Owning a dental practice or group has always presented challenges, but the marketplace has never been more crowded than it is now. With an ever-increasing level of choice for patients, it is more important than ever for dental businesses to stand out from the crowd. While we of course all know the value of providing a first-rate customer service, and that will always remain the most important factor, how many of us recognise the importance of creating and building a brand?

Generally, in dentistry, branding has not been regarded in the same way it is in the corporate world, where multi-national businesses expand on the strength of their brands. But now, with the growth of dental corporates and multi-practice groups, branding is becoming an increasingly important factor. That is not to say that branding is only the domain of the big players. Creating a brand which is unique and people can identify, talk about, recommend to others and remember is just as important for a single practice, and in some situations even more so, where there are other local competitors for existing and potential clients to choose from.

Effective branding is also important when looking to expand, franchise or sell one’s business. When dentists are adding another site to their existing portfolio, doing so under a brand will enable people to know who is moving into their area, and can help give confidence that this is an established dental business taking over their local site. One example being a business in North East England I act for, the Burgess & Hyder Dental Group, who now operate 11 clinics across the region under their brand. They are welcomed into each area because their brand is widely known, as is the quality associated with it.

Equally in franchising, the importance of a strong brand is crucial to enable a business to thrive in other areas relies on an existing strength of reputation. Through being part of that recognisable brand, patients will know that each site under that umbrella will offer the same levels of service and quality. Another of my clients, Damira Dental, has recently rebranded from Aspire Dental Care, and is pursuing a franchising model under its new and fresh identity. The business, which has 14 sites across the South of England, has amassed a strong reputation during its eight years in operation, and the strength of its service coupled with its branding will allow that to be replicated across the UK.

The creation of a brand identity, which can help support the expansion of a business, can also be of great importance when it comes to selling. It is much easier to market a business which is well known and has invested time and effort in standing out from the crowd. To a potential buyer, they are important factors in instilling the confidence to take on a site in a new territory.

In this day and age of dentistry being an increasingly competitive business, distinguishing oneself from the many other players has never been more important, and is something that must be given due consideration.