The Entrepreneurial Nutritionist

Fourth Edition

Kathy King

Wolters Kluwer Health | Lippincott Williams & Wilkins

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THE ENTREPRENEURIAL NUTRITIONIST

Fourth Edition

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The information in this book is for general use only; it is a starting point; it should not be considered legal or medical advice. Readers are referred to the appropriate professionals for more individualized information.

This book is dedicated to the dietitians and diet techs who have shared their wisdom and life's lessons; also, to Savannah, Cherokee, Laura, Chris, and Kate, grandkids, Grace and Grant, and my husband, Dr. Larry Gilbert, the flowers in my garden, for their never-ending love and support.

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PREFACE

Wow! It has taken over 30 years but we have many wonderfully successful entrepreneurial nutritionists in the U.S. and around the world. In my 2008 World-wide Entrepreneurial Dietitian Survey, 30 dietitians were netting over $200,000 per year and 60 were netting $100,000 to $200,000 per year. Do you want to know how they did it? Read our new fourth edition of *The Entrepreneurial Nutritionist*!

This book is written for nutrition professionals who want to start their own business. It offers them practical successful guidelines and business knowledge, skills, and insider tips. I have included interviews and case studies from successful practitioners who may act as role models for you while others will show you what you don't want to do.

Our most exciting newcomer to this edition is the results of the first and largest worldwide entrepreneurial survey ever conducted, with over 1335 dietitians who completed the 88 survey questions. Do you want to know how much dietitians charge or what products sell the best? How much it costs to start a business, or how many years it takes most dietitians to break even on their initial investment? What marketing ideas work best and which ones don't work at all? Do you really want to hear what kind of time investment is involved? We have the results!

This fourth edition is totally updated with new chapters on Reimbursement by Mary Ann Hodorowitz, MBA, RD, and What Can We Learn from the "Masters"? (those making more than $100,000 net in their own business). We have new information about marketing on the Internet, uses of the Web, tapping food and culinary markets, and consulting in long-term care. We have numerous practical examples to illustrate points, and answers to questions commonly asked by new and seasoned entrepreneurs. The term "entrepreneur" will be used to identify both self-employed people and employed intrapreneurs who try things in new ways. The opinions are obviously those of the authors. They should provide you with a starting point for your own research and personal growth.

Hundreds of dietitians have told me that the first three editions of this book helped them start and maintain successful businesses. For thousands of others, it taught skills and strategies that were used daily in their employment setting. Many say they referred to this book many times over the years as new decisions and hassles arose. I hope you find this book helpful and interesting!

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Entrepreneurship can be one of the most challenging, difficult projects you ever undertake. It may also be one of the most satisfying and exciting. Trial and error, adjusting to market changes, and trusting your gut instincts are part of every new venture. Passion for your projects is a must. Becoming skilled requires study, action, money, assessment, more action, more time, and more money.

The mere idea of starting a business venture of some sort was embraced by only a few maverick dietitians in the 1960s and 1970s. Self-employment became more popular in the 1980s and 1990s. Today, entrepreneurship is in the mainstream of dietetics and world-wide business. Dietitians are choosing self-employment to make more money per hour, to have more flexible hours, to try new ideas, and to work with new client populations or food in a different way.

EARLY ENTREPRENEURS

The dietitians who founded our profession were innovative, risk taking individuals. Many were consultants, authors, or innovators who created their hospitals' and universities' first dietary departments.

Eloise Treasher began the earliest known clinical private practice in 1949 in Baltimore, Maryland. As Eloise retired from work at The Johns Hopkins Hospital, many physicians wanted to continue sending their patients to her, and her consulting business began. Treasher stated, "Private practice is not for everyone, and not everyone will be good at it. But, if you offer quality counseling and service, you will be in demand."

In 1953, Norma MacRae began her counseling business in Seattle, Washington. Her practice included writing cookbooks. When asked about her success, MacRae stated, "I knew I had 'arrived' when physicians started coming to see me as patients."

Other pioneers include Virginia Bayles, RD, a consulting nutritionist in Houston, Texas, and author, Dorothy Revel, RD, from Fargo, North Dakota. Carol Hunerlach, RD, of Maryland, is credited with spearheading the movement to organize the Nutrition Entrepreneurs (formerly Consulting Nutritionists) Dietetic Practice Group of The American Dietetic Association.

Today, there are creative, extremely successful dietitians who are best-selling authors; others own multimillion dollar companies, restaurants, health food stores, vineyards, publishing houses, home health agencies, large long-term care consulting firms, and computer companies. Others offer services on a smaller scale where they consult to cruise lines, act as a chef or personal trainer, or counsel private clients. A growing number of highly skilled clinical practitioners are practicing biochemical-based functional nutrition therapy, which will become the practice of the future as medicine turns to functional medicine practice for chronic care therapy. Entrepreneurial nutritionists also write newspaper columns, host television and radio programs, author books, invent products, develop websites, consult to top athletes, speak professionally, and act as media spokespersons for food companies.

MY STORY

I graduated in Food Science and Nutrition from Colorado State University, which gave me a good, solid academic background. My internship was at Beth Israel Hospital in Boston, a Harvard teaching hospital, where I discovered my love for clinical nutrition intervention and outpatient counseling.

After practicing 2 years as a hospital clinical dietitian, I began my business in 1972 in Denver, Colorado. The lack of prevention and outpatient counseling in the hospital setting frustrated me. I decided to go into the outpatient setting and start my private practice. I wanted to see if I could make a difference by keeping clients healthier when their symptoms or abnormal clinical values first appeared instead of waiting until they progressed and hospitalization was necessary.

My business strategy was easy: Keep my overhead low, work day and night for a year, and then reevaluate. This decision was not hard to make, since I was single and had nothing of value to borrow against—but I had the time and dedication.

My business started at one physician's office 2 days per week for $5 per hour. I lived on that income while I developed my business, working out of six other physicians' offices. I spent a lot of time in transit, waiting for patients to arrive, and marketing to physicians so they would remember to refer clients. After expenses were paid, I lived on $8 a week for food.

I went to a lawyer friend of mine in order to pursue incorporation. He said, "I won't do it." I wanted to know why. He said, "Because you aren't worth suing. Why waste your money?" I have never forgotten that philosophy: Weigh costs against the benefits or risks before investing.

The first year I charged $7 for the initial visit and $2 for revisits—and some people still complained about my fees! I supported myself from the start, supplementing my income with cleaning houses and sewing. For every hour I generated income in the business, I usually worked 3 hours on paperwork, marketing, or other nutrition projects with no guarantee of income.

Before one year was up, I knew the concept worked. I decided to borrow $1000 from my grandparents and open a 10- by 13-foot office in the new medical complex being built next to the suburban hospital where I had last worked. I loved it. Patients came to me and I didn't have to counsel them over the stirrups on an exam table. I furnished my office with antiques and plants. I raised my fees slightly ($10 for the initial and $3 for revisits) to cover the increased overhead, and I looked like a legitimate business.

During my third year, I decided to sublease the office 2 days per week to a speech therapist. That freed me to take consultant positions at Head Start and retirement homes, and start a Master of Science course in exercise physiology to broaden my expertise. It also gave me a change of pace from full time counseling.

To promote my business, I gave several free speeches each week. I appeared weekly on NBC TV's "NoonDay" and monthly on KMGH TV's "Blinky's Fun Club," for a total of 8 years. I volunteered for the Colorado Dietetic Association so that other dietitians would get to know me and I them. After 3 years, over half of my new consultant accounts were from referrals from other dietitians.

I learned more about sports nutrition by volunteering for 3 years for the exercise physiology staff at the University of Denver. I was their "on call" nutritionist for speaking at sports conferences and counseling athletes. I invented a natural sports drink with the aid of the Herty-Peck Company in Indianapolis which 7–11 Stores wanted to buy, but that is another book.

Sports consulting with the Denver Bronco Football Team, Denver Avalanche Soccer Team, paid media work, media spokesperson jobs, lecturing, and writing started to come my way as my expertise and reputation grew. My approach to nutrition was from a wellness point of view, so when the trend finally hit Denver, I was ready to grow with it. I taught wellness nutrition to physicians, nurses, and hospital administrators, as well as the public. I was always curious and open-minded about alternative therapies. Being involved with media meant that I had to explore things the Denver public was interested in knowing.

My commitment to the profession grew as I was elected President of the Colorado Dietetic Association, and spent 5 years in the leadership of the Council on Practice, and 2 years on the American Dietetic Association's Board of Directors and House of Delegates.

When I married and moved to Texas in 1983, I didn't want to start over again by building a group of clinical offices. Instead, I helped develop a hospital-based wellness program, consulted at The Greenhouse Spa, wrote or edited several books, acted as a media spokesperson, hosted my own nationally syndicated radio talk show for a year, and traveled giving lectures and seminars. When I wasn't traveling, I worked from a home office so I could be home with my two daughters. Through meeting innovative dietitians from around the world, I have been fortunate to speak in six foreign countries. Individual patient counseling was a special high for me and I have counseled over 6,000 people, including three who lost over 125 pounds through diet, exercise, and cognitive-behavioral counseling.

This book has been translated into Japanese by Reiko Hashimoto, an outstanding private practitioner in Tokyo who also counsels sumo wrestlers. I self-published the second and third editions of this book when the publisher let it go out of print, and I asked for the copyright. That experience opened doors to more writing and publishing other dietitians' material. Helm Publishing is now a publisher of continuing education for Registered Dietitians (RD), Dietetic Technicians (DTR), Registered Nurses (RN), Certified Diabetes Educators (CDE), and Certified Dietary Managers (CDM). We are a mail-order and online cataloger with over 75 products that are more outpatient, nontraditional, functional medicine, and prevention oriented. We adopted marketing on the Web over 12 years ago for sales and online testing (see our website at http://www.helmpublishing.com).

In 1997, after looking for an asset to invest in, I purchased a rundown feed store to hold my publishing company and a "healthy" gift store less than a mile from my home on Main Street in Lake Dallas, Texas. I had it renovated into a beautiful peach-colored store with a white front porch, surrounded by an herb garden. As the publishing company grew, it made it very difficult to run two businesses, and we had to close the store or hire another person—it was a financial decision that had to be made. Retail antiques were great fun, but not especially profitable in a small town after 9/11.

From my 37 years of experience, I have learned that when the tough decisions have to be made, no one can do it better than I. I have stopped looking for that expert on a white horse. I try to learn from each experience and person I meet who knows something I don't. I have learned skills I never wanted to know. I find it still takes time and patience to break into new business arenas where I am unknown. I, and other entrepreneurs I know, continue in business because we love the chance to be creative, to create high-quality output, to work with people, and the freedom. The difficulty of the challenge makes us appreciate the rewards even more.

Innovative practitioners will continue to lead our profession into new, nontraditional job markets. We, as a profession, need to identify these trailblazers and let them teach us how to find these new career avenues. We should be willing to learn about new areas of practice and then act as mentors to our younger members. Or, recognize when someone is willing to take the risk and support that individual with our goodwill and enthusiasm—not the Tall Poppy Syndrome where an innovator is punished by their peers. We need this type of growth and experimentation to take place worldwide in dietetics.

