

A Step-By-Step Guide to Launching a Dermatology Practice



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Introduction

Welcome to Ezlaunch: A Step-by-Step Guide to Launching a Dermatology Practice.

Whether you're a new dermatologist with a vision or a seasoned provider ready to go independent, this guide was designed with you in mind.

Opening a dermatology practice is an exciting and complex journey requiring more than medical expertise. It demands strategic thinking, sound business planning, and a patient-centered approach to care. That's why this guide provides a modern, easy-to-follow roadmap to help you turn your dream into a successful, sustainable business.

On the following pages, you'll find expert-backed, real-world insights that walk you through each stage of launching a dermatology practice, including:

- Setting your goals and mission to guide every decision
- Securing funding and understanding financing options
- Selecting the right location and preparing your office space
- Marketing your services for patient acquisition and retention
- Building a strong team and cultivating a thriving office culture

Whether you're in the early planning stages of opening a practice or closer to opening your doors, this guide will help you make confident choices, avoid common pitfalls, and establish a dermatology practice that reflects your passion, values, and long-term goals.

Step 1

Developing a comprehensive business plan: detailing your dream.

Launching your own dermatology practice requires a solid foundation to both guide long-term, strategic decision-making. A comprehensive business plan serves as this foundation; guiding decisions on service offerings, organizational structure, personnel, daily operations, technology investments, and other key practice components. The development of such a plan supports dermatology entrepreneurs in achieving their dream – opening a practice that runs successfully and provides high quality care.

The components of a business plan

The goal of opening a practice requires shaping to materialize and mature. The strategic document detailing your business plan forms this much-needed structure, outlining practical and logistical intentions for the dermatology practice. These include your goals, objectives, means to achieve them. A business plan provides industry-specific direction that is integral to secure funding – a malleable roadmap that defines the practice’s mission, profile, offerings, marketing and staffing plans, financial forecasts, and anticipated organizational structure.

The following components are typically included in a business plan:

- A business summary including service offerings, the ideal patient, provider/entrepreneur history, and potential location(s)
- Financial projections such as anticipated volumes, technology/software investments, and monthly expenses
- Operational considerations including employment structure, collaborative partners, and anticipated staffing requirements
- Marketing tools that will be used to promote the practice, secure and retain patients, and sell services

Stating your mission

For an aspiring owner to clearly define a practice’s objectives and plans, it is important to begin with the “whys” – your key motivations in providing dermatological care that is unique in the

in the market. These fundamentals will form the basis of your mission statement, a declaration that defines the core purpose and principles of your practice. Establishing the mission statement during the formation of a business plan will help guide the practice's actions to facilitate optimal care provision over time. As important decisions arise, a strong and trusted mission statement will help mitigate uncertainty and bring clarity to operations.

An Ezderm customer shared that decisions are easier when considered in the context of your mission statement, which houses your practice's core values.



We don't have to feel bad about making a tough decision, because we already made it when we created our mission statement; as follows:

1. We work to provide excellent care to our patients.
2. We work to create an excellent workplace for our team.
3. We are committed to continuous improvement — individually and as a team.

— Tony J., Michigan



The most important aspect to convey in the business plan is what drove you to open a dermatology practice. While many aspects of your business plan may be altered, revised, or even discarded following real-world applications or attempts, the essence of the mission statement will remain unchanged. It is critical to assign words to the basis of your drive, noting how the practice will be different from other area providers.

It is also important to identify in your business plan the skill set that you intend to most frequently use in practice. Consider how you want to spend the majority of your working hours. Contemplate your motivations and differentiators to establish a values-driven, clear, concise statement about who you want to be as a practice. While the mission statement of your dermatology practice may evolve slightly over time, your purposeful passion and clear intentions for success will be precisely stated.

Stating business intentions

Once the business's primary tenets and mission are established, the comprehensive business plan should delineate short and long-term goals of the practice as well as a projected financial

forecast. The goals will be specific and personal to each business owner and dermatology practice.



A major trip point in this area is overthinking your projections. Analysis paralysis can be a major enemy as you get started. This does not have to be perfect — just get it done.

— Tony J., Michigan



An example of a goal in the short term — a span of 12 to 24 months after launch — is to stay open and solvent, a realistic aspiration for any new medical practice. This ties directly to the financial forecast, as well. “Just stay alive,” one practice owner advises; the business plan will highlight how you intend to do so. Since it can be difficult to project volumes and revenues, the simplest way to achieve business solvency over the short term is keeping the largest expenses like rent and payroll as low as possible, while choosing the right tools and platforms that will benefit you in the long-long.

For example, if you intend to do a buildout or extensively renovate office space, include the financial projections and intentions for financing and revenues. Keep in mind, among the biggest mistakes new practice owners make is overspending on basic expenses as a result of overestimating how quickly revenue streams will materialize. If possible, consider choosing an affordable office space that is rented for a fixed cost or one that does not require a large investment to kick off the business. Include these intentions with projected dollars in the business plan to illustrate how you plan to avoid overspending and maintain solvency, highlighting how your financial projections integrate with your practice goals and mission.

