

If you're thinking about refurbishing, renovating or extending your practice and/or surgery there is one basic question you need to ask yourself.

Why?

In no way am I intending this to sound rude or presume your reasons are not totally valid. Rather I am suggesting that you are absolutely clear in your own mind exactly what you want to achieve before you commit a penny to the project. Let me explain why.

You will have your own priorities. Top of the list may be the simple fact that you are running out of space. You may want to create more space. Your practice may look a bit 'tired'. The practice workflow needs rethinking. The surgery is cluttered. The staff facilities could be better. Your reception needs facelift. You need more light.....and so on. And above all your investment has to be affordable and a profitable long term investment.

The point I want to make is this. Unless your objectives are crystal clear in your own mind, you will not be in a position to give anyone a realistic brief. Bluntly you will, almost certainly, end up wasting time and money.

If you are reading this article I am assuming that the idea of making your practice more competitive in the High Street environment appeals to you. If this is the case then you have to think like 'they' do. That's why the kind of planning I have alluded to above is an essential first stage. However big or small the project.

When I embark on any project with a client, I invest a lot of time getting to understand the way he or she likes to work. This is another essential, because every dentist is different and although I have vast experience in practice and surgery design, 'one size' never fits all. I also encourage my clients to ask me awkward questions, challenge my thinking and check out the work I have done for other practices. I mention this because, whoever you appoint (and I'd like to think it will be Paradigm), they must understand how dentistry works and be in sympathy with your market position. Design and functionality need to work together...one cannot be a substitute for another.

### **What should you expect to achieve?**

This is why you need to get those priorities and objectives in place. Much will depend, of course, on the scale of the project but take a look at this list of what good design can achieve and you may be rather surprised as to what is eminently possible:

- a reception and public areas with a wow factor
- a co-ordinated patient journey
- a memorable brand identity that clearly positions the practice
- improved patient loyalty/spend/and recommendation
- more patients
- greater practice efficiency
- better use of space

- increased tidiness and less clutter
- improved working conditions
- greater staff loyalty
- improved and faster decontamination procedures
- improved profitability

One final piece of advice. Once you have chosen the people you want to work with and satisfied yourself they really understand what you want, then let them do it. Be interested, be available, be aware. But don't try to be a Project Manager. Changing things along the way will cost money and rarely benefits the project.

Be a dentist. You're good at that.

*Gavin Willis is Managing Director of Paradigm Design Solutions. In a long career working exclusively with the dental profession, Gavin has combined his unique design and creative skills with his knowledge of dental practice procedures to help his clients improve the efficiency and competitiveness of their practices. Gavin has a rare ability to provide answers where none seems possible and utilise available space where none seems to exist.*

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