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I

THE BEGINNING

WORDS OF WISDOM

Do not follow where the path may lead. Go, instead, where there is no path and leave a trail.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Many of life's failures are men who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up.

Thomas Edison

It's choice—not chance—that determines your destiny.

Jean Nidetch

THE ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT

1

Individual dietitians, worldwide, have become very successful, self-employed business owners over the past 25 years. Their ingenuity, creative verve, aggressiveness, and willingness to handle fear of failure are leading them and the dietetic profession around the world into new markets and fields of experience.

Starting a business is a lot of work. It can take over your life. But for 97.3% of the 1581 dietitians who answered this question on the *2008 World-wide Entrepreneurial Dietitian Survey*, they said they would choose entrepreneurship again if they had their lives to live over (1). There aren't many jobs that can boast that high of a satisfaction rate.

Many new graduates see nutrition's potential in the marketplace and want to try something different. They eagerly watch and listen to the role models who are blazing new trails, or they see markets that no one has tapped. This wonderful enthusiasm must be tempered with reality—their business skills may be limited, networking contacts take time to establish, and start-up funds have to be available. Will waiting 5 to 10 years before starting a business guarantee success? Of course not; it depends on your personality, your decisions, and what you do while you wait. While employed, you should try new ideas, save money, and meet people.

How much experience did our most successful entrepreneurs have before they started their businesses? Of the 90 surveyed dietitians who made over $100,000 net (profit), it is very interesting to note that 13.6% had no employed dietetic experience before becoming self-employed, 38.6% had 1–5 years experience, and 26.1% had 6–10 years experience (1). In the full survey, of the 1589 respondents who answered this question, 75% had, at most, 10 years of experience (Fig. 1.1) (1).

EXPERIENCED PRACTITIONERS

As many dietitians and dietetic technicians reach the top of their professional career ladders, they look for new ways to grow. They want to be successful, recognized, and well paid for their expertise. Jean Yancey, a former small business consultant from Denver, called this their "X-Point," or crossroads. At this X-point, they arrive at a decisive point where they feel they must do something different. These successful practitioners feel like so many things they used to do need to be left behind (a case of "been there, done that"). It feels similar to starting over again to pursue new career avenues, but this time, it is on a much higher level of expertise.

For some, the answer is entrepreneurship. This is the chance to be their own boss, schedule their own time, and create new services or products to make a personal profit. It streamlines decision-making, making it more effective. Entrepreneurship stimulates productivity and relieves boredom. It capitalizes on the personal and professional relationships the person has nurtured over the years.

THE ENTREPRENEURIAL EXPLOSION

Entrepreneurism is thriving in America. Being an entrepreneur has moved from cult status in the early 1980s to become de

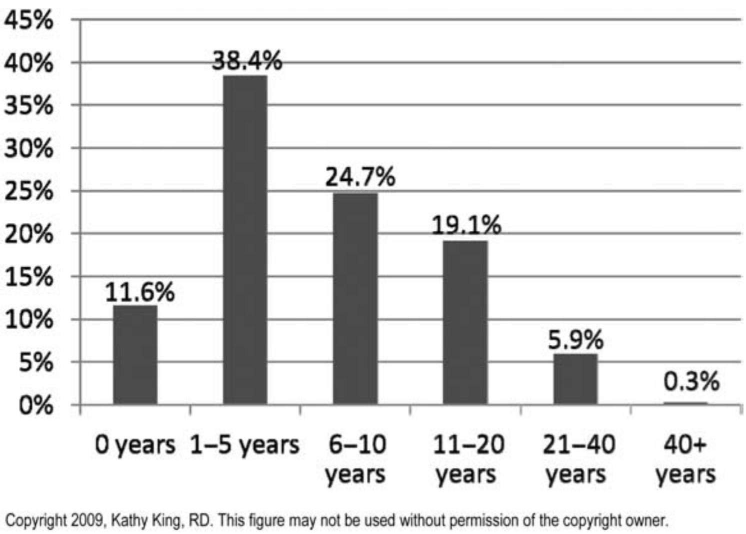

FIGURE 1.1 ■ Number of years of dietetic employment before beginning self-employment (1589 respondents) (1).

rigueur at the turn of the century. In 2006, there were more than 26.8 million small businesses in the U.S., and more than 12.3 million Americans were self-employed (2). In 2004, there were approximately 17,000 large businesses in the U.S. (3). According to the Small Business Administration (SBA), small businesses represent (4):

- 99.7% of all employers
- 60%–80% of the new net jobs
- 50% of the private sector output
- 97% of all exported goods

According to Dun and Bradstreet, the average small business owner has three employees, 1.3 locations of business, and is not a part of a franchise organization. They found owners typically work about 50 hours a week at businesses that generate average revenues of $50,000 to $200,000 (5).

Between 1997 and 2006, businesses that were fully women-owned, or majority-owned by women, grew at nearly twice the rate of all U.S. firms (42.3% vs. 23.3%) (6). During this same time period, employment among women-owned firms grew 0.4%, and annual sales grew 4.4% (6). Women start their own businesses at twice the rate of men (7). In 2006, reports on women-owned (or majority owned by women) businesses in the U.S. returned the following impressive statistics (6):

- There were an estimated 10.4 million privately-held firms.
- This accounted for every two out of five (40.2%) businesses in the country.
- These firms generated $1.9 trillion in annual sales and employed 12.8 million people nationwide.

In a survey of influential Americans completed for Ernst & Young, results showed 78% believed entrepreneurship would be the defining trend of the 21st century (8). People who completed the survey felt the major factors that would contribute to this rise in entrepreneurship were (8):

- New technology (helps small businesses compete), 76%
- Economic conditions (low inflation), 53%
- Social conditions (two incomes, return to family), 45%
- Global economy, 33%

THE ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET

Thomas Petzinger, a *Wall Street Journal* columnist and author of *The New Pioneers*, believes, "Everyone will have to be an entrepreneur in the future" (9). This statement comes from the awareness that jobs have changed drastically in the past two decades and entrepreneurship is more mainstream. "Entrepreneurship was really an immigrant activity for many generations" (9). Business life helped immigrants learn English and slowly assimilate into society. Petzinger sees people of all ages becoming entrepreneurs and bringing new ideas on social goodwill, creative solutions, and more holistic views on merging their home and business lives (9).

In his classic book, *Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, Peter Drucker, veteran business consultant and management philosopher, says "the *entrepreneurial spirit* is based on the premise that change is normal, healthy, and desirable, that it sees the major task in society, and especially in the economy, as doing something different rather than doing better what is already being done" (10). Entrepreneurship is a way of thinking where you see the possibilities of an idea before you dwell on its limitations.

Rosabeth Moss Kanter, former editor of the *Harvard Business Review* and author of *Change Masters*, a book based on her study of 50 corporations, concluded that those companies on a downward slope were there because of "the quiet suffocation of the entrepreneurial spirit" (11). There is a close relationship between entrepreneurship and innovation in meeting new customers' needs, increasing job satisfaction, devising new work methods, and improving quality (12). New ideas are essential.

In *The Atlantic Monthly*, authors Stephen Pollan and Mark Levine made observations about small business (13):

- The current tax situation makes it clear to Americans that owning one's own business is one of the few opportunities people have to create wealth.
- Government at all levels realizes that small businesses are the primary creators of jobs and is offering incentives encouraging entrepreneurs into their communities.
- Technology—in particular computerization and information processing—is lowering the start-up costs associated with small businesses and helping them seize chances.
- Small businesses have been so successful that large, hungry corporations have been moving into areas traditionally left to entrepreneurs, like childcare. As big businesses move, entrepreneurs are moving into areas that once were thought beyond their scope, like manufacturing for global markets.
- Creativity and innovation remain the province of the entrepreneur. More than half the major inventions since World War II have come from small businesspeople.

CHANGES IN THE EMPLOYMENT ENVIRONMENT

Jobs are changing. Job loyalty is changing. As more companies cut costs, merge, and consolidate, an increasing number of highly educated or experienced people will be let go (14). Business experts see a trend toward replacing many employees with a staff of subcontractors and consultants who will only be used on an on-call or per-project basis—they will get no fringe benefits or regular paychecks, but may be able to make more pay per hour. This will hit the Baby Boomers especially hard, since so many will be vying for the few good top-level positions their years of experience and expertise warrant.

Former President of the American Dietetic Association (ADA), Judith Dodd, agreed when she wrote, "A starting point is recognizing there is no safe place in any healthcare-related field. It is difficult to identify a position or a site that remains unaffected by technology, cost containment, takeovers, or mergers" (15).

The average American changes jobs about every 4 years due to better job opportunity, boredom, cutbacks, spouse transfers, or other reasons (12). Some experts believe people will also change the focus of their careers multiple times. For some, change is unsettling, but others see it as an opportunity to grow, meet new people, and try new ideas.

Spencer Johnson, author of *Who Moved My Cheese?*, stated in an interview, "What's changing is the speed of change; it's accelerating. I think the major challenge will be not only to adapt to change but to enjoy change and view it in such a way that it works to your advantage. The other half of that coin is to keep things in balance, and slow down a bit, and ask ourselves, 'Is this change really necessary?' Knowing when to change and when not to will call for good judgment and those who have it will win in the 21st century" (16).

WORKING FROM HOME

Four and a half million Americans work in home-based businesses either full- or part-time, and another 3.5 million work at home for an employer (17). Working at home is a growing option, especially for people who consult, write, publish, speak, make client home visits, or use the computer for the bulk of their work. A home office keeps the overhead low, reduces travel time, allows more time with your family, and offers scheduling flexibility. However, unless you are careful, it can overwhelm your personal and family life. Any negative stigma associated with working at home is quickly disappearing.

GLOBAL MARKETS

Global markets will change the competitive environment worldwide. Our business boundaries can expand overseas. Some jobs will continue to be lost to overseas companies if those companies produce products or services more economically and similar in quality. Products sell well when they are new, innovative, and ahead of the market curve. They often own the market until a competitor reproduces them at a much lower cost. To compete in any marketplace, we must continually market ourselves, improve the level of our skills, upgrade the uniqueness of our products, and offer services that are not easily duplicated. Our customer service must be helpful, timely, and better than the closest competitor's.

WHERE DO YOU FIND NONTRADITIONAL JOBS?

In the nontraditional job arena, communication links are less formal and structured, so self-promotion is a must. People learn about qualified practitioners through personal interviews, mutual friends, speaking, writing, networking, and through memberships in organizations and on committees. Most self-employed people will tell you that their good jobs come upon referral. In fact, career experts estimate that 70% to 80% of employment opportunities actually come from referrals (18).

Consultant and writer Howard Shenson found the type of marketing strategies used by consultants who make over $110,000 per year are different than those who make less than $55,000 per year (18). Top earners promoted themselves through:

- Calling on prospects referred by satisfied clients
- Lectures to civic, trade, or professional audiences
- Writing articles, books, and newsletters

The consultants who earned less marketed themselves primarily through:

- Cold calling new accounts who had not heard of them before
- Direct mail brochures and sales letters
- No-charge consultations to prequalified leads

These last methods are time-consuming, expensive, and *not* as effective. By looking at the top-earner list, you can see that people seek consultants with established identities, ones who are accepted and promoted by others. So, it boils down to getting to know people, becoming known for your knowledge and talents, and investing in your future while bringing home enough income to live on.

