

# Healthcare Branding: That Was Then. This Is Now.

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There's been a dramatic increase in the need for healthcare **branding**. In fact, we'd have to call it a huge rise in doctor **branding**, physician **branding** and hospital **branding**—all propelled by various factors in the marketplace.

Broadly speaking, we'd put the change-agents under the umbrella label of "healthcare reform." And three of these forces—empowered patients, growing competition and insurance relationships—are at the top of the list.

Much like a professional reputation, the definition and purpose of **branding** is the process of creating a unique name and image. More than ever before, healthcare **branding** establishes a clear and memorable differentiation.

Until fairly recently, doctors and hospitals were not concerned much about the need for **branding**. Traditional healthcare delivery systems were reasonably stable, historic patient flow was reasonably predictable, and competition was low-key and unchanging.

## ***That was then. This is now.***

Few of these dynamics are settled. Now... just about everything has been set in motion. Now... few of the "known," "predictable," or "traditional" factors are still in place...and much of what was "constant" is anything but.

Medical group practices, hospitals, health systems, individual providers and others now want to strongly differentiate themselves in the minds of others...most notably in three areas:

- **The greater need to attract and engage patients.** Patients and prospective patients are, more than ever, taking an informed and proactive role in their healthcare decisions. Above and beyond traditional **advertising**, empowered patients are seeking authoritative information and recognized providers with leadership reputations. Increasingly, this applies to the selection of physicians as well as hospitals.
- **The increasing need to respond to the shifting competitive landscape.** Branding is a pathway to remaining top-of-mind with the public, visible and distinctive from the competition. And with many providers moving, rolling-up, being acquired or becoming

independent, it is vital to be visible, reliable and stable in the view of patients and referral sources.

- **The need to maintain and grow insurance relationships.** Healthcare delivery systems have changed and will continue to reinvent themselves at every link in the chain. **Branding** can have an important influence in the relationship between provider and insurance industry connecting points.

Effectively **branding** a medical practice, hospital or health system is about the entire experience and relationship the business has with the people it serves and the entities it works with daily.

Your **brand** is the single most important asset to differentiate you consistently over time. Your **brand** communicates the unique competitive advantage that influences the desired audience to see you as their best choice.

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