

# Practice Management Thrown for a Curve

*Curve Dental's Whiz Kid Brings the Cloud to Dentistry*

by Benjamin Lund, Editor, *Dentaltown Magazine*

First impressions can often be deceiving. Matt Dorey, 24, strolls into the lobby of Conrad Hotel in Chicago, Illinois, and unlike the half-dozen well-dressed hotel guests who rode down with him in the elevator, Dorey's striking appearance catches you off guard. This young entrepreneur looks every bit his age – and then some. He's wearing stylish jeans, a gray hoodie sweatshirt, and then there are those bright orange sneakers, representative of his company's lively brand. A haphazardly upswept hairdo and two or three days of uneven stubble complete the look. As he nears, this patently hip young man is singing a blues song.

"I love the blues," he says. "When I visited Chicago a couple years ago, I was just learning to play guitar. I found some hideaway joints here where I heard the best blues music I'd ever heard before. Changed my life."

At first glance, you visualize Dorey as a budding rock musician – not the founder of Curve Dental, a company offering what many consider to be the biggest game-changer in dental software in a generation. He has a base at Curve Dental's headquarters in Orem, Utah, and says he doesn't really have an office – yet he still works about 80 hours each week. He spends most of his time on the road, traveling from practice to practice, finding more ways to improve Curve Hero, his company's Web-based software platform, all the while staying connected to his customers – an ethos he adopted following revolutionary businessmen like famed British industrialist Sir Richard Branson or Howard Schultz, chairman and CEO of Starbucks.

The son of entrepreneurs, Dorey received his first computer and became passionate about computer programming at the tender age of seven. In an effort to quench his thirst for learning how things worked, he "ripped his computer apart" to see if he could put it back together again. While in junior high, Dorey began taking college-level computer programming courses, hoping one day he might use these skills for a job in engineering. Dorey admits, "I was never great at programming, but I started young and I was always intrigued by it." He shifted his focus from becoming an engineer to developing software products, and while in high school he developed a Facebook-like social network for his friends years before Facebook trans-

formed social networking – until the school administrators made him shut it down.

At 15, following in his parents' entrepreneurial footsteps, Dorey started his first "honest-to-goodness" company, Synergy Solutions, which built computers, developed Web sites, created custom programming and installed high-tech equipment in dental practices and other local small businesses. After a time, Dorey began to recognize some patterns. "Our focus was everywhere and we were doing OK – but what was interesting was dentistry was one of our most successful outlets – selling servers and maintaining dental networks. So I thought, 'OK, why don't we just put our focus here?'"

Soon, the teenager from Calgary and his budding dental technology services company struck a deal with Ash Temple (which, at the time, was the largest distributor of dental supplies in Canada). With the stroke of a pen, Synergy Solutions became the *de facto* installer of all software and other high-tech equipment for dental offices in his region of Canada. While his friends were more preoccupied with prom, Dorey was more concerned about serving his customers and growing his business.

Installing computer servers and practice management technology in dental offices got Dorey to thinking; there had to be a better way to implement a practice management system without having to purchase the expensive servers and shut down the practice to install it properly, and lost production in training the dental team. Granted, this thought was in direct competition with his company's business model. Using software via the Internet meant companies like Synergy Solutions could become obsolete. Dorey began negotiating with Ash Temple to develop a Web-based practice management solution. "It didn't make sense to sell all of that hardware to dentists. A Web-based solution was better." But while Dorey was brainstorming the development of a Web-based practice management solution, Ash Temple was acquired by another industry giant and, due to a new set of corporate objectives, Dorey's Web-based software project hit a bump.

Frustrating as it was, Dorey wasn't about to give up on this idea. He changed the focus of Synergy Solutions exclusively to



*Matt Dorey,  
Founder, Curve Dental*

the development of this Web-based practice management platform. Soon after pitching the idea to several investors, Curve Dental was born.

As development of the Curve software platform continued, Dorey began exploring other health-care fields to see how Web-based software was being accepted. He found AdvancedMD, a fast-rising player in medicine that had single-handedly shifted the paradigm for medical practitioners away from traditional client/server technology to a Web-based software model. He was surprised to learn that Jim Pack, AdvancedMD's CEO, was a former principal at Dentrrix Dental Systems and led Easy Dental Systems back from the brink in the late 1990s. When Pack sold AdvancedMD in 2008, Dorey approached him through LinkedIn.com. After some rigorous due diligence, Pack agreed to take the helm of Curve Dental in early 2009.

