

Choosing Changes

The only constant is change. Look around at society, your town or city – change is everywhere. Can you imagine the changes that will come in Dentistry? Look at all that have occurred at all levels in our field – lasers used to be those things that were talked about in research papers and then in *Popular Mechanics*. Now they are part of everyday practice. I have had one since the early 90s. Digital photography has become the standard in forward thinking practices. Change occurs in equipment, supplies and products. It is easy to spend way too much in an attempt to boost your practice.

(You can also spend too little or stop spending money on something that is working. If there is an area that most Drs spend too little on, it is on themselves for personal development and coaching. **An almost sure- fire way to improve your practice is to improve you: your knowledge, outlook, strategy, marketing, sales ability and technical skill.** Sadly, too few Drs spend the time and effort on the other half of practice (non-technical side). That is why 95% of all dental CE is technical. Many very competent Drs. technically have so outrun their administrative and leadership skills that they are denied the practice they worked so hard to get.)

You should have good reasons to change... ones that make sense and cents...*ones your patients will appreciate*...ones that make you a better practitioner...ones that add to your bottom line...ones that you enjoy and feel good about.

Be aware that purchases for blue sky, vapor-ware kinds of benefits are almost always bad one.

On the other hand, if the changes can make you money right away, it is silly not to buy.

Who would want to work without magnification any more? Mine: 4.5 Designs for Vision wide field loops. I recognized the improvement in quality and speed immediately when I first bought these in the early 80's.

It is just as crazy to reject change because it will cost you money as it is to buy everything to come down the pike. It should fit your strategy.

The very first thing I consider is what will patients' reactions be to the addition or change. I had a fairly recent experience with deciding between two different choices to upgrade my facility. I could put in a steri-center (2 actually) and change some walls or I could make my reception area be the image that I wanted to attract patients and tell them in advance what kind of office it was... just by walking in. I gave this considerable thought.

The crucial question became: what reaction would the change create in the minds of my patients? For the steri-center, probably a ho-hum, so-what attitude would occur. Why? There would be no apparent benefit for them. Yawn is the response to these kinds of changes. ~~It would not be a difference that delighted.~~ It would improve my sterilization area, but the ones I had were adequate. In fact, compared to many offices, they were superior.

So what I did was to decide to get a bit outrageous and distinctive. I knew the effect I wanted to create in that reception area. I hired one of the best hoity-toity decorators in town and went at it.

Now the reception area proudly displays a black grand piano (it plays itself. Patients tell me that it is really enjoyable to listen before their appointments.), a Italian marble tiled Internet Café with Cappuccino maker, white wine, designer waters. It has a lounge with *USA Today* and the *Wall St Journal* and a patient education theater with 42 inch plasma screen. The ceiling is wallpapered with a special paper that gives the effect of being in an arboretum. Oil paintings hang on the wall.

The immediate feeling one gets when entering is that this office is different, more comfortable and more attentive to individual patient needs. Just last week I had the newspaper in my office interviewing staff and patients all about our unique dental practice.

I know the clientele I want. I knew they would appreciate the difference. It does please and delight them.

It is only appropriate for you if that is your target clientele. You do know exactly who you are working to have as patients don't you? Of course you know the composite demographics, psychographics of the patient you want to have. (You have figured that out haven't you?!)

BECAUSE I KNEW WHO I WANTED STRATEGICALLY THIS DECISION WAS EASY TO MAKE.

Knowing your strategy eliminates a lot of wasted energy, effort and money... and makes your decisions easier.

Here is the order that I use to decide based on my strategy:

1. Will it please and/or delight my patients?
2. Will it make me a better practitioner administratively or clinically?
3. Will it make me profitable money? How much and how fast?
4. Will it improve my speed and/or efficiency of delivery?
5. Will it give me more free time, more control or more satisfaction from my practice?

Obviously, the more yeses you get to these questions, the more likely it is to be a good decision.

Please note the position of number 1. It is patient oriented as is number two.

Sometimes the money decision is so compelling that that reason alone is sufficient if the numbers work well and it is an ethical enterprise.