

# Creating the right image

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Judgements regarding the quality of dentistry on offer will be based how your practice presents itself. Having a well-designed interior that raises your profile is key to success

We may be facing a recession but growth is important during all types of economic cycles. Dental practices that continue with their efforts to generate new business during the more difficult times will be more adequately poised for growth when opportunity arises.

Making sure that your practice sends out the right messages is essential for growth. A well-designed dental environment creates value in your patients' eyes by providing an exceptional customer experience that, in turn, will generate profit for you.

Putting the needs of your patients first has never been so important. Patients are more image conscious than ever and they are learning more about dentistry, which is good for the development of the dental sector. But this also means that standards within dental practices must be raised in order to meet their growing expectations. Patients are consumers – they will 'shop' around for a suitable dentist.

Judgements regarding the quality of care will be based upon how your practice presents itself.

Having a well-designed practice that raises your profile is the key to success.

## How to achieve a great design

### 1. Engage the services of an experienced designer

A great interior design for your dental practice does not happen by accident. It is a complex matter that needs a great deal of time and effort, and an ability to translate design ideas into workable solutions. Engaging the services of an experienced interior designer is the most stress-free approach. Knowing how to get the best out of your designer is the key to success. It is advisable to choose a designer who understands dental practice ergonomics – look at their portfolio to assess their level of skill and creativity. This is a one-off opportunity for you to create a stylish and unique environment – you are relying on their expertise and design sensibility.

You may or may not have a sense of your own personal style. Do not worry – your designer will work with you to develop a look and feel for your

practice that is consistent with who you are and how you work. The end result must be a design that represents the values held by you, the practice owner and meet the expectations of your future patients.

### 2. Understand your budget

Knowing your budget is an important consideration. Spending too much on high specification finishes is sometimes not necessary as a similar look may be achieved on a smaller budget. A good designer will encourage you to formulate a 'wish list' that respects your budget, setting out your accommodation requirements, working methods and any design ideas you might have. It is important to consider your target patient base and where you are locating yourself – will you be catering for young business city workers or families within a residential suburb?

### 3. Develop a practice identity

It is wise to engage the services of a graphic designer to create a branding/marketing strategy. In order to achieve the overall look the graphic designer



The interior design scheme should continue throughout to reinforce your practice identity and create a unified look



The yellow glow of light is important part of the design scheme. It is seen here above the sink in the WC



Accessories complete the overall look of the interior it is often these small details that leave a lasting impression

and interior designer should work together to create a coherent and unified scheme. Private dental practices operate as small businesses. The cost of running private practices and all the financial risks are borne entirely by the practice-owning dentists. As with any other business, dental practices must aim at achieving 'top of mind awareness' with their customers in order to maintain their success.

The marketing message must be reflected in the interior design. For

example the colours used within the logo should work alongside and inform the colour choices made for the interior design scheme.

### The design scheme

#### 1. The layout

The design should consider the patient from the moment they arrive. Well-designed external signage incorporating your logo will reinforce your identity and deliver a clear and positive message. Inside the practice the patient should feel at ease. If the

reception area is not immediately visible a patient should be greeted as soon as they enter and taken to a nearby waiting area. The overall layout of the practice should be well thought out with defined public, semi-private and private areas. Screens and feature walls may be used as devices to separate these areas. Different textures, colours and graphics will help to create a coherent look.

Consideration must be given to wheelchair users (your designer must ensure that the layout conforms to the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act).

### 2. Attention to detail

It is important to ensure that your patients are left with a lasting impression of your practice so it would be a shame for the look and feel of the interior to be compromised by poorly chosen furniture, artwork and or accessories. It is often these small details that people notice – displays of exotic flowers, scented candles or a patient being offered refreshments whilst waiting in a relaxed environment with good reading material available, all contribute to a positive experience. Have faith in your designer and let them choose the finishing touches.

### The benefits of good design

Good design matters. A well-formulated and constructed design will add significant value to your business. From a marketing perspective, it is a recruitment tool – attracting the right patients and staff. From a commercial outlook, a well-designed workplace is more streamlined, productive and motivating.

The detrimental effect that a poor working environment has on a dentist's mental and physical health is huge. Put simply if your practice well organised, efficient and your staff and patients are happy you will feel more relaxed.



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