



How to Bring Optimal Efficiency to Your Dental Practice

A guide to using cloud-based practice management software to improve the efficiency and convenience of your dental practice's daily operations.

Table of Contents

- How Efficient is Your Practice? 4
- Task: Patient Check-in 5
- Task: Scheduling 6
- Task: Managing Patient Records 7
- Task: Patient Communications 8
- Task: Billing 9
- Task: Training Your Team 10
- Task: Backing Up Your Data 11
- Task: Keeping Your Software Current 12
- Task: Dealing With IT Issues 13
- Task: Keeping Patient Information Secure 14

How Efficient is Your Practice?



You hate to admit it, but you know your practice isn't as efficient as it could be. Sure, you and your team members do your best to streamline tasks and save time, but it never seems to be enough. So instead of keeping your days smooth and stress-free, you often find yourself struggling to stick to the schedule as you deal with the daily chaos that comes with practicing dentistry.

Practice inefficiencies not only cause you undue stress and frustration, they also cost you money. Instead of focusing on treating patients or educating them about the importance of accepting treatment, you're dealing with IT issues or trying to figure out the best way to back up your data.

To improve patient care and grow your bottom line, you have to find ways to make your practice more efficient. Investing in the right practice management system is one of the best ways to make that happen.

Cloud-based practice management solutions, like Dentrix Ascend, help make practices more efficient in a variety of areas, from patient check in to billing to patient communications. Follow this guide to learn some of the ways cutting edge practice management software can streamline your workflow, make common tasks more efficient, and free you up to focus on not only providing patients with the best care but also the best experience possible.



Cloud Benefit

55 Percent of cloud users listed efficiency as the biggest benefit of moving to the cloud.

Source: CDW's 2013 State of the Cloud Report

Task: Patient Check-in



Checking patients in shouldn't be a hassle, but it often takes more time than it should, leaving team members feeling frazzled. Cloud-based practice management software can streamline the process in your practice. A Patient Overview feature, like the one found in Dentrix Ascend, makes it easy to get detailed patient information in just one click.

Having access to everything you need to know about patients all on one organized screen speeds up the check-in process—freeing up your front office to focus on other priorities, such as giving patients a warm welcome and answering any questions they might have before their appointment.



Tracking Insurance

Dentrix Ascend manages up to 10 insurance plans for every patient. The Insurance Manager helps your office track the current eligibility of each patient and archives any expired plans, making this time consuming process much more efficient.

Task: Scheduling



When your schedule is a mess, your production numbers will suffer. If you want an efficient practice, your schedule needs to run like a well-oiled machine.

In cloud-based practice management software everyone has access to the schedule at all times, so you and your team members are always on the same page, making staff coordination easy.

Drs. Jonny and Elliott Brennan, of Brennan Dental in Arizona, also like the patient routing feature of Dentrrix Ascend and the efficiencies it provides. This feature can be found on the left hand side of the screen, and shows all the patients scheduled for the day and where they are in the process, whether they've checked in or are ready to check out. This helps ensure everyone knows exactly where patients are, improving patient flow and keeping everyone on the same page.

If your practice management is on the cloud, you can access your schedule after hours, no matter where you are, whether you want to make a change or see when your first patient is arriving the next day. You can do this all from your own home, helping you prepare for a smooth, stress-free day.



Did You Know?

Cloud-based practice management also can improve efficiencies for dentists who own multiple practices. You can move from office to office without maintaining separate practice management systems or replicating patient files. And it gives your staff the ability to work remotely, and for you to offer variable work hours.

Task: Managing Patient Records



Finding what you need in a patient record isn't always easy. The patient profile is a huge time-saver, because it gives you all the information you need about a patient all on one page. You can also track referrals, manage family and guarantor relationships, and add personal notes.

When it's time to update patient records, you can easily add documents to patient files, upload images and assign tags to documents to make them easy to search. You can quickly add recare plans based on several routine treatments, select from a catalog of existing medical alerts, create custom alerts and mark alerts as high priority to ensure they're visible every time you open a patient's file.

The drag-and-drop treatment planner helps you quickly create, present and schedule cases, generate pre-authorizations, and track which cases are presented, accepted and rejected. And the ledger, organized by procedure, makes it easy to provide fast responses to patient inquiries.

