

Evidence-Based Clinic Growth for Private Medical & Surgical Clinics

**A practical guide to marketing for medical and
surgical clinics based on 6 years of data and
40+ clinics in the UK**

— by Dr Tiarnán McKeever

40+ CLINICS

6 YEARS OF DATA

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Foreword

About This White Paper

The aim of this white paper is to provide guidance on marketing for doctor-led medical and surgical clinics.

Growing your clinic is difficult, and it's not something anyone really teaches you. This white paper will contain a mix of case studies, data-driven insights and anecdotes based on what we have seen work, and what has consistently not worked.

We have partnered with a range of clinics, including plastic surgery, ophthalmology, vascular surgery, radiology, mental health, private GPs, men's health, women's health, gynaecology and more.

The clinics we have worked with are anywhere from just starting out, to spending up to £20,000 per month on their marketing.

As I'm writing this foreword, three of our clinic partners have hit their biggest ever months financially, another has had their best ever year and we've received referrals from seven of our current clients to their colleagues. I do not say this to brag, but to give you a reason to take anything written in this white paper seriously.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach me at tiarnan@kecatalyst.com

(Marketing for clinics requires a nuanced approach, so whilst the principles outlined are based on data across 40+ clinics, there are of course exceptions to all trends)

Words from our clinic partners

"I needed a strategic partner...that's exactly what Tiarnan has helped with"

Women's Health GP

"Clearly you guys do a fantastic job and we can't thank you enough."

Radiology Clinic

"They have been incredibly helpful in growing our online presence, improving our website, and delivering consistent social media campaigns that have led to a noticeable increase in website enquiries and engagement."

Orthopaedic Clinic



Dr Tiarnán McKeever

Founder and Director at KeCatalyst

I graduated from Plymouth Medical School with a BMBS with distinction in 2025. My journey in marketing for private clinics started over 6 years ago, around the same time that I started studying Medicine. Since graduating in 2025, I've worked full-time on growing my own business, KeCatalyst, and working alongside doctors to grow their clinics.

Chapter 1: Why You Should Care About Marketing

Marketing is one of the **three most important functions** for your clinic, of equal importance to patient care and compliance.

I would argue it's the most important function of your business if you're interested in growth. Clinic owners understand the importance of the latter two, but often entirely underestimate the importance of marketing, despite marketing being the lever they need to pull in order to achieve their growth goals.

There's no value that I can add when it comes to patient care, or compliance. That's what you are an expert in. My expertise lies in marketing and growth strategy, and it's what I can bet you are almost certainly under-indexing for.

Patient Care

The minimum standard.
The cost of entry. Rarely a differentiator.

Compliance

The minimum standard.
The cost of entry. Not a differentiator.

Marketing

The **differentiator**. This separates clinics that grow from those that stagnate.

Whether you grow over the next few years or not will be **directly correlated** with your ability to market your services.

Assume that nobody knows who you are, or what you do, and then spend as much of your time as possible fighting against that anonymity.

I spoke recently with a clinic partner of ours who joked that even her sisters weren't entirely clear on what her specialist clinic did. If your own family aren't clear, then you can be sure that others who live locally to your clinic definitely are not clear.

The Market Is Growing

Insurance-funded private healthcare use among 20–39 year-olds grew **13% year-on-year** as of PHIN's 2024 data, among the fastest-growing segments in the market, even though older patients still make up the majority of admissions overall.

The Competition Is Growing Too

Competition within the private healthcare industry is growing every single year, and not just in London anymore.

Your clinic will either become forgotten, or avail of the growing demand, and give yourself hiring problems instead of empty calendars.

The Growth Mistake We See Most Often

After auditing our entire client roster and all of the discovery calls that we have had in the past 6+ years, we have identified one key mistake that most commonly holds clinics back from the growth that they are searching for. This is based on conversations with over 100 clinic owners, including clinics we work with, and those we just had initial discovery calls with.



Abdication Instead Of Delegation

Marketing and growth strategy is overwhelming, and difficult, especially if this is your first time running a business.

It is tempting to focus your attention on compliance, service improvements and your patient experience and to entirely overlook marketing and growth.

After all, those are areas that typically align with the work that you have so much experience with already in your previous roles.

