Build a better practice brand

By Roger P. Levin, DDS

What is a brand? It is those unique qualities that set a company or a product apart from the competition. Coca-Cola and Mercedes Benz are two of the world’s most famous brands. Each of these companies has a quality product that customers perceive as valuable. Whether it is a refreshing soft drink or a well-engineered luxury car, these companies have defined their competitive advantages in the marketplace. To reach the highest level of success, dentists need to brand their practices.

Levin Group has seen doctors who have rebranded their practices achieve exceptional results both in the near and long term. These six action steps will help you brand your practice:

**Identify your competitive advantages.** What do you consider your strengths or competitive advantages? What do your patients perceive as your strengths? Are they the same things? View your practice through the eyes of your patients. Ask for patient feedback to make sure your competitive advantages are being communicated to patients.

**Improve customer service.** Look at the total patient experience. Does your scheduling system work? Are patients seen on time? Are front desk staff members helpful? Harried, overstressed staff members make a poor impression on customers. Practice success is built on business systems that promote efficiency, facilitate customer service and decrease stress.

**Upgrade your office appearance.** What does your décor say about your practice? If your practice has many younger patients, is your office decorated appropriately? Do you have toys and picture books that make coming to your office a fun experience for children? For your adult patients, do you have recent magazines that reflect a variety of interests? All these factors contribute to a positive or a negative patient experience.

**Find the right service mix.** Practices need to offer the right mix of need-based dentistry and elective services to increase production. The Levin Group Method™ recommends practices derive at least 22 percent of production from elective services. What elective services do you currently offer? Are patients requesting services you don’t currently offer? Selecting the right high-quality services will establish your brand.

**Training your staff.** Establishing step-by-step guidelines for every practice operation is the first step to training your staff. You need the right systems in place, so your staff can provide the best patient care. Use structured morning meetings to reinforce procedures and protocols for scheduling, case presentation and patient treatment. Appoint an office manager or a senior staff member as your training point person. To properly brand your practice, staff training must encompass all your services and products offered to patients.

**Market your brand.** Once a practice has defined its competitive advantages, it must make patients aware of its brand components time and time again. The staff must be trained to emphasize and reinforce this messaging throughout the patient experience. Collateral materials, such as brochures and posters, must support the brand.

**Conclusion**

Your brand is a promise to patients. Is your practice currently “saying” the right things to patients? Are there things you can do that will communicate your brand better to patients? Step back and take an objective look at your practice. Is it where you want to be? These six action steps can help you make your brand a reality.

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