A ccording to Mark Morin, DDS, a Southfield, Michigan, private practitioner, the use of CAD/CAM technology remains relatively rare among this country’s 160,000-plus dentists. But he says, “As it gets easier and easier, I think you’ll see more dentists adopt it.”

Helping to facilitate this transformation, says Morin, is a newly finalized partnership between Planmeca and E4D Technologies that boasts an end-to-end digital solution. Its PlanScan™ portable CAD/CAM system provides the ease of use, support, and convenience many dentists need to facilitate their transition to and maximize the advantages of using this technology. The system, previously marketed as NEVO, Morin notes, enables busy dentists to get quickly up to speed in CAD/CAM dentistry. It includes a portable scanner that requires no powder and can be easily moved from one operatory to another, and it features a streamlined approach to design without compromising restoration results. “Other CAD/CAM systems can be really complicated and cause dentists to shy away from going digital,” Morin comments.

Planmeca and E4D go to great lengths to help new users master the initial learning curve. Morin says, which he estimates to be about 30 restorations. First, there is 2-day standardized training at the company’s Dallas headquarters. Back in their own offices, new owners receive further training by system experts. “You do a lot of restorations during training, so you’re able to become pretty comfortable with the machine,” he says, adding that if there are problems after that, the practitioners can simply call the company to have someone receive the scan electronically, design it, and send it back to be milled. This level of support, to which Planmeca is fully committed, will be enhanced by the new partnership.

Whatever their reservations, Morin urges practitioners to “get onboard” with CAD/CAM technology at least partly as a matter of survival due to pressing economic realities that threaten the profitability of many dental practices. “Higher taxes, higher laboratory bills, and widespread use of PPOs will force dentists to find a simpler, less expensive way to offer patients the restorations they need,” he comments, “and I think CAD/CAM gives them that advantage.”

Morin claims evidence is mounting in favor of the quality of these milled restorations as well. “When you look at the long-term research, it shows that CAD/CAM restorations are outlasting and are more durable than gold restorations.” He says these restorations are better for the dentition. “With correctly bonded same-day restorations, the tooth is not exposed to a temporary material and bacteria, so there’s no expansion and contraction of the cemented crowns, which can cause problems such as sensitivity.”

“The accuracy and beauty of the finished product, in my opinion, is at least as good as and in many cases better than what the laboratory can develop,” Morin continues. “Right out of the milling chamber, restorations are absolutely gorgeous and nearly finished, so there’s very little after-work, which makes it faster to get the final restoration into the mouth and seated.”

Morin makes it clear that there is much to be gained by practitioners who offer CAD/CAM restorations. His laboratory bill, he states, has been reduced by about 70% while his production has increased dramatically. But, financial considerations aside, he maintains that the ability to offer same-day dentistry sets his practice apart from those that do not, and he makes sure his staff members, especially those at the front desk, can explain this service to patients. “I think, ultimately, I can give my patients better service when they are able to get a restoration in one visit—and it’s a far superior, better-fitting restoration.”

Morin expects the recent pairing of E4D with Planmeca, the world’s largest privately owned dental imaging company and equipment manufacturer, to greatly enhance the company’s ability to win over dentists who have not yet purchased CAD/CAM systems. This will occur especially as a result of co-development of products that integrate the CAD/CAM platform with the additional digital solutions offered by Planmeca.