

What you want ain't always what you need

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So, you've settled in to your practice, got a few years under your belt and are finally taking some time to evaluate the equipment that "just came with the place."

You have all the basics covered, and cash flow says you can now look at some of the "wants" instead of just the "needs." How do you define those?

Having provided equipment for hundreds of dentists over the past 25 years, WDA Equipment Solutions can offer advice on things to consider and help you avoid mistakes.

New equipment purchases should always accomplish a goal or solve a problem that you have in your practice and generally fall into one of the following categories:

- Improved efficiency
- Improved patient services
- Improved patient perceptions
- Increased profitability and ROI (return on investment)
- Improved reliability

Ideally, a new equipment purchase will check as many of the above categories as possible.

Improved efficiency

Items in this category generally allow you and your staff to more quickly and easily perform your daily tasks. Take a few minutes to observe or talk with staff members about things in their daily routine that are sources of frustration or wasted time, such as outdated and slow computers or software.

Does your sterilization area have enough capacity to process the volume of instruments you need each day? Do you need a larger or faster ultrasonic cleaner, instrument washer or additional autoclave? If you're at maximum capacity every day or if the instruments don't flow in a linear process, these inefficiencies in your equipment and space cost time and resources that multiply every day and add up to very real yearly costs.

Equipment that improves ergonomics also falls into this category. Eliminating pain and discomfort not only improves your day, but also keeps you in your career longer and your staff happier. This includes a well-designed treatment room and seating that fits both you and your staff. Handpieces that cut faster, provide better access or offer better ergonomics decrease fatigue and speed up treatment time. Consider electric handpieces or upgrading current models.



The recent move from film-based radiography to digital radiography has had as much to do with efficiency and speed as it does diagnostic capability. Are you taking advantage of all the time-saving measures available in your imaging process?

Improved patient services

Equipment in this category helps you perform better dentistry, lessen patient discomfort, improve diagnostics and provide better outcomes.

CBCT (Cone Beam Computed Tomography) is quickly becoming the standard of care. You can't diagnose what you can't see, and while CBCT systems have a major impact on implant planning and placement, many practitioners are using them for a variety of reasons such as sleep disorders and airway assessment, TMJ treatment, endodontic and tooth fracture diagnosis and orthodontics.

Intraoral cameras have a high-tech impact and ROI for a relatively low cost. They vastly improve patient education and case acceptance, and aid in patient perception of your practice. Cameras are an invaluable tool when submitting claims to insurance for reimbursement. They provide more than just photos – they can also aid in caries and plaque detection, diagnosing leaking amalgams and offer shade matching for restorations.

Digital scanners and CAD/CAM systems improve treatment outcomes and patient comfort, all while saving time. They can have a steep learning curve, but provide significant ROI when properly utilized.

Improved patient perceptions

Look at your practice through the eyes of the patient or bring a trusted non-dental background friend into your office and ask them what they "see." Are colors and flooring dated? Do you have aged equipment or cabinetry that is falling apart, damaged or has torn upholstery? If your practice hasn't had significant equipment or cosmetic updates in the past 20 years or more, consider an update to improve the patient perception of your practice.

Make sure that the environment matches the level of care that you are providing. The latest gadget to make your life easier won't mean a thing if your patient thinks your office is stuck in the last century.

“Taking an honest look at your practice, involving your staff in decisions and investing in equipment to better your patient experience can all be wise decisions when they are well thought out and implemented.”

Increased profitability and ROI

Some equipment choices have a much greater impact on your bottom line. CAD/CAM and CBCT systems can help you control costs and better diagnose patients while keeping expenses down and allowing you to provide more services. Intraoral cameras perform well across all categories and are a worthwhile financial consideration.

Not every equipment purchase may seem like it has a direct correlation to profitability. An old dental chair can seat a patient as well as a new one, but it can cost you revenue when it's broken, has high repair costs or causes a poor patient perception of your practice and reluctance to accept your treatment. Equipment that is efficient and easy to clean may also allow you to see one or two extra patients a day, translating into higher profits or lower expenses.

Improved reliability

Just because equipment is still working doesn't mean it doesn't need to be replaced. These purchases are less “fun,” but can greatly reduce stress and frustration. At WDA Service Solutions we offer maintenance and emergency equipment

repair services for dentists and see first-hand the havoc caused by the failure of a critical piece of equipment. Items like air compressors, vacuum systems and autoclaves can shut your entire practice down for hours or even a few days. Keeping these systems maintained and updated is critical. Buying a replacement before it fails is cheap insurance.

Every practice and every dentist is different. What works for some doesn't for others. Determining what makes you tick, how your staff accepts change and what fits with both the culture of your practice and your patient base all are factors in making decisions about equipment upgrades. Taking an honest look at your practice, involving your staff in decisions and investing in equipment to better your patient experience can all be wise decisions when they are well thought out and implemented.

If you need help on where to start, have ergonomics or efficiency questions or aren't sure of the age or condition of your existing equipment, the team at WDA Equipment Solutions offers free equipment evaluations to help you make informed decisions. Call 888-213-7300 to get started.



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