SURVEY RESULTS

There were 1638 respondents who began the *2008 World-wide Entrepreneurial Dietitian Survey*, and 1337 who completed all 88 questions (1). Ninety-seven percent were women and 3% were men, which are the same gender ratios as in the ADA membership (19).

HOW MANY YEARS IN SELF-EMPLOYMENT?

According to the 2008 survey, of the 1638 respondents who answered this question, it is interesting to see how many practitioners had recently chosen to become entrepreneurs (1):

- 31.3% (512 RDs or DTRs) self-employed 1–3 years
- 33.4% (548 RDs or DTRs) self-employed 4–10 years
- 21.9% (360 RDs or DTRs) self-employed 11–20 years
- 10.7% (175 RDs or DTRs) self-employed 21–30 years
- 3% (50 RDs or DTRs) had been in their own business for 31 or more years

Wow! Two hundred twenty-five nutrition professionals have been entrepreneurs for over 21 years! It's hoped that the information in this book will help those just starting out to find pearls of wisdom that will make them as successful as these veterans. See Chapter 2 for guidelines on who might best succeed at self-employment.

HOW OLD WERE THE RESPONDENTS?

Are the newest entrepreneurs just out of school? No, almost 60% were 41–59 years old, and we have at least two (0.1%) entrepreneurs in our profession who are 80 years old or older (Fig. 1.2) (1)!

HOW EDUCATED ARE SELF-EMPLOYED RDs AND DTRs?

Of the 1634 respondents answering this question, there were (1):

- 0.4% (6) DTRs
- 43.5% (711) RDs
- 51.5% (841) RDs with Master of Science
- 4.7% (76) with Doctorates

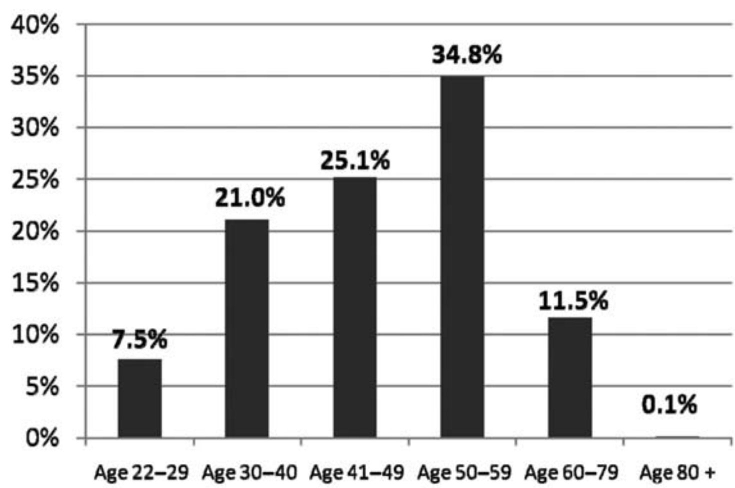

FIGURE 1.2 ■ Ages of *2008 World-wide Entrepreneurial Dietitian Survey* (1644 respondents) (1).

Self-employed practitioners are more highly educated than the general ADA membership, which, according to the 2007 Compensation Survey, had 45% of RDs with Master of Science degrees and 3% with doctoral degrees (19). Just as interesting is that there were eleven dietitians who were also MDs (Physicians), six RD/RNs (Nurses), two dentist/RDs, two RD/physical therapists, and one RD/ Naturopath.

HOW MUCH DID SELF-EMPLOYED PRACTITIONERS MAKE IN THEIR BEST YEAR?

There were 11.5% (180) who grossed (total income generated) $100,001 to >$500,000, which is fantastic! It is more representative of the full group that there were (1):

- 19.8% (311) who grossed less than $10,000 per year (presumably working part time)
- 3% (361) who grossed $10,001–$30,000
- 31.2% (489) who grossed $30,000–$70,000
- 14.4% (226) who grossed $70,001–$100,000
- 11.5% (180) who grossed $100,001 to >$500,000

The important number to know is how much you *net* in a business—this is the amount of money you keep after expenses are removed. When you start a business, you can find lots of things to spend your money on that can be used as deductions, so your income doesn't look very prosperous, but your deductions are greater and your tax burden is less. In ADA's 2007 Compensation Survey, the average dietitian took home $53,300 each year (19). See Figure 1.3 on the net income from the *2008 Worldwide Entrepreneurial Dietitian Survey* respondents' best year in business (1).

HOW MUCH DID IT COST TO START THE BUSINESS?

We will talk about what it costs to finance a business in later chapters, but suffice it to say that 85.2% of survey respondents spent $5,000 or less to start their businesses, and of all respondents, 72.2% broke even in the first year, and 90.8% had broken even in 2 years (1).

WHAT SERVICES AND PRODUCTS GENERATED THE MOST REVENUE?

What services or products generated the largest amounts of income for the 1359 respondents that answered this question?

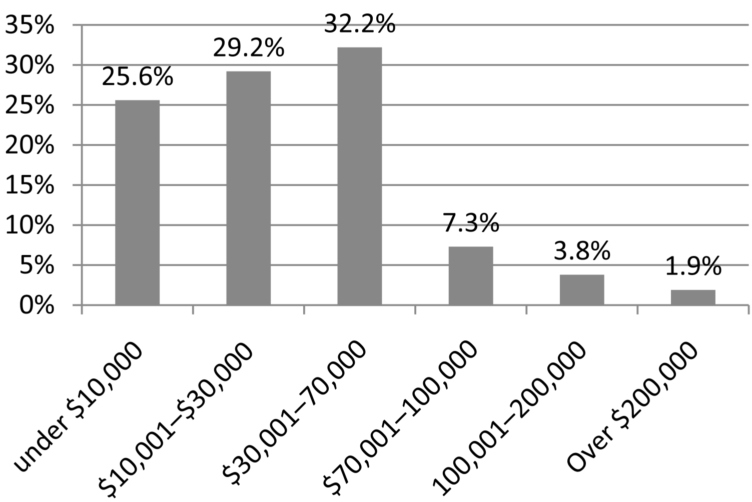

FIGURE 1.3 ■ Net income from survey respondents' best year in business (1560 respondents) (1).

Keep in mind that although these are the most common and popular, there are niche jobs and markets that may be very lucrative because not many practitioners are pursuing them at this time. Be sure to read Chapter 4 on what the top income-producing practitioners are selling. In descending order the answers were (1):

- Medical nutrition therapy (MNT) 35.3% (850 respondents)
- Wellness consulting/presenting (555)
- Speaking (539)
- Long-term care (408)
- Menu or recipe development (334)
- Writing articles and brochures (260)
- Business consulting (92 respondents ranked this option as their first choice)
- Counseling in functional nutrition therapy or nutrition genomics (159)
- Sports counseling (158)
- Writing books (129)
- Media spokesperson (90)
- Marketing products (80)
- Selling supplements (83)
- Supermarket personal shopper/tour guide (74)
- Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) (74)
- Fitness teacher (70)

Of the 546 respondents who work in long-term care, 470 identified the geriatric market as their largest market; second was the care of the disabled with 167; third was home healthcare with 111; fourth was hospice with 104; and fifth was drug and alcohol rehabilitation with 69 ranking it in their top five (1).

WHAT WERE THEIR GREATEST JOYS AND BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENTS?

These were open-ended questions so people could be honest and creative in answering them. Of the 1289 respondents who answered the question on their greatest joy or satisfaction, the highest number identified helping patients or clients as the most satisfying; followed by self-satisfaction for their personal achievement; third was being their own boss; and in fourth place was better quality of life for the practitioner and his or her family.

The biggest disappointments tied for first place were "none" and "long hours/stress." Tied for third and fourth were "slow business/no shows" and "worry about funds/economy." A distant tie for fifth and sixth were "working with the medical profession" and "outside competition."

WHAT WOULD YOU DO OVER? WHAT WERE YOUR LARGEST BARRIERS TO SUCCESS?

Of the 1117 respondents that answered what they would do over, the majority said "plan better," followed by "better marketing," then "stronger belief in myself and my abilities" and "better staff support."

Of the 1155 respondents, the number one barrier was "lack of business experience"; second was "too much time commitment"; third was "lack of or improper marketing"; fourth was "inadequate business planning"; fifth was "difficulty obtaining insurance reimbursement"; sixth was "unfamiliar with networking and using contacts well"; and seventh was "inadequate funding."

WHAT SHOULD BE EMPHASIZED MORE IN DIETETIC EDUCATION? HOW CAN ADA HELP MORE?

Of the 1253 respondents that answered the question on the top five ideas for improving dietetic education (1):

- The top answer was "more marketing skills," voted by 863.
- Second was "business management in order to generate a profit," with 791 votes.
- Third, with 681 votes, was "negotiation skills."
- Fourth, with 394 votes was, "arriving at appropriate prices."

- Fifth, with 376 votes, was "bookkeeping and accounting."
- Sixth, with 363 votes, was "product or service development."
- In seventh place, with 317 votes, was "building self-esteem or self-confidence."

To the open-ended question, "What could our profession do to help support entrepreneurs better?," there were 1771 responses. The responses were all over the board, but the most repeated ones were:

- More practical, entrepreneurial business skills in our education
- Better support for ideas and practice outside of acute clinical care
- Raise the level of counseling skills being taught
- Better marketing of our profession
- Encourage our members to work *with* other professions
- More support for RDs and DTRs in "nontraditional" practice areas
- Lower prices for ADA members for its marketing opportunities
- Encourage members to mentor and support each other better

OTHER SURVEY RESULTS WILL BE SHARED

More survey results on what works best in marketing, the best advisors for entrepreneurs, what dietitians charge for their services, and which forms of business most entrepreneurs use will be discussed in the upcoming chapters.

SUMMARY

Presently, the marketing window of opportunity for nutrition is wide open. Nutrition has never been a "hotter" topic, and it will remain so for some years to come. However, as with all great ideas and trends, it too will fade as our very large target markets become saturated with nutrition information and products. Markets will become segmented and there will be other health professionals ready and willing to answer the needs of those new markets with skills and information dietitians have not yet learned or rejected as unnecessary.

Nonetheless, there will always be an ongoing need for good nutritional information as each new generation participates in sports, has babies, fights obesity, prevents or recovers from illness, and wants to stay healthy as it grows older.

Career avenues for dietitians who distinguish themselves will abound. Competing successfully in the markets of the future may require experience and education outside the required nutrition curriculum and traditional career settings. Today, dietitians are learning about integrative medicine, functional nutrition therapy, medicine, psychotherapeutic counseling skills, media broadcasting, business management, culinary, pharmaceuticals, exercise physiology, law, marketing and sales, product manufacturing, writing, and public speaking. As is often said when faced with so much opportunity, only the person's imagination and energy will limit what she or he can do.

Dietitians are best selling authors, personal chefs, media spokespersons, media personalities, and sports nutritionists. They own public relations firms, publishing houses, and nursing homes. A few are inventors of products like fruit-sweetened cookies, diet card games, educational videos, and multimillion dollar computer data companies. Dietitians are culinary and nutrition consultants to movie stars, spas, restaurants, and fast food chains. Others offer consultant management expertise in inventory control and reducing the incidence of malnutrition. A growing number of Nutrition Therapists are pursuing new areas of clinical practice like integrative medicine, nutritional genomics, and functional nutrition therapy.

