

Not every dentist is fortunate enough to have a purpose built practice. If you can count yourself amongst these lucky few then, provided your architect took on board how dentistry works, it should all be going swimmingly. And sorry but no excuses if it isn't.

On the other hand your practice may be operating in a building that was never designed to meet the requirements of modern dentistry. So how do you overcome the inevitable problems that we euphemistically call challenges? In real terms, it's highly unlikely you **can** overcome them all. What you can do is adhere to some fundamental rules that you should consider are set in stone and secondly avoid the mistakes that trip up so many in the profession.

I don't claim any of the following points are rocket science. Having said that, it is amazing how many mistakes can be (and frequently are) made:

1. If you are refurbishing, renovating or extending then leave project management to experts. Your time is better spent doing dentistry
2. Ensure that your designer really understands how you and your practice work. Ask awkward questions to reassure yourself that the person you choose has experience and doesn't try and pull the wool over your eyes. Make sure you look at some examples of your designer's work and how well available space has been used before you commit
3. Pay attention to details such as lighting and branding.
4. Make sure your external and internal signing is clear and user friendly. Bad signing is commonplace and has a truly negative effect on how your practice is perceived
5. Don't think patients don't notice untidiness and clutter anywhere and everywhere in the practice. They do. Particularly take a critical look at the work surfaces in your surgery
6. It's easy to become complacent, particularly when you have a very busy practice. If your reception and waiting room areas look a bit tired then you may not see any point in refreshing them. What you need to keep in mind is that when patients leave your practice they take the whole experience with them

The bottom line here is whether you consider dentistry is competing in the High Street and patients are consumers or whether nothing has, or is likely to change in your chosen profession.

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