

You're Going to be Spending \$50,000+ SO DON'T BLOW IT!

by Bill Rossi

According to our 2009 survey, as of this year more than 50% of dentists (54%) now have digital x-rays. Bringing computing to the operatories entails considerable expense. Usually as digital x-rays are added, other technologies are added or upgraded too, such as intra-oral cameras, patient education software, and digital record keeping. Financially speaking, this often comes out to over \$12,000 per treatment room.

The pace of bringing digital technology to the operatories is increasing. Many of you will be making these investments over the next three to four years.

Since we have and will have many clients who will be investing over \$50,000, \$100,000 and up in this technology, I have two main suggestions to get more bang for your buck:

- 1) Get professional help in specs and get bids for the equipment – “cost control”
- 2) Commit to additional training so you get “result control”

In business, costs are inevitable. A consistent theme of my advice to clients is that you have to have “result control.” That is, if you buy intra-oral cameras, you want to make sure they’re used. Half of intra-oral cameras are used less than five times per week. Almost every office with intra-oral cameras struggles with getting them to be part of the hygienists’ routine (and the hygiene department is where they can have the greatest benefit in helping the patients understand their problems and value your solutions). Lots of offices have the capability to do chartless record keeping but less than 10% are truly chart free. With this technology in the treatment rooms the hygienist (for example) can post charges, set their next appointment, use the intra-oral camera, enter the treatment plan and use the patient education software. However, usually only two or three out of these five things are routinely done.



Most dentists have neither the inclination or the time to keep up on computer software and hardware. I have seen many installations where there was no competitive bidding whatsoever. Or, once the equipment was installed it was glitchy... the digital x-rays would go down in one room now and then, the intra-oral cameras wouldn’t work well, there would be server problems, wires and cables in the way, poor monitor placement, etc.

With technology the devil is in the details: video cards, cabling, monitors, monitor position, support, warranties, digital x-ray choices, etc.

There are reputable and competent technology installation firms out there, such as Erickson Technologies 651-452-6758 and Sunset Dental Technologies 612-326-8693. However, many clients have used the local “computer guy” or just bought the hardware from the software vendor or supply company.

I recommend you check out Ted Takahashi with T2 Consulting 952-891-5177. Ted does not sell anything and makes no commission or “finder fees” on any technology recommendations. What he does is draw up the specs so you can get competitive apple to apple bids. He knows what works and he’ll help you pick the right stuff. And, furthermore, you’ll be assured that the installation will be truly functional from day one.

Whatever route you take, just remember to focus on both cost and result control! Don’t let the suppliers take your business for granted! There almost always is some bargaining room if you go through a bidding process.

Bill Rossi is actively involved in the ongoing management of over 250 upper midwest dental offices. Contact him at 952-921-3360 or through www.AdvancedPracticeManagement.com. For more information, on Ted Takahashi, read Mr. Takahashi’s article, “The Chicken or the Egg...which comes first?” at <http://advancedpracticemanagement.com/T2.pdf>.