Becoming an entrepreneur fulfills for many people the desire to create their own destinies. Some people say they are more satisfied—financially and personally—than ever before.

In a speech to undergraduates at Cornell University, business expert Tom Peters gave sage advice that fits this topic well. He said (20):

- *Don't think, do*. You only really know if something works after you try it, *so don't spend all your time and energy planning. You will never make all of the right decisions before you start something*. Things get better as you apply what you learn.
- *Fail with flair*. Quoting novelist Tom Robbins: "If you've any sense at all, you must have learned by now that we pay just as dearly for our triumphs as we do for our defeats. Go ahead and fail with wit, fail with grace, fail with style." Sadly, all too many newly minted college grads, and forty-year olds, fear failure—that, in the end, is to fear living itself.
- *Listen naively*. Don't just listen, but also "hear." Hearing is about empathy and taking the time to respect others. If you are not empathetic (by this point), I don't know what to tell you—except, don't be the boss.
- *Ask dumb questions*. You couldn't possibly know all the answers, so ask and improve your ability to solve problems.
- *Get others involved*. It takes time to listen, hear, trust, and gain commitment but it is time well spent. *Others come to us with motivation and then we go about destroying it with demeaning attitudes and humiliating rules instead of enthusiasm for new ideas*.
- *Go where the action is*. The best, most successful chiefs and generals spend most of their time at the firing line, and the least in the office.
- *Make it fun*. All human endeavors are about emotion—zest, joy, pride, fun, and even crying are near the heart of any successful enterprise.
- *Be interesting*! Life's too short to waste time suppressing emotions, trying to be like the others, fearing rebuffs, or being fired. *You will never please everyone*.

So go nurture some very interesting failures and even better successes!

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IS SELF-EMPLOYMENT FOR YOU?

2

Self-employment is not a decision that should be taken lightly. It's a calculated risk that requires forethought and continuous critical thinking to evaluate the options and pitfalls as a project grows. Because it's challenging, succeeding as an entrepreneur can be one of the most satisfying accomplishments you will ever have.

What makes some individuals want to do such a thing in the first place? What drives some to do it, while others only talk about it? How do you tell if you're one of them?

According to Jerry White, author of *The Entrepreneur's Master Planning Guide* and director of the Caruth Institute of Owner Managed Business at Southern Methodist University, there are a few universal criteria that are common to most successful entrepreneurs (1). He says it's the person who gets a little angry and then galvanizes for action when let go in a downsizing—he or she gets a gleam in the eye and plans the future. He states that there are key personality traits that describe the successful entrepreneurs he sees (1):

- Stamina
- Realism
- Self-motivation
- Self-confidence
- Calculated risk-taking

If these characteristics don't describe you, then you might want to think long and hard before going into your own business.

The personal qualities, experience, luck, or financial resources necessary for an entrepreneur's success may be less important for another. Encouraging potential nutrition entrepreneurs to merely have years of experience in dietetics without regard to the type and quality of experience is not well founded. Dietitians and dietetic technicians have the basic clinical knowledge and skills upon entry into the profession. It's the other personal qualities and skills that help set people apart from their peers.

Venture capitalist Arthur Rock states, "Good ideas and good products are a dime a dozen. Good execution and good management—in a word, good people—are rare. A conventional manager isn't risk-oriented enough to succeed with a new venture, while an entrepreneur without managerial savvy is just another promoter. Good managers, on the other hand, can't lose. If their strategy doesn't work, they can develop another one. Great people make great companies, and that's the kind of company I want to be a part of" (2).

WHAT DOES IT TAKE?

Sixty-four percent of the 1581 dietetic entrepreneurs who answered the question feel they have "always had an entrepreneurial personality" (3). Of the three dominant personality types that some businesspeople feel entrepreneurs have, 44% of survey respondents chose "creative, inventor, idea-person," 24.7% chose "manager, leader, financial-person," and 31.4% chose "technician, detail-oriented, task person" (3). It is interesting to note that the most financially successful dietitian "masters" (those making over $100,000 net income per year) who had been in business many more years chose very differently (3):

- 51.7% said they were a "creative, inventor, idea-person"

- 33.7% said they were a "manager, leader, financial-person"
- 14.6% said they were a "technician, detail-oriented, task person"

These figures beg the questions: does the job change the person into someone who is more creative and a financial manager, or will the process of starting and managing a business naturally weed out the people who are more technical and detail-oriented?

The majority of dietitians who become entrepreneurs come from clinical backgrounds, followed in descending order by community nutrition, education, food management, business or communication, and, finally, research (3).

A successful entrepreneur has many areas of expertise that should be developed, including:

- A desire and an ability to network with other people
- A thorough working knowledge of how a business operates (often learned or observed on a former job)
- A willingness to promote self and the business
- The ability to develop a quality product or service
- Financial management skills and ability to generate capital to finance the business

The strengths of the business should be based upon the owner's unique personality, knowledge, and experience. This means that you must know about yourself. You may not need specialized training beyond the dietetic education and internship, or you may go for graduate degrees and certifications. Of the masters making over $200,000 net per year, an equal number had the RD credential or their Master of Science degree and 17% had their doctoral degree (3).

Survey masters identified their personal characteristics they felt were most responsible for their success, listed below in descending order (3):

1. Hard work and persistence
2. Personality traits
3. Caring and passion
4. Ability to network and build relationships
5. Knowledgeable and keep up with trends
6. Good communicator

"Successful entrepreneurs know (or learn) how to be tough, how to accept criticism, and how to make quick decisions. Personal integrity is crucial for continued growth of the business. The most successful strive for short-term excellence on every project or they do not agree to do it. They must be able to accept responsibility and stick by commitments" (4).

As a nutrition counselor, it is important to be people-oriented, empathetic, and be exceptionally good in communicating with others. Advanced counseling skills learned through additional education or training in psychotherapeutic counseling with professional supervision will be necessary for a long career in counseling. As medicine changes, especially in chronic care, to functional medicine, dietitians will need to know the body's biochemical functions and pathways that use nutrition as their cornerstone.

As media spokespersons, public speakers, and consultants, dietitians must develop their verbal communication skills and the powers to reason, organize, and think quickly on their feet. As you can see, formal dietetic education is just the beginning.

There is no guarantee that a new business will show an immediate profit. Individuals who start their own businesses cannot be prone to discouragement or boredom. A successful entrepreneur is a realist as well as a dreamer—reaching for the stars while maintaining a firm, earthly footing. Financially, entrepreneurs learn where to cut corners to save money and where to spend their limited resources to make the best impression or serve their clients better. Entrepreneurs must learn to be brutal when it comes to cutting "bad" ideas that drain resources, but generate fun diversion.

Entrepreneurs must learn from others because so many new skills are unfamiliar and because most new ventures are solo projects.

Many will set up informal mentor relationships with highly respected authorities who have experience and insight beyond that of the entrepreneur. At other times, they will network in dietetic practice groups and local business groups where they share ideas and problems with other entrepreneurs.

WHY CHOOSE SELF-EMPLOYMENT?

Dietitians on the verge of leaving employee status for that of self-employment find that being an employee no longer gives them what they need. It's as if they have come to the end of a certain passage. They can no longer grow in the present environment. Venturing into the unknown becomes necessary in order to continue personal and career growth.

Other reasons for becoming self-employed are to gain flexibility of time, to be your own boss, or to be home with small children. Some do it to follow patient care in a wellness setting, to create and implement programs, to do a greater variety of work, or to make more income or have greater recognition for their work.

In the *2008 World-wide Entrepreneurial Dietitian Survey*, the 1335 respondents ranked the reasons why they chose to be entrepreneurs with "flexible schedule" coming in first (3):

1. To have a more flexible schedule
2. To do a variety of work
3. To be my own boss
4. To be challenged
5. To earn more money
6. To have more freedom to use my creativity

The potential exists to make it in a big way. If entrepreneurs are successful, they can make much more money than they ever could as an employee in a traditional job because they collect both the owner's and employee's shares. However, they also pay for *all* the overhead and fringe benefits—both the owner's and employee's shares.

There is a tremendous swelling of pride in their work and in themselves as they

One of the many decisions a home-based businessperson has to make!

bring to fruition projects they originate. In society as a whole, entrepreneurs receive the approval and respect of many people who realize the enormity of the commitment and effort.

WHAT PRICE IS PAID?

Many of the benefits granted the employee, for example, regular paychecks, paid sick leave, pension plans, health insurance, regular working hours, and paid vacation time, are no longer givens when you are your own boss. It may dawn on the new entrepreneur that if he doesn't work a day, he doesn't get paid. There are no benefits when self-employed, except what you provide for yourself.

In logical and practical terms, the possible risks of being an entrepreneur can include:

- Financial and emotional insecurity (at times)
- A large time and effort commitment
- Family stress due to long hours and financial insecurity
- No paid benefits, especially healthcare insurance

Family needs, emotional support, and others' schedules must be considered before becoming an entrepreneur, especially for a person with children or with a partner without stable work. The stress can be high when children are young, ill, or very active in sports or other activities that require a parent to be available. Although an entrepreneur's schedule can be more flexible, once appointments and regular office hours are set, an entrepreneur's image can be damaged by frequently changing appointments or closing the office during office hours. When a spouse's work is sporadic or money is tight, the stress can be high for an entrepreneur trying to make the best long-term decisions for the growing business instead of taking jobs that produce immediate income.

Even formerly supportive spouses can become antagonistic and jealous about the time and effort an entrepreneur invests in the business. Does it help to involve the spouse in business activities? It helps some marriages because they see the work as a labor of love, sharing the workload and reducing the time needed to conduct the business. For others, it is the beginning of the end. Too many hours together may worsen tempers instead of soothe them.

Of the 1305 survey respondents that answered the question about their marital and family status when starting into self-employment, about 50% were married with children (see Fig. 2.1) (3). In response to the question about whether the spouse's or significant other's support was helpful, 91.1% of 1132 people said their support was neutral up to very supportive.

NOT FOR EVERYONE

As you can tell from what has been shared, entrepreneurship does intimately affect an individual. Also, the point needs to be made that you can't assume that since you have good ideas, money, lots of energy, and the right credentials you *should* start your own business. You might also think about working as an employee in business and industry, or for a spa, caterer, cruise line, large medical clinic, or another nontraditional employment setting. Good, progressive corporations are starting to recognize the value of hiring more creative individuals who are looking for career alternatives with regular paychecks and fringe benefits.

The negative aspects of starting a business are very real but certainly not insurmountable when a person does careful research and develops well thought out solutions. The fear of the unknown is often more paralyzing than what really happens.

MYTHS ABOUT ENTREPRENEURSHIP

MYTH: YOU WILL GET RICH QUICK!

