

Remodeling a dental laboratory can either be a small project involving simple design changes or a massive undertaking that demands professional assistance. Many manufacturers of cabinetry and workbenches for dental labs also offer design services that range from simple layout drawings to sophisticated 3D computerized renderings and materials lists. The manufacturer/lab teams featured on the next several pages faced design dilemmas and worked together to achieve workable—and in many cases, exceptional—results that pleased both eye (esthetics) and body (ergonomics).

Design solutions

By Richard Palmer

Evolving from craftwork into volume production

Arlink helps Issaquah Dental Lab redesign their redesign

When Issaquah Dental Lab decided to remodel its Washington state facility for the second time in five years, lab owner Larry Searles had no doubt about who to call for assistance. “We’re big believers in Arlink,” he said, referring to the furniture maker that also provided design assistance and cabinetry when Issaquah moved into its present building in 1999. Extending outside the lab, Searles said he even has an Arlink bench in his home for his hobby of building model airplanes.

For the most recent project, Issaquah wanted to reconfigure existing space to accommodate three 3M ESPE Lava milling machines for the new Issaquah Milling Center as well as consolidate crown and bridge departments and relocate an educational center, all within the original square footage.

Arlink utilizes its modular workstation platform, originally designed for production applications primarily in the electronics industry, now adapted to the needs of dental labs. The system’s architecture provides a flexible, expandable foundation on which a wide variety of applications can be supported. Modifications for use in the modern dental laboratory include integration of suction units and vacuum pumps, tool and equipment holders such as those for porcelain furnaces and air guns, waste and work drawers, and arm supports.

Ray Gottsleben, Arlink International Sales and Marketing Manager, sees a connection between the

two industries. “The dental lab environment is one that is rapidly evolving from piecework/craftwork to high-tech, volume production,” he said, adding, “As labs move into this production/manufacturing mindset, we see a greater acceptance for these modular types of systems that can be set up in a production-like mode, if need be, and adapted to a wide variety of other uses within the lab facility, such as in reception/administrative areas, training areas, shipping/receiving, computer rooms, storage areas, and the like. This provides lab managers with tremendous flexibility as their needs evolve and change.”

Searles likens the Arlink workstations to “an Erector set” that can be assembled, disassembled, moved, and rearranged in a matter of minutes with no tools. The modular design of the benches also allows them to be used in a wide range of applications at Issaquah, such as the front office, the model department, and the shipping department (where the benchtop was raised 18 inches to allow the user to work in a standing position).

Although Searles praises the flexibility and ergonomics of Arlink workstations, he admits that they’re not as glitzy as some European designs. “These are very functional, they get the job done, and they’re very



cost-effective,” he said. “What more do you need from a bench?”

From a design standpoint, Gottsleben said Arlink is able to take basic layout information, “from a cocktail napkin sketch to an architect’s complete CAD drawing,” and generate a comprehensive proposal including 2D plan views, 3D isometric drawings, full-color renderings, bills of material, and an installation plan that can be used throughout the project, from obtaining management approval and securing financing to completing the installation.

“It’s something more meaningful than just a written proposal,” commented Gottsleben on the package provided to clients. “Customers can visualize what their lab will look like when completed. Literally, what you see is what you get.”

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