



# ROI in professionalism

By Anne Levitch, B.Ind.Des, FDIA, AIMM

I was at a dinner party recently when the topic of conversation turned to the cost of dentistry. One co-diner was vociferously remonstrating about the quote she had received from her dental practitioner. Maybe you can imagine the line of conversation... needed dental work... visits dentist... treatment offered... price quoted... patient leaves... complains to anyone who will listen!

As my work places me in connection with the dental profession, I get more than my fair share of these conversations. I always defend the dental practitioner, pointing out the costs involved in the practitioner being able to offer the dental treatment. Education (initial and continuing), equipment (to facilitate pain-free treatment), technology (biggest investment of any private healthcare provider), fit-out (highest cost for.. services, utilities, cabinetry, infection control processes and technological requirements) and high staff to practitioner ratio (to facilitate efficient treatment).

As a culture, we love to complain about the cost of our professionals. Lawyers, architects, dentists, accountants... nobody is spared the litany of complaints by many in our community. It is generally based on ignorance of what other professions actually do and a disregard for the knowledge base and years of experience.

As architects and designers, we cop our fair share as well. In fact, if 'designer' was substituted for 'dentist' at the dinner party, the conversation of complaint would have been similar to many I have heard.

From a design point of view, some practitioners tell me proudly how they looked at magazines and put together a combination of other peoples' ideas and did their practice themselves. Results can range from downright damaging, thru to acceptable in terms of the aesthetic environment, however, so many vital planning aspects are generally ignored. The complete checklist of good design principles and the complexities of juggling requisite factors with equal dominance are generally not allowed for. The process is simplified due to a lack of awareness of the critical factors which need to be addressed.

## Return on investment

Those who seek expert professional assistance generally benefit greatly from their investment.

I have learnt a great deal about success from many clients over the years. I've had the pleasure of working with those who understand the value of professionals and have no hesitation in using practice management consultants, financial advisers, business coaches, lease negotiators, designers, architects, marketing consultants and many others en route to realising their vision. I have seen their career satisfaction, their practices grow enormously and continue to flourish.

While professional services of all types are sometimes viewed as expensive, this is only one side of the equation. There are

considerable returns on the investment. We gain optimum dental health from dentists, financial gain from accountants, risk protection from lawyers to optimum functional working environments from designers. The follow on benefits of every one of these filters through into the very fabric of our lives. We can live and work at optimum potential, with financial security, protected from high risk in an environment which supports the best function and creates positive growth of our practices.



Let's face it, none of us happily spend money for no return. Is there benefit in investing in professionalism? Of course, your patients do it every day, we do it every day, across an increasing variety of services. We would be a third world country without our professionals. If there was no return on our investment in professional services, there would be no professionals offering those services.

Beware the culture of complaint. It can make us feel good, but limit our vision as a consequence. A focus on the benefits rather than cost, could just change the way we view the world.

## About the author

Anne Levitch has managed Levitch Design Associates, a health-care design consultancy for over 25 years. During this time, LDA has worked with over 300 practitioners, designing dental and specialist surgeries across Australia and New Zealand. Anne is a Fellow of the Design Institute of Australia. LDA can be contacted on (02) 9880-9300 or visit [www.levitch.com.au](http://www.levitch.com.au)