

You Can Become A More Productive Dentist



By Woody Oakes, DDS, FAES

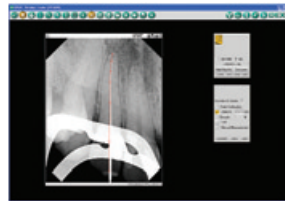
Recently, I had the pleasure of conducting a national teleseminar with Vicki McManus, RDH and Dr. Bruce Baird of The Productive Dentist Academy. During the event, Bruce shared with our 200+ listeners that although the average dentist produces about \$300/hour, by developing a more productive "mindset," production of \$1,240/hour is achievable without sacrificing the quality of the patient's dental care. Bruce accomplishes this in a number of ways including adjustments to routine procedures and more efficient use of equipment. One key aspect of his philosophy is to "buy technology that pays dividends" and yields "higher levels of performance and profitability" for the practice.

A great example of technology that gives back is digital radiography. I've been using and enjoying this technology for years. Although I know it saves time, money, and effort, I decided to put my system to a quantitative test when we were presented with a patient who needed root canal therapy on both lateral incisors. We decided to perform #10 with film and #7 using digital X-ray, timing the results. We completed #7 twice as fast as #10!

With tooth #10, the pre-op X-ray took over six minutes, then there were two additional films needed to check file length, and yet another post-op film to confirm the fill...24 minutes of time spent just getting X-rays. With #7, however, we got a digital image in six seconds, then confirmation of length and fill in less than 30 seconds. So you can see the time saved of almost 20 minutes—on one tooth!

Other timesaving considerations are retakes and positioning. When needed, retakes with film still take 6 minutes to process, and digital still is a few seconds. Also, the sensor I use has rounded corners and is smooth all around, not thin and sharp like film. The sensor's shape takes up less chair time as it can be quickly and comfortably placed, and is incredibly easy to fit around the rubber dam.

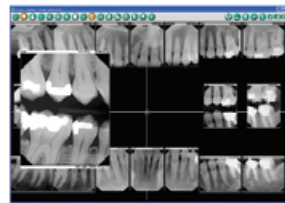
Actually, with all the time saved getting X-rays for file lengths, final measurements, etc., we can now do three laterals in 60 minutes! Our fee for a single root endo is \$427. So by using this technology, we doubled our productivity AND doubled our production from \$427/hour to \$854/hour with very little extra work. Or to look at it another way: If you only gain a 20%



From '0' to X-ray
in under 6 seconds



Save 20 minutes on each
endo procedure



Save 15 minutes per FMX

increase in productivity, at 65% overhead, your yield is a 54% increase in net income.

There's no doubt that digital radiography is a "profitable" technology. It saves money by eliminating the cost of film, film mounts, chemicals, processor maintenance, labor to develop, and the storage of traditional X-rays. It saves time on each and every procedure that you and your hygienists' perform that require X-rays. This time saved may allow your hygienist to treat one or two extra patients per day. If your average hygiene visit is \$110 and you work 190 days/year, that's an extra \$20-\$40,000!

Considering the financial benefits, there's no reason why any dentist should not move forward with digital radiography. When you use technology to "work smarter, not harder," you'll discover breakthrough techniques that will increase efficiency, productivity, and profitability in your dental practice.

Dr. Oakes is a 1974 graduate of Indian University, School of Dentistry. In 1987, he was awarded a Fellowship in the American Endodontic Society. Dr. Oakes is the CEO of Excellence In Dentistry and publisher of The Profitable Dentist. He maintains a private practice in New Albany, IN. He can be reached at Woody82647@aol.com and through the contact feature at www.theprofitabledentist.com.