We all know that the landscape of our profession has changed drastically during the past decade. PPO insurance plans dominate the market, and most of them continue to cut reimbursements. Corporate dentistry has come in with huge marketing budgets aimed at attracting patients based on convenience and lower fees that a single practitioner just cannot compete well with. Dental schools are pumping out large numbers of new dentists, which is increasing competition in the marketplace. More and more offices are seeing their overheads creeping up close to 75 percent. Doctors are burning out as they struggle with a lack of profitability. What is the solution?

I have spent the last 20 years traveling across the world, teaching dentists about CAD/CAM. I have found that I have learned quite a bit from those kind enough to share their stories with me. Anecdotally, I have heard stories from doctors who were going to sell their practices and find another career because they just didn’t enjoy running the office anymore. They add a CAD/CAM system, and they become reenergized to do more dentistry.

Henry Schein has also confirmed that it sees a 30 percent increase in dental supplies sold to doctors who add CAD/CAM systems, which increases to 57 percent if you add the blocks as well. With a scan-only system, the company sees a 9 percent increase. This increase is due to more dentistry being sold and done because doctors and staff are excited about what they now have to offer. It becomes fun again.

Many doctors out there hear what CAD/CAM has done for other practices and think, “That’s good for you, but that won’t work in my practice.”

I challenge you to start by analyzing your practice. Enlist Henry Schein to do a Dental Practice Analysis (DPAT) for you. It will show you how to tap into the potential that is already there. It will show you what the return on investment would be for CAD/CAM in terms of the number of crowns or other indirect restorations your office has provided.

Many DPATs reveal a lab bill that is disproportionate to the gross revenue. Often times it shows that new patient flow is lagging. Once armed with this information, you can address the needs of your practice. Many doctors have no idea that starting the digital cascade with a CAD/CAM system solves issues with profitability almost immediately.

This technology will reduce your lab bill by 4 percent minimum. It will help differentiate your practice. One survey done by a technology company indicated that patients who see a CAD/CAM dentist are more likely to refer their friends and family by 91 percent.

Adding CAD/CAM to your practice is just the tip of the iceberg to becoming more efficient and profitable. With this technology, PPO participation becomes feasible because now the cost to make the crown is only $30, which is the cost of the block.

Offering single-visit dentistry becomes another arena to leverage. By getting the patient to stay for treatment in one visit, it cuts down on the likelihood off no-shows or cancellations, you lose the expense of turning over the room, and you regain 30 minutes of unproductive chair time that would be lost because of the cementation appointment.

Not to mention, patients today want things now. They don’t want to wait two to three weeks to come back.

Often doctors find that CAD/CAM is the springboard into the rest of the digital arena. They often add CBCT technology, which then allows them to couple it with their CAD system to provide implants and Invisalign, as well as provide a platform for sleep dentistry.

These fully digital practices are very successful and usually have the lowest overhead. They are successful because they are focused on their patients’ needs and giving the best and most predictable outcomes.

These practices are able to attract the best staff as they have the ability to expand their professional skill set.

So as you can see, starting with one piece of equipment leads to an avalanche of great things. You owe it to your patients; your staff and yourself to take a closer look at what adding this technology can do for your practice.