

# Designing a New Office Requires Asking the

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*In the end the doctor must ultimately decide on most everything, but it's imperative to surround yourself with the sharpest people who will present the various options available.*

*– Gerald Schoenlaub, DMD  
Louisville, KY*

## Phase 1: The Vision

**F**requently, our clients say “I’m thinking about building a new office.” When hearing that statement, an immediate response is to assess some of the following criteria:

- What is your primary motivation for a new or redesigned space?
- How many treatment rooms do you want?
- Are you going to have a partner or associate?
- Do you see mostly adults or do you treat a good number of children?
- What size space do you think you need?
- Is the expense incurred sure to make the practice more efficient and profitable?

The list of questions goes on, much as it does when you plan to build your “dream home.”

Of course, a dental office could be designed and built without these questions being asked, but would a doctor and/or staff want to spend the rest of their collective professional lives in such an environment. That is, one built solely without consideration of their professional working experience, knowledge or needs.



When first meeting with a doctor about a project, and later the staff, we go through the following process: (1) ask questions; (2) listen closely; and, (3) take notes. When we are satisfied that the vision is complete, we begin Phase 2.

## Phase 2: The Plan

Recently, I attended the Chicago Midwinter dental trade show with a client. He and his wife came to the meeting specifically to look at equipment options for his new office. After about four hours in the exhibit hall he announced, “Now I know just how little I know about office design and equipping a dental office”.

His experience is not that different from many others. The number of equipment manufacturers is greater than ever. At a dental trade show, much of what is displayed looks similar with very subtle differences on the outside, but each brand has unique features in design that can add up to major differences in the function. When a doctor goes to a major trade show to look at his options, the choices become overwhelming. The experience of your equipment representative is a valuable asset in helping you match the features that best align with your specific needs. It is only after new equipment is installed and used for a while that the real differences become apparent. At a dental trade show or at the NDI equipment showroom, I try to determine the doctor’s needs and wants. That information, along with the floor plan, dictates the equipment options that eventually become the equipment proposal.



# Right Questions to Create the Right Plan!

If there are already building plans, we will spend time “brainstorming” ideas. Our next meeting will typically include our office designer, who will often have a preliminary plan to present. Many times, floor plans and equipment lists will change as we work through the process, but we always try to stay true to the doctor’s original vision.

The design elements we address are:

- number of operatories needed
- operatory layout
- sterilization
- integration of existing and new technologies
- lab
- business office and overall patient/staff flow

Nashville Dental will provide a floor plan concept for the doctor to approve. That plan is then sent to the architect and/or the general contractor. After building documents are completed, the Nashville Dental design/equipment team will review the plans to try to identify any problem areas. The good news is that we rarely find any problem of real consequence.

After building contracts are signed, but before concrete is poured, a meeting with the general contractor, the plumbing contractor and the electrical contractor takes place so any and all questions are discussed in order to minimize delays once the work begins. NDI Planning and Design will layout and mark all plumbing, electrical and structural requirements specific to the dental equipment being purchased. We will make sure sub-contractors understand and are aware of these unique requirements.



## Phase 3: The Process

During this phase, NDI Planning and Design is there to assure that the plan is followed. If problems arise, steps are taken to immediately revise, correct and resolve the issue.



After “rough-in” is complete, NDI comes on-site to inspect the dental specific portion of the project. This is a huge benefit to the general contractor, even if he or she has built a dental office before, because we often catch mistakes or major problems before they get under concrete or behind drywall. In many instances, this has saved the doctor and the general contractor a lot of time and headaches. When construction is complete, a member of the NDI installation crew along with the general contractor will make a walk through in order to plan the installation/transfer of both old and new equipment.



A major concern of all staff members is, “What are we going to do on the first day of business? How will we know where everything is?” A good plan designs the new treatment rooms to create efficiency. Your account representative should be able to give your staff a detailed plan for operatory storage and materials management. This will help to minimize confusion. Another way to help is to have the scheduler plan a much lighter workload for the first two or three days until the staff gets a better feel for their new surroundings. These are simple steps to follow that will help everyone make a smooth transition.



## Phase 4: Results

*“In my personal experience, the NDI office design and equipment team was extremely knowledgeable, professional, and courteous. They offered valuable insight into many office renovation issues and were an integral part in the whole process. From the beginning blueprints to the delivery and install of the final piece of equipment, Nashville Dental coordinated the project with the precision and rhythm of a symphony, making the whole project as seamless and stress-free as possible. I wouldn’t hesitate to call on them again should I ever need to renovate again.”*

*-Radu Pop, DMD*

*“Nashville Dental surpassed my expectations and made the building phase much easier than I expected. This was accomplished by knowing what questions to ask me during the design phase, thus reducing the meetings and phone calls needed with the general contractor. Their construction consultation and oversight reduced, if not eliminated, the typical slowdowns and change-orders.”*

*-Steve Mays, DDS*

*“I utilize a prime vendor for the majority of my day to day purchases. when it was time to equip a new location, I asked for 3 bids from different vendors. NDI is my day to day vendor and I also choose them to equip my new office. This decision was for a variety of reasons: a good personal relationship with my rep, a history of satisfaction with the company, help with the design, and cost.*

*Now that I am in my second location, I look back and realize I made a very good decision. The build out went very well and NDI addressed all my concerns quickly lowering my anxiety. The equipment has been outstanding. The design could not have been better. Finally, NDI has worked hard to make sure I have been happy with the product.*

*On a side note, NDI helped me structure my purchases to help me maximize my savings over a period of years on taxes. I did not think of this at first, but it sure has been very beneficial. They seem to be in it with me as a partner for the long haul.”*

*-Dr. Kurt Swauger, DMD*



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