

Layout, Look, Furnishings, and Equipment

CHAPTER EIGHT

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing this chapter, you should be able to:

- 8.1** Explain the importance of a functional layout and an appropriate ambience.
- 8.2** Recognize the importance of office size.
- 8.3** Understand the importance of properly furnishing and equipping the office space.

KEY TERMS

establishment
functional
ambience
micro view
macro view
massage equipment
office equipment



INTRODUCTION

How the business establishment is put together is a key element in the success of any business venture. The physical layout of the establishment must be designed well for the business to work optimally. The decor of the establishment has to fit the purpose of the business. The furnishings and equipment of the business must allow not only for the best use possible but also for the highest level of customer comfort possible. The goal is to have customers who come back, and part of their reason for doing so is that the establishment is a great place to be.

What Is an Establishment?

An **establishment** is a place in which you are doing business and you have some control over the environment. If you are providing services in customers' homes, on an out-call basis, those places are not considered establishments. This does not mean that the information regarding establishments can be ignored. The same principles apply to out-calls that apply to your own establishment. You will not have control over the situation to the degree that you have in your own place, but you can make changes that will enhance your performance and customer satisfaction.

The Keys of an Establishment

The physical layout of the establishment is very important. The most important aspect of the layout is functionality. The establishment is **functional** if the treatment rooms are big enough for the therapist to work in them comfortably and the waiting room is a comfortable size also. There needs to be enough room and a good room layout for the employees to work. All of the necessary facilities should be in their proper places.

In addition to functionality, you must take into consideration the **ambience** or "feel" of the establishment. The establishment should look good, clean, and pleasant. A facility should have all the things that you would consider important for making you feel comfortable. Everything from paint colors to the type of lighting is important for your facility. The furniture should be comfortable and functional.

Once the functionality and the ambience of the establishment are decided on, it is time to furnish your office. In furnishing, you can take micro and macro views of your establishment. A **micro view** is a view of one small aspect of the establishment, and a **macro view** is a view of the establishment as a whole.

The Macro View

The overall view of the space that you will be using has to reflect what you are trying to accomplish. If you are providing spa services or medically oriented services, the ambience should reflect that particular type of service. In other words, a spa/resort type of facility should be serene and relaxing; it should not have the look and feel of a medical or clinical office, which can be more austere. The functionality of the space is simply whether or not the space works easily for what you are trying to do.

The Micro View

The micro view of an establishment fits into the macro view of that establishment. Each micro component is a single aspect of the overall establishment and becomes part of the macro view. If the micro view does not work, the macro view will not work.

TIDBIT

No matter what the ambience is, the establishment has to be clean. Nothing can ruin an experience faster than an unclean environment.

WORKING IN A VASTU ENVIRONMENT

With my interest in and dedication to the principles and practices of yoga, I follow Vastu in my home and office. *Vastu*, Sanskrit for “dwelling” or “site,” is the Indian science of design and architecture. Vastu is, in fact, the predecessor to *feng shui*, the Chinese science of organizing personal home and work space to maximize positive energy flow. When one applies the principles of Vastu, one does so with the entire property, home, or office building and each room in mind. Practitioners acquainted with modalities such as traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) and polarity recognize the “five basic elements.” In Vastu the elements are space, air, fire, water, and earth. Space is the center of each property, building, or room and is where spiritual energies gather. Air governs the northwest area and inspires action or energy. Fire belongs to the southwest portion and is where anything related to fire or warmth is located, such as a fireplace or kitchen. Water governs the northeast and is calming; bathrooms and pools are located here. Earth is associated with the southwest area and is heavy and strong; any heavy pieces of furniture should be placed here.

My massage room is in the very center of the house, with the remainder of the rooms all located around the massage room. In Vastu, the center of the house, where spiritual energies gather, is considered the god-center and an area of healing (see Figure 8.1). My table is positioned southwest to northeast, with

the head of the table being in the southwest. This is the position that Brahma, the Hindu god of creation, is believed to be lying in; it is the god-center. It also happens to be the “safe room” where my dogs and I rode out several hurricanes in Florida in 2004 and 2005! My writing desk is in the southwest corner of the house, the creative area; and the room where I teach yoga classes is in the northeast corner, the area for meditation. All of my clients comment on their experiences in the massage room, and I truly believe that they are experiencing the power of Vastu, not the massage alone. Following a prescribed arrangement for each room encourages peacefulness, harmony, well-being, and, most importantly for your office, prosperity.

