

Use the Power of Brands!

By Beverly Korfin, M.B.A.



Coca Cola, BlackBerry, Google and Twitter! Is there any denying that brands are part of the fabric of American life?

"I don't get them as a couple," says one teenager to another. "She's so, like, Prada... and he's so, um, Abercrombie!" It's not limited to teens. Glance at the patients in your reception area and you'll see purses, shoes, sunglasses, baseball caps and clothing that were purchased, to some degree, because of the

brand logo. The power of brands is integral to our way of life.

Using brands can help you to build your practice. In fact, in many ways your practice is, itself, a brand.

When it comes to brands, marketers have their own language.

Brand equity: When a brand is well marketed, consumers immediately recognize the brand name. The brand stands for something, a clear concept or value. Say iPhone, and consumers automatically think: high-tech, cutting-edge design.

Brand loyalty: Consumers become accustomed to buying a brand—and they stick with that brand. It's a value they identify with. Fashionable consumers wear clothes with the Ralph Lauren Polo logo. Others order their shirts from L.L.Bean, and when a favorite shirt wears out, they order the same shirt again. It tells the world who they are.

Brand extension: When a brand is well established, marketers look to branch out into related products that leverage the recognition of that brand name. Coke extends to Diet Coke, Jell-O into Jell-O Pops. In fashion, that extends to eyewear and

sunwear, and in recent years, the optical field has seen many brand extensions that build upon a trusted brand name.

Global branding: As a brand grows, it is recognized far and wide and identified with fashion, performance and quality. Consumers like to be part of a widely recognized brand. A global brand.

What do brands have to do with eye care practices? Everything. By identifying your practice with top brands—and by presenting top brands first—you are making a positive statement about your practice. You associate your practice with an elite group of top-performing and widely recognized products. You show that you have the latest frame

Put Branding to Work

Reinforce Your Own Brand: Your Practice

Your own practice is a brand—and you can put the power of branding to work by training your staff in these five simple strategies.

1) Reinforce your brand name. In every interaction with patients, repeat and reinforce your message. Answer the phone, "Hello and thank you for calling Apple Valley Eye Care, where your eye health comes first."

2) Use this focused greeting all the time. Include your name and tag line in your phone calls, automated phone message, on your practice web site and in communications with patients.

3) Design your brand. Design a practice logo and include it in all communications from your practice. Consider hiring a graphic designer to create a logo and color scheme.

4) Co-brand your practice with top optical brands. Mention and show leading brands of ophthalmic lenses, contact lenses and frames in all of your communications.

5) Work with your sales reps. They know the benefits of their brand products better than anyone. Promote any programs and product specials that help to reinforce your practice brand.

styles from top producers, the most high-performance spectacle lenses and the most successful designs in contact lenses to meet a wide range of vision needs and patient lifestyles. And when your office is equipped with high-tech instrumentation and equipment, that sends a message that you deliver the highest level of eye care.

In other words, you can use established brands to build your brand.

Train your staff to present brands well. Use brand signage around your office and in your eyewear dispensary and contact lens instruction area. Display and distribute brand literature that informs and reinforces the power of brands.

All this adds up to one thing: Why would patients, who think and act as consumers, look anywhere else for the best care of their eye health

or to satisfy their eyewear needs? With the power of brands behind you, your practice is the first—and best—eye care destination.

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