

# 4 Ways In-Ear Radio Empowers Your Dental Practice to Prosper.



How dentists and their staff can use radio communications to cut through the noise, improve business operations and patient care, and potentially reclaim hours of productivity per employee per week.

**Dental offices stand out from other businesses.**

Patients' dental health is at stake, and effective communication between dentists and their staff is critical not just to good customer service, but to patient *well-being*. Complicating matters: instead of sitting at a desk all day, dentists and their staff are constantly on the move through a labyrinth of exam rooms, labs, and more. That makes staff communication a serious challenge.

**As a result, keeping operations efficient and effective is an ongoing struggle.** Just keeping everyone on the same page throughout the day poses a continuous challenge, and poor staff communication inevitably worsens efficiency and good service. While online chat technologies or public address (P.A.) systems work well in quiet, private, closed offices where everyone sits at their desk all day, they're a poor fit for the controlled chaos of a dental practice.

**But what's the alternative?** Do receptionists, hygienists, or technicians have to yell out or wander around until they can find someone, potentially leaving the front desk unmanned or patients waiting and unattended?

**The good news: This is a solvable problem.** In-ear radio communication systems (especially digital systems) fit perfectly into the unique needs and constraints of dental offices and labs. They not only make operations more efficient, they also strengthen the underlying business to create a more prosperous, profitable enterprise better able to care for its valued patients.

In this paper, we'll look at the ways radio communication systems work and help dental practices to save thousands or tens of thousands of dollars, decrease employee turnover, and simply make the workday easier.

## 1: Radio systems completely eliminate time spent physically searching for each other.

At any given time, dental office staff can be ... *anywhere*. Most staff, particularly the caregivers like hygienists, techs, and the dentists themselves are constantly on the move throughout the day. Just *finding* each other to communicate simple information can take an excessive amount of time and intrude on time with patients. The American Academy of Family Physicians recommends a “morning huddle” to allow the practice to plan for changes in the daily workflow and manage crises before they arise.”<sup>i</sup> Yet that’s just the *start* of good communication: a once-daily meeting cannot address what happens *during* the workday. That’s why in-ear radio fits seamlessly into dental offices: with them, messages can be communicated with a touch of a button. You can reach workers in any location, from labs to bathrooms, on the spot. With digital radios in particular, offices can leverage additional features like increased range, private calling, and all-call channels for emergencies or announcements.

“The radios help us a lot with time efficiency,” Mitchell Decker, an Arizona-based dentist, told the *DentistryIQ* news site. “Getting ahold of someone in the back office is much easier, and they can let me know about treatment changes without having to come up to the front. When I worked in offices without radios, we were constantly wasting time walking around to find people.”<sup>ii</sup>

Even better, you can ensure the communication is genuinely two-way. Most office comm systems (like P.A. systems) don’t offer any way for workers to confirm a message was *received*, a particular challenge when navigating areas with noisy equipment and patient conversations coming from all directions.

## 2: Improved convenience has an immediate payoff in superior patient care.

Inadequate communication between dental staff has both clinical and business consequences. Clinically, one study found that dental technicians working with dental impressions often failed to communicate with colleagues about safety and hygiene practices. Specifically, nearly half (44%) received no communication (perhaps because the office did not have an adequate staff-to-staff communications protocol) whether impressions had been disinfected or required further action.<sup>iii</sup>

It’s not just patients who suffer. Office productivity can diminish without adequate communication. For example, one survey found that more than 50% of office professionals spend more time searching for information than on their work.<sup>iv</sup>

That, in turn, circles back to patients: communication failures have been found to be a factor in some of the largest medical malpractice claims. A report from insurance company CNA on medical professional liability exposure found that communication lapses incurred claims averaging \$324,260 – 54% more than the overall average claim of \$210,513.<sup>v</sup>

Radio shores up those vulnerabilities instantly. Radio serves everyone better and offers a professional look and good customer service. Staff can stay fully informed at all times (not just after their morning huddle), while patients can be provided information in a fraction of the time and have requests implemented immediately. And if you improve the customer experience, you’ve improved revenue.

## 3: Quality radio endure even the most rigorous practice.

The convenience and customer service benefits of radio literally can’t be beat by other communication solutions; but from here, you have to start deciding what kind of radio or device. Durability is a key consideration: can the equipment survive in the wild?

In an environment like a dental office, look for enterprise-grade devices. Per research from analyst firms like Gartner and VDC, the total cost of a typical consumer communications device is significantly higher than for ruggedized





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enterprise-grade communication devices. Consumer-grade devices<sup>vi</sup> have shorter lifespans and reduced battery life, and every failure can incur both lost productivity and require over 2.5 hours of support time.<sup>vii</sup>

The difference between enterprise- and consumer-grade devices is in both design and construction. For example, a radio designed with just single wire that can slip under clothing will minimize or eliminate the exposure of wires getting in the way of close-proximity exams and equipment.

