

THE LEADING SURGERY DESIGN TEAM AT LEVITCH DESIGN ASSOCIATES ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT

BUILDING, INTERIORS AND MARKETING IN ORDER TO MAKE THE MOST OUT OF YOUR PRACTICE PRESENTATION

Style Guide #1 2010

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Q: “I am in the process of designing my new surgery and it was suggested I also update my branding at the same time. Is there any benefit in looking at my branding at this stage?”

A: If you have made the decision to refresh the look of your surgery, either by moving to new premises or by refurbishing your existing surgery, now is a great time to reconsider your branding strategy and whether it is effective in conveying the correct message to your patients. By addressing both areas at the same time you are taking control of all aspects of your image.

Beyond increased size and improved functionality, many practitioners look to move to a new surgery or refurbish their existing surgery in order to create the right ‘feel’ for themselves and their patients. Just as the aesthetics of a surgery – the colours, the patients flow through the space, and the various design elements incorporated into the fit-out – can affect a patient’s perception of the service they will receive from a practitioner, your branding aims to inform them of who you are, the type of work you do and how well you do it. Both elements are intangible, however they both have a substantial impact on the success of your business. If the look and feel of your new surgery conveys an image of professionalism and attention to detail, whilst your tired branding does not align with this image, the result is confusion for the patient, and any positive benefits of your efforts in trying to communicate a certain message about your practice could be compromised.

In order to ensure your branding is conveying the right message, consistent with the environment you are creating in your new practice, you must first consider your audience and your brand positioning in their minds. What do customers think when they come into contact with your brand? What do you want your customers to think when they come in contact with your brand? Good brands aim to create an emotional link with their audience, and great brands balance the delivery of functional benefits with emotional benefits.

Once you have determined what you want your brand to say about you, the next step is generally to create a logo, which acts as an easily identifiable visual representation of your brand. In a sense it gives your practice a graphic persona, and people will remember your logo through the experience your business has delivered them. An effective logo does not require a person to read, is distinctive and instantly recognizable, and conveys something about the brand experience of your product or service.

Once you are comfortable that your branding is achieving these aims, your branding and logo can then be integrated into the new fit-out, via external signage, reception signage,

glazing treatments – even the colour scheme throughout the practice should reference coloured elements of your branding to ensure consistency of your message. Finally, this branding should then be incorporated into all customer touch points, such as medical history forms, appointment reminder cards, letterhead, with compliments slips, business cards and your website. This repetition acts to cement in the mind of the patient the thoughts they are now associating with your new surgery and your brand. Consistency in all areas of visual communication is crucial to developing this strong brand image.

Q: “Our practice is in dire need of a facelift, however we only have three years left on our lease, and don’t want to undertake a complete refurbishment. Do you have any advice for freshening up our practice on a budget?”

A: This is a commonly asked question, and there are some relatively simple, cost effective options for refreshing your practice that can have a huge impact on the look and feel of your space. Affordable options include

◆ Re-painting

A new coat of paint on tired walls will instantly lift the space, and will provide a fantastic backdrop for any new design features you incorporate into your practice. Avoid using a blanket colour throughout, as it can swamp the feeling. Use of a neutral colour and a few stronger accents generally break up and refresh.

◆ Fabric panels

Using fabric panels stretched over timber frames in bright colours and interesting prints is a cost effective way of adding colour and interest to your walls. Even a simple canvas from your local art shop painted in a plain accent colour is effective.

◆ Framing

Update your existing artwork by re-framing and ensuring this remains consistent throughout the office. To increase the size of artwork you already have, consider increasing the matt (the cardboard area between the image and the frame) to create a greater emphasis.

◆ Vases with real or faux floral arrangements

Studies have shown that flowers have an immediate and positive effect on people’s mood¹. Real flowers are best, however updating floral arrangements weekly can prove a costly exercise. Faux flowers are a good alternative, and with improvements in production technology, it can sometimes be difficult to tell faux flowers from real ones. By purchasing vases that are the same shape or colour, but different sizes and variations for interest, you can create a cohesive look for your practice by placing these in clusters in strategic locations.

◆ Updated Seating

Updating the seating within your waiting area will have an instant impact on your surgery. If the walls of your practice are a neutral colour, look to incorporate a colour in the fabric that is within your logo or signage, or even the artworks you have on the walls.

◆ Accessories

Paying attention to the small details can have a big impact. Updating accessories such as soap dispensers at wash basins or simple appointment card holders on desks, will suggest to patients that you are concerned with detail in both your life and your work! Make sure magazines have a place rather than just dropped on a table.



◆ Good storage solutions

Last, but definitely not least, invest in new storage solutions that remove filing and unneeded paperwork from your patients view. By eliminating clutter, you create a sense of order within your office, which not only allows your staff to function more efficiently, but improves the aesthetics of your practice.

Each of these cost effective solutions can be applied throughout your entire practice to ensure a consistent updated image, from the front reception area to the clinical areas. ◆

References

1. “An Environmental Approach to Positive Emotion: Flowers”, *Evolutionary Psychology*, Volume 3, 2005.

If you need help, we would be happy to evaluate your current situation and answer any of your queries. Kimberley Ward and Christina Lilley can be contacted at: info@levitch.com.au or +6 12 9880 9300.



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