in place so he can focus on his own area of expertise.

EXPECTATIONS

Dr. Marin does not expect the fully booked schedule to be in place instantaneously. He has planned out his strategy to allow for slow but steady growth. He believes he has the opportunity to put processes in place which will ultimately lead to a practice he can be proud to call his own at home in San Diego.

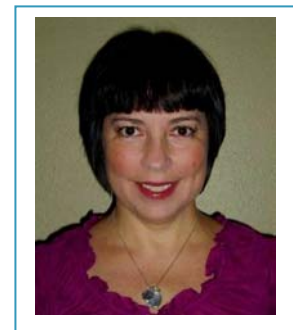
Vincent P. Marin, M.D., F.A.C.S., a native of San Diego, graduated with honors from Harvard College and subsequently earned his medical

degree from the prestigious Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York. During his extensive surgical training, he served as Chief Resident of the Baylor College of Medicine Division of Plastic Surgery at the world renowned Texas Medical Center. A Diplomate of the American Board of Plastic Surgery, Dr. Marin is among the academic elite in his specialty. Contact Dr. Marin at: 888.638.9894 or visit his website on the worldwide web: www.marinaesthetics.com. 

About the Authors



Ms. Lapointe



Ms. Jackson

AESTHETICS



MAKING BUSINESS BETTER

Aesthetics 360° was founded and is owned and operated by **Christine Lapointe** and **Laura Jackson**. Together, they bring their clients over 40 years of Business Development and Sales and Marketing Experience from the elective surgery industry nationally and internationally. Their mission is to provide a comprehensive range of services vital to the support of Technology Leaders and Physician-owned practices on their journey to success. Aesthetics 360° provides the systems and hands-on guidance necessary for practices to effectively measure results and target key areas for revenue growth from initial contact with a potential patient through long-term patient retention. Aesthetics 360° is the solution for technology leaders and practices that are committed to making business better. Contact them at 877.849.8216 or visit their website on the worldwide web: www.aesthetics360.com.