You hear about the "miracle" franchises that make tons of money overnight or the skateboarding college dropouts who built

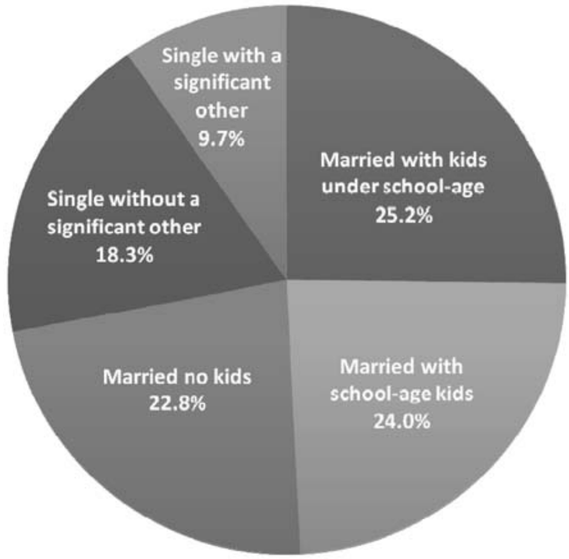

FIGURE 2.1 ■ Marital and family status when starting into self-employment (1305 respondents) (4).

skateboards and are now millionaires. But those are flukes, according to most entrepreneurs' experience. The majority of entrepreneurs find that growing a business takes time and patience. There are false starts along the way and growing pains when things catch on (5).

MYTH: IT IS ALL ABOUT MAKING MONEY

Surveys and interviews don't support the conclusion that it's all about making money. More entrepreneurs say they're in business for the other reasons that have been mentioned. Satisfaction comes from the thrill of the challenge, and the money helps make ends meet and covers the bills. After needs and wants are met, having more money doesn't make everything exponentially better, but it does feel great and the accomplishment is satisfying.

MYTH: WHEN YOU FINALLY MAKE IT, IT GETS EASIER

After working day and night to get the business past start-up, there are all new challenges to preoccupy the owner's time and resources. As the business gets larger and more successful, there can be employee problems, increased consumer expectations, new products or services to invent and maintain, increased costs to improve the business image, more equipment to purchase, increased overhead, larger space needs, and more tax commitments (5).

MYTH: IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL COME

Too many new entrepreneurs plan for the huge surge of patients or customers when they open their doors or throw a Grand Opening. However, many experience frustration because they never realized how much of their previous success at work was due to customers being attracted or loyal to their earlier employers (6). Before starting a business, Rebecca Hart, marketing consultant, suggests, "I'd say you need at least 250 names in your Rolodex. They don't all have to be potential clients or referral agents, but you at least need a base of people who know you and who you can count on for information" (6). Television book promoter Matthew Lesko stated in a seminar for dietitians, "I had a new

MBA degree, a fancy office, and new furniture, and do you know what? NO ONE CARED! I needed something to sell that people wanted to buy" (7).

MAJOR REASONS WHY BUSINESSES FAIL

1. **Not advertising or promoting enough.** Many businesses have gone under before adequate money started coming in (8).
2. **The product and service are not unique enough**, and there is either little demand for what you are selling, or the competition is strong so you decide to compete on price. That strategy often fails.
3. **You have not borrowed or saved enough money** to run the business and pay living expenses. Or, you let your overhead get out of hand by having an expensive office, staff, and equipment before you could afford them (8).
4. **Joining forces with the wrong partner(s)** has destroyed many business ventures—partnerships usually last less than 18 months.
5. **You are not willing to put in the time and effort necessary** to nurture the start-up process. "What separates success from failure: You have to be willing to do *anything and everything* to get the business off the ground" (9).
6. **Starting a business is a major lifestyle decision.** The business owner and her or his family must be committed to making the business succeed (9).

RISK-TAKING IS NOT RISKY LIKE IT USED TO BE

Risk-taking has always involved fear of the unknown. In today's dietetic market, the status quo involves fear of the unknown. Change is happening at an alarming rate. Dietitians must grow just to stay even (10).

Smart people learn how to minimize their risks. In his article, *Risky Business*, Bob Winston points out the difference between "dumb" and "smart" risks (11).

Dumb risks:

1. When the odds are staggeringly against you.
2. You've done little or no research.
3. It was an emotional decision without great merit.
4. You are about to change your life all at once.
5. You'll make a big effort for a small return on investment.

Smart risks:

1. You've researched it for months.
2. The timing is right.
3. You've given it your undivided attention.
4. Experts support you.
5. It blends well with the rest of your life.
6. Your gut instinct tells you to go for it.

SIX STEPS TO SUCCESS (11,12):

1. **Careful planning—but don't wait too long before acting.** *Which* venture and *when* are extremely important concerns. Markets change and trends come and go. Competitors' plans can open new doors for you or destroy your plans. However, *for most services, the primary competitor is apathy on the part of the patient or client*, not another competitor.
2. **Control the size of the risks.** Consider starting slow and building your business as revenues grow. First, contact clients who already know you and like your services instead of going after all new markets. Consider working part-time on a job while waiting for your entrepreneurial venture to grow. Start with services or products that are familiar to you, and try promoting them to new markets instead of inventing something totally new. Try offering more than one service or

product to each client—bundle complementary items to increase the size of the sale.

3. **Time your risk.** Learn more about the importance of the Product Life Cycle described in Chapter 3. You will be able to time the introduction of new items for more success than when you allow them to "happen" when it is most convenient for your schedule.
4. **Build a support system.** To get through tough times, surround yourself with people who support you in your risk-taking. Look for role models, and join groups where successful people meet and get to know one another. No one expects a person who is new to business not to make any mistakes. However, there is no excuse for repeated blunders when there are so many people and resources available to help businesspersons.
5. **Keep cool under stress.** Learn to identify the amount of change and stress you can handle comfortably. Look for signs of having too much stress, such as irritability, hyperactivity, shakiness, excessive smoking, overeating, drinking alcohol, depression, and forgetfulness. If these signs appear, consider delegating some of your tasks and unnecessary busy work, take some time to relax, and get away from the office.
6. **Save a percent of your income and invest it in assets.** Don't spend every cent you make. Save for purchases instead of going into more debt each time. Use income from your business to create savings and buy assets that will appreciate in value, as well as provide retirement income.

COMMONALITIES IN PRIVATE PRACTICE

Although there is wide diversity in dietitians' businesses, the majority support themselves, especially initially, with one-to-one counseling. More experienced practitioners begin with business consulting to established business contacts (4).

- **In clinical private practices, there is a shift in the type of nutrition information that is used most—** from acute medical diets used in the hospitals to "chronic," or preventive, nutrition with a disproportionate emphasis on weight control. Most practitioners report that at least 70% of their clients have weight loss as a primary or secondary diagnosis. Diets for heart disease, diabetes, eating disorders, sports, and allergy diets are common.
- **Practitioners find that this business is seasonal,** with slack times occurring usually over the holidays and in July and August. It is important to remember these times do exist. They are great times to do busy work and plan your own vacations. They should be avoided when planning group classes, mail-outs, and grand openings. In the weight control business, there are two times of the year when major marketing efforts are most effective: early fall and after the New Year.
- **Private practitioners' relationships with other heath professionals begin to mature to true members of the healthcare team.** The major reason interrelationships are more cooperative is because patients are treated for chronic problems instead of acute, life-threatening ones. As an entrepreneur, more time is given to patient instruction and follow-up than is traditionally available in a hospital setting. As a result, nutrition intervention often produces impressive outcomes. Referring physicians and nurses become very supportive of effective nutrition therapists.
- **Money takes on new meaning to new business owners.** To survive, you must generate more income than expenses. It doesn't take long before new business owners learn how to call or delegate the duty to contact their

"accounts receivable" to ask for a prompt payment, or to establish a policy where payment is due at the time of the visit. In the beginning, the fun, creative work with great *future* financial potential may have to take a backseat to less exciting projects that make money now and pay the bills.

- **Practitioners realize the beginning pace of a small business can't be kept up forever.** The need arises to develop projects that produce "passive" income. This is some product or service that brings in revenue without the consultant's constant input. Examples are selling products, earning book royalties, selling copyrighted teaching materials or computer programs, inventing a product, or hiring other dietitians to cover some of your client contracts. The business strategy to create passive income is responsible for some of the most financially successful businesses owned by dietitians.
- **As the business and its owner mature, it's common to narrow the kinds of products and services the business offers.** The dead weight—fun but not profitable or profitable but no longer fun projects—should be let go. The owner learns over the years who to trust and who has to pay up front and sign in front of a notary. Entry-level projects that used to be loads of fun and tons of work are usually left to the newcomers.
- **Business maturity leads entrepreneurs into working in other settings**, such as on decision-making committees, as a state or national dietetic officer, and as Board of Directors of businesses and organizations outside of dietetics.

COMMON QUESTIONS

Q: *I'm afraid I won't keep current without the input of other professionals around me, like in the hospital.*
A: This can be a problem. However, since your livelihood will depend upon staying up with the market, you must develop some solutions. First, see if you can start an informal journal club with other dietitian business owners or at-home moms. Start subscribing to nutrition newsletters and use your computer to access databases or get updates online from the American Dietetic Association (ADA) or health services. Read the newspaper and business-related magazines regularly. Join dietetic practice groups that relate to your areas of interest. Many of their newsletters offer a wealth of information and so do their meetings. Look for self-study continuing education programs on timely topics that put you ahead of the curve for what your target markets presently know.

Q: *I've always had difficulty getting organized, any suggestions?*
A: This concern is extremely important. If you want to stay in business, you will either learn to organize out of necessity, or you will have to hire someone to either do it for you or teach you how. You alone are responsible for the timeliness and quality of your output. There isn't an employer or supervisor to look over your shoulder telling you what to do and when.

If you work out of your home, you will want to maintain "business hours" and avoid watching daytime television and doing chores instead of business projects during that time. Good time management is essential. Start a notebook and list your daily "things to do." Be sure to prioritize them—all things are not equally important. Start with the most dreaded task first and get it out of the way. Many people make lists, but end up doing the low-risk, fun projects first.

Q: *I have wanted to start a consulting practice for years. I have some money from the sale of our house, and I also have some income from two consultant jobs for food companies in the area. I will need a steady income to support us. How do I get started?*
A: You have already started your business, since you have two consulting positions. Before you go any further, I suggest you do as my mentor, Jean Yancey, suggested,

"Weed out the garden of your life." Sit down and take a good, hard look at your life and see what is draining you emotionally and all other ways. Do you take on too much responsibility at home, church, or school, and leave too little time for yourself? Do you have too much debt? Are there people who use you or abuse boundaries you set? Those are just a few of the weeds that must be considered and better controlled before starting your own business.

Next, go and talk to your two present accounts and tell them about your plans to expand, and ask if there is additional work you could do for them. Ask if they know of other companies that might use your services.

Now, call and meet with as many other business contacts as you can to discuss what services you can offer. Many times, new services or ideas will emerge from these discussions that you never considered before. Join and become active in the ADA referral network and Dietetic Practice Groups. Use their online discussion groups and attend meetings of local industry groups. Volunteer to be on highly visible committees where you will meet potential clients, like charity golf tournaments, gala fundraisers, or when soliciting sponsorships for large events so you can meet company owners.

Stay visible, become current with the newest controversies and products, agree to speak for groups of potential clients, and begin to research and write articles that establish your credibility in the consulting areas you want to pursue. Good luck!

