

Finding a business partner or buyer.



The importance of finding the right fit with a partner or buyer.

Partnership

If your succession plan involves bringing a partner into your business this can understandably be an emotional decision to make. If you have been a sole practitioner and operated your practice on your terms, making the jump into partnership can be a big one. The following tips set out to ensure you enter the process in the right mindset.

Ways to source a partner might be:

- A current employee or locum working within your practice
- Someone within your professional network
- Contacting ProVision to discuss suitable Associate Members or other connections through our network
- Advertising the opportunity

There are several pathways to bringing on a suitable partner. Accordingly, entering into a partnership without first working closely together under the daily stresses of business can be fraught with risk. So, any potential partnership should have a reasonable lead time of 6 to 12 months before embarking on this arrangement. Often a trial period in a formal employment or locum capacity can be an ideal pathway for both parties to 'try before they buy'.

Your practice is something you gave birth to and have nurtured it to grow. You want a partner that will approach your practice and patients with the same level of enthusiasm and commitment that you have, but who also shares the same business Core Values.

ProVision can assist by facilitating a Core Values analysis to determine partner compatibility based on aligned values. If two people have quite disparate values, then the likelihood of success is severely compromised.

A partnership is a long-term, legal covenant between two (or more) people. You will likely spend a significant amount of time working with your partner and need to be able to get along with him/her.

Some tips to consider when finding the right fit with a business partner:

1. Find a partner that can bring the right optometric skill set to your practice
2. Find a partner that brings fresh ideas, strengths in areas you may not be strong in and a desire to grow your practice long term
3. Find a partner that brings business and commercial skills to your business, but also be prepared to mentor them in this area
4. Find a partner that you can see yourself, and your team working with on a daily basis and someone that shares the core values of your practice. Ensure they are good communicators
5. Choose a partner that is financially stable and is in a position to invest necessary capital
6. Ensure a partnership agreement is entered from the outset

Selling:

Similar to partnership, selling your practice to a new owner when you have put so much time, energy and care into the business, your patients and your staff can be extremely emotional for all parties.

Many independent sellers also choose to continue practicing for a period of time after the sale is completed, so having the luxury of a new owner that yourself, your team and your patients are comfortable with is advantageous where possible.

While choosing a partner is a different process to choosing a buyer, a similar outcome for the business can be achieved if you set aside sufficient time and plan accordingly.

Confidentiality and care should be taken regarding your staff throughout the process. As a business owner, selling your business is usually cause for a celebration, or at least a giant sigh of relief. But for your employees, the picture can be quite different.

Ensuring you keep the sale confidential for the majority of the process is best practice and not only prevents unwanted staff turnover but also allows you the opportunity to formally and sensitively communicate plans when the sale is complete with the goal of staff retention for the new owner.