

Never Underestimate the Power of Visual Communication in Your Dermatology Marketing



Colors, shapes, images, and more combine to send a message to potential and existing patients. What is your practice saying?

BY NAREN ARULRAJAH

>> The patient journey begins with someone discovering your practice, usually through your website, an advertisement, social media, or other public materials. At a minimum, that material must effectively communicate who you are and what you do, or there is no chance of the person becoming a lead. As we approach the conversion stage, materials must communicate why your practice is a good choice. The focus on communication continues through appointment scheduling, case presentation, and building a long-term relationship to facilitate patient retention.

It is often said that good communication is the foundation of any healthy relationship. That is undoubtedly true of patient relationships at your dermatology practice. Unfortunately, if you rely on language alone to communicate, you miss many opportunities.

Why communication takes more than words

When we talk about communication, the first thing to come to mind is probably words. Written or spoken language is the most efficient way to convey a message clearly and comprehensively. Yet, words alone may not be as clear as we imagine. In fact, they are nothing more than collections of symbols, which the mind must translate into information. Furthermore, we then need to analyze that information to fully comprehend the concept.

In reality, communication is far more complex than words alone can encompass. For example, consider a challenging task, such as assembling an intricate piece of furniture or learning to use a sophisticated electronic device.

The written instruction manual goes into great detail but it doesn't quite make sense. Instead, you turn to the provided infographic and training video to literally see what needs to be done. Once you fully understand, you might exclaim, "Now I've got the picture!"

Just how visual is the human thought process? Consider these statistics cited by Movableink.com:

- The human brain can process images 60,000 times more quickly than it can process text.
- A person is likely to remember just 10% of what they hear, 20% of what they read, and 80% of what they see.
- Most people read less than one-third of the text on a page, while seeing an image is virtually unavoidable.
- More than half of website visitors will spend 15 seconds or less reading text.
- Our brains are capable of processing an image in just 13 milliseconds.

Communicating with color and shape

Some forms of visual communication are obvious; infographics and explainer videos show, rather than tell, a story. However, there are many subtler elements to consider. In reality, everything the brain perceives is information. Even if it is vague or conceptual, it contributes to one's overall judgment and understanding of your dermatology practice.

Color. Can you communicate with color alone? Look to a traffic light for the answer. We know red means "stop" and green means "go." That symbolism does not stop with traffic lights, either. Many software programs use the same color

scheme for stop and go buttons; green arrows are used to symbolize financial growth; red flags alongside list items are meant to make the reader stop and pay attention.

The list of examples could go on infinitely, and it is not just about traffic lights. Colors evoke certain emotional reactions, largely based on their symbolism. Furthermore, the meaning of a color can vary depending on the culture and location. For example, North America is not unique in having red-yellow-green traffic lights; it is common in most countries around the world. Yet, if there is a university in your city, its sports team colors (and those of its rival) likely have a very strong, very local meaning.

Shape. Again, we have the option of symbolic communication, much of which is quite obvious. Stars, check marks, arrows, and many other shapes have very well-known meanings and are often used as clear symbols. However, shapes can also carry much subtler messages. For example, the FedEx logo is simply text but incorporates a less noticeable arrow between the “E” and “X,” and the Pittsburgh Zoo and Aquarium chose a tree image, which cleverly creates the outline of a lion and gorilla. This common practice is rooted in the theory that even “hidden” symbols contribute to the overall comprehension of an image.

Shapes can convey messages, moods, and emotions in other ways. Intricate, curved lines can add to a sense of elegance. Bold, abstract images with hard lines and sharp corners can feel active or chaotic. A graphic element can be made to blend in or stand out simply by its similarity to (or

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difference from) those in close proximity, such as a large oval photo in a row of smaller, square pictures.

Bringing it together. Visual elements each add a bit of subtle communication, but individually they are unlikely to change the overall message of a design. The true power of visual communication is combining these elements to tell a story.

Strategically planned color palettes combined with shapes can make a powerful statement.

A brightly colored “burst” symbol in high contrast to its background screams “Attention!” Gracefully curved shapes in pastel gradients speak of delicate gentleness. A bold, dark-colored, straight line is a clear indicator that elements on each side of it are separated. Use shades of blue, wavy lines, and flowing forms to create a soothing atmosphere reminiscent of water. Arrow shapes vaguely resemble a running person, and splashes of bright color can create a sense of urgency.

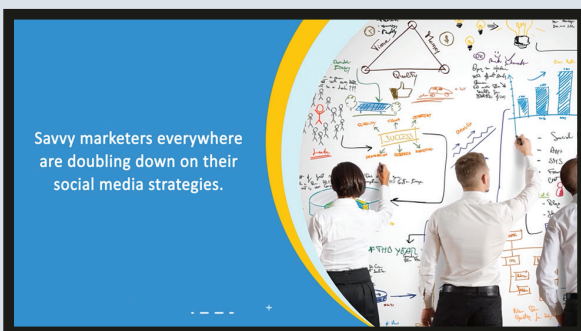
AMPLIFIED COMMUNICATION

Words are powerful, but maybe not as powerful as we like to imagine. Most of us are well aware that body language and voice inflection can entirely change the perceived meaning of the spoken word. In fact, experts estimate that at least 70% of communication is nonverbal. Think of the aesthetics that accompany the text as the “body language” of your marketing materials.

If the visuals in your marketing material send a contradictory message, then the text will lose a significant amount of its impact. On the other hand, when images, color schemes, and even minor graphic elements align to support the message behind your words, the power is amplified exponentially. ■

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. You may also schedule a session at your convenience with the Senior Director of Marketing - Lila, by clicking <https://www.ekwa.com/msm/> or simply send a text to 313-777-8494.

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