

How to... ensure your designs are implemented



Gary Bettis explains the steps needed to make sure your builder delivers a dental practice that is both beautiful and functional

After taking all the steps to make sure your building is designed the way you want, you need to ensure that it is built as designed, conforms to building codes, and remains on budget.

There are three basic steps to follow:

1. Provide your builder with detailed design documentation
2. Enter into an appropriate contract with your builder
3. Engage your designer to site supervise.

1. Provide your builder with design documentation

Your designer will have prepared a set of plans and schedules to pass onto your builder. These plans must be highly detailed and include every conceivable element of the design from the position and quantity of electrical sockets to how many layers of lacquer are required on your new reception desk.

These drawings have already enabled your builder to provide you with an accurate cost for the work. They must now provide clear and concise instructions to enable them to build your practice.

If the design information is incomplete, inaccurate or unworkable untold problems will result. It will put pressure on the relationship you have with your builder, delay the project and increase your overall project cost.

Do not take on a builder who is prepared to work without this information. If you do you will be giving them the opportunity to claim 'extras' for items not previously included within their quote.

Some companies will offer to 'design and build' your project. They will take a standard approach and provide basic drawings with a minimum level of specification. They may suggest that this saves you time and money but it actually

benefits them. Firstly, the project is easier for them to build and secondly they will install bulk purchased low grade products to maximise their profit. With the builder in control of your project, you will be left in a vulnerable position. Make sure you know exactly what information you are going to be given before you engage their services and when you do receive drawings read them thoroughly so that you know how your practice is going to be built and how it will eventually look.

2. Entering into a contract with your builder

Due to the volume of information and the complexities involved in most dental practice construction projects, it is always advisable to enter into a contract. A building contract is an agreement between two parties in connection with the execution of building works in return for remuneration. All contracts should be in written form whether you are using a standard pre-written contract or one specifically drawn up by the builder, a solicitor or yourself. Verbal contracts are not recommended, as these are difficult to prove in a court of law and are easily misinterpreted.

The purpose of a contract is to protect the parties involved (you and your builder) by stating obligations to one another and in so doing it sets up a legal relationship. It also creates a framework to deal with issues or disputes.

The design drawings and schedules form part of the contract documents. They define exactly what is expected of your builder and represent what you're paying for.

In its most basic form, a contract should include the following details:

1. The date the agreement was made
2. Start and completion dates
3. Description of proposed building works and site address
4. Detailed drawings including technical specifications, other consultants' drawings, ie structural engineers' details, finishes schedules and any other relevant information a builder may require. Collectively known as the 'contract documents'
5. The contractor's obligations to carry out and complete the works in accordance with the contract documents



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6. The contract sum. This is the agreed amount that the employer will pay the contractor to carry out and complete the works
7. Retention sum (monies withheld until works are satisfactorily complete) and penalty clauses.

3. Site supervision

How can you make sure that your builder does not cut corners, install inferior products or misinterpret the design drawings? By far the best way is to ask your designer to oversee the works or 'site supervise'.

During site visits your designer will instantly pick up if the builder has not used the specified materials, fittings and finishes and report back to you. They will select a fair and unbiased contract appropriate to your project and make sure that both you and your builder are protected. They will administer your contract (as a 'contract administrator') to ensure the works are completed economically and efficiently.

A contract administrator will:

- Deal with all contractor/builder queries
- Check that all the items that the builder is claiming payment for have been satisfactorily completed. (The builder is unable to approach the dentist for payment.)
- Deal with all disputes under the terms of the contract
- Advise on fines and on any breaches of contract
- Deal with all contractor/builder queries
- Deal with back-charge claims, insurance claims for site loss or damages

- Issue certificates, review time or cost fluctuations, chair formal site meetings and publish the minutes to all relevant parties.

Final words

Success of your project is not only about choosing the right designer and getting accurate and detailed plans drawn up. It is also about making sure that your chosen builder has the skill to interpret the information, ability to carry out the work and commitment to your project. In the current economic climate we often hear of builders downing tools to take on a more profitable job elsewhere, or folding. By entering into a contract you will safeguard your project. The builder will be legally bound and obliged to carry out works in accordance with the drawings, which form part of the contract. If they fail to deliver, or change the design, you will have recourse to fine them and put things right.

Your designer is the most suitable person to administer the contract, since they have firsthand knowledge of your project and know instantly if the contractor has deviated from the drawings. They will ensure that your project is legally compliant, delivered on time and within budget. This will allow you to focus on running your business and delivering the best patient care. [PD](#)



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