

Have you begun your aesthetic portfolio?

Laura Horton reiterates the importance of why every cosmetic dentist should have an aesthetic portfolio

Having worked in the dental industry for many, many years there is one thing I have learnt. Every dentist must have an aesthetic portfolio. I have worked in dentistry in many different roles, in all areas, from fully NHS practices to top end private and cosmetic practices, working alongside top dentists from all over the UK' says Laura 'and I know the one thing that will help you and your practice be successful is having a brilliant aesthetic portfolio with outstanding quality pictures. There is one essential tool that a successful aesthetic dentist needs and no it's not your hand piece or sparkling new bur, it is your digital camera.

In the last decade, a digital camera has become an increasingly popular tool to own with in a dental surgery. Many will have purchased a camera when the digital age dawned on us for use at work and home and now more sophisticated digital SLR cameras are being purchased.

Ask any of your dentist friends after reading this article and I guarantee you will hear mixed reviews and thoughts about photography in a dental surgery. Many will have a camera – and probably not even use it! The majority of dentists will have a point and shoot camera and will probably find they use it quite often, whereas the best – SLR cameras are rarely taken out of their case!

Now let's go back a step or two within your business plans and goals for your successful career. You own your practice and within your business you have your systems in place. You have your marketing also, which will bring in the new patients (NPs) to whom you have advertised your 'cosmetic' services. Now as a cosmetic dentist I do not need to tell you that you

need to stand out from every other practice in your area or Google rankings; the dental practices who may also appeal to your target of NPs.

So to continue, your NP is in your door, in your surgery, perhaps even having a complementary consultation with yourself, so now you have your one chance to show your NP what you can do as an aesthetic dentist to meet their needs and expectations. This is not the time to shout about your skills and your practice; this is the time to show them your skills. The lady or gentleman present in your surgery is there because they want to look good. Therefore they are not too keen to hear about your excellent preparation techniques that your laboratory technician raves about (as great as you know they are)!

If you sat with your patients and showed them your beautifully printed portfolio of before and after pictures and showed them pictures of other patients that you have treated, similar to them – this will speak a thousand words. All you have to do is say nothing and show them the amazing work that you have produced. There is no need to explain about your post graduation education and what you have achieved, just simply show your NP the beautiful aesthetic dentistry you can achieve for them with the power of digital photography.

So how do you get started in creating your portfolio?

Ensure from now on that for every NP you take a full set of digital photographs; the full shots ideally to be taken are:

- Full face
- Full smile front view
- Full smile LHS
- Full smile RHS
- Retracted front view
- Retracted LHS
- Retracted RHS
- Upper occlusal view
- Lower occlusal view

I always advise to use a material card background for the full face shots that is a royal blue colour. These can easily be purchased from your local craft store. Then ensure that all of your photographs are sharpened and image corrected. This means that your photographs, that yourself and the NP see, will be of an equal vision to how the human eye will see these shots, therefore your patient will be seeing what you really see during an examination.



Laura Horton teaches dental photography to all the dental team with her excellent one-day hands on training programme – in your practice! She has also recently established

Laura Horton Consulting LTD. For further information on dental photography visit her website www.laurahortonconsulting.co.uk or contact Laura directly: 07912 360779 or email: laura@laurahortonconsulting.co.uk

Laura's top tips for amazing photographs

Dos and don'ts

Do practice taking these photos and ensure your team do also. Everybody in your practice should be able to take these shots quickly and easily

Don't take these photographs on your own – you will need an assistant

Do take a few photographs of each view just in case!

Don't use a SLR camera without a monopod!

Do use good mirrors and retractors

Don't over expose your photographs, mild under exposure can be corrected with adobe

Do send your patients for professional makeovers once you have completed their treatment

Don't forget to use a coloured background for all face shots

Do create a professional looking portfolio and keep updating it regularly

Don't forget to get a consent form signed by your patients to use their photographs.

Always take photographs of the transitional stage of your treatment too. Not only are these vital for important laboratory communication but also for your portfolio, and then at the final stage of the treatment once again take another series of shots. Once you have finished the placement of your patient's new smile it is more ideal to bring them back when they are not experiencing from anaesthesia. In your photographs the final end result will show its self even truer. **A**