EVALUATING YOUR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

It is important that you look at your strengths and weaknesses objectively. You need to know what your strengths are because you will want to capitalize on them and base a lot of your business strengths on them. Knowing your weaknesses will show you where you could be vulnerable. You can seek help to supplement your weaker areas, such as public speaking, writing, bookkeeping, marketing, computer work, etc. The less you are able to do for yourself, the more it will cost to operate a business. The cost of delegating responsibilities and training office staff must be weighed against the value of your time in generating income. A good manager will manage resources and time so he or she is not forced to do $12-per-hour office work instead of $125-per-hour client-contact work.

EDUCATION

The challenges of entrepreneurship can access every brain cell and frame of reference you have. People often enter a small business totally unprepared for the scope of skills that are needed. It's unreasonable to assume a new entrepreneur would know how to do everything. For that reason, entrepreneurs must accept that education will be ongoing both formally in continuing education or schooling and informally from life or work experience.

A dietetic technician is only limited in the clinical area of nutrition practice, where supervision by a dietitian is necessary. He or she is certainly more qualified than most of the lay counselors who work with the public in weight loss and fitness centers. By working in catering, food development, management, or with "normal" nutrition, a dietetic technician can be successfully self-employed.

In a survey of successful private practitioners, Rodney Leonard, former writer for *Community Nutritionist*, found that, "If they had to do their schooling over again, they would choose a curriculum heavily weighted toward building communication skills and acquiring a basic knowledge of business practices. They would take public speaking, journalism, marketing, public relations, bookkeeping or accounting, and economics" (4). In interviews conducted recently, entrepreneurs agreed with this list and added more advanced counseling skills.

Graduate Education or Specialty Certifications should open various doors in business and improve an entrepreneur's marketability. Besides nutrition, dietitians are taking advanced degrees or training in law, medicine, culinary, chiropractic, exercise physiology, communications, health promotion, food technology, business management, psychology, functional medicine, Chinese medicine, and marketing, to name a few. Certification can be in diabetes, renal, pediatric, nutrition support, sports nutrition, lactation, weight counseling, Certified Clinical Nutritionist, and many others.

Practitioners do not agree on the exact role that an advanced degree will play in an entrepreneur's career. Some feel it is an absolute necessity that provides an edge in today's professional world and competitive markets. Others feel advanced degrees are perhaps only important in clinical settings, academia, and government positions. Everyone agrees that a Master of Science degree or PhD will not compensate for a lack of ability, skill, or personality traits needed to succeed in business as an entrepreneur.

Re-education is important when a dietitian hasn't remained current in the areas of nutrition that will be used in practice. Due to the growing nutrition awareness of the public and the sophistication of the competition, new business owners can't afford to be outdated.

For dietitians who have not practiced for some time, don't underestimate what you know. However, you should consider taking dietetic courses, self-study continuing education courses, qualifying for dietetic registration (if you aren't registered), and perhaps working in a teaching or clinical setting for a while to refresh your knowledge and improve your skills.

Experience/Expertise can be gained in a variety of ways—from working in a family-owned business, working as an employee or volunteer, or creating a business of your own. The quality of the experience and the degree of involvement are usually as important as the number of years, but adequate time and exposure are necessary.

Dietetic experience past the internship level is all but mandatory to gain composure, practical clinical knowledge, save money, build a network, and to learn those things not taught in school. People currently in practice have recommended 2 to 5 years of experience in a variety of positions before starting out on your own.

There are, of course, exceptions to every guideline, and, as disclosed in Chapter 1, there are dietitians who have started successful businesses directly out of school. But for the majority of entrepreneurs, the added years can be beneficial in learning new ways of doing things, trying out programs in institutions where resources are more readily available, establishing good credit, and saving seed money for a new venture.

COMMITMENT LIMITS

You will need to decide the amount of personal commitment you want to devote to your business. There are some important questions to ask yourself and decisions that need to be made.

- Will you work at private practice full- or part-time?
- Will you try to keep your other job?
- Will you have a medical, commercial, or home office?
- How much debt can you handle?
- Where can you get funding for the venture?
- If you have a family, how will you juggle the multiple facets of your life?

When determining your limits, recognize that having support for your venture from your family and friends can be very helpful on your road to success. Involving other people in your decision-making may help solicit their support for your projects.

LEAVING YOUR OTHER JOB

How you leave your present job or how you handle your job while you start a new business on the side can be very important professionally. Your reputation either will precede or follow you into your new venture, so the past is never really gone. Try to leave as amicably and cordially as you can. After giving notice, use the next few weeks to let people know about your plans and generate goodwill. Hopefully, your present colleagues will become good referral agents if you have chosen to conduct a noncompeting business.

If you are starting a business on the side, keep it on the side. Don't get fired because you used the photocopier to print all of your diets or solicited patients on the floors of the hospital. Also, be aware many employers consider starting a private practice after hours as a conflict of interest, and it may jeopardize your job.

Several clinic dietitians have found their employers were less than understanding when they established part-time private practices in the same community and offered services that competed with the employers' outpatient clinic services. That wasn't a smart move. Put yourself in the employer's spot—wouldn't you make the dietitian decide which job she or he wanted more? Work in a different community or offer excellent, but noncompetitive services, such as group weight loss classes with an exercise specialist or diabetic cooking classes.

Your reputation and goodwill toward you will grow as you become known for your services. Your identity will grow separate from your employer's.

A common question dietitians ask is: "What is mine when I quit?" Generally, the rule of thumb is: Intangibles are probably yours (including the names of your contacts), and tangibles (patient records, the Rolodex or palm computer provided by the employer, etc.) are probably not. If you invented or created something on your salaried time, usually it belongs to your employer unless you had another agreement. If you wrote materials that you want to use later in your business, plan to write different ones with newer information.

A former employer can't keep you from practicing your profession—unless you signed a noncompete contract, and even then it must be reasonable. An agreement may state that you can't solicit business from your employer's client accounts or disclose the employer's proprietary information. You should be able to contact physicians on staff at the hospital, but on your day off, not during paid working hours.

One practitioner reported a food service company asked her to sign a contract when she first started. It stated that upon termination, or if she quit, *she could not work as a dietitian for anyone for one year within a 100-mile radius of the large metropolitan area where she lived.* Don't sign something like that! It's doubtful the agreement would stand up in court, but who wants the expense and bother of a court case? Talk to a good lawyer about some compromise.

CASE STUDY 2.1

THE NUTRI-SERVE STORY

On March 31, 1987, I incorporated Nutri-Serve Food Management in the State of New Jersey. Nutri-Serve Food Management contracts with school districts in the state to provide school food management services.

I had worked for a small food service management company in New Jersey for 10 years. It was my plan to be the owner of my own food service management company by the time I was 40 years old. When pencil came to paper, working for that company no longer contributed to my career growth, so I decided to start out on my own at age 33. The company I left had 17 clients, so I set a goal to have 17 clients by the time I was 40. At Nutri-Serve's 5 year anniversary, I had exceeded my goal of 17 clients.

I started my business in the second bedroom of my townhouse. I was single at the time, and lived off of my savings. I taught a class once a week to pay for groceries, bought anything I needed from a second hand store, and worked and worked. I decided to call my business Nutri-Serve Food Management because I wanted to include Nutrition in the name and because Service is key to the success of any business, especially food service.

It is very humbling when you are a cog in a larger wheel because you have to do EVERYTHING yourself. I was shaking to the bottom of my socks at times. After you do something for the third or fourth time it gets a lot easier! I would highly recommend to anyone starting their own business that they find an excellent attorney, CPA accountant, and insurance agent. These three people will be of great help.

I researched the competition, wrote a proposal book, sent out letters to the school districts in nearby counties, and started to cold call. I got my first client in September, 1987, when the new school year started, and I am pleased to say we still have that client. I hired my first employee part-time in January, 1988. When asked what it takes to start and succeed in your own business, I think it is having perseverance beyond your wildest imagination! Integrity is also extremely important to me and was one of the ma`jor reasons I started my own business.

What Helped Most?

Rejection can be hard in the beginning. I listened to positive-thinking tapes, read positive-thinking books, and watched positive-thinking ministers on television. I had several mantras to keep in my brain. My favorites include:

- "Don't give up. . .we know you can do it!" Written in a card from my parents
- "Do what you fear most." Dale Carnegie
- "Most of us have far more courage than we ever dreamed we possessed." Dale Carnegie

In addition, I have some anonymous sayings:

- "Ready, shoot, aim."
- "The universe rewards action."
- "The universe will provide."
- "Fall forward—When you pick yourself up you will be one step ahead."

I listened to Jack Canfield's *Self Esteem and Peak Performance* by Career Track until I wore out the tape. I took the Dale Carnegie Sales Course to increase my confidence in selling. After the class was over, I became a teaching assistant for two more classes so I could continue to learn without having to pay for it.

The excellent book, *Think and Grow Rich* by Napoleon Hill, was essential in my personal and business growth. Reading, studying, and implementing this plan was a turning point in my life. Napoleon Hill was contracted by wealthy businessperson Andrew Carnegie to interview, over a 20-year period, hundreds of well-known successful businesspeople. He took this information and consolidated it into 13 common points that are described in the book.

My Christian faith is my keystone. I am a spiritual person. When I would get down to my last $1000, my path would take a bend in the road. Something positive would work out that I never dreamed would happen and I would be back on track.

The Creative Side of Work

Clients like to buy into a creative idea. I created the "Balloons for a Balanced Lunch" clown unique to Nutri-Serve Food Management to represent the mission of nutrition. When students take a food of each color they have a balanced meal. The USDA Nutrition Pyramid also enhances our message. This year, Nutri-Serve added flags for each food group over our serving lines, adding color to the line and reinforcing our nutrition message to students.

Use the talents of friends and family whenever you can. I developed Nutri-Serve's signature clown and flags, and my mother drew all of the artwork. All the brain power you can get for free is great. Napoleon Hill calls this the Master Mind Group. It is very important to surround yourself with positive people and positive thoughts.

I had a booth at the New Jersey School Board's Convention the very first year I was in business. My father went with me to work the floor. When prospects walked by the booth and asked what clients Nutri-Serve had, I would mention two clients and then let my voice linger (as if I had others but just didn't mention them) and moved onto something specific about our service to benefit them.

Growing a Business

I think it is important to be progressive, always learning, and to take reasonable risks. Trust your gut! It is usually right. One of the first things I did in 1987 was to invest a good part of my life savings into having a software program written for the accounting portion of the school food service business. Personal computers were relatively new and fax machines were not invented yet. This program has served us well. It has been rewritten and updated over the years and it is still in use. Implementing systems that can be used year after year is important to the stability of the company and makes it much easier to train employees.

I got into the habit of collecting good interviewing questions as the company grew because I needed them to hire people to partner with me on my team. I wanted to hire people who would believe in my dream. Asking the right questions was essential. I am very proud to say I work with an absolutely excellent team of people who are very dedicated, hard working, honest, and understand the goals of Nutri-Serve Food Management. No job is too big or too small. We all work together to accomplish the goal.

In August 2002, I purchased a building for our corporate headquarters. This is now my office. As of September 2008, Nutri-Serve Food Management was serving 76 school districts in central and southern New Jersey with 200 schools. We serve about 78,000 total meals a day and have 900 employees.

Nutri-Serve's booth at the 2008 New Jersey School Board's Convention.

