



SIX STRATEGIES FOR BRANDING YOUR PRACTICE

How to leverage what makes you different from all the other aesthetic practices in the marketplace



“Successful clinics keep their branding at the heart of their business; they live and breathe their brand.”

AS THE FIELD OF MEDICAL aesthetics has matured around the globe, more practitioners and managers have recognised that branding is essential to growing their businesses, especially in light of increasing competition from many directions.

They recognise the link between a successful business and strong branding and aspire to build a brand that resonates with the target audiences they want to reach. The strategies that go into building your brand, so patients stay loyal, range from the image of the practice, the range of services and products, and quality of results achieved, but even the smallest details factor into how your overall brand will be perceived.

Branding is not just a cool logo, new colour palette, a website or how you want your brand to become across. A brand strategy is a long-term plan for developing a successful brand presence in order to achieve specific goals. Your brand is not your product, your logo, your website, or your name. In truth, your brand is far more encompassing – it defines the visceral and frequently intangible aspects of your company identity. A well thought out and defined brand identity should be the backbone of any successful company, particularly for online enterprises that typically lack the physical brand components of brick-and-mortar stores. It's that hard-to-pin-down feeling that separates powerhouse and mediocre brands from each other, and a big part of that hard-to-pin-down feeling comes from brand consistency.

Successful clinics keep their branding at the heart of their business; they live and breathe their brand.

When building your brand, think of it as a person. Each of us is an individual whose character is made up of beliefs, values and purposes that define who we are and how we connect with others. Our personality determines the way we conduct ourselves in different situations, how we dress and what we say.

Conduct a brand audit

In its purest form, branding is a way of defining your practice to your internal team and your external audiences. Branding is the process of differentiating your practice from all the other practices in the market. It is your practice's DNA. This identity should be based on your core values and what you do, not just how your practice looks. It is far more complex than the physical aspects of the brand. It should conjure up powerful emotions, both good and bad. Your ongoing mission is to transform any less than stellar responses into positive ones which takes time and a cohesive plan.

Branding takes into account the look and feel of your practice, you and your staff, all your marketing materials, and every other detail that offers clues to who you are and what you value.



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Before you can develop your brand identity, define what the core values of your brand are, what your mission is and how you differ from the competition. Also, consider what you want to tell clients about your practice and ensure that your offer aligns with what your target patient segments want and what you actually deliver. For example, if your primary target audience is working women over 40 who are cost conscious, developing a luxury brand positioning may not be effective. Similarly, if you base your brand value on delivering 5-star service but your staff are underpaid, disgruntled and unfriendly, your brand will not meet your client's expectations.

Effective branding will give your practice a personality that suits your target audiences. Competing brands that offer the same products and services can have very different brands. For example, a chain of clinics that features series pricing for light-based hair removal treatments performed by non-medical staff may shoot for a value-for-money brand image, whereas a solo practice staffed by an MD and physician extenders using premium brand diode lasers for hair removal may do better to place an emphasis on providing a pampering and more exclusive experience to attract patients who are seeking that level of service.

Create a unique vision

Look at your practice and how it appears to others from the outside looking in. Branding your aesthetics practice will help your practice stand out by separating you from the competition. Not all practices will share the same mission and vision, and these traits are what makes you different and special. ▷

▷ Determine where you stand in the marketplace and to understand who your target audience is. This entails an in-depth analysis of how your brand is viewed by consumers. Consumers are very sophisticated today and can see right through attempts to dazzle them with discounts, specials, spin and sales pitches. Their relationships to brands are at least in part emotional. When customers connect with you because they share the same values and philosophy as your brand, it can lead to greater loyalty and advocacy. Brand loyalty leads directly to more treatments and products being sold, higher price points, better average sales, and a platform on which to build and expand.

You will also need to conduct a detailed competitor analysis. This may include a review of your top competitor's branding, websites, online presence, ratings, reviews, marketing, pricing and advertising. If you are not entirely sure of your top competitors, think about who you compete with for new patients, who you lose patients to most often, and the biggest, most successful aesthetic practices in your market. Investigating what these practices are doing well, offers clues on how to differentiate and the best strategies to roll out.

Examine your market to ensure you have identified a unique value proposition that will resonate with your patients and the community. It is critical to set yourself apart from other practitioners who offer similar services in the surrounding area. Identify any unmet needs in your market. Consider focusing on areas where there is high demand for specific services, but fewer good options available to patients. Then, develop a unique brand that communicates your superior position in the marketplace.

