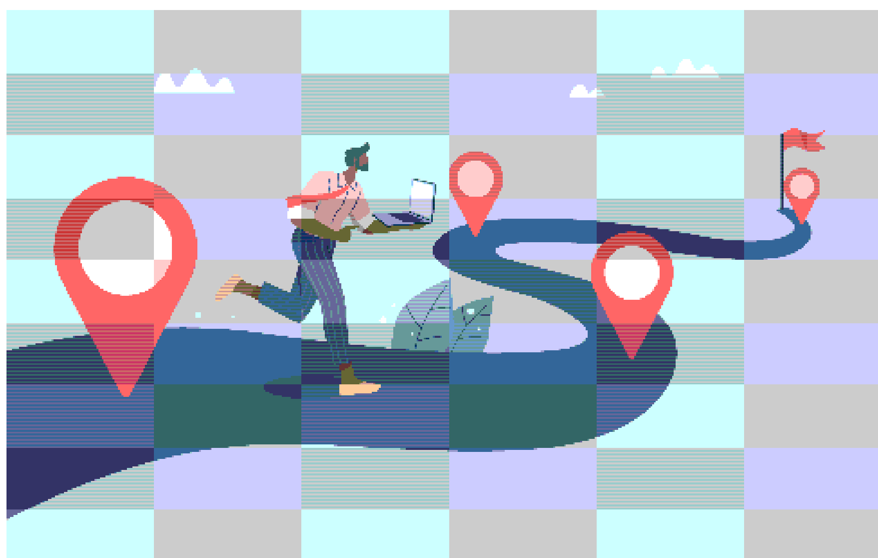
PATTERSON DENTAL

FROM HESITATION TO OPPORTUNITY: A ROADMAP TO RETHINKING TECHNOLOGY INVESTMENTS

These practical strategies will strengthen your fee schedules, help you negotiate better contracts and improve cash flow.

For many dentists, investing in new equipment or technology is as much an emotional decision as a financial one. The benefits, such as greater efficiency, expanded services and increased production, are clear, but so are the perceived risks: significant upfront costs, disruption to daily workflows and uncertainty about return on investment. That hesitation can lead practices to delay decisions that may already be limiting growth.



According to Patterson Dental Territory Representative Lisa Davis, one of the biggest barriers isn't resistance but uncertainty. "Most of it's just a lack of knowledge. They don't know what they don't know," she said.

BEGIN HERE: THE PROBLEM, NOT THE PRODUCT

Rather than leading with equipment specifications or pricing, Davis begins conversations with customers by diagnosing the practice. "Our role is to ask questions about where their pain points are and to share what we know about technology that provides solutions," she explained.

Those pain points aren't always what dentists expect. They can be physical, such as back or neck problems from excessive twisting while working on a patient, or operational, such as inefficient scheduling or underutilized production time.

By first identifying those issues, the conversation naturally shifts from cost to value. "When I say, 'Okay, Solea is going to solve all those issues. This is what it costs,' they already know the value and what it will do for them," said Davis.

Focusing on problem-solving frequently leads to a learning moment that results in a deeper understanding of the benefits technology provides.

Also, many of those pain points stem from perspective. As Davis noted, some dentists become so focused on the day-to-day demands of running a practice that they lose sight of what's possible. "They kind of get in their own walls. Those are the only walls that they know," she said. That mindset can make long-standing workflows feel "good enough," even when they quietly limit efficiency, production and clinical options.

UNEARTH THE HIDDEN COSTS OF WAITING

One of the more difficult conversations concerns timing. Many practices delay investments, waiting for the "right moment," but that delay can carry a cost.

"Yes," Davis said when asked whether postponing technology investments can impact a practice financially. She cited CBCT imaging as a clear example. Without it, practices may overlook treatment opportunities already in their patient base. Even improving basic diagnostics can generate meaningful revenue.

THE REAL COST OF WAITING

It's easy to postpone a major purchase, but the impact of waiting frequently goes unnoticed. Consider the following effects:

- **Missed production opportunities:** Undiagnosed treatment without advanced imaging
- **Underutilized chair time:** Multi-visit procedures that could be completed in one
- **Referral leakage:** Procedures sent out that could be kept in-house
- **Team frustration:** Outdated equipment that impacts efficiency and morale
- **Patient experience:** Longer treatment timelines and more appointments

As Davis noted, even something as simple as updating diagnostic protocols can begin generating revenue that offsets the cost of new technology.

"You're not even taking pans…just catching your patients up on pans – that's X dollars right there, which more than pays for the CBCT," Davis explained.

The same principle applies across workflows. Two-visit crown procedures, for example, can quietly erode productivity. "Those two-step crown appointments are clogging up your schedule with no production," noted Davis. "If you could finish that in one prep appointment, would that help you open up your schedule to get more production?" In that sense, the question isn't just whether a practice can afford to invest; it's whether it can afford not to.

