



Branding—Not Just for the Big Guys

I KEEP HEARING ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF BRANDING OUR PRACTICE. ISN'T THAT JUST IMPORTANT FOR THE BIG INSTITUTIONS?

— BY STEVEN POWELL

Branding your practice or healthcare organization is definitely NOT just for the big consumer-oriented institutions. For large and small organizations alike, the road to commanding the most impact recognition and good will possible from your marketing efforts is by consistent and relevant branding. This means, a memorable logo, a truly relevant tag line, and well designed/written materials.

Throwing enough money at a brand can make almost anything recognizable, but smaller organizations don't have that option. The smaller the marketing budget, the harder it is to get the word out and be remembered for that "word".

In marketing, we want to reach out to our potential market and "touch" them as often as possible. If your brand usage is consistent (the look, feel and overall business message), your audience will be "touched" each time they hear your name, see your logo or hear your tag line.

It's all about consistency. Here are some branding issues that should be kept in mind for all your communications materials.

Logo/Trademark: Is your logo prominently displayed and cleanly reproduced in everything you do? Be it emblem or logotype, nothing impacts your brand visually more than your logo. It's on your card, your letterhead, your signage – even your corporate jet someday. Use it consistently and treat it with respect and others will do the same.

Graphic Identity: Did we mention consistency? Don't change your color scheme just because you're bored with it. If 'Healthcare blue' is the color on your sign, then 'Healthcare blue' should be the dominant color in all of your materials.

Do your patient statements use an orange bar under your logo? Then that orange bar should also be on your letterhead, brochures and web site. Who knows? That orange bar could be just the trigger to remind someone they've seen you before.

Tag Line: Nothing delivers the promise of your practice to its potential patients like your tag line. In fact, some experts say that your tag line is just as important as your logo itself. So, if your business card says, "Your family practice", then

that statement should travel everywhere your logo goes. (Please, please, please... don't use anything that generic.)

From the direct claim to the incredibly sublime to the mad-deningly generic, if you believed in it enough to put it on your business card, then own it. Believe it. Make sure it rolls off your staff's respective tongues. And, most importantly, live up to its promise.



Finally, remember that branding is a serious, long-term investment and your spending decisions need to respect that importance. If you're going after or have received outside financing, it should be a significant line item in your budget. Building a brand is a core business activity, as important as leasing office space, recruiting the right people and developing your product or service. **c8**

We raise a lot of issues, but we're here to help you with the answers. Need some professional guidance? Call us at 845.651.1650 for a free, no-obligation consultation.

Steven Powell is the founder and award-winning creative director of Co-oper8 Marketing Group, a branding and marketing studio based in the Hudson Valley. He has been helping businesses find and deliver their unique marketing messages for over 25 years. Steve hosts *Marketing By Design*, a weekly talk-radio show marketing and branding and speaks at professional seminars through out the region. Learn more at: www.c8group.com.



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