Most of us would jump at the chance to improve our dental practice free of charge if we were given the chance. This is, of course, unlikely to happen unless we win a competition or someone just hands us the money. In reality, it’s a totally different story. Making improvements to surgery costs a lot, so a large sum of capital will be required, and is usually borrowed at a cost that might haunt you in the future.

The hidden costs
Change rarely happens easily and the stresses brought to bear on you and your staff are not insignificant. Few people deal rashly with building work going on around them. The alternative to closing your surgery while building work is carried out merely adds to the cost. There is also the risk that the end result falls short of the standard you envisaged. There may be, for example, that new equipment might have looked sensational at the trade show or showroom, but not so good in your new environment. Designs that look clever on paper, might be dysfunctional in practice.

Most dispiriting of all, is that your patients might resent rather than approve of the changes. They might see it as a cost they’ll have to bear, and when you come to sell your surgery, it may be difficult to recoup your investment. These are the downside factors against change.

Improving your practice will make it more appealing, but there are many pitfalls. Ed Bonner weighs up the pros and cons.

Creating a space
There are few professions more confining or restrictive in a physical sense than dentistry. Most dentists spend eight hours a day, five days a week, in a cell. Why then would you not want that cell to be as perfect as you can make it, with design, equipment, lighting, air exchange and general ambiance all functionally and aesthetically optimal? Why would you want to subject your back, neck, and eyes to more strain than is necessary?

A question of pride
What about your self-esteem? And that of your employees? How do you feel your patients feel about your place of work? A place to be tolerated (or worse, endured), or one to be praised at Saturday night dinner? Your surgery and reception room are your shop-front, your ‘come hither’ showcase, an essential part of your extended being. To be seen as less than excellent is to be less than excellent, and you pay a price for that, perhaps greater than the price you would pay to be seen as the best. There is a very simple test: how do you feel when you walk to and through your front door? Does the answer defy anything less than ‘great’, you are selling yourself and your profession short. That aforementioned cell will be no more welcoming than a prison cell, and you will feel just as imprisoned.

On the other hand, walking into a newly-created or refurbished, functionally designed, state-of-the-art practice can lift your spirits, improve your output, increase your earnings, protect your body, reduce your staff turnover and please your patients. Which of those would you not wish to have, whatever the cost?

The 10th Dimension
The power of 10...

...a series of articles by Dr Ed Bonner BDS MDent, Sloan Fellow London Business School, practice development consultant & coach

Managing Time
What is done, cannot be undone
‘time and tide wait for no man’
when in the chronicle of wasted time... (Shakespeare sonnet)

The abbreviation of time, and the failure of hope, will always tinge with a browner shade the evening of life.’

Most dentists spend eight hours in a cell.

Are you for or against dentists improving their practices? Would your patients think it a positive move? Email editor@dentaltribuneuk.com and let us have your views.

The Sceptic presents
The case for... and against...

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