Also consider how you will maximize staff efficiencies, like having an administrator or advanced practice physician wear many hats for an initial period. Further, seek to make smart technology investments in the area of software. While it is wise to consider frugality in your business plan, choosing the lowest-cost software option may lead to bigger expenses and missed opportunities down the road. Partnering with a reputable software vendor from the start can set you up for streamlined workflows and lasting successful operations.

One Ezderm customer began their business with the goal of covering all major monthly expenses with just one week’s worth of revenue:

“Taking this approach — or a similarly fiscally conservative one — will help you meet the goal of sustaining business operations over the short term.”

— Tony J., Michigan

As for inclusion of a long-term goal in the business plan, this will be unique to each dermatology practice owner. The long-term business goal is typically derived from the primary motivation for starting your practice. If the owner is a practicing dermatologist, he or she may seek autonomy that enables a certain level of medical care or fosters a specific type of workplace environment. He or she may be passionate about care provision based on very specific qualities unattainable elsewhere. The motivation may stem from lifestyle or monetary aspirations, which would be reflected in goals for visit volumes or revenues. It is important to consider how the practice will be different, and focus the long-term goal on the merging of key differentiators and personal ambitions.

Market research and more

When opening a new dermatology practice, it's important to understand the target market, local competition, and current industry trends in the context of creating a business plan that aligns with your primary motivations and passions. A target market is the group of people you plan to serve and retain — primarily patients, but may also include caregivers or referring providers. Demographics are key, and include data on age, gender, income level, and location. Purchasing habits, hobbies, attitudes, and lifestyle decisions will also play a role in understanding a local market. Do research on the market and consider your ability to both meet the most prominent need (or needs) and any additional desires for services that may arise. Ensure the market need is aligned with the primary provider's area of expertise and/or interest, and demonstrate that in the business plan.

One customer recommended meeting the immediate market demand, with intent to expand services as needs arise:

“
For years, our practice was centered around Baby Boomers who needed treatment for skin cancers. Eventually, some of them asked for Botox.

— Tony J., Michigan”

When including competitive analysis in the business plan, it's important to strike a balance between your own growth efforts and your focus on other practices' offerings. Research area dermatology practice services, pricing structures, patient demographics, marketing strategies, and unique offerings. Use review sites to understand areas of success and improvement among competitors.

“
If you're focused on what the competitor is doing all the time, then you're always going to be one step behind them.

— Tony J., Michigan”

In the business plan, prioritize your practice's key differentiators among local options, and how you will use these factors to attract and retain patients within the market. Include these insights, highlighting a strategy not based on what others are doing, but how you will uniquely fulfill the wants and needs of patients.

“
You don't have to beat [competitors] in everything, but you have to beat them in something. Figure out what that something is.

— Tony J., Michigan”

When drafting the business plan, be sure to address market-specific trends in dermatology. Provide insight into the current reimbursement climate. Generally speaking, Medicare reimbursement rates are failing to keep up with inflationary costs for dermatology services. With insufficient or unreliable insurance reimbursement, create a plan – including a projection as a percentage of services – for cash-pay procedures that are not covered by insurance.

Many cosmetic dermatology advances are trending: laser therapies, peels, fillers, injections, microdermabrasion, microneedling, and others. Choose wisely, planning service offerings – preliminarily – that do not require an immediate expensive equipment investment. The business plan should reflect the provider’s interest in medical, surgical, or cosmetic dermatology procedures – ideally some combination of service offerings that will yield profits, meet patient demand, and support the provider’s mission.

When drafting the business plan, continue to keep in mind its primary function to secure financing. It is prudent to include ways you will seek to optimize operations, from software that empowers staff to virtual assistants that can help patients at lower costs. As you consider your target market, location options, service offerings, and other key business elements, you will identify potential pitfalls and strategize to avoid them. Your mission, values, and goals will support a plan for sustenance and future growth, demonstrating to prospective stakeholders your commitment to patient care and the potential of your proposed business plan.

Step 2

Securing funding: investing for growth

After completing the comprehensive business plan for your dermatology practice, you are ready to examine options for funding it. This funding will cover your startup costs and overall practice operational expenses, which include office space, equipment, and staff salaries. With the right investment capital, you will be able to start your business and expand it as your revenue increases over time.

Considering the numerous options for financing, the strategy of your practice that you've outlined in your business plan should guide your decision-making around medical practice funding. This includes the type of office environment you want to create, the type of services you will provide, the expected patient volume, and your personal approach to finances—among other factors. One thing is certain: capital is the primary means by which dermatology entrepreneurs are able to invest in their business and pursue their dreams.

Funding considerations

As you weigh available funding options, it is prudent to gather the materials you will need to present to potential lenders. This includes your comprehensive business plan, which should detail your business model, legal structure, operating plan, anticipated start-up expenses, and financial projections.

Financial projections made simple

Just punch in all your information about your expenses, and it actually generates a nice business plan with graphs that you can submit to banks.

