

Principal of DentalFX in Bearsden, Glasgow, Stephen Jacobs, took a long, hard look at his practice and decided it could do with a boost. Here he discusses the impact of the changes introduced by Paradigm Design Solutions with its MD, Gavin Willis.

Gavin Willis: What really prompted you to contact us in the first place?

Stephen Jacobs: I'd just invested in a Trioss 3 Shape intra-oral scanner and, along with another mobile trolley holding my implant drilling unit and Osstel device, there was no space for them to be positioned in my office.

GW: Anything else?

SJ: It prompted me to look at the surgery and reception as a whole, assessing its appearance and functionality. I suppose I could sum it up by saying that the set up could benefit from a makeover.

GW: Was there any patient pressure on you?

SJ: No, none at all. We'd kept the practice and the surgeries looking very clean, up to date and most presentable. We'd undertaken some 'ad hoc' improvements over the years, as everyone does. However, it was time to make some changes, and with that, we would then have the opportunity to create a 'wow' factor.

GW: Let's talk about your reception area. Before we met, did you feel it really 'worked'?

SJ: Yes it worked; we have been working in this way for 10 years after all. However it looked cluttered and that was always a concern. Your concept that the reception fulfilled four functions, a 'meet and greet', a call centre, a payment collection centre and an administration office, with those functions ideally being separated completely, struck a chord with me.

GW: That's good. But the problem you have is one you share with many of your colleagues. Space is limited and frankly you need expert advice to make it work for you. By removing a wall and replacing it with glass, improving the lighting and physically separating reception from administration, we were able to improve the appearance and efficiency of your reception dramatically.

SJ: And patients have noticed. They simply say it 'feels' better but don't quite know why. They find it more relaxing and welcoming, and from my perspective, I realise that you cannot have a working admin area that's tidy, so hiding it from view is the answer.

GW: So let's move on to your surgery.....

SJ: Yes, that was something that I was keen to look at. As dentists, we are often adding to our armamentarium of equipment, instruments and 'toys'. As we do this, there is often no space for them to be stored, so they tend to sit on worktops, windowsills and just about

anywhere where there is space. I was really looking to have a set up where nothing was visible, not even a wire or cable.

GW: Again the fundamental problem you had was the way you used the space. It created problems that, by careful planning, we addressed and overcame. Would you agree?

SJ: Absolutely. Like many surgeries, it was not really planned at all, or in reality it was planned for someone else to work in. It is like many kitchen designs, very formulaic with 'this going here', 'that going there' and "lets ignore the bay window, so just run the cabinets across it". It really didn't take into account procedures, workflow and was not relevant to the way I work.

GW: I have to say that this does make me wonder. Every dentist works differently and when you think about the length of time you spend in your surgery, it's just common sense to plan it and lay it out to make it an enjoyable place in which to work. Doing it without that sort of forethought is not really a sensible option.

SJ: I feel a lot more confident now. Not in terms of my clinical skill but in the way the practice and its procedures are perceived. The task bins and storage system you recommended and that we have introduced have totally eliminated clutter and reassure the patient in relation to organisation, hygiene and cleanliness. I know that, like every dentist, I am uncompromising on these issues. But an untidy surgery is, without question, counterproductive and can sometimes give the wrong impression.

GW: It's only fair to say that you are fortunate with the position of your surgery. It's got a lot of natural light and it's a good size. So we had plenty to 'work with' which isn't always the case.

SJ: Fair enough, but we weren't using the space well. With cabinetry/worktops removed from across the bay window, the chair repositioned, a consultation area away from the chair, easy access storage and the superb scrub area, we now have an airy, open surgery where before we had clutter.

GW: So, are you happy?

SJ: Absolutely delighted! Happy that it not only met, but actually exceeded my expectations, happy that my team love it and love working in it and happy that it came in on budget.

GW: As an investment, how would you describe and rate the work we undertook for you?

SJ: I did not look for, or expect, any sort of payback in terms of profit; this was not going to generate increased fees. What to me is more important is that I enjoy doing my dentistry as much as ever and we have improved the working environment. We achieved this and more....how do you put a price on that?

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