



Joshua Polansky

Continuous and never ending improvement...a philosophy of excellence

Applying the concept of Kaizen to the work of a dental technician.

"Knowledge has to be improved, challenged, and increased constantly or it vanishes."

- Peter Drucker

Sometimes it is good to just get back to basics. We live in a world that is cluttered with too much

information. Magazines, websites, social media and every other avenue of content is trying to publish the next new thing.

All of this information can only serve to confuse the dentist and technician and dis-

tract them from their main focus of providing patients with the very best possible outcomes. With all of the new technology in the form of techniques and materials, it is not difficult to lose our way.

●●● LOOKING TO GET BETTER



Fig. A A tooth shade is never truly just one color.



Fig. B Posteriors often have more shade nuance than anteriors.



Fig. C A complex posterior shade is achieved using GC Initial MC.



Fig. D Natural abutment shade is crucial to any successful restoration.



Fig. E A harmonious, natural result is achieved with GC Lustre Paste.



Fig. F Correct understructure shade can allow the technician greater options...



Fig. G ...such as using the refractory technique...



Fig. H ...which in turn leads to an outstanding, natural result.



Fig. I The veneers in this case blend into the surrounding dentition.



Fig. J Pre-operative images are key to knowing where the case needs to finish.



Fig. K Preparation photos provide other details the technician will need.



Fig. L A photo of the provisionals provides a roadmap for the final restorations.



Fig. M Those restorations should match the look and function the patient approved in the provisionals.

My philosophy has been to follow the system of Kaizen, which means “improvement” in Japanese. Taking the basics and using this philosophy of continuous and never ending improvement is sure to make you into a better technician.

This article will review three basic ideas to improve your cases.

CATCHING SHADE

So many dentists and technicians only bring out their cameras for anterior dentistry. However, mastering shade



Fig. N Achieving predictable results requires communication to take a case from a pre-op situation...



Fig. O ...Through the provisional stage...



Fig. P ...To final results that look natural. Constant improvement should be the goal of both clinicians and technicians.

doesn't stop at the bicuspid. We can learn a lot from matching posterior shades, that can be applied in any circumstance.

Digital communication should be applied for every case, as most posterior teeth have more color effects and demarcations than anterior teeth (Figs. A and B). By simply using base shades we could never accomplish the harmonious blending that we see in Figure C which was done with GC America's GC Initial MC (gcamerica.com) in this case completed with Dr. Barry Polansky.

Most patients and dentists accept much less than this in the “back of the mouth,” because it can't be seen. But we do see it.

When determining a shade, another important image to capture is the natural abutment color (Fig. D). This is of utmost importance in order to see what has to be covered and/or blocked out.

With a base shade and abutment selection we can achieve a harmonious natural restoration achieved with GC Lustre Paste in Figure E in a case with Dr. Charles Ward.

With a restoration such as this, we can be proud to show the patient how we went the extra mile.

The natural abutment image serves a very important purpose and should be required minimal information with every case. With a nice understructure (Fig. F) the technician can use the natural abutment color as the foundation of color.

EXPANDING INFORMATION

With this information the technician can feel comfortable going forward with utilizing the refractory technique (Fig. G). This makes the process so much easier and yields a much more natural result (Fig. H).

The overall goal is to create veneers that blend with the natural teeth, such as those in Figure I which were completed with GC Initial MC.

The more information the doctor sends, the more predictable the outcome. As part of the continual and never ending improvement philosophy, the technician should require certain minimal inputs from the dentist.

A preoperative model is required for every case, with a list of the patient and doctor's desires (Fig. J).

The pre-operative model provides the technician with a starting point and a key to mapping out the destination. It reveals the story of wear and any other possible functional issues.

Full facial images are important to better “get to know the patient.” Photos of the preparations can reveal the nuances of the case as far as parallelism and shades for masking (Fig. K).

The ultimate level of information comes from models and photos of the provisionals (Fig. L). The provisionals act as the theoretic template for the final case. They should have been approved cosmetically and functionally by the patient (Fig. M).

FOUNDATION IN RELATION

The resulting case completed using GC Initial ZR with Dr. Mike Monokian (Figs. N-P) shows how results can become more consistent and predictable when the dentist and technician work together for continuous and never ending improvement.

Using photography is the next best thing to the technician actually being chairside. Creating beautiful and functionally correct restorative dentistry is a process. It is a process that depends on many factors, none more important than the dentist-technician relationship.

Without that relationship there will be breakdown in communication somewhere.

Kaizen—continuous improvement—is what many industries use to give us their best products in the 21st Century. It's time for dentistry to put that philosophy to work as well. [lab](#)

The author would like to acknowledge the dentistry displayed here from Dr. Barry Polansky, Dr. Charles Ward and Dr. Michael Monokian.