



Best Practices for Creating a Secure Cyber Environment in Your Dental Practice



As a dedicated owner of your dental practice, safeguarding your practice's digital integrity should be as crucial as the quality of patient care the practice provides. The cybersecurity policies below should be followed in your dental practice to help create a secure cyber environment for all.

1. Use Strong Passwords: Create and maintain unique passwords that combine upper and lowercase letters, numbers, and special characters. Fortified passwords deter unauthorized access. Additionally, the use of multi-factor authentication should be a requirement, not an option.

2. Exercise Vigilance Against Phishing: Exercise caution with suspicious emails and links. Verify sources to prevent divulging personal information. Provide training to employees on how to identify phishing attacks – this can go a long way in securing the practice.

3. Properly Secure Devices: Lock screens and secure devices to prevent unauthorized access and data breaches. Laptops should also be protected from theft or exposure in public settings.

4. Handle Data Responsibly: Dispose of sensitive files securely. Keep the digital environment clutter-free and secure. This security measure will protect data against breaches and misuse.

5. Perform Regular Software Updates: Performing routine software updates is important not only for maintaining the functionality of practice devices and systems, but also for enhancing security. These updates help to patch vulnerabilities in the software that hackers exploit.

6. Maintain Firewall Protection: A firewall is a network security device that monitors and controls incoming and outgoing network traffic. An active firewall should be maintained to ward off unauthorized network access.

7. Ensure VPN Usage: All practice members should use a VPN for secure remote work when they are connected to Wi-Fi outside the practice. The goal in using VPNs is to encrypt online activity to prevent attackers from tracking that activity while a practice member is connected to an unsecure Wi-Fi network.

8. Control Admin Access: Controlling administrative access involves closely managing who can access and modify practice system settings, and sensitive data. Only a limited set of authorized individuals should have these administrative privileges.

9. Implement Employee Termination Policies: When an individual's employment with a practice is terminated, the practice should ensure centralized logging to that employee's devices and accounts. Additionally, all files and data should be archived for 24 months.

10. Use Credentialed 3rd Party Providers: When using a 3rd party cybersecurity service provider, practices should require that the provider be accredited and certified. This will help ensure that providers have expertise in relevant compliance regulations so they can help the practice meet its cybersecurity obligations.

11. Emphasize the Importance of Incident Response: All practice members should understand the need and process for reporting breaches in cybersecurity. Prompt incident response will ensure efficient mitigation of any issue. Obtaining employee commitment to be the first line of defense and response against breaches will help maintain a safe digital space for patients and operations.

Assemble your team

It takes an entire team of dental industry professionals to ensure the success and growth of a dental practice no matter where you are in your professional journey. Each advisor serves a unique role in providing proper guidance to dental professionals as they navigate the successes and challenges of practice ownership.

There are six essential roles every dentist and dental specialist should consider when building an advisory team:

- **Accountant** – Understands dental practice economics and ensures accurate financials, tax planning, and practice valuations.
- **Practice Consultant** – Offers operational insight to reduce costs, improve efficiency and growth, and strengthen overall business operations.
- **Attorney** – Protects your interests by providing advocacy and legal guidance on contracts, compliance, risk management, and transition planning.
- **Financial Advisor** – Helps structure personal and practice finances for long-term stability by offering guidance on investments, retirement planning, taxes, etc.
- **Specialty Lender** – Evaluates practice cash flow and growth potential and can often offer one hundred percent financing and working capital in a dental acquisition.
- **Broker** - Assists in valuing and marketing a practice, finding opportunities to acquire and grow, and serves as a resource in helping parties reach a fair deal.

It is crucial that each of these professionals have experience working specifically with dental and dental specialty practices. Often, one trusted advisor will recommend other qualified professionals to help you complete your team.

Taking the time to build this team will provide you with the advice and perspective needed to make informed decisions throughout your career.

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focused on *results*.



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