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Is a Cloud-Based System Right for Your Office?

The Benefits of the cloud model in dentistry

This paper summarizes the advantages of a cloud-based system for a dental practice and compares it to a traditional in-office system. The fundamental differences between the two are the cost, location, and ownership of the hardware and software.

Benefits of a Cloud-Based System

- Round-the-clock access
- Multiple location access
- Hardware diversity
- Automatic updates
- Automatic data backup
- Lower IT demands

Cloud-based dental management systems are a viable alternative to in-office systems. They allow dental practices to shift the responsibility and costs of setting up and maintaining an IT infrastructure in their offices, which can significantly reduce costs and the chance for patient data to be lost or stolen.

Traditional In-Office Systems Are the Old Norm

In a traditional setup, you own the individual PCs, servers, applications and other programs and equipment that comprise your dental management system. This model is a natural outgrowth of the personal computing revolution, started in the early 1980s, where a user owns the PC that runs the software and stores the data.

The primary benefit of this system is control. By owning the software and hardware and maintaining both in your dental offices, you are in position to ensure the data is secure and your patient information is kept private. These are two major concerns for organizations that must comply with various federal and state regulations.

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In-Office Systems Are Expensive to Purchase and Difficult to Support

The downsides to an in-office system are that it is only available to your staff while they are at the practice; it can be expensive and a nuisance to keep the server operating and up to date; and you must spend time and effort installing the software whenever a new version or fixes are released. Dental practices must:

- Monitor the firewall

- Respond to security alerts

- Apply the latest security patches

- Secure patient and billing information from hackers.

- Pay licensing fees for traditional dental software

- Perform daily, time-consuming manual backups to prevent losing patient data in the event of a crash or other problem.

- Install software updates.

- Worry about the server with patient data being stolen during a break-in.

Cloud Is Just Another Word for the Internet

Until a few years ago, dental practices had no choice but to purchase an in-office management system. But now cloud-based systems offer practical alternatives. In simple terms, with cloud computing, everything that typically runs on the server in your office is handled by a service provider in a data center and delivered to you over the Internet. This is called software as a service (SaaS). With SaaS, you run your practice management system—from patient scheduling to treatment planning—and access your data as if it were in your office, but the system is actually running over the Internet (the word cloud is a metaphor for the Internet).

You access these services using the same web browser that you use to search and do other things on the Internet—from any computer anywhere in the world, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Many business owners prefer using cloud services because this model lets them focus on their business or practice while someone else maintains the technology.

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"In an age when health information is stored and transported on portable devices such as laptops, tablets and mobile phones, special attention must be paid to safeguarding the information held on these devices," OCR director Leon Rodriguez said in a statement.

Gmail and **Amazon.com** are two examples of cloud-based computing. For example, instead of purchasing an email application like Outlook and running it on a PC that you own and maintain, you can access your email account from any computer with Internet access. You can send and receive emails and store them on Gmail servers just as if they were on your local computer, yet you never have to purchase or maintain any software.

The Benefits of a Cloud Model in Dentistry

The primary benefits of cloud computing are convenience, and saving money and time. With a cloud-based solution, you can:

- Access your practice management system—charting, billing, scheduling, X-rays, prescriptions, patient data and more—from any location even when traveling.

- Practice in multiple places, moving from office to office without maintaining separate practice management systems or replicating patient files.

- Use any operating system. Because cloud computing is browser-based, staff can work on whichever operating system or device they choose: PCs, Macs, iPads, laptops and more. You could even run a Mac at the front desk, run PCs in the operatories and access patient data from home on an iPad.

- Back up information automatically every time you make a change to patient files, and store that information in remotely located data centers with the latest disaster recovery technology.

- Never have to download, upgrade or install software again.

- ignificantly reduce the time and money you spend on IT issues, because experts are maintaining and supporting the system.

High Levels of Protection

The principal benefit of an in-office dental management system is control, especially of your data. But cloud-based systems can offer high levels of protection. For example, Dentrix Ascend, the cloud-based practice management system from Henry Schein, offers the following benefits:

- Transport Layer Security (TLS) technology to protect data as it moves between a user's browser and the cloud-based server.

- Data and activity logging to create a security audit trail that practices can use to track how each user is accessing and using patient information.

- Rights administration allows practices to control exactly which information each user can see, access, modify and delete—based on their roles and responsibilities.

- Automatic logout after a specified period of inactivity for added security.

- Security monitoring to detect unauthorized access attempts, denial of service attacks and network slowdowns.

- Security audits are done by security experts to identify possible system vulnerabilities and weaknesses.

- Data protection that includes multiple, physically secure data centers with fully redundant power, application servers, routers, bandwidth and data storage.

- Complete, automatic backup and disaster recovery with full tape backup, offsite storage and a comprehensive disaster recovery plan to ensure practices can regain full access to their system in case of a catastrophic event.

For More Information

If you are interested in finding out more about a cloud-based dental management system, please visit **www.DentrixAscend.com**.

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