

A Laser in Every Operatory



Affordable new laser technology from AMD LASERS looks to increase widespread global laser usage at breakneck speed

by Benjamin Lund, Editor, *Dentaltown Magazine*

For the last 10 years, “affordable lasers” has been Alan Miller’s primary thought. He left Biolase to start up National Laser Technology (NLT) to sell after-market lasers to dentists for half the price of new lasers. In five years, NLT became the world’s largest supplier of after-market hard- and soft-tissue lasers. Through NLT’s success, Miller focused his efforts on creating a new laser that dentists could buy, brand new, at an affordable price. This new venture – AMD LASERS – has been able to do just that through its recently unveiled Picasso soft-tissue laser. *Dentaltown Magazine* recently spent some time with Miller to learn more about AMD and the company’s massive push to put a laser in every dental operatory around the world.



Alan Miller, president and CEO of AMD LASERS and National Laser Technology

Alan, for those readers who don't know you, could you please tell me a little about yourself?

Absolutely. I've spent the last 25 years in the medical and dental markets helping design, market and sell some of the most revolutionary products in the world. At 18 I graduated high school and started as an EMT to pay my way through college. At 19 I was hired to train doctors and nurses on a brand new product – an external cardiac defibrillator, which is now used everywhere. At 22 I was the youngest pacemaker representative ever to qualify and be hired to sell and train doctors how to implant pacemakers. One of my first designs was the world's first mobile cardiac catheterization lab, which completely changed how expensive technologies was delivered to rural American hospitals.

I have always been drawn to high technology and medicine. A few years ago my brother, Dr. Jack Miller, introduced me to a new company that was developing a low-cost intraoral camera – The Acucam. The company was just starting and looking for some help so I was introduced to a whole new world – dentistry. I saw how dentists were looking for the technology but no other manufacturer had made it affordable. Intraoral cameras can be found in almost every dental office now because of the early efforts of New Image. For the last 15 years I have helped companies find the right solution for packaging their intraoral cameras, digital X-ray systems and lasers.

Can you please tell me how you started National Laser and then AMD LASERS?

I had worked for Biolase Technology, Inc., for five years, when I started National Laser Technology after recognizing a new market for dentists who wanted to sell their unused lasers to dentists who wanted to purchase lasers at reasonable prices. NLT is now the largest reseller of used hard-tissue lasers in the world. I have learned first hand that all dentists want laser technology at a reasonable price. \$80,000 for a new hard tissue laser is tough to fit into anyone's budget, but at \$30,000-\$40,000 with a warranty and training, it makes purchasing one much more feasible. While NLT was striving and selling lots of used hard and soft tissue lasers, I really wanted to put my efforts and money into developing a soft tissue laser that *every* dentist could afford. So almost three years ago I created AMD LASERS to design and develop a breakthrough technology at an unbeatable price point.

So three years later, you've finally released what you set out to do. Please tell me about your new Picasso laser.

Picasso is an incredible laser. It took me more than two years of designs to get a product that really fit the needs of dentists worldwide. It is easy to use, portable, sexy and has received FDA market clearances for all four of the major functions: surgery, periodontal treatment, root canal treatment and laser whitening. Every nuance was reviewed over and over from size and shape to even the weight to make it heavier; you can pick it up with two fingers. I found that other lasers on the market are too light weight and can be pulled off counter tops too easily. I basically took all of the good

things from every laser we had sold through NLT and put them into one package – Picasso. Even the name "Picasso" alludes to dentists as artists and the laser as the perfect brush to use on their masterpieces, aka, patient smiles.



AMD LASERS and National Laser Technology building

continued on page 36

Your marketing tag reads, “Picasso: A Breakthrough in Technology; A Breakthrough in Price.” Can you explain what the breakthroughs are? How are you able to sell the Picasso at such a low price?

