

In the first article I discussed the fact that many hospitals could seriously use a facelift or even a bigger renovation. Time, money and aggravation all play a role in these things not getting done enough. I will now attempt to give you cost effective (inexpensive) ideas on how to improve your facility.

Lets start at the beginning, simple yet effective. Take a look at the outside of your building and your parking area (if you have one). Is it clean, parking lines easily distinguishable, grass not overgrown. All simple things and yet easy to overlook. Even easier to fix inexpensively and quickly. However, this area should be maintained daily. As an owner I would always walk in through the fronts of my hospitals so that I could see the facilities as my clients did.

Next would be your sign advertising your business. Does it still reflect your business and is it up to date with the times? Sometimes, with practices that have been around for a few decades, a sign change could be a very good thing. Is the sign lit? Should it be? Are the lights clean and working? Again, all simple yet important things to watch regularly.

Lets move to your entranceway. Again, clean is important. Live plants help too, nothing more depressing than dead plants near or in the waiting area. Lets start with the front door. Does it work properly, is it clean? Does it do its job of keeping outside air out and inside air in? If not, it doesn't take much to replace it, but often it only needs some adjustments to the closer or the sweep to get it working properly. In the past most facilities had each of the different credit card large logos posted on their front doors telling you they would take your hard earned money. With pets becoming family members, there has been a shift away from this. It might be a very good idea to get those stickers off. Make sure the glass in the door is cleaned daily. It is still a good idea to have a statement discussing payment being required near checkout and possibly a small credit card plaque also (many facilities are now doing check out in their exam rooms - computerization has made it simple to do)

Ok, time to move into the waiting and reception area. So, what will it actually take to make the reception area look better and function more efficiently. First, how much pet food is cluttering up the space? Typically, getting rid of 50% of the pet food will help tremendously. Sell it off and don't replace it. In this day and age, deliveries are often weekly and with a good inventory system, you should be able to cut your inventory in half easily (more money in your pocket). What about paper clutter? I am sure you have thought about going paperless?? You've talked about it but never followed through. Almost every computer management system can go paperless. Get someone in to help you make the change, sure it will be a bit of an inconvenience for a week or two but long term, think how much extra space you will have without all the paper clutter. These are two situations I see in most practices I visit and they are easy to correct and also very inexpensive to do so.

So far we have given you a bunch of very simple, inexpensive ideas on how to improve most practices. What about if you wish to spend some real money too?

Easiest, and best bang for your buck is a paint job. Nice happy color, bright, easy to clean and wow, major difference and not that much money. With the trauma that pets inflict on our walls, should you consider a wrap around protective material like FRP -fiberglass reinforced polymer (products you would see in very high traffic areas restrooms of Cosco, Target, and Walmart)

It also might be time to consider new seating, could be as simple as changing the arrangement of the seating or bringing in new chairs or benches(if you need additional storage), Lots of wonderful choices out there and not expensive either (Cosco, Ikea, and catalogues)

The last thing to look at for this area is the lighting. How old are your fixtures? Do you use the right type of bulb? Have you thought about LED's? Does the area get a good amount of sunlight (not too much either). Don't be afraid to look into skylights or Solutubes (great sources of natural sunlight)

Ok, you now have the ability to quickly do a simply inexpensive renovation of your "front end". Go make a difference. Often making your facility more attractive to your clients and user friendly, creates an increase in revenue.

And don't forget to get more serious about real renovating to make the facility not only more attractive to clients but also to make it a better place to work and enjoy where you spend so much of your life.