

Training

A Case for Consistent Training

Kay Saari

Twenty plus years ago, practice administrator Kay Saari and her husband, Dr. Paul Saari, invested in three computers for their dental practice. While today, computers at the front desk and even in the operatory are common, in the mid-90s the technology was new and even a bit intimidating. Saari knew that if she and her husband were going to get the most out of their investment, someone was going to have to take ownership of learning the computer system and the CS SoftDent practice management software that came with it. That “someone,” she decided, would be her.

“This was an investment,” Saari said. “My goal was to exhaust as much as we could on SoftDent that was applicable to our practice. It became my passion to learn the software.”

But Saari knew she couldn’t do it alone. If the software were to be used to its full potential, she needed an expert’s help in learning its ins and outs. That’s when Saari first became an advocate of software training.

Training Transitions: From Out-of-Town to Onsite

At first, Saari faithfully attended local training sessions held by her dealer.

“Back in the day, our dealer would hold a meeting in Orlando for every major software update,” she said. “You’d be kept up-to-date on all the new upgrades to the software. Every year, you’d learn a little bit more.”

Then, Carestream Dental started hosting weekend-long training sessions known as Users’ Meetings. These conferences were held outside of Florida but Saari jumped on the chance to participate in more in-depth, full-day training.

“Eventually, the Users’ Meetings came along; I’ve attended them for several years,” Saari said. “You’d think the same session on, say insurance, would get old but no matter how many times I attended, I always picked up little pearls of wisdom to make my life easier.”

These days, Saari mixes the best of both worlds—in-depth training that’s not only local, it takes place in her own practice. Carestream Dental offers her the option of onsite, full-day training with a dedicated trainer.

Onsite Training Tailored to Fit Your Practice

“With onsite training, you can customize it to whatever you want; we give our trainer a list of questions and concerns ahead of time and she’s happy to address them,” Saari said.



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Kay Saari has been administrative assistant for 30 years in her husband’s dental practice. She is responsible for the financial aspects of the office; maintaining and updating computer software; and assisting the front office, as well as in the back office with sterilization, etc. Saari also coordinates HIPAA, OSHA and CPR trainings.



She explains how the trainer may spend the morning with the hygienists; then train the front desk; perhaps spend the afternoon with the assistants; and then bring everyone together at the end of the day to wrap up training. What's important is that the day be divided up to fit with her practice's schedule and needs.

And while Saari always found value in the Users Meetings—"If I had one 'aha moment,' then the trip paid for itself"—it was not always convenient or cost-effective to take her staff out of state. However, with onsite training, the staff never need leave the office.

"Think of how many employees you have, now divide that by eight hours of training," Saari said. "Compare that to paying for travel, hotel and conference fees. It's a great bang for your buck because you can focus on whatever you want. If there are certain features you want to focus on, you have that flexibility."

"My Life Got So Much Easier"

The tips, tricks and shortcuts that Saari has learned from training help her and her staff run the practice more efficiently. For example, staff were posting payments to each patient, which did not take into consideration any credits or payments from another patient in the same account.

Then, Saari learned about the "Y" screen, so called because the Y in Payment is underlined to indicate the keystroke shortcut. This shortcut allows staff to distribute the monies to the correct patients with the same account; make adjustments to credits and debits; and a few other selections, as well.

"We just didn't know about the 'Y'," Saari said. "Oh my goodness, my life got so much easier when I learned about the Y screen! And my credits and balances were so much easier, correct and balanced.

When Saari visited another practice, she saw firsthand how not taking advantage of key features of the practice management software—such as the Report Manager, which allows practices to run customized reports with the click of a button—was adding extra stress to the office.

"They let me take a look at their Report Manager and it was *blank*," she said. "The majority of people aren't going to take the time to figure out how to enter all those reports on their own. This is a case where onsite training could be extremely beneficial. We love our Report Manager; you have to scroll down because we have so many reports."

Staying on Your Toes

Saari now makes it a priority to schedule at least one onsite training a session a year.

"It's always nice to have a refresher course," she said. "It keeps us on our toes and shows us where we may have gotten lazy but also emphasizes new changes in the software."

She also adds that staff at busy practices might not have the time to explore the software on their own, so she recommends annual training to ensure that staff are aware of all the "little things that make your life so much easier."

Another reason Saari recommends consistent training is for new staff members. She recalled one practice where new staff were not familiar with CS SoftDent; they even tried to convince the doctor to switch to the system with which they had more experience. However, the doctor wanted to avoid the pitfalls of converting over an entire practice management system and instead invested in onsite training.



His new staff were brought up to speed on CS SoftDent and were content to use the system once they were equipped with the knowledge to use it effectively.

“I would tell anyone to invest in training,” Saari said. “Unless there’s someone in the office (and it’s probably not the dentist) who takes ownership of the software, you’re just not going to learn the system. Ultimately, if you don’t have that drive to want to learn, you will only get what you put into the software.”

With all the time that Saari has put into her software, she’s managed to create a technologically advanced office. Her husband, the dentist, is confident that he’ll have a cutting-edge, up-to-date practice to sell when it comes time to retire; the staff is well-informed and confident in their work; and most important, the patients don’t notice a thing, which is the ultimate sign of a well-run practice.

If you are interested in onsite training, fill out [this form](#) and a personal trainer will contact you. Or call **800.944.6365** or visit **carestreamdental.com** today.

Editor’s Note: Carestream Dental also offers live online training in addition to onsite training. Live online training is taught by the same dedicated trainers who conduct onsite training and can be a cost-effective and efficient alternative.

Case Study

