

Optimum Timetable for Starting a Practice

Beginning practice requires planning and organization. Using this timetable, you can fill in dates and note the parties responsible for the designated actions. Such forethought helps to assure that the opening of your office will proceed smoothly.

9 months to 1 year before beginning practice Date: _____

6 months to 9 months before beginning practice Date: _____

3 months to 6 months before beginning practice Date: _____

2 months to 3 months before beginning practice Date: _____

1 month before beginning practice Date: _____

Opening Day Date: _____

NINE MONTHS TO ONE YEAR BEFORE STARTING PRACTICE

Date: _____

Check off as
completed

Responsible
Party

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|-------|-------|----|--|
| _____ | _____ | 1. | Think about what you want in life. If you are married, discuss your goals with your spouse. Decide where you want to live and work. Consider professional, economical, and recreational aspects of these areas. |
| _____ | _____ | 2. | Decide a location by checking with: |
| _____ | _____ | | Dental school and residency program directors in areas under consideration |
| _____ | _____ | | State dental societies |
| _____ | _____ | | Recruiting firms |
| _____ | _____ | | Ads in journals |
| _____ | _____ | | Personal contacts |
| _____ | _____ | 3. | Investigate real estate availability and price, schools, "feel of the community". Best done by subscribing for several months to papers in towns you're considering or checking city and Chamber of Commerce websites in each community. |
| _____ | _____ | 4. | Obtain demographic data regarding possible location(s) from: |
| _____ | _____ | | Regional Planning Commission |
| _____ | _____ | | Census Bureau (local offices are in major cities and state capitols). Be specific about the type of information you want about the city or geographic area: characteristics, growth patterns, potential, etc. |
| _____ | _____ | | Chamber of Commerce |
| _____ | _____ | | Dental Society |

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| _____ | _____ | 5. | Visit with other health care professionals about the area's need for dentists. |
| _____ | _____ | 6. | Schedule visits to practices you may wish to join. |
| _____ | _____ | 7. | Contact state dental licensing board regarding license procedures. |
| _____ | _____ | 8. | Make final decision on practice location. |
| _____ | _____ | 9. | Check on membership for: |
| _____ | _____ | | Local dental society |
| _____ | _____ | | State dental society |
| _____ | _____ | | American Dental Association |
| _____ | _____ | | Specialty Association |
| _____ | _____ | 10. | Obtain and compare contracts from practice you are considering joining. |
| _____ | _____ | 11. | Begin to calculate your net worth in terms of capital available for moving, associateship or start-up costs. |
| _____ | _____ | 12. | Reserve office phone number, if possible. |
| _____ | _____ | 13. | Determine the printing date for the telephone book. List your name in both white and yellow pages. Research website designers and hosting companies in the area. |
| _____ | _____ | 14. | Visit banks and begin "shopping" for a credit line or long term loan. Obtain forms for personal financial statements and loan applications, and meet loan officers to determine what information the bank needs to evaluate your application. |
| _____ | _____ | 15. | Draw up an income/expenditure projection for first year of practice. Talk with several bankers about loans and submit applications. |

SIX TO NINE MONTHS BEFORE STARTING PRACTICE

Date: _____

Check off as completed	Responsible Party		
_____	_____	1.	Check sites for leasing/buying dental office space.
_____	_____	2.	Check zoning ordinances with local city offices and/or zoning board regarding signage, type of businesses allowed in the area and ask about any anticipated changes.
_____	_____	3.	Determine the office layout and design.
_____	_____	4.	Check utility requirements for the office.
_____	_____	5.	If leasing, determine needed leasehold improvements.
_____	_____	6.	Evaluate office space lease or purchase contracts with your attorney before you sign them.
_____	_____	7.	Determine dental equipment needed. If installing x-ray equipment, check with the state health department, radiological health section, to see if special registration or certificate is required. Same checks should be made for laboratory facilities.
_____	_____	8.	Obtain bids on major office equipment. (Compare lease vs. purchase.) Get written guarantee of delivery date and intransit insurance.
_____	_____		• Telephone equipment
_____	_____		• Computer system
_____	_____		• Dictating equipment
_____	_____		• Intercom system (decide if it is to be separate from telephone system.)
_____	_____		• Photocopy machine, fax
_____	_____		• Reception room/office furniture and décor

_____ 9. If entering an associateship, finalize the details of the agreement. The senior dentist's attorney will write the contract. You and your attorney will approve.

_____ 10. Choose advisors:

Accountant
Attorney
Banker
Insurance broker(s)
Investment counselor
Management consultant
Real estate broker
Other (e.g. computer consultant)

_____ 11. Obtain narcotic license:

Federal: Application for registration available through the Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration. Visit: www.dea.gov

_____ 12. Inform the state dental licensing board of your new address.

THREE TO SIX MONTHS BEFORE STARTING PRACTICE

Date: _____

Check off as completed	Responsible Party	
_____	_____	1. Obtain answering services:
_____	_____	Dentist's exchange
_____	_____	Personal (office)
_____	_____	Beeper service
_____	_____	Call forwarding
_____	_____	2. Begin investigating retirement funding.
_____	_____	3. If you plan to treat welfare patients, meet with the professional representative from Medicaid (administered by your state Health and Human Services Department), Blue Shield, and other major commercial carriers regarding:
_____	_____	Participation requirements
_____	_____	Provider number(s)
_____	_____	Procedure codes
_____	_____	Prevailing fees
_____	_____	4. Apply for hospital staff privileges
_____	_____	5. Decide on a logo and color theme for stationery and other paperwork.
_____	_____	6. Shop, compare and order computer system and equipment.
_____	_____	7. Plan payroll system.
_____	_____	8. Order sign for office.

