

# BENCHBRIEFS

Laboratory of the month

## Dale Dental: A Grandmaster of Outsourcing

KELLY FESSEL CARR / EDITOR

**“THE GAME OF CHESS** is not merely an idle amusement,” wrote Benjamin Franklin in his book, *The Morals of Chess*. In fact, Franklin believed that the ability to consider the consequences of every action, see the big picture and not make moves too hastily were not only key to succeeding at chess but in all facets of life. These are beliefs that laboratory owner Dave Lesh—a passionate Chess player—shares and has used to build his business, Dale Dental in Richardson, Texas.

Founded in 2000, Dale Dental is the first laboratory in the U.S. dedicated exclusively to fabricating understructures for laboratory customers only. The impetus for Lesh’s business model came from the challenges he faced while working in his family’s laboratory. “When I tried to outsource some cases, I found I wasn’t getting the level of service I wanted. Then my dentist-client—who knew I was outsourcing the understructure—started sending work directly to the outsourcing laboratory so I lost business as well,” he explains.

Dale Dental has grown into an outsourcing supercenter, housing an impressive array of equipment—including 11 different CAD/CAM systems—offering 45 different understructures in close to 20 different brands or types of restorations. In addition, the lab just launched Coral™, its own brand of zirconia frameworks. It’s also the first lab in the U.S. to achieve ISO 9001:2000 certification, helping to ensure that its 2,200 laboratory customers are in compliance with the FDA’s GMP requirements.

### Customer service philosophy

At the heart of the laboratory’s customer service philosophy is a powerful customer-focused website, [www.daledental.com](http://www.daledental.com), which is the culmination of more than 50,000 hours of computer programming and development. “We want to make each customer feel as though he is our only customer. To ensure that type of service, you have to be able to track three quality metrics: on-time performance, product quality and customer satisfaction—and our software is capable of measuring and quantifying these metrics,” says Lesh.

The software provides valuable tools that Lesh uses to enhance service as well as make his internal operations more efficient. Customers can track shipments online in real-time and access complete information on

past and current cases. It has an electronic quality control card through which the customer can score the attributes of each case and write more detailed comments if he chooses. If any attribute is rated “poor” or “fair,” the software alerts a technical specialist who can immediately call the customer to follow up.

Dale’s customers submit about 15,000 quality control forms each year, and their incentive to do so is that they receive Crown Rewards™ Points they can redeem for free shipping, priority overnight upgrades, turnaround time upgrades as well as electronics, home goods, sports equipment and leisure items. They simply complete the form within seven days of receiving the case in order to get the points, and they can track and redeem their points through the site. “We want to receive feedback and react to it as soon as possible, so putting a cut-off date for completing the form helps ensure that,” says Lesh.

### The ease of iTunes

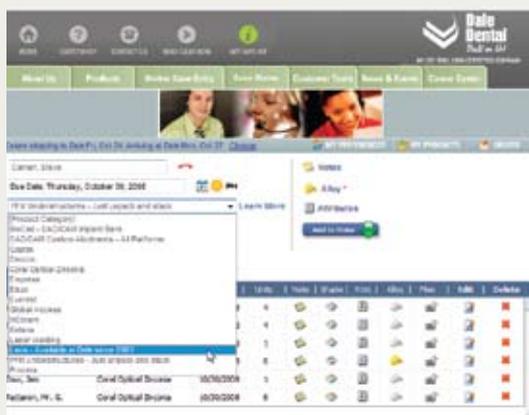
In Dale’s most recent venture aimed at making lab-to-lab outsourcing even easier, it has just launched Online Case Entry (OCE). “OCE makes ordering restorations as easy as iTunes has made purchasing music,” explains Lesh. The system completely digitizes the ordering process and eliminates the need to send a paper prescription form with the models. Instead, customers provide all the required information using just five different drop-down menus and they can also customize their own product configurations to save even more time; for example, if “Dr. Smith” has the same preferences for all his single PFM copings, the customer can create a configuration with that name and all Dr. Smith’s preferences are automatically retrieved.

Since the software ensures that the customer completes all the required data, when Dale receives the case, it’s immediately put into production; there’s no need to call the customer to clarify handwritten instructions or fill in missing information. “This software has been six years in the making. It’s intuitive and user friendly and designed so the customer can complete the work order with as few as five fields and in just 10 seconds,” says Lesh. “It’s all about empowering our customers to work better, smarter and more efficiently and in turn, that helps us perform even better for them.”

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Dave Lesh, the founder and president of Dale Dental in Richardson, Texas, is also a passionate Chess player.



Dave Lesh likes to say that his new Online Case Entry (OCE) website makes ordering outsourced restorations as fast, accurate and easy as iTunes has made ordering music.



Dale Dental’s new Coral Optical Zirconia™ understructures are available in 16 shades, give lab owners precise fit and are delivered in three days for \$49.