Here is how this problem plays out:

- You hire your nephew to build your website or run your social media pages
- Nobody on your senior leadership team is clear on what your growth strategy is, yet you speak about clear revenue and profit growth goals
- You outsource your paid advertising and SEO to the cheapest possible option, often offshore
- You outsource call-handling/enquiry handling
- You have no clarity on whether your marketing and advertising are actually having any impact, how to measure that if you wanted to find out, and what questions you should be asking to get closer to understanding that answer.

If you want your clinic to grow, or even just maintain its current size, you need to be constantly fighting to generate enough attention from the right people every single month.

Abdicating that responsibility to the cheapest bidder because it's not something you are entirely familiar with is what will ensure your clinic struggles to grow, or worse, is forced to close down.

⚠ Warning: The solution to this problem is not to try to become a marketer or growth strategist yourself. You do not have the time, nor the experience to do this yourself, and this will result in the same outcome as the approach above. However, it is your job to become sufficiently educated in all things marketing and growth to start asking the right questions, and to allocate this area of your business the attention, time and resources it requires.

Chapter 2: The Foundations Of Marketing And Growth

"Marketing is the process of identifying, anticipating, and satisfying customer needs profitably. It encompasses all activities a business undertakes to promote, price, distribute, and sell its products or services." - Chartered Institute of Marketing

Before we get into the different ways that you can market your clinic (advertising, social media posts, SEO etc.) - we need to look at this with the right mindset.

Example: Two private GP clinics that we worked with offered identical services, in similar-sized cities. Both spent exactly the same on paid advertising on Google (around **£20 per day**).

One is turning over **£20,000 per month**. The other is still only seeing 1–2 patients each week. The difference is not budget. The difference is that one views themselves as a business owner obsessed with growth; the other views themselves as a doctor with a side project.

Clinic Owner A — Thriving

- Views the clinic as a **business first**
- Posts content consistently on social media
- Attends local networking events
- Runs live webinars online
- Invested in a CRM and business coaching
- Takes calculated risks that lead to revenue growth
- Follows up every enquiry promptly

Clinic Owner B — Stagnating

- Views themselves as a **doctor-first**
- Set up the clinic alongside NHS practice
- Believes the right patients will "find them"
- Sporadically creates social media posts
- Does not do any local promotion
- Does not follow up patients who enquire
- Passive approach to growth
- No CRM or structured follow-up process

→ Understand Touch Points

A patient who sees you locally, then on LinkedIn, then Instagram, then visits your website and gets a call is far more likely to convert. **A multi-platform approach is essential.**

→ Value Every Enquiry

Someone who has actively submitted a form or made a phone call deserves a prompt follow-up, multiple times. Treat every enquiry as a genuine opportunity.

→ Marketing Requires Relentless Effort

Marketing is not something that just happens. It cannot be reliant upon one channel. It requires consistent, deliberate input across multiple platforms.

Chapter 3: *How To Make More Of The Right People Aware That Your Clinic Exists*

As a clinic, you are constantly battling against anonymity. Monthly website traffic is an indicator of how many people know that your clinic exists.

A new clinic, or a clinic in a competitive area that has not put effort into marketing, will primarily face a traffic problem. There are multiple ways to generate traffic and **no single channel is universally best**. The exact marketing function(s) you decide to deploy for your clinic should depend on your team capacity, the services you offer, your location, your budget and what work has been done so far. No one method is better than any other.

Here is a general overview of each area that you should consider:



Google Ads

High intent, higher cost, lower volume. Ideal for services where patients are actively searching to make a booking.



Social Media Ads

Higher volume, varying quality, requires more qualification. Often outperforms Google for aesthetics clinics with the right creative.



SEO

Long-term organic traffic from search engines. Builds authority over time and reduces reliance on paid spend.



Organic Social

Posting content consistently on social platforms. Builds brand awareness and trust without direct ad spend.



Local Print & Networking

Attending local events, print advertising, and community presence. Particularly effective for building referral networks.



A Strong Referral Network

A sign that you are incredible at what you do. This needs to be actively curated, but not relied upon.

Case Study — Radiology Clinic: All Traffic Is Not Made Equal

- ❏ A remote radiology clinic spending £3,000+ per month on their Google ads was generating very few relevant enquiries when they came to us for help.

They had partnered with an agency who had come highly recommended from a friend who ran a non-healthcare business, and this agency had helped them with their SEO. Accepting the referral, the clinic and agency began working together on their Google ads.

