



Centralization Strategies for Dental Groups and DSOs

A Playbook for Practice
Growth and Efficiency

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Why Centralization Matters

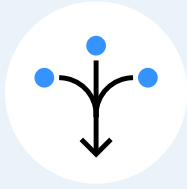
The rapid growth of multi-location dental groups and dental support organizations (DSOs) has reshaped what operational excellence looks like in dentistry.

Thriving dental groups share a common trait: the vision to centralize what matters most and unlock the full potential of their company.

As DSOs expand beyond a few locations, centralization becomes not just a strategy, but a necessity. By consolidating functions like billing, scheduling, human resources, marketing, practice management, and IT, dental groups can drive efficiency, create consistency across offices, and prepare their organizations for sustainable, long-term success.

This playbook provides practical strategies, real-world examples, and expert insights to help you evaluate, implement, and optimize a centralization strategy for your dental group.

What Is Centralization?



Centralization means moving certain business or clinical functions into a shared, centralized hub instead of handling them independently at each practice location.

Centralization is not about removing the voice of the practice. Rather, it is about redefining where administrative work is done and who ensures consistency. Done correctly, **centralization empowers providers and practice teams to focus on patient care while a dedicated support structure manages operational infrastructure.**

Team members assigned to centralized functions may work at a corporate headquarters, at another offsite location, or remotely. Some DSOs hire third parties to handle specific centralized functions, such as insurance eligibility verification.



Commonly Centralized Functions in Dental Groups and DSOs

Most DSOs strategically begin with business functions that produce a quick, measurable impact.

Frequently centralized areas include:



REVENUE CYCLE MANAGEMENT (RCM)

Insurance verification, benefits checks, pre-authorizations, fee schedules, payment posting, claims submission, denial management, and collections



CALL CENTER & PATIENT COMMUNICATIONS

Centralized scheduling, new patient intake, recall outreach, after-hours support, and patient communications



HUMAN RESOURCES & TALENT MANAGEMENT

Recruiting, onboarding, benefits administration, payroll, training, and retention initiatives



CREDENTIALING & COMPLIANCE

Standardization of provider licensure, payer enrollment, and certification tracking.



MARKETING & BRAND MANAGEMENT

Brand consistency, campaign management, web presence, referral tracking, and performance analytics



