

How I did it

Tariq Idrees reveals his highs and lows of owning his own practice, as well as the importance of first impressions

I qualified from Manchester Dental School in 2001 and went on to do vocational training in a NHS practice in Glossop, Derbyshire. I enjoyed every minute of it and strived for further development and knowledge. I went on and did a restorative house job in Leeds and successfully achieved my MFDS in 2003. During my time at Leeds I was exposed to complex and challenging cases, I decided there and then that I did not want to do treadmill dentistry. However, at this stage I was unsure what step to take next in my career – practice or hospital.

I applied to work part-time in an existing new practice in the Harvey Nichols store in Manchester. The practice was aiming to provide first-class dentistry with a patient journey to match. I was exposed to a different type of clinical environment and worked with specialists in every field to achieve the best possible results for patients, with relatively few financial constraints.

I also worked for Boots Dental in their regional centre of excellence in Manchester for two years. During this period I successfully applied to train to become a specialist in prosthodontics in Manchester, however after much thought I turned it down as I was learning so much and enjoying my dentistry.

Itchy feet

Despite this, I soon developed itchy feet and wanted to own a dental practice. It took me several years to find the right practice. I decided to buy a five surgery private practice in Whitefield, Manchester that accepted referrals for endodontics. The practice had a good turnover but more importantly, had potential to grow.

The practice is located just off J17 of the M60, has good road and public transport links and is housed in a large semi-detached Victorian building with parking. The local population is mixed, as are many areas, but there are pockets of high wealth locally. The practice itself was tired and needed modernising; the old owner felt as the practice was doing well he did not want to take on a renovation project.

Before I brought the practice I decided what I wanted it to look like and where I wanted it to be in the future. The practice had good loyal staff but many of the systems were outdated and the practice was not customer focused. I wanted to incorporate ▶



PRACTICE FACT FILE

Practice fact file

Carisbrook Dental Care and Implant Centre
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Manchester
M45 6BF
T: 0161 766 4906
E: info@carisbrookdental.co.uk
W: www.gentle-dentists.co.uk
Practice plans drawn up: August 2008
Work began: October 2008
Work finished and completed: January 2010
Projected initial cost: £200k
Total project cost: £250k

CARISBROOK
DENTAL CARE & IMPLANT CENTRE
DENTAL



This page Carisbrook Dental branding is apparent throughout the practice; the green and grey logo colours being carried throughout the interior finishes.



Left: Clever use of space keeps the reception desk hidden from the waiting room. The green and grey logo colours are carried throughout the interior finishes

what I had learnt in Harvey Nichols into my practice, I wanted the patient journey to be paramount and my patients to feel special. I also wanted to expand the referral base and the services we offered. The practice did very little cosmetic work, in either dentistry or complementary services such as Botox, so these areas were immediately identified as areas of growth.

I wanted the practice to be modern and clean but also inviting to patients, I learned from my Harvey Nichols experience that if a practice looks too modern it could alienate clients. They can sometimes think this practice is too modern, and therefore expensive, for them. One of the main problems the practice had was when patients entered through the front door they were met with a blank wall and then had to make a U-turn into reception. Immediately the first impression was inadequate, you only get one chance, so we were failing straight away. I wanted my patients to be met by friendly, trained reception staff as soon as they entered.

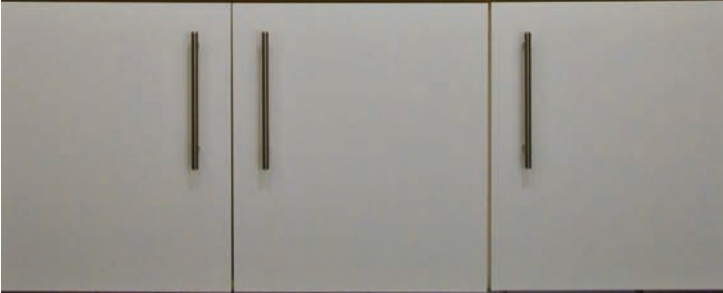
A matter of money

As I had taken a large loan out for the practice I did not want to borrow any more money for renovation work. My accountant advised that any new equipment should be financed via lease purchase due to the tax saving available with these schemes. I saved for 18 months and did not take any money out of the business. I was fortunate because I still had my associated job to live off.

Through recommendation, I instructed Makin Architecture to draw any necessary plans and interior design. I already had a logo and colour schemes, which they worked with. Makin understood from day one what I wanted, the only problem I had was visualising the end results.

I decided on a builder I had used for some earlier work, this was my first mistake – I should have tendered the work out. The second mistake I made was I should have used Makin for project managing but I listened to the builder who told me it was a waste of money – what a big mistake!

