Advertising, marketing, social media, and websites can help us bring people in our practice door, but once a woman enters our practice, it is up to us to actually sell ourselves and our practice to that patient in person. In the closing chapter of her book, Why She Buys: The New Strategy for Reaching the World’s Most Powerful Consumers, author Bridget Brennan describes the fundamentals of selling in face-to-face environments. Seven principles are put forth that are directly transferable to the cosmetic surgery consultation—and to selling aesthetic services to female patients. Although trends have shown that more males than ever are seeking aesthetic procedures, female patients still represent the majority of our customer base. Each of these seven principles is an important consideration when meeting a potential new female patient, engaging her business, and gaining her trust.

**PRINCIPLE #1: WOMEN ARE EVALUATING THE SALESPERSON AS MUCH AS THE PRODUCT.**
When it comes to cosmetic patients, the aesthetic of a practice plays a role in their decision to choose a particular practice. Take note of your office surroundings, because your new patient definitely will. Make sure that your waiting rooms are clean, tidy, and uncluttered. Make sure that your exam rooms are the same. Take an interest in your own personal appearance, your dress, and your presentation, especially when making your first impression on a prospective cosmetic patient. Always remember to be kind and gracious to your staff. Your interaction with other office personnel will be noted by your patients, so make sure to be friendly to all and remember to compliment genuinely when indicated.

**PRINCIPLE #2: WOMEN FACTOR IN THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT THERE.**
This principle is particularly important when discussing recovery and return to work issues with a cosmetic patient. When deciding to schedule a treatment, some women may be more concerned about returning to care for their family than their own health issues. Provide these patients with as much information as possible so they are clear about what to expect. Be frank about when a patient can return to driving, can lift a small child safely, or when she’ll feel comfortable and safe returning to social appearances. Women also may worry about spending family resources on a procedure. In these instances, reassure the patient by reminding her that no amount of exercise can correct abdominal diastasis, for example.

**PRINCIPLE #3: WOMEN ARE MORE INTERESTED IN THE PRODUCT BENEFITS THAN SPECS.**
This may be one of the hardest hurdles for aesthetic physicians to get over and understand. After medical school and years of residency training, we are very interested in what we do and how we do it. But it’s important to remember that the patient is not as impressed with our techniques; they really just desire safe and effective results and want to understand what to expect in terms of both safety and efficacy from any treatment or regimen. Use a lot of before and after photos in consultations—show patients the kind of results they can expect. We note in our
practice that the most time patients and potential patients spend on our website is in the before and after photo section. Women want to know what we can do for them. Another tool that has become a helpful communication tool is 3-D imaging.

**PRINCIPLE #4: WOMEN ARE TAUGHT FROM CHILDHOOD THAT TALKING ABOUT MONEY IS IMPOLITE.**

In our practice, we do not discuss any financial issues during consultation with the physician. We completely separate the cost and scheduling discussion from the medical evaluation. Costs are discussed by a completely separate person in a separate setting. We find this also strengthens our position as a physician and caretaker—patients come to us for our medical expertise. They can discuss billing and scheduling questions with staff who are the experts in those areas.

**PRINCIPLE #5: WOMEN APPRECIATE HAVING SOMEONE EDIT THEIR OPTIONS.**

I discuss alternatives for the sake of completeness during consultation, but I recommend the treatment that I think is going to be the best for a particular patient. This is based on my experience and my expertise, but it also involves listening. I tailor treatment plans to give patients their best results—but it’s also important to consider how much recovery time a patient can afford to take, when is the most convenient time for the procedure for them, and the duration of the outcome that they desire when recommending a treatment plan. These are all considerations that we want to take into account when tailoring options for individual patients. Providing a recommendation makes closing a consultation much easier. Patients can be given options, but leaving a patient with multiple options that lack your professional point-of-view can be confusing and delay, if not eliminate, a decision to proceed. You are the expert and the patient expects an expert opinion from you.

**PRINCIPLE #6: WHEN SHE SAYS SHE WILL THINK ABOUT IT, SHE PROBABLY MEANS IT.**

Always encourage patients to do additional consultations, and recommend your website as a reference they can use. Market research currently shows that women think about breast augmentation for about two years prior to booking a consultation. They then typically have more than one consultation. The thought consideration is a real factor and not a brushoff. Knowing that this is the case, we regularly follow up with our patients after a consultation to make sure that we have adequately answered any questions that might come up after they have left our office.

**PRINCIPLE #7: WOMEN WANT TO KNOW THAT THEIR BUSINESS IS APPRECIATED.**

We often bundle skincare products, such as scar creams or facial treatments, with procedures, so that patients are getting a product as a thank you from the practice. An additional benefit to this practice is that if a skin treatment is bundled with a procedure, it introduces that patient to another caregiver in our practice and so creates another touch point within our practice. More touch points potentially build in stronger and longer relationships for the patient with our practice.

Finally, I always close a consultation with a sincere thank you. We all know the cost of bringing a new patient into our practice, and I always thank the patients for considering me for their upcoming services.

**CLOSING THE COSMETIC CONSULTATION**

Brennan’s seven principles of face-to-face selling to women are easily incorporated into the cosmetic consultation. Taking these principles into consideration will better help you as a physician to communicate with your patient, which will allow you to become better understood, more well liked, and more successful. Understanding these seven principles have been enlightening to me and have allowed me to become a better communicator with female patients, the demographic that drives the majority of business for our industry.

Dr. Finical wrote this article in cooperation with Why She Buys author Bridget Brennan.

**BOTTOM LINE**

Although trends have shown that more males than ever are seeking aesthetic procedures, female patients still represent the majority of our customer base. Know the important considerations when meeting a potential new female patient, engaging her business, and gaining her trust.

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**BRIDGET BRENNAN**

CEO of Female Factor and a leading authority and speaker on women consumers. Her new book, Winning Her Business: How to Transform the Customer Experience for the World’s Most Powerful Consumers, is available from HarperCollins Leadership and available wherever books are sold.