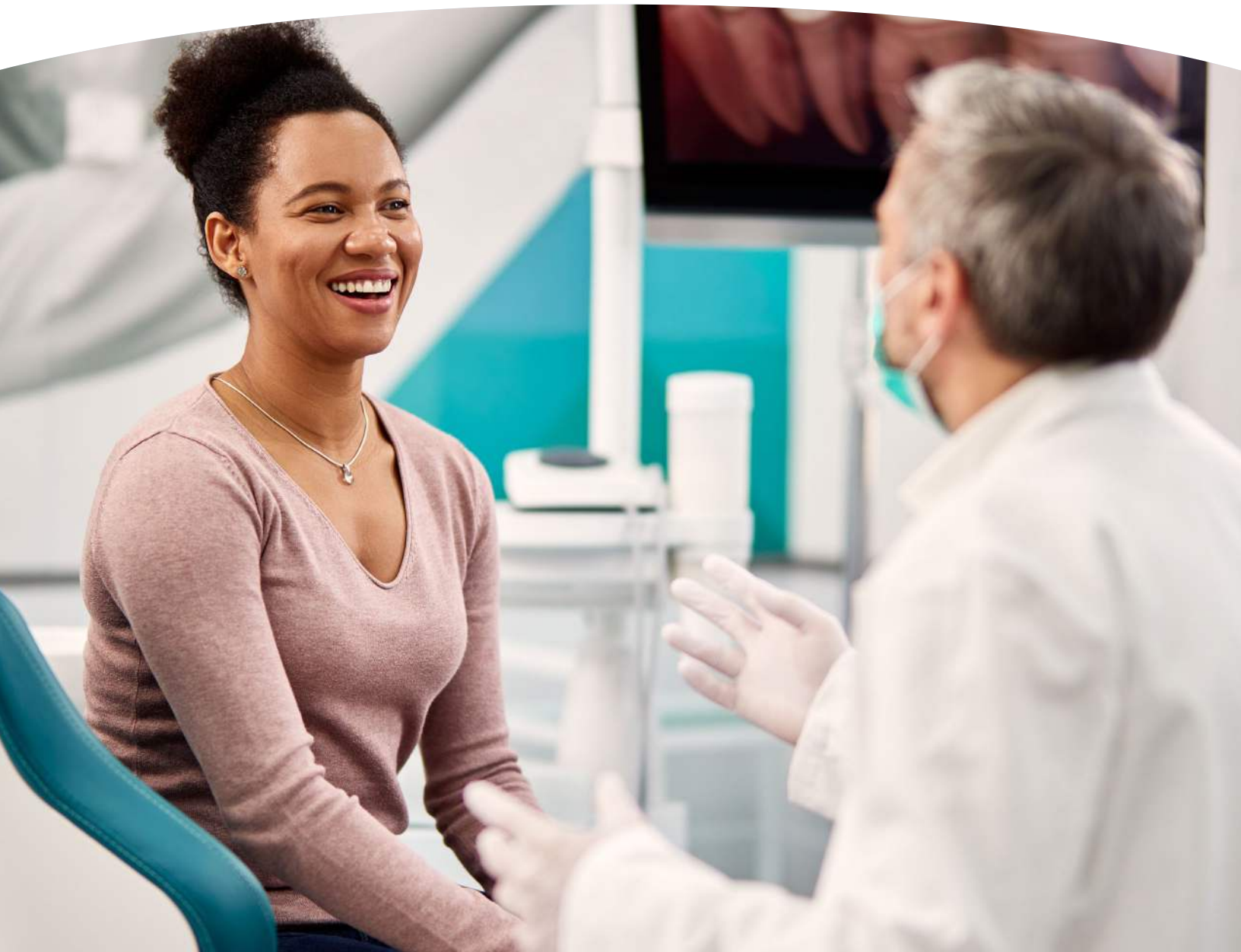
IT & CYBERSECURITY

Practice management systems (PMS), imaging platforms, network security, vendor oversight, multifactor authentication/single sign-on functionality (MFA/SSO), and centralized support ticketing.



PROCUREMENT

Supplies and capital equipment purchasing, vendor consolidation, inventory controls, and formulary management.



Benefits of Centralizing Dental Operations

The goal of centralization is simple: deliver better performance with greater consistency and lower overhead. When designed effectively, centralization creates:

1. Economies of scale

When each office procures separately, bargaining power is fragmented. Centralization consolidates purchasing, allowing DSOs to negotiate better pricing and service guarantees.

“The savings from centralization can’t be understated,” said Christy Englehart, fractional chief operating officer for the Dentist Entrepreneur Organization (DEO) and a dental executive with more than thirty years in the industry. “When you consolidate vendors for supplies, labs, and equipment, you can leverage your buying power and negotiate from a stronger position.”

2. Technology leverage

Cloud-based practice management, AI-enabled RCM tools, and enterprise patient communication systems allow support teams to operate efficiently from anywhere.