The ads started relatively well over the first few weeks, then over the next few months continued to get worse and worse until the point that the clinic was receiving very few bookings, but lots of low-intent, irrelevant enquiries that were increasing administrative burden without increasing revenue.

Our initial investigation revealed that their traffic was dominated by searches for "NHS X-Ray", local hospital departments, and "111" — entirely the wrong audience for a remote private radiology service.

Here's the learning point: If this clinic had not come to us, they would have left with the impression that Google ads did not work for them. They would have had a negative view of marketing in general.

After a month of working with us, that attitude had changed entirely and they began to increase their budget.

The setup was the problem, not the budget, or the platform, or the mindset.

- ① **Summary:** All traffic is not the same traffic. Whilst it is useful to increase the amount of the people that are visiting your website, it is much more impactful to ensure from the get-go that those people are the 'right people'. This is why focusing all of your attention on trying to go viral on social media likely won't positively impact your clinic revenue numbers despite increasing views.

Audit the sources of and intent of the traffic visiting your website to establish whether you are getting in front of the right people.

For Google ads, review your search terms.

For Meta ads, review your conversion rates.

For your SEO, use Google Analytics and Google Search Console to check where people come from to land on your website, and what they do once they get there.

Case Study — Dental Clinic: Choose Your Traffic Sources Wisely

- ❏ A dental clinic came to us a few years ago looking for support in increasing the number of high-ticket procedures they booked each month.

We crafted a landing page that filtered for:

- patients who were local
- patients who knew the cost of the service
- patients who wanted to get started in the next couple of weeks

We used before/after creatives, founder story creatives and process explanation videos.

By all accounts, everything from a marketing perspective was set up to generate lots of bookings for this clinic, who were spending around £1000 per month on their Meta Ads.

Here's where it all went wrong:

This clinic managed to achieve a roughly 20x Return On Ad spend (ROAS) but only managed to convert around 5 of 95 high-intent enquiries.

Here's why:

This clinic was managed by a sole dentist. They had no reception time. Nobody to answer phone calls. Nobody to call up leads. This meant we flooded an already overwhelmed dentist with more leads than they could handle, and their ability to handle those leads in the appropriate manner became almost impossible.

A more appropriate strategy for this clinic, in hindsight, would have been to focus their ad spend on high-intent Google Ads searches. Their cost-per-qualified lead would likely have increased, he would have received fewer leads, but their ability to manage those leads would have improved, and so he would have likely had more bookings.

- ❏ **Summary:** Google Ads, Social Media Ads, SEO are all just traffic sources. Each has its own advantage and disadvantage. The one, or the combination, that is most appropriate for your clinic will change over time and depends on multiple factors including your team's capacity, your pricing, your budget, and the services you offer.

Case Study — Orthopaedic Clinic: Do You Need To Run Paid Ads?

- ❏ One of our clinic partners has generated over 50k website visitors in the past 3 months without spending any money on paid ads. So do you really need to run ads? This is a clinic that we've been working with for over 4 years now, and it's the only clinic that we work with that does not rely on paid ads as a way of getting more eyes on their business.

They continue to grow year on year without a paid ads budget, but not spending on paid ads is not the same as not investing in marketing and growth. Here's how they have invested in growth:

- Invested in a great brand
- Invested heavily in their website
- Invested in SEO (for over 7 years)
- Invested heavily in organic social content including videos
- Regularly host education days to continue to build out their referrals networks
- Have a team of incredible secretaries who chase enquiries

