Communicating with Dental Imaging Software: Bridge vs. Integration vs. Native

When it comes to different dental technologies, there appears to be some confusion over how different technologies work together. The past 20 years have provided an amazing array of options, acronyms, and terms tossed around that can be quite confusing.
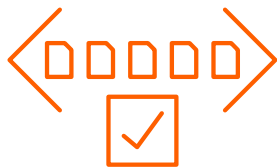
At Curve Dental, we like to keep things simple. As a result, we have a specific definition for the way these different technologies work together when we talk to each other in the company. Feel free to adopt our terminology for your own use.

There are 3 basic ways by which different technology products can work together:

1. Bridge
2. Integration
3. Native

In this paper, we define each and provide examples to help with differentiation.

Bridge

Bridges are by far the most common method of system integration among different dental technologies. With a bridge, there is typically a selection, or button or command that sends a patient identifier to the other software product and that identifier is used to search the database or create a new record.

For example, if you were using the Curve Hero practice management software and wanted to look at a patient's digital x-ray in your Schick software, you would open the record of a specific patient in Curve Hero, then select the Schick Bridge option. This would send a command to the Schick Software to open that patient's x-rays to view within Schick.

The primary benefit of a bridge is that it reduces the amount of searching that is needed, saving keystrokes. The software, i.e., Curve Hero and Schick, is totally separate and the two systems have no data in common other than the patient identifier.

Almost every practice management software system and most imaging systems can be set up to work this way. Curve Hero bridges to the popular systems and we are able to build a bridge if your favorite system isn't on the list.
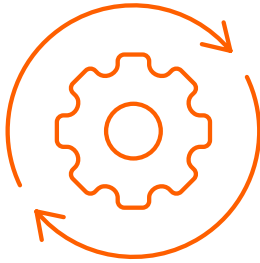
Integration

Direct integration is much less common than a bridge. It is typically only used when two separate software products are owned by the same software company and they choose to make them display in the same window or screen. Direct integration can also occur when two companies choose to work together to provide a level of integration. They are essentially "bridged" behind the window by placing parts of both software systems on the same screen.

Direct integration eliminates the appearance of two separate software products which enhances readability. Because both are in the same screen or window, it enables the products to complement each other with regard to the information presented.

Let's be clear: Direct integration is a step up from a traditional bridge system. But there is one more technical option that has some merit.

Native

Native systems are written as part of the same application. There isn't separate code that is linked together behind the scenes, rather it's all part of the same product. What makes this type of system unique is that the ability to use clinical data, images, and management data all together is greatly enhanced.

Curve Dental offers a native imaging system, which allows you to capture digital images directly and instantly to the cloud (unlike other systems, the image is not first stored on a local hard drive and moved to the cloud at a later time). Moreover, the imaging features are compatible with most digital x-ray sensors and intraoral cameras and more compatible sensors and cameras are being added all the time. TWAIN-compatible panographs will also plug and play with Curve's imaging features.

About Curve Dental

Founded in 2004, Curve Dental provides cloud-based dental software and related services to dental practices within the United States and Canada. The company is privately held, with offices in Provo, Utah, and Calgary, Alberta. The company strives to make dental software less about computers and more about user experience. Their creative thinking can be seen in the design of their software, that's easy to use and built only for the web.

CURVE DENTAL®

Visit us at www.curvedental.com