

10 Steps to Finding, Evaluating and Negotiating for a Dental Office Location

By

George Vaill

Thankfully, finding a dental office location and negotiating for it is something you'll rarely have to do. I say "thankfully", because the process is one with which you probably have little familiarity and it can be fraught with difficulties and rude surprises. At the very least, it's very time consuming and generally takes you through lots of unfamiliar territory. So, when you're faced with these challenges, having a well-thought out plan and following it deliberately will result in a substantial savings in time and money and a significant reduction in the hassles and stress normally associated with the process.

A Ten Step Process

A good location search and negotiation plan is one that combines (i) thoughtful establishment of the location, site, space and lease terms criteria; with, (ii) coordinated search, evaluation and negotiation procedures and techniques. None of these elements, however, should be developed without input from various professionals who have experience in the required disciplines. Your plan can be summarized in the following 10 sequential steps.

Planning Stage

STEP 1: Select professional team members. Among others, these should include equipment, finance, practice management, design, real estate, construction, legal and accounting experts. With early input from these professionals, you are better prepared to proceed through the remaining steps. Find out at the very start when they think the best time is to bring them in.

Let professionals be your guide.

STEP 2: Establish goals. Develop your lifestyle plan and your corresponding workstyle plan. Establish short and long term goals for your practice in general and, specifically, for the location search, evaluation and negotiation process.

Meld your personal and professional goals.

STEP 3: Define your criteria. Where do you want to locate - geographically? What type of setting - strip mall? high rise? professional building? free standing? How large a space? Do you require any special amenities? How much parking will you require?

This is your future. Think through it carefully.

STEP 4: Conduct the search. Employ brokers, drive the area, scan the newspapers, check on-line space listings, and ask family, friends and your equipment/sales reps to keep an eye out.

Focus on and be truly faithful to your criteria.

STEP 5: Evaluate the opportunity. Is it where you want to be? Is it the right size? Is it in the type of setting that will best project the public image you desire? Does it have sufficient parking and signage? Is it available in your time frame?

Leave your rose-colored glasses at home.

STEP 6: Inspect the space. Do the dimensions work? Is the space handicap accessible? Are the utilities of sufficient capacity? Can you run the plumbing as needed?

Check every detail carefully.

STEP 7: Gather the lease information. How long a lease term is the landlord seeking? Are there renewal options? What is the starting rent? When does it increase? What's included and what's not? What's the delivery condition? How much will the landlord contribute toward your leasehold improvements?

Get it all in writing.

STEP 8: Negotiate the lease: Your professional lease negotiator will negotiate the economic terms before the landlord drafts a lease document. Once the economic terms are agreed upon and inserted in the landlord's form lease, your lease attorney will negotiate the dozens of legal concepts that define the landlord/tenant relationship.

The key is to employ an expert negotiator.

STEP 9: Design the layout: Secure the services of a professional dental office designer. Only someone with this specific experience will know all of the ins and outs of dental office design. That knowledge will make a whole world of difference between a facility that serves you well over the course of your occupancy and one that is a constant source of aggravation for you and your staff.

Design in the present. Plan for the future.

STEP 10: Construct your facility: Secure the services of a professional dental office contractor. Only someone with this specific experience will know all of the ins and outs of dental office construction. That knowledge will make a whole world of difference between a facility that serves you well over the course of your occupancy and one that is a constant source of aggravation for you and your staff.

Build it right the first time.

The foregoing is not meant to address every single phase of the process. However, it does provide a basic outline for you to follow. As your office lease is one of the largest and most important contracts you will ever sign in your life, it's critical that you employ every measure at your disposal to reduce the possibility of making choices that do not serve your long-term goals. Plan thoroughly, leave your rose-colored glasses at home when evaluating a location opportunity and, most importantly, recognize your limitations.

© George Vaill 2001 - 34 Edward Drive, Winchester, MA 01890 * george@georgevaill.com * 800-340-2701

George D. Vaill is president of George Vaill Dental Office Lease Negotiations. He specializes in negotiating the economic elements of office leases for dentists throughout the United States. Additionally, George reviews, and in many cases renegotiates, leases as part of dental practice transitions. George can be reached at 800-340-2701 and can be found at <http://www.georgevaill.com>.

GEORGEVAILL
DENTAL OFFICE LEASE NEGOTIATIONS