

The Threat Within: Protecting Your Dental Practice From Unfair Competition By Former Employees: Part I

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Most dental practices are fully aware of the importance of data security. Practice administrators know their obligations under HIPAA, they have thought through issues of IT security, and they know to ensure that unauthorized individuals do not gain access to private records. In short, dental practice personnel are trained and focused to deal with external threats.

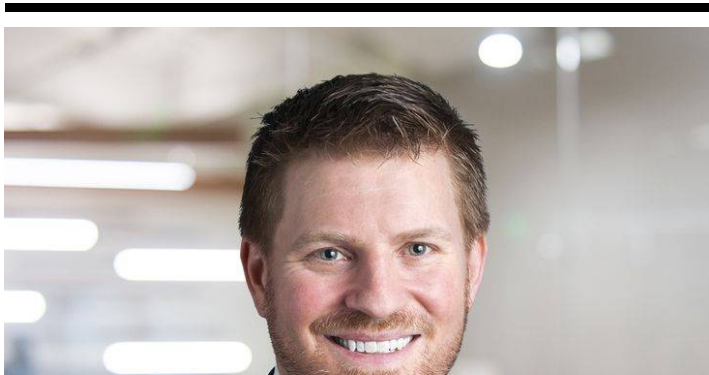
But what about a threat from within? We like to imagine that we are going to work with the same colleagues until we all retire, but a basic reality of the modern workplace is that employees move regularly. Sometimes, they choose to depart, and sometimes their employers end the relationship. In either event, an employee who stays in the same industry has an incentive to take and use materials from a former employer to help a new practice compete. Additionally, an employee will usually have a motivation to try to exploit relationships developed on behalf of a former employer, whether those relationships are with patients or employees.

So what are the best practices for a dental practice that hopes to retain its key employees for a long period of time, but is realistic enough to know this hope may not come true?

1. Have agreements in place
2. Think through your key information and take steps to protect it
3. Make clear that employees cannot misuse the practice's computer system

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