

# Branding Basics: Why Create a Dental Brand Guide (and How to Do it)

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by Naren Arulrajah, Ekwa Marketing



You may have a niche market, but there is an equal chance that a half dozen other offices in the neighbourhood offer the same dental services. Either way, your practice is unique. That is because your services do not define your brand. It is comprised of many things, from the aesthetic design of your website to the attitude of your staff.

Every person has a distinctive set of expressed beliefs, habits, actions, preferences and lifestyle choices that define who others perceive them to be and how they are recognized. A public identity, accurate or not, emerges with judgements about one's character, personality, skills, etc. Certain elements that are consistent and highly notable, such as frequently used phrases or favourite items of clothing, come to be associated with that person. Some people are well known, and some are barely known, but virtually every individual has some sort of public image.

A business, like a person, develops a unique perceived public identity that is the culmination of many things. And – like an individual's reputation and public image – if that identity is not carefully cultivated, it will develop on its own as a result of how people judge and react to various factors. In the case of one's personal identity, many favour the concept of living authentically, not feeling the need to explain oneself, and not worrying about what others think. However, when it comes to business, public perceptions are undeniably important – and you want to take control of them.

Three reasons to document your branding strategy

## **One: Consistency**

If you are using three different versions of your logo, a different colour palette for every piece of content, and whatever sounds good at the moment for a tagline – is anyone going to recognize your practice? Maybe someone watched a video and was impressed; later, that same person sees an advertisement for a teeth whitening special but disregards it because the dentist is unfamiliar. The video and advertisement were both your content, but they were too dissimilar for the viewer to recognize your brand.

Brand exposure will not translate to increased recognition and awareness without some consistency. A documented page makes it possible to keep certain elements aligned across various marketing channels and throughout departments within your practice.

## **Two: Efficiency**

Certain elements of your brand guide will likely be visited frequently by any content creator on your marketing team (including you). Colour codes, font variations and sizes, logo specifications, and other technical details can be difficult to impossible to memorize.

In this respect, a brand guide document can serve as a handy cheat sheet. A third-party content creator or new employee can easily get up to speed with all the essential details at hand. Anyone can easily look up those bits of information they don't remember.

## **Three: Guidance**

Brand recognition and awareness are most closely tied to visual identity. Additionally, making an easy reference available helps with details such as font alternatives and colour codes that are difficult to remember. For those reasons, many small businesses, such as dental practices, use a simple visual brand guide. However, a comprehensive guide can also include elements such as mission, vision, values, and voice.

Defining and documenting elements of your practice's overall personality and motivating forces can turn your brand guide into a useful practice management tool. Every person on your team makes micro-decisions throughout the day that help shape the patient experience as well as your business efficiency. If every team member is also acquainted with the full scope of your brand identity, they have better context for making these little choices, such as prioritizing tasks according to brand values or choosing the right words when answering a question in alignment with the brand personality and voice.

## **What goes in a branding guide?**

There is no "one size fits all" brand guide structure. Some small businesses simply have a one-page document with a few highlights, such as main colours and primary font. Large corporations may have multi-chapter guides, going into great detail about usage guidelines for each element in various scenarios. The best answer to what you should include is whatever fits your needs.

Some of the most common branding elements are listed below. Your guide can include a few, many, or all of them, along with any other details you wish to document. Include as much detail as makes sense for your particular strategy.

## **Visual**

Colour palette – Names and codes for colours, along with user guidelines (e.g. colours for headlines, body text, backgrounds, accents)

Typography – Primary font name, size, and weight for each class of text, along with web-safe alternatives

Logo – Primary logo, acceptable variations for different uses, and specifications such as minimum size, page location, or padding

Design – Specifications for graphic creation, page layouts, preference in shapes and forms, etc.

UI – Specifications for user interface elements in web design and app development

## **Voice**

Messaging – Describe your overall brand message

Taglines – Catchphrases consistently used to describe your brand

Slogans – Catchphrases for specific products, services, or marketing campaigns

Writing tone and style – Specifications for creating and editing text content (e.g. casual or professional blog posts, use AP Style Guide for grammar, avoid overly technical wordings...)

## **Brand Overview**

Mission – A short statement summarizing the business's objectives

Vision – A concise statement outlining the business's aspirations

Core values – The business's guiding principles and beliefs

Promise – Value or experience that the business consistently delivers to patients

Purposes – What is the purpose of the business beyond making a profit?

## **Other**

Hierarchy – For organizations with multiple practice locations, include the relationship and common/different elements among the brands

Additional resources – Location of logo files and other digital assets, links to sub-brand guides, employee manuals, or other documents with additional relevant information

## **Conclusion**

Branding encompasses everything from visual style to lofty missions; it impacts everything from your professional reputation to the demographic of patients who choose you. If you do not take control of your brand identity, it will take control of the direction in which your dental practice is growing.

## **About the Author**

Naren Arulrajah, President and CEO of Ekwa Marketing, has been a leader in medical marketing for over a decade. Ekwa provides comprehensive marketing solutions for busy dentists, with a team of more than 180 full time professionals, providing web design, hosting, content creation, social media, reputation management, SEO, and more. If you're looking for ways to boost your marketing results,



call 855-598-3320 for a free strategy session with Naren. You may also schedule a session at your convenience with the Senior Director of Marketing – Lila, by visiting [www.ekwa.com/msm/](http://www.ekwa.com/msm/) or simply send a text to 313-777-8494.