



KEY INTERIORS

INTERACTIVE WORKPLACE SOLUTIONS



# Dental Office Design

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## Dental Office Design

For professionals in most industries, an office is more than just a place where work is done. Rather, it's a second home: it's a place to burn the midnight oil and chase your dreams. It's where you make friends, build connections, and interact with clients, customers, or patients who matter to you. Dental offices are no different. In fact, more so than professionals in other industries, dentists need to prioritize their office design to accommodate employees and visitors alike.

That's one reason why dental office design presents a tricky prospect for many practices. After all, getting the most out of your workspace, while also satisfying patients' needs is a tall order. The good news is, we understand this problem intimately; at Key Interiors we've worked with dentists for decades, and know what it takes to develop a sound office design strategy. So whether your dental office merely needs a few fresh takes — or you're ready to sanction a full-scale overhaul — we're here to provide you with the resources you need.

# Getting Started: Dental Office Design Best Practices for the Modern Workspace

One of the key “anxiety triggers” for people who are reluctant — or in some cases, flat-out terrified — to see the dentist, is the traditional clinical look and feel of the environment: uncomfortable plastic chairs in the waiting room, buzzing fluorescent lights, People magazines and a Sports Illustrated circa 1989. Indeed, just thinking about it is enough to convince many patients to put off going to the dentist until they absolutely have no other choice.

Fortunately, while this may have been the norm in the past, it certainly doesn’t need to be now and going forward — which is particularly good news for dentists who want to increase their scalability. And who wouldn’t want happy, relaxed patients who look forward to their visit instead of dreading it? To that end, here are five best practices you should look to achieve with your dental office redesign:

## #1. Creating a balanced upscale environment

More and more patients are going to the dentist for cosmetic treatments. Teeth whitening, teeth straightening, implants - All of these treatments improve your appearance. And so your dental office should project an upscale hospitality feel. Things like glass walls, a Keurig machine, sleek fixtures, and state of the art equipment make your patients feel that they will be properly cared for and receive the best treatment possible. (Plus, your staff will appreciate the change as well!) Anything you can do to make your patients feel at ease will improve their experience at your office. And things like fast-connecting WiFi aren’t a luxury anymore — they’re a necessity for most businesses. Indeed, if you can promise that a patient can stay connected and work on their laptop or smartphone until the minute you’re ready for them, more people with busy schedules will be willing to take time out to visit. It’s important to note that there is a fine line between “upscale” and “glitzy”. Key Interiors can help you reach this optimal design without alienating your patient base.

## #2. Welcoming, Inspiring Decor

Patients who are nervous about their dental appointment can be assuaged with proper wall decorations. Consider adding new, uplifting artwork to your waiting areas. It may seem like a little thing, but shaking up your space with engaging posters and pictures can invite your patients’ minds to wander, when otherwise, they would be focused on big dental procedures. If possible, also consider adding a well-positioned television for your patients to divulge in while waiting. Again, you don’t have to break the bank to put your customers at ease — just be willing to add a few creature comforts!

### **#3. Respecting Privacy**

Patients love privacy. Maybe they aren't as young as they used to be but at long last they can afford braces - that they wanted at 16 but can finally afford at 50. Or maybe they are dealing with some other age related health issues and need to work this around their dental treatment plan. Having private rooms makes the patients feel special and they can converse at ease without the entire office overhearing what's being said. However, most patients do not like closed doors - that can be intimidating. Having a private room with a door on the room helps to maintain both an open, welcoming office and yet respect individual privacy.

### **#4. Optimal Space Utilization**

Space utilization doesn't mean that you need to use every bit of available space for a functional purpose, such as storing files or housing equipment. On the contrary, the most successful modern dental clinics strategically and tactically avoid over-saturating the environment with "stuff," since this can impede employee efficiency. Plus, it's also an eyesore for patients!

Ultimately, the best advice here is simply to keep space utilization top-of-mind when planning your modern dental clinic renovation. Both the space you use and the space you don't use should be a deliberate decision, rather something that "just is that way" by default.

### **#5. Prioritize Current and Future Patient Groups**

Many design and style decisions should be less about what you and your team personally like, and more about what your current and future patient groups will find agreeable and impressive.