Our first breakthrough was at the design and component level. I do not want to give away too many secrets, but I can tell you we dramatically reduced the number of components and how they are connected to give us the quickest and lowest manufacturing costs possible. Second, I believed in the mantra, “If you build it they will come,” so I committed to building more than 10,000 Picassos our first year. This commitment brought my cost for components so low that other companies can’t build theirs for what I can sell ours for. And the last thing we did to ensure a competitive price point for our laser was to implement good and simple business practices, such as sharing our manufacturing plant with NLT – both space and people. Dentists are thrilled about the Picasso and I think we’re giving the competition a run for their money. We recently attended the IDS in Cologne, Germany, to unveil the Picasso and I was mobbed by two groups – one was made up of doctors and distributors wanting to purchase (a good thing) and the other group was made up of management teams of several laser manufacturers. They all had the same message: *congratulations, the market is yours and thanks for screwing it up for the rest of us...*

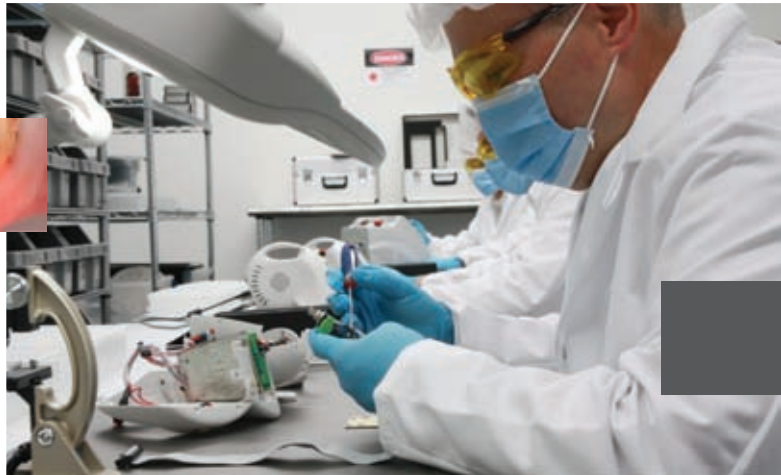
Our low price point is the easy part. We’ve built it better, mass produced it, kept our overhead low through good business practices, and charged a *reasonable* margin to do it all. It is simply a better mousetrap with a management team that believes dentists want lasers and they are willing to pay a reasonable price for them. Making laser technology available for a first-time laser user makes sense at \$3,495 – not \$12,000 – and I also believe that putting three lasers into every office for \$9,995 is reasonable.

What sort of financing options do you offer clients?

Our most popular programs are 12 and 24 month zero percent interest. Just take your purchase price and divide it by 12 or 24. That’s it. Pretty simple. Of course we offer traditional financing up to 72 months if needed. That’s one of the many reasons we priced Picasso so attractively at \$3,495. Now offices don’t have to look for financing.

What sort of warranty are you offering on the Picasso?

We offer a three-year warranty, which is exactly what dentists have asked for. A five-year warranty is available for \$495. We are one of the few companies that even offer a five-year plan. But just as important is the annual operating cost. I put a three-meter fiber on Picasso to keep the annual operating cost to around \$200. The other units that use disposable tips can run more than \$20,000 a year for a dentist who sees just 10 patients



a day, 20 days a month. It’s like buying a printer for your office; the printer costs nothing but the ink cartridges kill you. Many dentists have found out the hard way post sale just how much it costs to keep a laser running. I wanted to break this mold and tell every dentist the truth about ongoing operating cost because they need to know.

Aside from obvious price point, what distinguishes AMD from other laser companies?

Our people and commitment to the post-sale makes the difference. All we do is lasers. We are not a dealer and we don’t carry tons of other products. We know lasers and what dentists are looking for. When dentists call our office they are amazed we are there, we pick the phone up and talk lasers. Based upon our experience of selling and servicing almost every laser you can think of, we help educate dentists on the “making the right choice” even if we don’t carry it. Sometimes we direct them to other companies, like Millennium, who makes a great product and has a good training program for perio. When we talk about things like warranties and ongoing cost, reliability, cutting speeds, wavelengths and other companies’ support, we give unbiased and educated answers.

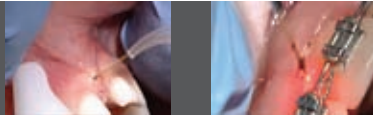
How far reaching is your client base?

