How to Help Your Dental Staff Adjust to Digital Upgrades

by Darby TechForce

By now you know that adopting new technology is key to [attracting and retaining dental patients](). Millennials are expected to outnumber Baby Boomers as the largest adult population in the U.S. by 2019. This tech-savvy generation is looking for healthcare providers that offer fast, convenient services and use the latest technology. The most successful practices will cater to this changing patient demographic by embracing digital dentistry.

So, you're convinced. You're ready to [transition to a paperless dental office](). But, your staff might be harder to convince. After years of using the same systems to keep track of health records, take x-rays, and submit insurance claims, they'll likely resist the proposed changes. In fact, some people might refuse to learn how to use the new hardware and software all together.

There's no getting around it – change can be tough. However, there are some things you can do to make the shift a bit smoother. If you're planning to make digital upgrades in your dental practice, here are a few ways you can help your staff adjust.

Explain why you're upgrading

"Why are we doing this?"

It's probably the first question your staff will ask when they hear the announcement about your new practice management software or digital imaging equipment. Give your team an honest explanation. Explain that the purpose of the digital upgrades isn't to cause frustration or push anyone out. It's to grow the practice and better serve your patients. When your staff understands why the changes are taking place, it helps take some of the resistance away.

Communicate the impact

Once you explain why you're investing in digital upgrades for your dental practice, communicate how the changes will impact your staff, their careers, your patients, and the practice overall. Emphasize that upgrading to digital will make your team's jobs easier and improve the office workflow. Explain how the skills they'll learn will advance their careers and carry into future job opportunities. Encourage your team to keep an open mind about how the new technology will make their lives better and help provide better patient care.

Invest in the appropriate training and support

Another way to help your dental staff adjust to digital upgrades is to invest in the appropriate amount of training to go with each product. When your staff is trained properly, they'll be more likely to accept the new technology.

Make sure everyone is trained individually and take the abilities of each person into consideration. It's also smart to purchase support for each of the new products in your dental office. If your staff has questions about how to perform a certain function, they'll feel at ease knowing they can pick up the phone and talk to someone who can easily help them.

Set clear yet reasonable expectations

When a member of your staff meets you with resistance, it's tempting to back down. Set clear expectations from the beginning: everyone must participate in the training; there is no opt-out. Establish a date on which you'll transition to digital, and give everyone plenty of notice. At the same time, be reasonable with your expectations and take your team's learning abilities into consideration. A bit of understanding and flexibility will go a long way towards helping your staff embrace the changes.

Provide extra support where needed

Keep track of your team's progress as they're trained on the new products. Who is struggling? Take steps to provide extra support or training for these people. One way to do this is to create a buddy system. Identify the staff members who caught on to the new technology quickly and pair them with those who need additional help. By having a go-to partner who understands how to schedule patients in the new practice management software or take digital impressions, everyone on your team will have the support they need to get up to speed.

Don't be afraid to make tough decisions

If, at the end of training, you still have a staff member who refuses to embrace the digital upgrades in your practice, assess whether the person should truly be a part of your team. Remember that this is your business, and you can't hold back an entire practice because one person doesn't want to change the way he or she does his or her job. Having harmony amongst your staff is crucial to a productive office and a successful practice, and you may need to make tough decisions to drive your business forward.

The future of dentistry is digital; let's get your team on board

Digital imaging, intraoral scanners, and paperless charting are the new standard in patient care. In order to meet your patients' expectations and grow your practice, it's important that your staff accepts and embraces new technology. While change is always hard, explaining why and how digital upgrades will improve the office workflow, investing in adequate training, and providing extra support will help your staff adjust. While you lead your team to success, we'll work behind the scenes to get your new technology up and running.

At Darby TechForce, our dental IT experts are certified in all of the hardware and software your practice needs to go digital. And, we can set them up to work together seamlessly. We're also brand agnostic, so we'll never try to sell you on a solution that's not right for your business. With two decades of experience helping dentists take their practices to the next level, we have the experience you can depend on for an efficient and successful transition to digital.

To learn more about how we can help modernize your practice, give us a call at 800-886-2093 or email us at connect@darbytechforce.com.