— Suresh M., West Virginia

Regardless of which funding method ends up forming the financial foundation of your dermatology practice, it is important to keep in mind that the first few months of operations will likely bring in limited revenue. This is due to the nature of the insurance claims cycle and also accounts for time needed to grow your patient base. Be sure to plan to yield little to no revenue for the initial three months, ensuring that you secure enough capital to both kick off the business and operate the practice over this period of time. As noted in the section, *Developing a Comprehensive Business Plan: Detailing Your Dream*, it is important to limit your costs and expenses during this initial start-up time frame. Also be sure to factor in how loan repayments will contribute to regular monthly expenses.

In addition to sharing business plans and projections with potential lenders, you will likely need to supply legal documentation including professional credentialing, business registration, and any agreements you have already set for office space or equipment. Practice credentialing can take upwards of six months, so it is important to begin the licensing process early. Similarly, lenders will inquire about medical malpractice insurance; explore options to protect yourself and manage risk with plenty of lead time and secure a plan as the practice nears opening.

Available borrowing options

There are a multitude of options for securing medical practice funding. While many physicians seek out bank loans, funding from financial institutions is just one of many options available. A wide variety of loans, terms, and lines of credit can fund your business. Further, some entrepreneurs are self-funded, meaning they draw from personal savings to start a practice, or join forces with a partner or investor.

If opening a practice with one or more partners who are pooling resources together, it is important to agree on the terms of the partnership and compensation among parties. Consider how the equity will be distributed among contributors, and how the partners in practice will share the work—sweat equity. To ensure smooth operations, decide upfront how the capital, workload, and profits will be distributed, and detail everything in writing.

If seeking external resources for medical practice funding, traditional bank or credit union loans are common; rates vary based on current economic conditions, personal credit history, size of the loan, and the lender's risk assessment based on your business plan and overall profile. Financial institutions offer a variety of loan options—both secured and unsecured—and many of them are quite reasonable assuming the borrower has a solid credit score (in the mid-600s or higher) and low debt-to-income ratio (35% or less). The earlier you establish a relationship with potential lenders, the better. Get to know bank representatives ahead of or during the application process so you can demonstrate your commitment to the business and establish open dialogue about intentions and plans.

“ Seek funding locally. From our experience, the best lending opportunities come from building relationships with a local banker who knows you personally. Bankers like to lend to doctors because their high earning power reduces the risk of defaulting on the loan.

— Tony J., Michigan ”

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Small business administration (SBA) loans are similar in that borrowers apply for funding from a traditional bank or credit union. These loans are backed by the government up to 85%, allowing for more favorable interest rates, fewer fees, and longer terms for repayment. SBA loans do, however, take up to three or four months to secure and involve a healthy amount of paperwork in the application. Term loans are a good back-up plan when traditional or SBA loans are not feasible. These loans provide a lump sum of capital at a fixed rate that generally requires repayment within a year at fixed intervals; short-term, intermediate term, and long-term loans are available. Usually, the limits for term loans are lower than traditional longer-term arrangements, so these are more often used for purposes like expansions and equipment upgrades than start-ups.

A business line of credit allows you to draw against a determined credit limit over time versus securing a lump sum. This quick access financing option ensures you can secure exactly what you need—and only pay interest rates on what you end up using. Similarly, dermatology entrepreneurs also may consider a home equity line of credit (HELOC), which leverages personal assets in the same way to fund practice start-up costs or ongoing operational expenses. It is important to review your options with a financial advisor to understand each type of financing to find what works best for your vision.

After weighing all available lending options—especially the pros and cons of the terms—you will provide the documents, materials, and background information as requested for submissions of applications. Be ready to communicate the value of your practice to prospective lenders. After receiving funding offers, review the terms and conditions in detail, and negotiate with the lender to optimize the impact of the loan with respect to what you need to run the business.

“

A major trip point is over-borrowing. Don't allow your banker or any advisor to sell you on a plan that does not work for you but makes them more money. Borrow what you project you need and not a penny more.

— Tony J., Michigan

”

Managing funds wisely

Ideally, the funding you secure based on accurate, sensible budget and revenue projections ultimately meets your business's financial needs. Unfortunately, some entrepreneurs discover that unexpected expenses arise and accrue, creating a scenario where more funding or additional revenues are needed to sustain the practice. Capturing additional revenue streams in the form of Mohssurgery, dermatopathology services, or direct-pay cosmetic services, to name a few examples, can serve to cover higher-than-anticipated expenses or expand the business.

To mitigate high practice expenses, consider how you can manage funds wisely to optimize operations on all levels, including payroll costs and both fixed and variable office management expenses. Consider how investments in dermatology equipment, medical and telehealth technology, patient engagement tools, or practice management software can positively affect your bottom line.

It is also wise to identify opportunities for consolidating software, which can drive productivity, eliminate redundancies, and free up staff via streamlined practice management related workflows. In the dermatology industry, a piecemeal approach that uses various point solutions can cause interoperability challenges and other difficulties with managing multiple vendors' policies, fees, and terms.

To save on costs and improve the user experience, it may be worth an initial investment with one trusted vendor partner who meets your business and operational needs including revenue cycle management, EHR, practice management, patient portal, and check-in via one consolidated offering. For billing, in particular, integration enables significant time savings and error reduction, which actually enhances revenue through improved collections. In general, investing in current technology – particularly with applications leveraging AI and integrated software tools – is an asset in private medical practice that enables cost and time savings, minimizes errors, optimizes performance, and improves the patient experience.

