

Modular Dental Office: Better By Design

By Dr. Joseph J. Massad

It is my experience from teaching and meeting thousands of dentists around the world that change is rather difficult, and that new dentists tend to have similar concerns. One deep rooted concern stems from the need to repay school loans coupled with the high cost of setting up a new office or purchasing an outdated office that needs modernized.

I set up a new office in uncertain economic times, which is an experience I relay to students when they come to me with financial concerns. My plan to reduce the risk of unnecessary spending provided me somewhat of a safety blanket. I had an exit plan to move locations if desirable. Even though I purchased and refurbished my space, I would recommend dentists who opt to lease to either sign a shorter lease or have a drop clause for flexibility.

As I put my plan into place, I realized it would require an office design concept that was different from the norm. I needed a modern way to quickly establish a sophisticated treatment space while minimizing costs, time delays and avoiding landlord leasing issues. The best option for me was a modular design, which is something you might want to consider as well.

Take Advantage of Excess Retail Space

As the tenant's leases in retail spaces begin to terminate because of the "Amazon effect," landlords are looking for ways to repurpose the space for other types of tenants, including charter schools, medical offices and specialty grocery stores. Many of these spaces make ideal dental office locations. They tend to have high visibility, easy access and parking within an established suburban area.

Portability Can Be Your Best Asset

Retail landlords are unfamiliar with the high cost per square foot required to build out traditional dental space designs with extensive plumbing and cabinetry. To make it easier to negotiate a low-cost and short-term lease and/or a drop clause, modular office design allows you to minimize plumbing and/or the leasehold improvements required for dental space, making you just like their other tenants.

In addition, modular designs can dramatically cut time needed for build out, which shortens the downtime from lease signing to generating patient revenue. This can be vital to a young dentist's starting cash flow.

Plumb-Free Build Outs

If you find a nice location, and avoid spending money on build-out costs to cut concrete for plumbing and traditional cabinetry, you will have a reasonable budget that allows you to purchase quality equipment you can rely on.



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ASI Cabinetry-Free Operatory, ASI Designer Advanced Dental System (on left), ASI Designer Ambidextrous Assistant's System (on right)

I saved about \$60,000 in construction costs and eliminated the need to cut concrete and all the plumbing of water, compressed air, suction, gas etc. I have everything I need in attractive portable dental units that allow me to perform all dental procedures. They also perfectly match my existing portable cabinetry.

I can move these portable dental units, including the side portable cabinets, into the middle of a room and give a demonstration to my students during a class. Just think about what this means if you decide to move. Rather than installing new plumbing, you can take your entire operatory with you.

Plumbed Modular Designs

New dentists who decide to plumb a space with delivery systems connected to a central utility room should still consider the time and cost savings newer modular delivery systems provide. Traditional cabinet-based operatories are expensive, lack ergonomic function, and can become cluttered. They're not easily updated, reconfigured, or transported should you wish to remodel or relocate.

The solution? Flexible, cart-based delivery for dentists and assistants. This modular platform provides superior ergonomic function and the ability to update with emerging technology. Plug and play functionality means adding equipment only as necessary and growing your practice at your own pace while avoiding additional construction costs.

Ideal location opportunities for younger dentists are becoming available thanks to an abundance of retail space coming onto the market. Quick, cost effective solutions now exist for new dentists to order dental equipment directly from the manufacturer, with easy set up and the ability to relocate any time. Find a location that best suits you and then spend wisely on build-out costs. **tND**



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