# 6 Tips for Transitioning to a Paperless Dental Office

by Darby TechForce

It's hard to imagine running a dental office without paper. Whether it's collecting receipts for ordered supplies, printing statements for patients, or using Post-it notes to scribble phone messages, paper will seemingly always have its place in the dental environment. While completely eliminating paper might be unrealistic, more and more practices are transitioning to what's called a "paperless" dental office.

Also called going "chartless," a paperless dental practice is one where paper usage is greatly reduced and all existing charts, forms, images, and patient records are converted to a digital format.

The primary goals of going paperless are to improve efficiency, lower costs, and increase patient satisfaction. Soon, a majority of your patients will be Millennials, and this discerning group expects its medical and dental providers to be tech-savvy. Starting the transition to paperless will keep your practice on the cutting edge of technology while streamlining daily operations so you can focus on what you're good at – treating patients.

While it's easier for a new practice to establish a paperless dental office, existing practices can achieve this goal, too. The important thing to remember is that going paperless isn't a single event, but a series of small, gradual changes. Here are six tips for easing the transition to a paperless dental office.

## 6 Tips for Transitioning to a Paperless Dental Office

Evaluate your existing processes

Think about how you currently handle making appointments, submitting insurance claims, creating treatment plans, and tracking inventory. If you're still using paper for any of these processes, see if your dental software can handle these tasks. If it can, contact your provider to arrange training. If it can't, consider switching to software that has the capabilities you're looking for.

Be realistic about your timeline

Going paperless is not an overnight event. Take it one step at a time so you don't overwhelm yourself or your staff. Set a realistic timeline that will allow everyone to adjust to the new processes and learn the new technology. Transitioning to a paperless dental office can take anywhere from six months to two years depending on which processes you're already doing digitally.

Start with practice management software

Often, the hardest part about starting a big project – like switching to a paperless dental office – is knowing where to start. If your existing practice management software isn upgrading should be your first step. Consider every component of management software that has a digital alternative.

Don't throw away your paper charts – yet

Once you convert your paper records into a digital format, it might be tempting to empty your file cabinets into the dumpster. Not only does this put your patients' privacy at risk, you might want to reference those paper charts as your team adjusts to the new changes. Over time, you'll find yourself looking at the paper charts less and less until you stop completely.

Small changes can make a big impact

There's a time and place for big investments, like new computers and intraoral cameras, but small changes can have a big impact, too. For example, an electronic signature pad, which starts at less than $200, can be used to digitally add a patient's signature to forms and receipts. This would save your front office staff the time of printing a document, having a patient sign it, and then scanning and saving the form.

Ask for help if you need it

Overhauling your existing processes and switching to digital dentistry can be overwhelming. If you don't have a dedicated IT team to help with the transition, give us a call. At Darby TechForce, we're fluent in dental IT and can walk you through every step of the process. From helping you select the right software for your needs, to installation, to making sure your digital patient records are safely stored and managed, we've got your back.

In other words, we take on the task of managing your technology so you don't have to. When you're ready to take the first step to a paperless dental office, give us a call. Our friendly dental IT experts are standing by and happy to answer your questions.

Call us at 1-800-886-2093 or send us an email to get started.