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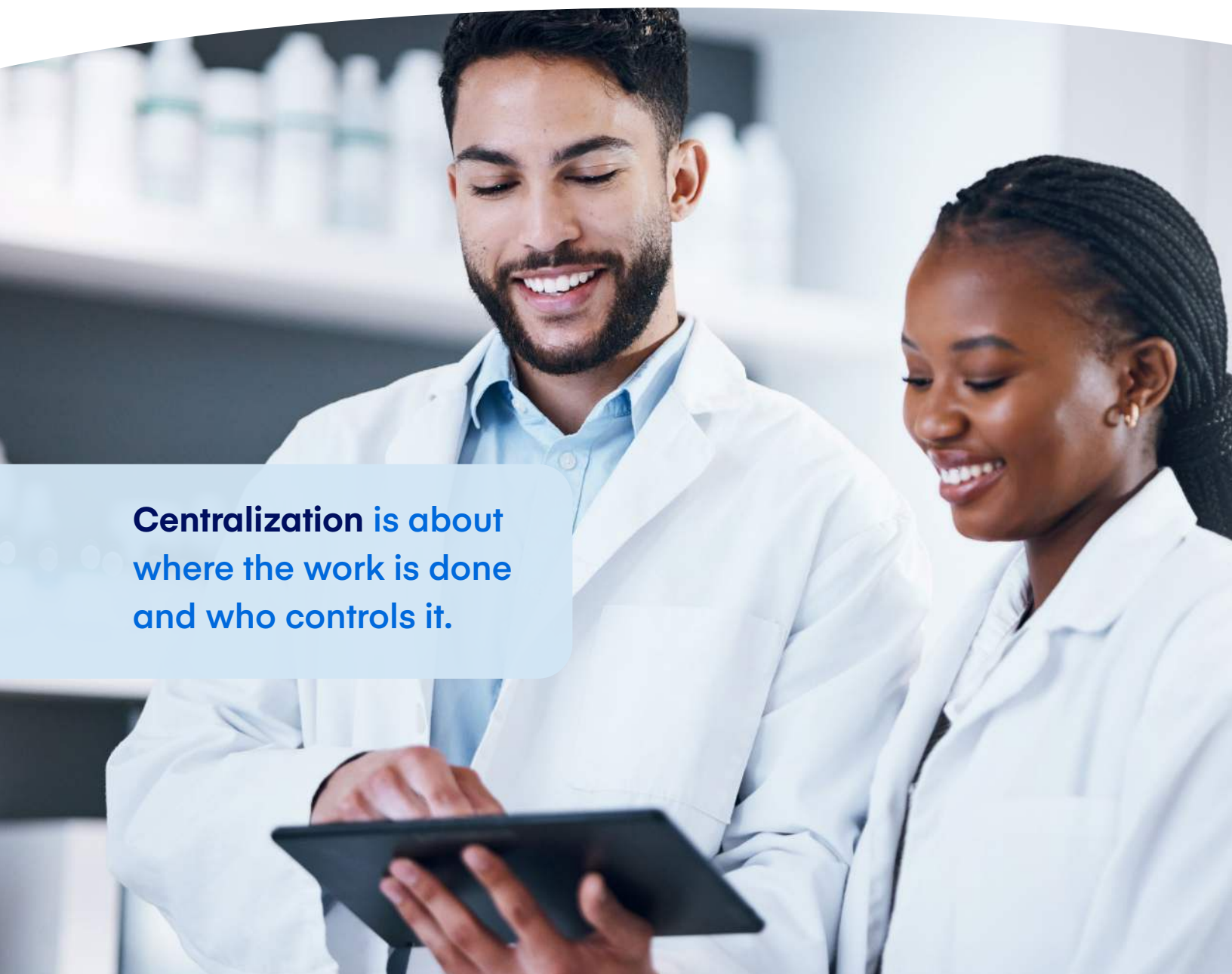
CHRISTY ENGLEHART
Fractional COO
Dentist Entrepreneur Organization

3. Standardized workflows

Training a centralized team on uniform protocols improves compliance, accurate reporting, and a consistent patient experience from start to finish.

4. Scalability and growth readiness

Centralized processes make it easier to integrate new practices, open de novo locations, and meet investor expectations for operational maturity.

A man and a woman, both wearing white lab coats, are looking at a tablet together in a laboratory or clinical setting. The man is on the left, holding the tablet, and the woman is on the right, looking at the screen. They are both smiling. In the background, there are shelves with various bottles and containers.

**Centralization is about
where the work is done
and who controls it.**

DSO Centralization Readiness Checklist

How do you know if it's time to centralize? This checklist helps identify friction points:

- ☐ We have three or more locations.
- ☐ Each location manages its own billing and collections.
- ☐ Patient scheduling varies significantly between locations.
- ☐ Our hiring and onboarding process differs from office to office.
- ☐ We are manually tracking credentialing and licensing requirements.
- ☐ We lack real-time visibility into key performance metrics (KPIs) across locations.
- ☐ Different offices use different technology.
- ☐ Different offices use different vendors and supply ordering processes.
- ☐ Our leadership team is stretched thin managing operational details instead of operational growth.

