

All Laboratories Are Not Created Equal

Making the Case Against Commoditization

MARIBETH MARSICO / SENIOR EDITOR

Conventional wisdom in the dental laboratory profession is that the proliferation of CAD/CAM and offshore outsourcing is making the dental restoration a commodity. Dentists, some say, don't see much difference from one laboratory to another, and price sensitivity is higher than ever in this economic environment.

That's why savvy laboratory marketers are honing in on the key to differentiate themselves in this increasingly competitive market: it's no longer just about

a top-quality product, it's about top-quality value. Whether it's providing exceptional service, being a technical resource or offering other value-added benefits, the goal is to get dentists to see you as the only laboratory that provides a total solution for their needs.

Here are four laboratories that are raising the bar and showing current and prospective clients alike they are much more than just a crown in a box.

TECHNICAL RESOURCE

R-Dent Dental Laboratory: Offering the Expertise of an On-Staff Clinician

Daxton Grubb has a realistic outlook on the price pressures in our industry. "Let's face it, we're all looking for the most value in every dollar we spend; dentists aren't any different," says Grubb, President of

R-Dent, Bartlett, TN. "As a laboratory owner, I have to be aware of that and, instead of becoming frustrated, find ways to add value to our services to strengthen my stance on our prices."

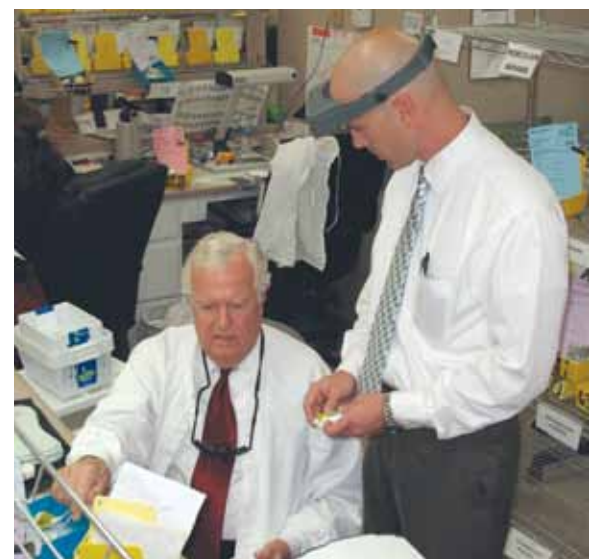
In addition to staying up to

date with digital impressions and other technology and providing continuing education to customers, Grubb enhanced his service

strategy two years ago by hiring an on-staff dentist. In the laboratory two days a week and by appointment the rest of the week, Dr. Bob Hewitt offers hands-on tips and advice—at no additional charge—for clients working on complex cases, and also caters to new clients and younger dentists who can benefit from his 40 years of experience as a practicing dentist. In fact, Dr. Hewitt has become a valuable resource to many of R-Dent's clients and some request right on the Rx that Dr. Hewitt call them to discuss large cosmetic or implant cases.

Tapping into this unique service niche allows R-Dent to bring its role as a technical resource to a new level, because Dr. Hewitt both enhances dentist/laboratory communication and troubleshoots technical prob-

lems, such as impression-taking techniques. "We let clients know that we want to make our laboratory more valuable to them and



Dr. Hewitt (left) is a technical resource for R-Dent's clients and technicians alike. Here, he discusses a case with Shawn Holmes, the lab's Fixed Department Manager.

he's here to help us both, not to judge their work," says Grubb, who budgets Dr. Hewitt's salary as a direct labor expense since his overall responsibility is quality control. "We've gotten a lot of positive feedback on this service. Any service we can offer that our competitors don't is an investment in our future growth." ■



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