The project started in October 2008 and should have taken six months. It involved some major work such as removing structural walls and generally changing the layout of the building. It soon became apparent that the builder had taken on too much as he was cutting corners and doing a poor job. He had under quoted for much of the work and was trying to ▶

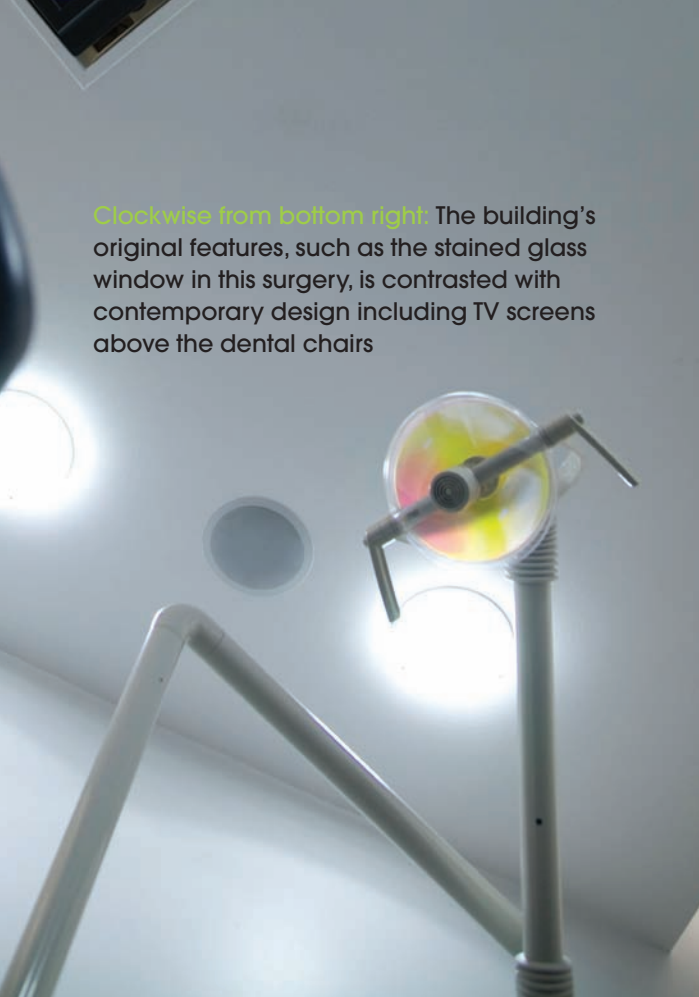


Top, left, middle, right: Use of lighting (both natural and not) and the design has been emphasised with the use of graphics digitally printed onto wallpaper,
Bottom left: The mix between clinical areas and interior design
Bottom right: The consultation room



photography: Lloyd Goodall

Clockwise from bottom right: The building's original features, such as the stained glass window in this surgery, is contrasted with contemporary design including TV screens above the dental chairs



save money by doing a lot of the work himself, whereas when he had done work for me in the past he had used specialist tradesmen.

I made the mistake of letting him start on the next phase of the project so he could gain a payment when the previous stage was not finished. By April 2009 I decided to cut my losses and asked Makin Architecture to find me a builder. They tendered the work out and we selected Jade Shopfitters. Straight away I noticed a difference, Jade was professional and the quality of work was impressive. Essentially, Jade had to redo quite a lot of work the previous builder had done. As the practice continued to open during the building work, Jade was accommodating and all its workman were professional. Jade finished the work in six months and generally on budget.

I decided to use Henry Schein for equipment purchases as the company is experienced and sell all the equipment that I needed. They offered to design the surgeries but I wanted something different, as I feel that all the surgeries they design look the same.

