

Article 5

The mystery of space

I'm not a great follower of football but when I do watch it I'm fascinated by the way the very best players can create space whilst the less talented huff and puff and seem to achieve little.

The metaphor is being stretched, but the best designers can find space in a building where none may seem to exist. In a dental practice, where that space is at a premium, such ability can be priceless. It may be a little immodest but, in countless practices, I have been given some difficult challenges and rarely failed to find solutions.

So if you are struggling to fit a quart into a pint pot, don't despair. It may well be possible to resolve the problem. To back this up, let me outline some of the issues that I address when faced with seemingly insoluble difficulties.

Positioning and repositioning

As a practice evolves, equipment is added and equipment replaced. All too frequently it ends up in the wrong place...and stays there. Repositioning equipment and other fixtures can often help create additional space at minimal cost. Centrally storing materials rather than keeping them in each surgery will help reduce stock levels and corresponding costs. An added bonus is that efficiency will be improved as a result

An holistic take

It pays to stand back and see the big picture. Of course if you have a blank canvas then a practice and its surgeries can be designed with few restrictions. In most cases however refurbishment, renovation and even extending involve compromise and an ad hoc approach. Wherever possible I advocate working to a long term and a coherent plan, even when the work is carried out as part of a phased programme

Understand procedures

A designer who doesn't understand dentistry will not have the required knowledge to design your practice so that it consistently performs at its best. It's as simple as that. Don't be fooled into thinking that aesthetics and appearance (as important as they are) can overcome any shortcomings in functionality

Thinking that's outside the box

There are few, if any, standard answers because designing a practice needs to take into account so many variables. When, for example, HTM01-05 came in, some practices felt they simply could not stay put and still comply. But, for our clients, we found answers. There is usually a way!!

Nooks and crannies

Sometimes it is quite feasible to turn apparent disadvantages into positive advantages. The general point I want to make here is that 'dead' areas can often be given a new lease of life.

Once again a good designer, who understands practice workflow, will spot these opportunities

In summary what I want to get across is that many dental practices are not making the best use of available space. General storage will most often be filled to 110%, so it's sensible to address the issue for the practice as a whole and detail where everything should live. This will help keep a lid on stock levels and contribute to practice efficiency

Putting it bluntly, not using space to best advantage could have a serious impact on the profit potential of the practice and its ultimate long term value.