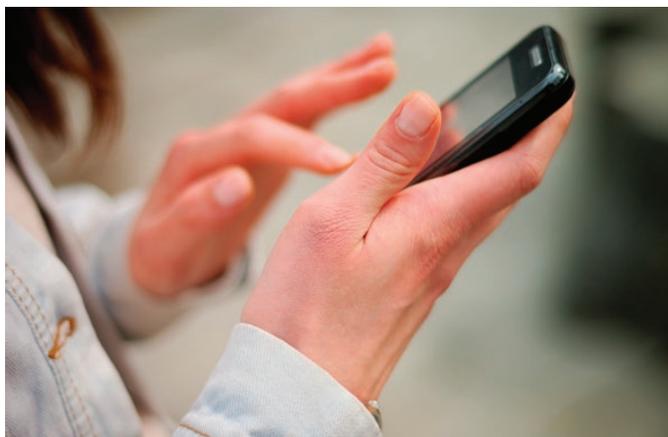
And of course, because you're on the cloud, you can access patient records from any device you choose whether it's a Mac, a PC or an iPad. Everyone on your team has the same experience, no matter where or when they log on.



The User Profile

With a cloud based system, your user profile follows you around from computer to computer, Dr. Elliott Brennan said. You can customize your profile to give you different notifications, such as a ring to let you know a patient has arrived, or is ready to be seen. No matter where you log in, you have access to your individual profile.

Task: Patient Communications



When Drs. Jonny and Elliott Brennan worked at other practices, they saw a lot of time and money wasted on patient communications. Patient communications consisted of snail mailing appointment confirmations and postcards, which was pretty time consuming and inefficient.

Today patient communications in their practice is automated through cloud-based practice management software. They have the ability to text and email their patients appointment reminders, and to send customized emails to selected parts of their patient base.

“Texting is really handy for a lot of the quick communication of confirming appointments and making sure we don’t get no-shows,” Dr. Elliott Brennan said, explaining how automated patient communication makes the practice more efficient. “And we’ve shaved off so much wasted time with printing and postage and sending out all those letters.”

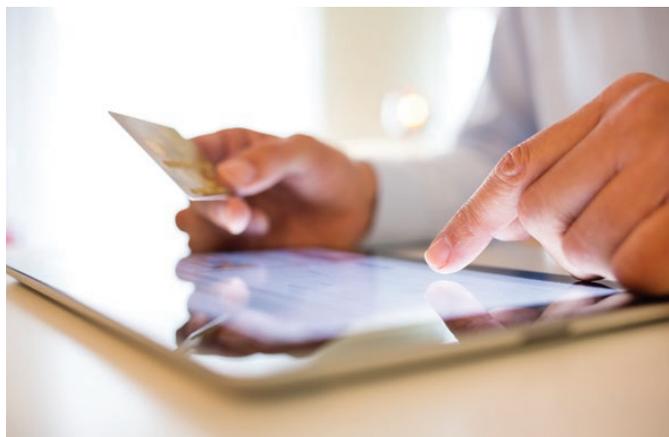
Cloud-based practice management runs repetitive tasks, such as confirming appointments and reaching out to past due patients, in the background, so you don’t have to spend hours preparing mailings, or calling patients on the phone. This not only helps ensure you get more patients in the chair, it also helps you run a smoother, more streamlined practice.



It Helps With Office Communication Too

The cloud helps Drs. Jonny and Elliott Brennan and the rest of their team communicate better, Dr. Jonny Brennan said. They can access files at the same time and updates are shown in real time. Even if one of the doctors is away, he can access patient records, the schedule—anything he needs—and address any questions that come up. This all helps keep the practice running smoothly, saving everyone the stress and frustration that comes with poor communication.

Task: Billing



This can be time consuming, but Drs. Jonny and Elliott Brennan have found a way to make it seamless. A third party company processes their billing and insurance claims for them, and because the practice uses cloud-based practice management software, a representative is able to log in to the software and access everything needed to complete the process.

The fact the doctors can access their practice management solution from any computer that has a browser, no matter where they are, also makes billing more efficient, Dr. Elliott Brennan said.

“A lot of the correspondence I have with the accountant or bookkeeper comes when I’m at home,” he said. “Rather than just flagging the email and waiting to respond until I get to the office, I can just open my laptop and look at what our accounts receivable are. I can check billing at any time. It’s nice to be able to keep a beat on your practice while you’re away.”



Billing Benefits

Dentrix Ascend lets you sort your ledger history by procedures and provide fast responses to patient inquiries. You can quickly create walkout statements, calculate payments, and apply payments to specific procedures.

Task: Training Your Team



For your office to operate efficiently, your team members need to be comfortable using the products and technologies you implement. That means providing them with the training they need, and investing in products that have short learning curves.

Some cloud-based practice management systems come with intuitive user-interfaces that make the transition smooth.

“This is probably unique to our practice, but we hired two front office girls with no dental experience at all,” Dr. Elliott Brennan said. “We did the Dentrix Ascend training with them and they picked it up pretty quickly. We’re in an Internet generation, and a Web page based software is similar to everything else they do. Another huge training benefit is if they’re new and not getting enough experience at work, they can log in at home and spend as much time as they need getting familiar with the software.”

