Are You Ready to Expand to a New Location?

A self-audit for practice owners considering a second or third office

Expanding to a new location is one of the highest-stakes decisions a practice owner can make. Most practices choose on gut feel — and some regret it. Use this checklist to make sure you've done the groundwork before you sign anything.

Phase 1 — Confirming Demand at Your Current Practice

■ **You've checked your monthly website traffic and know roughly how many potential new patients it represents.**

A healthy practice site driving 500–700+ visits/month signals real demand.

■ **You know your inbound call volume — and how many of those are new patient inquiries.**

■ **You're currently seeing fewer new patients than your marketing data suggests are available.**

A gap between demand and capacity is the clearest signal to expand.

■ **Your scheduling lead time for new patients exceeds 3–4 weeks consistently.**

If you're booking 6+ weeks out, you have patients you cannot serve.

■ **You've had a conversation with an advisor about whether to add staff vs. open a new location.**

Sometimes the answer is another hygienist, not another building.

Phase 2 — Evaluating the Location Itself

■ **You've assessed visibility — can the office be seen from the road?**

Storefront, medical plaza, and standalone buildings each carry different visibility value.

■ **You've assessed access — easy entry, exit, and adequate parking.**

■ **You've pulled demographic data for the 1, 3, and 5-mile radius.**

Population density and income alignment matter more than the address.

■ **You know how many competing dental offices are within 1 and 3 miles.**

■ **You've assessed daily traffic counts and proximity to anchor tenants.**

Grocery stores, pharmacies, and schools drive consistent foot traffic.

■ **You've reviewed the lease terms — length, renewal options, TI allowance, escalation caps.**

■ **You've confirmed zoning is approved (or obtainable) for dental use.**

Zoning and permitting timelines can significantly delay your opening.

Phase 3 — The Own vs. Lease Decision

■ **You've modeled the financial difference between owning and leasing over 7 years.**

A 7-year horizon is the common breakeven point for ownership to make sense.

■ **You've spoken with a dental-focused real estate advisor — not a general commercial broker.**

Specialists know build-out requirements, TI norms, and dental lease traps.

■ **You've confirmed your capital position supports the option you're considering.**

Phase 4 — Operational Readiness

■ **You have a staffing plan for the new location — not just a lease.**

A second location needs its own team pipeline and training system.

■ **Your current practice has strong enough systems to run without you daily.**

Expansion while your first location is still dependent on you is risky.

■ **You've outlined a marketing plan for the new location's first 6 months.**

How many did you check? 0 — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10

14–18	You're in a strong position to move forward confidently.
8–13	A few key gaps to close — especially in Phase 1 and Phase 3.
0–7	More groundwork needed before committing. That's a good thing to know now.

What's the one thing you'd need to know to feel truly confident about your next location?

Based on the DSN article: "Assessing Potential New Locations for Expanding Dental Practices."