A Step-by-Step Guide to Building Your Dream Office

A well-designed facility communicates the care and attention you have invested in your practice and in your patients. Start with these fundamentals.
Everything you do sends a message to your current and potential patients. Starting with your website and telephone presence, the first impression of your office and through their treatment experience, these details add up to represent your practice brand personality. Are you high tech and leading edge? Warm and personable? Affordable and efficient?

If you haven’t developed your mission and vision statements for your practice, now is the time. Unless you are the only dentist in town, you will want to differentiate your practice to attract the type of patients you are seeking.

Start with these questions. What inspired you to become a dentist? What unique features, benefits and services do you offer and are most proud of? What impression do you think is most important to make about your practice?

Once you have identified your philosophy, you can create an environment that truly represents the way you support your patients, your team, and your community.
Begin with your structure and location. You need the right office not only for your practice today, but also for tomorrow. Think long-term and plan for your growth objectives. Is your current facility consistent with your goals?

If not, should you renovate, buy, or build? Can your current space be updated? What is the ROI on building? Are you better off buying an existing practice? While these questions may at first seem complicated, many resources are available to guide you through the financial aspects and space requirements for your specific needs.

You don’t have to continue to struggle with a setup that doesn’t fit. What do you need to make your vision a reality? Consider the following:

- Size of building/site
- Usable square footage of office
- Number of operatories
- Types of treatment room setups
- Business areas
- Imaging, lab and sterilization
- Utility rooms, storage
- Public areas
- Parking

Standard calculations for many of these questions are available. You can use an online dental space planner to get started (see page 8 for links to online resources).
Dependable equipment and technology is the backbone of your practice and should fit seamlessly into your workflow, allowing you to focus on patient care. Your purchasing decision begins with recognition of the value you place on some features over others, followed by your hands-on research. Finding the right fit will maximize productivity from every angle.

Outfitting your practice requires not only selecting the appropriate equipment, but also placing and integrating it for maximum efficiency. Each unit or system comes with certain requirements, such as wiring (electrical and data), heat/ventilation control, maintenance and sterilization, and adequate room to operate.

What are the requirements for your current equipment and technology? How about upgrades and expansion?

- Computers, monitors and phone systems
- Practice management software
- Digital imaging
- Digital impressions
- Chairs, delivery systems, lights, cabinets
- Sterilization and instrument management
- Vacuum systems, air compressors and nitrous
- Laboratory
Even small improvements in ergonomics, convenience, and workflow efficiency for you and your team can add up to large benefits over time. Unfortunately, many practices consist of unplanned systems of new and old equipment, and public and private spaces, pieced together in ways that tend to undermine your operations.

If properly installed and utilized, many of today’s systems work to support the health of the dental team. They are designed to minimize workplace health risks such as musculoskeletal disorders, noise-induced hearing loss, and eyestrain. When planning your ideal practice, make these health-enhancing features a priority.

Private office space and staff needs should also be considered. A staff break room helps to lower team stress and encourage camaraderie. A private office for you allows space and time for research and continuing education.

Consider the importance (and real benefits) of:

- Dental stools
- Operating lights
- Dentist private office
- Business area
- Staff break room
- Efficient flow of overall office

In the ADA’s Health Screening Program of 2012, 59.8 percent of participating dental hygienists/chairside assistants and 56.4 percent of participating dentists had musculoskeletal symptoms. Thirty percent had symptoms lasting more than 10 years. Seventy-nine percent had symptoms that were worsening or unchanging.

From the moment patients enter your office, they are evaluating all the details of their experience. Take a step back to observe it from their perspective. What does your office communicate? Is it welcoming and relaxing, or high-tech and sophisticated? Evaluate their total experience from all 5 senses: what do you see, hear, smell, taste and touch?

Encouraging patients to keep appointments and accept treatment often depends on their feelings toward your practice. Hundreds of details—many of them easy and inexpensive to improve—contribute to a positive patient experience.

Rate Your Practice for:
- Reception flow
- Interior design, furnishings
- Patient entertainment and education
- Corridors
- Comfort and privacy of treatment areas
- Delivery system
- Chair design
- Paperless efficiency
- Restrooms

The Patient Perspective

Take time to develop a fresh, critical perspective on how your design works for (or against) your practice brand. Ask patients and other visitors. Take pictures. Make videos. These days, through your website, social media, and YouTube, your office is going to be seen and evaluated from a distance. Make sure it sends the right message.
The difference is in the details. The right practice space allows for an additional team member, an extra hand that facilitates patient care, case acceptance, marketing, and business management. Ineffective space can be detrimental to your mission and even undermine your efforts to provide quality care.

Many of these office design components can be analyzed with the help of available step-by-step resources and the appropriate professional assistance. Companies that understand the needs of dental environments can help you with material selection, space planning, and many other details for success.

Get started today and allow your patients to see the commitment you've made to your practice, your staff and most importantly, to them.
Henry Schein Dental’s professional dental office design department has helped thousands of dentists nationwide during startup and during remodeling, relocating, or expanding. We understand the importance of environment in achieving dental practice goals, good patient flow, and patient satisfaction. Let us help you develop a dental office design and layout that uses your dental office space most efficiently and comfortably. You’ll have a team of dental sales consultants, dental office design professionals, and dental equipment and technology specialists to help you every step of the way to create beautiful and functional dental facilities. You can depend on Henry Schein Dental for convenient and affordable dental office design with winning results.
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