



Get To Know Your New Board Member: Autumn Ellingson, GM

1. How did you get into the dental laboratory industry?

I was an administrator in a private school and one of our parents, who owned a dental lab, asked if I would ever consider leaving the education field to manage his dental lab. My father-in-law taught at the University of Washington Dental School and had a private practice so I was familiar with the industry and weary of education. The hours and compensation worked for our family so 18 years ago I made the switch and haven't looked back.

2. What do you love about the dental industry?

The constant innovation, the technicians and their artistry, the variety of dentists and their practices, and the ability we have, in a small way, to impact the lives of people. Changing a smile can change a life—I love being involved in that process!

3. What challenges is our industry going to face in the coming years?

- a. We face a serious shortage of technicians—especially anterior specialists, and we lack accredited technical programs that attract qualified, talented candidates who aren't simply there as a result of retraining due to injury or job loss.
- b. Constant changes in technology make keeping up prohibitively expensive for many labs.
- c. Educating our dentists so they fully comprehend what is required to move their practice into the digital age—it's more than buying an intra-oral scanner!

4. As a new WSDLA Board Member, what do you want our association to achieve this year?

- a. Laboratory registration roll-out needs to be clearly understood and implemented by our laboratories and we, as board members, need to get out front and be available to help our counterparts work through the process.
- b. We need a strategy in place to encourage high school students and other technical and art driven individuals to look at our field as a possible career path, i.e... attend career days, provide attractive written material, and participate in technical/trade fairs, etc.

5. What do you hope to bring to the WSDLA?

Hopefully the administrative experience and enthusiasm I have for our ever-changing industry will contribute forward momentum. I'm privileged to work in a field that isn't without its challenges but with planning and perseverance, those challenges can be met head-on!

6. What does being a WSDLA member mean to you?

The WSDLA has been extremely helpful over the years to provide education, support, and guidance to our laboratory. The friendships I have forged have been extremely meaningful and even though in some cases, we are competitors, I have always been able to reach out for help and trust that my counterparts have our best interest at heart. That's a rare attribute in any industry—something our association can be proud of!