

Roadmap to a Paperless Office

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Does your office look like this?

The quest for the paperless office has commenced. Believe it or not, it began many years ago when you purchased your Datacon system. You made the switch to digital records when you entered in your first patient.

The ease of sharing information has increased year-over-year to make a practice efficient and more productive. The advent of the Internet, availability of digital radiography, and low hardware costs have paved the way for today's dentist to almost completely get out of "dead tree" documentation. But how to do it?

I've had many doctors ask "What's it going to take to go paperless?" As a Datacon client you have the backbone for this task, but it will entail more. This article will map out what a complete paperless office looks like. You should identify the stage you are in, then begin to take the necessary steps to move forward.

Stage 1- Software and Connectivity

First things first. And in your case it's a given. Your Datacon software is the first thing you need to get you where you need to go. However, to take full advantage, your office should be updated to the newest version of Datacon which is version 3.6C. In addition to customized templates, recall, scheduling, perio charting, word processing documents, billing and production reporting, the newest software has medical history, automated chart notes, and charting. Everything you used to do on paper can be done within Datacon.

Action Items: Contact us today to get on the latest version of software or to help you create the templates your staff requires.

Connect. Now. Your office should have an Internet connection. It allows you to contact your patients through e-mail or SMS (text message) using your Datacon software. It makes cloud based backup possible. It will make it possible for you to access your system remotely. It will enable you to file electronic insurance claims with digital attachments, improving your cash flow. It also allows you to receive timely updates and software support from Datacon. Ditch the modem and get your information real-time.

Action Item: Contact your local ISP to get Internet installed. Be sure to get a static IP when ordering. If you have concerns about security, ask us how your network can be configured to limit Internet access from your workstations.

Stage 2- Hardware for your System

Server backbone. Your server is the spine of your practice. It is important that it is a recent model. As you know, technology moves fast. Anything older than five years becomes fallible. Also imperative is that it is backed-up daily. Datacon runs on Apple servers. Chosen for their security and stability, a MacPro or a Mac mini is what you should have in your office today. While the Alpha Micro machines were great and have withstood the test of time, we are urging our clients to replace them before their lifespan is up. The Apple servers will allow for server-to-server secure electronic claims, run back-ups in a snap, creation of Patient Folders and allow you to store your digital images in one convenient machine.

Action Item: Replace the Alpha Micro server with a MacPro or a Mac mini. Contact us for a quote.

Ditch the dumbs. PCs for everyone! (or Macs)... The days of dumb terminals are over. Your office should clear out any "green screens" and move into the 21st century. PCs and Macs, as ubiquitous as they are, should populate your office to allow use of productivity software like MS Office or Apple's iWork. Datacon 3.6C will not run on the dumb terminals.

If you've already replaced those old terminals, then maybe it's time to think about installing a PC in each operatory for chair-side perio charting, treatment planning and appointment scheduling. If you're selling your practice soon then it's also a good time to upgrade.

Action Items: Replace the dumb terminals with PCs or Macs. Place a PC into each operatory. Call us or dmi for a quote.

Roadmap to a Paperless Office (cont'd)

Stage 3- Digital Imaging Technology

Smile! You're on camera. Today's imaging machines have gotten better and more refined. With digital X-rays and intraoral cameras becoming available and affordable, upcoming HIPAA regulations and ease-of-use should smite any argument for chemical labs and film in your office. The MacPro server becomes the central repository for the Patient Folders. Contained in those Patient Folders are all the electronic documents for your patients. This is where your digital images are stored. Datacon integrates beautifully with just about any third-party digital imaging software.

Action Item: Contact a rep for your preferred imaging product. Please contact the Datacon sales department for recommendations. Be sure to call Datacon before you purchase to plan for integration.

Stage 4- Digital Record Creation and Storage

Plan it. Scan it. Shred it. Now that you've got your system ready to receive the digital data, it's time to get those old manila charts off the shelves and into the shredder. While there are various processes, here are two ways some of our clients have done it:

1. DIY: purchase a scanner and scan-as-you-go. When a patient is in the office then that person's record should be scanned and set aside for document destruction. All of the scanned data should be placed into the Patient Folder of the respective patients. The startup cost would be lower but your staff's time toward the project would increase.
2. Outsourced digital record storage: A HIPAA compliant company will take all of your records at once. Within a week all of your records will come back to you on a flash drive, organized as you specify. Your paper records will have been sent for destruction. This may have more out-of-pocket costs but it will be a much faster and cleaner option.

Action Items: Contact the Datacon sales department for recommendations on scanners or digital record companies. Be sure to consult with Datacon software support to assure the correct organization of information.

Stage 5- Moving Forward and the Future of Digital Documents

Click, scan and save. Wow, your office is really humming on all cylinders now. From now on, your office takes anything that's paper, scans it in, then shreds it. Consent forms and patient information forms are PDFs that your patient fills out on the computer then signs using a digital signature pad. Some offices are using touch screen technology in consultation rooms to accomplish this.

Action Item: Contact the Datacon sales department for recommendations on digital signature pads, touchscreen equipment and scanners.

Datacon is working towards integration of mobile devices, electronic payment processing, and online patient information. Your office should be working toward these improvements to really get the most out of your system, reap the benefits of electronic payments and processing, and adding value to your practice for retirement or resale.

Action Item: Contact the Datacon sales department for consultation in any of the aforementioned areas.

Upcoming Classes and Events

January

Wednesday 1/26
New User Class*

Friday 1/28
Air-tight Recall Training*

February

Thursday 2/17
New User Seminar*

Thursday, 2/24
Power User Seminar*

March

Wednesday 3/9
9 am - 2 pm
New User Seminar*

Thursday, 3/24
9 am - 12 pm
Air-tight Recall Training*

* Qualifies for CE Credits

Chart Notes

With the 3.6 version of our software, we have implemented a number of features to support those of you who are ready to go "chartless". One such enhancement is chart notes.

Chart notes can be added to the patient record either as separate records or attachments to treatments. An example of an independent chart note would be a SOAP note.

SOAP notes are split into four sections titled "Subjective," "Objective," "Assessment," and "Plan." These can be used to document initial visits, periodic evaluations, and emergency visits. A simple outline template allows each section and its contents to be included by clicking on check boxes. The resulting paragraphs can be edited before they become part of the patient's permanent record. Contact us and we can help you set up this useful template.

Going Paperless? Let us help you!

Take advantage of your FREE 45 minutes of training. Call us today!