Associateship Course
Syllabus

Introduction: Whether it’s the day after dental school or the week after residency or the need to regroup at another place of employment, the search for a proper match in a dental practice can set the tone for the rest of your career.

A magical time
A threatening time
A major change

Before the Job hunt: Proper choices begin with thorough preparation.

Know yourself
Have a plan
Set some goals
Job Hunting: *Like the other major decisions in life, they should be done thoughtfully and without haste.*

- Decide on potential locations
- Analyze the marketplace
- Get help
- Network
- Interview
- Multiple offices
- Large practices
Practice Analysis: *The more you know before you decide, the better chance the decision will lead to a positive experience.*

- Find out about the potential employer
- Personality type
- Practice philosophy
- New Patients
- Types of services
- Types of patients
- Staff longevity and support
- Clinical skills
Financial Considerations: *In addition to the Practice Analysis, it’s extremely important to know the financial plan for the new job.*

Contract

Independent contractor/ employee

Managed care

Pay

Perks

Advisors

Why Associateships Fail

Why Associateships Succeed

What the employer is looking for
The Interview: *The opportunity to discuss the job with the owner should give you a clear understanding of the practice.*

- What is the practice philosophy
- What is the practice vision
- What are the practice goals
- Why are you hiring an associate
- What is your role as a mentor
Other Issues to consider: *No one can get all the answers nor should the lack of an answer be a deterrent to taking a position, but the more you know, the better chance of success*

a. What is the average production level.
b. How many new patients per month.
c. What are the work days and hours.
d. Patient load for the associate per day.
e. Are there management responsibilities for the associate.
f. How will assignments of patients be made.
g. What percentage of the practice is restorative and what preventive.
h. What is expected of the associate if there are no patients.
i. What is the average production/collection ratio.
j. What is the insurance make up of the practice.
k. What is referred out and should the associate be expected to do the same.
l. Who handles the insurance billing.
m. Who will cover the emergencies.
n. How will the associate relate to staff.
o. How many patients are seen by a hygienist each day.
p. How is recall handled.
q. How are hygiene exams coordinated/distributed/production tracked.
r. Who manages the staff and who will be working with associate.
s. Will the associate have management responsibilities.
t. What is the plan to market for the associate.
u. What role does the associate have in marketing.
Compensation structure: *Both the employer and the employee will have a better working relationship when pay issues are decided in advance.*

1. How will the associate be compensated.
   
a. Will compensation be changed over time.

2. How will the associate be classified.

3. What are the benefits for an employee.

4. Can the associate review the associate agreement.

5. Is there a transition plan

6. If ownership is an option, what are the objectives and when activated.

7. Has the practice been recently valued.
For a Large Group Practice: *Certain issues are important when joining a large group of dentists.*

1. Are there daily production goals
2. What if goals aren’t met
3. What is the ownership potential
4. How are new patients assigned
5. What is the marketing responsibility of the associate
6. How is the practice managed
7. How is the staff managed
8. What are the terms of the associate agreement
The Associateship Agreement: *The number one reason that associateships fail is a lack of or poorly written agreement.*

Key Points:

1. The days and hours worked
2. Duties beyond patient treatment
3. Independent contractor/employee
4. If an employee, what if any are benefits
5. How to get paid, at the beginning, and at certain thresholds.
6. Is there bonus pay
7. What are the practice treatment standards and will the associate be expected to adhere to them.
8. What is the policy for treatment vs referral
9. Can the associate see patients outside normal working hours
10. How will patient’s family be treated financially
11. All fees generated in the practice go to the practice
12. Malpractice insurance, a requirement and who pays
13. What is the process of termination
14. Under what circumstances can the associate move patients to another practice

15. How will disputes be resolved

16. Is there an option for ownership

17. Are there issues not yet covered
Check List for Job Hunters: *There is a proven technique in the business world to open doors for job opportunities.*

1. Narrow your search area.
2. Check with the alumni association for graduates in the area.
3. Contact the dental society for the area of choice.
4. Use the dental society roster to choose dentists that are in the area and may be considering or needing to consider hiring an associate.
5. Spend significant time analyzing what you want out of a practice, where you plan to take your life, what your short and long term goals are, what you can give to the patients, the practice, and the employer.
6. Develop short and long term goals. Involve your significant others.
7. Prepare a resume based on what you can offer the practice.
8. Prepare a cover letter that highlights your value to the practice.
   And mail to area dentists.
9. Cold call the area dentists and set up interviews.
10. Create a series of questions that will guide you toward the proper practice.

11. Have some patience.

12. Use any references to gain additional access.

13. Only settle if the short term loss leads to a long term gain.
Letter Looking for a Job Opportunity: *This tool is just one part of opening doors*

Graduation day

Dr. Opportunity  
My Town, USA

Dear Doctor,

I am a recent graduate of the World’s Best School of Dentistry. I’m very interested in practicing in the My Town area and would like to discuss the possibility of becoming an associate in your practice. I can bring a number of positive assets to the table if you would consider my employment.

I love children and enjoy treating them.

I’ve made a special effort to concentrate on endodontics and feel that I can handle many of the cases that you might currently be sending to a specialist.

I had outstanding training in emergency dentistry and would enjoy carrying most of the burden for after hours call.

I’m certified in Invisilign, CPR, and Team Building.
I realize that an important part of being an associate is expanding the reach of the dental practice to the surrounding community and I am committed to community involvement in my spare time.

If you are considering transitioning out of Dentistry in the near future or are wanting to take more time off or have too many patients to comfortably handle, I’d love the opportunity to talk about how I might be able to help you with your goals. Even if you aren’t currently interested in bringing an additional dentist into the practice, I’d appreciate the opportunity to discuss the area and prospects for employment. Your years of experience would be a real asset to my efforts.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration. I’ll be calling your office in the next few weeks to set up a time to meet and discuss the area and job opportunities.