

## Meeting clients' needs

Mark Daniels of Associated Laboratories Ltd tells us about what values the company holds dear

Some thirty years ago I remember walking into King's College dental hospital being shown to the training lab, being introduced to my tutor for the next four years and sitting down to a day of induction.

At the end of a whirlwind day Paul summed up and gave some words of wisdom which have stayed with me until this day: 'You'll only ever be as good as you last crown'.

I worked hard at producing the best I could and qualified, moving to my first real quality lab a year after qualifying where they had one of the first dicor machines. Immediately I realised that technology would be the driving force for my generation and before too long the antiquated methods used in our industry would disappear. Whilst at my new lab I was taken to my first dental exhibition by Pete (now one of my business partners) and we heard that a new machine was being demonstrated which would remove the need for technicians. This was Cerec in its first incarnation and technicians weren't invited along. I remember thinking that career change at the age of 40 was probably on the cards. As with all new revolutions it was a slow start and luckily I am still in dentistry.

### Long hours

Next was the move to starting a business and many years of long hours and no weekends



Figure 3: Zirconia full contour and framework bridge ready for sintering



Figure 1: Latest Armann Girrbach digital scanner in operation

followed. The constraints of family life, client demands and inadequate staffing to name a few regularly led to frustration and a struggle to maintain a quality product. Some 10 years ago we decided to look at the use of CAD/CAM technology within the lab and spent a large sum of money on a system. It was slow could only produce one case at a time. It did afford us the chance to overcome our fear factor concerning computer-controlled production but rapidly became a white elephant, occasionally being used for the odd Zirconia.

Materials had moved on and with the advent of pressable technology we could offer emax as an alternative. Larger staff numbers helped reduce late night working and so with happy clients we carried on.

Staffing issues, as it is with small businesses, loomed once more and the fear of a return to long days and work not being as it should sent Pete and Brian off to Cologne for a catch up on what was available, and after a short period of time I was introduced to the Amman Girrbach scanner and the



Figure 2: Roland 5 axis in-house milling machine and sintering furnace

Roland dwx-50 milling centre. Installed in our new CAD/CAM suite within a week we had produced wax patterns to be processed onto any type of material that could be cast or pressed, full arch Zirconia bridges that would in the past had been sent to a dedicated milling centre. Transparent stents, drill guides and full contour transparent bridge try-ins, and implant substructures at the push of a button. The most impressive for me are the full contour crowns made of translucent Zirconia which can be produced cheaply enough so as to satisfy any surgeon in any location.

### Radical change

This radical change to the way we produce products has meant again we have the luxury of spending time with our clients' needs outside of just making a crown and this gives us a natural advantage over competitors. In today's marketplace most products are being made to a good quality at a good price. What distinguishes a good company from a bad one is the quality of service they provide. I am soon to be in charge of four new apprentices and once I have given a hopefully not too tedious induction I shall say: 'Listen guys, you're only ever as good as the last helpful thing you did for your client' **adt**

Mark Daniels is a director of Associated Laboratories Ltd. For more information, contact: Associated Laboratories Ltd, 324 Bensham Lane, Thorton Heath, Surrey CR7 7EQ, call 020 8683 3816, email allden@aol.com or visit [www.theteethpeople.co.uk](http://www.theteethpeople.co.uk).