



DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: AN HR PROBLEM, NOT A TECHNOLOGICAL CHALLENGE

Abstract

As digital software and hardware have become easier to use, the relative importance of technical knowledge has decreased. Instead, oral surgeons must focus on the role of HR in achieving successful digital transformation and realizing their overarching practice goals.

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Digital transformation as an HR problem

Over the past 20 years, digital technology has proliferated the field of implant dentistry. As software and hardware have become cheaper to acquire, the barrier to adaptation has decreased significantly, allowing higher numbers of clinicians to pursue digital solutions. Traditionally, oral surgeons have prioritized equipment selection as the most important part of digital transformation. They believed that if the right equipment was purchased—and the right technician was hired—their implant practices would automatically reap the benefits of their investment. However, as many oral surgeons have found, this approach is difficult to scale up and often does not yield the desired results. In order to successfully leverage digital transformation, oral surgeons must understand the impact of technology on their non-technical staff and, most importantly, its role in their long-term practice goals.

The Role of HR

In addition to becoming cheaper to acquire, digital technology has also become easier to use for a broader range of activities. In other words, software and hardware once restricted to lab technicians is now available to surgical assistants, office managers, and other team members within a practice. Access to technology and ease-of-use are no longer the primary limiting factors of digital transformation efforts. Instead, it is how to motivate

practice team members to incorporate newly available digital technology into their daily activities.

No oral surgery practice will succeed in digital transformation without the right strategy and the right team. Oral surgeons need to learn the process of streamlining new complex work environments and aligning them with their clinical and business objectives. This requires developing a comprehensive, long term strategy that reflects the strengths and capabilities of all team members. This plan must be communicated to all relevant team members. In turn, team members must understand their role, responsibilities, and upcoming changes to their daily operations.

HR Strategies for Successful Digital Transformation

In the digital age of implant dentistry market, an oral surgery practice is only as innovative and successful as the talent it attracts and energizes. Oral surgery practices that are planning to digitally transform must seek team members with not only the right skills (clinical and technological), but also an aptitude for innovation. While each practice has its unique set of needs, in general practices should:

- *Have a credible, forward-looking leader managing the digital transformation process.* The leader needs to understand

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how technology can improve business operations, including referral engagement and the patient experience. This leader must have the necessary vision to develop a detailed digital strategy.

- ***Focus on developing a detailed role for team members, including information regarding the role of digital technology in their daily activities.*** Team members with a clear understanding of their responsibilities and goals—as well as an understanding of the role of digital technology in achieving these goals—will be motivated to support digital initiatives.
- ***Understand the limitations of technical knowledge.*** While technical know-how remains an important aspect of digital transformation, it should not be the sole focus of training initiatives. Beyond understanding the functionality of hardware and software, team members must also understand the benefits of technology to their daily activities.
- ***Develop a plan for workload management and performance appraisal.*** Digital transformation is a complicated process, and compliance must be monitored closely. Efforts must be made to support team members struggling to adopt new technologies.
- ***Be prepared for staff changes.*** It is important to understand that not all team members will be well suited for digital transformation. Similarly, not all practices will be able to fulfill their digital needs with their existing team. Throughout the digital

process, practice owners must be prepared to hire and replace staff as necessary.

Conclusion

With the advent of many technologies, there are numerous tools that allow process enhancement, streamlining, and quick turnaround in an oral surgery office. In order to successfully incorporate these technologies, team members must understand their changing roles, objectives, and key performance indicators. Newly digitized oral surgery practices must adopt a new operational model, wherein senior surgeons and practice managers must empower their team members by providing necessary HR framework, tools, and incentives. Team members with a thorough understanding of digital changes will more effectively communicate with patients, lab technicians, and referring dentists to overall improve practice operations.

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- [People strategy for the digital age](#)
- [The talent challenge: Rebalancing skills for the digital age](#)

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