Medical Practice Branding Guide

WHAT IS BRANDING, WHY IS IT IMPORTANT, AND THE 7 STEPS TO A STREAMLINED BRAND
Branding for medical practices is a subject that's frequently referred to but is rarely defined.

It's an area that many doctors maybe familiar with and understand the need for, but may not be able to clearly define or explain it's importance.

So before we address the 8 steps for a streamlined brand, we should be clear on the answers to these questions:

1 | What is medical branding?
2 | Why is it branding your practice important?
What is Branding?

Branding is a term often discussed, but rarely defined. It also seems like everyone has their own definition.

So let’s start by clearing up two common misconceptions about medical branding.

Not Just a Logo

Your practice brand is not simply about your logo. A logo is definitely a large part of your brand, but it’s only the tip of the iceberg.

Confusing a logo with a brand is a common mistake, as you will see there is more to your practice brand.
Branding is not just for large companies. When we think "brand," we often think of the brands we're most familiar with. Brands like Pfizer or Mercedes Benz. But the truth of the matter is that every business has a brand. Your practice brand is always communicating something visually to your patients and referrers. It might be telling them that ‘you're precise and pay attention to details’ or it could be sending a message of ‘uncertainty, confusion, and poor service’.
Your Brand Vision?

A brand is more than an image of your practice. Our favourite definition is:

"Your brand tells patients what they can expect and can help differentiate your practice from others. Overtime, your brand is the sum of your kept promises."

Many patients are exposed to your brand before they visit. This glimpse should pre-frame this promise.

Think of a fast food experience like McDonald's (colorful and friendly) that catches your attention versus a local French restaurant offering more refined dining and an expectation of something special.
A doctor’s brand character is an important aspect of how you position and project your practice. It should be consistent with:

- who you are,
- who you want to be, and
- who people perceive you to be.

Basically, your branding should be a reflection of your practice and its character.

Good medical branding is intentional about using elements like your logo, website, and other branded material to portray where you want to be.
Like your practice vision, your brand should reflect where you are going, rather than where you are now.

Like dressing for the part; your practice branding is the art of making your patients see and hear the right things and setting the right expectations.

Branding should also use your practice's logo, color scheme, tone and identity to attract your ideal patients.

Your branding should reflect your promise and vision and how these are aligned to your target patients and their needs.
Brand Trust

We have always understood that a brand is like trust.

“a brand can be framed from the outset, but only be earned overtime.”

Your brand is nothing unless it is supported by a strong reputation.
Your brand is really the sum of both managed patient expectations and your kept promises over the long term.
The Components Of A Brand Design

We can dichotomize the components of a brand into 2 categories:

**The Tangible**
Tangible components of a brand are those that are visual: a logo, website, marketing materials, signage, business cards, printed material, etc.

**The Intangible**
Intangible aspects of your brand are often far more powerful: verbal scripts, words used, workflows & patient experience, patient respect & their outcome.

Both components are equally important to your practice's brand.

Quantum Digital
Apple’s brand is more than its logo. It includes both tangible and intangible components. Their tangible or visual branding includes:

- the iconic logo and the sleek product design,
- the "belly button" ear plugs, and
- their simple advertisements

Intangible or non-visual aspects, we could think of are:

- product names (iPhone, iPad, iMac),
- Apple store service
- notification sounds, ringtones or Siri's voice.

All of these components are part of Apple's brand.
Why Is Branding Important?

**Visual Memory**

Most people have a visual memory, people primarily remember how things look. Your practice brand should project to patients an image to recognize and recall. Ideally a strong brand will support a mental image that appeals to your ideal patient. A practice brand will help your practice to be more recognizable.

Ramsey Healthcare’s brand is a simple and consistent brand.
Why Is Branding Important?

**Practice Differentiation**
Branding differentiates your practice from competitors and allows you to set your practice apart from your competitors. Take these three courier brands for example:

They all offer similar services but their brands allow each service provider to be easily distinguished.
Why Is Branding Important?

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**Emotional Bonding & Patient Loyalty**

It is natural to get comfortable with brands, whether it's a car, toothpaste, or your doctor. Your patient develops an emotional attachment to your practice and this creates patient loyalty.

Practices should nurture brand loyalty to help in the process of both attracting ideal patients and supporting repeat patients.

