

Refurbishment in a roller coaster year

A look at how recent ups and downs have helped shape the development of one business.



Judith Kinnear is the principal of the Quadrant Dental Practice in Epsom, Surrey. She purchased the business in July 2019 having worked there as an associate since 1997 and, as she explains, it has been a roller coaster of an experience. She and her husband, David, not only increased the size of the team, but also refurbished the practice to accommodate the improved and expanded services – and this was during lockdown. Judith explains, “It has been quite a year of learning, ups, downs and hard work, refurbishing the practice as well as upgrading our IT and practice management systems. We now work with two associates, both of whom work four/four-and-a-half days a week; and two part-time hygienists, who share a surgery. We have introduced a trusted specialist periodontist with whom I have worked for years on referral. And I am very excited to be working with a new oral surgeon from November who will be placing implants at the practice for the first time in its history. We will also be offering sedation for our more anxious



patients so that we can help them to receive the dentistry they deserve. I have a team of four dental nurses and two reception staff; and our first full-time practice manager starts in November.”

The refurbishment project was completed in the early summer during lockdown, and took just three weeks from beginning to end.

Judith explains, “The pandemic was the making of the project in some respects. Gareth from Dentalbuild and Laurence from SPS Dental had set up the quotes for work earlier on in the year, but I had not signed on the dotted line. Then lockdown hit... I was able to get the finance arranged after giving Chris at SPS Dental a call on the off-chance that we could use this time. There must have been a greater being in charge, as the Belmont chairs, which generally have a three-month lead time, were sitting in their warehouse

unallocated. So we were good to go, and with no compromises involved.”

According to the practice’s website, the team aims to provide a “quality-driven service with an empathetic approach” and “high-quality dentistry within a relaxed and friendly environment”. For Judith, the setting had to reflect this ethos.

She says, “We have all been to a restaurant that in retrospect one might not have gone to, and certainly won’t revisit – not because of the food, but because of the ambience. The practice has a history of providing a happy, friendly atmosphere, and that speaks as much about the staff and their attitude to serving our community as it does about the environment we work in.”

Her aim was to create a sense of space and calm. She says, “I wanted a good working environment for the clinical staff at the same time as a relaxed environment for my patients; ➔



“After all, it is their room as much as it is ours. I wanted a blue and white theme. It is a classic combination, but I was inspired by the sea, and the work of the artist Dawn Reader. Every time I see her art, I feel calmer and I have been thrilled to be able to incorporate some of her work throughout the practice.”

There were the usual issues involved in all builds, including a wall that had to be rebuilt.

She explains, “We were able to have a conversation about water heaters just prior to starting the build, and Gareth and his team came up with a fabulous option to remove a hot water cylinder and exchange it for a central electric water heater, so we now have instant hot and cold water in each surgery without losing a cupboard to accommodate a heater in each.”

The team working on the project were exceptional, she says. “Life is about people. Every member of the team from SPS and Dentalbuild was a pleasure to work with from the start. It was the prime reason I chose to work with both companies. Both Laurence and Gareth struck me as highly professional and experienced from our very first meeting: they have always had my best interests at heart. It was fantastic to be there every day watching the transformation happen.”

Designing the surgeries were a combination of SPS Dental’s experience and Judith’s own wish list. She says, “Laurence was particularly

helpful in designing the surgery. There were a lot of design options discussed and presented to me, right up to the last moment. At no point was I put under pressure. Eugene from Belmont took time out on a Sunday morning for us to visit the showroom to look at chairs and decide on the finishes I wanted.”

Opting for a Voyager III and a Cleo II, Judith explains, “I know and trust the Belmont brand. We have two Cleos in the practice already and I know their reliability. I have worked with a Cleo for four years, and patients liked the armchair feel to the design. It also allowed me to start treating patients with disabilities and/or in wheelchairs who had perhaps sourced their treatment elsewhere due to the difficulty in accessing the rooms and chairs. I like to be able to sit opposite the patient to talk to them. In no other professional environment would one of the participants be sitting with their legs out in front of them for a consult. The Cleo allows that conversation to happen more naturally. However, I also wanted an ambidextrous option in the hygienists’ surgery, hence the Voyager. A much simpler chair, but with the addition of an NSK electric motor and a Belmont Touch X-ray machine, it could also be used as an associate surgery. Indeed it has been used as such post-lockdown, as we rotate surgeries far more amongst the clinicians.”

Patient feedback is important to Judith, especially as she only became the practice principal a little over a

year ago. She says, “They see that, as a new principal, I have spent a lot of time and energy in improving their experience within the practice. I have incorporated TV screens on the walls to allow me to communicate treatment options through intraoral photography and radiography. Along with the simultaneous investment in an iTero scanner, it is a game changer in patient communication and treatment options. They also love the feature wall, which matches the colour of my chair. It will take time, but I have a real vision for what we can do elsewhere in the building.”

Indeed, with four surgeries and an imaging room complete, she is now adding a decontamination room to the practice. She explains, “I am really excited to be starting on the next project with SPS and Dentalbuild, as we reconfigure the toilet facilities to incorporate a decontamination room so we can work to best practice. If I do something and commit to it, I don’t do halfway houses.”

So, apart from allowing for all this refurbishment, how else has Covid-19 impacted the practice? Judith remains positive. “Social distancing and fallow time inevitably means we see fewer patients in a day, but I’ve been humbled by the loyalty of our patients as a whole, who have stuck with us through these times. We have had so many messages of goodwill and congratulations. If I hadn’t realised what an amazing patient list we had before Covid-19, I certainly do now.”

Top tips when considering a refurb

1. Never be afraid to ask seemingly stupid questions!
2. Don’t assume your ideas won’t work – they might never have been considered before.
3. However, do listen to the technicians. They have experience and have seen more dental surgeries than you ever will!
4. Trust your instincts in who you choose to work with.
5. Think about the investment in your practice – it will come back to you in spades.
6. Consider your working environment and how you will use it.
7. Take your time – and take advice.