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## Emerson Dental's Second Office Creates More Capacity For Growing Practice

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### Emerson Dental - Bedford, MA | Gregory Wu, DMD

Creating a high-end, memorable experience that patients would talk about long afterwards was one of the visions that

Dr. Gregory Wu had for his expansion of Emerson Dental. He brainstormed several ideas (one of which included replicating the Death Star of Star Wars movie fame), and when the project was completed, he was practicing in a gorgeous, cutting-edge space. What he didn't foresee when building his new office was that a pandemic would hit the country as forcefully as a strike from Darth Vader, interrupting the momentum he was building in the office.

### Emerson Dental's History

While the multi-specialist Emerson Dental currently employs seven dentists, eight dental assistants, and seven dental hygienists, the practice opened 19 years ago with a single dentist, Dr. Alavaro Maya, one dental assistant, and an office manager. What happened in between is a story of consistent growth and adaptability to evolving patient expectations.

Located in Westford, Massachusetts, the fledgling practice focused on providing high-quality care, state-of-the-art equipment, and a comfortable environment. This formula attracted an average of 44 new patients each month in its beginning years. Dr. Wu joined the practice in 2007 and later purchased it from Dr. Maya in 2010. The practice continued its growth, adding a periodontist, endodontist, and pediatric dentist. Things became crowded, and the space no longer tracked with the practice's commitment to offering a welcoming and comfortable environment.

The solution at that time was relatively uncomplicated: in 2015, the practice moved across the hall to a larger suite, this one equipped with eight chairs. In their new location, Emerson Dental was able to add another associate dentist. The suite was furnished with state-of-the-art equipment, including an A-dec sterilization unit and Dentsply Sirona products. Dr. Wu fully expected to comfortably remain in the upgraded Westford office for a long time, but with continued steady growth, the practice outgrew its space in less than three years. Now Dr. Wu had a decision to make—should he move the practice again or add a second location?

### Dental Business Institute Guides Doctor's Decision on How to Best Grow

Henry Schein Equipment Sales Specialist Scott Lasser had known Dr. Wu for several years. Because of the personal trust they had built, Dr. Wu followed an important piece of advice that Mr. Lasser offered from the Dental Business Institute. The Dental Business Institute offers courses that help dental practitioners consider

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options for further expansion, create business plans, gain an understanding of negotiation strategies, and develop leadership management skills.

One of two outcomes would result if he participated in the course, Mr. Lasser told Dr. Wu. He would either come out of the Dental Business Institute with confidence that adding a second office was the right decision, or he would prevent himself from “making a million-dollar mistake” by determining that a satellite location was not what he wanted.

Caroline Crabtree, the Henry Schein Field Sales Consultant who worked with Dr. Wu, seconded the recommendation, and the doctor attended, learning the ins and outs of running multiple locations and sharpening the skills needed to execute that plan.

Taking time to weigh the options also presented other scenarios that Dr. Wu was interested in for the future, such as mentoring, which is close to his heart, adding associates, or stepping back and handling the business side of the practice. Taking time to think about his future aspirations allowed Dr. Wu to ensure that his new office would be built to accommodate these potential options if he chose to pursue them later.

Ultimately, Dr. Wu decided that adding a second office was the path he wanted to follow. With the assistance of the Dental Business Institute, he wrote a business plan and moved forward.

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The office was built around the calm serenity of the sea. Its design elements, including the light fixtures, were meant to mimic sun beams reflecting through the water on a sunny day.

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### Finding the Right Spot

Once Dr. Wu had made his decision to open a second office, Mr. Lasser and his team got to work, locating a 3,600-square-foot space within a retail plaza in Bedford, an upscale community outside of Boston and 11 miles from the Westford location. The high-visibility road on which the plaza sits connects several affluent towns, and it was close to his existing office.

"As soon as I saw the space in Bedford, I knew this was going to be it. It had the right demographics, distance, and space,"

Dr. Wu said.

Some of Dr. Wu's existing clients lived closer to the Bedford site, so Dr. Wu planned to move them to that office. Mr. Lasser noted that while "you don't want to cannibalize your own patients," Dr. Wu's plan freed up much-needed space at the Westford office.

### Making a Statement

The desired location was selected rather quickly, but lease negotiations hit a snag, so Henry Schein partner Orbus Consulting came in to help. Finally, the design of the leading-edge space could begin.

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*The doctor chose A-dec for his sterilization center, a spacious, pristine space that is designed to handle high volumes as the practice grows. Set in the middle of the practice, it is open for patients to view the safe and efficient flow of instruments.*

Because Emerson Dental is a multi-specialty practice with same-day dentistry, integration was crucial. "Being able to perform any procedure at any time with the same dental unit makes things more convenient and efficient," Mr. Lasser explained.

In two operatories, the doctor chose Dentsply Sirona furniture and cabinetry, which he already used in his Westford practice. The Dentsply Sirona chairs feature integrated UAF cameras and a CEREC digital impression system.

