PART I.
BUILDING YOUR BRAND: WDS YOUNG PHYSICIAN PEARLS

How do you set yourself apart by creating and promoting your own brand?
It is important to educate other dermatologists and core physicians in the geographic area. This positions you well as an authority in your community because of your history of teaching and giving back to help the next generation.

Identify the niche that you want to associate yourself with. It’s easier to become an expert in 1-2 areas, perhaps 3 in the beginning, so you can read more, know more, and then teach and synthesize the topic for others. Lecturing the public and lecturing colleagues at conventions help to build a local reputation. This involves affiliating yourself with different organizations like ASDS, Skin Cancer Foundation, etc.

What is most important for young physicians to do when first building a brand and a career?
The most important thing young physicians can do from the get go is to be ethical and honest in how they approach every patient. You can get ahead of yourself sometimes in your desire to be or what you perceive yourself to be.

Be able to walk the walk instead of just being able to talk the talk. It’s important for a physician to be substantive rather than just style. When considering what you want to be and what you want your brand to be, you first have to be the brand; you can’t project a brand that you can’t back up.

You need to understand your value to the patient; what is it that you can do for them that they want. Educate the patients on what you can do for them and then deliver on that promise. Take every new patient as an opportunity to show off your brand; that patient will be an ambassador to you so that you will have new patients lining up.
It’s important to identify what you don’t want to treat and what you are not necessarily interested in treating because we have a great, very broad field in dermatology, but you can’t really be the expert in everything; this is especially important in media outreach and building a personal brand.

Trust your own judgement; listen to your own GPS/guidance system. Identify what area you are passionate about, then focus on that and look for mentors that can bring you along.

Once you’re established in a practice, you need to reach out and let people know that your there. You can do it a lot of different ways- through social media, press releases.

**How do you build a reputation?**
It can be challenging and there’s different facets. You can build a national academic reputation or a national brand/media reputation- and ideally you want to be respected and well known in both facets. Ask for advice about how people have done it; get a mentor.

**What is your advice on building a brand online and on social media?**
Try to have fun with it. Twitter, Instagram and Facebook are useful and they all have their own flavor. Try not to get overwhelmed. Pictures are more powerful than anything you write.

Manage your online reputation by being the reputation you want exposed online; sometimes you don’t have control and someone will write something about you that you don’t think is representative of you; it’s important to look at that and decide what they are really saying/what was their experience and how can I grow from this; it’s also helpful to write a response to it that represents who you really are; but don’t take it personally. Not every patient is for every doctor. Not everyone is going to like you, and that’s okay.
PART II.
BUILDING YOUR BRAND: INTERVIEW WITH DR. DEIRDRE HOOPER

What is a brand?
Most leaders do not realize that their practice brand is NOT their logo, website pictures or a bunch of words. A brand is a culture, an experience, a feeling, a memory. The culture you create intentionally or unintentionally is really the practice’s brand. Your brand is what people think of when they hear your name. For example, when I hear “Tesla”, the first thing that comes to my mind is “cutting edge.” When I hear “Louis Vuitton” it makes me think about everything expensive and luxurious. It is what patients experience when they interact with you and your staff—when they call, come in, see your website or social media page. It exists in customer’s memories and is spread by word of mouth. Each of these images is a brand—you already have a set of words and feelings that go with that brand. A practice may believe it is doing well, but that may not be the perception of the paying patient.

What tips do you have for young physicians trying to build a brand?
Sit down and decide, what is your brand?
✔ Choose Key Phrases that explain what you are all about.
✔ Describe the personality of the practice.
✔ Describe the tone of voice of the practice.
✔ Select imagery that reflects the brand.

Get staff buy in.
We have used branding as an internal marketing tool with our staff. To build a successful brand, the whole office has to buy into it. Remember, patients only interface with the physician about 10% of the time, the other 90% is interactions with staff, your website, social media and paperwork. Explain your values to the staff and clarify your expectations.

Every employee is given a copy of the “Brand Bible” at hire and is required to read through and sign it. Every year we review the brand and we constantly talk about the brand as part of policy decision making. We work to be aware that we are constantly branding ourselves to our employees. The employee then knows the brand, thinks of it as a part of their employment, and helps you further market your brand.

Feedback is easier when expectations are clear. Your staff is your greatest source of internal marketing, with enormous power and influence over your patients. When your staff believes in what you are doing and WHY you are doing it, they are part of your brand.

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Dr. Deirdre Hooper is a board-certified dermatologist who specializes in medical, cosmetic, and laser dermatology. In addition to her private practice, Dr. Hooper is an Associate Clinical Professor in the Department of Dermatology at both Louisiana State University and Tulane University. Dr. Hooper lives in New Orleans, LA with her husband and their 3 children.
Here is an example of what you want your staff to think about in the first few weeks of working for you: “Wow, I am part of this awesome team. How lucky am I that I got this job?”

Here are examples of what your staff may think in the first few weeks of work if you have not successfully communicated your brand. “The lunch break is much shorter here.” Or “Wow the phone rings a lot, I guess this is not Urology.”