Construction also matters. A plastic chassis, common to consumer-grade equipment, can snap after a single bad drop. A cast aluminum body won't break even if the user throws it. Cheap construction means expensive operation, and quality builds are likely much less costly than you think. This is another area where digital radios can make a difference, too, with longer-lasting battery life that minimizes recharging.

#### **4: The bottom-line impact - radios save money and time.**

Good internal communication is an investment in the practice. Most of these dental practices understandably look at communications as “nice to have” rather than “must have.” But while buying communications *gear* might seem like purchasing a commodity, getting an effective communications *system* is about reclaiming staff time, facility budget, and future success.

Indeed, poor communication incurs real costs. A recent Grammarly-Harris Poll on *The State of Business Communication* found that poor

communication costs \$12,506 per year per employee on average.<sup>viii</sup>

Another way to think about the impact is production per hour (gross or net), one of the key performance metrics for any dental practice. An increase of \$50 per hour will yield around \$75,000 in additional annual revenue for the average practice.<sup>ix</sup> Now remember how workers lose 40 minutes daily to information-seeking and clarifying? That could be that additional \$50 hourly production right there.

Altogether, improvement in communication effectiveness is associated with a nearly 20% increase in overall market value, because it drives better worker behavior, helps facilitate change when needed, and enables continuous improvement.<sup>x</sup>

Finally, in an industry that can have high turnover, especially of front-office staff, implementing highly effective communication practices makes companies 4.5 times more likely to have highly engaged employees and 20 percent more likely to have less employee turnover.<sup>xi</sup> In fact, a good system might help you right-size staffing: as each staff member operates more efficiently, you regain time from them – up to nearly half their day, 3.6 hours, that workers typically spend searching for information.<sup>xii</sup>

**Ultimately, improving in-house communication will strengthen your practice and position you more competitively even in the most demanding markets.**

If you are interested in strengthening the business side of your dental practice while simultaneously delivering better patient care (and better protecting against miscommunication-based malpractice claims), an in-ear radio communications solution checks all the boxes. Radios can help every aspect of that process: strengthening the business to improve competitive positioning and win smiles from patients. Not sure where to go from here? See the next page for tips to get started.



## Getting Started

1	<b>Verify durability.</b>	Evaluate options against the rigors of a fast-paced dental office. For example, make sure the earpieces are as durable as the radio. Many manufacturers and facilities use low-cost, easily broken earpieces.
2	<b>Consider weight.</b>	You want lightweight radios. Otherwise, workers will complain about sagging pants; such details determine whether the radios actually get used and whether users are happy with them or just live with it.
3	<b>Test comfort and ease of use.</b>	Factors other than weight also affect day-to-day use. Do earpieces feel comfortable in the ear? Is the device easy to use in the real-life conditions of a dental office? Once again, comfort and ease will determine whether staff are happy about, or resistant to, the devices.
4	<b>Look at the battery.</b>	Battery management is crucial to cost-effectiveness. Look for lithium batteries that will last 20 hours (multiple workdays) on a charge, with a lifespan of 2-3 years per battery, and identify the cost of replacement batteries.
5	<b>Ask questions!</b>	Don't be afraid to ask your vendor some hard questions about how their product will fit into a dental care environment. In fact, that's a good way to test if they're even <i>familiar</i> with the specific needs of dental and medical providers.

## About Black Diamond Radio

Our policy is to treat you the way we would want to be treated. Every radio includes a 2-year warranty, with a 1-year warranty on earpieces, at no cost. If your staff can break them, we will replace them, period. **Black Diamond Radio** started in 2002 with a dedication to quality custom molded products and a commitment to customer service. Now, as a leading manufacturer of two-way radio products, we bring you the best in quality, innovation, comfort, and ease of use.

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<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.dentistryiq.com/practice-management/staffing/article/14169038/instant-communication-how-twoway-radios-improve-dental-practice-efficiency>

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0002817714626441>

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.techrepublic.com/article/more-than-50-of-office-pros-spend-more-time-searching-for-files-than-on-work/>

<sup>v</sup> <https://www.cna.com/web/wcm/connect/f8b73780-0c25-453e-b4cf-b5343da8e374/Nurse-Exposure-Claim-Report-4th-Edition.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&ContentCache=NONE>

<sup>vi</sup> <https://www.zebra.com/us/en/blog/posts/2023/what-all-you-need-to-know-before-deciding-whether-consumer-or-enterprise-mobile-devices-are-best-for-front-line-workers.html>

<sup>vii</sup> <http://www.plantengineering.com/single-article/in-industrial-settings-two-way-radios-still-a-smart-choice/e69f11074c25f77c4e619067512dfa84.html>

<sup>viii</sup> <https://www.communicate4impact.com/blog/the-costs-of-poor-communication>

<sup>ix</sup> <http://www.dentistryiq.com/articles/2013/08/10-daily-practice-statistics-every-dentist-should-review.html>

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<sup>xi</sup> <http://www.inc.com/peter-economy/7-steps-engaged-employees.html>

<sup>xii</sup> <https://venturebeat.com/business/report-employees-spend-3-6-hours-each-day-searching-for-info-increasing-burnout/>