By combining dermatology-specific electronic health records, practice management, revenue cycle management, and patient engagement tools into a singular ecosystem, Ezderm empowers practices to streamline their workflows — saving time, money, and enabling them to see patients more efficiently to grow their practice.

Ezderm by the numbers



98%+

average net collection
rate



20%

average increase in
admin efficiency



30%

average cut in
documentation time

Securing dermatology practice funding demands a nuanced understanding of financial planning and business development. It is also the precursor to important decisions about the office location and/or environment, staffing, technology resources, marketing, and patient retention, among other dermatology-specific practice needs that we will explore in the next sections. As you grow your practice and network, your financial needs will change – so, too, will your revenues. Keep in mind, securing funding is an achievable objective; administration of funds over the long term requires ongoing management rooted in diligence, discipline, sound decision-making, strategic planning, and adaptability.

Step 3

The choice is yours: location, location, location — and office essentials

With a comprehensive business plan in place and funding secured, you are ready to tackle a dermatology entrepreneur's biggest decision yet — choosing the location of your practice and outfitting it for success. Selecting the right space is critical, as an optimized location results in higher patient volumes, steady revenue, and potential for accelerated growth. Once you've zeroed in on a location, you'll also need to prepare the space with the right devices, tools, supplies, and hardware to efficiently serve patients and expand your practice.

The good news is that you've already laid a strong foundation for these decisions. By now, you've zeroed in on a target population and the types of clinical services you will provide — from general dermatology to cosmetic procedures. You also have anticipated revenue projections that you can use to assess the financial feasibility of potential spaces for your office and its subsequent outfitting.

When it comes to selecting a practice location, geography is only one of many factors to consider. If you are established in a particular area and the market is desirable, you may want to build on existing patient and professional relationships and start a practice close to home. If you are open to moving to other locations or areas of the country, you will have to do a lot more research about areas of interest, demographics, cost of living, and market demands before choosing a location. Always keep in mind your target patient population and the clinical impact you intend to make while meeting your financial goals, as well as the importance of compliance with local zoning laws and necessary inspections.

Know the neighbors

When considering an office location, it's critical to understand the market you are targeting as established in your comprehensive business plan. Both industry trends and current market demographics play a role in honing in on an area's ideal customer. Use local Chamber of Commerce and U.S. Bureau Census Bureau Web sites to gain insights on an area's population. Ensure age, gender, income level, and purchasing habits in a local market will match your plans for service delivery — ideally with a high concentration of the types of people you want to engage.

Also check out neighborhood dermatology competition in your areas of interest. If a local community is saturated with established practices, you may have a hard time attracting customers. Gather research on review sites to see what patients are saying about local practices and determine where you can gain a competitive advantage. Ensure the area of interest provides ample opportunity to meet volume projections and potentially achieve growth.

Finally, consider the range of medical providers that are established in the area and in close proximity to the location. From referrals to partnerships to patient convenience, the presence of other clinicians and medical service providers may be beneficial for business continuity and growth.

Space considerations

When choosing a location, think about the type of space in which your practice will thrive. Would a neighborhood strip mall or center city location bring foot traffic to the business, or would a more traditional professional or corporate office building be a better fit for your vision? If you select a nontraditional or boutique space, consider the work that may be required to make the space operational and if your existing budget will cover it. Some spaces will need minor modifications for the reception area, exam rooms, administrative spaces, or waiting rooms, while others demand extensive renovations for a complete overhaul.

Medical office buildings can offer many advantages, including space that is already primed for dermatology service provision with nearby bathrooms, appropriate-sized exam rooms, and a front desk area. These buildings often make it possible for target patients to access an array of services in close proximity. Similarly, patients like having access to related medical providers such as other physicians, their pharmacy, or lab testing in the same area. Keep in mind, building providers can bring networking benefits and generate referrals to make the overall care experience seamless for patients. Remote or isolated office locations will not bring these benefits; they also may not accommodate practice growth.

“If there is a primary care provider group or urgent care in the building, this is an excellent referral base.”

— Stephanie F., Ohio

Physical space needs vary greatly among start-up dermatology providers. For a micro-practice, small-scale office space may be sufficient. For entrepreneurs who are focused on volumes and/or adding additional providers, a spacious office for expansion is optimal. While it varies by specialty, generally 1,200 to 1,500 square feet is recommended for the first physician, with about 1,000 to 1,200 square feet for each additional physician.

Accessibility is an important consideration when evaluating locations that will provide a positive patient experience. Again, consider the target demographic and their ability or willingness to easily reach your location via freeway, side roads, and/or public transportation. A remote location or one in a traffic-filled area may deter patients. Ensure there is adequate free parking that is close to the building for both patients and your staff. An ADA-equipped practice with ramps and elevators is essential to accommodate patients with mobility challenges.

Weighing purchase or lease

Just as each practice's target populations, volumes, and range of services are unique, each dermatology entrepreneur brings their own goals, resources, and mindset to the business. After evaluating your intentions for patient volumes and future expansion, as well as available financial resources, you will need to decide whether to buy or lease a property. With adequate resources, purchasing office space could be a solid investment. If you are new to practice ownership or just finishing your residency, investing in real estate right away may be a financial reach. Leases — and/or subleases from existing providers—are a viable opportunity to build a practice early in your career, as they allow flexibility of agreements and duration.

