

Prospective Associates *Interviewing Tips*

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If you are at the point of looking for a dental practice associateship and considering how to successfully interview for a position, this material is for you. It is presented as a road map for you to follow by encouraging you to prepare ahead of an interview and then provides questions for you to use during the actual interview.

Well Before an Interview

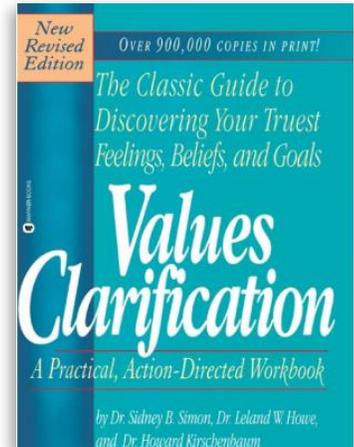
Here are tips for you to consider before you enter any interview situation with a dental practice owner or larger enterprise level corporate practice. As in most things, the more you prepare the better the result you should be able to obtain. The result you are seeking in the situation where a owner is interviewing you is three fold: 1) during the course of the interview they have a clear understanding of why you would be a good choice for the practice, 2) why you want this position with this particular practice, and 3) gain a perspective of your personality and character. You should be prepared to discuss if asked, and if not asked to volunteer, your comments on each of the three areas in a conversation with the owner. You can facilitate getting to effective answers by using the following steps.

- **Think about you.** Be prepared for a question(s) along the following lines. “Tell me about yourself and what you are seeking?” You should have a short concise answer pre-prepared that you have thought out and can state to any one that asks that type of

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question but particularly a potential dentist employer. This is sometimes called the 'elevator speech.' Check out http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elevator_pitch

- **Think about your values.** Be prepared for a question(s) along the following lines. "What matters most to you about providing care to patients?" Take time to think through what excellence means in providing clinical dentistry. Think about what the words 'quality care' and what they mean to you. If you have not really thought about values consider reading [Values Clarification](#), by Dr. B. Simon and others.
- **Think about your philosophy of care.** Be prepared for a question(s) along the following lines. "What will guide your decision making in deciding to provide care or not and the procedures you might consider when in a patient consultation?"
- **Review and update your CV** and list any qualifications and references with contact information including, phone and email listed.



Immediately Before an Interview

Once you have a date set for a meeting with a prospective dentist employer it can be helpful to prepare by undertaking the items immediately below.

- **Do check out the practice and the location.** To check out the practice, research ahead to see what is on the practice web site and any social media for the practice and Linked In for the doctors. Check out any review sites like Yelp to see positive and any negative reviews. Look at the practice location on Google Maps. Ask yourself, Why did the practice owner locate the practice here? Is it near to schools or neighborhoods or on a freeway exit ramp? Use the location as a talking point during the interview with the owner. Reviewing the basic demographics of the area is helpful. An internet search on the name of the city and state and the words 'demographic information' will glean results from the state and local chambers and government sites at no charge and if you want to go further in your research there are fee based services available.
- **If you have time, drive around the area where the practice is located.** Check out the condition of the business buildings in the area or houses in the neighborhood. Does it seem like the area is one you would like to practice in? During the interview ask if most of the patients come from within 1-3 miles of the practice location or are further out.
- To help gain an understanding the practice a younger professional should ask to see or discuss the practice mission statement and the philosophy of care that guides the practice.

During An Interview

When you arrive at the practice location these tips are worth reviewing.

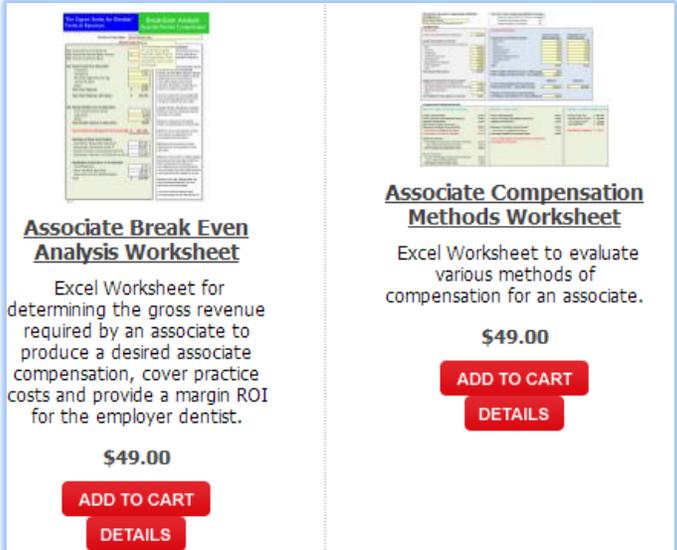
- **Arrive On Time, Dressed Appropriately.** Keep in mind that the doctor you are seeing is driven all day by a schedule. He or she is likely to be very time sensitive. It is always appreciated if a candidate for an associateship position is on time, even if the owner

happens to be delayed by a patient emergency or other situation. As a professional it is a given that you should be dressed in a manner that reflects your position. You must decide what dress you feel communicates this to any staff member, doctor or other person who may be present before, during or after your interview.