I never take anything for granted. You will make mistakes. It's part of being human. Learn from them. I learn and grow every day. If you are faced with a new problem or, as I like to call them, "challenges" or "character builders," remember there is a solution, you just haven't thought of it yet! *—Karen B. Fynan, MS, RD*

SUMMARY

If you are going to succeed as an entrepreneur, you must have a burning desire to develop your idea, and you must believe so firmly in the idea that everything else pales in comparison (2). By now you can tell the commitment to become a full-time entrepreneur should not be taken lightly. In the next chapters, you will learn the importance of timing, customer service, and marketing to making a venture a success.

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BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION

II

WORDS OF WISDOM

We cannot direct the wind. . .But we can adjust the sails.
Bertha Calloway

Do not let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do.
John Wooden

BUSINESS STRATEGIES AND MANAGEMENT

3

Most people believe customers can tell excellence when they see it, that customers seek the superior choice when buying as long as the price is lower, and that they want healthy food and quality programming on television. However, according to marketing consultant, Harry Beckwith (1):

- People buy what they hear about most or what seems most familiar and tastes good.
- They want to avoid making a bad choice; they seldom seek the superior choice.
- They buy from people with whom they have a relationship.
- They will pay more if the "perceived value" or image is higher than the price.
- They aren't truthful on surveys—they say what they think surveyors want to hear and what makes the customer look good.

There is so much advice for new businesses on strategies for success—much of it conflicting—because "the range of options and problems is vast and most decisions are 'up for grabs.' Many new business ventures simultaneously lack coherent strategies, competitive strengths, and talented employees" (2). Successful entrepreneurs encourage newcomers to:

- Create a focused, timely business strategy
- Execute it well
- Exceed customers' expectations
- Keep the overhead a modest percentage of the income

RELATIONSHIPS ARE THE KEY

Your marketing, talent, professional knowledge, and expertise will get customers to your door, but your service business will not flourish unless you have *relationships* with your customers (1). This helps explain why some well-financed businesses run by highly educated people fail or make only marginal income. Customers don't return and they don't refer their friends and colleagues when your service is an "encounter" (like ordering online or buying from a vending machine), instead of a relationship (3). As more and more businesses turn to offering services and products online with no human contact, it will be interesting to see how they try to maintain the loyalty factor with encounter services instead of relationships. Using a person's name in direct mail or recalling their past purchases haven't proved to be very effective marketing and aren't really relationships.

Customer service skills for front line employees and yourself are imperative in today's competitive marketplaces. For a small business with limited resources, establishing relationships with physicians is often the difference as to why patients are referred to you instead of the outpatient department of the local hospital. Additionally, relationships are why a food company returns to you when they need a media spokesperson, even though there are other dietitians who can speak as well or are willing to work for less.

There are noteworthy, changing trends in some services that seem to be catching on: one hour eyeglasses, buying stocks online, and laundry services with 24/7 service and online reports when clothes are ready (3). The keys are to keep the services fast, effective, efficient, friendly, and with minimal hassle.

LIFESTYLE OR SUSTAINABLE ENTREPRENEUR?

When choosing strategies for your business, an important decision to make up front is whether you want to be a lifestyle entrepreneur (you enjoy working and keeping the business the size you can manage), or you want to build a sustainable business (survives without the founder and may eventually sell out to the highest bidder). Your goal for the business is important because each type is run differently and usually seeks different markets. It also may be that entrepreneurs must remain "lifestyle" until they finally create the sustainable concept that is lucrative enough to attract outside financing, crack employees, and an eventual buyer.

"Lifestyle entrepreneurs are interested in generating enough cash flow to maintain a certain way of life, so they don't need to grow very large. In fact, a business that becomes too big might prevent the founder from enjoying life or remaining personally involved in all aspects of the work"(2). Their problems include:

- Limited ability to attract good employees or financial backing
- Long hours
- The owner is so closely associated with the business, selling it is difficult
- Burnout or illness can threaten its stability

"With no ways to leverage their skills (except subcontracting or hiring employees), they can eat only what they kill. Factors that make it easy for entrepreneurs to launch such businesses often make it easy for competitors or employees to do what founders do" (2). These nutrition entrepreneurs pursue such ventures as one-on-one counseling, consulting to businesses on smaller projects, speaking, media opportunities, book writing, and being a personal chef or trainer.

Sustainable nutrition business owners who want to grow a venture to sell for a large amount, eventually take public, or just enjoy on a larger scale, pursue more high-dollar markets like computer programming for institutions, product manufacturing, building a retail business, weight loss programs for the masses, or creating a consultant firm with employees and numerous client accounts. The company name and image are promoted, not necessarily the owner's. The entrepreneur's day is spent more on management of employees, overseeing projects, negotiation, product development, or financial issues. The most common drawbacks or stresses for these entrepreneurs are:

- Missing the day-to-day closeness with customers
- Employee hassles
- Large debt and tax issues
- Uncertainties or feelings of loss when delegating their favorite tasks to others

THE BIG IDEA

At one time or another, we all have a "big" idea we know will make us a million dollars if we would just pursue it. Truth is, not many people actually try to pursue their ideas. The patent office reports that out of the 1400 new patents issued per week, only about 5% are ever manufactured.

In his book, *The Rejects*, Nathan Aaseng explores the difficulties and negative feedback that inventors of well-known, highly successful products or services had to endure in order to make their ideas successful (4). His examples included: Orville Redenbacher and his high-priced but high-quality popcorn, Frederick Smith and his idea for overnight delivery (Federal Express), and Clarence Birdseye, who drew upon his adventures in the Arctic to invent a process to freeze vegetables successfully.

The small book is inspirational because it does *not* highlight the "overnight" success stories. Instead, it looks at the dedication and perseverance required when you believe in your idea and it is not an instant hit. The reader sees that the thrill and satisfaction from an idea is in the intellectual challenge, creativity, camaraderie with the others involved, and the emotional highs along the way. Money is a good reward too, but for most entrepreneurs, it is the thrill of the challenge that makes us happiest.

WHAT IS IT ABOUT AN IDEA THAT MAKES IT UNIQUE?

It could be you and your association with the idea. It could be how you market it or its message. Usually, it is the fact it was the *first on the market*, or if not first, then how it was *different and better*. There are many ideas that hit when the *timing* was right; they weren't first, but the public responded like they were first. Miller Lite beer was actually the third or fourth lower-calorie beer to hit the market, but when it hit, the timing was right and so was its *message*, "lighter and less filling," not "diet."

Sometimes, a "new" idea is not always better. When McDonald's fast food concept was first invented, it streamlined food production. The menu was made as simple as possible (nonmessy foods that can be eaten while driving); the production line was broken into repetitious steps so that each product tasted, looked, and was the same; labor was trained and treated as interchangeable robots (no waitresses or relationships were needed). Unfortunately, we have been experiencing a time in medicine where the Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) creators tried to instill that same concept in the provision of healthcare in the U.S. and the public responded by pulling away from HMOs. Relationships in healthcare are expected by consumers.

CRAFTING STRATEGIES THAT WORK

Most new start-ups have to start with tried and true strategies that have worked for others because of the lack of funding and the need to gain business experience. As discussed by Amar Bhide in *Harvard Business Review on Entrepreneurship*, "A new company based on hustle, like consulting or sales, can provide good income and a dynamic and competitive market. Capital requirements are low and overhead is often lower. Surprisingly, small endeavors often hold more financial promise than large ones. Often, the founders can keep a larger share of the profits because the company grew on its own profits instead of borrowed money. However, niche enterprises can also enter the 'land of the living dead,' because their market is too small for the business to thrive, but the entrepreneur has too much invested to walk away" (5). In this case, the venture needs to be redesigned or diversified.

It is okay *not* to be the leader in the market—you can be a follower and still find your niche and make a decent living (6). When you are the leader, competitors seek to dethrone you and continually point out your faults to customers. Leaders often spend more money and time trying to maintain the status of that role. At their own expense, leaders often help create new awareness in the marketplace for a new kind of product or service that an entrepreneur can also deliver. Then, an entrepreneur comes along and capitalizes on that awareness in a smaller segment of the market. For example, the leader may be going for all households over $50,000 in income, and an entrepreneur markets to teens or to single-parent families with a similar product or service.

A National Federation of Independent Businesses survey of almost 3000 start-ups found that entrepreneurs who spent a large amount of initial study, reflection, and planning were no more likely to survive for 3 years in business than people who seized opportunities as they presented themselves without much preplanning (7). Successful entrepreneurs adopt practical approaches that are quick, inexpensive, and timely.

Bhide, a venture capitalist and Harvard University visiting professor, gives four helpful guidelines for aspiring founders (5):

1. Screen out unpromising ideas as early as possible through judgment and reflection, not gathering loads of data.
2. Realistically assess your financial situation, personal preferences, and goals—they will gauge your passion for the idea.
3. A niche venture can't justify too much advertising (but it must advertise); it must work within its budget and available distributors and referral agents because it can't support huge investments. In other words, you work smart—use local printers to save on shipping and network with people you know, as well as referred colleagues.
4. Integrate action and analysis. Don't wait for all the answers, and remain flexible and ready to change course.

PRODUCT LIFE CYCLE

The product life cycle concept can be applied to products, services, market trends, and even careers and professions. Just as trends come and go, so does market potential. By understanding the graph (see Fig. 3.1), an entrepreneurial dietitian can better anticipate the levels of consumer demand and competition and better estimate the amount of capital needed to enter a market. The more established the competition (mature market), the more it will cost to create an identity for a new service or product.

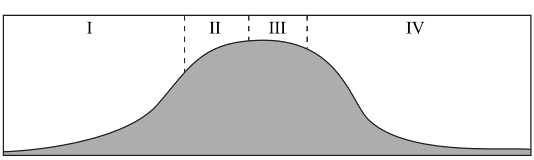

FIGURE 3.1 ■ Product life cycle.

As illustrated in Stage 1 of the chart, *Infancy* describes the period when a new trend is just emerging or when a new idea is at the cutting edge, as was wellness in the 1970s. A few people were talking about the idea, but it didn't have mass appeal. The dietitian who wanted to become established as an expert at this stage did so at her or his own expense. However, at this stage it often doesn't take much money to become established. True entrepreneurs love this stage. They thrive on the untapped potential of the emerging trend and creative brainstorming. They often develop close professional ties with people they meet while actively pursuing the trend at this stage (8).

Stage 2, *Growth*, begins when the idea becomes more popular and demand grows for the best services, products, and providers from Stage 1. Profits rise, and the new idea starts to attract the attention of other possible providers (your competitors). Competitors copy or improve on the best ideas and add lots of marketing dollars. As the market matures, it becomes expensive to enter with a new product or service. Businesses experiment less at this stage. Ineffective or marginal services, products, staff, and marketing efforts are let go. The venture is honed to a lean, well-functioning, revenue-generating business (8).

Saturation becomes a problem in the *Mature* stage, Stage 3, as too many competitors vie for a piece of the market. Sales are at the highest level since the product or service was introduced but growth begins to decline. As James Rose, RD, stated, "During Stage 3, the business becomes fairly routine so many entrepreneurs lose interest. A person with good management skills is needed at this stage to keep the product or service consistent in quality and efficiently produced" (9). Marketing is especially competitive at this stage with each competitor trying to attract the same shrinking target markets. If this chart represents your career, it means that what you are doing has reached its peak of popularity and you need to be investing in several new ideas in earlier stages with future revenue potential.

