

Get The Word Out: Branding Plus Online Presence Equals Reputation Building



Your online branding program and associated initiatives can improve your web ranking and your appeal to patients.

BY NAREN ARULRAJAH

>> A big part of marketing is awareness. After all, people must learn about your practice before they will consider visiting. Moreover, they need to hear (or read) the right things in order to pique their interest. Branding, online presence, and reputation building are all marketing concepts that involve “getting the word out.” However, they are not just different terms for the same thing. In fact, they are distinctly different concepts, which work synergistically.

BRANDING AND BRAND AWARENESS

What is branding? The simplest definition is a word, phrase, or visual element that is associated with a specific organization. Usually it is a business name, logo, or slogan. Color schemes, mascots, unique fonts, shapes, and other elements can also be part of branding.

The most obvious examples of branding are retail products. Most shoppers make purchasing decisions at least partially based on brand names. However, branding is a much broader concept that applies to virtually every type of business or organization. Examples of branding include Nike’s “Just Do It,” McDonald’s golden arches, and the Olympic rings. Even a police officer’s badge or black and white car could be described as a type of branding. All of these are instantly recognizable, familiar symbols.

Building a brand identity for your dermatology practice helps people recognize your website, social posts, physical signage, and marketing materials. For example, a person might read a blog post on your website. Later, the same person sees a social post from your practice, and then notices your business card on a co-worker’s desk. With repeated exposure comes familiarity, otherwise known as brand awareness. However, all these things must have common elements (branding) in order to be recognizable.

Some of the best branding elements for a dermatology practice include:

- **Name.** Keep this consistent, regardless of whether you are marketing your dermatology practice, yourself as a professional, or both. Prospective patients might not realize that Jane Doe, MD and Dr. Jane are the same physician, or that Skin Center and The Skin Center of Anytown are the same practice. As a side note, consistency in names is important for local search engine optimization.
- **Logo.** If you have a logo that you like, keep it. People are already familiar with it, so a change can cost some of your acquired brand awareness. However, if you need to design a logo, give some thought to the elements. Choose colors and shapes that symbolize the image you want to project. An upscale aesthetic practice might choose simple text in gold-toned script, while a pediatric dermatologist might prefer a teddy bear shaped logo in primary colors.
- **Slogan.** This is a chance to tell people something important about your practice right away. Don’t try to say everything, though. The ideal slogan, or tagline, is short, usually just a few words. It can be catchy (“Where healing comes from the heart”), descriptive (“Providing community access to quality care”), or simple (“Caring for you”).
- **Other.** The above mentioned are the essential components of branding, however it can include much more. You can define specific color palettes, font styles, tone of written content, predominant shapes in graphics, or even design themes such as floral or tropical. Large corporations often include dozens or hundreds of elements, with many publishing brand identity guides for

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employees. However, small businesses such as dermatology practices typically have much simpler branding standards.

ONLINE PRESENCE

Billboards, yellow page ads, and postcards are no longer enough. In fact, Forbes.com says digital marketing is quickly surpassing traditional methods, with the primary reason being that it is more cost effective. People no longer look to phone books, they search Google. They do not watch for billboards; they ask friends on Facebook or simply Google “Dermatologist near me.”

For years, people have been spending more time, doing more research, and making more purchases online. COVID-19 significantly accelerated that trend. Simply stated, if you want prospective patients to find you, then you need to be where they are looking. How often does your website appear in search results? Are you active on social media? Is it difficult for prospective patients to research your credentials, services, reviews, and office hours online?

Tips to build a strong online presence include:

- **Content-rich website.** Most dermatology practices have websites. However, many of them do not have content, at least not enough of the right type. Search engines such as Google strive to provide valuable results pages with plenty of information. Pages with little to no text are unlikely to rank well, if at all. Additionally, the website should be a resource for people who are considering visiting your practice. It should describe what services you offer, include a biography of the doctor(s) and important staff members, as well contact information.
- **SEO (search engine optimization).** Ranking well takes much more than just including keywords in your content. You need to make sure that content is high quality, provides some value to the reader, and is original. Beyond content, optimization includes meta-tags, site functionality, loading speed, inbound links, mobile-friendliness, and much more. All of this is true for any type of SEO. Dermatology practices also need to opti-

mize for local search, which includes creating a Google My Business profile, acquiring local links, and standardizing NAP (name, address, and phone number) across all listings.

- **Social media presence.** If your practice is not on social media, you are missing one of your best opportunities to reach existing and future patients. Social profiles can serve multiple functions in your marketing plan, including staying in touch with existing patients, acquiring new leads, sharing your latest blog posts, and showcasing your expertise via informative posts.

BRING IT ALL TOGETHER TO BUILD YOUR REPUTATION

Of course, your expertise and quality of care will shape your reputation—at least among your patients. However, if you want to build a reputation beyond existing patients and create an image that will help grow your practice, then you need to build your brand and establish a strong online presence. ■

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 dermatologists, 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.

OPTIMIZE YOUR REVIEWS

SO, WHY DO REVIEWS MATTER FOR DERMATOLOGISTS?

Review platforms allow for your biggest fans to have a bullhorn. But they also give your most dissatisfied patients a soapbox.



It has never been more important to generate quality reviews from real people. In its latest video, Ekwa Marketing explores the factors that drive positive reviews and shares tips to use those reviews to grow loyalty and attract new patients.

Watch now: PracDerm.com/OptimizeReviews