Once you identify what makes you and your practice exceptional, promote the @#\$\$%& out of it! This may include a convenient location, evening/weekend hours, credentialed staff, distinctive expertise, service and product offerings, service, specialisation, comfortable facility, and many other attributes.

Your practice name, logo and tagline are also important. Good design should



provide a consistent image that will enable people to recognise your brand immediately. Once you choose some brand names you may want to run with, do a trademark search to make sure they are not commonly used and are available. You should trademark your brand before investing in a branding campaign and marketing plan. You will want to be sure that your distinctive brand image is protected against the competition.

Your marketing should be in line with your brand values across everything you put out there. For example, think about what spelling mistakes on correspondence and an untidy waiting room say about your brand to new patients? Is that really the message you want to send? These are clues that your practice doesn't pay attention to details, are sloppy and not buttoned up. These are not really selling points for an aesthetic practice.

If you dispense a wide range of products, consider whether they all fit well together within your brand strategy. For example, if you focus on selling exclusive physician-only skin care products, and you decide to add a retail brand that is available on eBay, Amazon or in the mall, you may want to develop a separate segment to avoid turning off established clients who come to your practice specifically for products they cannot get everywhere else. While you can expand to take advantage of new opportunities, you

may risk undermining your brand if you do not maintain a consistent focus on your core values.

When you understand your market and identify how you and your team stand out, craft a tagline or slogan that summarises how you want to be perceived. This should be short and sweet like a synopsis, rather than a lengthy mission statement. Keep it bold, memorable, and succinct. Some good examples of aesthetic practice taglines may be: 'We're All About Skin,' 'The Beauty Place,' or 'Embrace Your Potential.'

Your brand's visual identity will be reflected in the colours, fonts, logo and overall style you create. The voice of your brand should be distinctive, consistent, resonate with your audiences, remain true to your ideals.

Develop consistent messaging

Your mission statement is like your 'raison d'être' so to speak. It serves as a guideline for daily decision-making and prioritisation. All major changes to your practice, adding new services, locations or expansion, should align with your long-term goals. This will take the form of a one-sentence summary of what you do and who you do it for.

For example, the mission statement of the Mayo Clinic is, "To inspire hope and contribute to health and well-being by providing the best care to every patient through integrated clinical practice, education and research." So, a mission statement for an aesthetics practice may go something like this, "To advance the art

ADVANTAGES OF A STRONG BRAND

- Competitive advantage
- Adds credibility
- Establishes a recognizable image in the market
- Resonates with your target audience(s)
- Brand recognition

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and science of aesthetic and reconstructive surgery for adults and children,' or 'Providing state-of-the-art skincare and medical spa services in the Carolinas.'

Your brand should tell customers exactly what they can expect from you. A strong brand identity will also attract new customers by stressing the differences between you and the competition. This is critical if you are in a highly competitive market where it is difficult to differentiate your practice on services, products and results alone. If you strive to deliver on all of your promises, patients are more likely to return again and refer others to your practice.

Think of the Starbucks brand. How many times have you walked out of your way to find a Starbucks for a coffee drink because you know exactly what's on the menu, what it will taste like and how much it will cost, even if it costs more than another coffee shop you pass along the way? That process is the same for your patients.

Creating a professional brand image doesn't happen overnight. Determine who your target audiences are and what will appeal most to each of them. For example, if your primary target is women over 40 who are seeking anti-ageing treatments, displaying stock images of 20-something girls in bikinis on your landing page is more likely to turn them off than to attract them to choose your practice. Similarly, if you also are targeting men, make sure to include relevant images and the right content to reach male patients in your marketing strategy.

Decide on the core messages you wish to convey to each audience and build your brand elements around these. Everything from the colours and fonts you select, to the style and imagery on your website and the content on your social media platforms, should speak to these key messages.

In a perfect world, you should enlist a team of designers and branding professionals to assist you with this process. If your budget does not allow for that level of expertise, use some tools to take a stab at it yourself.

Your brand should be consistent across every online platform that is relevant, starting with your website.

If you are creating a new brand, pay attention to these platforms to own your brand name and maintain a presence:

- Facebook business page
- Twitter handle
- Instagram account
- Snapchat account
- LinkedIn business profile
- YouTube account
- Pinterest business account.

