

Building a resonant personal brand: A 10-step guided path for ophthalmologists

BY ROD SOLAR

Here are 10 actionable steps to carve out a meaningful personal brand.



1. Uncover your core values

Delve into the ethos and values that define you as a professional. What sets you apart in the ophthalmic arena? These will be the values that you'll want your market to associate with you.

Mine? I'm the guy who grows and scales refractive surgery practices. I have 20 years of experience and an international client base in over 38 countries. I have a growth mindset. I talk about strategy and entrepreneurship. I give value first. I value hard work, consistency, and doing what you say you'll do. And I'm patient – I know that big things take time.

2. Consistent messaging

Craft a consistent narrative across all platforms (but start with one). Whether it's your practice or professional website (yes, everyone should have a web presence that they control, even if they're not in private practice), social media, or local community

events, consistency in messaging solidifies your brand in people's minds.

What's worked for me? I've written 841 blog posts about what I know since 2007 (that's one per week over 16 years). I co-authored a book. I've shot 140 videos for YouTube. I've written over 50 articles in the industry press. I've presented at global and national conferences every year over the past 14 years. Since I re-started posting on LinkedIn, I've averaged five posts a week over half a year. Yeah, it's a lot. But what did I say earlier? Big things take time.

3. Local first, global next

Start by building a reputable local brand. Deliver exceptional service, exceed expectations, and word-of-mouth will follow. Once you've built a local stronghold, envision a broader brand narrative. My first customer was within a 10-minute walk from my office. My customers were all based in the UK in the first six years. Then, the US.

By the eighth year, Europe. Year nine, Middle East. Year 17, Oceania. Now, we're in over 38 countries. It didn't happen overnight. Sometimes you have to give time, time.

4. Solidify your service quality

Before you can amplify your brand, make sure your services are top-notch. A satisfied customer is the best brand ambassador. I'm embarrassed when I remember my customers' experience 10 years ago. Ten years from now, I aim to feel the same way about my customers' experience today. If you're improving every day, this is inevitable.

5. Embrace 'more, better, new'

Continuously improve, innovate, and then offer new solutions to your customers. It's about being a step ahead in providing solutions, but only once you've mastered the step that came before.

We started with marketing tactics. When we figured that out, we added sales training. Then, growing practices. Then, scaling them. Every time we solved a problem, a new problem would surface, then we solved that. Get really, really great at one thing. Then do the next thing, rinse, repeat.

6. Engage with your community

Be active in local community events. If you're in private practice, offer free entry-point services and engage in local collaborations. This will not only build your brand but also foster a sense of community. Trade your competitive drive for a collaborative spirit.

I give away my secrets. Every year, ESCRS has been on my 'won't-miss' list. I organise my calendar around it. I've presented at BSRS and UKISCRS several times. This year, I'll contribute to Ophthalpreneurs, too. Get out there. Be Present. Contribute.

7. Collect and showcase testimonials

Encourage satisfied customers to share their experiences. Utilise these testimonials on your personal website and social media.

Since starting, I have collected over 200 testimonials – many of them on video – and used them everywhere I can. How did

I get them? I asked. My customers have always been my best promoters. I've not yet spent a pound on advertising my services. Ask for feedback. If it's bad, learn. If it's good, learn and share.

8. Educate and share

Share educational content related to eye health. Engage in discussions, answer queries, and become a go-to resource in your domain.

Some ask me why I give so much content for free. All of it is re-investment in the community, which has already given me so much. I want everyone in ophthalmology to think of me when they want to grow their practice or help someone who does. You want everyone who you can help to think of you when the time comes.

9. Measure, analyse and refine

Use feedback and analytics to understand the effectiveness of your brand-building efforts. Refine strategies as needed for better resonance and reach.

I'm always listening and watching to see how my content resonates. I refine, tweak, and adjust to what does better, even if it pushes me out of my comfort zone. Even when it's hard. Even when I don't want to. I

do it because it's what's required. Don't just 'do your best', do what's required.

10. It's a marathon, not a sprint

Building your brand is not a one-time thing. It involves ongoing effort, engagement and improvement. Tread this path, and the brand you cultivate will reflect your practice. It will be a legacy of the values and excellence you stand for in the field of ophthalmology.

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Declaration of competing interests: Rod Solar has been involved in paid engagements with over 100 business entities providing refractive surgery and refractive surgery devices and meetings in more than 36 countries. He has also been reimbursed for expenses to speak at industry events. Rod Solar owns shares in LiveseySolar Practice Builders Ltd and acts as a consultant for them.