



ORTHO2

The Team and Technology

by **Rosemary Bray**

A computer in an ortho office? You have **got** to be kidding! That will never happen!" These are words I must admit that I actually said in the early and mid 90's as I worked in an orthodontic practice.

My particular practice truly had a file in the office entitled "**The C Word,**" and into it went every flyer or article about the computerization of orthodontics. There were a lot papers in there from Ortho2. The folder was rather thick... and finally, close to the time I was leaving the practice to become self employed as a speaker and consultant, **my** practice was fully computerized. (Today, they are an Ortho2 client!) This was too late for me to realize the magnificence and positive effect it would have on an ortho practice.

Certainly now I can see it everywhere I travel to. So much of what we are doing today—what we think is modern and "techy"—will someday to be to our children and grandchildren as outdated as our pegboard bookkeeping system and our appointment books seem to us today. Times change, things change... and so must we.

I have said often in my lectures that **one** thing I am most certain is true about orthodontics is that the 3 areas which combine to make an ortho practice "Successful, Profitable, Quality, Happy, Harmonious, Excellent..." must be an **equal** combination of and focus on:

- 33% Clinical Excellence**
- 33% Extraordinary Service**
- 33% Great Teamwork**—includes **education** and integration of new technology

John Wooden, former very successful and famous UCLA basketball coach, brilliantly said, "It's what you learn after you know it all that really counts." Boy, is that a true statement, and it certainly applies to all of us in ortho as we adapt to the many new technologies which have entirely changed the way we practice our profession.

Computer management systems for orthodontics began in the early 80's, with Ortho2 being established in 1982. I actually learned from Dr. Bob Scholz, with Ortho2 from early on, that he obtained his first computer in December of 1984—an IBM AT with a 10 MB hard drive that ran on 8.7 MHz with a monochrome monitor—at an astronomical cost of \$8700! Today we can get so much more computer that runs so much faster, does so much more in multi-colors, weighing nothing, and costing little.

There were very few ortho offices who were trying computers in 1984... and the rest, as the saying goes, is **history**.

When bringing any new technology into an office, the **doctor** and the **team** must be totally on board, mentally and emotionally, before beginning the research and purchases.

What Makes a Team Member Stay at a Job

- 1 ~ Overall job satisfaction
- 2 ~ Being valued and appreciated
- 3 ~ Increased work knowledge **
- 4 ~ Ongoing challenge and growth **
- 5 ~ A feeling of doing something worthwhile
- 6 ~ A sense of empowerment
- 7 ~ Increased skill **

** These three areas specifically apply to the area of new technology and learning.

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Benefits of Being on a Team vs Being Solo

- 1 ~ It enhances better overall communication
- 2 ~ People appreciate the differences and strengths in each other more
- 3 ~ It stimulates greater creativity and learning
- 4 ~ It is easier to solve challenges and concerns as a group
- 5 ~ Change is more welcomed and better handled

All
of these
apply to
ortho.

Benefits of Learning & Using New Ortho Technology

- 1 ~ Overall efficiency is enhanced
- 2 ~ Time is saved by all team members
- 3 ~ Enables a more organized practice
- 4 ~ Provides hands on learning for patients and all team members
- 5 ~ Reduces (or eliminates) the "lost chart" hunts
- 6 ~ Empowers you to your patients and referrals
- 7 ~ Markets your practice as advanced, state of the art, and dedicated

Is this
all true
in your ortho
practice?
 Yes No
 Not yet

Five Most Common Mistakes When Applying New Technology

- 1 ~ No formal training. We often say, "it's too expensive, we don't have time, we can manage without" or worse, "We know this guy who is a real geek and he can..."
- 2 ~ Only a few get trained. We say, "it's easier, less down time, some are smarter than others, they can teach the rest of us, I learned that in my other office..."
- 3 ~ No follow up training. We say, "it's less costly, we got it already, we don't have time, we have to see patients..."
- 4 ~ The doctor does not get trained. We often say, "the team can teach him/her, s/he needs to see patients, we don't have the time, s/he's a geek already..."
- 5 ~ No training on the updates. We often say, "it's less expensive, we already got it (again), we need to see our patients, our good friends can show us how..."

The Doctor's Role in the Team and Technology

- 1 ~ Dr. must have a clear vision of what is expected from the technology being considered. Discuss it with others, research, compare, shop it around first!
- 2 ~ Dr. needs to communicate that vision and expectation to the entire team, not to a few, to everyone.
- 3 ~ Dr. must commit to the continued ongoing costs of technology and training and upgrading. It has to become part of the regular expected monthly budget.
- 4 ~ Dr. makes sure all get fully trained. Not a select few, everyone, including the Dr.
- 5 ~ Dr. needs to make it safe to make mistakes. Real confidence comes not from always being right, but from not fearing to be wrong. Too many team members fail to learn because they fear being proven wrong or making a mistake. Adapt a no blame environment. You will see people learn better and with less anxiety.
- 6 ~ Dr. has to continually praise, thank, and appreciate the team for the above and beyond effort to learn. (Team, you can do the same for Dr., you know.)
- 7 ~ Dr. must anticipate **change**. Just when you think "you got it," get ready, the cheese will move again! Embrace the changes.

The Team's Role in the Team and Technology

- 1 ~ We must accept that technology is here to stay—it is not going away.
- 2 ~ We must be fully trained and cross trained.
- 3 ~ We must communicate far better than we ever have in the past.
- 4 ~ We must own our own mistakes. No fear of being wrong, no "not my fault" excuses. Err, admit it, learn from it, and move on. That is how we grow.
- 5 ~ We need to welcome the education and the training—it will be forever.
- 6 ~ We should agree that the costs of all new technologies and training are well worth the money spent. We cannot be resentful of the money the practice commits to spending, nor can the team feel it is their "lost bonus or raise." No whining!
- 7 ~ We need to stay as positive as possible, even in times of stress.
- 8 ~ We must accept that change is not always comfortable, but in order to grow and learn, it is required. It is not an event, it is a process. Welcome it.

About the Author



Rosemary Bray has more than 30 years experience in the dental profession, including 16 years as an Office Manager and Treatment Coordinator in an orthodontic practice. As an orthodontic consultant and professional speaker since 1998, Rosemary has lectured nationally and internationally on a variety of topics, specializing in new patient exams, marketing, customer service, communication skills, and team building. She can be reached at 760 268-0760 or via www.rosemarybray.com.

At the 2009 Users Group Meeting, she will present "Have 'Em at Hello!" and "What Makes a Great Ortho Team?"

Integrating any new technology, system, or product into your practice requires a lot of great communication and positive attitudes. But first, the **acceptance of change** must be dealt with. Many are frozen by it, as we learn in the terrific Spencer Johnson book, *Who Moved My Cheese?* I recommend reading this before initiating any major change in the practice, or in your life for that matter!

"We have to either **move** or **be** moved." ~ Colin Powell, at a past AAO meeting.

When integrating any new technology into your great practice, stay positive and enthusiastic and quote our President Elect, saying all together, "Yes We Can!" ◊