Realize that clients sense the energy, the vibration, in your room. We live in a high-stress time when our senses are assaulted by many things: constantly ringing cell phones, a barrage of e-mails, ever-increasing commuter travel time. There are natural forces that govern the space around us and the space we place ourselves in. Aligning with and honoring this space creates an environment that not only is free of physical and mental clutter but also is one of respect. Whether your treatment room is more clinical in nature or more spiritual, clients will appreciate the positive forces they feel when in this space.

There are two excellent books on Vastu: *The Power of Vastu Living: Welcoming Your Soul into Your Home and Workplace*, by Kathleen Cox, and *The Vastu Home*, by Juliet Pegrum. (JLS)



The example that best shows this interdependence is the size of a treatment room with regard to the treatment provided: If the room is too small, the room will not work and thus the overall establishment will not work.

Putting the Views Together

It is time to put an establishment together using both the micro and macro views. If these views are combined properly, the establishment will be able to be used to its optimal level. The starting point is the macro view of what you are trying to accomplish. The plan calls for a small office for up to three therapists who perform different therapies. The office is not specifically medical, nor is it a spa; it does have components of each, however.

Attention to detail creates a warm and friendly environment and indicates professionalism



FIGURE 8.1

The overall size of the office space needs to be considered first. There are many considerations that need to be decided on to determine the optimal size. For example:

- **The number of treatment rooms.** There need to be a sufficient number of treatment rooms for the therapists to be able to work. Some therapists require only part of a room, for part-time work, while others perform work in more than one room at a time. It is important that the number of rooms that the establishment starts off with is more than adequate.
- **The size of the treatment rooms.** There is nothing worse than working in a room that is not the proper size. If the room is too small for your equipment, it will be impossible to work there effectively. A room always appears larger without any furniture in it. The best way to make sure that a room is large enough to be optimally functional is to lay out paper cutouts of your furniture and equipment so that you can actually see whether everything fits.
- **The area of the waiting room.** The area that is needed for the waiting room is wholly dependent on the number of people who will be waiting for your services or who will be with the people receiving your services.
- **Any space for back-office work.** If there is a need to have people doing any office work, such as billing or filing, which should not be done in front of the customers, then there needs to be a room designated for that. Additionally, if there is preparation for treatments that has to be done outside the treatment rooms, a space has to be made for this also. If there are to be laundry facilities or any other special needs, such as a refrigerator, these items should be located in a back room.
- **Restroom(s).** One or two restrooms, along with any other required facilities, such as showers, must be taken into account. If there are any shower facilities, there need to be multiple restrooms in your facility.
- **Storage.** Storage is a very important thing to have in any office. Files and supplies tend to build up, and it is important that you have the space to handle all the items that will be needed in the business.

The above factors constitute the micro view of the establishment. The macro view of the same establishment comprises factors such as whether the rooms are proportional to each other and the office as a whole. Another aspect of the macro view that needs to be taken into account is the cost of the area that is being used. It is very easy to say that you should have all the space you need, but space costs money, so the need for extra space must be balanced with the cost of that extra space.

Lastly, the space has to work well and be organized in such a way that all people who are in the space feel comfortable there. An example of poor organization is having the restrooms or the work space in the part of the establishment that customers first see when they enter. Common sense will dictate the overall organization of the space, but there is something even greater that will contribute to the shape of the space: The primary driving factor in the overall shape of the space is what is already available. For a small start-up venture, it is cost-prohibitive to build your own space; by finding a built space that meets your needs, you will save time, money, and aggravation.

When using someone else's space, you may have to compromise on one thing or another, but depending on the area in which you are planning to open your establishment, it may be the only real alternative that you have. Some creativity can come into play here, but please remember to walk away from anything that doesn't work for you, even if you like the overall space or the idea or something else about the space. If it is not going to work for a specific reason that cannot be changed, then walk away from it.