Adding a sublease

“If you're just starting off, it can be difficult to have more than one location. But to serve two patient bases at once, I subleased from another dermatologist once a week. So if you're not completely busy in one location, at first, you can build up in another location.”

— Stephanie F., Ohio

Leases require much less money up front, which means less financial risk for the practice. As you see what is available in your area of interest, consider whether the space is mostly ready for business, or requires extensive renovations or even a complete build-out. If renovation needs are minor and/or cosmetic, short leases are reasonable. If you are working with a blank

slate, terms of a longer lease will be more favorable, enabling an investment in extensive renovations. Deciding on leasing or buying depends largely on personal plans for growth and the desire to make extensive improvements. Many entrepreneurs prefer to put energy into building the business, not the space itself. Leasing allows you to do this, while providing the flexibility to move locations and/or expand into neighboring space.

“ I could have bought property, but from a convenience and growth perspective, leasing allows you to leverage cash flow in other ways that will be beneficial. I recommend leasing first.

— Stephanie F., Ohio ”

Office resource decisions

Once you have zeroed in on an ideal location for your dermatology practice, it is time to make decisions about outfitting it for success. Choices about which equipment, software, medical supplies, and other technology you will use should be determined by your intended delivery of services and established financial plan.

Software, hardware technology and medical equipment will be large investments. Take advantage of sales incentives or tax breaks whenever possible. Consider refurbished computer technology, when feasible, for tablets or desktops and other equipment that is required for office management. Similarly, buying refurbished medical supplies including exam tables and instruments is a cost-effective way to outfit the new location with necessary, high-quality materials. The American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) has a member buying program, and — along with state societies — may provide discounts on instruments and technology. There are also free or affordable versions of software for email hosting, videoconferencing services, and other basic operational needs.

“ I bought refurbished iPads instead of new ones. You can also save a ton of money on refurbished office supplies and exam equipment. Do some research on your city’s refurbished medical exam equipment companies. You can really get some good deals and end up with equipment that looks brand new!”

— Stephanie F., Ohio ”

Similarly, purchasing and maintaining new dermatology equipment and devices may be costly for start-up providers. While financing can be a feasible solution, leasing, instead, is a solid option that allows you to offer specific services before determining volumes and revenue potential. Laser rental, for example, provides flexibility as you build the patient base and a demand for services. This option may be delivered at a flat fee, or a percentage of daily collections.

Keep in mind you will be making office selections from an array of vendors and solutions. Negotiating relationships with numerous vendors over time can be expensive and time-consuming. Consider both the convenience and costeffectiveness of partnering with one vendor who can meet your operational needs including dermatology EHR, practice management, patient portal, and check-in app in one seamless solution. This enables both practice and patient empowerment through one suite of user-friendly, integrated tools.

“

If you are starting your own practice as a dermatologist...go with Ezderm because they make it so easy if you are not a 'business person. The billing aspect is the scariest part, so handling that, my credentialing, and my EHR—that's the hard stuff! I could not have started my practice as successfully as I did without Ezderm.

— Patty P., Missouri

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Not sure where to begin on decision-making? It can also be productive to meet with other dermatology providers in the area or region to get advice on local vendors, service providers, and general selections available in the market.

“

Reach out to other dermatology entrepreneurs that you trust and see what they're doing. Get as many ideas as possible from your local community. I talked to six or seven dermatology practice owners in my area to pick their brain over a drink or dinner. Talk to them about some of these decisions... what worked, what didn't. In my area, nobody was territorial. Everybody was very happy to help out.

— Stephanie F., Ohio

”

Once your practice location is established and you've considered outfitting it with the appropriate dermatology-specific technologies and supplies, your startup is ready to address how it will market to local patients – and keep them!

Step 4

Marketing matters: patient acquisition and retention

Now that you have secured funding and a location for your dermatology practice, it is vital to develop a marketing plan to grow awareness of your business, acquire new patients, and keep them coming back year after year. It is never too early to generate patient demand for services, and many marketing efforts can be executed for free or with a modest financial investment. Many dermatology entrepreneurs make the mistake of investing only on facilities, equipment, and even personnel – which we'll cover in our final section – sinking all of their resources into the concrete materials a practice requires to open. But investing time and money into productive marketing efforts early is equally important so there is demand for practice services as soon as the doors open.

An effective, modern marketing strategy requires a blend of developing a unique brand identity, sharing quality information, and creating two-way engagement with potential patients, informing them about your practice's expertise and quality of care.

Setting yourself apart from competitors

Establishing a compelling brand and an optimized online presence is essential to differentiate your practice and draw in new patients. When kicking off such efforts, be sure to reference your “why” of starting the business, your target patient demographics, and the competitive analysis outlined in your comprehensive business plan. With an understanding of the demographics, preferences, and needs of your ideal patients, you will more effectively be able to tailor your messaging and subsequent advertising to the right audience.