For example: if you're aiming to boost your patient roster with young families, then shifting toward a more relaxed, and kid-friendly style may be the right direction to explore. Conversely, if you're seeking to entice more executives in search of cosmetic dentistry solutions, then adopting a sharper, more sophisticated vibe may be the way to go.

Essentially, you want to look at your dental clinic through the eyes of your target patients. What do you want them to see, think, and experience? The answers will help you make smarter design decisions that are based on objective analysis, rather than subjective preference.





# Planning a Renovation: How to Turn a Vision Into Reality

You may have been mulling it over for months — or perhaps even years — and now, at last, you're ready to move forward and make your dental office renovation vision a reality. To help make the experience successful and rewarding, here are seven things to keep in mind when forming a dental office redesign strategy:

## #1. Schedule the Renovation Strategically

For many dentists, the biggest concern they have regarding a dental office renovation is the possibility of being forced to temporarily shut down their practice — which is obviously not desirable. There are a couple of ways to mitigate or eliminate this risk. One option is to execute the work in phases, which would enable the practice to remain open throughout the renovation. The drawback here is that some of the office will need to be cordoned off, and while the renovation itself might not take more time (i.e. the number of total hours may remain the same), the overall end date will be pushed back.

Another option is to shift more work to off-hours, such as evenings and weekends. The downside is that labor costs will be higher (since specialists and trades will charge premium rates), and for practices in some locations (such as malls) this may not be possible per property management rules.

## #2. Establish Your Budget Early

It's important to establish your available budget early in the process, so that you can reconcile what you want from your renovation, with what you have to spend on it. For instance: it's a waste of time to explore options that will cost well over \$100,000, when your budget is under \$25,000.

### #3. Create a Patient-Centric Design

Patients are highly influenced by the atmosphere of a dental practice — both consciously and subconsciously — and this in turn affects everything from anxiety levels, to proposed treatment-plan adoption. The critical element is that your design should be patient-centric, which means that it embraces elements like:

- Soft and/or natural lighting (a study by the University of Toronto found that people feel emotions more intensely when experienced under bright light).
- Providing suitable entertainment and Wi-Fi access.
- Enhancing aesthetics with artwork, rugs, miniature fountains (the sound of which can also soothe nervous patients), etc.
- Allowing reception staff to keep an eye on the waiting room instead of having their back to it, so they can ensure that patients are comfortable and attended to.

### #4. Keep Workflow Needs in Focus

An ideal dental office design enables (as much as possible) one-way traffic flows for both staff and patients. This maximizes efficiency, and avoids human “traffic jams” that can happen during busy times. It also prevents patients from getting confused and disoriented as they go from one room to another.

### #5. Take Full Advantage of Value Engineering

Value engineering is a construction approach that explores viable alternatives to more expensive materials, methods, transportation, organization, and other elements of a renovation. The essential concept is to maintain — or in some cases, increase — the design vision, but at a lower overall cost. In some cases, the savings can be substantial.





## #6. Shop Smarter

One of the last, but still vital, steps to forming a dental office design renovation plan that you can put into action is making smart furniture choices. Note that this goes beyond merely picking out couches and chairs that “look nice.” With that in mind, here are a few things to consider when shopping for furniture at your dental facility:

- Pay close attention to materials in the waiting room. While leather or vinyl furniture may look sharp and sophisticated, it may lack the “warm-and- welcoming” aspect of certain fabrics.
- Prioritize colors. Blues are more calming than reds, yellows are more energizing than browns, and so on. Note also that lighter colors make the office look bigger than darker colors.
- Offer patients (and those accompanying them) workspaces to click away on their laptops and tablets. Be sure to have enough outlets (both plugs and USB) to charge devices.
- Provide patients with a beverage bar that offers a variety of refreshments, from filtered or bottled water, to herbal teas. It’s a relatively minor investment that can deliver big results; especially for anxious patients who dread going to the dentist.
- Choose exam room furniture that extends the warmth of the waiting room. For example: seats should be comfortable and lighting should be soothing. Finding the right balance between functionality and comfort is key.
- Provide adequate break room furniture to boost staff morale. Consider opting for diversified seating choices, and pay attention to lighting, tabletop space, and aesthetics.



