

A few years ago I was one of the judges of one the Dental Awards.

The criteria for entry were high. Deliberately so. And a number of high achieving practices impressed us (and each other!) with their presentations. But one practice stood head and shoulders above the others.

Like the other judges at the time, I found it difficult to put my finger on exactly why. With one exception each practice was one I would have trusted to deliver excellent dentistry; but something made this practice stand out.

I thought about it long after the event itself and eventually it dawned on me. This practice really understood branding. By this I mean that they had taken on board the fact that a brand establishes a credible identity only if it accurately reflects the **totality** of the way it delivers its product to the market. And everyone in the dental team is consistently singing from the same song sheet.

They had realised that, as good as their dentistry may be, a rude receptionist, a cluttered surgery, a tired reception, will be all it takes for the image of the practice to take a nose dive.

A logo and a few clever graphics are **not** branding. It's about every single way your practice reaches out to your patients and how they experience it. It's about your practice really living up to the claims you make for it on your web site. Think of branding like a stick of rock...it needs to say the same thing all the way through.

So my advice is to take a good look at your branding. Can you put your hand on your heart and say it absolutely reflects your values? Do your colleagues understand and buy in to it? And most importantly do your patients have a loyal relationship with the brand or with individual dentists?

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