



# Systems for Working With Your Lab

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In most offices, indirect restorative dentistry is performed multiple times each day, and somewhere between 20% to 100% of the prostheses are fabricated at a dental laboratory. Creating a smooth, reliable working relationship with your laboratory is an essential ingredient to increasing not only quality, but efficiency and productivity as well.

There are two fundamental systems at work in the relationship between the dental office and dental laboratory: logistics and communication. To maximize the impact of these two systems, we need to answer three questions: “Who?”, “What?” and “How?”

## LOGISTICS

### WHO?

- **To streamline the process of moving materials between your office and the lab, determine who in the practice is responsible for:**
  - Making sure all necessary records have been obtained prior to dismissing the patient.
  - Gathering all the patient records and boxing them up to go to the lab.
  - Completing the prescription.
  - Getting the case to the lab.
  - Receiving the case back from the lab.
  - Inspecting the case prior to the patient’s next appointment.

## WHAT?

■ **Compile a list of all the steps involved in completing an indirect restoration that involve the laboratory, including:**

- All necessary patient records that must be taken during their appointment.
- All patient records that must be gathered, labeled and boxed for the lab.
- The lab prescription that must be completed.
- Logging the case as going out.
- Delivering or shipping the case to the lab.
- Receiving the case back from the lab.
- Logging the case in.
- Inspecting the case.

## HOW?

■ **Create workflow documents indicating how each “What” happens and “Who” is responsible for each step. These should include:**

- Creating a checklist by procedure of the records required by the lab.
- Designating a location where patient records, lab prescriptions and boxes are kept.
- Creating a workflow for how records are moved out of the operatory, how a prescription is generated, and how everything is gathered and boxed.
- Designating a delivery or shipping method and creating a workflow for how cases leave the office.
- Creating a workflow for receiving lab cases, checking them in and inspecting them.

Even in an ideal world where the logistics system has been well developed and is functioning smoothly, we will still need to talk to the lab about special circumstances and clinical situations that are difficult to manage on a written laboratory prescription. This same approach can be used to create a system around communications between your office and the lab.

## COMMUNICATIONS

### WHO?

■ **Designate the team members who will spearhead communications with the laboratory regarding:**

- Scheduling issues and return dates.
- Technical issues and clinical concerns.
- Customer service issues and concerns.
- Billing issues and concerns.

**WHAT?**

- **Compile a list of situations that may require communications beyond a written lab prescription, including:**
  - Scheduling issues and return dates.
  - Technical issues and clinical concerns.
  - Customer service issues.
  - Billing issues and concerns.

**HOW:**

- **Determine which of the following methods of communication with the lab work best to resolve specific issues:**
  - Phone call.
  - E-mail.
  - Text.

Investing the time to work through these questions with your team and create documented systems that everyone is trained on and invested in will save time, money and aggravation in the long run. 🗨️

**TIP:**

**There's a saying  
that's worth heeding:**

**"IF IT ISN'T  
DOCUMENTED,  
IT DOESN'T  
EXIST."**