

Paradigm Design Solutions

Private Dentistry August

Why I didn't do it

Principal of Pure Smiles In Fulham, Ayzaaz Akram has some strong views on practice and surgery design

If I'm honest I always read those 'How I did it' articles with a certain degree of caution. It's not that I don't believe that they **did** do it but, if my experience is anything to go by, to 'do it' well needs a set of skills only a very few people have.

This came home to me quite dramatically when my brother, Shiraz, and I decided to open a new practice in the New King's Road in Fulham. The property had been an Alternative Wellbeing and Massage Clinic and was anything but purpose built for dentistry. We were both confident, however, that we could transform the place and had little problem visualising how it would eventually look. We're both pretty adept at DIY and neither of us felt daunted or that we had bitten off more than we could chew.

We'd been approached by a firm who purported to specialise in surgery design. We gave them an opportunity, particularly as what they offered was 'a free design service'. Let us simply leave it on the basis that when something costs nothing that's usually what it's worth.

Somewhat disillusioned I went to Dental Showcase to seek something or someone better. And that's where I met Gavin Willis of Paradigm Design Solutions. It didn't take me long to appreciate that I was talking to somebody who not only understands dentistry inside out but 'gets' the way a practice works. Believe me; Gavin is in a different league!!

To cut to the chase, I invited Gavin to come and look at our new acquisition. He must have seen hundreds, if not thousands, of practices new and old, but what impressed me was his enthusiasm. He more than bought into our vision, but even more importantly he pointed out things I just hadn't seen, opportunities that we could exploit and showed us how we could use the available space to maximum advantage.

Looking back I suppose my brother and I can lay claim to the original concept for our new practice and, in that sense, this could be a 'How I did it' article. The truth is that I could have done something but it wouldn't have been anything half as good as I got from Paradigm. I think it's worth explaining why.....

Design service

Paradigm charges for its design service. I've no problem with this because it takes the time to design for **your** practice and surgery and doesn't simply impose a bog standard, 'one size suits all' solution on you. Bluntly you get what you pay for.

Understanding Dentistry

Most sales reps know how to sell (though you may question this!!). What they don't understand is how a dental practice operates on a day to day basis. When you're designing practices and surgeries you need someone who has the experience and knowledge to give you an holistic solution before you go spending money on expensive equipment.

Using space to best advantage

Perhaps this is what, quite frankly, astonished me. Whilst this is not a big practice, an overall feeling of spaciousness has somehow been created. At the same time every last inch is used effectively. Some of Gavin's proposals were quite radical and probably added to the budget I originally had in mind. Taking a longer term view though, I now see that by implementing these suggestions, our bottom line will be consistently improved.

Patient behavior

It is very easy to fall into the trap of 'knowing what we want' and then closing our ears and minds to any ideas that do not exactly correspond. Practice and surgery design is a case in point and can be an Achilles heel for so many of us. We have what **we** want and perhaps tend to overlook patient perception.

As an example of what I mean, I did not necessarily think that patients being able to see our decontamination facility would be good news. Obviously we have nothing to hide but instrument cleaning is not really what you want patients to see.....or is it? Gavin persuaded me to put a state -of-the-art decontamination room behind glass doors. This sends out a positive and reassuring message to every patient.

Project Management

I'll end pretty much where I started. Yes, I could have struggled through all the planning issues. Yes, I could have designed a practice in which I could have done my dentistry quite adequately. Yes, I could have organised all the required services and arranged installation. Yes, I could have had surgeries that looked like fitted kitchens. Yes, I could have taken the short term view and saved a bit of money.

Yes, I suppose I could have done it all myself. But I'd rather concentrate on being a good dentist.

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