Here are the key foundational efforts you should focus on to develop a strong brand and set yourself apart from competitors. ☒ ☒

A memorable tagline: A strong tagline sums up the value you deliver in a few impactful words. It should be simple, aligned with your mission and patient demographics, and clearly communicate the essence of your services.

Consistent visual elements: Using the same logos, colors, and fonts across your digital and printed materials builds a cohesive, trustworthy brand. Consistency reinforces recognition and professionalism—both online and in-office.

Building a strong foundation Your practice's website is the most important tool for marketing your practice. It serves as a hub for patients to learn about your services, build confidence in your unique skill set, and contact you to schedule an appointment. The site should feature your unique brand logo, tagline, and be easy-to-navigate and informative.

“Your website needs to work effectively. Don't focus so much on what your website looks like—focus on how well it works.”

— Brent C., MetaMed Marketing

Once you've established your website, it is important to optimize it to be discovered in search results. While the home page is most often the “front door architecture” of your practice, patients may also find you while searching for information about conditions they have or procedures they are interested in. Some no-cost, foundational ways to optimize your website to appear in relevant searches are listed below. For a more robust search engine optimization (SEO) strategy, you may consider investing in an expert agency partner.

- **Include relevant keywords and phrases in your content:** Use keywords that potential patients are searching for—like acne treatment, skin cancer screenings, cosmetic dermatology, or dermatologist in [your city] —throughout your website content. This helps search engines understand what you offer and improves your visibility when people search for dermatology services in your area
- **Answer frequently-asked questions about conditions you treat:** Create content that addresses common patient concerns such as "What causes eczema?", "Is this mole dangerous?", or "What are the best treatments for adult acne?" Answering these FAQs builds trust, positions you as an expert, and boosts your site's SEO by matching what people are actually searching for. It also addresses “intent-based searches,” which search engines increasingly are responding to.
- **Add page titles that include your service areas and location:** Each page on your website should include a clear, keyword-rich title—for example: "Dermatology Services in Austin, TX" or "Botox & Fillers in Scottsdale." This helps local patients find you and improves your rankings in location-based search results.

In tandem with these foundational SEO efforts, it is important to develop a strong digital footprint across search engines and directories. It is critical that information about your

practice—such as your address, phone number, hours, and services—are listed consistently across the web.

As Google is the most-used search engine, creating and optimizing a Google My Business Profile is essential. Once you create an account, be sure to do the following:

- Add key contact information
- Add a description of your practice (this should include your tagline, key differentiators, and service areas)
- Add your brand logo
- Add photos of your practice
- Respond to reviews

Begin engaging with potential patients

Creating opportunities for engagement with potential patients throughout their decision-making journey is key; you'll want to first address curiosity to drive awareness of your practice, then ensure that your demonstration of offerings earns consideration in the context of their medical needs, and finally, receive a commitment in an inquiry to pursue services through an appointment. Engaging marketing takes a potential patient on this journey, moving them step by step toward earning their visit in-office.

Social media platforms are a cost-effective way to begin to drive such engagement. These platforms can work in tandem with your website to highlight your competitive advantage through a healthy mix of content—whether that covers the benefits of a specific service, the positive attitude of the staff, or a current event.

Across your website and social media profiles, the following are key ways to engage with patients:

- **Showcasing visual appeal:** Highlight before-and-after photos to focus on provider results. Showcasing transformations can be incredibly effective for promoting services related to skin health and aesthetics. Remember to use consistent physical patient positioning, facial expression, background, and lighting so these look professional.
- **Telling the story:** Potential patients want to hear (and see!) success stories. Document the individual story—gaining patient consent, first—with strong images and some history of a patient overcoming an obstacle or health action point between existing patients, new patients, and the practice itself.

- **Highlighting testimonials and reviews:** Testimonials, positive reviews, and patient success stories carry significant weight in attracting new patients. When treating sensitive conditions, potential patients may be calmed by hearing existing patients' positive experiences.
- **Providing patient education:** Content about skin conditions, treatments, and skincare routines positions you as an authority in dermatology. Blogs, articles, and photo galleries help build trust with potential patients who value your expertise. By using personalized language, you can make patients feel understood and comfortable with their skin concerns.
- **Leveraging seasonal tactics:** For dermatology, certain times of the year might be more relevant for specific treatments. Tap into seasonal changes to advertise your offerings (e.g., sun protection tips in the summer, acne treatments for teens going back to school, dealing with dermatitis in the winter).

Expand by meeting patients where they are

Once an engaging digital presence is established, it's time to expand your marketing efforts across a variety of digital and traditional platforms. A strategic, diversified approach helps you reach prospective patients wherever they are—whether they're searching online or seeing your name in print. Dermatology providers aim to inform, educate, and inspire patients — while also engaging them meaningfully. However, the way you reach and resonate with patients varies significantly based on factors like age, preferences, location, and lifestyle.

For instance, younger patients may turn to Instagram, TikTok, or YouTube for skincare tips, cosmetic procedures, or acne solutions. Older patients might rely more on Facebook, Google search, or local print ads to find providers for skin cancer screenings, rashes, or anti-aging treatments. And parents looking for care for their children may respond well to recommendations from pediatricians, school newsletters, or community bulletin boards.

