

# You Should Know: Guru

By Thomas Giacobi, DDS, FAGD, Editorial Director, Dentaltown Magazine

The product is Guru. The company is Reality Engineering. But the brand is what people should know. Dentaltown sat down with president and COO, Rick Heerkens, to learn more.

First of all, tell me a little bit about how you came to be the president and COO of Reality Engineering?

**Heerkens:** I was a part of the growth curve of the DENTIS business, and also ran the commercial teams for Genies and LCAT. I was with the Dental Imaging Group from 1998 until 2005. Having achieved market leadership positions, I felt like we had done what there was to do and I wanted to do something new.

How do you describe Guru to a dentist who is learning about it for the first time?

**Heerkens:** Guru is the ultimate tool for patient communication, education and consultation. It is a software product that makes it possible for doctors to talk to patients about their conditions, their treatment options and the consequences of their choices. Doctors have a difficult time having that conversation, which affects the acceptance rate of elective procedures.

When patients decline a treatment plan, is most cases it's not about the money. It's about the lack of understanding why the treatment is necessary. This is where Guru makes the difference. It helps every clinician to become a teaching pro by utilizing Guru's digital learning "tools": 1. state-of-the-art 3D visualization; 2. audio narration; 3. communication and 4. interaction and motivation. Explaining procedures with clarity on the back of a patient's chair is not a very successful way of teaching. But Guru can do the job effectively in 30 seconds. Our research shows educated patients are more likely to accept a treatment plan and they tend to choose a higher quality of dental care.

How long has Guru been around?

**Heerkens:** The product was originally launched about six years ago.

Can you tell me how dentists are integrating this into their practices?

**Heerkens:** Guru offers a variety of solutions for the dental office. From lobby to operatory to e-mail and Web. Dentists integrate it in a variety of ways. We have users who have 50-inch screens in every operatory. We have others utilizing our iPad version. Some doctors are happy that the animations have full narration while others prefer to move the audio and do the presenting themselves. Some patients are not necessarily deciding on a \$5,000 case right in the chair, doctors are using Guru's capability to e-mail complete presentations including all animations and audio to the patients so they can review and discuss at home with family and friends. So, Guru allows you to do what you want to do, handle time.

We believe that the Guru approach is powerful in helping people learn, understand and retain information. And if you do not, then the question is why wouldn't you do this? Now more than ever, it's important to have high-quality tools to communicate choices and consequences with patients. Our job is to bridge the responsibility gap. What the patient chooses is not the doctor's responsibility. But it is the doctor's responsibility to make sure the patient understands the options and the impact of the decision.

I am curious to hear your take on where the dental industry is right now relative to the overall economy.

**Heerkens:** Without employing too much of a pun, it is relatively anesthetized. When people have they go get care. Doctors have seen an impact on elective procedures. Our users seem to get Guru and boost the treatment plan acceptance rate. ■

## Company Contact

For more information, please contact Guru at 1 800 222 6290 (R&E) or visit [www.realityengineering.com](http://www.realityengineering.com).

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