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The Revolution's Here

While we've all been enjoying the latest push of the technological revolution in the last 20 some years as it has spread into every part of our lives (making them easier and more fulfilling), one part of that revolution is still playing catch up. The paperless and digital revolution in dental offices is still an area too heavily populated by young practitioners just out of school, and too sparsely populated by more established practices. Let's look at some of the reasons why:

- Concern that the transition will be just "too much work"—That actually proves not to be the case. An office that decides to go paperless picks its "drop-dead" date and begins using no paper charting for all patients from that day forward. As the patients come in, their information is updated in Treatment Chart and paperwork for them is scanned into VP Document. By doing this one day at a time, the job becomes manageable and is done before we know it. It's also a great way to weed out all those old charts that were still in the active file but are long past due to be archived. As time permits, we do a full audit of the paper charts to be sure no one slipped through the cracks, and then we've officially and completely joined the revolution!
- Concern that errors will be made and not caught—The fact is that we're actually seeing fewer errors in our paperless offices than in offices using paper charts. The assistants have time to be working on the computer charting as the doctor is talking, instead of waiting for the doctor to relinquish the chart and then hurriedly writing in it while escorting the patient to the front desk. This also allows more time for one last important connection with the patient before they leave the office
- Concern that the computer will go down and all data will be lost—Every paperless office needs a good

by **Pat Rosenzweig**

backup system, but so does any office that uses any type of computer scheduling and/or billing. If staff members are thoroughly coached in the importance of daily backups, there is very little data loss (if any) if the office experiences a power failure or computer glitch.

- Concern that a computer issue will cause lost production time—In the same way that the retail store pulls out the old "knuckle-buster" when the power goes out, we always have the option of putting today's notes on paper until we can enter them into the system. The real piece of good news, however, is that the days when the computer was always down are pretty much a thing of the past. Now that technicians and support staff are able to "come into the system" and assist us electronically in seconds, we have very little computer down time.
- Concern that the conversion to paperless is too expensive—This is actually my favorite objection to relinquishing paper charts. "It's just going to cost way too much to do the conversion and buy the new software and hardware." For an office that's in its early or mid years, I suggest the doctor do the astronomical math and tally up the cost of storage for current and future charts as well as the dollars spent purchasing all these paper and x-ray products... it will come to one whopping number!
- Concern that the staff will hate going paperless and have difficulty learning the process—This one couldn't be further from the truth. I've worked with staff members of all ages and computer backgrounds who absolutely love working with paperless systems because it makes their jobs so much easier.

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My final thought on this paperless/digital revolution is that your patients are a very savvy, educated group. As they see other offices heavily marketing the safety and convenience of their new technology, an office that hasn't joined the revolution starts to look a bit old fashioned and behind the times. You know your orthodontics is excellent and on a par with any other office, but when it comes to attracting patients, it's frequently the perception that counts. A modern office that's up to date with technology will get the perception nod every time. Maybe it's time for you to consider joining the revolution! ☺

About the Author



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