

## Image Is Everything: The Power of Branding

Steven Visentin

Successful businesses use color and design to attract people to their service. They understand how important image is and hire experts to create an attractive package. Starbucks works hard to create an atmosphere that is warm and inviting. People come again and again for the cozy feeling they get there. Shouldn't you do the same? Here's how.

### Look Like "The Best"

Everything about your practice should sing quality and grab the interest of potential [new patients](#). Your website, the front of your office, the sidewalk outside, the front desk, the walls, written materials, the bathrooms, and everything with which a new patient might come into contact should look and feel first rate.

Of course, this also includes you and your staff: Do you look and act sharp? How are you dressed? Do you have good posture? What is your tone of voice like?

The easiest and least expensive way to significantly upgrade your practice image is to upgrade your practice wardrobe and/or wear a white clinic jacket. If you look impeccable, people will assume your practice is excellent. Patients have no way of judging your clinical excellence and will go by what they can see, feel, hear and smell.

On a regular basis, walk into your practice and ask yourself: *Does it look clean? How are the carpets? Are they worn?* Experience the office as a patient would or arrange for a "secret shopper." Get on the tables and into the chairs.

Your office makes a statement about you and your profession. Make sure it's a good one. Shockingly, some offices aren't even clean. Cigarette butts lie outside the front door, the bathrooms are dirty, the carpets show wear, and the awnings are faded. Even if you are just starting out, have people come in during the weekend to clean your facility - or do it yourself, if necessary. High-volume practices should be cleaned throughout the day as needed and thoroughly twice weekly.

### Put Your Face on Everything

Are you good-looking? Do you have features that reflect strong character or authenticity? Even if your face is just memorable, put it on your website and everything associated with your clinic. You want people to be drawn to you. Let your uniqueness shine.

Your image is more important than a logo, especially when you first start. If your work is unique and/or your clinic is exceptional, don't use generic logos. Have some great photos of yourself taken and apply them to everything: business cards, flyers, brochures, web pages, etc. Let your work become an extension of yourself. Show some pride and get your image out there.

### Don't Be Afraid of Color

Your web page, marketing materials, newsletters, business cards, and postcards should all look like they come from the same place. The color schemes of the office and the materials you use should match. Someone looking on [Facebook](#), or receiving a mailer, newsletter or postcard, should know instantly by the touch, feel, look and quality that it came from your office.

Certain doctors have a flair for this. If it isn't one of your strengths, hire a professional. It's worth it to have an interior decorator or graphic designer work with you and suggest a color scheme for everything associated with your office.

### Let Your Walls Do the Talking

Almost every clinic is designed to put patients at ease with the clinical process. Colors, pictures and decor are intended to sedate. As a chiropractor, your clinic should educate patients, not put them to sleep. You can expand your practice by creating a healing center that teaches people how to stay well through your service.

With the help of a local artist, I designed a "road to health" theme in my center. Its intent is to educate. It is a mural of a healthier city on a road to a more natural way of life.

### Lead Them to Learn

Create an exciting learning environment and teach people how to be healthy naturally. Create an attractive social media presence, a library of health books, DVDs, and magazines, and get rid of the generic *Reader's Digest*, *Sports Illustrated* and *Time* magazines. Take a stand for chiropractic and wellness.

### Prioritize Decor (Real and Virtual)

*Office:* Create an inviting environment for you and your patients. Why would your patients refer you enthusiastically unless your place looks and smells great? Place fresh flowers at the front desk occasionally. If you can create a sensory experience for them that says quality and back it up with service, they will tell everyone they know about you.

If you're in a neighborhood of more modest means, be careful not to overdo things. Make certain your office and everything within your practice is professional, coordinated and clean, but don't go overboard on interior design, as potential patients may think they cannot afford your services. Make sure the chairs are comfortable, though, and patients have access to cold water and a bathroom. Internet access is a must in high-tech cities.

*Web:* Design your [web presence](#) and practice for your patients' comfort level and give it a new "paint job" with the latest colors regularly. Every year, experts get together and decide what colors will be "in." This is why over time, if you don't update your colors, you will look dated.

If you're serving an upscale clientele, your presence online, all your materials, and your entire practice will have to be upscale. You will have to spend more on decor for this type of practice. The people you serve should feel comfortable, as if they were in their own home.

### Create a Landmark

Since 100 percent of potential new patients are outside your clinic, welcome them with a professional, but striking front. If your center faces the street:

- Frame testimonials with photos of excited patients on the front window facing the sidewalk.
- Hang flags of various nations from your awning.

- Cement a bronze plaque about your work to the building.
- Paint the sidewalk the same color as your sign.
- Offer free calendars, inspiring poems, or newsletters in a "Take One" Lucite box glued to the front door or wall.
- Play a repeating educational video that facing the waiting room.
- Place a sandwich sign on the sidewalk outside your office that says, "New Patients Welcome."
- Hang a large banner on the front of your practice about a recent award you've earned, like "Google's Highest Reviews."

Get your message out if you have drive-by or pedestrian traffic. Create a street-side message that changes once a month. Take care to keep it crisp, clean and first class. Make people wonder, "What's going on there?"

If you want to help people who've been in a motor-vehicle accident, place a "crash test" dummy in front of your practice. A real one can cost over \$50,000, so buy a seated mannequin with no movable joints online. Have a white jumpsuit "frozen" on. Paint whiplash engineering symbols on the side of its head and add a cervical collar. Place a bright yellow banner overhead with black lettering and announce, "We Specialize in Whiplash." Now you have a landmark.

#### Draw Patients in With Branding

To succeed, find out what everyone else is doing and then *don't do it!* If you are in a strip mall and every business around you is screaming for attention with bright colors and large lettering, your practice will stand out by being understated. Put nothing on the windows and doors except a small mention of your name and professional title in gold-leaf lettering.

Instead of marketing to push more bodies into your clinic, "brand" your center and *draw* patients in. Focus on yourself and then work outward. Brand from the inside out. Create an image that magnetizes people to your service. Your practice is sure to grow.

SEPTEMBER 2014