

Branding Your Clinic

An impactful image and brand are key to successfully opening and sustaining your clinic. Your brand is much more than a logo or symbol used on a website or stationary; it is the representation of your entire organization to the public. Branding is not marketing and advertising (although both of those activities will help your brand); branding is about promoting everything associated with your organization.

A well-branded clinic will have more success with raising funds, and ultimately be able to help more people through the use of those funds.

How does one go about branding their clinic?

The process is similar to building a for-profit brand name. Below are some key points to consider during this process.

1) The Name

The most important part of your branding is going to be the name of your organization. This is how people will recognize you and eventually learn to put their trust in you. So it is important you pick a unique name that is going to let people know exactly who you are.

If your name says it all, and it has brand recognition, keep it. Work with it. The American Cancer Society doesn't need to explain what it does, it's self-evident. If you don't have a large marketing budget, this is half the battle – name recognition.

If, however, your organization's name does not clearly state who you are, and you have a limited marketing budget to build your brand, patients and donors will be confused. Compassionate Friends or Concern America may be worthy organizations, but it is difficult to tell what they do just from their names alone. In these cases, it takes a strategic approach and money to build brand equity. If there are no options here, then develop a tagline that sets you apart and hints at what you stand for. Use it on every piece of communication to help build recognition for your cause or mission.

2) The Logo

The logo will identify you to donors and recipients, and can even be used to help further your donations. For example, the Breast Cancer Society has the logo of a pink ribbon. This pink ribbon is now immediately recognized in society as being related to the Breast Cancer Society. The more often people see your logo, or symbol, the more often they are going to think of your organization, especially at times of donation. Creation of a logo can be an expensive undertaking if a professional firm is contracted for this purpose. On the other hand, this may be a project that a college/graduate student could take on as a school project. Some clinics have also found professional resources through Board connections. In either event, the importance of the logo merits use of a skilled individual to assist in this endeavor.

3) The Package

The package in this sense does not refer to a tangible item. Packaging is how your organization puts itself together visually, the presentation.

Questions to ask about presentation:

- How it is “wrapped” or presented to the outside world?
- Does your direct mail have a similar look or feel to your brochures or annual report?
- Are there common denominators that “brand” your organization?

Work with marketing communication professionals or volunteers to ensure every communication looks like it is from the same clinic. Ensure that ALL materials that are distributed on behalf of the clinic are uniform and are pre-approved by the organization. Cheap, poorly designed materials can diminish your credibility. While the community expects you will be a good steward of your resources, a professional appearance will be expected and serve you well. Hire specialists or ask

design students or volunteers for assistance. Consistency is the key here to a powerful brand!

4) The Experience

You have heard that first impressions are everything. This is true! From the patient walking in your door to the person providing donations, how they experience the clinic, the Board, and the staff (all affiliated with the organization), first impressions prove to be lasting impressions. Clinic-wide training in the experience and expectations of all involved will derive great dividends for the clinic. Creating a powerful experience will deliver increased exposure, revenue, and volunteers.

You have defined your brand, now live it, refine when necessary, and live it again!

In this competitive marketplace, clinics need to differentiate themselves from lesser alternatives. You can't afford NOT to market and brand effectively today. It's an investment in your organization's growth and in those whom you serve.