"Using all Dentsply Sirona equipment has allowed for easier communications, as the products were meant to work together. The design with the cabinets, allowing us to have all the equipment and supplies within arm's reach, enables us to work comfortably and efficiently," noted Dr. Wu.

The patient experience, inside and outside the operatories, has undergone changes to further protect patients and the staff against the new coronavirus. Patients complete forms online; they wait outside to be called in for their appointments, which are now staggered an extra 30 minutes apart; when prompted they enter, masked, and have their temperatures taken. The doctors have separate teams who rotate in shifts. If a team member is exposed to COVID-19, it's easy to isolate that team as a whole, limiting the spread of the virus to other team members or patients. Another doctor and team can step in to fill the gap.

Two distinct areas hold clean and dirty PPE and serve as staging areas for the doctors. In addition, the doctor invested in medical-grade HEPA filtration units for each operatory. They filter out 99.97% of all particles over 0.3 microns. A HEPA system was also installed in the reception area.



"We also implemented Bola AI, which is headset free, voice-activated perio charting, eliminating the need for a dental assistant to help hygiene chart," explained Dr. Wu. "This minimizes patient contact and helps social distancing as much as possible. The other benefit of voice-activated charting is it also reduces contamination because the hygienists can chart without touching a keyboard."

## Same-Day Dentistry Important Tool in Post-COVID Care

Dr. Wu wanted to continue using CEREC technology, which he uses in his Westford location. "If I was going to do this second location, I wanted everything to be best-in-breed," Dr. Wu said.

What he couldn't have foreseen at the time of his office build was how the CEREC unit and same-day dentistry would be so beneficial once COVID hit. As patients try to strike a balance between receiving necessary care but also being cautious about the spread of the virus, the CEREC technology allows them to limit their exposure and come in just once versus multiple visits.

"Many of the techniques and technologies that we already implemented in the office are here to help keep patients safe, from CEREC crowns to digital X-rays," said Dr. Wu in a welcome video he and his staff developed for patients, sharing the steps they have taken to ensure the return to dentistry in their office is safe. "A lot of [the technology] will help minimize exposure and also keep our team safe and patients safe while maintaining the highest quality of care."

The sterilization center, with A-dec Inspire cabinetry, has always been a priority for Dr. Wu so the virus didn't change their procedures, but it did give the team another reason to highlight those procedures, in the video. Mr. Lasser described the space, which moves instruments efficiently from dirty to clean as "a sleek, functional sterilization

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In shades of teal, gray and white, the operatories are equipped with Dentsply Sirona chairs that feature integrated UAF cameras. Relaxation room built aquariums with changeable backdrops create an ever-changing, vibrant environment for patients. Same-day dentistry is a key part of the doctors offerings, using PrimeScan with in-house mill.

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showpiece.”

To align with the state-of-the-art clinical equipment, Dr. Wu also created an exceptional ambiance for this practice.

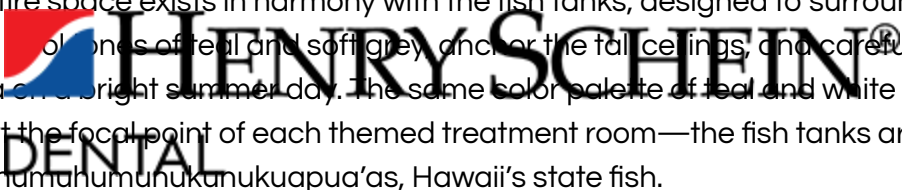
Although his original dream was to model the office after the fictional Death Star, it wasn't feasible. However, his contractor did place several Star Wars cut-outs, complete with teeth, in the office's front windows, an eye-catching and fun way to attract prospective patients.

The doctor decided to replicate some of the features his patients especially enjoyed in his Westford office, such as the massive aquarium built into the hallway window and the 180-gallon reef tank in the reception area. Right now, patients are not able to fully appreciate the thought he put into the interior, but the hope is that soon, they will.



“I wanted a patient who is sitting in the chair to have something to look at but not just a piece of art that gets old if they come for multiple visits,” explained Dr. Wu. “If there was a window, they could see outside and see things change, so instead of that, I put in a fish tank, something that’s alive and ever-changing.” Henry Schein’s Integrated Design Studio team worked with Iquarium, a company that creates custom-built aquariums that have interactive backgrounds that can be changed to create a whole new aesthetic for the tank.

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The entire space exists in harmony with the fish tanks, designed to surround patients in a soothing ocean vibe. The floor, in cool tones of teal and soft grey, anchors the tall ceilings, and carefully selected lighting imitates the feeling of the sea on a bright summer day. The same color palette of teal and white is used in the cabinetry. These details all support the focal point of each themed treatment room—the fish tanks are filled with puffer fish and triggerfish, called *hamahumanukuapua’as*, Hawaii’s state fish.

Limited-edition nautical artwork graces the office’s walls alongside treasured pieces collected by Dr. Wu and his wife from travels to the Greek Isles of Mykonos and Santorini. Several Disney-commissioned pieces and Dr. Seuss artwork also dot the walls throughout the practice.