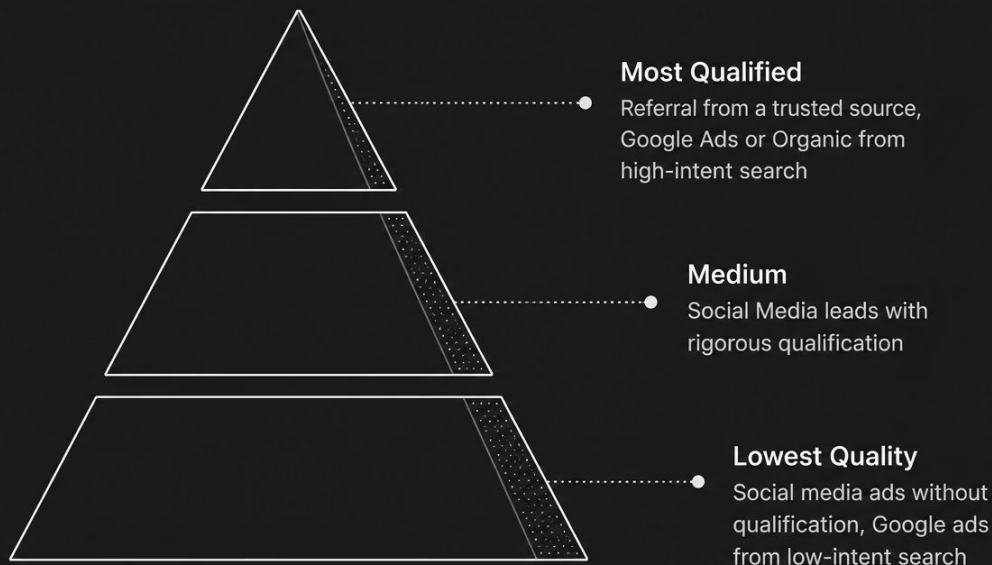
- ① **Summary:** You don't 'need' any one specific marketing tool. None are objectively better than any other. You need a plan that aligns with what work has already been done, what your current weaknesses are and what actually matters for your particular clinic, and a plan that is specific to your current growth constraint. For most clinics in their first few years of business, paid ads will almost always be a part of the plan because it's a way to get as many eyes on your business as possible in the shortest amount of time, and because they have the shortest feedback loops. For larger more established clinics, it's not always as straightforward

Chapter 4: *How To Make More Of The Right People Enquire About Your Services*

A lead is someone who has given you their email or phone number and put their hand up to say they are interested in your service.

Leads are good, but not all leads are made equal.

Where the lead has come from, their intent and quality, are hugely important.



Intent-Based Marketing

Using Google Ads to get in front of people who are **actively searching** for the service you provide. Higher quality, lower volume, higher cost, higher conversion rate.

Interruption-Based Marketing

Stopping the scroll while somebody is on social media but **not actively searching** for your service. Higher volume, varying quality, requires more qualification, lower conversion rate.

The concept of friction

Friction is how difficult you make it for someone who has come across your website to give you their contact information.

A private GP practice came to us with a bookings problem. Over 90% of their traffic came on mobile, yet they had a huge banner covering half of their screen and only offered direct booking, no phone call button, no enquiry form, no WhatsApp option.

High Friction

Ask more questions, and add more steps when you're worried that the traffic quality is low.

Low Friction

When you're confident that traffic quality is optimal, remove as many steps as possible before booking and payment.

❗ **Lesson:** Meet your patients where they want you to meet them. Offer phone, WhatsApp, enquiry form, and direct booking. Removing steps removes friction; adding steps increases friction.

Case Study — Patient Buying Journeys

- We have worked with 8 different private GP providers in the past year or so. We consistently find that across these clinics, over 60% of their total qualified enquiries come by phone call, with the remaining 40% split across direct bookings, and enquiry form submissions.

I speculate that this is because people have already got a pre-formed idea of what getting a GP appointment looks like, and for most, that involves calling their GP practice directly. This booking behaviour then carries through to Private GP land. If you do not want the hassle of offering phone calls as an option, you will lose out, and your clinic will suffer.

On the other hand, we work with a private mental health clinic who managed to grow from basically £0 (aside from family/friend referrals) all the way to nearly £30,000 in bookings in just under 90 days. This clinic does not offer phone calls as an option, for two reasons. One is that they do not have the capacity to offer it, but two is, more importantly, that they understand that this communication tool is not one that is likely to be availed of by their particular patient demographic.

Finally, we work with a specialist MSK clinic that serve a more elderly population. For them, patients refuse to pay for any booking online. The patient buying journey either involves them calling the clinic directly and paying over the phone, or having one of their children book online on their behalf.

- ① **Summary:** Consider your patient demographics and psychographics and think about how exactly they might want to get in touch with you. You will likely find that different aspects of your patient base will want to get in touch with you in different ways, and so, you should do as much as you can to facilitate their preferred contact method.

Chapter 5: *How To Get More Bookings*

Your end goal is to get more bookings, of course, but it's important to note that without enough traffic or enquiries, you will not be able to solve your bookings problem.

