

Surround yourself with the right team



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By **Peter Arnot** – Director, Project Consultant – Levitch Design Australia

Building or renovating a practice is a team effort, requiring many different people with varied skills to make the project a success. Approach the creation of your projects team in a similar manner to selecting representatives for your practice and remember that time and patience are essential, explains Peter Arnot.

Planning and fitting out new surgery premises will require you to draw on the services of and negotiate with a number of individuals. These may include your accountant, financiers, architects and/or interior designers, builders, real estate agents, buyers' agents, lessors, vendors, marketers and lawyers. Forming good working relationships with these individuals ensures that they all work to the best of their ability and take responsibility for their part in your project.

An essential factor in developing successful working relationships throughout your project is time. Scheduling dedicated meeting time encourages understanding and communication, preventing difficulties in the completion of your project.

Before sourcing new premises, have a clear understanding of what you can afford. Meet with your accountant to organise your financial information, consult with an architect / designer to formulate a rough idea of your space requirements and speak to real estate agents about market prices.

Form a proposal to show your banker/broker before you begin to look at premises.

Although some dentists wish to design and supervise the entire project themselves, most find that a specialist dental design and fit-out company will greatly simplify the process. Experienced dental design and construction specialists will have existing relationships with other key people in the industry and a detailed understanding of the relevant authorities and the processes involved in taking a project from sourcing premises to completion.

They can mediate between you and regulatory bodies and with an in-house construction team can facilitate all day-to-day technical and practical decisions on your behalf. Once they've been given a brief by you, they will closely manage the day to day supervision of the project, allowing you to exercise your critical process, but drawing on their expertise in practical issues.

If you're negotiating a lease or purchase, the contract should be subject to the approval of your project by statutory authorities, to prevent you entering into a contract for untenable premises. It's always helpful to negotiate such conditions as rent-free periods, contribution to the cost of your fit-out and/or waiver of any 'make good' clauses. If you are purchasing property for your surgery, you may be able to negotiate a reduced deposit, delayed settlement and vendor's terms.

You will need to gain approval from statutory bodies to use the property as healthcare premises. You are more likely to receive accurate information if you have experienced industry professionals speak to the relevant members of the authorities on your behalf.

Detailed and specific construction documentation prepared by a design professional is more likely to result in accurate quotes and quality work. A design and construction company will project manage the entire process for you from start to finish.

Although it is possible to act as an "owner builder" yourself, it is time consuming and demanding. A builder is likely to get better prices as they deal with the sub-contractors regularly and have the necessary technical knowledge to supervise.

It is beneficial to establish a good working relationship with your dental installer early in your project. By actively involving the installer in the set-out of services, you can facilitate easy installation and access for maintenance of your equipment.

Making the effort to build effective working relationships will ease the process of setting up a new surgery and get the best results.

The ideal way to bring a dental practice to life is by finding the right design and construction company that will work together every step of the way with you and all other parties in your team. The design and construction model will save you time and deliver optimum results for your new healthcare practice. ♦

Levitch Design Australia is a multi-disciplinary healthcare design and construction specialist. Established for over 30 years and credited with designing some of Australia's most successful practices, Levitch Design Australia combines both the art and science of healthcare practice design.

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