Scoring:

- 0–2:** Operations are mostly efficient; continue to monitor performance.
- 3–6:** Centralize key functions to reduce chaos and improve margin.
- 7–10:** Centralization is urgently needed to protect growth and profitability.



Creating a Centralization Strategy

Centralization is not an overnight shift; it is a disciplined transformation. The most successful DSOs follow a phased approach:

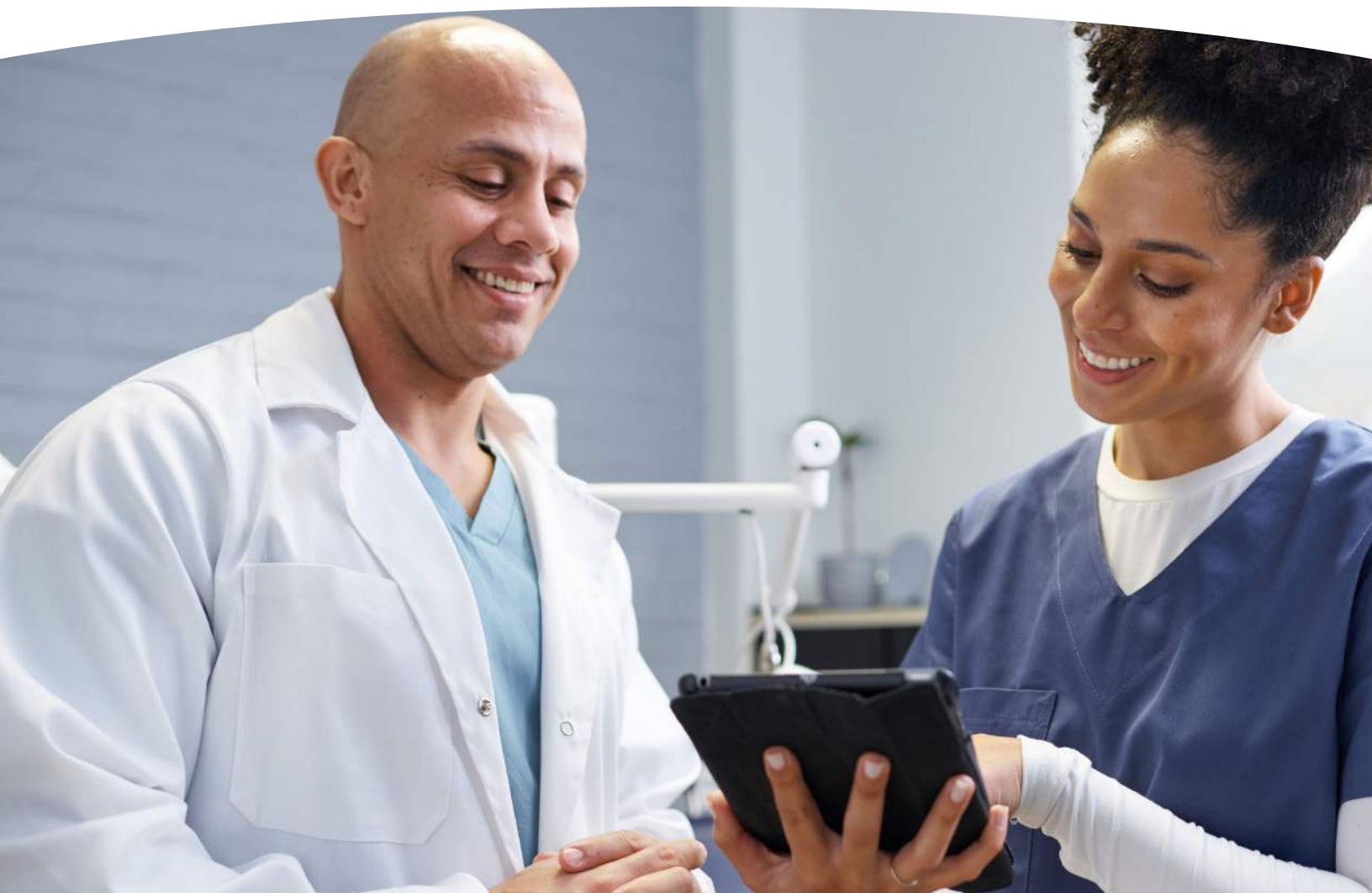


Developing Economies of Scale Through Centralization

In decentralized models, each practice chooses its own suppliers, labs, and materials. Costs escalate and vendor loyalty weakens. By contrast, centralized procurement leverages collective volume.

“When you’re doing significant business with fewer vendors, the customer service is better, and the relationships are much stronger,” said Christy Englehart.

Beyond cost savings, centralized procurement supports standardization in clinical materials, enhancing consistency in treatment quality and outcomes.



Centralizing Access to Data

DSOs pursue growth, but fragmented systems sabotage visibility. Practices using multiple PMS platforms create blind spots, manual reporting, and data lag.

“Denticon gives us centralized data at our fingertips at all times, which makes pulling reports easy,” said Joel Olivio, Chief Information and Security Officer at Dental Care Alliance.

Centralization through a single cloud-based PMS solves these issues:

- ✓ Real-time reporting across all locations
- ✓ Streamlined integration of new acquisitions
- ✓ Clear KPI tracking such as production, A/R days, case acceptance, and hygiene reappointment rates



Enabling Centralized Support and IT Efficiency

Without centralized technology, IT teams must maintain multiple systems, increasing costs and cyber risks. Each additional platform multiplies complexity.

“Having our practices on Denticon has dramatically increased our ability to respond faster,” said Joel Olivio. “When you have to maintain multiple systems, you just don’t have the same expertise.”

Centralization reduces IT burden through unified infrastructure:

- ✓ Single login architecture (SSO)
- ✓ Consistent security protocols
