

# Technology...friend or foe?

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PEB XLDent President

Is technology your friend or your foe? As developers and implementers of software systems, we've seen it be one or the other, or both at the same time in many dental practices. In fact at times in PEB's own operational history, it's been both. Technology as both friend and foe is a real part of workflow development, and workflow outcomes in all types of organizations. It's something that can't be controlled. It can only be managed.

On June 12, 2009, we all witnessed a historical example of how advancements in technology can be both friend and foe. On this date, all broadcast networks switched over to digital only broadcasting. This means that those people who were still using rabbit ears and rooftop mounted antennas either had to go out and buy a TV converter box, purchase a new TV with a built in digital TV tuner, or subscribe to a paid TV service. Failure to act on one of these three options resulted in loss of signal – no more TV. Technology as foe may be the consensus for those people that neither planned nor prepared for this event. Those people that already had digital ready TV's were assured uninterrupted service on this date. As an added benefit, many in this group had been enjoying multimedia home entertainment experiences for years. And even more adept to this fundamental change in communication infrastructure were those people that anticipated improvements and moved on to *wireless* multimedia home entertainment *networks*! This group surely sees technology as friend.

The digital broadcasting transition is a large-scale example of how technology can affect our everyday lives. Now consider how technology advancements affect your business. Bad planning or no planning can make a big difference in the way you deliver patient care and maintain efficiencies in your operational processes, which ultimately equate to the color and/or size of your bottom line. Recently, we conducted a digital assessment for a former Dentrux user. What we found was so unbelievable, it's now become the benchmark by which we measure the complexity of all data and image consolidation conversions.

Our assessment of this seemingly high tech office identified one practice management system, four different makes of diagnostic technology, four image management software systems, and four different patient databases. Installed in various locations throughout the office were Schick sensors, Suni sensors, a digital Gendex panoramic unit, and intraoral cameras. Each system was running on an independent, closed database and in some cases an independent computer network. While from an outsider's point of view this practice appeared to offer the latest in diagnostic advancements, from an insider's view the staff was literally crippled in the delivery of patient care. Patient x-rays were being taken, but no one could get to them when they needed them. In some situations, files were getting lost due to the inconsistent record structures between systems, and trying to gather patient health history and images from all these sources to develop a treatment plan was impossible.

How did the doctor's intent to stay current and bring his practice into the modern era fail so miserably? For this practice, technology began as a friend and quickly turned into an undeniable foe.

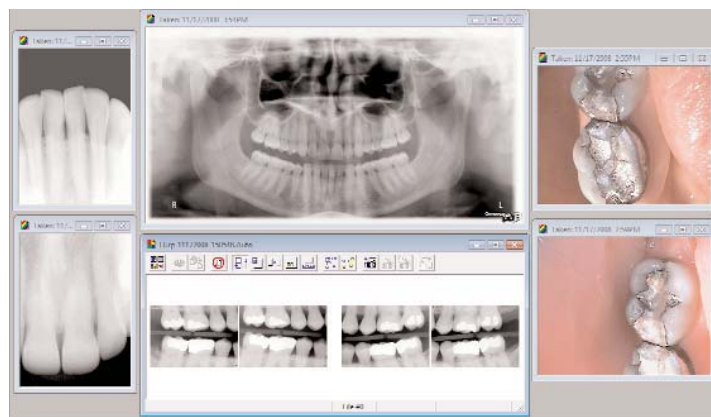


The inefficiencies resulting in the lack of an integrated solution was affecting profits, and the staff's attitude towards clinical digital technologies in general was one of negativity and resistance.

In the case of our nation's transition to digital broadcasting, the preparation began back in 1996. The U.S. Congress authorized the distribution of an additional broadcast channel to each TV station so that they could start a digital channel while simultaneously continuing their analog broadcast channel. The next stage of the plan was implemented in March of 2007 when all television receivers were required to contain a digital tuner. In addition, TV retailers were required to disclose at the point-of-sale whether or not a television included only an analog tuner. The entire process took thirteen years. Imagine what would happen to your dental office if the successful introduction of a single piece of digital x-ray equipment took that long to implement.

In the case of the practice with four different makes of digital technology, the process began over 10 years ago. The result wasn't so much a lack of planning as it was a lack of a truly integrated solution of choice at the time. When the doctor contacted XLDent, his first goal was to bring all of his existing technology purchases into one centric solution. His next goal was to make sure any technologies he would purchase in the future would be supported by that centric infrastructure. Following our assessment, we concluded that one patient record and three image conversions would be necessary to meet the first goal of bringing everything together into one database. The reason he contacted us was because of XLDent's MySQL database platform, full Suite of dental software application products, and open architecture approach to digital technologies integration, so the second goal had been met before the phone call was made.

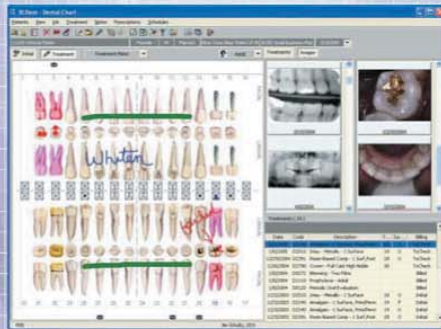
Just as a digital broadcasting infrastructure is the key to our transition to the next level of multimedia entertainment in our homes, a centric software solution is the key to the next level of paperless record keeping and diagnostic advancements in your dental office. So before you make your next digital purchase, consider the infrastructure that will support it and other purchases you make now and in the future.





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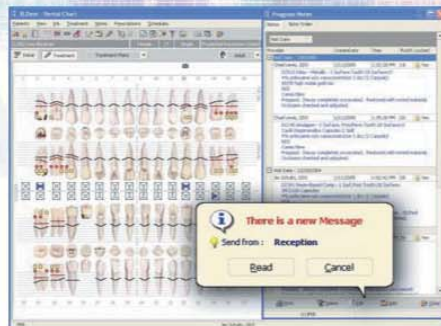


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