

## 5 Easy Ways to Elevate the Appearance of Your Practice

I am often asked by colleagues and clients my recommendations to improve the appearance of a practice when they are looking to simply 'take it up a notch'. Maybe the décor hasn't been updated in a bit or perhaps they are just bored with the way things look. Perhaps they just invested in the company website and want to make sure they are sending a consistent message of the type of care they provide their patients.

I love this question! It is amazing how impactful small steps can be in how patients perceive their caregiver. While some may be a clear change, others may be less obvious to the patient, unless it isn't done: then it just looks like neglect! There are varying degrees of investment but can have big impact on the ambiance in the practice.

Here are my top five recommendations for elevating the appearance in the practice:

### *Declutter*

This is my number one suggestion for a handful of reasons, the first of which is that it is free! It is not achievable to present a 'clean' environment when there is clutter everywhere. Even if it were possible to clean every surface of every item on counters, tables, walls and floors every single day, the perception of the patient will not accept it. Treatment rooms should be 95-100% clear of anything that is not directly needed for the procedure being performed at the appointment. Try to avoid 'tchotchkes' and remember "less is more" when it comes to elegant design that creates a feeling of calm cleanliness.

### *Clean the carpets*

Many offices have carpets in common areas such as reception rooms, offices, and hallways. It is wonderful for sound absorption and while not recommended for treatment rooms, is still widely used in practice design. However, the maintenance of carpeting requires frequent cleaning, a task that is sometimes neglected. Carpets throughout a practice should be professionally cleaned minimally twice a year, and perhaps consider traffic areas to have more frequent attention in locales where snow/ice melt chemicals are used, or mud is a common element of daily life. Rented 'do-it-yourself' machines will leave more chemical residue in the carpet, which will trap more dirt and wear the carpeting out faster, costing more in the long run.

### *Paint*

Painting an entire practice is more of an investment but should be considered every 3-5 years to keep things fresh, on trend and clean. Touch-ups should be made regularly. This is another service I recommend hiring the professionals – save the DIY approach for home. Paint color is paramount: one color used throughout with an occasional accent in a second color that is close in tone will create a calm environment. Vivid, multi-colored walls can potentially invoke nervousness or agitation and should only be considered in pediatric offices that are striving for a themed, fun and exciting environment. Often, a professional painter will be able to provide a recommendation for a Color Consultant to get the color just right with existing finishes, hard surfaces (such as floors and counters), lighting and furniture.

### *Rethink dental themed art*

Here is the truth of the matter: your patients know they are in a dental office and sometimes, they have anxiety just walking in your door. They don't enjoy being reminded of this with every turn. While dental themed art is widely available and seen in many offices, I rarely recommend it for my clients. It would

be akin to entering a physician's office and looking at renderings of syringes, tongue depressors or whatever body part they specialize in. Consider instead quality artwork that is congruous in (non-dental related) theme, medium, or color. Consistent framing also presents an intentional, thoughtful approach to the environment and will suggest the attention to detail that patients appreciate.

### *Replace acoustic tiles*

In my 30 years in dentistry, I have been in hundreds of practices of all sizes, shapes, and ages. Many of these have drop ceilings with acoustic tiles – a popular construction choice and perfectly acceptable in dental practices. I often quip in audience presentations that I have yet to enter such an office and not spy somewhere in the practice at least *one* of these ceiling tiles that has evidence of a water leak! They do stain dramatically, don't they? If your patients see these ceiling tiles, you are sending a clear message that you do not pay attention (or worse, don't care) to the maintenance and upkeep of your practice. There is no explanation in the world that will overcome that impression. If your landlord will not replace the tiles, invest in them yourself.

Small changes, improvements and maintenance tasks can have big impact on how patients perceive the quality of care. As offices are recovering from the pandemic, checking these small things off the list will assure the patient family that they are in the right dental home for themselves and their families, as well as friends and neighbors looking for a dental provider. It is worth the investment in the business – whether money or just time – to set it apart from other offices and poise for growth.



*Andrea Greer, founder of On Point Space, combines over 25 years of clinical, management, and consulting experience in the dental industry with a love of organization, time management and décor to create productive and beautiful workspaces for dental professionals. Applying her extensive knowledge of the unique challenges that dental professionals face every day, she delivers effective and easy to implement tools to help teams improve their practice appearance, tame their 'to-do' lists, and most importantly, create an amazing experience for every patient, every time. In addition, she works with professionals who 'office' at home to create a space they love to step into every day! Visit her website at [www.OnPointSpace.com](http://www.OnPointSpace.com).*