To effectively reach and engage these diverse audiences, dermatologists can implement a “flood the zone” strategy—using a variety of tactics and touchpoints across both digital and traditional channels. If you've set aside funding for Marketing, hiring an outside marketing firm specialized for medical providers (or specifically dermatology providers) may be helpful in the further development of online strategies including website content, social media messaging, email campaigns, and print brochures.

“It's just a fact: No marketer can know with 100% certainty where and how to actually catch the eye of someone and persuade them to take action. So ‘flooding the zone’ gives the best chance of resonating with the audience to take action.

— Brent C., MetaMed Marketing”

Be sure to prioritize patient retention

Once you have successfully acquired new patients with a robust, modern marketing strategy, retaining these patients—and earning new ones via word of mouth—often comes down to good, old-fashioned quality care experiences.

“The biggest key for patient acquisition and retention is to be nice, be thorough, and do a good job. Dermatologists — more than any other practice — get referrals from their friends, family, and coworkers. Take time with the patients, show them you care, and they will be loyal.

— Patty P., Missouri”

Even “non-clinical” elements to practice management can be used to acquire and retain patients. Listening intently, responding to patient inquiries in a timely manner via phone or text, and creating an office culture among staff who are willing to go that “extra mile” are major differentiators for a dermatology practice. Patients feel welcomed by a clean, warm, inviting office manned by friendly staff, and appreciate being offered hot beverages, water, or snacks. You can keep patients engaged through regular emails that provide educational resources, updates on services, skin care tips, promotions, or local events.

As your comprehensive marketing plan takes shape, set clear goals and establish data tracking for various marketing initiatives so you know how they are performing. This will likely entail increasing local awareness, driving website traffic, and/or growing your patient base to a specific volume. You can track results to gauge effectiveness of your campaigns using analytics tools, where feasible, refining your strategies over time. These strategies may require testing, tweaking, and retooling before they are operating at full speed. Effective marketing of

your practice cannot be achieved through a brief, concentrated period of effort. Marketing is an ongoing operational task to keep your practice functional and thriving over time

“

Think about your promotional initiatives as exercise. If you haven't been exercising, get started now. Don't try to run a marathon every day for the next six days, then stop exercising. It's the same with marketing your practice: build up to it, be steady with it at regular intervals. You should always be marketing your website and [performing] other marketing initiatives.

— Brent C., MetaMed Marketing

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Step 5

Staffed for success: investing in your people

It's true: Staffing is one of the most significant expenses dermatology entrepreneurs need to plan for when starting their own practice. While the costs of hiring, training, and health insurance coverage are certainly significant—making a solid, continuous investment in your people is what ensures quality care delivery. A qualified, satisfied, and productive staff will be empowered to deliver on the mission you set forth in your business plan.

The human side of hiring

While professional skillsets are integral in establishing your team, first consider the qualities you most value in an employee. A motivated, passionate, loyal, and curious person who works well with others will be your biggest asset. Be sure to identify candidates who are personable and teachable under strong leadership.



People can learn everything, but they can't learn how to be nice, trustworthy, and passionate.

— Patty P., Missouri



Your necessary staffing levels and the skillsets required will vary greatly based on the type of services you plan to offer. For example, a high-volume general clinical practice will have different staffing needs than a Mohs-focused provider. Regardless, focusing first on hiring for administrative positions will power the optimizing of daily procedures and enable providers to do their job efficiently. Office manager candidates, for example, must be capable of “wearing many hats” as they move processes forward through workflows, coordinating with staff, insurance providers, and patients.

As your practice is starting out, consider hiring only the staff needed to fulfill initial patient volumes. This will protect cash flow until volumes become more established—You can always scale up staff as you go. However, be sure that your pool of staffers is large and diverse enough to run the office in the event an employee calls out of work.

Establishing and maintaining a positive office culture

For a dermatology practice to be successful, a positive relationship between office staff members and the practicing physician—or physicians—is critical. When developing your style of office management and its related policies and procedures, consider how a practice atmosphere can facilitate employee retention and high employee morale.

Ideally, management creates an environment that is comfortable and friendly. While certain practice situations may call for urgency, day-to-day operations should feel calm. A relaxed workplace lends to open conversations—both professional and personal—that make employees and patients feel seen and heard as individuals. While praising and encouraging individual staff members is important, it's also critical to focus on a team dynamic where all employees are driving toward the same goals together. Alternatively, negativity or gossip among staff members creates a toxic environment and should be addressed for resolution immediately in direct, private conversations.

“ I have to lead by example. My attitude completely dictates the day. So if I'm positive, energetic, and feeling good—that's how the rest of my staff is going to feel. If you love what you do and you're happy to be a practice owner, it will show. Your staff will be happier and your patients will be happier.

— Stephanie F., Ohio ”

Fostering a positive office culture also means getting to know employees outside their daily behaviors that make the office run. Take the time to ask about their families, what they do for fun, and their motivations in life. By engaging in events outside the office, you can connect with employees and make memories that bond a strong team. Opportunities include simple monthly happy hours or dinners, an employee holiday gift exchange, a staff escape room, or a group cooking class. These inclusive and intentional events are a way to establish a strong culture that supports a practice's "personality" for deeper engagement, meaning, and satisfaction.

