Dental branding: three important truths

By James McAnally, DDS

Many national consultants feel “mission statements,” “branding” and “logos” are important. You’ll never hear anyone at Big Case Marketing saying such. Why? Because there are fundamental truths about branding and “image” that aren’t getting shared with dentists, and here they are.

Truth No. 1: mission statements

Patients could care less. Patients, and actually everyone, are tuned to their favorite station whose call letters are WII-FM — What’s in it for me?

Here are five things patients want instead of framed mission statements:
1) no pain,
2) to understand what you propose in simple terms,
3) options (but not too many),
4) the “Wizard,” and
5) respect.

Truth No. 2: logos and brands

Logos? The only thing less important to your patient than your logo is your mission statement. Thus, no need to worry much about logo design. A logo can cost $250 or $5,000. Instead of spending a month’s marketing budget on your logo, invest the $1,750 on direct response based marketing to make the phone ring with patients you wish to treat.

Logos can be useful if gracing a popular product on a shelf, backed by multi-millions of dollars in advertising. Then there’s value. When that level of money is spent, even when dead, a brand still has value. Is that your situation? Is that the situation of even the largest group practices or “chains” of clinics? Doubtful.

A logo can also be useful when a niche culture or sub-culture wears it on their polo shirt. In triathlons I’ve seen IronMan® logos tattooed on some fellow racers. That’s true power in branding. No one is queuing up to get our logos as tattoos though.

Logos won’t make or break us. Patients don’t lie awake eagerly anticipating your newest logo design or, really, any company’s. The patient simply doesn’t care. Recently, people on the street were shown the Subway® logo — the real one and four fakes all on the same sheet of paper. With millions in franchise fees annually spent on marketing, only 6 percent could pick out the real logo! Dental logos backed by $50K to $300K are not going to beat that dismal result or create new cases.

Truth No. 3: the doctor is the brand (especially when performing elective or complex cases)

The bigger the dollar amount involved, the more important you become. Patients need who you are, not what you are, and you in the consult room is the brand. This becomes even more important after the patient receives promotional information from the practice and schedules a live appointment.

With the right marketing, patients can call a practice, know very little about the doctor and still be powerfully motivated to seek treatment with that office because they were offered solutions to problems, not logos, brands or mission statements.

Are you offering solutions to problems or simply wasting time, energy, and money on things the patient really doesn’t care about?

Dr. James McAnally is CEO of Big Case Marketing, a global leader in providing turn-key marketing for the complex case patient and in teaching a trademarked sales system to dentists who treat elective reconstructive and dental implant patients. Big Case Marketing doctors are on three continents and programs are conducted worldwide. His two-day per week part-time practice focusing on reconstructive and implant dentistry is in Seattle, Wash. To find out more, visit www.bigcasemarketing.com or e-mail info@bigcasemarketing.com.