It is a new year… and it is time for change. As we contemplate what transpired in 2018, we must also think about what will happen in 2019. In many ways the dental industry is at a crossroads of sorts, the investment in analogue solutions has been a mainstay of our educational initiatives and daily clinical practices for more than a millennium. We are now closing in on all-digital solutions for most procedures in dentistry, including crown-and-bridge, orthodontics, porcelain laminate veneers, dentures, surgical placement of dental implants, and implant restorations. Of course, moving from analogue to digital requires a behavioural change. Can we exist in an all-digital world? Is this the future of dentistry? Thus, the crossroads of change.

Besides a behaviour change in order to adopt a digital workflow, we must first invest in new equipment and learn the new digital language that is necessary to move pixels and voxels around on our LCD computer monitors to design new smiles, diagnose pathology, or to place implants in the correct positions to support a new occlusion. The move from analogue is not easy because of the monetary investment and the time necessary to learn new ways to communicate our treatment plans and turn them into reality. Dentists are truly artists of the oral cavity; however, as I have stated many times, we are really the “architects and the engineers” of the oral cavity—and we now have some very powerful digital tools to create the blueprints necessary to achieve success. Clinicians used to using their well-trained hands to sculpt a beautiful functional and aesthetic result intraorally, are now using their hands to move a mouse around a screen to create a virtual restoration with the same outcome. It is a behavioural change for sure, but one that brings wonder and excitement to those who embrace the potential of the digital world.

Fortunately, many dental schools have made the change, and are now investing in the proper equipment (with thanks to the dedicated manufacturers who offer their assistance) to educate and train the next generation of clinicians to be proficient in the digital workflow that exists today, and that will continue to evolve for years to come. Therefore, change was necessary to the standard “analogue” dental curriculum to insure future progress. We are fortunate that Dental Tribune International is also a partner in this digital evolution—not only offering physical publications, but a strong online presence to help spread the world to our global community. Let’s see what change is in store for 2019.

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