**What are the benefits of building a good brand?**

Good business people understand that a good brand generates income via returns and referrals. Marketing becomes simpler when your brand is locked down. Growing and developing an efficient and top-performing staff begins by rallying around a common practice culture of shared core beliefs. Having a written, detailed brand clearly communicates what we want from our practices—the experience we want our patients to have and WHY we have created this business. Most MDs base their businesses on the greater good—We are here to care for patients as a priority over making a profit. Leadership is helping your staff understand this goal.
What tips do you have about creating and maintaining a social media presence?

Regarding Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, LinkedIn, etc., you don’t need to be on every platform. Instead, consider whichever is the most relevant to you and your goals, choose just 1 or 2 to focus on, and make them really good. I would also suggest sticking to platforms you are most comfortable on. For example, if you don’t use Twitter for personal use and don’t feel like you’re familiar with that platform, I wouldn’t try to make that part of your social media plan.

Regarding posts, I recommend the “fewer, bigger, better” philosophy, meaning post higher quality content less frequently. If your posts are too frequent, people will get fatigued and lose interest, and you’re likely not giving yourself enough time to build out a thorough, interesting, or unique piece of content.

Regarding content, it’s no secret - people love lists. Buzzfeed-style articles like “Top 10 Ways to Reduce Scarring” or “Top 10 DIY Hacks for Acne”) are easily digestible and skimmable - people can skip around and quickly find what’s relevant to them. Also, in this format, it’s easy to utilize anchor links for each numbered bullet or section. This makes it easier for others to directly reference particular parts of your article, as they give people a way to quickly jump to a specific topic of interest. The more of these “inbound links,” the better for your SEO (Search Engine Optimization) - one of the reasons you often see list-style articles as the first, second, and/or third result on a search results page when you Google something.

For more detailed information about SEO, check out “Moz’s Beginner’s Guide to Social Media.” Moz is the #1 authority for matters relating to SEO.

For photo-centric platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Imgur, before and after photos are among the most shareable content, if they are done well. In order to make yours unique and compelling, I would suggest exercising some general best practices, especially if you are not able to take the photos in your own office or studio space:

- Control for as many variables - lighting, location/backdrop, style of clothing and amount of coverage, angle and distance from the camera- as possible.
- If your channel/account is in the early days, and you’re still trying to establish credibility, the more skeptic-proof your first examples can be, the less trouble you’ll have in the comments section. Subjects/patients who have a distinctive scar, beauty mark, tattoo, etc. can help head off the inevitable, “these aren’t real” comment trolling.
- The more photos you have to choose among for the post, the better.
- These posts are a great opportunity for branding, especially in the event they do get shared a lot. I would add your logo, firm name, etc. in the corner of the photo or as a watermark.
**Videos** can also be a very powerful and effective way to reach your audience (again, if done well.) General overview videos are a great place to start. They should be informative, engaging, and conscious of the fact that attention spans are short. (I wouldn’t have that type of video longer than ~90 seconds.) These assets are versatile in that you can use the full-length cut on your site and about pages, and also edit them into multiple shorter clips and use them in multiple posts, across social media channels.

**What tips would you have for young physicians who are starting out, trying to market themselves and build a personal brand?**

Reviews are very helpful. Come up with a way to start capturing reviews as soon as you can. Consider sending an email with a link for patients to review you. In this case, other people generate the content for you and it ensures that you will have unique content (great for SEO).

Consider having a method on your site whereby people can send referrals as well as offering an incentive for patients who do refer their friends/family to you.

**Do you recommend young physicians to manage their own social media, or is it better to hire someone for this?**

Unless you have a lot of content, or are spending considerable money on paid social media posts, it’s probably fine to do the actual crafting and posting yourself.

Consider investing more for your visual content. Hire a professional photographer or invest in a good camera and take classes if necessary so that you know how to use it. It’s important to have visual consistency across all your posts in order to build your brand, so you’ll want to use a designated style of photography or the same photographer each time.

- I would **definitely** recommend hiring a professional for any significant photography (office or facility photos, team member photos, before and after series, etc.) For other instances, you can use royalty-free stock photography, (there are actually good, free options like Unsplash) or use photos you’ve take yourself on your phone (or, ask to borrow a coworker’s phone if they have a newer iPhone with a better camera than yours!)
- I would also 100% recommend hiring a professional videographer, either freelance or through a studio or agency, for any video content that will live on your website, or will otherwise have a longer shelf life.

If you are creating your own site and writing your own content, don’t forget to think about keywords and metadata (title, etc.). You can research the best, SEO-optimized keywords to use with tools like Moz’s Free Keyword Planner. For site building, you can use services with nice looking templates that require no coding or technical knowledge, like Squarespace, Wix, Wordpress, Unbounce, Instapage, etc.

**What advice would you have about negative posts from patients?**

If it’s not specific or constructive feedback, I would generally recommend ignoring or deleting it. Responding to inflammatory posts can turn into a messy dialogue that you don’t want. But I would research how others in your particular vertical handle social media monitoring to inform your strategy.

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**KEY TAKEAWAYS ON BUILDING YOUR BRAND**

1. A brand is a culture, an experience, a feeling, a memory.
2. Effectively communicate your brand to your staff.
3. Regarding social media, remember “fewer, bigger, better”; post higher quality content less frequently.