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## Choosing dental office management software: Simplicity or Flexibility?

For a specialist in dentistry, the process of analyzing and selecting dental office management software is no simple task. This is even more true if you are not already computerized. It is hard to choose between simplicity of use of software and its flexibility, i.e. its ability to adapt to different, constantly changing needs. Unfortunately, the second criterion is often rejected much too quickly.

Obviously, if you intend to acquire dental management software, you can rely on the opinion of a colleague who has already computerized his operation to make your choice. This approach is not a bad one if the colleague you ask has been using the software for a long time and is still satisfied in terms of the latest management needs of the office.

On the other hand, if you wish to use a systematic approach, the issue of ease of learning versus the flexibility of the software has to be faced.

If software has to actually be as simple as possible to use—just how simple is that? Einstein said: “Everything must be as simple as possible but not one bit simpler.” In other words, you must distinguish “simple” from “simplistic.”

In fact, the concept of simplicity is much more subtle than might appear at first glance. Concretely, it may sometimes hide inadequacies and shortcomings in software. That is why it is a decisive element in the selection process. In fact, it is very likely that once informed of the limits of a management software package, you may well decide not to buy it, even if it is the simplest one on the market. It is normal that as a buyer, you would want to get the maximum from your investment, in the short as well as the long term!

In the area of computerized management, simplicity is a quality that must be taken into consideration because it plays a strategic role during the start-up period. Most likely, in the first few months, you mainly want to become familiar with your new tool and satisfy the basic management needs of your office, such as billing.

However, management expectations and needs evolve enormously during the first year that you use such systems. And, after a year, you will have mastered this new platform and will want to define new objectives to achieve. At this stage, it is the depth of management of the selected software that will make of it a high performance, stimulating tool. Its flexibility is thus the best guarantee of its capacity to evolve with your practice, i.e. adapt to management needs that appear gradually in a normal computerization process.

If the simplicity of your software has hidden weaknesses in its operation or the ergonomics of its interface, you will quickly find yourself forced to either limit the development of your clinic or change your software, two prospects that you want to avoid.

In conclusion, while simplicity plays a key role in learning how to use computer systems, make sure that you have a long-term view in selecting software by also evaluating its capacity to keep up with or even promote the future development of your practice.

As in lasting personal relationships, the dating period is much shorter than the time you spend living together. It's better to make the right choice from the start!

Don't hesitate to contact a CTRLProgident counselor if you want some help in your selection process. CTRLProgident, a service of your association.