How you view bookings will differ depending on the service that you offer. For some services, like a private men's health clinic, bookings might mean a direct 30-minute consultation booking. For surgical services, a booking can be the initial consultation with the consultant, and then what happens beyond that point to ensure that eligible patients come back and book their surgery with you.

Let's start this section with a case study to better illustrate the key components that go into setting your clinic up for success in terms of converting enquiries and traffic into bookings.

Case Study: Why Increasing Your Qualified Lead Flow Does Not Always Increase Bookings

A large clinic we worked with had a bookings problem. They received lots of website traffic and lots of qualified enquiries, but a disproportionately low number of bookings.

I spent three afternoons sitting directly next to the receptionists who were handling enquiry calls to find out what the issue was, and it revealed three critical issues.

Problem 1: No Online Booking

This clinic did not offer online booking.

Make it easy for patients to book online where possible.

If you don't, you will put off patients who value this convenience and waste your staff members' time on calls that could be automated.

Problem 2: No Communication

There was no real-time communication of availability between surgeons, their teams, and the booking team.

The reception team physically could not convert leads who called into booked appointments, because the reception team did not have a reliable source of truth for when the next appointments were available.

Problem 3: A reluctance to call

The receptionists had not been trained on how to convert patients from enquiry to bookings. They dreaded having to call patients, and that showed in their inputs. Patients would go days without receiving a follow-up. By the time the clinic got back in touch with them, multiple patients had already booked high-ticket surgeries (£5,000+) elsewhere at other clinics.

Summary: Increasing the number of bookings you receive requires a system with zero gaps. Your reception/lead handling team need to be bought into the processes, and you need to make their lives easier by making it as easy as possible to answer the questions that patients will ask them, and to seamlessly book patients in.

Customer Relationship Management System (CRM)

As you fix your traffic and lead problems, you will generate more cold leads.

These leads do not already know who you are, in the same way that a referral or a family friend does. They will require more careful input in order to convert at the same rate as your 'warm' leads.

A CRM does two things.

1. It gives you visibility over who has spoken to each lead, whether they booked, or didn't, and why. This visibility helps you learn more about whether the traffic that you are generating is of a high enough quality, and which aspects of your process require further training and improvement. This visibility also ensures that patient enquiries are not forgotten about.
2. A CRM allows you to reduce the workload that your staff have to deal with. Most of you reading this will not be at a stage where you have entire teams dedicated to lead handling and conversions. Instead, you will be relying on receptionists, or even some clinical staff members to manage lead flow. A CRM will give you the ability to set up automated emails, SMS, or WhatsApp messages to go out to your leads to improve conversion rate. It will reduce the mental bandwidth that is taken up by your staff trying to remember what needs to be done next by setting up manual and automated task reminders.

Our Three Golden Rules For CRM Management

01

Every Lead Has a Live Task

Every lead must always have a live task assigned to a named member of the team — e.g. "call tomorrow at 10am".

02

Move Along the Pipeline

Every patient should be moved along a named pipeline (customer journey) at every contact point. No one falls through the gaps.

03

Standard Operating Procedure

There must be a clear SOP for using your CRM — otherwise team members will freestyle and use it however they see fit, or stop using it all together.

Where it all goes wrong with CRMs

Introducing a CRM into your business is a large systemic change. It requires intense staff training to get everyone on board with using it. Like with any good system, process, or spreadsheet, it's only as good as the people using it. You must front-load training and getting staff on board to use the CRM. Explain why you're using it, and remind them why it's important to continue using it.

Speed to Lead

Alex Hormozi, a famous marketing-centric business owner whose portfolio of companies has a turnover of around \$250 million per year, describes speed to lead (how long it takes you to get back to someone who has left an enquiry with your business) as the **most important proxy metric for how seriously you take your business.**

7x

More Likely to Convert

Businesses contacting leads within an hour were 7x more likely to have a meaningful conversation with a key decision-maker. (*Harvard Business Review, 2,241 US companies*)

60x

Less Likely to Qualify

Companies waiting 24+ hours were 60x less likely to qualify the lead at all. Speed is not a nice-to-have; it is a competitive advantage.

30min

Target Response Time

Put somebody in charge of getting back to enquiries within 30 minutes of them coming in during business hours.

Phone calls take priority over everything else.

The most important conversations you have with leads will come on the phone. You cannot shy away from this.

There are some clinics where this is an exception of course (mental health centred clinics for example) but for 95% of medical and surgical clinics, you will have the highest percentage chance of converting leads over the phone rather than anywhere else.

