logos and images, but they spark the other senses as well. The taste of McDonald's French fries, the smell of BMW leather trim, the feel of Coca-Cola jingles. We've all experienced these brands, and they are more than just products and services; they are part of our lives. The Coca-Cola, BMW, and McDonald's are examples of brands that have become part of our society and our culture.

The branding steps at work. Take Coke. The creation story is about Dr. John Pemberton creating a carbonated drugstore beverage. The creed is about "the real thing." The icons are the shapely bottle profile and the Coke red ribbon. The sacred words include "Coke," "It's the real thing," "Coke is it," and other words exclusive to the Coke experience.

Consider the iPod. The creation story has to do with bringing Steve Jobs back into the Apple empire and the redesign of personal computing and Apple Corp. The creed is about delivering sound and pictures in portable ways like no other company has ever tried. The icons are the elegant design of the iPod and the striking two-color ads. The sacred words include "Coke," "It’s the real thing," "Coke is it," and other words exclusive to the Coke experience.

Branding is a process that can help you position your dental products and services by creating a community of people to surround them. Brands are built by providing products and services that people can believe in. Don’t become another generic dentist. To the general public it can be difficult to differentiate one dentist from another. This difficulty has been magnified for decades, by dentists who offer no special competitive advantage or unique approach to dentistry. The shame is that with the cutting-edge equipment, procedures, and high-tech dental philosophies in place, it isn’t very hard to be special. Especially, since only a small percentage of the dentists in the industry seem to understand the unique opportunity that is before them.

Update your old equipment. Become comfortable with cosmetic dentistry. Invest in a laser and digital radiography. Spend some money perfecting your front office with one of the many invaluable patient education systems available. Expand your hours. Hire a practice management coach and perfect your craft. Then, when you have done these things and more, shout it from the top of your roof!

Interested in speaking to Joel about developing your brand? E-mail him at Joel@thedentistsnetwork.net.

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