

The International Brand of Leonard

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I was fortunate to be able to take some time off with my family during the holidays. If you haven't done so in a while, I highly recommend you take a vacation. [A recent survey](#) of DCs suggests that a regular vacation can provide great benefits to both you and your practice.¹ Much of my time away was spent on the beach in Mazatlan, Mexico. The climate was warm, the food was delicious and the people were gracious.

If you've ever spent time on the beaches of a Mexican resort town, you know there is no shortage of vendors trying to sell you everything from parachute rides to hammocks. Most are extremely persistent in their approach, offering their wares "almost free" to apprehensive tourists. They can actually be so persistent as to border on obnoxious.

In the midst of this army of vendors sits a man known only as Leonard. Like many other vendors, Leonard offers silver jewelry. But Leonard is different from almost all the rest.

Some friends at church told us about Leonard a few years ago, saying he is the only one they will buy jewelry from in Mazatlan. We later discovered that one of the people here at the office is also a Leonard fan.

The last time we saw Leonard was two years ago; and yet, when approached by my wife, he was quick to remember her. After a short greeting, he left her (and his three open display cases) to come say hello to me, even though I was 10 yards away. This was not a simple handshake. He wanted to know how I had been and was sure to comment on how much our children had grown.

As I watched Leonard over the course of the week, I noticed that he had the same kind of relationship with most of his other patrons. People from across the U.S., Canada and even parts of Europe took the time to talk with Leonard and ultimately buy some of his jewelry. They all knew his name and had been referred to him, were referring others, or both.

Somehow, on the beaches of Mexico, Leonard has become an international brand. He has risen above the crowd of questionable product hawkers to stand for quality jewelry and fair prices. He is the name you trust. He is the one you recommend.

Leonard is not overly outgoing, smooth-talking or persuasive. He is, at best, quietly friendly. So, how has he done it? How has Leonard differentiated himself from so many other nameless vendors with similar, if not identical, products? Here are a few habits that I believe contribute to his success:

- *Relationship Investing:* Leonard is there to serve people, year in and year out. On our last day in Mazatlan, Leonard gave my son David a silver necklace. Besides myself, David is the only member of the family who didn't buy any jewelry. My guess is that this will change on our next visit. As Leonard said to my wife, "I would rather make less and make a friend."
- *Focus on a Specific Community:* Leonard serves the tourists that stay at a particular time-share resort. This creates enduring relationships with people who are more comfortable with the Mexican culture. Over time, he has identified what jewelry they buy and how much they

will likely spend. Leonard is in the same place every day from about 11 a.m. to after 5 p.m. Yes, he occasionally spends a few hours without any customers, but everyone knows right where to find him.

- *Quality and Service*: Leonard's jewelry is comparable to any that we have seen in Mexico, even in the mall. You can trust that you will still be happy years after you return home. But he is more than a jewelry salesman; he is a resource. If he recognizes you aren't finding what you want, he will return tomorrow with several more choices based on your description of what you want.

Tourism is down in Mexico. It has been for several years now. Violence, bad press and political uncertainty have left many people there in tougher financial conditions than ever. Leonard's business is probably down as well. Fewer tourists generally equals fewer sales.

But Leonard is doing far better than the rest of the beach vendors. In fact, based on my limited observations, his sales are probably more than the rest of the vendors combined. That's the power of the Leonard brand. The relationships he's made over the past decade are still paying dividends, both in repeat business and referrals. [What is your brand?](#) Beyond the general chiropractic brand, what do your patients think of when they hear your name? What is the first thing they tell their friends about your practice when they talk about you?

A brand is more than your reputation; it's what you stand for. You communicate your brand with every interaction you have with a patient or a potential patient: verbal, e-mail, Web site, invoice, signage, reception area, etc. Spend some time thinking about how you can enhance your brand and create more impetus for visits and referrals:

- How can you invest in better relationships?
- What are the needs of the people in your community? Perhaps you should consider focusing on a specific group like seniors, children, athletes, etc.
- Do you have a quarterly "Free Exams for Kids" day?
- Are you the wellness resource your patients need?

Over the next month or so, my wife will get compliments on her new earrings (all three pairs). When she does, she will more than likely tell her girlfriends about Leonard. Now that's a great referral system at work - from nearly a thousand miles away. Like Leonard, your practice also has a brand. How far it extends and what it says about you is based on how you manage it.

Reference

1. "Vacation Rejuvenation." *Dynamic Chiropractic PracticeINSIGHTS*, January 2011.
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