Best Practices for Video-Based Branding During Virtual Residency Recruitment

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On-site residency recruitment interviews have been considered the "gold standard" for allowing programs and applicants to assess mutual compatibility and fit.[1–3] For the 2020–2021 interview season, however, the Association of American of Medical Colleges (AAMC) is strongly encouraging graduate medical education (GME) programs to use virtual interviews to mitigate the risk of COVID-19.[4] On-site interviews contribute significantly to an applicant's perspectives of a training program by providing opportunities to interact with residents and program leadership, to experience program location and work environment, and to develop a sense of a program "feel" and how they "fit" into that program.[1] In lieu of traditional interviews, programs must reimagine how they communicate information to applicants, describe culture, and authentically portray the program. Videos represent a means of consistent information delivery; however, their design must be optimized to ensure a strong user experience. We review key concepts and best practices for the use of video during virtual residency and fellowship recruitment.

Key Concepts in Branding

Residency programs have already developed a unique brand, whether intentionally or not. The term *brand* is defined as "a sign certifying the origin of a product or service and differentiating it from the competition."[5] Although health systems and residency programs have previously devoted efforts to branding,[6,7] virtual recruitment will necessitate additional attention to it (FIGURE). Brand positioning should provide consistent messages in a clear and appealing format, including a modern-appearing and fully functional program website, a strong social media presence, and online video content that shares a compelling view of the program. *Video-based branding* is the use of videos for brand positioning and is the focus of this article.

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Best Practices for Video-Based Branding

Historically, programs have used several platforms to display a brand image, including websites, social media sites such as Twitter, and online communities such as Reddit.[8] Programs have also disseminated videos via these forums. Programs have then used an in-person interview to provide a comprehensive brand experience. As residency programs must now fully provide the comprehensive brand experience virtually, they must consider key principles for developing recruitment videos.

Limit Video Duration: Shorter videos keep an audience's attention.[9] Business literature suggested that two-thirds of viewers watch videos to completion if they are shorter than 1 minute.[10] In 2018, the average marketing video lasted 4.07 minutes.[10] While highlighting key aspects of a program likely necessitates videos longer than 1 minute, we recommend keeping videos as short as possible, ideally less than 5 minutes.

Limit the Scope of the Video: Each video should have a clear focus. Comprehensive videos represent significant cognitive load for applicants and risk diluting key information. We recommend creating multiple short videos to individually highlight program features to give applicants a "feel" for the program. Examples include a video demonstrating post-work activities of residents or faculty and recorded interviews detailing unique aspects of the curriculum.

Include Information About Resident Life: Traditional interviews include opportunities for applicants to ask questions to residents. Responses can significantly affect brand image.[1–3,11,12] Losing pre-interview social events limits applicants' ability to gather this information in a low-stakes setting, but programs can provide similar information in video format. Essential content may include satisfaction and wellness, cost of living, and descriptions of the local area, benefits, and community-building initiatives. Videos featuring a

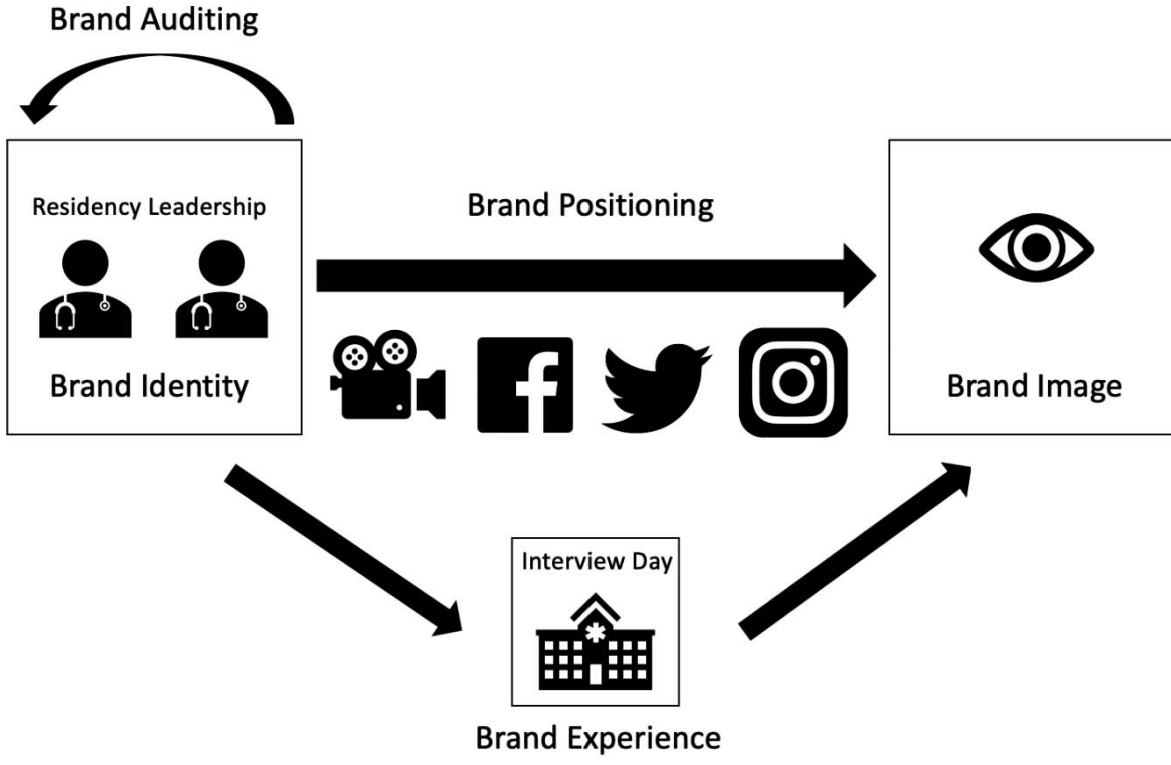

FIGURE
Residency Program Branding During Virtual Recruitment Season

variety of resident voices may facilitate an applicant's assessment of their fit.

