

# business side

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# BRANDING TO BUILD YOUR BUSINESS

Branding is a marketing tool used not only by the corporate giants of the world, but also by the small entrepreneur. In fact, small business owners—just like you—can benefit greatly from creating a brand that holds true to your professional services.

## WHAT IS BRANDING?

In the simplest terms, your brand is your image. A brand is a collection of visual cues: colors, logos, and typefaces, as well as emotional associations people have with your company. For example, United Parcel Service (UPS) works hard to ensure that dependability is part of its brand. When people encounter one of the UPS visual cues, such as the distinctive brown truck, the company hopes those people will think, on an almost automatic level, “Dependable. If I give UPS my package, I can count on it arriving safely.”

Your brand should reflect your company accurately and positively. Yet it’s important to set up a brand that you can maintain. Inconsistency will kill you professionally. Everything about you and your performance as a massage therapist is part of your brand. This goes from your attire, to the services you offer, to where you practice. All of these things need to be in tune with the expectations of your target audience, while remaining authentic to yourself.

Make this easy by creating a brand that is consistent with who you are and what you want to do. If you’re passionate about extreme sports and athleticism, you can brand yourself as a specialist in high-end luxury massage, but do you want to? You’re not going to be happy doing the work, and your clients aren’t going to be happy either. The same would be true if the situation is reversed: the massage therapist who wants to work in a high-end spa isn’t going to be thrilled helping golfers work through low-back pain.

It’s more authentic, realistic, and ultimately profitable to brand yourself in a way that attracts the type of people you want to work with, thereby allowing you to do the work you enjoy.

It’s important to remember that there’s a clientele for everyone. Your brand, if it accurately and positively represents you, will help you draw in the right type of customers. Consider carefully who you are, what type of work you want to do, and the type of client with who you want to work. This, coupled with your modality, will help you find the brand that fits.

## BRANDING BENEFITS

Branding can help your practice in many ways. Building a strong and highly visible brand is one way to generate word-of-mouth referrals. Experts tell us that word of mouth generates 87 percent of all business, and that percentage may be considerably higher in service-oriented fields, such as massage therapy.

Effective branding also creates secondary revenue opportunities. If you’re well regarded within your community—which has gotten to know and trust you through both your branding efforts and then subsequently trying, liking, and benefiting from your work—you can then explore other opportunities.



## If you brand yourself effectively, you'll be able to provide valuable educational outreach to your clients and potential clients.

Teaching seminars and workshops, for example, becomes far easier and much more lucrative if the teacher is well known and respected. Some massage therapists have gone so far as to license their own lines of products.

These secondary revenue streams are essential for the long-term health of your practice. As much as we all love the work we do (and I firmly believe that anyone who succeeds in this field does so because of a genuine passion for bodywork and commitment to healing), there is, by the nature of the work, a limit to how much we can do in a day. Expanding our practices to become more profitable can be done in a number of ways, such as hiring employees. However, many of these options require a great deal of investment money. Branding yourself successfully allows you to capitalize on those secondary revenue opportunities without having to tie up a lot of your own money.

One of the most overlooked, yet essential, elements about branding is the role it plays in helping your clients. It's no secret that the vast majority of the public has a minimal understanding of what bodywork is, much less how to select the right massage therapist for themselves. However, if you brand yourself effectively, you'll be able to

provide valuable educational outreach to your clients and potential clients.

Branding can explain who you are, the type of services you offer, the role massage plays in healthcare, the people who could benefit from massage, and what type of experience to expect from your practice.

The complete article is available in printed form in *Massage & Bodywork* magazine. To subscribe visit [www.massageandbodywork.com](http://www.massageandbodywork.com) or call 800-458-2267.