Furnishing Your Establishment

Depending on the type of establishment you are starting, the furnishings will vary tremendously. The furniture will become a large part of the ambience (discussed above) of the space. Some of the other things to take into consideration when purchasing items for your establishment are:

- **Ease of cleaning and maintenance.** You do not want to buy upholstery that is not washable. You do not want carpeting that cannot stand up to the wear-and-tear of heavy use.
- **Sturdiness.** You want to have items that are sturdy enough to be used over and over, without worry of breakage. Other people may or may not be as careful using the items as you would be, so please be aware of this when picking out items.
- **Replacement.** Some items that you purchase need to be available at a future time in case you need more of them. You may not need 10 chairs today, but you may need them next year. Will they be available, or will something complementary be available?
- **Compatibility with the scheme of your establishment.** Compatibility goes beyond the decorating aspect of the purchase decision; it also includes whether or not an item is appropriate for your establishment. Are household couches appropriate for your waiting area? If they are, it would be fine to use them in that situation; if not, other options should be considered.
- **Compatibility with the needs of your customers.** Do your customers have any special needs that you have to consider in picking out your furniture?

When a business first opens, the amount of money available often necessitates a trade-off between having a fully finished establishment and having just the essentials. If funds are an issue, it is imperative that you prioritize the items that are needed in your establishment. Give top priority to customers' comfort and needs.

Proper seating in the waiting area is necessary, as are other appropriate furnishings, such as tables and lighting. The basic items that are needed with regard to furniture are as follows:

- **Chairs.** Between one and two chairs per person per session time are needed. So, if there are two customers each session time, there need to be at least two seats in the waiting area and there need not be more than four seats. If the waiting area is very large, additional seating may be needed to fill the space and make the size of the room look appropriate.
- **Tables.** Tables and/or wall racks are necessary for displaying magazines, brochures, and any other material that you want customers to see while they are waiting for you.

Other items for decorating purposes are pictures, wall hangings, and lamps. These items should be consistent with the macro view of the establishment. Your personal taste should be reflected, yet it is important to continue to recognize the purpose of the establishment.

Equipping Your Establishment

Prioritize which items your business requires immediately and which can wait for a future time. When it comes to your establishment, proper financial and business decisions should take precedence over “wants.” Guard against falling into the “want, want, want” and “buy, buy, buy” mode; it is an easy trap to fall into. This will alleviate the financial and emotional stress that is inherent in purchasing too many things too early.

It is time to make a list and assign a relative importance value to each item.

Massage Equipment

Massage equipment is equipment that is specific to the performance of massage and has a useful life of greater than one year. Criteria to be used when you are selecting massage equipment are the quality, price, portability, and functionality of the items.

A *massage (treatment) table* is the most important piece of equipment that you will purchase. Figures 8.2 and 8.3 show different types of tables. The quality of the



**Lightweight-frame
portable table**

FIGURE 8.2

**Hydraulic table with
wooden frame**

FIGURE 8.3



table is so important that you need to shop extensively, feeling and trying many different types of tables, before you buy one. If you are working in an office setting and plan on doing a volume business, you should use a hydraulic table. It not only will be the most durable but also will be a back saver for you, owing to the ease of adjusting the height and therefore the pressure during any given session. If you are going to be doing home visits, purchase a lightweight table that is portable. The weight, width, and ease of lifting your table are very important to the success of your practice. You should upgrade the covering on the table to the most comfortable materials. If possible, you should upgrade the foam used in your table. All of this is to do one thing, which is to make your customer more comfortable. If your customer is not comfortable during the treatment because of your table, you will lose the person as a customer, no matter how good your technique is. If possible, add either a table fleece or a table warmer to your table. Clients on the table get very cold very quickly because of a decrease in body temperature with increased circulation to the muscle. By keeping the customer warm with a table warmer, you will enable him or her to relax and enjoy the treatment even more. Remember to inform the customer that you have a table warmer, and be aware of any medical conditions your customer has that may preclude you from safely using a table warmer during the treatment.

Depending on the type of establishment that you will be running, you could need many other pieces of equipment. It is important that you use the same principle in shopping for and purchasing this equipment that you use in purchasing your table. Remember that you should list the items in order of importance of need, and purchase them in that order. Be ever cognizant of the balance you have to keep between the overall cost of the equipment and the items you “want to have” to open your establishment’s doors. Other items include (but are not limited to):

- Hydrocollator/Thermophore or electric hot pads.
- Linens.
- Stereo/iPod and music.
- Exercise equipment.
- Electrical therapy (e.g., electric stimulator or ultrasound).

Figures 8.4, 8.5, and 8.6 show different types of equipment.

TIDBIT

If you happen to be in the market for a new car, take your table, and any other equipment that you use, along with you on demo drives. It is important that the table fit easily into the trunk or onto the backseat. Many tables do not easily slide onto a backseat or are too big for the trunk to close.