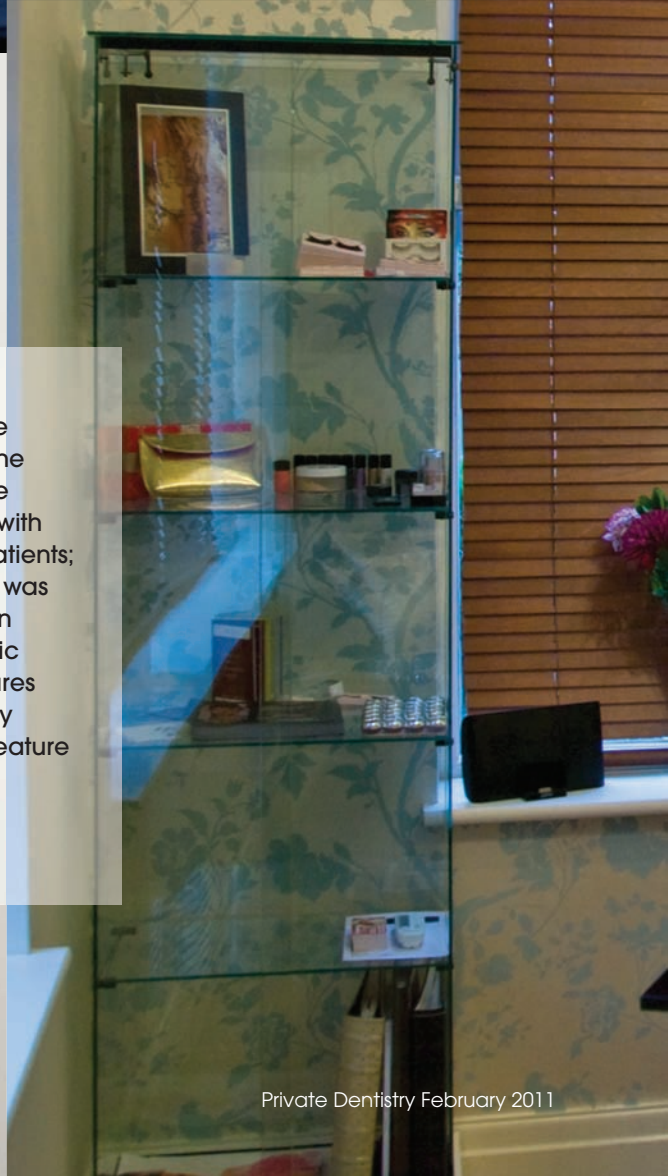
The third mistake I made with this project was agreeing with the leasing company to pay for any equipment at installation rather than waiting for a few weeks to ensure there were no post installation problems. My advice would be to make sure you do some research into a company's

post-sales service, as I experienced negative service. From my experience doing this refurbishment I have learnt the following:

1. Do not project manage yourself as you are not qualified to assess the building work
2. Do select a good architect and interior design company, better if they are one company, and let them manage the project
3. Use an experienced building company who are professional. They may cost more but in the long term they are worth it. You can normally tell if they are professional from the first meeting to the quotation stage
4. Do not always buy furniture from where the interior designer recommends – find alternative suppliers or alternative furniture
5. Always hold some money back – 5% is a good number
6. With equipment suppliers, do not accept the first price. Get multiple prices from different companies then start to negotiate
7. Always have a money reserve, as costs can escalate.

Looking back

Now the project is complete, the one thing I would change would be the sterilisation rooms. As the practice is over two



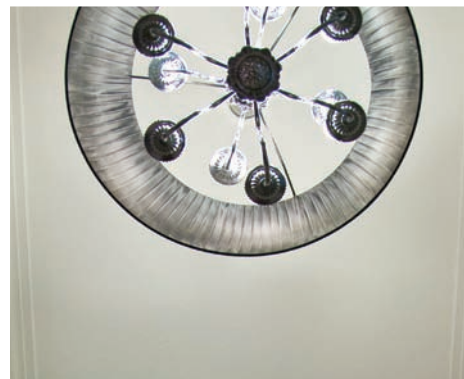
Clockwise from bottom left: The green and grey colours from the Carisbrook Dental logo can be found in the bathroom, along with complimentary perfume for patients; contemporary intimate space was created for private consultation for patients looking for cosmetic treatment, interior design features include glass chandelier, luxury furnishings and wallpapered feature wall

levels, we planned for two rooms. However, HTM 01/05 was not around when we started the project and I have found my rooms do not meet its recommendations, so at some stage I will need to change them. The current rooms are not large and do not have enough sinks, but hindsight is a wonderful thing.

It has been a roller coaster of a journey over the last three years, have I achieved my goals and expectations? I would have to say yes – the practice is now stunning and I am glad I listened to Rosie, the interior designer, as she had to push me from being too conservative to using bold colours and designs.

The business has grown, turnover is up and new and existing patients always say the practice is stunning. The old adage is definitely true, I have stunning dental chairs and equipment but most patients are only impressed by the TVs in the ceilings and the complimentary perfumes in the toilets. I have patients referred to me by existing patients not due to my dentistry but the fact I have TVs in the ceilings!

The practice now accepts referrals for endodontics, orthodontics, dental implants and oral surgery, sedation and cosmetic dentistry. The team has grown over the last three years to include different specialists, therapists and patient co-ordinators. We have benefited from the decline of other referral practices in the area to develop this side of the business and I am immensely proud to say we have over 80 dentists trusting us with their patients. We make sure all referred patients are looked after well and hopefully go back to their dentists with glowing reports. [PD](#)



COMPANIES INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT

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Jade Shopfitters

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