



# What to ask when building your new practice

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**H**ave you ever wondered how many new oral and maxillofacial surgery students know life without the internet?

Have you considered how the new generation of graduates was born into a world where Google answered questions in just a few seconds? Have you ever thought about how wide the cultural gap is between even 10 years ago and today? Have you ever speculated about the shifting, rapid growth and expansion of technology, and how it is influencing the future generation of new surgeons?

OMSs begin to reflect on that with all the paralleled cultural and technological changes. The oral and maxillofacial surgery field may be unrecognizable in the coming years. The way OMSs will be working and the way they will provide healthcare for their patients, although it may seem the same, is vastly varying with each passing year. Overall, everything will be changing, even down to the very tools OMSs use and how OMSs use them.

In the same sense, the new generation of surgeons requires a new look at how the physical environment can respond to their needs, their patients and their team to continue to enable them to deliver healthcare.

The typical physical environment design of yesterday does not respond well to the new millennials' way of thinking and their culture. As today's surgeons, OMSs need to establish offices that are providing great flow, that meet this new spectrum of work and utilize new technology made efficient by streamlining operations – all contained in an attractive, stimulating physical environment.

Although change may be difficult, it is necessary for the world to move forward. The concept of "less is more" or the culture of new millennials have been debated in many ways, yet they are hardly ever thought of when it comes to the physical environment design of the oral and maxillofacial surgery office and its impact on delivery of care, patient experience, team productivity and psychological state of mind.

The physical environment in which OMSs work can transform their lives and manipulate their mindset. To positively and successfully do this, OMSs must first think about how they can better integrate these developing changes to enhance performance and delivery of care. However, physical environment design is seemingly a few steps behind. Knowing this, one can wonder how you go about making the same upshift in physical environment to stay congruent with today and the future of oral and maxillofacial surgery technology.

In response, OMSs need to take a more in-depth approach when it comes to understanding what they identify as the three major themes in designing and building new-age offices. Simply put, these three themes are vision, budget and timeline. These three topics are intertwined and never work alone; realizing one without another will not allow you to achieve your end goal successfully.

## Vision

Vision is the one question that needs be answered long before looking for physical space. Realizing your vision can help identify how you will practice in the future. Directionally, you must take your mind right to your future, and what, ideally, that would hold for you.

A few questions that need a concise understanding include details such as: How many days per week will you work? Will you have an associate working with you? Will you sell the practice in the near future, bring a partner on board or keep the practice?

It would be best to establish your desired exit strategy from the beginning and lay out a future that is calculated and aligns with your wants and needs. These realizations can help one decide how many operatories you may need, not only today, but in the future because making decisions should be based not only on what your practice will objectively look like, but additionally how you anticipate yourself working in this practice.

Your vision also holds the keys to what your practice's physical environment can look like. This vision is nested deep inside your mind and can be nurtured and realized with the help of an architect who knows this industry inside-out.

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It is true a nice physical environment enhances the patient experience, but what is “nice?” This question needs an answer with the help of a professional. That professional would be your dedicated architect in this field. He or she is the one who needs to understand you, see the world through your eyes and be able to translate your sporadic wants and dreams into one cohesive reality. It is challenging, but this is something architects are trained for and should be done with great attention to detail by listening to their clients and zeroing in on what exactly that picture, in its entirety, looks like.

Once that is established, the architect can develop details down to material types and color palettes to provide the kind of space envisioned for years to come.

Patient experience is developed from here, regarding not only how the physical environment will feel and look like to your patients but also how the integration of technology and the way you deliver care will impact your practice.

The surgery/procedure room and operating rooms and their equipment such as chairs, delivery systems, cabinetry, carts and all other tools that you require for your work can be decided at the beginning.

Realize vision is the prerequisite to moving forward for all other steps of building your office, such as establishing a realistic budget and timeline to achieve your goal.

Although your vision is something you could contemplate

and dream about, sooner or later you will need a team of professionals to help bring your vision to a cohesive reality. This team should include your architect, coach, financial institution, CPA, real estate broker, lawyer, equipment specialist and general contractor.

### Budget

A realistic budget that falls in line with your vision could be difficult. This is truly where you need the professionals to help. The square footage you have determined is directly associated with your budget, just as your vision.

The physical environment you have envisioned for the space will portray you and establish your level of patient experience. It is multifaceted and includes many details, such as selection of colors, floor and wall coverings, plumbing, electrical fixtures, ceiling heights, wood and glass doors, cabinetry, surgery equipment, tools and, very importantly, the integration of technology associated with the type of practice you will have. This study certainly will assess cost per square foot for your buildout. These discussions also can help you recognize if there is a need to shift or re-evaluate your vision so your architect may modify to a certain degree to adapt to your expenditure.

Budget and vision always go hand in hand; they are a balancing act. Your team can help you realize a realistic



budget in achieving your vision. Your architect can help you find solutions where you can still achieve your vision by subjectively building your office in phases. Construction of your practice can be successfully done in multiple phases, allowing you to still create your dream office with six operatories by building the infrastructure for all six, but only equipping three to four operatories at the beginning, saving cost. As you practice with the revenue made from the three operatory offices, you can continue finishing all the remaining rooms on your time to ensure you can still obtain your dream office.

Another issue to consider is that the cost of construction can vary in different areas, and this can certainly determine the final number of square footage one can build. In some areas, such as a metropolitan area, space availability and lack of square footage could be a defining factor to adjust your vision.

These are all factors that can hinder your timeline in relation to how much sooner or later you can occupy your new surgery center.

## Timeline

A timeline can be established about the same time as you develop your vision.

Finding a new space that can fit your vision could take a long time. Establishing your budget, working with a financial institution, negotiating a lease, selecting equipment as well as physical construction are just a few elements to consider in your timeline.

All these things require a certain period of time, so knowing the approximate occupancy of your office could be a great place to start. Setting a goal for your occupancy date can

provide a guide for your team to move forward with paving the road and creating your office within that timeline.

Although your ideal timeline is incredibly significant, you may need to adjust to a more realistic and achievable timeline, so remembering to communicate these ideals at the beginning is vital to your team. It is important for all involved to have a clear understanding that time is money, and your timeline can become detrimental to your vision. Timing is everything; therefore, you and your team need to be mindful of how long it will take to bring your vision to reality. Every day you are late to occupy the space is a day you will not be performing surgery, and this can negatively affect your budget.

Finding a suitable space for your vision can take months, but once you have secured a space for your practice, a definite timeline can be set to design and build your office. This timeline can be established by your architect working with your entire team. Your architect should be your quarterback and move the team forward to achieve your dream.

Building your vision can be one of the most exciting times of your career. However, not knowing how to go about it could lead to surprises that are likely to distract you from achieving your goals.

Answering these few fundamental questions – vision, budget and timeline – with the help of a professional team will positively affect achieving your goals in a much safer and more predictable manner. In today's world, where predictability is hard to find, these discussions and exercises could help you not risk it all, yet still achieve your dream. It is all a balancing act.

And, yes, the question is: Will you succeed? "You will, indeed! (98 and 3/4 percent guaranteed)," as Dr. Seuss says in his modern classic, *Oh the Places You'll Go!* ■



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