How **NOVA Computer Solutions** Helped a Dental Practice in Frederick, Maryland.

How Much Should Dental Practices Expect To Pay For IT Services From An IT Services Company That Is Focused On The Dental Industry? What Kind of IT Support Is Best For Your Dental Office?

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C O M P U T E R   S O L U T I O N S

Trevin Wear and Dr. Michelle Wear own Premiere Dental Arts, located in Frederick, Maryland. The dental practice has 17 computers.

This brief case study shows a history of the dental practice's relationships with its IT services providers. It indicates that there were difficulties with normal operations of the dental practice under one provider, due to problematic IT services. It reveals that the service issues serious were serious enough to motivate the dental practice owner to search for a professional referral to a replacement IT services provider.

Level of Owners' Technology Experience: The Wears are relatively technology savvy, and they update their office's systems by implementing new software and equipment as necessary to stay current with evolving industry standards and with updates to external networks.

Length of Time with Current IT Provider: Premiere Dental has been a client of NOVA Computer Solutions for seven years.

Status of Working Relationship with Current Tech Services Provider: A healthy relationship of trust has been built between NOVA and Premiere Dental Arts, which led Premiere to agree to be a part of NOVA's beta testing of their NOVA Guard (managed virus protection and content filtering solution) when it was initially introduced into the IT services market.

Level of Client Engagement with IT Services Provider: Trevin Wear is very familiar with IT and is interested in the causes of issues ways to fix them. So, he is very involved in any work done by the IT services team in his dental office.

Client's Receptivity to IT Systems Upgrades to Elevate Their Practice's Operational Efficiency: This dental office is always receptive to the NOVA dental IT specialist's recommendations for their IT needs. However, they are very conscious of their budget. They examine and ask for clarification to understand the details of the work that is being done. NOVA works closely with them to answer questions and ensure that they are comfortable with the work proposed and that it stays with the budget they've set.

NOVA provides the dental practice with installment payment options for larger projects, and the dental practice owners have accepted those arrangements, to make the more significant improvements to their operational systems.

HOW NOVA HELPED

When asked why the Wears chose their current MSP (Managed Services Provider), Trevin explained that they were referred. We were looking for someone. We weren't happy with our previous provider. We had some problems with the install and with integrating our dental practice management software with our system. We called around for a referral. We knew a guy in Virginia who had an office. He was using NOVA's services in Virginia. He said they were doing a great job and suggested that we give them a call. We're in Maryland, but we gave them a call. They knew what they were talking about, and they had a good plan, and that's kind of how it started.

The client briefly explained how NOVA helped resolve the dental office's issues when they were brought onboard. It's been so long since we started with them, I can't recall many specifics. But, they were able to assess the system that we had. They were able to locate the choke points and

how the data was not getting through. And, they were able to propose the installation of a system of equipment and software that resolved that. They also upgraded our internet security and gave us a perfect backup system for a very old database.

He explained that the technologies NOVA initially implemented were later replaced with Microsoft 365. But initially, it involved standardization of the operating system and updating of the computer operating system, our Windows system, at that time. And, it involved maximizing and optimizing the ability of our practice management software to integrate with the new equipment. Then, they did troubleshooting of the inevitable incidences where software conflicts did occur. They were good at troubleshooting the certain problems to be expected with equipment, practice management software and computers. And, they were able to do that pretty much remotely, which is nice.

The client was familiar with partners that NOVA has worked with in servicing Premiere's IT systems and applications. They've seemed comfortable working with anybody. They've worked with Dell, Dentrix, the Microsoft Operating System, Air Techniques (including ScanX), They've worked with Dexis, and online operating systems that are leased, and printing equipment and scanning equipment companies. They've worked with our Wi-Fi and

Comcast. I would consider them at least a step ahead of whatever the internet service providers like Comcast and others are saying.

Asked if he can describe a time when NOVA has gone beyond his expectations, Trevin Wear reflected on his overall experience with the company. Well, I expect a lot. I would say that in their consistent thoroughness in checking out solutions to particular technological problems that come up in an office, overall, they've done an excellent job. They do an excellent job of making sure that your equipment is the right equipment and that it's customized for what you need specifically. You're not just going to get a Dell server. You're going to get one that's tailored and that's not going to have anything it doesn't need. And, you're not paying for stuff you don't' need, and you're buying stuff that you need and can use, and that's specific for your office. That's just nice.

Discussing whether or not he finds that working with NOVA has helped his business, he provided a very general overall assessment. It's important to have your IT stuff run as efficiently as possible. It's nice to have that certainty that pretty much what you've got is probably as good as you can get. Maybe that's not a huge ringing endorsement, but it does save me from a lot of IT-related stress to know that.

ANALYSIS

The above is merely an abbreviated case study of the changes in the IT services client's experience after switching from one IT services provider to another. It's not a study of options to be evaluated in IT services pricing, per se. However, the study does provide specific useful indicators of the most appropriate approach to answering the question of how many dental professionals should expect to pay for IT services.

