



Minding your own business — ROI of digital technology

For more on this topic, go to www.dentaleconomics.com and search using the following key words: *digital technology, business of dentistry, digital images, ROI*.

While many dental practitioners prefer to concentrate solely on the “practice” of dentistry, we must also be involved with THE “BUSINESS” OF DENTISTRY. With the right dental instruments in our hands, a successful financial situation is within our grasp. With this in mind, implementing digital technology was one of the best business decisions of my professional life.

For a dentist who is just beginning a career and planning a new office, there’s no reason to invest in antiquated equipment, especially since we now live in a digital era. The competition is tough. New dentists need practices that stand out from the others. Since your new patients have probably seen other dentists before you, it is imperative to show patients that your practice is special as well as state-of-the-art.

You can start at the beginning of the appointment by taking digital images. It begins the minute the patient “senses” the difference between the feel of a comfortable sensor with rounded corners and the “cutting” sensation of traditional film. Their positive experience will continue when their images appear instantly on the computer screen, and the assistant doesn’t have to disappear from the room to develop X-ray film. Plus, patients accept radiographs, but they don’t like them because they read about the effects of radiation. When you tell them how much digital technology reduces radiation exposure, patients definitely appreciate you more.

For an experienced practitioner updating an office, anything other than going digital should be considered a downgrade. When I upgraded to digital (DEXIS intraoral and Gendex pano), I got rid of the expense of film and solutions. More importantly, I liberated my staff from the time-eating darkroom — feeding film into the processor, mounting the X-ray, messing with the developer, maintaining solutions, and cleaning the processor. Instead of interacting with patients or helping me, my assistants

were developing new X-rays, filing old X-rays, and digging through hefty charts to find the ones I needed.

Digital technology allows me to maintain more effective communication with my patients and others involved in their treatment. I can quickly e-mail digital images to patients, insurance companies, and referring dentists with a click of a mouse, for free — instead of rallying the front desk forces to manually copy X-rays and photos, prepare the package, and pay the postage to send them to patients, doctors, and especially insurance companies by snail mail (which, by the way, didn’t get that nickname because of its efficiency and speed of delivery).

Dental treatments are increasing in sophistication, and digital is imperative for the extra perspective that you need to add new procedures to your menu. My imaging software contains specialized “tools” that give me an extra return on investment. Recently, I had a complicated anterior implant case where I needed some very precise information on positioning; DEXImplant can be very helpful in these situations. It helped me get it right in just a few seconds. I can’t get that with film.

Here’s the bottom line on return on investment from digital imaging: time is worth way more than money. You can make more money, but you can never make more time, and that goes for dentists as well as their patients. A busy, successful dentist cannot afford to waste either resource. Digital imaging improves your income and your reputation — it’s a great way to “mind your own business” and invest in your future. **DE**



Time is money for dentists and patients



Digital imaging — time savings at its best

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