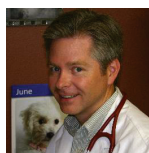


# DigitalDownload

Information and insights into radiography using your IDEXX Digital Imaging System

## Why you should integrate digital imaging into your practice



an interview with  
James Moebius, DVM,  
and Kirk Cito, DVM

**Volume 4 No. 1**

**Why you should  
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The task of fully integrating your practice may seem daunting. And there's confusion in the market about what integration really means. The fact is, the true integration of your diagnostic equipment—including digital radiography—with your practice management system can save time, help you provide patients with better medical care, increase client loyalty and improve your practice's bottom line.

We talked with Kirk Cito, DVM, and James Moebius, DVM, to get a frank perspective on integration and digital radiography. Dr. Cito is a sole practitioner at Overland Animal Hospital and Pet Resort in Denver, Colorado, who has had digital radiography "since the beginning." Dr. Moebius, whose practice at Murphy Road Animal Hospital in Sachse, Texas, employs three doctors, made the switch to digital a few years ago. They have both integrated their digital radiography systems with their practice information management systems (PIMS).\*

### What do you see as the difference between interfacing and integration?

**Dr. Cito:** A lot of information out there uses the terms synonymously, but it's misleading. Interfacing is more of a one-way communication. It may allow certain entities within your network to communicate in one direction but rarely allows back-and-forth communication. Integration gives us the opportunity to streamline data and create efficiencies. We can tie all of our diagnostic equipment and practice management software into one package so that information is shared in a way that's very beneficial to client communication and quality of care.

### Once you decided to integrate your practice, how was the experience?

**Dr. Cito:** It's been a phenomenal experience and the staff appreciate it. I'm a sole practitioner, and when I don't have to spend my time inputting data, I'm more available to use my medical training. The staff appreciates the ability to efficiently process requests as they can easily locate their next task or image request. I can better utilize their skills and talents, too.

**Dr. Moebius:** No question, it's been an improvement. Every time we increase our efficiency with integration, it saves us time. We try to have our staff do all they are capable of doing. The more we integrate, the easier their jobs get, so my staff is thrilled. And, it's easier for the doctors to find the data we need.

**Dr. Cito:** My staff are well trained and know how to maximize their time for the benefit of the patients and the practice. They appreciate the benefits of integration and high quality diagnostics, including digital radiography. A number of them have told me that they don't think they could work anywhere else. They've become spoiled with the efficiencies and the quality of medical care that we provide.

For example, integration helps make us efficient enough to do a complete exam on a new patient, including in-house blood work and digital radiography, and have all the data and results compiled into an electronic format. I can use this integrated report to talk with a client during their visit so that they can more easily understand

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### How has being integrated affected your staff's efficiency?

**Dr. Moebius:** Entering and accessing information is quicker, as the data is in the record automatically. Integration lessens the chance of data, including images, being lost in the shuffle, as test results and images are sent to the patient's record automatically. During our audit process, the issue of not charging clients doesn't come up, so I know we've cut out lost charges.

their pet's problem. It helps me to efficiently communicate what's needed therapeutically so they can go home and relay it to their spouse. That face-to-face communication helps clients realize the value of the services they've received and where their money is going. Integration also helps us with consistency in our messaging. We're all on the same page with what's best for the pet and can effectively communicate and reinforce that message with clients.

**IDEXX**  
LABORATORIES

### How have these efficiencies filtered to your clients?

**Dr. Cito:** It's real-time care, just as it sounds. Clients don't have to make multiple visits. They don't have to return to pick up medications. We don't lose refills to online pharmacies. It's important to remember that it's difficult for clients to carve out time to bring in their pets, and if we can show them we respect their time by being efficient and giving them more value, they see that as a benefit. When they see results in just a few minutes, there's a lot less disconnect. And we're giving them something they may not be able to get down the road, so it's definitely good for business.

**Dr. Moebius:** Clients definitely notice the digital experience. They're impressed that they can see the image on a monitor within a few minutes. Everybody's got schedules and places to be and if you can cut out having to retake that image, you've improved your efficiency and your ability to stay on top of appointments.