## #7. Don't DIY

Last but certainly not least: dentists and their teams should not waste time and resources trying to make dental office design decisions on their own — because they almost certainly will not have the time or intel they need to make savvy, practical, and cost-effective choices. Instead, partnering with a proven interior design firm at the outset of the renovation process is the safest and most effective way forward.

# Benefits of Sound Dental Office Design

All dentists know that a professional image plays a key role in attracting and keeping profitable patients. To that end, dentists invest in advanced equipment and technologies, hire experienced hygienists, administrators, and other staff, and take a personal interest in the satisfaction of every patient on their roster.

Naturally, these commitments go a long way to establishing the right image. But there is another piece of the puzzle that is often overlooked, yet can substantially increase profits. (Or unfortunately in some cases, diminish them.) And that's dental office design.

Below, we highlight the three ways that dental office design — perhaps surprisingly — drives profitability:

## Dental Office Design Impresses Patients

Plain and simple, patients factor in dental office design when they form an impression of their dentist.

Importantly, patients do not necessarily expect an office to ooze glamour or luxury; this means that dentists who are thinking of an office renovation don't have to go deep into debt to impress their patients. Rather, patients want to feel that the practice is modern, friendly, advanced, and innovative.

## Dental Office Design Increases Efficiency and Reduces Overhead

While aesthetics are obviously a big part of any dental office design — everything from colors, to fabrics, to lighting, and more — the renovation process is not just about upgrading the physical appearance. Good dental office design also improves efficiency.

For instance: establishing one-way traffic flows, centralizing sanitization stations, making it easier for staff to access equipment (e.g. printers, shredders, recycling, etc.) are all ways design can affect employee performance. All of this helps increase productivity and reduce overhead, which means that a bigger chunk of revenue goes in the profit column, instead getting used up to cover expenses.



## Dental Office Design Boosts Staff Engagement and Increases Retention

Dental practices are busy, patient-focused environments that can get stressful; especially during certain times of the year (the holiday season, before year-end benefits expire, back-to-school, wedding season, and more). And then of course, there is the basic, unavoidable fact that some patients are quite anxious when visiting the dentist, and, as such, can be a bit more demanding than they might be under normal, more relaxed circumstances.

In light of the occasionally stressful day-to-day reality of the dental world, good dental office design should boost staff engagement levels, which translates into higher retention rates, happier employees, and ultimately, satisfied patients.

## Conclusion

A successful dental office redesign needs to incorporate all of the many aspects of a progressive dental practice. Waiting rooms need to accommodate numerous visitors from busy entrepreneurs, to nervous schoolchildren. The layout should be easy-to-navigate, and allow your staff to access all areas of your operation without confusion. And of course, your space should enable you to work with the high-tech equipment that dentists utilize every day.

Given all of the industry-specific needs that dentists face when renovating their workspace, it's no wonder that so many seek out professional help. On that note, it's important to remember that not all office design companies were created equal. At Key Interiors, we love working with dentists. We've established connections in the industry through decades of quality work, and we know how to solve your office design conundrums. So if you're ready to transform your dental office into the workspace you've always envisioned, contact us today. We have the skills, the experience, and the work ethic to complete your project on time — and on budget.



# About Key Interiors

## DESIGN | BUILD | FURNISH

Established in 1978, Key Interiors is a complete interior resource assisting clients with any facility re-design, expansion or relocation in mind. Located in Chicago, our office design firm offers a comprehensive range of services including design-build, architectural design, construction management plus a design center with over 300 lines of office furnishings & contract furniture.

We are project management specialists capable of managing your project from initial office design to completion. Our team of forward thinking collaborative partners have over 30 years of experience and a track record of 300+ successfully completed office renovation projects including corporate offices, dental offices, healthcare waiting rooms, car dealerships and more!

We know profitable office environments today are fast paced! The right workplace can foster excellent work-group collaboration, increased productivity and streamlined processes.

Let us design an interactive workplace for you!  
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