



The Passion in Our Industry



The Journal of Dental Technology was pleased to have a dialogue on the state of the industry with Jerry Kaizer, CDT. Kaizer is the owner of Murray Kaizer, Inc., a dental laboratory in Farmington, Conn., specializing in a broad spectrum of customized denture and removable prosthetics. He has been a consummate volunteer during his career. Of note, Mr. Kaizer donated his time and experience working with Dentsply Prosthetics to develop the online Virtual Full Denture Training Workshop available through the Foundation for Dental Laboratory Technology. This 5-module removable video program, launched in 2015, documents a patient case from initial chairside assessment through placement of the final dentures. Each individual module was scripted and produced to document each step of the denture process between the dentist and the dental laboratory technician. Kaizer is a 40-year CDT and is an ardent supporter of education.



Describe your process of taking your lab digital.

When the crown and bridge transformation hit in early 2000s, removables were just a small segment of the total dental market and it wasn't worth the investment to expand. In 2013, we took our first course at the laboratory in partial denture design in 3Shape, and had the ability to see what the transformation could be. Since then, we have integrated the digital world into removables as much as possible. We currently have 15-18 percent of our work done digitally but that's only if we go back to the doctor and inform them of our capability. The majority of accounts are not thinking about digital dentures and don't see all of the advantages. The results are also not as predictable or esthetic as desired. I predict this will change by the end of this calendar year. New materials are being released that will allow a more predictable result. The Dentsply Sirona resin is next generation bullet-proof with an exclusivity that comes with Carbon subscribers.

How can a lab be successful in today's market?

You have to be clever to run a successful lab. The spaces and business models are being filled differently, but if you have the capacity to look beyond your specialty and integrate what you can into your specialty, both old and new, we can satisfy a broader end of our market that needs to be served.

Price-oriented labs will always be there, but there is still room left for deep customer service companies to succeed twenty years from now. There are enough dentists focused on best quality rather than best price that are looking for labs that give them less aggravation chairside and predictable results. Consistency works better in the doctor's hands because they know what's coming and how to pitch it, and if you give great customer service they will stand by you.

What's one of the biggest challenges this industry faces?

Most dental lab owners are seeing an uptick in business since the pandemic, but bouncing back is a subjective answer. While the demand is increasing, there is a vacuum in the volume of qualified technicians. Our biggest challenge is the lack of credentialed technicians and supply of accredited dental laboratory technology schools.

Software, materials, and equipment continue to change but the tools still need a qualified operator. We are all under the presumption that operators understand what is going on and what method should be used. If a technician is a CDT or has been educated, they have the resources to explain what is happening with a case.

We have looked at all avenues to recruit technicians. We had always had a pipeline of young people interested, but that pipeline dried up as they can make more money starting entry-level in other industries. I had to look at everyone in the company that was making less than \$25 per hour and increase their wage. With the national movement for increased wages, I can't entice someone to learn this trade without giving them the financial incentive to do it.



How has the customer relationship evolved over the last 20 years?

Most of my clients have known me long enough that if I call them and say I see something here I don't like or won't work, they trust me. As I get older, I have grown more comfortable accepting that I cannot work for everyone. A successful dental laboratory understands their strengths and their ideal customer. There will be personalities/communication styles that don't line up, and you have to know when to walk away. That has been a big paradigm shift for me as well as my staff. With that said, technology today offers clients multiple ways of interfacing (text, email, etc.) which has bettered our communication from an overall standpoint.

How do you communicate to your customer base and staff the value of being a CDT?

I was a high school English teacher before becoming a technician, so I am a firm believer that education is key. What I admired most about Glidewell was not their marketing and business growth; it was Jim Glidewell being smart enough to know he always had to train staff. There was always the next person in line and through this, he was able to sustain quality and growth. Being a CDT is a feather in a cap because it shows you have a commitment to your profession and it's not just a job. When I go home I think about the work that I'm doing and expand my mind. Critical thinking

comes from education, hands-on or from books. It's a quest to want to be better, to do something more and to be insatiable about what you are doing. Passion is a strong word, but look at all of the famous artists and musicians who were passionate about their work. I currently have four employees in the process of studying for the certification exams. Now that it's virtual and can be done out of our lab, it's a home run and really fills a need.

Things are changing in many ways and who knows where things will end up. It is the most exciting business to be in; it's physically challenging and artistically satisfying. We are making uniquely-sculpted dental jewelry, whether by computer or by hand. **JDT**

