The importance of brand continuity

Cathy Johnson offers advice for getting your dental practice noticed consistently

Nowadays we are saturated with logos and brands in a myriad of shapes, sizes and colours, all competing for our attention. The brand of any company, including your practice, is essentially a grouping of elements that provide it with a unique face and personality. If designed well and applied consistently with care, flair and imagination, it will go a long way to ensuring the practice is perceived and talked about as highly attractive.

The most important roles of the brand, beyond providing the practice with a unique face and personality everyone will easily recognise, are the following:

• Deliver consistent messages about what the practice is all about
• Build and preserve the desired perception about the practice
• Clearly convey what the practice offers to its audience

In order to preserve the uniqueness of your brand you must apply it consistently on everything your viewers see.

Be seen
Starting outside the practice, what a great opportunity to show off! There’s no point investing in a stunning new identity, yet leaving an old unbranded sign on display.

On the contrary, a striking image beautifully displayed can do a magnificent marketing job for you, simply by being there – reinforcing your brand by making a favourable and memorable impression on all who view it. Inside the practice, make sure your brand is an integral part of your interior design scheme.

Be proud
Likewise, with your practice literature, ensure your practice logo is featured in exactly the same way on all items of stationery, welcome packs, referral packs, patient newsletters and internal literature. Any advertising you do should follow the brand guidelines and it goes without saying that your website must be designed in line with everything else.

There are numerous opportunities to get your brand noticed in a range of applications. Repeat, repeat and reinforce your message. In addition to uniforms, name badges and carrier bags, some practices now have branded cups, saucers and hot towels within the practice and branded toothbrushes and floo to take home. There are plenty of companies producing promotional accessories that give you the opportunity to get your practice seen outside of your own four walls. Most people love a freebie and there's nothing worse than being your own best-kept secret. I have actually heard the words: “we've spent money on these brochures so we're not going to hand them out too freely”. Yet this is surely a fundamental business error that completely misses the point – what use is a brochure when it is hidden away?

If, at present, you don’t have the budget to rebrand across the board, start with the brand identity you hand full of the items most in need of a facelift. This way you can plan ahead, ease cash flow and gradually reinforce your brand over, say, a year or two. However, remember that brand continuity is key so delaying things may be a false economy. Look at where you are now and where it is that you want to be in one, three, or five years’ time. You’ll know when it feels right to go the whole hog and give yourselves the “wow” factor.

Case Study
Number 45 Dental in Chichester opened in May 2008. From the outset, as contracts were being signed on the property, the owners focused on choosing a name for the practice and commissioned the design of the brand identity. This was done in conjunction with planning the internal décor and, by putting the graphic designer in touch with the interior designer; they ensured continuity of style and colour throughout. The welcome pack, stationery, signage and website are all fully co-ordinated. The result: an impressive and stylish achievement that received a Best New Practice nomination.

About the author
Cathy Johnson specialises in design for dentists and will design your practice image, stationery, welcoming packs, referral packs, external signage and website to raise the profile of your practice and attract the patients you are looking for. Cathy’s success is built on more than 25 years of experience as a graphic designer combined with an in-depth understanding of the needs of the dental profession. She and her team are based in London and work with practices across the U.K. and abroad.

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