Dorey rounded out his team when Andy Jensen, who had more than 15 years experience in marketing technology in the dental profession, came aboard to handle Curve's marketing. "With Jim and Andy's proven track record in the industry, we could essentially cherry pick the rest of the team," says Dorey. "The people we have directing our development, architecture, data conversions, operations and customer service are veterans of the dental profession or renown for their expertise."

It took meticulous recruiting of the right people, thousands of man-hours and millions of dollars in capital to develop and offer what Curve Hero is today. Dorey says the product was always meant to come to the states, but since it was being developed in Canada, the software company was able to operate very much under the radar.

### *Expert Opinion*

#### **Dr. Lorne Lavine, founder and president of Dental Technology Consultants**

The discomfort the dental profession might feel about Web-based applications is both understandable and contradictory at the same time. I've heard some of my colleagues express their fear about placing their data on the cloud and then in the next sentence make reference to managing their personal finances with online banking or online retirement planning. With time the dental profession will make peace with their fears; however, it is interesting that our adoption of Web-based applications lags behind our colleagues in the medical world.

In my business, I have no reservations in recommending Web-based applications, like Curve Dental, to my clients. Is it for every practice? No, but it will be very soon. The challenges that doctors have faced when switching to new dental software are greatly diminished with Web-based dental software. For example, the task of installing the software, unlike a traditional client-server system, is as simple as going to the Web and entering a username and password.

I enjoy watching Curve Dental change the profession on a daily basis. Once upon a time we all managed our practices using DOS, and then Dentrrix and others came along and we all switched to Windows for all of the obvious benefits. The benefits of using Web-based applications are just as obvious. If I had to bet, I'd put all my money on the cloud.



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## Why the Web?

Curve Dental's move to the Web is not as surprising as you might think. Consider for a moment how much your life has changed over the past decade because of the Internet. Chances are you survey your checking account online from time to time. Maybe you've avoided the crowded malls during the holiday season and purchased gifts for friends and family on Amazon.com or Ebay, while sitting by the fire in your own living room. You have probably booked travel online, or checked in for your flight. Nowadays, you can even watch your favorite shows and movies through the Web or avoid the pitfalls of the social scene by finding your next date online. Through social sites like Facebook and niche professional networks like Dentaltown.com, the world has become vastly smaller and we've become infinitely more connected.

It was only a matter of time before a Web-based practice management software option would come along, allowing users to shed their servers and IT woes. This is all part of the global paradigm shift techies are calling "the cloud," aka cloud computing.

Curve Dental, and its cloud-computing model, allows users to connect to their practice management systems from anywhere with Internet access (office, home, vacation, etc). Via Curve, all of the practice management system's applications are delivered online, securely stored and professionally maintained.

Dorey acknowledges that the concept of storing practice data in "the cloud" may find a few skeptics among the dental community, but also puts it into context.

"Everyone's financial information is online, banking is online, you can trade stocks, check your power bill, adjust your 401(k), and much more," says Dorey.

"Right now, most dental practices don't have anybody qualified in their office who knows anything about IT, security, back-ups or anything like that. We know 50 percent of the market isn't backing up their data properly, and most computers have viruses or aren't secure. There's currently so much exposure, but nobody really understands it because there's misplaced comfort in having a box under their desk or a physical

## Expert Opinion

**Sandy Pardue**, director of consulting, Classic Practice Resources

In today's economy, more and more doctors have an eye on the bottom line and have become savvier when it comes to time and money. That's why I like the cloud. It benefits the practice in the following ways:

- **Saves Practices Money.** You'll spend less on implementation, IT and licensing fees with Web-based software
- **Servers Not Necessary.** Servers are expensive to buy and maintain.
- **Saves Time.** There is no need to install any CDs, download any software or worry about upgrades.
- **Data is Backed Up Automatically.** Web-based software, such as Curve Hero, backs up data automatically. It's impossible to lose the practice lifeline.
- **Always the Latest and Greatest.** When you use the latest features you maximize efficiency.
- **Works from Anywhere.** You can easily access patient data at home or on vacation... all you need is Internet access.

Web-based software, like Curve Hero, will handle the security, backups, upgrades and "IT guy" stuff. The practice is not threatened by theft, fire or natural disaster. You can stay focused on dentistry and it is 100 percent HIPAA compliant. For doctors looking to tighten their belts and become more productive at the same time, the cloud is a clear winner.



From left: Curve Dental's Marketing VP Andy Jensen, Founder Matt Dorey and CEO Jim Pack.

tape backup in a safe. When a burglar breaks into their office, what's the first thing they're going to take? The computers. And when a hurricane hits, or a fire starts or something of that nature, what then? They're down. Their data's gone. It's the equivalent of putting your money under your mattress."