- ✓ Standardized training and permissions



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JOEL OLIVIO
CIO, CISO
Dental Care Alliance

Streamlining Revenue Cycle Management (RCM)

In many practices, managing the revenue cycle is one of the biggest challenges.

Traditionally, team members in the practice had to spend hours to verify insurance benefit eligibility, submit claims, track denials, and reconcile payments.

Now, many DSOs are choosing to centralize many of the RCM functions through a dedicated team, technology, or a combination of both.

Centralized RCM enables:

- ✓ Unified claims submission and tracking
- ✓ Dedicated, well-trained team members
- ✓ Standardized fee schedules and payment posting
- ✓ True A/R performance visibility

“At Imagen, we see centralization of revenue cycle management as a cornerstone of scaling effectively,” said Rezwan Manji, CEO of Imagen Dental Partners.

“By standardizing across practices, we reduce variability, improve visibility, and enable teams to focus on patient care rather than administrative friction.”

The group made the decision to standardize their practice management system in 2025.

“We viewed our transition to Denticon as an opportunity to take a fresh look at every workflow, simplify what was overly complex, and bring all of our practices into a single, more efficient operating rhythm,” Manji said.



Overcoming Resistance to Centralization

Even well-planned centralization rollouts can face pushback from providers and practice managers who fear loss of autonomy.

Common concerns:

- ✓ "We'll lose control over how things are done."
- ✓ "Our specialty is different."
- ✓ "Our patients only want to talk to us."

Operational change without cultural alignment is one of the biggest risks in centralization. Dentists may equate centralization with a loss of control, especially over clinical decisions, materials, or team dynamics. The key is differentiating between administrative standardization and clinical independence.

"Doctors may feel like you're micromanaging," Englehart cautioned. "It's important to still allow autonomy and recognize every practice may do things differently based on specialty."