Once team members are comfortable using the cloud-based system, they’ll find there are many ways it makes them more efficient. The clean user interface naturally walks them through routine work, identifying problems and providing prioritized solutions to help your office reach its goals, and make your team more efficient. A to-do list helps keep them on track so no important tasks fall through the cracks, ensuring your team members are productive.



Creating Practice Reports

While many dentists think of creating practice reports as a chore, it doesn’t have to be. Dentrix Ascend’s drag-and-drop interface allows you to quickly create customized reports. You can get charts and graphs to search your practice data with one click. You can also drill down for more details or export your reports to multiple formats for further analysis.

Task: Backing Up Your Data



System failures are common, which is why you take special care to back up your data. One equipment failure or natural disaster could wipe out all your patient files.

The problem is, manually backing up your files is not only inefficient, it's also not very effective. That's why practices lose their data 40 to 60 percent of the time after a system failure. Dentists think they're backing up their data when they're really not, because they depend on processes that just don't work.

Cloud-based practice management makes data backup more efficient. In fact, you don't have to worry about it at all. Every server, hard drive and other major hardware component in the data center is backed up immediately. Not only that, a staff of IT professionals monitors and validates all these backups. The result? Your data stays complete and up-to-date, without you ever having to think about it. And that means if there's a failure, you can access your data immediately.

Hardware will fail and local system crashes will happen, but they don't have to bring stress and chaos to your day. With cloud-based practice management, you no longer need to rely on inefficient systems to back up your data. It's done for you automatically.



Cloud-based Server Tip

When you're choosing a cloud-based server provider, make sure the company you go with stores your data in two different locations in separate geographic zones. That way, you don't have to worry about a natural disaster destroying both your primary system and your backups

Task: Keeping Your Software Current



With traditional practice management software, you spend a lot of time performing updates—time that could be spent treating and educating patients. That’s one of the main reasons Drs. Jonny and Elliott Brennan opted for a cloud-based solution instead.

“Cloud-based software stays live and up-to-date without us needing to keep tabs on updates coming out, wondering if those updates have been tested and if we need to update,” Dr. Jonny Brennan said. “We have the latest, up-to-date software without worrying about software crashes.”

The software updates every few weeks based on customer feedback, and all users have to do to access those updates is log in—a much more efficient way to handle upgrades.

Dr. Elliott Brennan also likes the fact he doesn’t have to worry about managing licenses for software on different computers, which could easily turn into a nightmare. With cloud-based software, all he has to do is sign each user up—there’s no need to keep track of discs or licenses.



24/7 Protection

The data redundancy cloud-based practice management offers protects your systems at all times, even if you fall victim to a natural disaster. The redundant data center can be online within 48 hours. And your information is protected with tape backup at the data center.

Task: Dealing With IT Issues



As a dentist, you should spend your time treating patients, not troubleshooting the IT problems that are sure to come up from time to time. Yet, when a server goes down, you often find yourself doing just that—turning your once streamlined day into an inefficient mess. And of course you usually end up calling an IT specialist anyway, wasting more time as you wait for the specialist to arrive and then fix whatever the problem is.

Cloud-based practice management virtually eliminates these costly IT headaches. You won't need to store and maintain nearly as much equipment, and if you ever do have a problem, you're covered by a team of experts who are constantly making improvements to the data centers. That means you no longer have to worry about getting behind schedule because you're trying to fix an IT issue. Someone else is working in the background to do it for you.



It Doesn't Slow You Down

While your practice management system will likely be your primary cloud-based application, think about other practice applications and services you might want to move to the cloud. You don't have to move everything all at once, but having a plan in place will help keep you focused and moving toward specific goals.

Task: Keeping Patient Information Secure



It's up to you to keep your patient information safe and to make sure you are meeting regulatory requirements.

The cloud-based Dentrix Ascend platform provides protection of patient data as it is transferred over the internet to our cloud-based servers, and once it is on our servers. Dentrix Ascend supports Transport Layer Security(TLS) security to protect your data in motion. Dentrix Ascend stores practice data in physically secure data centers monitored using various security measures.

To give you even more peace of mind, users must have passwords to access patient information. All activity is logged, creating a security audit trail so you can monitor every authorized user. After 10 minutes of inactivity, users are logged off.

You need to keep your information safe, and the thought of patient information being stolen certainly shouldn't be keeping you up at night. Finding a cloud-based practice management system that keeps your data safe will allow you to focus on running an efficient, productive practice.



Secure Solutions

Losing or exposing patient information can put your practice out of business—leading to one of the most stressful situations you've ever faced. Cloud-based solutions such as Dentrix Ascend help protect you from various threats, including:

- Unauthorized release
- Lost productivity
- Virus and malware infection
- Backup failures

“If you’re looking to grow your practice, and you want to be on the forefront of innovation and you want to be as progressive as possible in dentistry today and up to speed on what’s out there, go with a cloud-based system.”

~ Dr. Eric Osmolinski DMD