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Displaying Your Brand

By Steven H. Dayan, MD and Tracy L. Drumm

Your credentials are a critical part of your professional brand. Don't be shy about sharing them with patients.

One of the world's most notable international marketing gurus, Walter Landor, is known for saying that your brand should be your promise to your customer. In medicine, the physician often wants to present a brand that pledges safety, quality and satisfaction.

A critical element to branding is credentials. They symbolize a "seal of approval" intended to reassure patients that you are high-quality and safe. You cannot let a patient take your training and medical education for granted. What specifically does this mean? Over the past decade, the competition for aesthetic patients has intensified. Patients no longer have to drive an hour to get a Botox treatment. They simply go around the corner to the nearest mall, or even to the local hair salon. This means if you're positioned as a higher-end brand and charge a greater price, you will need to justify it through subtle promotion of your expertise, extensive training and white-glove customer service. As patients increasingly have multiple options for aesthetic treatments, they are more likely to shop around. If your credentials and quality brand are reinforced, it will be easier for them to justify paying a higher price. Remember, service and results will have to match your boasts, or your credentials risk being devalued.

The bottom line is that your training is impressive, and a patient should never have the opportunity to doubt you. It is up to you and your staff to make sure the first and last impression given is one that reinforces your qualifications. It is critical that patients are constantly reminded of your brand and credentials.

The good news is, a few, subtle credentialing inclusions into your practice decor and daily protocols can be easily implemented without a lot of expense.

Create a Wall of Expertise

One of the first and simplest ways of credentialing may seem to be an obvious point, but it is often overlooked: Put diplomas and certificates where patients are going to see them! Highlight any training you have, even CME courses, and let patients absorb these impressive certificates of your accomplishments on display.

Tip: To avoid a wall of madness and clutter, use frames that are consistent and unobtrusive. The focus should be on the diplomas and the overall look should not be a busy mess of different-sized frames scattered all over the wall.

Have a large office and want to display your diplomas in multiple rooms? Bring them to a professional printer and have them scanned and reprinted on glossy photo paper. Find inexpensive, matching frames and evenly distribute them on a wall. This is an easy way to cut the cost of reordering pricey professional diplomas.

Share Your CV

Is a new filler patient really going to read all 28 pages of your curriculum vitae? Probably not, but a visual tour of your educational and professional past will certainly make an impact, even if it is just a sigh of relief that you are so well-qualified to perform her treatment. A nice way to give patients a truncated version of your CV is to print it landscape-style with two pages to one sheet. This way it is still legible, yet presented in a more compact and convenient manner. A nice touch is to have a bound version of your CV available in your waiting room. You can have it spiral bound at FedEx Office for less than \$10.

Implement an Education Corner

Each time you do something as simple as attend your annual Academy meeting, let your patients know. Ultimately, your continued education and weekends away from the office studying benefit the patients. Tell them about it!

Implement an "Education Corner" displaying recent seminars you have attended or, better yet, given. Patients want to know that physicians in all stages of their careers continue to be active with advancements in medicine.

Educate Your Staff

I'm always miffed when a staff member who has been working at my office is unsure of where I went to medical school, or of my board certification. How could she not know? To correct this problem, I instituted a credentialing sheet that was posted by every phone, along with answers to the most frequently asked questions to help staff members provide knowledgeable responses.

An increasing number of practices are reporting a surge in price shopping phone calls regarding all procedures. An easy way to flip that phone call from a 10-second price inquiry to a scheduled appointment is to engage the caller in dialog. Don't simply provide a direct, blunt answer; instead, ask questions that will open up the caller. When asked, "How much are your Restylane injections?" you could respond, "There is a range in fees with filler injections. Let me ask, have you ever had an injection before? What was your experience like?"

This is a basic phone sales technique often taught at seminars, but you can take it a step further and provide a "credentialing statement" that further separates you from the other four price calls that patient just made. For example, instead of saying, "Dr. Jones charges \$650 for a Radiesse treatment," you can mention, "As a double-board certified facial plastic surgeon, Dr. Jones is one of the leading injectors in the city specializing in this treatment. To date, he has performed more than 800 facial injections, and his fees range from \$400 to \$650 for a treatment." If the caller has made this same exact inquiry to several establishments, which most price shoppers generally do, the assertion of experience and qualifications will help set you apart from the other offices she has called, along with helping her justify the \$40-\$50 price difference.

This article is an excerpt from the book [Thrive: Pearls to Prosper in Any Economy](#) by Steven H. Dayan, MD, FACS, and Tracy L. Drumm.



Put your credentials where your mouth is: Dr. Dayan (left) is a double-board certified facial plastic surgeon, medical director of True Skin Care in Chicago, and adjunct professor at DePaul University. He has published more than 60 articles, book chapters and monographs, and has authored four books. Drumm is the manager of IF Marketing, a Chicago-based aesthetic medical marketing firm. She is also the co-author of two books on medical practice management.

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