

Practice Impossible (Part 5): Office Appearance Matters

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Recently, we became interested in the television program Restaurant Impossible. The Food Network show is hosted by Robert Irvine, a noted chef and restaurateur. The premise of the show is to help failing restaurants by giving them a complete makeover. The makeover is carried out by the chef, a builder and an interior designer. The catch is the makeover has to be completed in forty eight hours on a budget of only ten thousand dollars.

If you follow the program for a short time, you will quickly see that the chef focuses on five factors of the restaurant business, regardless of the size and type of restaurant. The five factors are; leadership, the staff, the menu, the décor and marketing. You will also realize that the methods he uses are not applicable only to the restaurant business, but to any business.

This is why we like the show. The chef uses many of the same business principles we have used in running successful practices and consulting for other chiropractors. This series of articles works through these business principles from our chiropractic prospective. In this article, we focus on the office décor.

The restaurants in the television show frequently have not been redecorated in years. Even worse, they have not had a good cleaning for years. It is surprising how someone could run a restaurant and not be concerned about cleanliness. It is more surprising that the health departments let them get away with it.

Where to Begin

The chef always has the kitchen staff cleaning like mad because he won't stand for a dirty kitchen. As for the decorating, he brings his builder and an interior designer along for a quick low-budget make-over. This is one of the most amazing portions of the show. The restaurants always end up looking great. It is surprising what they can re-purpose and reuse. It is also surprising how creative and tasteful the team can be with such a thrifty budget.

This brings us to your office. When was the last time it was redecorated? How about spruced up as they say, or cleaned thoroughly? Hopefully it was recently, especially the cleaning.

A clean office is just as important in the healthcare business as it is in the restaurant business. Clean equates with healthy for most people. Even if you cannot afford to remodel or redecorate you can clean. When was the last time you cleaned the office? We don't mean just vacuuming, a little dusting and taking the trash out. We are talking about moving the furniture, cleaning the carpets, washing the windows, dusting the plants, wiping down the baseboards and scrubbing the restrooms. When was the last time you cleaned the portion of your tables where the patients lay their heads?

Offices often go months, even years without this type of cleaning. This should not happen. The doctor and staff must keep a clean office. If the doctor is using a cleaning service, then the

employees of the cleaning service must be held accountable for their work. The doctor and staff of a practice with a cleaning service are often so happy that someone else is doing the cleaning that they are willing to overlook a poor job by the cleaning crew. Don't let this happen.

Plan a thorough cleaning of your office after you read this article. Set a date, decide who will be doing the cleaning (make sure there are people who can move the furniture) and make a list of what will be cleaned. Hopefully, you will clean everything that can be cleaned.

Remove the Clutter

While you are moving the furniture and cleaning, get rid of a few things. Things tend to accumulate in the office. A dirty office is bad. A dirty cluttered office is worse. There is always something you no longer use, need or want. Two good indicators of what these items are is the amount of other things piled on top of them or the amount of dust covering them. If you can barely see it under the mess, you are not using it. If you can write your name in the dust on it, you aren't using it.

Sell these items if you can. The next best thing is to give them away. Throwing them away sounds wasteful, but the liberating feeling will make up for it. In some cases, for example with healthcare records that accumulate, you cannot get rid of them. Get archive records for inactive patients and place them in a climate controlled storage center. Many of these centers are reasonably priced. The records are protected and they are out of the office.

Redecorate or Remodel?

Redecorating is the step above a thorough cleaning. It differs from remodeling as it is less involved and cheaper. Remodeling usually means moving walls, changing counter tops, replacing paneling with drywall, moving plumbing, etc. If finances allow, this can have a big impact on your practice.

There are several reasonably priced things you can do to remodel the office. Reasonably priced means they can be accomplished relatively cheap without placing a financial strain on the practice, especially if the practice is in a rut or down at the present time. You don't want to place financial or logistical problems on the practice and have the results backfire, so do the less expensive projects first. These projects include but are not limited to:

- Painting.
- Replacing the carpet.
- Hanging new pictures
- Re-framing old pictures, certificates and diplomas.
- Recovering the tables.
- Replacing the waiting room furniture.
- Updating signage.
- Modernizing the office equipment.
- Replacing the plants (use real plants).
- Redecorating bulletin boards.
- Rearranging the office.
- Replacing the old magazines/literature in the reception room.
- Updating the photos of the doctor's/staff's family.
- Stop taping notes/signs to the walls (including Post-It Notes™).
- Clean everything well when you finish.

If you need help in redecorating then consult an interior decorator. The results in your office, just as in the show, can be amazing for a nominal price. If you can swing a needed remodeling, a decorator and builder will be needed. You could use one of these to find the other. Selecting people

who have worked together successfully in the past can insure success in your project.

In addition to finding the right people/companies for the job, there are other challenges with remodeling. Most importantly, is assessing the patient flow and overall functionality of the new look. It is also important to get the work done with as little disruption of the practice as possible and on time. The key here goes back to the people/companies you hire for the job and, if possible, having penalties for poor work and slow progress.

A final option here is moving to a new location. Has the environment changed around your office? Has your area become depressed? Are you now in the slums? It may be time to move.

Whether it is cleaning, redecorating, remodeling or moving, improving and maintaining the appearance of your office is vital. Your office décor is a reflection of you and your success.