

The Value of Good Design

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Good Design Defined

Opinions differ on what constitutes good design. Is good design timeless, of a particular style, or functional? Whatever your definition, good design is unquestionably purposeful, useful and a powerful business tool. Just ask Starbucks, Target, McDonalds, Coke and Apple, just to name a few.

The definition of good design will differ between industries, businesses, and individuals. Good design for a McDonalds, for example, will not use the same defining criteria as that of an Apple Store, though their ultimate business goals may be similar. What are the defining elements of good design in an orthodontic office or building? As an architect focusing on the designs of orthodontic offices, over the past 25 years, I have come to identify ten criteria that I believe, universally define good design in orthodontic offices; listed in no particular order:

- It is useful, functional, and efficient.
- It addresses the needs of the users.
- It is easy and cost effective to maintain.
- It is constructed with high quality, durable materials.
- Its cost meets or exceeds the owner expectations.
- Its aesthetic quality meets or exceeds owner expectations.
- It meets current user needs and anticipates future needs.
- It is environmentally sensitive.
- It is contextually sensitive.
- It inspires, it defines, it brands, and it emotionally connects to users.

Again, your definition(s) may be different.

Whatever they may be, they need to be communicated to your design professionals in order for them to meet your expectations.

Good Design is Strategic.

Good design is not simply about aesthetics, it is about communication. A good design will be thoughtful and can translate your business goals into a clear and compelling message to your patients (and future patients). Good design does not stop at an office or building design. It is all a part of a planned, cohesive, strategic business message that is also told through a website, stationary, a logo, brochures, and more.

Patients will judge the quality of care they expect to receive from the physical surroundings of your office. What message do you want to convey about your services? What do you want your practice to say about you (without having to use words)?

Is Good Design Measurable?

A 2007 study completed by the Design Council (www.designfactfinder.co.uk) shows there is a strong link between good design and business performance. 4 out of 5 businesses surveyed believe that design's importance to competitiveness has risen in the past 10 years. It showed that in businesses where design is stressed, less than half compete mainly on price. Conversely, two thirds of those businesses surveyed who don't use design as integral business tools compete mainly on price.

One study, "How Design Increases Productivity: Expert Insights," published by the American Society of Interior Designers, suggests that a well-designed workplace can increase employee productivity by up to 20

percent. Other studies confirm the relationship between productivity and design factors such as access, comfort, privacy, and flexibility.

Experience is Key

Experienced designers play a vital role in turning office interiors into value-enhancing support systems for businesses. To exploit these opportunities, they must go beyond conventional thinking about function in the programming phase of design projects. They must also consider qualitative issues linking specific features of the physical environment with employee performance.

In addition to the aesthetic values in good design, not enough stress can be placed on well-planned, efficient offices. Efficiency is an absolute must in a successful orthodontic office. A skilled designer knows the right questions to ask which can translate into an efficiently planned office can increase productivity and revenues.

The value of good design in orthodontic offices is abundant. Seek professionals who support your business strategy, understand your needs and who can help increase the bottom line of your business. The fees paid to professionals who purposefully and appropriately design your orthodontic practice will pale in comparison to the ultimate business value.

“Design helps to shape experience, and the quality of experience that people have of any company is the most influencing factor in shaping their attitude toward it. It affects loyalty, repeat purchase and the way people talk about the company to colleagues and friends.”

~ Sir John Egan, CEO, BAA