### How has integrating your digital imaging improved your ability to provide care to your patients?

**Dr. Moebius:** With IDEXX-PACS™ software, I can easily manipulate my images. It's amazing how quickly the brain adjusts to a higher quality image, and we have better images with higher detail. It's easier to share them with a radiologist or other specialist and we have tremendous image flexibility. We share the images with clients in the exam rooms and they appreciate and are impressed by the technology. It's also easy to burn a CD so clients have a copy.

**Dr. Cito:** We're not searching for films or files. We have access wherever we have a terminal to pull up client, patient or diagnostic results. There's no competition for a view box and no problem waiting for a file, so we can effectively relay information to the client. It makes us quite efficient not just in data entry but in data recall. A picture's worth a thousand words—it's much easier to explain a difficult scenario to a client with pictures in hand.

### How have IDEXX Digital Imaging and integration affected your profitability?

**Dr. Cito:** There's a lot of financial benefit with digital. You can more effectively obtain results so you don't waste staff time or materials, such as films and wasted exposures with retakes, not to mention the higher quality images, which are

paramount. We also save on employee time, not wrestling unruly pets for retakes. It's a lot less laborious for the staff. And, because clients can see the value, you can appropriately charge for the service.

With integration, you're not dropping charges that are dropped without connectivity, so it's more profitable. We also give clients CDs for dental or whole-body radiographs, which help them realize the value and relay information more effectively to spouses who weren't there. It's amazing how inexpensive yet how beneficial that is.

**Dr. Moebius:** There's no question it's affected our profitability. When you're considering going to digital, you always hear that you're going to take more x-rays. As a vet, I'm thinking that's just a line, but it's

“ When you know you're going to get a good image the first time, you're more likely to order it...and that's good for everyone. ”

true; with digital imaging, we're more apt to take the images we need to take. When you're using film, especially when it's not an easy patient to handle, there's a part of you that says it's not worth the hassle. When you know you're going to get a good image the first time, you're more likely to order it. If you're taking more images, it improves patient care as well as your bottom line. You're making better decisions, and that's good for everyone.

### Have you seen an effect on customer loyalty?

**Dr. Moebius:** Yes, ours is a service industry. Any time you can improve your service, you're going to engender client loyalty. If clients have a good experience because we've been able to provide good information and help them, they're going to come back. Digital and integration of that technology as well as blood analysis helps us do a better job. With a sick patient, I can't wait, so I test in-house and 10 minutes later, I'm holding those results as I go through them with the client. It's the same thing with radiographs; they're right there when I need them. And even if it's not the outcome the client wanted, they got good service and they're going to be back.

**Dr. Cito:** Absolutely. The realization of the value of coming in is illustrated by client

loyalty. They notice the quality of care and the effective use of their time. Most of the issues we have with clients involve communication. Integration gives us more time to communicate effectively. We've increased compliance, which is especially important in this tough economic time. If I didn't have the time created by the efficiencies of integration, I wouldn't be nearly as communicative.

### How do you let your clients know about the investments you make in your practice to benefit the health of their pets?

**Dr. Moebius:** When they're here, we've got a captive audience, but we also place informative advertisements in local papers, which highlight certain illnesses and talk

about how technology helps us work up our diagnoses. I network at the local chamber of commerce and do sponsorships where I get a chance to talk about what's new. There's word-of-mouth, and also the CD with images that clients can show to family and friends. The image we want to cultivate is that of a modern, progressive practice.

**Dr. Cito:** Most communication comes through time spent with clients and personal relationships. If we've got new diagnostics, we'll discuss those capabilities during visits so clients know why we plan to do what we're doing and why it's best for their pet. Our clients are our best promotional assets. We're able to send home tools that they can share and easily refer back to us.

And I agree it's important to cultivate the image of a modern, progressive practice. In today's veterinary field, there's been a big paradigm shift from the old school. When I graduated, I was being interviewed; now graduates are interviewing practitioners to see if they want to work at a practice. I don't know how many students today have even developed a film, so if you don't have high quality integrated tools, like digital imaging, it hurts your opportunity to expand your staff with new, quality hires.

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