For purposes of concluding reasonable pricing from the case study, the first consideration is necessary whether or not a dental practice prefers IT support just for emergencies and other occasional professional IT help or comprehensive IT management services for their dental office. Other factors relevant to pricing for a dental IT services client, based on this case, include:

- The number of IT components in their system, such as servers, computers (Premiere Dental had 17 computers at the time of the interview for this case study.), printers, scanners, fax machines, and business telephone equipment and systems.

- The dental practice owners' level of interest in keeping their systems up to date with IT upgrades that ensure optimal operational efficiency, and that maintain full integration with updated external networks.

NOTE: The number of users may also be factored when employee onboarding, email administration, user training, Help Desk support and other services are to be included in IT managed services agreements.

Although the abbreviated study does not directly address the matter of pricing for IT services, the responses from the Premiere owner reflect the client's practical interests in ensuring:

1. That services are adequate for his dental office's operational needs.

2. That the dental practice pays only for the specific IT equipment and services it needs and avoids unnecessary IT costs.

## BREAK/FIX VS. MANAGED IT SERVICES FOR DENTAL PRACTICES

It is to here compare the two pricing structures, and then apply each to the Premiere case.

Break/Fix Dental Practice IT Support

Under this pricing model, a dental practice has the advantage of only paying for IT services when IT service is received occasionally for some particular purposes, or when a problem arises that the dental office staff cannot overcome without intervention by IT professionals.

Ultimately, Break/Fix IT support may cost significantly more than Managed IT Services, even when taken throughout many years, due to:

- The higher costs of emergency IT services to correcting complex, urgent problems that from time-to-time render systems, applications, and equipment inoperable, compared to the cost of ongoing preventive service.

- The lower dental team productivity resulting from slow or otherwise inefficient network, equipment, software applications, and other IT systems issues that Managed IT Services proactively correct.

- Insufficiently managed HIPAA responsibilities that can lead to exorbitant fines, lawsuits, and damage to the dental practice's reputation in its community.
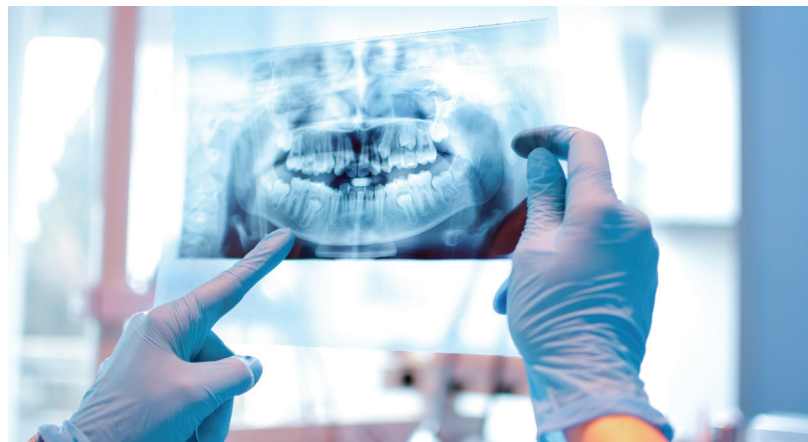
Managed IT Services

With dental practice Managed IT Services, the client pays a set fee (usually monthly, quarterly or annually), for around-the-clock off-site monitoring and management of IT systems and equipment, as well as routine onsite equipment maintenance, and all other IT management work, as needed.

Managed IT Services costs for an individual dental practice must be carefully determined, and are typically based on some or all of these considerations:

- Number of machines

- Number of users

- Kinds of services included in the agreement

Essential dental practice Managed IT Services usually include security, virus protection, email admin, 24/7 Help Desk support, staff training, a comprehensive HIPAA compliance program tailored to the dental office, and web hosting, among others.

Pricing within the Managed IT Services structure is typically based on a complete itemized assessment of the amount and kinds of IT equipment and systems components that are in a dental practice and the number and types of services desired by the client.

NOTE: Service agreements for Managed IT Services should be carefully examined to ensure against hidden costs and service exclusions.

CONCLUSION

The cost advantages and disadvantages of the Break/Fix pricing model for IT services are to be partly understood in the context of the size of a client's dental practice, i.e., its extent of IT equipment and systems. These factors typically determine the potential numbers and kinds of typical emergent problems that are common for an organization of its type. And, they determine the practice's extent of potential for compounding such issues and the associated costs of major equipment and systems issues resulting from inattention during earlier stages of their development.

In other words, although the size of an organization is not the only factor in reasoning to appropriate costing of IT services, the more IT equipment, software and users in an office, generally speaking, the greater the office's need will be for comprehensive ongoing IT management.

Finally, applying the respective limits of IT services under the two pricing models in question, it appears most reasonable to conclude that Break/Fix is not sufficient to maintain optimally efficient integrated IT systems and timely updates for dental practices similar in size to the studied dental office.

To determine specific pricing for IT services for dental offices comparable to the dental practice that is the subject of this study, as stated in the above subsection, a thorough analysis of the particular IT equipment and systems, along with the kinds and number of services selected by the client would be needed, in order to obtain all information necessary to calculate a realistic price total.

For More Information About Dental IT Services Contact NOVA Computer Solutions at (888) 711-3234, for more information about Managed IT Services for dentists and dental specialists. Ask for a no-obligation IT systems assessment.