

With about 5,300 active board-certified plastic surgeons in the United States, why should a patient choose your practice? Effective branding can make the answer to this question immediately apparent. A **brand positions your practice in people's minds**. Where once there were “doctors” who performed all medical procedures, we now have specialists such as cardiologists, dermatologists, and plastic surgeons.

Creating a brand can be an excellent way to communicate how you can meet individual needs. For example, a physician who wants to be known as an expert in facial rejuvenation should have a consistent focus on the specific advantages they have to offer featured in their practice brochure, slogan, patient education materials, advertisements, and website. Even if you want to be known as a practice that serves all plastic surgery needs, **branding can clearly state to potential patients your services and communicate that you are a qualified plastic surgeon, if not one of the best in your field.**

Having a brand that defines the quality and purpose of your practice is increasingly important. The American Society of Plastic Surgeons reports that the number of procedures performed per year has grown considerably in the past decade. From 1992 to 2004, there has been a 700% increase in cosmetic plastic surgery procedures. With so many more patients seeking these types of services, **a plastic surgeon needs a strong brand to state clearly what sets his or her practice above the rest.**

While the concept of building a brand may be new to you, it doesn't have to be daunting. A brand is not created overnight. In fact, a properly handled brand can evolve over time. Your brand can become stronger by constantly keeping abreast of how your target audience perceives you, assessing your marketing plan, trying new strategies, and defining your goals.

Establishing a brand for your practice should happen in stages. While your marketing plan will be unique to you, consider following these steps.

Step One: Define it. Talk to your patients about their needs and perceptions. Think about what makes you and your practice unique. Clarify your brand concept for yourself and your staff.

Step Two: Create awareness. Have a professional design your business card, practice brochure, and website. Offer public patient educational services such as seminars, and make an educational system such as the Revenez program available in your office. Create positive patient experiences and outcomes that result in referrals for your practice. Establish loyal patients.

Step Three: Modify and refocus if need be. Get feedback about your brand. Decide which attributes of your brand you want to keep and which are not working for you. Be prepared to redefine your brand. Use your experience and market feedback to focus on what makes you unique.

What do people see in their minds' eye when they think of your practice? This image is your brand. **You already have a brand whether you have purposefully set out to establish one or not.** With a little thought and planning, that brand can make building your practice easier and work for you even when you are not. With the growing number of plastic surgeons in practice, and so many new procedures being developed every day, the public requires help making decisions about their plastic surgery needs. By defining your brand, you are helping them to decide that you are the best physician for them. A good brand will give you an excellent return.



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