- _____ 9. Notify dental supply company representatives and other appropriate sales people that you are beginning practice.
- _____ 10. Send personal notes to individuals in the community that may help "spread the word"; e.g. real estate agents, pharmacists.

TWO TO THREE MONTHS BEFORE STARTING PRACTICE

Date: _____

Check off as
completed Responsible
Party

1. Obtain professional malpractice insurance.
2. Obtain office insurance

Premises Liability

Business interruption --some advisors say this insurance is not necessary depending on elimination period. Follow advice of your insurance broker

Employee fidelity bond to protect against embezzlement.

Office contents

Umbrella: provides comprehensive catastrophic liability claims beyond the limits of your regular liability program.

Worker's Compensation: this is often required by law and is determined on a state by state basis. Check with your state Worker's Compensation Board or industrial commission.

Health insurance for your family

Disability

Life

Automobile

3. Install telephone equipment and computer system

4. Make arrangements for patients to pay by using credit cards (VISA, MasterCard, etc.) through your local bank or other agency. Rates are competitive and vary greatly. Shop for the lowest rate.

5. If there is a patient referral service available through the local dental society, provide essential information.

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| _____ | _____ | 6. | Investigate memberships in civic and social organizations. |
| _____ | _____ | 7. | Arrange for movers, if necessary. |
| _____ | _____ | 8. | Write to your state Department of Labor for state employment regulations and wage and hour information. |
| _____ | _____ | 9. | Write job descriptions for employees. |
| _____ | _____ | 10. | Write policy manual for employees |
| _____ | _____ | 11. | Start interviewing for business and clinical personnel. |
| _____ | _____ | 12. | Apply for your Federal Employer Identification Number through your local Internal Revenue Service (IRS) office, (SS-4 Form). |
| _____ | _____ | 13. | Apply for your State Employer Identification Number through your state office/labor department. |
| _____ | _____ | 14. | Obtain "Small Business Tax Guide" and your federal estimated income tax forms through your local IRS office or attend small business tax seminar at your local IRS office. |
| _____ | _____ | 15. | Obtain state estimated income tax forms through your state tax office. |
| _____ | _____ | 16. | Hire a payroll service or seek training about preparing payroll and records, etc. |
| _____ | _____ | 17. | Review tax requirements with your accountant. |
| _____ | _____ | 18. | If needed arrange: |
| _____ | _____ | | Janitorial service |
| _____ | _____ | | Laundry service |
| _____ | _____ | | Lawn maintenance |
| _____ | _____ | | Snow removal |

- _____ 19. Order clinical supplies and set up inventory control system.
- _____ 20. Order formal announcements.
- _____ 21. Order business supplies:
- _____ Patient records
- _____ Appointment cards
- _____ Business cards
- _____ Patient recall cards at www.practicon.com
- _____ Stationery and envelopes. Use your logo on all printed materials.
- _____ Deposit stamp for checks
- _____ Prescription pads
- _____ Preprinted telephone message pads.
- _____ Practice brochure
- _____ CDT insurance code book. Available from Praticon at 800-959-9505 or order online at www.practicon.com.
- _____ 22. Determine office hours.
- _____ 23. Determine fee schedule. Do not undercharge.
- _____ 24. Subscribe to magazine/periodicals for reception room. Subscribe to professional journals.
- _____ 25. Purchase office equipment and furniture based on bid obtain earlier.

ONE MONTH BEFORE STARTING PRACTICE

Date: _____

Check off as
completed

Responsible
Party

1. Decide on collection/insurance assignment policies and other work systems such as block scheduling patterns, recare system, inventory control for clinical and office supplies.

2. Hire and train office personnel regarding:

Telephone techniques

Collections

Appointments

Policies of your office

3. Have utilities turned on:

Telephone

Electricity

Gas

Water

4. Begin setting up office. Install sign for high visibility.

5. Install all remaining office and operatory equipment.

6. Start making appointments.

7. Establish a petty cash fund.

8. Establish a benevolent fund for donating to local charities and projects.

9. Announcement in community paper:

Advertisement

News release

- _____

10. Announcements mailed to dentists, physicians, pharmacists, hospitals, health groups, real estate agents, etc.

OPENING DAY OF THE OFFICE

Date: _____

Check off as completed	Responsible Party
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|-------|-------|----|---|
| _____ | _____ | 1. | See first patient. |
| _____ | _____ | 2. | Congratulate yourself and celebrate. You are now in private practice! |