Strategies to earn clinician trust:

- ✓ **Establish clinical advisory councils.** Involve practicing dentists in decisions around formularies, lab guidelines, and supplier relationships.
- ✓ **Preserve choice within limits.** Offer approved supply tiers rather than one-size-fits-all mandates.
- ✓ **Prioritize data transparency.** Share how centralization improves patient care, such as shorter wait times, faster billing resolution, and better case acceptance.

Clinicians support centralization when they see that it removes burdens without sacrificing patient care.



Developing Hybrid Approaches to Centralization

While full centralization offers powerful efficiencies, some DSOs find success using hybrid models that blend centralized infrastructure with limited local autonomy. The goal is not uniformity for uniformity's sake but consistency where it matters most, such as finance, data, compliance, and patient communication.

How phone calls are answered exemplifies a model that has evolved over time. Many DSOs attempted to centralize call centers but encountered patient confusion when the messaging between practices and support centers didn't align.

"Many years ago, call centers were very popular," said Christy Englehart. "They created consistency in how the phone was answered and scheduling, but we found inconsistencies between what the patient was told by the call center and by the practice."

Now, some DSOs are integrating AI-assisted communication platforms that can triage calls, answer frequently asked questions, schedule appointments, or send follow-ups via text message.

Examples of hybrid centralization with AI:

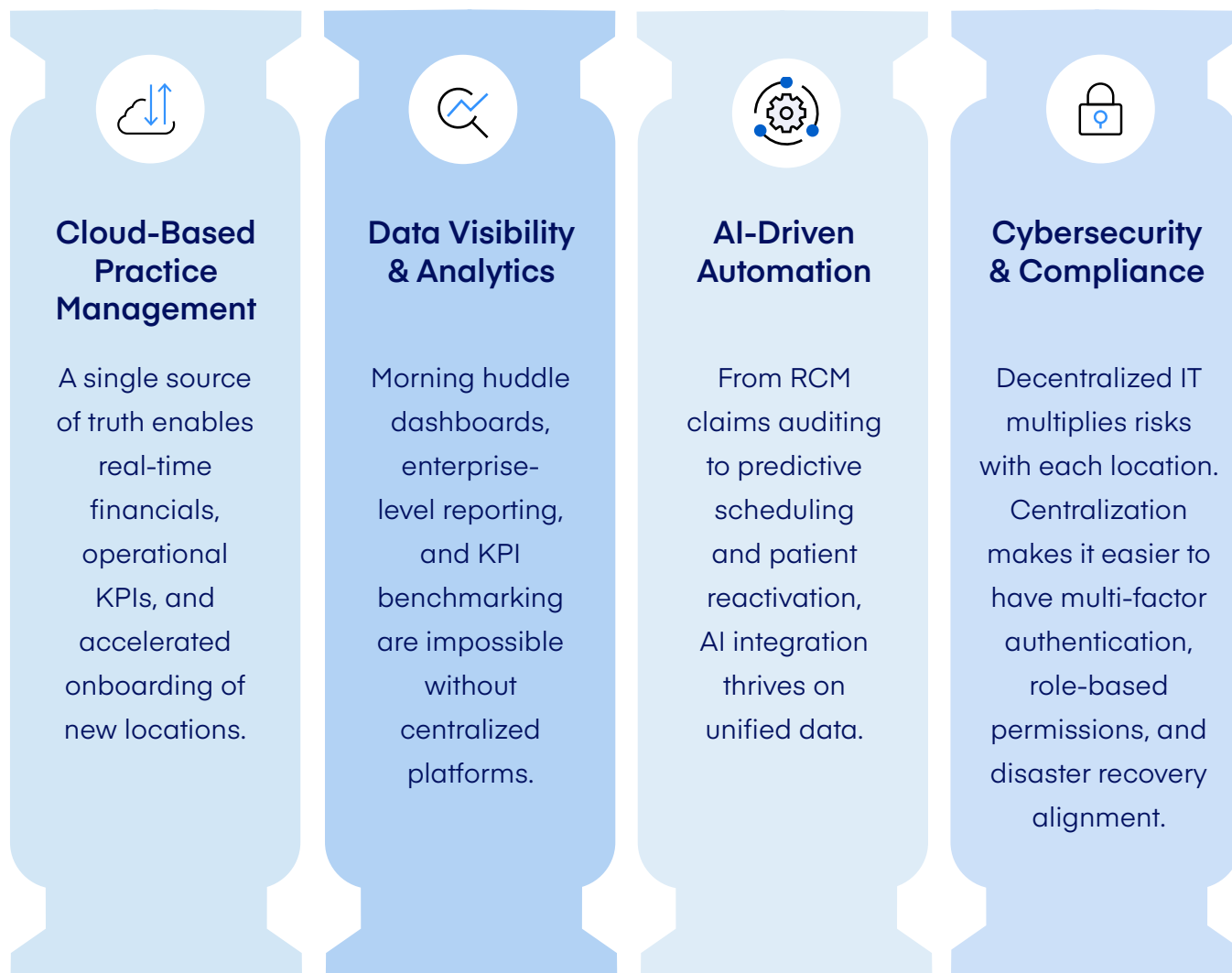
- ✓ AI handles first-touch inquiries and after-hours messages.
- ✓ Escalation workflows route complex inquiries to trained team members.
- ✓ Agentic AI technology proactively contacts patients with unscheduled treatment or overdue hygiene.