Good branding should catch the eye of your target patient.

For example a male obstetrician, may need to appeal to soon-to-be mothers with soft, feminine colors, maybe girly, hand-lettered logo, etc.

Every branding decision should stem from knowing your ideal patient.
Many practice owners nowadays understand both, What branding is and Why it’s important, but

They struggle with Branding Implementation.

That’s where the 7 Simple Steps to a Streamlined Brand comes in.
7 Simple Steps to a Streamlined Brand?

Step 1 | Write Your Mission Statement
Step 2 | Define Your Ideal Audience
Step 3 | Develop Your Tone
Step 4 | Research & Collect Visual Examples
Step 5 | Create or Refine Your Logo
Step 6 | Set Standards For Your Brand Elements
Step 7 | List Your Workflow or Client Experience
Step 1 | Write Your Mission Statement

The branding process starts with a concise statement that captures the purpose of your practice. This mission statement is a foundational step. It can include your services, how you position your practice and why you are unique. Your logo, colours etc should align with your practice mission.

One approach is to first make a list of keywords that describe your practice niche, conditions treated and what makes you different.

Then create a focused and specific statement like: “we help surgeons to help more patients with an end to end marketing solution, using proven strategies and metrics”

Your mission rarely arrives overnight, it shouldn't be rushed. Also, don’t move onto the next steps if you haven’t nailed your mission. It’s up to you.
Step 2 | Define Your Ideal Audience

Ultimately your practice brand is less about your practice and more about attracting your ideal patient.

In order to attract them, you must first define who they are:

- What is their age and gender?
- What is their occupation and income?
- What are their interests?

The more detailed you are in your description, the more you will be able to zero in on that niche and appeal to them through the tangible and intangible components of your brand.
Step 3 | Develop Your Tone

Your brand's tone is an often overlooked component. While much attention is given to the visual aspects of a practice brand, less is given to a brand's voice.

In order to streamline your brand, each component needs to be considered. Does your tone fit and is it consistent with your practice mission?

“clear & professional”, “slightly relaxed”, “friendly & encouraging”, “blunt & bold”

What would your ideal patient find most appealing? Are their words you will and won’t use. Think through the names of your services. Go back to that list of words you created in Step 1.
Step 4 | Research & Collect Visual Examples

Collect pictures or ideas to help with determining the visual direction of a brand colors, patterns, photos, etc.

Your collection of ideas become a guide of your brand elements and feel.

You might collect examples of possible colour schemes, subject matter, shapes and graphics that are consistent with your desired mission.

Whether you pull together images on a secret Pinterest board or use a scrapbook. It helps define a brief if you catalogue visual samples of brand design inspiration.
Step 5 | Create / Refine Your Logo

The logo is the step where many practice owners get stuck. It's the component of branding that usually comes to mind first, and it makes a large impact on the way your audience will recognize and identify your brand.

While we don't have an across-the-board formula for coming up with the perfect logo for your practice, you should read the following blog post "7 ESSENTIAL LOGO CHARACTERISTICS"
Step 6 | Set Standards For Your Brand Elements

Consistency is the key to developing brand recognition and loyalty. Repeat use of the same visual elements creates strong audience association. Spend time nailing down your brand's

- colors, fonts,
- photos, graphic and illustrative styles,
- patterns, etc.

Once you’ve outlined these items, compile your tangible and intangible brand components into a brand style guide.

To maintain consistency, set detailed parameters. This will be especially helpful if you have more than one person working on your brand
Step 7 | List Your Workflow / Client Experience

For your brand to be effective and streamlined, it must be carried out consistently across all points of contact. List out your workflow and patient experience in detail and think through how each step can reflect your brand.

- Business cards & Email signatures
- Thank you notes, blog post graphics
- Return address labels
- Pricing guide PDFs
- Invoices & Contracts
- Facebook cover images

Consider every aspect when streamlining your brand elements.
If you take nothing else away from this guide...remember to

STAY CONSISTENT

Changing your branding every couple years can be a hindrance to
growing brand loyalty and increasing recognition with your
audience.

If you stay consistent with your tone, visual direction, colors,
patterns, typefaces, brand standards, and photos, your brand will
become more professional and streamlined in no time.