- **Establish Trust.** Trust is built. You can quickly give an indication that you are a person to trust by being forthcoming with information, about your personal upbringing, your schooling, practices you may have worked for previously and your personal goals. Many associateships turn into practice partnerships that are long-term relationships, so it is never a good idea to hold back important information or insight on you because you think it might not be discovered during a relatively short-term associateship.
- **Assess.** Keep in mind that you are also interviewing the practice owner at the same time you are being interviewed. You should assess everything about an opportunity and a prospective employer.
- **Ask Questions as Part of Your Assessment.**
 - **History.** You should ask about the practice owner's history and that of the practice, when it was started and the patient population served.
 - **Vision.** You should discuss the practice owner's vision for the practice and how you might fit into that vision.
 - **Philosophy of Care.** You should discuss the practice philosophy of care, asking about, for example, a potential case you care about. What would they have done?
 - **Assess the Owner.** You should assess how prepared the practice owner is for a discussion of a given opportunity.
 - Does the owner have a copy of their mission and philosophy of care handy and are they willing to discuss them?
 - Is the owner willing to relate, at least broadly, some of the financial particulars of the practice and why they feel that you are needed?
 - Listen to the owner's verbal skills in explaining answers to you, are they more teacher or preacher?
 - How would you assess the owner's apparent leadership of the practice based on what you see?
 - Is the owner able to describe the marketing program for the practice and is the owner seemingly actively engaged with the program?
 - Is there an expectation on the practice owner's part that you will be devoting time to the practice marketing program and if so, to do what and how much time?
 - Consider your impression of what the owner is looking for in an associate and if they strongly indicated or not their interest in having you be part of a team. Consider demeanor, openness, amount of feedback and quality of a practice owner's response.

➤ **Financial Issues.**

1. Ask about the associateship compensation method to be used (collections, production, salary, draw). You can find Excel worksheets to test a compensation proposal for both a Break Even and to see how various methods of compensation are calculated at our webstore at www.BerningAffiliates.com
2. Ask about any benefits, for example, payment or reimbursement of professional liability insurance, health care coverage, vacation policy, etc.
3. Ask about the financial performance of the practice. How has it performed during the economic conditions of the last few years? Have collections been difficult during that period and now?
4. Ask if there is a future beyond the associateship? For example, any opportunity for a buy-in to partnership or buy-out of the practice?

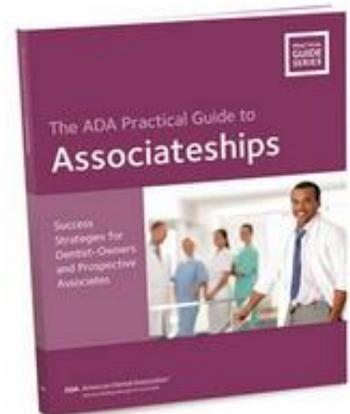


Associate Break Even Analysis Worksheet
Excel Worksheet for determining the gross revenue required by an associate to produce a desired associate compensation, cover practice costs and provide a margin ROI for the employer dentist.
\$49.00
ADD TO CART
DETAILS

Associate Compensation Methods Worksheet
Excel Worksheet to evaluate various methods of compensation for an associate.
\$49.00
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Associate Agreement

- There are a wide range of items to check and review in an associateship agreement. You can see an example associate agreement with employment illustration provisions that are not one sided at the ADA publication *The ADA Practical Guide to Associateships* that I co-authored. You can generally secure a copy at a local dental school library or by ordering at our webstore www.BerningAffiliates.com which includes an additional monograph or from the [American Dental Association](http://AmericanDentalAssociation.com).
- Is the owner doctor prepared and presenting an associateship employment agreement that has already been written for the practice? If so, ask if it is a 'take it or leave it' document or is the owner open to modifications if your attorney advises changes?
- If there is a restrictive covenant provision, do you understand the geographic scope and the months or years that is covered?
- If there is a trade secret / confidential information provision do you understand what is covered and why it is important to protecting the owner's practice? If not why not?



Summary

The process of interviewing for an associateship position in a dental practice is one of the most important aspects of launching a dental career. Do it by preparing ahead, be attentive to the scope of the interview and what is offered and generally you will find a favorable position. Using the suggested format here, to prepare well in advance, then immediately before an interview and using a variety of the during an interview inquiries, provides a roadmap for finding the practice and associateship that is a fit for you and the practice owner.

About the Author

Randall K. Berning, JD, LL.M. (LL.M. Master of Laws in Health Law from Loyola University School of Law Chicago). In addition to his law practice he is President of Berning Affiliates, Inc. a consulting firm he founded in 1980 serving dentists and dental specialists nationwide. The firm focus is practice future planning, transition / succession and valuation. He is coauthor of two ADA publications on *Associateships* and *Valuation*, both now in their 6th revisions and used by thousands of doctors and their advisors. He has spoken widely at annual sessions and association meetings and has authored over 150 articles during his career. The consulting firm publishes more than 50 monographs, form agreements and cash flow Excel spreadsheets to provide focused information for dentists. He is past Adjunct Professor of Dental Jurisprudence and Director of Practice Administration at the University of Illinois, College of Dentistry and past adjunct faculty at UCSF School of Dentistry and the University of Maryland Baltimore College of Dental Surgery. Prior to entering private law practice Mr. Berning served as an Assistant Attorney General for the State of Illinois.



List of Resources in Order Referenced

Website describing an '[Elevator Speech](#)'

Book [Values Clarification](#) by Simon, How & Kirschenbaum

[The ADA Practical Guide to Associateships](#) from the ADA

[The ADA Practical Guide to Associateships](#) with Companion Reader www.BerningAffiliates.com

[Associate Break Even Analysis Worksheet](#)

[Associate Compensation Methods Worksheet](#)

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