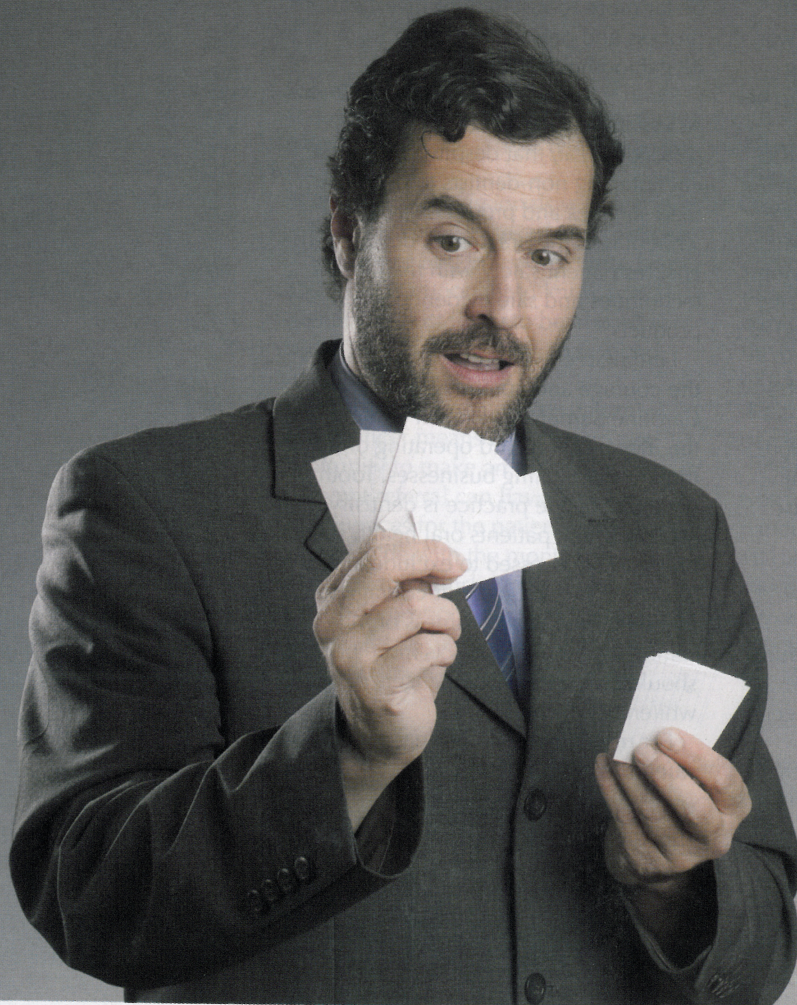


# What is a brand?

Michael Sultan explains that it is about more than aesthetics.



What does your branding say about your practice?

In my younger, more naïve days I thought that a brand was a practice logo, a clever strapline and ensuring all the team wear the same smart uniforms – I was wrong.

Indeed a lot of people consider their brand to be based on how the



**Michael Sultan**

is a specialist in endodontics and clinical director of Endocare.

stationery and the building looks, but it is, and needs to be, so much more than simple aesthetics. A brand should represent your philosophy and not be a static entity; it should be something that grows and develops as a living, breathing organism.

From the outside most dental brands appear very similar. We all want to use the best materials, provide the optimum outcomes in the most comfortable surroundings. And we all have similar visions of what a clinical practice should look like and what the aesthetic should be. The problem is if people just see their brand as a tagline or a logo or an image, they won't nurture it and the staff won't buy-in to the mission statement and direction. Thus the brand

could lose its significance and impact altogether.

## Brand NHS

If you ask people about what makes Great Britain great, high up on that list is the NHS. At its launch in 1948 it was the greatest public healthcare system, and a world-changing phenomenon. But unfortunately, in recent times it hasn't been nurtured or allowed to grow. In fact I think it has become rather stagnant.

If you ask dental professionals about brand NHS they would tend to say it's marred with time constraints, inferior products, bureaucracy and lower standards. Although the concept of the NHS is fantastic, it has lost its way

And the brand has lost its shine. All the world once looked to the NHS as a beacon of innovation, but sadly I don't think they do anymore.

### Brand Harley Street

Another divisive brand is that of Harley Street. Historically this comes with an image of clinical excellence, where the best doctors and dentists in the world are housed, with the smartest consultants embodying the epitome of charm and style. Perhaps for the outsider it still has that charm, it certainly makes my mother very proud that this is where I practice. But what does it actually mean when you aren't required to have any added qualifications to practice here, other than the capacity to pay the rent?

As a brand the name Harley Street is heavily protected, but what we think it signifies and what it actually does may be two entirely different things.

### Brand SmilePod

Recently I attended a meeting of a small corporate that has five practices. Incredibly they had invited every member of staff from each practice

to this meeting: every nurse, dentists, hygienist and receptionist. They went through their vision from conception to future developments, with everyone involved, sharing the same goals and objectives.

I thought that this was a brand that was growing and thriving. It wasn't just a logo or a title, but an organic entity that had a code and set of shared principles. They had embraced the brand philosophy across the whole corporate and made sure that everyone was involved, on board and 'on brand'.

I wonder how many other practices would do this - nurturing the brand by sharing the vision, the mission statement, and the clarity of purpose and communicating this with the organisation.

### Brand Endocare

At Endocare our brand is focused on our mission. We aim to provide a service to our patients to relieve them of pain, utilising the best equipment to make a potentially stressful procedure more comfortable, whilst offering the best possible patient journey.

When we interview DSAs for jobs we

explain that we do sometimes run late, but when we do it's not because we want to do an extra crown or an extra filling to make more money. We run late because we get emergencies, and as part of our mission, if someone is in pain we cannot abandon them. Our brand is based not on the financial side of dentistry, but the emotional side, and our mission statement plays a massive role in this.

Because of this, where I thought I was going five years ago and where I am today are two entirely different things. The Endocare brand has grown away from pure endodontics and our mission has evolved to providing great healthcare, alleviating pain and suffering and caring for our patients.

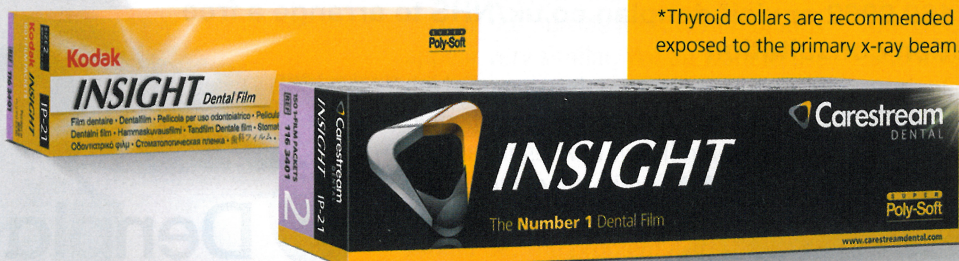
It is important to be aware that your brand is alive and to nurture it, letting it grow – even if it's not always in the way that you would have expected – but as long as you move in the right direction, and you have the buy-in from everyone involved, you will get there in the end.

Remember a brand is a living, growing organism, not just an appointment card with a pretty logo and clever strapline.

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