

Employment Q&A: Marketing your business

Q: A commonly asked question from ODHA members thinking about starting their own business is: “How do I determine if there is a market for my services and how do I develop a marketing plan?”

A: Successful marketing starts with the basic principle of supply and demand. Whether your business is dental hygiene, tooth whitening or mouthguard production, you have to know if your services meet the needs of your clients.

Following are some key points to help determine whether or not there is a market for your services and how you can achieve success in attracting clients to your business.

1. Determine your sales potential.

Your sales potential is directly related to the size of the area you plan to serve. When choosing an area to operate your business, consider the following: population and growth potential; income, age and occupation of the population; the number of competitive services in and around your proposed location; and any restrictive local ordinances or zoning regulations in the area. If clients are coming to your place of business, how much space will you need? Is parking available as well as public transportation? If you are going to your clients, such as residents in a long-term care or retirement home, is there a demand for your services and, if so, is it sustainable?

2. Attracting Clients and your competition.

Conducting a S.W.O.T. analysis – to determine your Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats – can help you identify challenges and find out what distinguishes your service from your competitors. How you plan to attract clients and pull them away from your competition is another aspect of marketing your business. How big, how established, how strong are your competitors and what advantages do they have? What are your advantages? They could be price and access to care, including portability. Typically, dental hygiene services within the traditional dental office are more costly; therefore, focusing on the uninsured, lower income groups and the homebound and offering a more affordable price may create a demand for your services within these sectors.

3. Advertising and promotion.

How will you advertise and promote your business – radio, newspapers, magazines, flyers, business cards and stationary, yellow pages, signage? What is your budget? What are the messages you want to communicate to your potential clients? They may include the services you offer, your strengths and how you differ from the competition. In all your communications, it is important to be consistent and clear. Whether clients come to your place of business or you take your services to them, the manner in which they are treated and the quality of your service will enhance your reputation and image. Being pleasant, prompt

and courteous encourages client satisfaction and repeat business. Word of mouth could be your best form of advertising.

Please review your CDHO guidelines for advertising before developing your marketing campaign. For more information about starting a business, an excellent Web site is www.cbsc.org. Visit www.dentalprolearn.ca for a list of courses that can help you market your company.