A Smooth Transition to Digital Dentistry with Gendex

By Dr. Scott Schroeder

I learned an important lesson after my recent transition from a traditional film system to GXS-700™ sensors and the GXDP-300™ digital panoramic by Gendex. The company that you choose to update your technology can make a big difference in the level of your imaging and the level of your confidence.

When I first started to consider a new system a few years ago, some “in-house” circumstances delayed my moving forward. Foremost, the original IT company did not instill confidence in their ability to accomplish a relatively seamless transition. When we built our new office some years ago, we installed empty conduits into each operatory with the idea that at some point we may need future hardwiring for the new technology. This wasn’t a question of physical limitations, but of putting the right CPUs, servers, and hardware in place so that everyone could undergo the training period as a team. These challenges led to new beginnings and an unexpected, positive experience. I hired three new staff members who I was confident would turn into loyal long-term employees, and I found new IT guys who were focused and knowledgeable about computerizing my operatories and getting my software programs up and running.

Before choosing a digital system, it was important for all office members to understand how the digital x-ray technology would improve our practice and help our patients. We felt that we needed a strong commitment from them, as it was going to take some extra effort on their part to make things happen. We wanted them to feel excited. Gendex representative Troy Schmidt provided an in-office presentation with my entire staff. He brought in a laptop and the GXS-700 sensors and completely reviewed everything from how to physically use the equipment and how the software worked. He also reassured us that we would not have difficulties bridging VixWin® Platinum with our existing practice management software. He promised that he would do everything in his power to ensure a smooth transition. Gendex and Burkhart did an unbelievable job. While I left the state for a brief hiatus, I put the office in the skilled hands of Gendex and Burkhart. Our IT guy, Joe Swanson, coordinated everything in advance, installing new computer terminals throughout the office and hardwiring the system to a new server. Between Troy, our Burkhart Account Manager Steve Northcott and Equipment Specialist Klint Croucher, all aspects of our digital system were installed, carefully calibrated, and ready for results upon my return. Troy worked tirelessly to complete the job shortly before we saw our first patients. I was very impressed at his work ethic.

One of the first things I noticed about the GXS-700 sensors was the comfort of use as compared to traditional film. The sensors come in two sizes to accommodate both children and adults. It is very difficult to take x-rays on me because I have mandibular tori, so I wanted to test the sensor for myself. As I was personally due for films, I became the test subject. Because of the rounded edges and smooth corners, I was happily surprised to find that the sensors were more comfortable for me than those with the old film system!

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staff members were leaving the practice to be stay-at-home moms, leaving the state with spouses for other work, or just pursuing a change. This meant hiring new people. We wanted to have a stable staff in

Digital images are instant, which for my office is a real benefit, since I do more oral surgery and endodontics than most general practitioners. Often emergency patients have to be fit into an already tight schedule, and having digital x-rays helps to prevent wasted time in the process. My assistant can capture a digital x-ray of a broken tooth, abscess, etc., and see in an instant what we
are dealing with, get a surgical tray ready, and be ready to treat. We waste no time waiting for film to be developed. In endo, if I have any question on the length of the master cone, it is immediately resolved. The time we used to spend twiddling our thumbs waiting for film to develop has now vanished. My brother-in-law is an endodontic specialist, and with his system, he reported a problem capturing the apex of the root during root canals. Steve Northcott, our Burkhart rep, helped us find an aftermarket snap ray holder that has worked beautifully in that aspect.

With digital x-rays, the efficiency that I have gained exceeds my expectations for endodontics, oral surgery, and new patient exams. I estimate that I have cut new patient exam time by 30 to 40 percent by eliminating processing time, time spent mounting the x-rays, and bringing them to the view box. With digital, images appear on the screen instantly.

My entire digital system also provides very clear imaging results. My GXDP-300 pan, which takes both panoramic and bitewings, delivers great image quality, with what they call proprietary FOX™ technology. It is very beneficial for patient education, because I can spotlight and magnify areas of concern, and the patient can see the problem very clearly. I use my radiography in conjunction with my Gendex intraoral camera (Acucam® Concept® IV). I can pull up pictures of a patient’s arch on a flat panel TV, and bring up the digital x-ray on the adjacent computer monitor. If someone needs extractions, root canal therapy, or crowns—in other words, extensive dentistry—I have both a color image and a beautiful x-ray on a large screen. Patients really understand the situation when I point with an arrow to an image of an abscess or broken tooth on screen. It promotes good dentistry. A periodontal pocket or a periradicular abscess may be asymptomatic, and if it doesn’t hurt, patients don’t feel the need to fix it. But when they see a high-resolution image of a defect in the bone of their jaw, they understand that it is time for treatment.

My assistants love the new digital system. Elise Diede shared some of her insights: “With the film system, we had a darkroom, and we shared responsibility for cleaning and maintaining the processor and chemicals. Now, we don’t need the darkroom, so we use that space for our network server, and we have more room for storage, which is really nice.” Elise also discussed patient reactions.
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“Patients were very impressed with how quickly we can take the x-rays. This helps a lot with ‘gaggers’ too. Our new Gendex pan also takes bitewing images, so this helps a lot while working with patients who are more difficult to diagnose without making them feel uncomfortable.” Elise continues, ‘Time is probably the biggest improvement for us. Not only are we able to take the x-rays more quickly with the new sensors, but we also instantly see if we need to take a different view. Patients appreciate spending less time in the chair.”

When I researched options for my new system, I found that there are a lot of manufacturers out there and a lot of equipment to be bought. I was already familiar with Gendex quality, and Burkhart assured me that I would get great support and have a good experience with Gendex. I have received the most professional care and attention of anything I have purchased from anyone for years, including my last automobile! GXS-700 sensors and the new GXDP-300 pan have helped move my office into a new level of efficiency, and more importantly, provided better dental care for my patients. I didn’t have to worry about my transition from film to digital after all. Gendex and Burkhart kept their promises, and I can’t imagine anyone doing it better.

Scott Schroeder, DDS, is a University of Nebraska Medical Center graduate, board-certified since 1987. He completed an externship in oral surgery at the University Medical Center and VA hospital Omaha, Nebraska in 1986. Dr. Scott has also pursued continuing education in the area of endodontics. Dr. Scott holds licenses in Nebraska and Montana. He is credentialed in both the Central and Western Regional Boards and holds professional memberships in The American Dental Association, The Montana Dental Association, and The Academy of General Dentistry and maintains involvement in The Summit Study Club and The Seattle Study Group. Dr. Schroeder was a delegate for the Nebraska Dental Association from 1990 to 1996 and also served as a member of the ADA Grassroots committee involved in membership recruitment and retention during that time. He currently practices as part of the Ponderosa Dental Group in Missoula, Montana, along with his wife, Cindy Schroeder, DDS, and their excellent staff.