

COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS INSPIRE INNOVATION: KEYS TO PRACTICE GROWTH

BY MICHELE C. BENNETT

In his 2004 book, *The Wisdom of Crowds: Why the Many Are Smarter Than the Few*, James Surowiecki's thesis is that a diverse collection of independently deciding individuals is likely to make decisions better than individuals or even experts. In other words, collaboration works!

As the medical aesthetics industry continues to progress in the coming years, it's more important than ever that teams of innovators work together in the advancement of aesthetic medicine beyond the current treatment categories. But the question you may be asking yourself is: How can I apply these principles on collaboration to my clinical practice? In my experience and based on research, there are three elements that must exist for this collaborative process to bear fruit:

- Create a culture where innovation can thrive: where your employees have an opportunity to engage in innovative ideas and solutions that are key to helping to make your clinical practice more efficient and successful.
- Seek diversity of opinion: as the visionary leader of your business, you hold the ultimate vision of how you develop your services and processes, while at the same time being open-minded to those opinions and thoughts of your trusted colleagues, employees, and business consultants to build upon your successes.
- Identify unmet customer needs: fill the needs by identifying gaps in services, processes, and products offered – whether you are a large or small practice.

In the past 10 years, the aesthetics industry has revolutionized the way consumers and physicians work together to enhance or maintain their appearance. Many of the aesthetic products on the market today are a result of col-

laborations between corporations, doctors, and scientists in the aesthetic community.

AREAS OF INNOVATION

In order for collaboration to truly pay off, it's important to first understand the key areas for innovation in the aesthetics industry today:

- Drug advancements
- Technologies
- Coalitions
- Professional societies
- Mentorship

Within these key areas, aesthetics professionals are consistently working together to discover and create new ways to meet unmet needs in the aesthetic marketplace.

Modern
Aesthetics

INNOVATION

Seek diversity of opinion: as the visionary leader of your business, you hold the ultimate vision of how you develop your services and processes, while at the same time being open-minded to those opinions and thoughts of your trusted colleagues, employees, and business consultants to build upon your successes.

An example of this is the number of leading professional societies that partnered with RealSelf.com, the most visited online community for learning about and sharing information and results for medical-beauty treatments, to get patients' first-hand experience on aesthetic procedures.

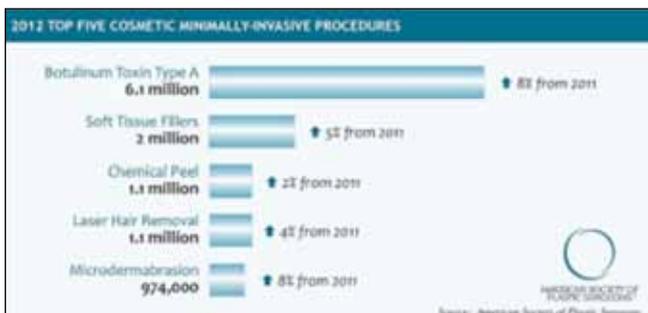
Through the use of lasers and biopharmaceuticals, consumers are enjoying a new, improved experience with high satisfaction, and the aesthetics industry is working hard to ensure that experience only gets better.

CHALLENGES BECOME OPPORTUNITIES

As the aesthetics industry forges ahead, there are always challenges, but within these challenges are opportunities for growth. The economic woes of recent years have left consumers with less money, leading many to temporarily forego more expensive treatments. From this, aesthetics innovators are simply inspired to find new ways to make state-of-the-art treatments more affordable. The American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) Annual Report for 2012 states:

"For the third consecutive year, the overall growth in cosmetic surgery continues to be driven by a significant rise in minimally invasive procedures, while surgical procedures remain relatively stable. We are aware, however, that patients who begin with less invasive treatments with a plastic surgeon may opt for more invasive, surgical procedures once required."

Cosmetic minimally invasive procedures increased six percent, with more than 13 million procedures in 2012. The top five minimally invasive procedures were:



The current wave of company acquisitions could lead to a marketplace with multiple industry players with ambitious growth agendas. Those companies that have prepared through the changing competitive dynamics will emerge as the market leaders. Similarly, physicians/surgeons will want to ensure their clinical and surgical practices are focused on emerging technologies and new products to offer their patients the best treatment options and services to increase patient loyalty.

In many ways, collaboration is a great way to overcome obstacles. When leading experts come together, no

obstacle is insurmountable. Aesthetics professionals can combine tried-and-true methods with new technologies to make treatments affordable, satisfy regulations, and provide consumers with advanced customized treatment regimens based on each of their specific needs.

BRAINSTORMING

One of the best ways to generate new and innovative ideas is brainstorming. For brainstorming to be effective, you may want to incorporate the following simple rules:

1. **Defer judgment.** Don't block someone else's idea if you don't like it...put it on the whiteboard and maybe you'll be able to build on it later.
2. **Go for volume.** Getting to 100 ideas is better than 10, no matter what you initially think about the "quality." Try setting a goal for the number of ideas you'll get to in a certain amount of time to provide some food for thought.
3. **Allow only one conversation at a time.** When different conversations are going on within a team, no one can focus.
4. **Be visual.** Sketch your ideas out for your teammate. It will communicate them more clearly than words alone, plus you might inspire some crazy new ideas.
5. **Build on the ideas of others.** This leverages the perspectives of diverse teams and can be especially useful when you feel like you're stuck.
6. **Encourage wild ideas.** The crazier the better...you never know where your team might be able to take it.

One approach might be to gather together a panel of aesthetics professionals to come up with ideas (using the framework) to address unmet needs. The shared inspiration of the group will help fill you with confidence as you all focus on creating innovative ideas designed specifically for disruptive innovation, entrepreneurial, blue-ocean—big picture thinking. Think of your group as a "Think Tank," in which you come together to come up with ideas that will help revolutionize the industry. Developing ideas that foster new trends and support emerging product development through physician advisory panels and consultative engagements with corporate entities and venture capital firms, is an excellent way to share your innovative thoughts.

It's important to find inspiration from the past. Some of the world's most brilliant minds found success by simply fulfilling an unmet need. Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, and even pharmaceutical companies (Medicis Aesthetics) came up with ideas that challenged the status quo. By looking at the

Comment on this article or send your "Big Ideas" for future publications to: Michele@BennettGlobalConsulting.com

journeys of these professionals, your team can come up with great ways to tackle future challenges.

Allergan, Inc., through its Research and Development, has excelled as a company that keeps consumers safe through rigorous manufacturing processes and safety standards. It's important that aesthetics professionals find sources of inspiration when coming up with great ideas, and there's no better place to look for that inspiration than in the work of others in the industry.

WORKING TOGETHER

Timing is important, as well, but by simply working together to strengthen the vision and purpose of the aesthetics industry, we can ensure that we are always growing. This strength of purpose often leads to some of the best innovations in the aesthetic space.

In our industry, collaboration is integral to conduct-

ing business. By working together, we can develop new drugs, products, and better technologies, which will lead to enhanced treatments. Collectively, this will help us create greater market opportunities and form stronger professional alliances. ■



Michele Bennett is Founder and CEO of Bennett Global Consulting Group (www.bennettglobalconsulting.com). She has experience in medical management, sales, strategic marketing, and communications. Previously, she was Global Executive Director of Strategic Communications for Bausch+Lomb's Surgical unit and Senior Director of Global Scientific Communications and Global Strategic Marketing Director of Allergan.