Your aim for all of your lead conversations should be simple: get this person on a call with a member of our team as soon as possible.

Yes, that's difficult, but it's non-negotiable.

Case Study: Fix Your Bottleneck

- ❏ A medical clinic came to us for support with increasing the number of bookings they received. Over the past 2 years, their monthly number of bookings had hugely decreased, and they were not sure why.

It took us one single diagnostic conversation to work out everything that was going wrong.

Problem 1: Traffic Problems

The clinic owner had been convinced by a family friend that they needed a new website, so they moved away from their existing website/SEO provider to an inexperienced provider who completely tanked their SEO. At the same time, because they were allocating more funds to their website build, they decreased the amount of money they were spending on Google ads each month.

Monthly traffic almost halved.

At the same time, their Google ads were being managed by a web dev/SEO person. Tracking was not set up, so they had no idea which campaigns were performing well or not performing well.

Problem 2: Conversion Problem

A junior member of staff was in charge of converting leads. They worked as a receptionist, they supported the finance team, they handled the social media, the newsletter and they were expected to handle conversions from lead to enquiry.

They did not have a CRM of any sort.

This was the highest urgency and highest importance bottleneck to fix.

- ❏ We stopped working with this clinic 2 months in. We flagged early on that ads tracking needed to be fixed, the website needed to be brought back to its original state, and most importantly, that their conversion problem needed solving by creating a CRM and the relevant systems and processes that go along with that. Unfortunately, the clinic owner was more interested in creating posts for social media pages that had little following. They pulled the plug on the CRM launch the day before it was due to go live, avoiding solving the core bottleneck that would have solved their business growth, in favour of doing what they wanted to do.

Summary: It is your job as the clinic owner to fix your growth bottlenecks.

Chapter 6: How To Make Growing Your Clinic Easier

There are some high-leverage inputs that can accelerate your clinic growth, inputs that do not necessarily fall neatly under traffic, leads, or bookings, but that have a significant impact on outcomes across our portfolio of clinic partners.

Key Concept 1: Don't Be Afraid to Spend

The percentage of your clinic's revenue that you are willing to spend on growth tells us exactly how much you value growth.

- Clinics spending **£6,000/month badly** can outperform those spending £2,000 wisely
- Clinics spending **under £1,000/month** struggle to reach the minimum threshold to see any positive returns.
- Clinics spending **over £1,000/month** often stay with us for 12 months or more and continue to grow throughout that time

Key Concept 2: Choose Location and Service Wisely

Set up your clinic in an area where there is significant footfall of the right kind of patient. Choose services that are:

- **In demand** — patients are actively searching for them
- **Profitable** — margins support meaningful marketing investment
- **Competitively advantaged** — you have a reason to win

Being the only private ENT specialist across two cities gives you a far easier time than being the fourth aesthetics clinic on the same high street.

Position Strategically

Right location, services, and competitive advantage.

Invest Meaningfully

Spend £1,000+/month for 12+ months; trust the process.

These two concepts work together. Meaningful spend in the wrong market yields poor returns. The right market with insufficient spend yields slow growth. The clinics that win combine both: deliberate positioning and the willingness to back themselves financially.

Closing Remarks

We started this white paper talking about anonymity. About how, even if you are spending thousands of pounds a month on advertising, the vast majority of people who could become your patients have no idea you exist, what you actually offer, or why they should choose you over the clinic down the road.

Everything in between — traffic, leads, bookings — has been about closing that gap. Not through tricks, not through some secret platform nobody else knows about, but through the **unglamorous, repeatable work** of getting the right people to find you, capturing their interest properly, and following through once they have raised their hand.



Thank you

Private healthcare in the UK is not shrinking, and it is not getting less competitive. More clinics are opening. More patients, including younger ones who would never have considered going private a decade ago, are actively looking for the kind of care you provide.

The clinics that win over the next few years will not necessarily be the best clinically. That is the cost of entry, not the differentiator. They will be the ones who treated marketing with the same seriousness as patient care and compliance, right from the start.

If you have read this far and are thinking about where your own clinic sits against everything covered here, I am always happy to talk it through.



Dr Tiarnán McKeever

Founder and Director at KeCatalyst

Email Dr Tiarnán McKeever

tiarnan@kecatalyst.com

Connect On LinkedIn