The bodyCushion for supportive and pregnancy massage



FIGURE 8.4

Left to right: Wedge bolster, 6-inch round bolster, 8-inch round bolster, and breast cushion



FIGURE 8.5

It is important that you balance the cost of the items with the monetary return that the items will provide your business. You do not want to spend a large amount of money on something that you will not make any money from. Doing so would be an indulgence that you may not be able to afford, and it could place the future of your business in jeopardy.

Office Equipment

Office equipment consists of items that last more than one year and do not directly involve any therapy. Office equipment is very important to plan for. The first and most important piece of office equipment is a computer. Even if you are antitechnology, you will find that a computer is essential for successfully running

Moist heat sources: Hydrocollator pack and Thermophore

FIGURE 8.6



a business. Many computers come with software programs that can make life easier for you. If yours does not have the software you need to function properly, invest the money to purchase additional software. Technology will make you efficient by saving time and effort; you will be able to spend more time making money, instead of poring over books and sheets of numbers and information. You may also want to invest in a personal digital assistant (PDA), BlackBerry, or iPhone. These devices can be used for appointments and memos when you are out of the office, and they have the advantage of hotsyncing to your office computer; appointment lists and the like can easily be printed out to provide a hard copy for license renewal purposes.

If your business plan calls for you to do insurance work, purchase a program that will help you to do that. The programs range in cost from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars. The functions range from simply printing the HCFA (Health Care Financing Administration) forms to keeping track of past-due accounts, accounts receivable, billing cycles, and much more. Check with colleagues in your profession to determine the best programs to use. Be sure to ask what they like and don't like about the various programs. As with everything else you are planning to purchase, it is imperative that you do a cost-benefit analysis of the program that you want to purchase.

You should also consider purchasing an accounting program. You can ask your accountant which program she or he prefers that you use. Again, the cost can range greatly, and the programs' functions vary so much that you need to do a cost-benefit analysis based on your needs. Some of the tasks you may want the program to do are write checks, keep track of budgets, do payroll including payroll taxes, and do budget forecasting.

Most computers come preloaded with a writing program, which is more than sufficient for you to use. Please remember that flexibility is an important option. Have at least one person who has a background in computers, or at least a good amount of experience with computers, review the computer and programs you are planning to buy and your reasons for choosing those particular items.

After a computer, a copier is the next most important piece of office equipment. With today's technology, a multiuse printer, copier, fax, and scanner can be purchased for a relatively small amount of money, and for the purposes of a small office they are more than adequate. Leasing a large copier for speed or quality is an unnecessary expense, given the fact that you can go to a print shop for that kind of work when you need it. Generally speaking, buying a copier that will fit your everyday needs costs about the same as leasing a large copier for two months. This is a perfect example of options for which a cost-benefit analysis will show whether the benefit received justifies the cost of the purchase or lease.

Another item that you will be purchasing for your establishment is a phone system, which should be kept as simple as possible. For a small business, a portable

phone system with an answering machine is sufficient, or even a cell phone alone can be a good option. If you are going to be making appointments from a certain system, it is important to have caller ID; people leaving messages often mumble their phone numbers or talk too fast for you to understand the numbers.

This takes us into the next group of items that you will need to consider purchasing for your establishment. If you are planning to purchase a desk and storage items, please make sure that they fit with the decor of the rest of the office. They need to be functional as well. You will need to have filing cabinets for paperwork, ideally cabinets with locks.

The most important thing to remember is that the micro needs to fit into the macro and the macro needs to fit into the function and look that you want for your establishment. If this is accomplished, your establishment will be a huge asset to your business.

CHECKLIST

Have you done these things yet?

- Have you determined what you want to do in your establishment?
- What areas and area sizes do you need in order to do what you want to do in this establishment?
- _____
- _____
- Have you determined the macro and micro views of your establishment?
- What furnishings do you want to include?
- _____
- _____
- What equipment do you want to have?
- _____
- _____

SO WHAT DO YOU THINK?

1. What are the most important items to have in your establishment? Why? List them in order of importance.

2. What type of atmosphere do you want to create in your office? If you are sharing an office, what if the other people have completely different tastes? How would you handle this?

3. If you are on a limited start-up budget, what items are crucial to your business? What creative combinations can you come up with to help curtail the amount of equipment you need to purchase?