So, even if you don't want to focus on Snapchat or Pinterest right now, create an account with your brand name anyway to prevent someone else from owning it. In addition, on every social channel you want to be active on, maintain a personal account and a professional profile separately.

You should also reserve all domain names associated with your practice, and all domains with your name. For example, for James Smith MD of Smith Cosmetic Surgery and MedSpa, you may want to reserve the following URLs:

- JamesSmithMD
- DrJamesSmith
- SmithCosmeticSurgery
- SmithMedSpa.

You can then select one primary domain and have all of the other URLs point to that domain. By taking steps early on to reinforce your brand, you can ensure that a competitor won't hijack your name, forcing you to come up with an alternative when you decide to take advantage of a new marketing channel.

Protect your brand by claiming any accounts relevant to your practice because there may be a similarly named businesses elsewhere. For example, perhaps you want to expand

your practice by adding another site in a location across town. Your current brand is 'Johnson Aesthetics,' but you search online and find that someone else has a practice called, 'Johnson Esthetics Center.' Those brand names are close enough to cause potential brand confusion and customers may not know which practice yours is. Being first to claim any names related to your practice will establish your online presence.

In medical aesthetics, it is common for practices or clinics to choose their names in these orders: Location plus Brand, such as 'Richmond Medical Laser Spa' or Brand of Location, such as 'Laser Medical Spa of Richmond.' The best way to be proactive is to make sure that your brand is very clearly defined.

Communicate your key messages

Build a marketing campaign to communicate your brand identity to your patients and the community as a whole. You can do this via email marketing, Google ads, Facebook ads, Instagram promotions, appointment reminders, newsletters, billboards, brochures, among other tactics. Make sure that your message

is consistent and lines up with the quality of the experience patients receive when they visit your practice.

Measure results before and after pulling the trigger on each marketing tactic. What you measure depends on the impact you want to achieve. Consider the traffic to your website, response to emails, interactions with a chatbot, and engagement on social channels. Have the number of leads increased? Are more patients booking consultations and treatments? Are fewer patients leaving the practice? Are patients posting positive reviews about your practice? Are you getting more referrals from current patients? Branding is a long-term exercise, so be patient and expect to see improvements over the long term.

Your brand should be upheld in all patient interactions, social media and marketing. Identifying your strengths and differentiators will help you communicate your value proposition clearly to patients in your marketing and personal interactions. Having a consistent brand image can also help keep your >

10 NOTABLE BRAND TAGLINES

- NIKE: Just do it
- US POSTAL SERVICE: We deliver
- AVIS: We try harder
- CAPITAL ONE CREDIT CARD: What's in your wallet?
- DISNEY: The happiest place on earth
- DOLLAR SHAVE CLUB: Shave Time. Shave Money.
- L'OREAL: Because You're Worth It
- TACO BELL: Think outside the bun
- HSBC: The world's local bank
- TESCO: Every little helps

▷ team operating as a cohesive unit.

Your brand needs to be showcased and visible to your audience to achieve the desired results. When communicating your brand messages, create a PR strategy that delivers placements in the right channels for your brand. For instance, if you are positioning your plastic surgery practice to be high touch, high service, getting quoted in a supermarket tabloid on bee venom in skincare may not be the ideal vehicle for your brand. Develop a content marketing strategy that tells the story you want to communicate to your target audience.

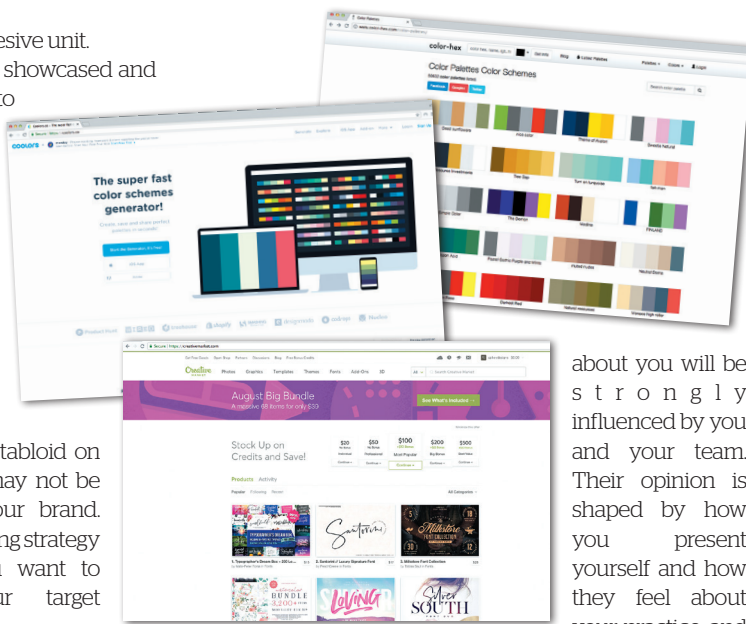
A strong brand can be your best asset for managing and growing your practice and image in the community. Drive the discussion around your practice, online and in the marketplace. Promote the type of experience you offer as well as the services you provide. The experience you create in your practice and the impact you hope to have are just as important as the services you offer because they will attract the type of patients you want. If patients enjoy the experience, they are more likely to refer new patients to you, so you can continue to target the type of patients you want to have.

