

Six Simple Strategies to Improve Your Brand Visibility



You are your brand. Here's how to promote it.

BY NAREN ARULRAJAH

>> Brand is a word we hear often in the marketing space, and people often associate it with retail products. You are a doctor, and you provide medical services. Unless you have your own line of cosmeceuticals, you probably don't think of yourself, or your practice, as a brand. That is one of the most common marketing mistakes that dermatologists make.

WHAT EXACTLY IS A BRAND?

You are a brand. Your dermatology practice is a brand. Every company, online platform, professional, celebrity, or other publicly known entity is a brand. In the broadest terms, branding encompasses everything that defines that entity, setting it (or him or her) apart from others.

Think of it this way: What does it mean to say that your friends, family, and staff "know" you? Of course, they don't know everything about you, but they recognize you on sight, are familiar with your mannerisms, and hold opinions about who you are. We could call this branding, on a very personal, one-on-one level. When we talk about branding in marketing, it refers to the general public "knowing" an entity, be it a person or business.

Some of the most important aspects of branding include:

- *Brand awareness (how well the public knows you).* This describes the level of consciousness regard-

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ing your brand. Do people recognize your practice name and logo? Do they recognize your face? Do they immediately know who you are and what you do?

- *Brand identity (how the public recognizes you).* A brand is a rather intangible concept. Yet, you want people to recognize it immediately. To facilitate that recognition, you consistently use certain words and design elements that comprise your brand identity. These commonly include names, taglines, slogans, color palettes, and fonts.
- *Brand image (how the public perceives you).* This refers to the public's perceptions about your brand. It is not something you can change quickly or have complete control over. Your brand image is closely linked to your professional reputation. It develops gradually over time and is the culmination of your branding and marketing efforts, as well as circumstances

beyond your control that help shape your image.

- *Brand visibility (how the public finds you).* Going back to our example of a personal acquaintance, you don't get to know a person until you meet him or her in your larger circle of friends, or being regularly seen at places that you frequent, a meeting is much more likely. Similarly, the more visible your brand is, the more likely people are to discover it.

GETTING NOTICED

The internet is an audience of millions, but catching their attention can feel virtually impossible. Holding that attention is even more difficult. How can you be more visible than the competition? Here are six of the best ways.

1. *Increase your social media presence.*

The key to visibility is being where your patients and potential leads are. Over three billion people, including 69 percent of adults in the United States, are on social

media. That number continues to rise. More importantly, social media is becoming more than a place to connect with friends. It is a hub of online activity, from shopping to reading the news, to looking for a dermatologist.

2. *Optimize your website for local search.* Standard SEO (search engine optimization) is as important as ever, but it is no longer enough for brick and mortar businesses, such as medical practices. Local SEO techniques include highlighting areas served, internet-wide consistency in contact information, and adding your practice to Google My Business and other directories. These things help your practice appear on Google maps and rank in local searches.
3. *Get your name in the news.* Earned press is one of the best ways to increase your visibility as a professional. Participate in or host local events, be available for media seeking expert commentary on dermatology-related stories, issue press releases when appropriate, give presentations at industry conferences. The possibilities are endless. Watch for opportunities and take them.
4. *Create shareable content.* Your website visitors, newsletter subscribers, and a percentage of social media followers will see your marketing materials. You can exponentially multiply the size of your audience if those people forward emails, share social posts, and link to your pages. Of course, no one wants to share an advertisement, which is why you need to include some engaging, informative, humorous, or otherwise shareable content. Look at your current content and ask yourself, "If I were a patient, would I find this interesting enough to tell others about it?"
5. *Become an early adopter.* Don't shy away from new technology, social media features, or internet trends. You might remember the buzz when Facebook introduced live video, or when Twitter increased the character limit of tweets. People were excited about it, trying it out, and talking about it. Of course, they paid extra attention (and engagement) to posts using those new features. Watch for the next latest-and-greatest trends and be among the first to embrace them.
6. *Prioritize reputation management.* One of the most likely places for people to discover your practice is on Yelp or a similar site. If they find you on Google search or on Facebook, they will immediately see your star rating. Additionally, the quantity and quality of reviews can impact your placement in search results. Complete your business profile on review sites and invite your happy patients to leave feedback. Also, monitor your profiles and respond (in a HIPAA-compliant way) to reviews, both positive and negative.

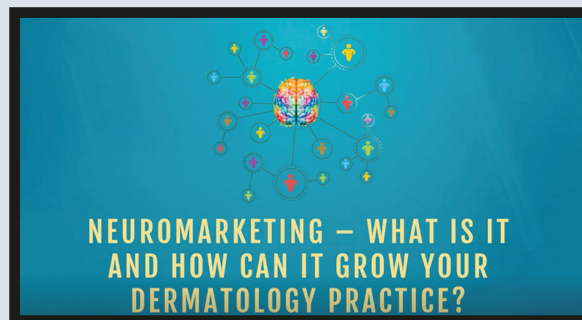
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FINAL THOUGHTS

Any branding, visibility, or general marketing efforts should be wrapped around your USP (unique selling proposition). If it is not well defined, ask yourself a few basic questions. What sets you apart from the competition? Why would a patient choose you instead of another dermatologist? What is unique—and better—about your practice? Choose brand identity elements that represent your USP; make sure it is reflected in your content and marketing materials. Once your message is well defined and refined, use the tips above to spread it far and wide. ■

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.

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