

The market for digital impression scanners has grown, but which scanner best suits your practice?

Finding the Right Scanner for Your Practice

With continued advancements in digital dentistry, it can be difficult finding the optimal scanner to fit your practice's needs. That's why we've compiled 20 essential questions every clinician should consider asking scanner manufacturer and their lab.

Questions to Ask the Manufacturer

1. How long has your system/scanner been on the market? Do you have another dental office that I can contact who is currently using the system?

Sometimes it is not best to be on the cutting edge of technology. It is always recommended to talk with another dentist to see how the system works for him/her.

2. How many systems do you offer? Is there a contract involved in the sale? Who facilitates the maintenance, software upgrades, and continued support? What does it cover and for how long?

It is important that you know who to contact for support and service. Is it handled through the vendor/supplier or a third party, and for how long?

3. Does your system offer open or closed architecture?

For maximum flexibility, your practice should consider an open-architecture scanner, which allows you to work with any lab that has a digital system, regardless of the type. A closed-architecture means the lab must have the same system.

4. What are the purchase options? Are there options or modules that can be added later? Will there be discounts on my lab bill?

Be cautious when discussing prices and ways to purchase. Much like an automobile, there could be hidden fees attached with items such as click fees, annual fees, usage fees, and upgrades. The manufacturer may quickly answer with a yes to the discount question, but it is imperative you always ask your laboratory first before weighing this in as a determining factor of your purchase.

5. Who does the training, how long does it take, and what is the cost?

You will want to ensure you have an experienced trainer, preferably one who understands the doctor's process as well as the laboratory process. You should also ask how quickly, after purchase, you will receive your training.

6. What type of support do you have in place after training? What are the fees, if any?

There is a learning curve with any system. It is advantageous to not rush through initial training because there may be limited resources available to receive additional help.

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Technical Research Consortium
NORTH AMERICA

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7. What type of technology does this system use: video, photo, or laser? Does it require powder? Is it monochrome or color? What are the benefits?

There are pros and cons to any technology but they all get the job done. Powder may be required on some systems and recommended in certain situations on others. Most labs can effectively process either monochrome or color scans and either will have a WOW factor with your patient.

8. Will my digital scans work with CT scans and import into any implant planning software?

If your plan is to place more implants via a lab fabricated surgical guide, your system's files must be able to merge with CT scans and import into various planning software.

9. Can you scan a patient pre-operatively then scan again after prep and send a single file of both together?

This option allows the laboratory to reproduce the patient's dentition prior to prepping, which leads to better patient acceptance and less chair time.

10. Can you save portions of a scan while going back and rescanning troubled spots?

This option allows you to focus on filling in the missing data areas without dramatically increasing the file size which speeds up post-processing and sending files to your lab.

Questions to Ask your Laboratory

1. Are you a digital lab?

The lab should be able to discuss the "digital workflow" step by step. Even though more traditional impressions are sent to labs, a truly digital lab will convert the poured up, articulated stone models to a digital file for the design and milling process.

2. Do you design and manufacture in your lab or do you outsource?

While many labs manufacture restorations in-house, some labs outsource their work. Be suspicious of longer turnaround times or significantly cheaper pricing. Get to know your lab; ask for a tour.

3. How long have you been designing, milling, and/or printing?

A lab that is experienced has a better understanding of the process and materials. Experience typically equates to consistent results. You want someone who can help you, not learn with you.

4. Is there a digital specialist at your lab who can enhance my scanning technique and/or digital workflow?

Some labs have people on staff who can help you with issues that may occur, while other labs have certified trainers to help you. A lab with a digital specialist can answer more questions and have a better understanding of your process, and can communicate with you about the lab's process for a better overall understanding and improved workflow. Ask the laboratory what kind of resources it offers.

5. How many systems do you support?

Ideally you want to work with a lab that is comfortable and familiar with all systems. Each system has a different post processing time before it reaches the lab. Ask which system they receive the most files from.



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6. What type of restorations are available with digital scans?

Not every lab can accept all types of scans, which may limit the lab's restoration choices. Ask the lab which products they offer that utilize digital scans.

7. Could you explain modeless crowns to me?

More experienced labs are comfortable with this concept. The idea behind modeless restorations is to save you time and money. Labs may also include a "crown carrier" or contact model to provide "peace of mind." Since the contact model is printed while the restoration is being processed, your lab must own a model printer. Turnaround times for modeless crowns are typically faster.

8. How do I scan an implant case?

Your lab should be familiar with all systems and should be able to help you with the correct scan bodies and workflow involved.

9. Do you have a different turnaround time or pricing structure for cases from digital impressions?

Turnaround times for digital impressions can be shorter than analogue cases. Digital impression cases usually come back sooner, which makes it easier to fill a schedule if cancellations occur. Other offices want to change their scheduling process to offer a shortened time for patients. You will need to consider what is best for your office.

Pricing structure varies from lab to lab. A digital salesperson will tell you that digital impressions are cheaper for the lab, which is not always the case. Modeless restorations, however, are sometimes more cost-effective when limited to monolithic zirconia, and are dependent on the lab having the proper equipment. Be sure you have this discussion with the lab.

10. From a lab perspective, what are the advantages and disadvantages of each digital impression scanner?

The lab can offer you valuable information on the comparison of each system. Since every office is different, the more information you have, the better decision you can make as to which system will work best for you.



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