DISCOVER TECHNOLOGY'S REAL-WORLD IMPACT

A key part of Davis's role is helping dentists connect technology to everyday outcomes they can understand both financially and clinically. "If I do this, I can get this and it will solve this problem for me and affect my business this much," she said, describing how she frames the conversation.

Davis breaks down costs and efficiencies into practical terms. For example, in-office milling can reduce lab fees, eliminate temporaries and condense treatment into a single visit. "Your crowns are currently $150 when you send them to the lab. If you mill them here, it's $40, and you don't need temporaries or impression material," Davis explained.

Just as important, technology can unlock procedures that dentists currently refer out. "I try hard to help my doctors keep as much in-house as they can handle," noted Davis.

In one case, a practice that referred out a high volume of endodontic procedures realized it could increase production by $200,000 simply by keeping those cases in-house, ultimately exceeding that amount after investing in training and workflow changes.

Davis also emphasized that how the dentist communicates treatment plays a role in realizing its value. Even with the right technology in place, case acceptance can hinge on how dentists frame the conversation. She cautions against minimizing treatment with phrases like "it's just a small cavity" or "we'll watch it," noting that such messages can unintentionally downplay the importance of care. Instead, being more deliberate in how treatment is presented can help patients better understand both the need and the value of what's being recommended.

5 QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE YOU INVEST

Before committing to new equipment or technology, ask yourself:

1. What problem am I trying to solve? (Clinical, operational, or physical)
2. Where am I currently losing time or production?
3. What procedures am I referring out that I could keep in-house?
4. How would this change my daily workflow – or my team's?
5. What would success look like 12 months after implementation?

These questions can help clarify whether an investment aligns with your practice goals, or if you're simply reacting to trends.

GUIDE WITH STRUCTURE AND CONSULTATION

Although each practice is different, Davis follows a consistent process that guides dentists from initial curiosity to confident decision-making. It begins with discovery: understanding what the practice currently does, where it aims to grow and what gaps exist.

"If you could do implants, would you? If you could do endo, would you?" she said, describing the types of questions she asks early on.

From there, the process typically includes:

- Demonstrating how a solution fits into the practice
- Arranging a hands-on demo or live event
- Reviewing the financial picture
- Connecting the dentist with a peer who already uses the technology

"Don't hear it from me; hear it from the horse's mouth," Davis said about peer-to-peer conversations. Throughout, she emphasizes clear next steps. "Setting the follow-up and setting the expectations are key," explained Davis. Just as important, those follow-ups are never just check-ins. "I always bring a value-add, something that helps their decision," she said.

CHART A PATH TO REDUCED RISK

Beyond cost, implementation – training, downtime, team engagement and acceptance – can be another major source of anxiety. Davis addresses these concerns directly. "You're going to slow down to speed up," she tells dentists when introducing new systems.

By setting realistic expectations upfront, Patterson territory reps like Davis help practices prepare for the learning curve and the payoff that follows. "It's about how we're going to hold their hands to be successful with the technology," she said. That support is critical, especially when adoption stalls. "I don't want them buying any of it and having it sit there and collect dust," Davis added.

Ultimately, the most meaningful return on technology isn't just financial; it's time. "Time is one commodity we can never get back," said Davis. Whether that means creating space for additional procedures, reducing no-production chair time or simply ending the day earlier, reclaiming time can be just as valuable as increasing revenue and is often a more immediate, tangible benefit for both dentists and their teams.

NAVIGATE A COMPLEX TECHNOLOGY LANDSCAPE

Dentists now face more choices than ever, from imaging and CAD/CAM to lasers and 3D printing. That abundance of options can create its own form of paralysis. Davis helps practices focus by pinpointing where they can have the greatest immediate impact. "If they don't have a pan or a CBCT, it's going to start there because they're going to find the dentistry, and it's going to deliver an instant ROI," she said.

From there, decisions are guided by what the practice lacks and what will most directly affect the bottom line. "What could be the biggest game-changer for their bottom line? That's when we find the solution that best fits the missing bucket," said Davis.

PLAN FOR THE FUTURE – AND THE PRESENT

For some dentists, especially those nearing retirement, the hesitation to invest can be even stronger. But Davis encourages them to look beyond the immediate horizon. "In five years, when you're looking to sell your practice, you'll get the most value if you have at least some technology," she said.

Younger dentists entering the market expect a modern, digital workflow, and buyers factor that expectation into valuations. In one case, a dentist who was ready to retire instead invested in CAD/CAM technology, revitalized his practice and ultimately sold it for significantly more than expected. "He ended up turning it into a $5 million GP practice because of CEREC," reported Davis.

PASSION, PROCESS, PERSPECTIVE

At its core, Davis sees her role as equal parts consultant and educator. "You have to have passion and a process, and you've got to walk them through it," she said.

For dentists considering a major investment, that guidance can make the difference between hesitation and action, and between maintaining the status quo and reaching new levels of growth. ●