

DENTISTRY IS EVOLVING

By Duane Gallup MCSE— co-founder of Vital Technology Group

As the son of an Orthodontist, I grew up in the Dental industry going to trade shows from the time I could walk, albeit begrudgingly because there are a host of other places a kid can find more entertaining. During my childhood, my father's high-tech equipment consisted of a dark room with a B/W enlarger, film processors; one for photos, and the other for x-rays. As a kid, I ruined my share of his drill bits, and I was good at jumping the elastic cording off the track, remember those? They transmitted power from the electric motor in the cabinet to his drill. Talk about high-tech! His Cephalometric x-ray was crude; by way of an old-school x-ray unit shooting across the room to a stool where the patient sat with their ears in what look like a paper towel rack. To be honest, high-tech just wasn't to be found in a dental office in the 70's, & 80's and none of the equipment talked to each other.

Fast forward to today and Dental professionals can't escape technology. Not only that, but as soon as you purchase your new Equipment, the next model is introduced making the one you just purchased obsolete. What happens to the day where you could purchase a new Panoramic X-ray machine, pay it off and use it for the life of your practice? Unfortunately those days are gone. I'm aware of dozens of Digital Panoramic machines that work flawlessly, take good (still acceptable) images, but the computers that support them are aging, dying or are now running a non-HIPAA compliant operating system. Unfortunately, many Vendors would rather sell you a new Pan, than come up with a fix for your old one to work with a new computer! What's a practitioner to do?

The key is realizing that you don't have time to be a technology expert. You are your practice's CEO, CFO, and the primary earner. You already have too many hats to wear. So... do what other CEO's do. Find and hire your own Chief Technology Officer (CTO) and

Technology department. I know, you're thinking that it doesn't make financial sense for most practices to hire their own I.T. Department, but it doesn't mean the need is not there. This is where Managed Service Providers (MSP's) come into play.

Managed Service Providers (MSP's) like Vital Technology Group (VTG) offer all the same services and perform all the same tasks that an internal I.T. department would do, but at a fraction of the cost, they are designed for small business and spread their operating cost among several small businesses for a set monthly fee. Some MSP's like VTG are specialized in the Dental Market, and can provide you with advice and recommendations on up and coming Equipment purchases. They should be happy to look into whatever Equipment you are thinking about introducing to your practice, after-all much of the equipment you are considering, communicate with your other technology based products. They will need to interface with your current

Imaging and/or Practice Management systems. By hiring an MSP you have a technology team and partner in your corner. Your MSP's very existence depends on your success and they should be looking for ways to ensure it. As your Technology Partner, they have a vested interest in helping you determine if a product is a 5 year fad, or designed for long-term use. Don't be afraid to bring your MSP with you when shopping for new "Technology" based products. If your MSP like VTG, is specialized in Dentistry, then they probably have experience with the product you are considering. In fact, they can often introduce you to other practitioners that are already using it, giving you access to an un-biased reference for a given product that you won't get from the Equipment sales rep.

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