

## New Equipment -- An Investment in Yourself

Louis Sportelli, DC

I recently replaced six perfectly good tables with six new tables. I was asked why I so frequently replace tables that still have long lives ahead of them. In nearly 30 years of practice, I have replaced tables seven times because I believe it makes good sense -- financial, common, and horse - to update my equipment.

The reason is quite simple, I depreciate my tables over a four year period. This is just an arbitrary time frame -- it could be three to six years, but four years is the most comfortable for us. My accountant has suggested that this is a very effective way to obtain the maximum depreciation for my equipment, and I do this with all the equipment in the office, not just the adjusting tables.

From a financial standpoint, it makes good sense to me to invest in new equipment for my office every four years. I then take the "used" or "nearly new" tables and sell them to the young doctors who are just starting out in practice, at a substantially reduced cost. Since I have six tables, they are only used one-sixth of the time, and they are in great shape for anyone who purchases them. Additionally, I have them gone over by the dealer to assure that they're in top shape and sell them with confidence to any doctor who wants to purchase them. I have a waiting list of doctors who want to purchase my "nearly new" equipment when my four years are up.

Frankly, there is another reason other than the sound financial reason as to why I get new equipment, and it has nothing to do with depreciation, income taxes or any other "governmentally-imposed" reason.

### Image Is Important

The real reason is the psychological boost that "new" equipment gives me as a practitioner. I'd take no pride in boasting that my equipment is 20 years old while I drive a brand new model automobile. I have yet to get anyone better driving in my automobile! I also notice that when I get new equipment, there is an attitude among my patients. They see that their doctor is using the latest equipment to take care of them.

They tell other patients about this and many new patients openly remark to me that the referring patient has said that "Doctor Sportelli's office is very modern and has lots of new equipment." We spend thousands of dollars trying to create an image, and the image of quality and up-to-date technology is immediately conveyed to the patient by the fact that the equipment is new and state-of-the-art. There is much more about this, but suffice it to say that patients appreciate the fact that their doctor spends something for the betterment of the patient, not only on luxurious creature comforts for the doctor alone.

Finally, there is the aspect of staff attitude. My staff is proud to see that they work in a state-of-the-art office and the equipment they have to work with is new. The manufacturer's latest feature, a power front section, is a way I can say to my staff, "your comfort is important to me; making your job easier is important to me." Many times raising the top section of a table is difficult for the chiropractic assistant, and when they have to do it for a 6'6" patient, they have trouble. When these

latest tables arrived, there was no doubt in my staff's mind that I got the extra feature of the electric top for them. Appreciation of the staff is always important, but this was extra special and they really do appreciate it.

#### State-of-the-Art vs. State-of-Yesterday

With the new equipment, the patients win and their attitude is positive; the staff wins because they know you care; and you win because financially it does not make sense to pay everything out in taxes when you could be writing off new equipment and enjoying it every day of your professional life.

I look around everywhere I go, from the physician's office to the auto mechanic, from the cosmetologist to the bank, and there is a subliminal message conveyed if they are state-of-the-art or state-of-yesterday. Too often, the image created is one that says, "The image you portray speaks so loudly I cannot hear what you are saying." Chiropractic in general must be sensitized to the development of a positive image and it begins with each patient that enters your office.

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