Balance User-Generated and Program Leadership–Generated Content: User-generated content is a staple of business marketing. Consumers regard the content as authentic and trustworthy,[13] and are 5 times more likely to interact with user-generated content than with professional content.[14] Examples of user-generated content in residency programs include personal anecdotes and testimonials from current residents, faculty, and alumni, as well as videos highlighting a "day-in-the-life" of a resident. These videos can be made without the need for professional equipment—smartphone videos and pictures often suffice. While user-generated content is valuable, we recommend balancing it with high-quality program leadership–generated content that showcases the curriculum and sponsoring institution.

Utilize Mayer's 12 Principles of Multimedia Learning: Mayer's 12 Principles of Multimedia Learning optimizes multimedia presentation design and improves learning and knowledge retention (TABLE).[15,16]

Track and Review Video Analytics: Available data includes the number of viewers, devices from which the video is viewed, and the time at which viewership declines. Video hosting websites such as YouTube readily provide these data. Instagram also has a native analytics tool that shows audience demographics, profile engagement, and which posts are most successful. A member of the recruitment team should track this data weekly in order to maintain popular videos, relocate less trafficked ones, and contribute to future brand auditing.[17]

Augment Video-Based Branding Strategies with Social Media:[18,19] Social media can be used to drive traffic to program videos and increase viewership. Not only can videos be featured on program websites and social media platforms, such as Twitter and Instagram, but members of the program can also share videos on individual accounts to increase traffic.

TABLE
Mayer's 12 Principles of Multimedia Learning

Principle	Videos for Residency Program Branding	Example
Coherence	Avoid segments that do not highlight key aspects of the program's brand identity, even if visually appealing.	Focusing on fellowship placement when the program doesn't have many graduates pursue fellowship.
Signaling	Provide cues to audience prior to showing critical elements of the brand identity to recapture attention.	Introduce elements using large or boldly colored text or modulating tone/volume of presenter's voice.
Redundancy	Avoid redundant text on-screen if voice-over narration provides the same material.	Having text cues that replicate what is being said.
Spatial and temporal contiguity	Present corresponding audio/pictures/clips close together within the video.	Use pictures of residents together outside of work when speaking about concepts like wellness or work-life balance.
Segmenting	Avoid clustering critical information within too short a span of video.	A video places multiple program highlights within the same minute of the video.
Pretraining	Provide static materials highlighting desired aspects of the brand identity near the video link.	Place program's mission statement or letter from the program director near video link.
Modality	Use audio voice-over rather than on-screen text.	Use high-quality microphone to record voice-over.
Multimedia	Video and audio together are more effective than a single modality alone.	Avoid videos with background music and on-screen text only.
Personalization	Use informal language to connect with applicants rather than overly technical terms.	Avoid using medical or business jargon during video.
Voice	During sections with audio, use an expressive human presenter.	Modulate tone and pace to maintain audience's attention.
Image	Presenters during the video do not always need to be shown while speaking.	Utilize voice-overs, especially if same individual is consistently speaking.

Social media allows programs to directly engage with applicants in a dynamic fashion; applicants can ask questions via comments or direct messages and receive responses from the program. Social media accounts can also post videos of residency events, resident and faculty achievements, and educational content. Social media analytics as mentioned above can be used to track engagement with content and allow programs to optimize efforts.

Pitfalls of Video-Based Branding

Video-based branding comes with certain pitfalls.

Avoid Trying to Precisely Recreate the In-Person Interview: Focusing on traditional aspects of residency tours, such as visiting the intensive care unit, can lead to long, unengaging videos that do not emphasize unique features.

Watch for Unprofessional Content: Social media platforms that allow for public and anonymous commentary present a professionalism challenge.[20] Potential strategies for programs include limiting access to accounts or disabling comments to prevent inappropriate posts. Consider providing social media training for operators of the social media accounts.

Avoid Overly Produced Videos: Although investing in high-quality videos is recommended, overly curated videos can jeopardize perceived authenticity.

Acknowledge that Videos Can't Completely Replace a Typical Interview Experience: Regardless of quality, videos miss the subtlety of in-person interactions and observations and lack interactivity. However, video-based branding can help fill the void created by virtual interviewing by augmenting the brand experience and supplementing it once in-person interviews return.

Future Directions

We anticipate that video-based branding will continue to play an important role in recruitment given the flexibility and control provided to a program with regard to branding. Videos offer a preliminary glance at a program's mission and identity and ideally lead to interest from compatible applicants. Programs will likely invest significantly to develop videos, which should be created with the intent of being used for multiple years.

Interviewees are limited in who they meet and speak to on in-person interview days. Therefore, in future years, videos can be used to expose applicants to resident and faculty voices that they may not have met in person or those who have like-minded interests. This will allow for applicants to develop a greater understanding of a program's brand and culture.[2,3,11,12]

Further research is needed to determine if applicants value these videos and what, if any, impact videos have on recruitment.

Conclusions

Residency recruitment videos should be designed by following key branding principles and production best practices. Videos allow applicants to gather vital information about a program and determine if a program aligns with their desired training experience. We encourage residency leaders to use video-based branding to promote a robust brand image that communicates the unique aspects of their programs to well-matched applicants.

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