This approach maintains scalability without sacrificing personalization. Rather than relying on dozens of front desk team members to handle mundane calls, DSOs can utilize a mix of human and AI resources.

Building Systems for the Future

Centralization is no longer just about shared services; it's about building a platform for innovation. Dental groups that centralize appropriately are better positioned to deploy AI, analytics, and digital care models across their locations.

4 Technology Pillars of Scalable DSOs



"If we could go back in time, we would have implemented an enterprise-wide PMS much earlier in the lifecycle of our business because we have learned that we can't have 115 practices doing things 115 different ways," said David Diekmann, Chief Financial Officer for Imagen Dental Partners.

Scaling Through Centralization: Key Outcomes

When implemented thoughtfully, centralization delivers outcomes that compound over time:

Centralization Impact	Benefit
Standardized billing & RCM	Decreased A/R days, higher collections
Unified scheduling	Increased patient volume
Centralized procurement	Reduced supply costs
Integrated data	Real-time reporting and KPIs
Centralized IT & compliance	Lower risk exposure and faster support

Another benefit: Private equity groups and strategic buyers value operational maturity as well as EBITDA. A dental group with centralized infrastructure can attract greater investor interest.

"It was obvious throughout our recent quest for a new private equity partner that investors are looking for so much more than profitability," said Lorri Detrick, President and COO of Riccobene Associate Family Dentistry, a dental group with about 75 associated practices.

"Our standardized technology and operating systems provided centralized data, real-time visibility, and operational consistency. That level of transparency not only streamlined the due diligence process, it helped us command a stronger valuation," Detrick said.

Is Your Dental Group Ready to Centralize?

Centralization is more than an operational tactic; it is the infrastructure for scaling a modern dental organization.

It reduces friction, creates clarity, empowers clinicians, and positions DSOs to deliver consistent, world-class patient care across every location.

If your DSO or dental group is experiencing:

- ✓ Variability across locations
- ✓ Operational bottlenecks
- ✓ Limited visibility into performance
- ✓ Rapid growth or acquisition plans

Then now is the time to develop a structured centralization roadmap.

Use this playbook to spark leadership alignment, identify priority functions, and begin building a centralized foundation that supports sustainable expansion and helps you reach your goals.



Discover how we can help your DSO or dental group grow.

BOOK A DEMO



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Dental software is broken. We aim to fix it. As a partner in growth for DSOs and dental groups, Planet DDS delivers a cloud-based platform designed to scale alongside growing organizations. Powered by DentalOS™ with AI, its open platform includes Denticon Practice Management, Cloud 9 Ortho Practice Management, and Apteryx Cloud Imaging. Trusted by leading DSOs and emerging dental groups nationwide, Planet DDS enables 13,000+ practices and 118,000 users to move beyond outdated legacy software with seamless integrations, optimized workflows, and scalable technology built for growth.