Build credibility

Deliver on your brand promises 24/7 to maintain credibility. When a new patient encounters your brand, they have certain expectations and it is critical to be able to deliver on those promises.

For example, when you think of high-end service, brands like Nordstrom, Neiman Marcus and Ritz Carlton might come to mind. Similarly, when you want to find virtual assistant technologies, Apple's Siri, Amazon's Alexa and Google Assistant are what most people will look for.

The power of a strong brand is that it can elevate your practice above all or most of your competitors to a memorable experience. When a patient has a great experience, encourage them to recommend your practice to others through word of mouth, relevant review sites, or via their social channels. How your patients talk



CHECK OUT THESE SITES FOR LOGOS, FONTS, AND COLOUR SCHEMES

- color-hex.com
- color-palettes.com
- colors.co/
- palleton.com
- creativemarket.com
- fiverr.com

about you will be strongly influenced by you and your team. Their opinion is shaped by how you present yourself and how they feel about your practice, and whether you live up to their expectations.

While it is important for your brand to establish clear messages and imagery, it does not mean that you will be boxed in and cannot make changes in the future. To stay competitive, plan to review and refine your brand as needed and alter your strategies along the way. Your brand's core elements may not change very much, but the way you communicate them may need to change with the times and consumer behaviour.

Protecting your brand

You alone are responsible for protecting your brand over time. If you deviate, you will have lost some of the momentum you and your team have worked so hard to create. For example, think before you make decisions and choices; "Is this on brand?" Consider whether every strategy, tactic, new hire, new treatment to be added, is consistent with your brand culture and messaging.

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For example, if your brand is high-end luxury and a pampering experience, will adding an imported generic IPL system

enhance your brand offering to clients? Probably not because those patients are seeking popular brands that are touted by consumer media, influencers, and other reputable physicians. Similarly, if your brand is exclusively about being the experts in facial aesthetics, will expanding to offer body shaping treatments undermine your brand positioning? In this case, you may be able to expand your offering beyond the face if you introduce it in a manner consistent with your brand messaging that meets your existing patients wants and needs.

Developing a brand and communicating it aggressively is key to building an engaging online and local presence. How you present your brand defines the conversation around your practice and highlights your strengths to patients. Don't dilute your brand positioning with indiscriminate discounting. Try offering a better value proposition, rather than just slashing prices. Rolling out special promotions to VIP or loyal patients is a great opportunity to reinforce your brand mission and to introduce more patients to the services and products you offer.

Aim to build long-term relationships with patients. Try not to raise expectations that may potentially result in broken promises. Develop trust among patients and your community with honest branding. Consumers are all about transparency today. Be clear about who you are and stay true to your core values. Always consider your branding when communicating with customers.

Speak to your customers with a consistent tone of voice. This will help reinforce your practice's identity and clarify your offering, so patients know exactly what to expect. Avoid the trap of repeating the same messages in the same way over and over again. Rather, strive to make your key messages work together to maintain a harmonious identity.

Lastly, simply posting your logo on everything does not a brand strategy make. A logo is simply a symbol that represents your brand promise. Your brand identity should not just be a mission statement on the wall and a colourful logo. Be innovative, step out of your comfort zone, and take some risks to stand out. Your brand is a reflection of your philosophy, character, and values. Reach for the total package to build a lasting brand for your practice.

The Ultimate Beauty Solutions



27th EADV Congress

Paris, France from September 12 ~ 16, 2018

Booth No. 225 in Level 2

IMCAS World Congress 2019

Paris, France from January 31 ~ February 2, 2019

Booth No. 104 in level 3

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