



## Embarking on a Digital Journey

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As you embark on taking your practice on the digital journey, effective financial planning is of course essential. This article discusses other key considerations that are essential to maximizing the benefits of digitization for both your practice and your patients.

### Decisions, Decisions

Your dental dealer can help you determine which scanner and printer make the most sense for you based on your needs, such as taking digital scans for aligner treatment, making retainers for orthodontic retention, or making implant stents to integrate with your CT scans and software. You will also want access to a support technician for additional guidance.

### What are your digital requirements?

You will need to determine your digital workflow needs based on how often you expect to use the scanner. You will then need to determine what skills will be needed to integrate the digital workflow into your practice, and who will provide back-up support when things go wrong.

### Back-up

In addition to data back-up, you will want to have technical back-up. The data from the scanner – which need to be retrievable for medico-legal purposes – must be stored on an additional hard drive, which also needs to be backed up. Digitally scanning and saving this data will free up physical storage space in your practice.

### Clinical skills

Going digital will strengthen your prepping skills, as taking a scan of your prep will let you quickly see where your crown margins are and identify any errors that need to be corrected.

### The design software

Once the scan has been done, the crown of the inlay will need to be designed. If you and your team are not used to designing crowns, inlays or bite plates online, you will need to get the necessary training from your dealer. You also need to decide if you are to be an “architect” or an “engineer.” Most dentists like to be “architects,” as they enjoy the creative process and prefer to delegate the technical design to an experienced technician and email the scan to get the digital design. If you are an “engineer,” you will want to personally scan, design and process the digital print/mill from scan through to finished product, taking complete control of the outcome, and thinking the procedure through from start to finish.



### **Patient marketing**

If yours is a patient-centric practice, you might want to use a digital newsletter to let your patients know that you have invested in exciting new digital technology. Many patients may be excited to learn that their appliance will be printed in 3D and that your ability to print appliances while they wait will make it unnecessary for them to make second visits.

### **Integrating the digital workflow with the dental technician**

If you decide to delegate to a dental technician the responsibility for designing and preparing the inlays on the software, excellent communication between the two of you will be essential.

### **How can dental team members help?**

If your medico-legal advisors have told you to keep all plaster models for many years, you can have your team scan your plaster models for safekeeping and storage so you can dispose of them and free up valuable physical storage space. Beyond that, many team members can be trained to scan models and even can scan patients under your supervision.

### **Conclusion**

Introducing digital scanning and a digital workflow can introduce a new level of profit and efficiency to your practice. To maximize the benefits of digitalization, however, it is essential to make these new digital processes “patient-centric” in order that your patients experience and appreciate the improvements in efficiency and speed that your efforts have made possible.