Operationally, it's important that practice leaders communicate often with employees about policies and procedures — especially if changes occur — to foster genuine understanding about management decisions. By welcoming opinions from staff about how the practice is

running, you demonstrate that their opinions are valued. Employee surveys and 360-degree evaluations – performance reviews that gather feedback from an employee's manager, peers, and direct reports (if applicable) – are other ways to solicit opinions on your dermatology practice. Finally, employees feel appreciated if they are strongly compensated for their work. Pay employees well, and they are more likely to stay at the practice.

“We take people's feedback really seriously. The more that your employees feel like they're being heard and the more seriously they feel like their concerns are being taken, the more job satisfaction they're going to feel.

— Stephanie F., Ohio”

Prioritizing training, weighing experience

Most practice owners prefer to hire staff with prior healthcare experience, and more specifically, dermatology practice experience. If you have a trusted, reliable contact from a previous place of employment, he or she may be a candidate to consider for your new practice. A well-trained office manager and medical assistant (MA) are integral to operational success.

While an office manager position is primed for those who have previously managed a practice, there are various approaches to consider in successfully fulfilling dermatology MA roles. Responsible for performing both administrative and clinical tasks, MAs should be well trained in the specialty. Develop formal staff training programs for implementation, and ensure employees are familiar with common dermatology cases, treatments, terminology, and medications. Some dermatology owners prefer to fill MA roles with gap-year medical students. For hiring, partnering with companies dedicated to matching gap-year students with practices and advertising at local colleges and universities can be productive. While gap-year MAs will likely only stay with your practice for one to two years, they typically are highly educated and motivated.

“Gap year students are so bright. They're engaged because they have a vested interest in going into medicine. They are excited to learn and passionate about it. It's not just a job to them.

— Patty P., Missouri”

Alternatively, some dermatology practice owners prefer career MAs who have been in the field for decades. These seasoned professionals are used to working on clinical teams and are less likely to leave the practice. Ensure your MA is able to chart accurately, interface well with patients, call back pathologies, and seamlessly engage with practice software to ensure smooth workflows.

Prioritizing and investing in comprehensive training for all staff, especially in areas like dermatologic procedures, management of the electronic medical records and practice management systems, and billing processes is essential for success. Not every employee must be cross trained on all practice tasks, but some staff members should be capable of covering different roles. For example, hire and train an MA who can also work the front desk. Encourage regular shadowing at the practice so, for example, your receptionist witnesses the nature of your daily interactions with patients. Cross-training and shadowing among staff breeds empathy and deeper understanding across various roles on the team.

Leveraging partnerships

While staff training on use of dedicated software systems is important for effective implementation, often vendor partnerships enable more efficient delivery of services. Outsourcing software that streamlines practice management functions with billing, the EHR, and patient portal can improve both convenience for users and affordability for practice owners. Dermatology practice owners can also consider the use of virtual assistants to shoulder the burden of administrative tasks like appointment scheduling, insurance verification, and data entry, leaving more time with patients for in-house staff. Note that templates and dictation tools may also help employees save time, while secure, AI-supported communications solutions can help consolidate and streamline messaging, calls, and other communication needs.

By combining dermatology-specific electronic health records, practice management, revenue cycle management, and patient engagement tools into a singular ecosystem, Ezderm empowers practices to streamline their workflows — saving time, money, and enabling them to see patients more efficiently to grow their practice.

Ezderm by the numbers



98%+

average net collection rate



20%

average increase in admin efficiency



30%

average cut in documentation time

Outside of technology supporting operational aspects of practice management, owners make decisions to partner with outside consultants on non-clinical matters such as accounting and legal issues, and with vendors on utilities and equipment. Strong and trusting relationships with individuals at organizations that supply quality services positively impact staff satisfaction. When selecting partners for the practice, trial and error is commonplace; try not to commit to any long-term contracts. Clinically, partnering with a quality, trusted, responsive dermatopathology laboratory is critical.

“The importance of having a direct connection or relationship with your dermatopathology lab cannot be overstated.”

— Stephanie F., Ohio

Finally, after you have built your practice from the ground up, honor your efforts by retaining the people who most deserve the opportunities presented. If a staff member or vendor partner is not performing adequately, it is wise to part ways. Value employees who are committed to your mission, providing a supportive work environment where your entire practice can thrive.

Conclusion

Launching a dermatology practice is one of the most rewarding endeavors of a professional's career. With the right tools, insights, and support, it's entirely possible to create a thriving, patient-focused business built on your values and vision.

This guide has equipped you with a clear roadmap – from defining your mission and securing funding to marketing your services and building a trusted team. While every practice journey will look a little different based on market demands and personal aspirations, the principles outlined here are designed to help you stay focused, identify potential hurdles, and make smart, strategic decisions for success.

Ready to take the next step?

You have the roadmap, the passion, and the plan. Now, equip your new practice with the technology designed to help you thrive from day one. Ezderm offers the complete ecosystem you need to succeed.

[**Book a 1:1 meeting with an Ezderm expert** →](#)