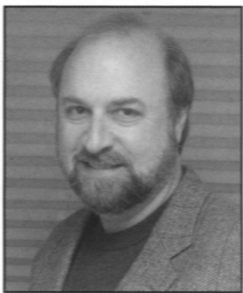


# Creative Uses for Computers in the Pediatric Dental Office



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In 1978, I purchased the first computer system for my dental practice. The selection of dental related software and equipment could be counted on one hand. Today, dental software manufacturers can be found in unlimited numbers. Computers in the dental office are not toys or luxuries, nor are they any longer something a dentist can do without. Pediatric dentists have always been in the forefront of technology. We are always searching for ways to make our patients feel more comfortable in our office and new ways to educate our patients and parents, prevent dental disease and make the repair of dental disease less frightening.

Since I started using a single stand alone computer to manage my business office, I have found many more ways to use computers to make my staff more productive and dentistry fun for not only my patients, but also for myself and my staff.

The key to successfully utilizing computers is to realize that a computer does not replace a staff person, but rather allows my staff to be more efficient. I consider computer systems, now networked rather than stand-alone integral members of my office team. Technology is growing at a rapid rate and today's software and computers can become outdated almost as soon as we install it into the office. If a dentist waits for tomorrow's technology before buying into computers, it is most likely the dentist will never acquire today's progress.

Computers and their related software can be routinely found in the dental office for Office Management programs, Scheduling and Accounting. However, there are many other ways we can utilize a computer in our offices. Some areas I will discuss include:

- Nightly patient confirmation: Televox
- Patient sign-in: Self designed
- Internal practice marketing: MS PowerPoint
- The internet: Office Web Site: [KIDDSTEETH.COM](http://KIDDSTEETH.COM)
- Lectures: MS PowerPoint
- Creating customized office forms: MS Office Professional and scanners.

- Chart notes: Label maker
- Customized patient/parent educational materials/videos
- Digital Radiography and video cameras
- Dentist / Physician communications: fax machines
- Proof of treatment: traumatic injuries, surgical procedures, insurance reimbursement
- Games
- Local anesthesia injections: Wand

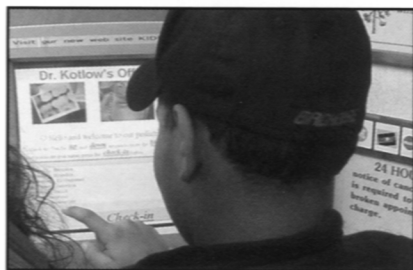


Do not throw away any of your old computers, old computers, even if the computer is not Y2K can be recycled as educational internal marketing tools. A brief description of each of the above follows:

It took me quite a few years to realize that patients would accept an automated phone call to remind them about their upcoming office appointment. Once I got over that hurdle, the rest was easy. Televox is a program, which uses a modem, and software to create customized calling to remind parents of their child's appointment. We call 2 days prior to the appointment and set the calls to run between 5pm and 8:30pm. This will usually reach at least half of the patients or leave messages on answering machines. This has reduced the amount of time my staff spent on calling patients. The software provides



a daily list of all patients who confirm, are not reached and who are reached only by an answering machine.



I hired a computer software company to design a touch screen sign-in program. The program interfaces with my office management program to identify patients who have appointments on a daily basis. The patients can scroll through sign-in screen and find their name. It confirms the patient's correct name by cross-referencing the patient name with their birthday. The patient then is asked if they need to speak to the receptionist or give insurance information to my business office. The children love using the computer and the parents do not have to wait in line to check-in. Once the sign-in is completed, the information is sent over the network to monitors in my hygiene and operative areas. The screen displays the patient's name, birth date, appointment time and time of arrival. The screen also indicated the time the patient is seen, identifies the staff person who is treating the child, and how long the patient waited to be seen.

Computers, which are outdated, can be recycled with MS PowerPoint presentations. The presentations created by me include topics such as "The ABCs of Oral Care", Office policy, and Early Infant Dental Decay. These computers can be part of the network or stand-alone. My hygienist uses programs when discussing infant care with parents and I can use similar programs when describing surgical or operative procedures.

I created my own website, "KID-DSTEETH.COM". In the first 6 months over 500 individuals have contacted the site. I refer my patients here to read articles

I have written and for answers to most commonly asked questions. I market the site to physicians and insurance companies for information on pediatric dentistry.

I have scanned all of my 35mm slides (Hewlett Packard Photosmart Scanner) into MS Powerpoint is for presentations for parent groups, physicians and dentists. MS Powerpoint found in Office 2000 and is a program, which is relatively simple to use and allows you to produce entertaining and exciting programs.

Using MS Office Professional, which includes not only Powerpoint, but also MS Word, I can create or modify patient forms and handouts for patients. Exciting high quality color or black and white pamphlets can be formulated and produced for reproduction. I am able to state exactly what my office policies are, give instructions for care of orthodontic appliances and post-operative instructions. Referrals letters and thank you notes can be personalized.

Digital radiography has significantly altered the requests for second opinions. Large simple to understand radiographs



make patient conferences quick and easily understood by parents. The reduction in developing time, mounting of radiography and cleaning up developing areas allows my staff to be more efficient and productive. In addition, when used with a video camera, the digital x-ray program allows me to create vivid descriptive files to show parents office procedures. (Schick CDR)

The most productive internal marketing tool I have in my office is the fax machine. I have a created a customized form, which

is set up in my computer, this form, reviews my clinical findings and recommendations for each new patient seen in my practice. This is completed on a computer located in the hygiene area. It is then printed on to hard copy and faxed to the primary care physician and if indicated, referring dentist. The dentist and physician are informed that their patient has been seen and treatment is in progress. From a marketing stand point; my name is going across the receptionist desk often, resulting in significant number of referrals.

Photographs and radiographs acquired in



the Digital Radiography program can be printed out and sent to insurance companies for reimbursement and proof of treatment. As of this time I have never had an insurance company refuse to accept this form of proof.

Computerized video games are located in my reception and hygiene areas for children to play with. This is a great internal marketing tool.

Attached to my operatory computer is a "Costar" label maker. All progress and patient notes are printed out in a very legible form and then attached permanently to the patient's chart.

All these ideas and computers are integrated and utilized in making dentistry more fun and reducing stress for both the patient and the office staff. Yet I still believe I have only touched in a small way all the uses available when computers are found in the dental office. The best way to appreciate all the technology available is to visit dental offices, go to meetings, try out the software and make the move to acquire today's technology "today"!