Dorey continues, "With our system, the practice's data is stored in a world-class multi-million dollar security infrastructure that can be accessed securely by the dentist from any browser anywhere in the world at any time. It would never be economical for dentists to have our standard of security and redundancy for their own office. Because they're connecting to our network, the security and redundancy all comes with the service. Their data is being backed up in multiple locations with the same level of security and encryption used in banking."

Another concern dentists have about storing their practice data in the cloud is the reliability of their Internet connection. Dorey responds, "Most of us can't remember the last time our Internet service was down. The telecom companies that provide Internet service invest billions of dollars

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each year in ensuring 100 percent uptime – particularly if you are a small business client for them. So the worry of downtime is less and less relevant. With that said, if an office wants a second option, it is simple and affordable to install a USB wireless Internet card available from all of the telecom companies.”

A major advantage of a cloud-based software solution is the outright elimination of having to install updates and patches to your system, a process so intimidating to most dental offices that they allow their disk-based updates to pile up on the shelf. Dorey insists that all of the “heavy lifting” is done on Curve’s end. “Our customers find out that our platform is perfect for them. Once they start with Curve, they never have to change or go through the hassle of installing updates on any of the PCs ever again. We take care of the change for them.” According to Dorey, in the last 60 days, Curve had developed and deployed more than 300 updates to its software already. Dorey says, “It’s just like when you log on to do your online banking and they’ve added new features. There is nothing new to install. I didn’t have to take my bank account offline for a day while I installed some new update. It’s painless and organic. It’s seamless. Why shouldn’t that same type of ongoing evolution be available to dentists with their dental software?”

Another advantage of Curve’s Web platform is that it changes the way the team is trained on the software. No longer will a dental practice need to shut down for certain period of time to install servers and software and train the staff. “We’re changing how everything works,” says Dorey, adding, “Because we’re using the Web to implement our system we’re more in touch with our customers. I am confident that our customers feel we’re very responsive to their needs and fun to work with.”

## The Right Time

A product like Curve Hero wouldn’t have been able to exist even three years ago. Now, high-speed broadband Internet usage is fairly prevalent. People everywhere are gaining more and more trust in the Internet. The generation that has grown up with the Internet prefers using Web-based applications because they are more convenient and are more in tune with their lifestyles. And, because Curve Hero is Web-based, it is compatible with both Mac or PC. A doctor can choose to use one or the other or both in the same practice.

“The technical challenges that some doctors worry about are now managed by us at a fraction of the cost,” says Dorey. “Web-based systems have a faster ROI and provide doctors with much better access to their data. And being on the Web opens up a host of advantages to the doctor; for instance, we have integrated online booking for patients, automatic e-mail messaging for recall, electronic invoicing, and more. When you check a patient out, the invoice is automatically sent.” But Dorey says that is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to Curve Hero’s application capabilities now, and in the future.

Dorey’s confidence in his company’s technology is bolstered by the premonitions of computer power players like Bill Gates and Steve Jobs who are convinced that more things are moving to the Web. “In just a few short years the profession will look back at 2010 and laugh at the way technology was being integrated into the practice,” says Dorey. “People are starting to recognize that Web-based applications should be the standard. Curve Dental is the only company that can push the dental profession to that tipping point. Just as Windows-based applications replaced DOS-based dental systems 15 years ago, cloud computing and the power of the Internet is fueling the technology of today. It’s already happened in most all other markets. Curve Dental is leading the charge in dentistry.”

To learn more about Curve Dental, please visit [www.curve-dental.com](http://www.curve-dental.com), or call 888-910-4376. ■

## Expert Opinion

### Justin Shafer, founder of Onsite Dental Systems

One of the biggest sources of pain for the typical dental practice is the expense in servers, hardware and maintenance of the system. Any time a practice can simplify its network, or its network footprint, they’ll benefit in several ways. Most likely they’ll experience less downtime due to hardware failure; less downtime means more production. All of my clients welcome changes that will result in an increase in productivity.

What I like about cloud computing, and software like Curve, is the simplicity and the security. Any time one of my clients must update their existing client-server software they will most likely experience a number of technical issues that will require my tweaking their server, upgrading their workstations or purchasing new workstations. All of that is an expensive undertaking for the practice. The cloud eliminates all of that pain.

Data security is very cool on the cloud. I’m a big believer in establishing proven backup procedures for my clients. I’ve seen too many practices lose all of their data before I could help them. But procedures rely upon people, and too many times people don’t follow procedures. The cloud, on the other hand, is automated. Data backup is a natural part of the cloud. The doctor using Web-based dental software will never be bothered by its database backup or software upgrade worries ever again. There isn’t a better business continuity plan than the cloud.

