

# Make Your Software Switch As Painless As Possible



National Technology Advisor Dan Easty offers advice to help you successfully navigate a successful software transition.

Does the idea of changing your dental practice management software system make you break out in a cold sweat? It doesn't have to be as hard as you think.

Before we get to the advice, let's talk about why dentists change software platforms in the first place. Some change because they want to better protect patient data. Others want more accessibility. And still others change because they crave new and different features they believe will benefit their practice – and their patients. I remember working with an office that had three different databases and a manual process for appointment reminders. Once I explained the need to bring it all under one umbrella, the office knew this was the best avenue to deliver a great experience for their patients.

Keep in mind, some dentists aren't just switching software – they're switching philosophies by shifting to a cloud-based experience. According to some reports, 10–20 percent of dental practices have already made this transition, and I'm sure many more will consider it in the next few years. We talk to people about the shift to the cloud all the time as part of our discussions around Fuse – our own cloud-based practice management solution.

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So, we know why dentists are making the change. But what common challenges are dentists running into when changing software platforms?

- **Data conversion and migration**

In essence, replacing long-time paper charts with digital data. As you can imagine, this is a time-consuming process. And protecting confidential patient data is absolutely paramount. So, dentists are constantly concerned with how this data migration will work.

- **Retraining staff**

In some cases, dental practices have used the same software for 20-plus years – now, they’re changing to an entirely new system. That often means new workflows, structures and processes. Additionally, even if the new system promises more efficiency and better patient care, it doesn’t mean it will be easy for the team.

- **Communication**

I’ve worked with some practices where I show up the first day of the implementation and the team is wondering why I am there.

**Bottom line:** there is no shortage of potential pitfalls. But there are ways to help mitigate these concerns and make the process less painful. After being a part of hundreds of software system changes for customers over the years, I’ve noticed three steps that dentists can take to help make the process a little easier:

### 1. RESEARCH

Make sure you take ample time to investigate all your software options on the front end. Ask for demos. And be sure to ask the right – and hard – questions. Will the company show you what your data will look like in the new system? What data will convert and what won’t? What kinds of training and support does the company offer? Are they actively developing their software? How long have they been around? Does your current hardware need to be updated, too? Do your due diligence to make sure there are no surprises when you start implementation.

### 2. ASK ABOUT KEY INTEGRATIONS

You most likely use other technology in your office: intraoral cameras, digital imaging, etc. How will your new software “talk” to those tools and technologies?

What other integrations does the software provide, especially with third-party vendors? Does it have agreements with other products? Make sure your new software works with everything else in your office, too.

### 3. INVEST IN YOUR TEAM

An investment in new software is a big deal. But in order to optimize your software investment, you’ll want to also invest in your team. Be sure to focus on training and ongoing learning to make sure you’re utilizing all the features of the new software. Make time for this training – and remember, as adult learners, we often need to understand the “why.” Allow even more time for the team to adopt the new processes and understand what’s happening and the rationale behind it.

My final piece of advice? Be sure to celebrate small victories along the way. Changing software systems requires hard work, patience and resiliency on the part of your team. Make sure you’re taking time to acknowledge that and highlight wins as you progress through this journey.

*Dan Easty is a National Technology Advisor for Patterson Dental. He has spent over 13 years educating and training hundreds of offices to become paperless and implement technology into their practices. ●*



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