I invested the money a long time ago into a global market. Our Picasso represents that commitment as it has 14 different languages. It keeps our overhead low by inventorying one unit that we can ship around the world. Not to mention the ever-expanding melting pot in the United States alone, where the primary language for some communities isn’t English. We have several international partners for distribution but we will ship door to door anywhere in the world.

Do you think it has taken a long time for lasers to be accepted into the dental market? In your opinion, what has been the biggest “shot in the arm” for laser use in dentistry?

*Lasers work,
patients love them and
they pay for themselves
at the right price point.*

– Alan Miller, president and CEO, AMD LASERS



The only things that have helped dentists in purchasing lasers has been price and ROI. Even the naysayers have come around. Lasers work, patients love them and they pay for themselves at the right price point. Until Picasso hit, lasers were going the wrong direction. Take a look at hard tissue lasers; instead of coming down in price, they're getting more expensive and they have a higher operating cost. Even soft-tissue lasers have gone in the wrong direction. Almost all of the new models released in the last year offer less in power at a higher price. A majority of dentists are waiting for the price to come down – they have proved this to be true with every technology that has come their way. Early adopters will pave the way for education in the market, and then a breakthrough company takes the technology to the commodity phase. What do I think the biggest “shot in the arm” for laser use *will be?* Picasso.

What would you say to a dentist who is considering purchasing this technology?

I would invite all practitioners to ask me any questions they might have and to provide me with as much information they can about their practices so I can help them figure out which laser is right for them. Too many sales people focus on their own product instead of focusing on what is truly important – a solution. Once we have enough information we can assist in making the right purchase or none at all. I think it is about giving realistic expectations of what a laser can and cannot do that really keeps our clients happy.

Why should a general dentist buy your laser?

Picasso is a great way to get into lasers without worrying about the money aspect. It is easy to use right out of the box and as the dentist becomes more proficient with the laser, Picasso will grow with their capabilities. That's one of the reasons we gave it such great user friendliness with lots of power and multiple optional accessories.

What sort of training do you offer?

Training is everything for a laser. Lots of companies will drop the new laser off at a dentist's practice and then the sales

rep disappears. Purchasing a product is easy, investing in education is the most important part. AMD LASERS offers what we call the Three Step Plan. These three unique levels of training cater to dentists who have three different educational needs. Level 1 is for everyone, first-time users to experienced laser aficionados. Level 2 is for offices that need professional certification. Level 3 is for offices that want to get the maximum out of their laser. This is a comprehensive two-day hands-on course with the entire staff in their office. In addition to our Three Step Plan, we offer the ease of online Webinar training and have state-of-the-art regional training facilities across the country. We have aligned ourselves with the best dentists in the United States to provide the best comprehensive laser training possible.

Can you explain more how your laser is distributed?

Like I said before, we sell door to door to anywhere in the world. A dentist in India can purchase a Picasso for exactly the same price as here in the U.S. We truly cater to a global market from our facility in Indianapolis, Indiana. For import regulations in some countries we do have partners for distribution. Dentists are much more savvy in researching products through the Internet and on any given day we are shipping to dozens of countries worldwide.

In your opinion, why is it so important for every dental office and every operator to have a laser within reach?

If it is within reach it is going to be used. If it has to be transported or is in use in a different operator than it is not fair to the patient who is missing out on this great technology. We definitely hit the right price point and idea with Picasso. First-time Picasso purchasers are buying one to try it out and they're coming back to purchase additional units to equip all of their operatories with one. Seasoned laser users are immediately putting Picassos into every op because they know the value of having a laser there at their fingertips. We recently equipped an office with 16 Picassos.

Although Picasso just hit the market, are there any other developments you're working on right now?

Yes, we are currently working on two new lasers. Our new perio/hygiene laser is going to revolutionize the hygiene and perio world, and the other laser is, as you might have guessed, a hard tissue laser that every one can afford. We are also working on five private label lasers for other companies. Like I said we have only one goal – to equip every dentist world wide with this remarkable technology.

For more information about AMD LASERS and/or National Laser, please visit www.amdlasers.com or www.nationallasertechnology.com or call 866-999-2635 or 800-336-1021. ■