

To Update or NOT TO Update?

When it comes to updating the décor and design of a dental practice, I often hear objections about how the return on investment does not seem high enough to warrant spending the money. Business owners will tell me it has no bearing on how they practice dentistry, and they are probably right. However, keeping your space fresh and current has other impacts on your practice. BIG impacts!

The Patient Experience

When was the last time a patient complimented you on a beautiful crown margin? Unless your patient is another dentist or dental professional, probably never! Patients do not know if you are truly a good dentist or not. They come to you, stay with you and refer to you because of the overall experience you provide them, not because your restorations would win accolades in CE classes. This experience is so critical to the success of a business; a well-executed patient experience will lead to treatment acceptance that is willingly paid for, referrals and great reviews. It is no wonder there are so many classes and tools create the best experience possible for every patient, every time.

What teams must understand is that the patient experience is based entirely upon how the patient feels about their journey through the practice: how they feel when they come in and how they feel when they leave. Your website, customer service, how you alleviated their anxiety and how you communicated with them are all data points the patient uses to decide if they like you. A large part of this is ambiance and aesthetic.

A dark reception area with outdated colors, artwork and uncomfortable furniture does inspire confidence that you are informed about the latest technologies in dentistry. It sends a message that you don't feel comfort is important and may turn people off. Clutter in any area of the practice immediately triggers doubts of cleanliness and is proven to increase anxiety. If you have spent marketing dollars on identifying your brand and how you want to practice dentistry, the appearance of the practice must support your branding, and this will build credibility.

Team Morale

Have you ever done any kind of refresh in your home? Maybe you updated the kitchen, or perhaps renewed the paint and bedding in the master bedroom. I am speculating that when you finished, every time you walked into the room, it made you smile and you thought, 'why didn't we do this sooner?' I was speaking to a new client this week who is hiring me to update the décor in her office. The doctor had gotten a 'wild hair' last month and painted the reception area, which previously had been the popular red and gold of the 2000's. I was a little nervous, but he chose great colors and the feedback from the team and patients was so good, he hired a painter to come in and do the rest of the practice. This office manager told me that the whole team gravitated toward her office now, because it was so much lighter, cleaner and felt so much better than the areas that have not been completed yet.

Maintaining an office is a symbiotic thing. If a team sees that the owner keeps the office fresh and inviting, they will feel good working in it. If they feel good working in it, they will keep it maintained and take care of small problems as they arise. If teams will help with the upkeep, owners feel more inclined to invest in keeping the practice updated. A great exercise to facilitate this relationship is detailed in my eBook "If These Walls Could Talk" which can be requested from my website.

Preparing to Sell

It is well documented that staging a home will help the home sell faster and for more money. Staging is an inexpensive service that optimizes furniture placement and décor to help buyers envision themselves in a home they are buying. For practice owners who are beginning to think about selling their practice, doing a refresh of the décor and paint has the same effect. It will present a more inviting investment to potential buyers so they are not thinking about the money they will need to invest after the sale to bring it current.

According to the [ADA](#), 49.7% of graduating dental students in 2018 were female. While women own fewer practice compared to men, the rate of female ownership is not declining. This means that if you are targeting a private owner as your buyer, your practice must appeal to both men and women, and typically women notice décor more than men (this goes for your patients, too!)

Updating your décor may increase the value of your practice as well. Maria Melone, Managing Partner at MORR Dental Transitions states, "To command premium practice values an office must include current technologies but also be aesthetically pleasing and up to date." At the very least, a buyer won't be asking for a price reduction to offset the investment they will need to make to update the office.

But isn't it expensive?

I believe many business owners hesitate to update décor because it may feel like an expensive investment that is not necessarily tangible. If the layout of the practice is still conducive to your workflows, often updating doesn't have to be expensive. If the hard surfaces such as flooring and counters are in good condition and can be considered current, a fresh coat of paint and new artwork can be enough to really change the feel of the practice. In the reception area, furniture can be replaced inexpensively, however, in this one area, I would recommend upping your budget as much as you can. Chairs receive an immense amount of wear and tear and can become loose in the joints and lose their cushion very quickly if cheap ones are purchased.

Overall, there are a multitude of reasons to update the décor in the practice and it doesn't have to break the bank. Décor certainly can be "DIY" and with websites such as Pinterest to help collect ideas or if you know a friend who loves decorating, updating your space can be easy. On the other hand, if the last time you addressed the décor in your practice can be tallied in decades, perhaps hiring an Interior Designer to come work with you onsite is the best course of action. I have the pleasure of working somewhere in the middle with my clients - they are looking for someone to narrow the choices and show them what goes well together. I get to marry my 28 years of experience in dentistry and Certified Color Expert designation with my passion of décor and art and create beautiful spaces for practices across the US!



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.