Patients are dazzled when they walk into Emerson Dental’s Bedford office, which gives the doctor immense satisfaction. “When I see their eyes and the look on their faces, I know that I’ve accomplished what I set out to do, which is to exceed their expectations.”

Dr. Wu credits Henry Schein for helping him achieve his goals. “Henry Schein’s motto is ‘Rely on us.’ Everybody I came into contact with, I could rely on,” Dr. Wu said. “They took the time to get to know me and what my vision and values were...they know their market. They know their customer.”

## Shutdown Allowed for Adoption of New Technologies

The Bedford office opened in October 2019, but assistance from Henry Schein continues, particularly in this challenging time when everything is reconsidered and technology is valued for both its outcomes and for the extra measures of safety it provides against contamination. Dr. Wu praised the technicians who have worked to ensure everything is working seamlessly.

“Any time we needed anything they were quick to respond, especially in the first two weeks of opening, as there are bound to be some things to fine-tune.”

The practice is off to a robust start in its first year, but the doctor said COVID definitely took some of the wind out of its sails. In early June, the state moved into Phase 2 in its coronavirus reopening, and later that month, Dr. Wu began accepting patients again for elective procedures. He remains positive but pragmatic about what to expect from the rest of 2020, noting that it’s difficult to project the future of the virus and its impact on patient care. Dr. Wu said the pausing of services had a silver lining though – it gave the team time to incorporate new things into their office operations and build even stronger relationships with one another.

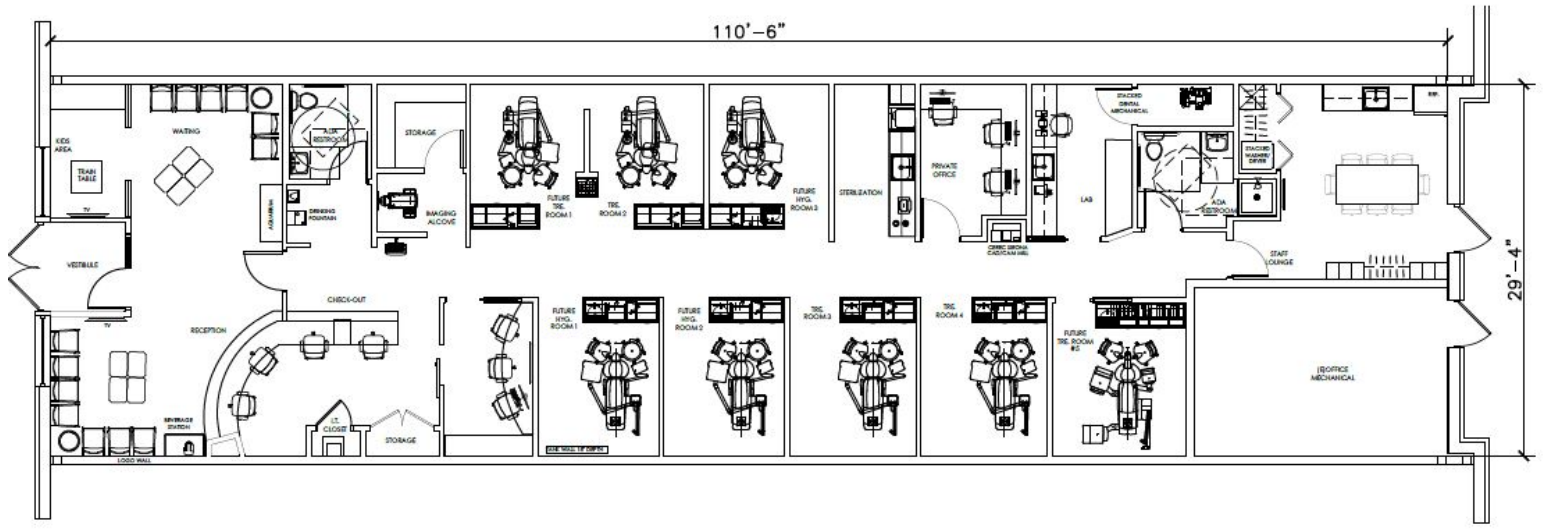
“We used this slowdown as an opportunity to implement new systems and technology that we were afraid to do when we were very busy,” confirmed Dr. Wu. “This has been a great time for us to team build via weekly Zoom calls.”

Looking forward, the energetic, upbeat doctor notes that COVID has also shifted his mindset too, reinforcing his belief in the mission: The greatest wealth is our health.

“I intend to promote that, not just for 2020, but for the rest of my lifetime, as COVID-19 has taught us what is truly important.” ♦



Left to right: Scott Lasser, Equipment Sales Specialist; Caroline Crabtree, Regional Sales Manager; Dr. Gregory Wu; Clay Cleveland, Field Sales Consultant; Stefan Opalacz, Digital Technology Specialist; Justin Roy, Equipment Service Technician.



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