

Vision quest

Sitting in her established practice in Box Hill, Victoria one day in 2008 Dr Tami Benedikt was making a decision that would revolutionise her world.

Photography: Meg Grant

A successful family dentist in the same practice for 13 years, Dr Benedikt had reached a point where she was ready for a change. Updating her current space was one option. She could relocate and use the same business model she had relied on until now. She could join a dynamic practice team and safely share the rewards of another dentist's innovation – or she could step completely out of the square and take an aerial view of her life and work that might transform her world entirely.

Just like we all do – or used to do – around New Year's Eve.

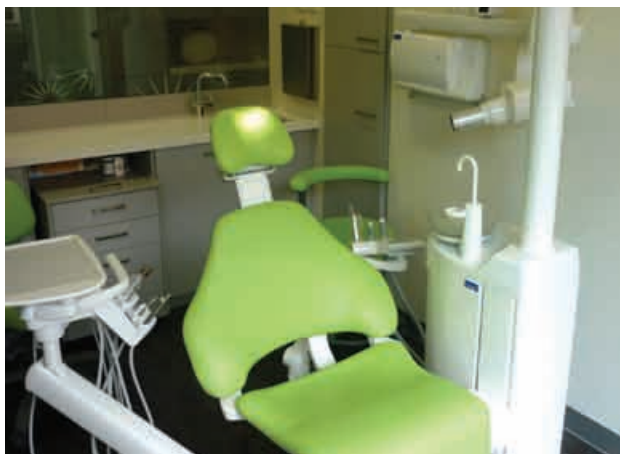
She contacted business consultant Victoria James and Dr Benedikt's life as she knew it was over for good.

James runs Straight To It Solutions. Her speciality is in planning, supporting and executing radical changes to established businesses and business visions that achieve more than the average make-over. The pair joined forces and began plotting changes with a careful audit of Dr Benedikt's current situation and future needs.

The priorities were immediately clear. Dr Benedikt wanted to work closer to home. A move would free up more time for her personal life and relieve work-related pressure.

She began to see that relocating could also provide a tremendous opportunity for revolutionising her work environment, creating security and becoming master of her own destiny.

With this much larger view as the goal, they created a 'vision board' that factored in and set about achieving her aspirations for working comfort, design aesthetics, investment in technology, projected income and security – all based on the strong foundations of a radically altered business model.



Mission One was new premises. "A great location was the primary requirement," James said. "We needed a building that was closer to home but also highly visible, on a main road, with existing operational permits, and room for growth and diversity."

When she found the perfect space it proved to be a dishevelled but prime 2-storey site that was saturated with light and enjoyed a northern aspect over gardens.

With the space identified, they recruited a gun team of boutique professionals.

Dr Benedikt's brief was for a 'beautiful space'. "I wanted a practice that was just lovely, rather than corporate and functional-looking," she says. "I wanted a place I would love to come to everyday. I spend so much of my time at work I wanted it to be absolutely gorgeous, and for my clients to feel the same."

The architect, Daniel Kontista, set to work creating a state-of-the-art practice as well as re-finishing and updating the exterior of the building to create an elegantly branded result that underplays elite technology and the finest choices of surgical equipment in favour of delicious aesthetics.

"We chose the very best of everything to provide ourselves with the best environment, now and in the future," says Dr Benedikt who chose to fully re-fit and optimise the new practice with the best equipment available for her field. On her shopping list for the fitout were a Cattani compressor, and Turbosmart suction, Scannex digital processing system Oasis dental software and Planmeca xray.



"I wanted the best but I didn't want to make a show of it," she says. "It is far more important to me that the clients love being here than feel impressed, or actually afraid, of the equipment we use." She chose the PlanMeca Compact S side delivery chair specifically because of its unique swinging arm design that allows the handpieces and tools to be swung away discretely before clients enter the surgery.

Patient experience is vital to their choices about treatment and about coming back. Managing how they feel in the practice is an important part of Tami's philosophy as it enhances the patient's perspective of the care and comfort that they are receiving. For many people a lot of difficult noise and sometimes fear involved in their visit to the dentist. Keeping the environment as nice as possible makes the experience of visiting the dentist as motivating and positive for the clients as well as the staff."



Which is where the importance of brand comes in.

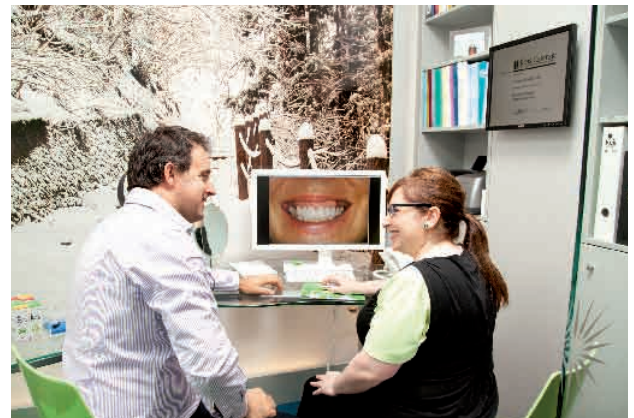
James worked for almost a full month on brand development and trial applications alone. The final brand features a distinctive sparkle logo which appears on all Dr Benedikt's practice materials, and is even cleverly incorporated into the architecture of the rooms (in glass decals along the corridor) and the building (in an exterior design panel that adds glamour as well as subtle reinforcement of the brand). James developed a thorough marketing plan to maximise exposure for the new practice, all supported by the work of the architect, Daniel Konstisa and builder, Silvio Falcone who worked to make the space a part of the marketing strategy.

"One advantage of a building that needed work was that we could create absolutely anything with it," says James. And architect Daniel Kontista did just that. He maximised the north-facing position by opening up space for strong natural light and for pleasant views while incorporating unusual round ceiling lighting that Dr Benedikt says is superb to work with. He used stone for the wet areas, recessing sinks, concealing storage, choosing slide down cupboards over swing doors which clutter up space obstruct sight lines.

The beauty of the space is not just for the visual pleasure of the staff and clients – in Dr Benedikt's practice the patients receive the same kind of care that went into creating every aspect of the space. The practice aims to provide every client with an experience they would be happy to come back for.

"The patients' response to the space and our level of interest and connection with them is worth it just in itself," says Dr Benedikt.

As for her own experience at work these days, three months after opening Dr Benedikt says there's not a single thing she would have done differently and describes the change in her work and personal life as a 'total revolution'. ♦



Specs:

- Project Manager – Victoria James, Straight To It Solutions
- Designer – Daniel Kontista and Co
- Builder – Decom- Silvio Falcone
- Graphic Designer – Ben Pola
- Three surgery practice
- Planmeca Compact S – side delivery Dental Unit
- Compact S (side delivery) Planmeca Dental unit
- Suction Cattani Turbosmart
- Cattani compressor
- Scan-x Digital Process System
- Planmeca Intra Xray
- Oasis Dental Software
- Steriliser – Mocom B
- Equipment supplied by Henry Schein Halas