Finally, Stage 4, *Decline*, arrives. The trend and its attractiveness to its present target markets are declining. There are fewer new buyers because everyone who wanted the product or service has purchased it. Sales drop and the product, service, practitioner, profession, or trend in its original form is no longer competitive. There are three options at this stage. The first is to continue offering the product or service for as long as it is profitable. The second is to reformulate or repackage the concept and reintroduce it as "new and improved." The third option is a mixture. While either of those two options takes place, you invest a percentage of your resources into a new, cutting-edge concept in Stage 1 or early Stage 2. Smart businesses offer several products or services, each fitting into a different stage of the life cycle.

Although many trends may take years for Stage 4 to evolve, when something dramatic happens like a new breakthrough product or widespread negative publicity, change can happen overnight. For example, when Oprah Winfrey announced she had lost weight on a liquid protein diet, it gave credibility and heaven-made exposure to that industry. Other weight loss programs based on more gradual diets couldn't attract enough participants to hold class for several years. Stage 4 happened in a matter of weeks. However, as often happens with fads, when news hit of the women suing a diet franchise because of gallbladder problems, liquid diet programs went into Stage 4 and began to fold within weeks.

THE PROCESSES OF MANAGEMENT

Managers decide what is to be done and how it will be accomplished. The majority of self-employed entrepreneurs will work solo, but there will be advisors, printers, repair people, and numerous others to oversee. So, the success of their business is still based on how well they manage.

Entrepreneurs must be self-motivated and have coordination in seven critical areas, as outlined by Tom Gorman (10) and others (5,9,11,12):

1. **Planning**: determines what is to be done—it can be strategic plans, financial plans, marketing plans, and production. The business plan will cover all of these plans and should be in enough detail to steer the business.
2. **Goal-Setting**: Goals should be big enough to inspire people and small enough to be achieved. There should be business, financial, marketing, and personal goals. Goals also must have the following three characteristics:
   - **Specific**—goals must be specific, i.e., "breakeven by 6 months in business."
   - **Measurable**—so you know whether or not you reached it, i.e., "contact three new accounts each week."
   - **Time-limited**—It has a deadline and is not open-ended, i.e., "completed by June 10, 2010."
3. **Decision-maker**: A good manager is a decision-maker. Some people hate to make decisions because they hate being "wrong." Actually, the business will suffer if timely decisions are not made. The following is a six-step process for making decisions:
   - **Define the problem**. Identify what you must work with or solve.
   - **Gather information**. Dig deep to find all the facts: talk to people, research trends and market economics, study competitors, and so on.
   - **Analyze the information**. You may use the personnel policy manual, legal counsel, mathematical equations, or a computer decision-support system to help with the analysis. This step helps you understand the full ramifications of the issue.
   - **Develop options**. Options give you choices, which you need to arrive at logical, rational, legal, and practical decisions.

- **Choose and use the best option**. Now you act because you have all the information you need to make the best choice that anyone could make, given the same knowledge. Don't be paralyzed by dwelling on the need for more analysis.
- **Monitor the outcome**. You need to know if your decision solved the problem, so you have to monitor and make another decision if the problem remains or it mutates.

4. **Delegation**: Assign tasks and responsibilities to others. This is how managers get work done through employees, and how lone rangers get more work done—by letting temporary help, subcontractors, graphic artists, and others do what they do best, while the owner gets "high-level stuff" done. Others may do the work but the manager is still responsible for approving the quality of work and its completion schedule. Everyone should have clear responsibilities, and enough authority to carry them out. Everyone should have only one person to report to.
5. **Support**: Employees and others who are assigned delegated work will meet with barriers or problems—some anticipated, some not. The manager can't just walk away and say, "Not my problem, you take care of it." The manager needs to be there initially to help problem-solve, establish guidelines, listen to complaints as they come in, and correct problems. Managers also need to hand out humor, encouragement, pointers, and praise.
6. **Communication**: This is one of the most important skills of a manager, and one that often determines success. First, *listen* to what is being said. Respond in direct, precise, clear language, and then ask the person to tell you, in his or her own words, what you said. People like to feel needed and important; this means that others need to feel "in the loop," so share important information.
7. **Controlling to Plan**: This means controlling all the elements—people, resources, time, money—to follow the plan to reach the goals that were set out in the beginning.

MORE ON DELEGATION

Because entrepreneurs are so self-reliant and independent, many have trouble delegating to anyone else. They fear loss of control or loss of quality output. This hesitancy may cause problems like:

- Owner burnout
- Frustration for anyone who has to work or live around the owner
- Red flags of warning for possible investors
- Stifling of growth, if the business is ready for expansion

This situation is remedied by hiring or subcontracting to very qualified people, which will take the entrepreneur some research time to find. It may take several tries, but if the person is right for the job, it should become apparent.

STRATEGIC THINKING

Strategic thinking was originally a wartime concept, but it has come to mean the "process of reasoning that during the decision-making process is used to find the ideal route to achieving a goal or competitive advantage. People who are good at strategic thinking have developed the capacity to craft unique ideas that are practical and applicable to specific business situations and, most importantly, to bring them to fruition" (13). Robert Jonas, President of Strategy International, Inc., suggests specific tools that may be used to develop this skill (13):

- Get training to overcome the status quo and learn strategies, like in chess.
- Seek environmental stimulation while walking around and seeing new things in order to break the monotony of mental stagnation.

BOX 3.1 ***A Few Terms to Know***

1. **Balanced scorecard**: As the fiasco over WorldCom and others proved, we expect more from a company than just financial success.
2. **Benchmarking**: Assess the best in your field and apply the lessons and strategies to help your business.
3. **Continuous improvement**: This can have powerful results—getting a little better over a long period of time.
4. **Core competencies**: These are the things you and your business are best at doing; focus on them, especially as a small business.
5. **Customer relationship management**: Your relationship to your customers is what it's all about.
6. **Learning organizations**: Knowledge is increasingly the most important asset and with so much information coming out in nutrition, effort must be taken to keep up.
7. **Mass customization**: Information and services meet in an effort to give customers what they want.
8. **Mission and vision statements**: Although many discount these, they're among the most popular and long-lived management tools around.
9. **Reengineering**: The 1990s were the reengineering decade, but the U.S. will benefit from improving business processes for years to come.
10. **Total quality management (TQM)**: The systems era of business management began in 1980 and is almost synonymous with TQM—striving toward constant and ongoing improvement through empowering employees, setting long-term objectives, using the team approach, and to "do it right the first time" (11,13).

- Seek generalists who more often see the whole picture instead of "experts" who may be locked into their narrow vision of what works.
- Benchmarking has helped businesses learn from others, but not all competitors will share their secrets (nor should they). This practice may also mean everyone is mediocre.
- Elaboration in the forms of prototypes, models, tests, what-ifs, and risk analysis must be conducted during the discovery stage.
- Role playing to gain perspective from another's view point.
- Create an environment that accepts and fosters learning from failures.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Strategic planning is concerned with identification and actualization of long-term organizational objectives (that cover 5 or more years) (12). Short-range forecasts are revised on a quarterly basis, and medium-range plans are reviewed annually. When a venture is first planned, these stages are identified and explored. As new opportunities present themselves, the plans may be informally reviewed or revised more or less frequently.

Small business owners, especially, need to write down their plans for three important reasons (12):

- **Continuity and succession planning—**If the owner becomes ill, injured, or dies, the mental plans go with him or her if they aren't written down.
- **Quality of decisions improves—** The owner is forced to assess the pros and cons of ideas, which can help the best ideas come to the top.
- **Commitment—**The plan acts as a psychological tool or contract to reaffirm the owner's implicit commitment to his or her business.

Business consultants suggest that good managers know when to micromanage a project and when to only set up checkpoints along the way. They know they will never be able to guess all the right answers before a project begins, so they develop action plans based on their best research, and then begin. They make corrective decisions along the way in order to stay on target to their goals. *Entrepreneurs take risks, but they are calculated, well researched, and closely managed.*

DESIGNING SERVICES THAT DELIVER

Even though they are intangible, services can be subjected to the same rigorous analysis as other management operations, according to Lynn Shostack, a senior vice president at Bankers Trust, in an article in the *Harvard Business Review* (14). She uses a blueprint concept to develop new services, to decide the steps and stages of delivery, and to identify problems and the potential for other market opportunities.

The development of new services is usually characterized by trial and error. However, there is no way to ensure quality or uniformity without a detailed design (14). By adapting a work flow design, you can devise a blueprint that is nonsubjective and quantifiable, one that will allow you to work out details ahead of time (14). Simply identify all the steps of a service, adding time and costs, including any preparation time. By illustrating what you do, or plan to do, you can find possible weak points where quality may be compromised. Or, you can use the example to train a subcontractor on the finer points of a service you provide that you want duplicated.

GROWING A PRODUCT-BASED BUSINESS

The profession of dietetics can point to some very successful members when it discusses people with product-based businesses. Merilyn Cummings, MS, RD, invented The Diet to Lose & Win, a card-wallet system to control food intake, using the diabetic exchanges.

Ellyn Luros-Elson, RD, was former president and cofounder of Computrition, Inc., a supplier of food cost management and nutrition analysis software and computerized cookbooks. In total, it has over 50 different products for the food service and dietetic industries. Through aggressive marketing, Computrition's products have become known as state-of-the-art in the food service arena. Luros-Elson says, "It takes about 18 months for a product to be developed, tested, refined, and packaged for the market. It takes an additional 27 months for it to breakeven, and for us to recover our investment. Our company has over $10 million invested in product development. But even with the high costs, having products to sell is the only way I know to make a lot of money in dietetics. Service-based businesses soon realize there are only so many hours in the day to sell. After the start-up investment, products can sell and generate revenue without your heavy input of time like with service businesses."

Randye Worth, RD, developed the fruit sweetened cookies you see in your grocery called R.W. Frookies and Animal Frackers. She and her husband wanted an all-natural cookie that was good for you. Two and a half years in development, and with her husband's aggressive, creative marketing and product experience, they started with four flavors and a concept for a free standing display (15).

In an interview, product experts John Luther and Jim McManus of the Marketing Corporation of America in Westport, Connecticut, gave advice to people with product-based businesses (16):

- *Don't introduce a new product unless it has proprietary competitive advantages.* If it's not unique, don't spend your time and money on it. If there is no barrier to a competitor entering the market with a product that is just as good, or better than yours, you'll quickly be competing on price. You could have a marketing success, but you'll have a business failure if you can't sell it at a profit.

- *Be simple and candid in your packaging and in your description to the trade.* If you can't be, the product probably isn't very good.
- *Don't bet the ranch.* Always hold some assets in reserve.
- *You test market by getting into the business.* There is nothing theoretical about it. Just do focus groups in at least two geographic regions to get a reality check that you are on target with colors, flavors, attributes, marketing messages, and so on. The old thinking was that you test marketed a product in a representative city and if the consumers liked it, it would sell nationwide. *That did not prove to be true.*

Two very interesting books on product development are *How to Create Your Own Fad and Make a Million Dollars* by Ken Hakuta (17) and *Toyland: The High-Stakes Game of the Toy Industry* by Sydney Stem and Ted Schoenhaus (18). Although these two books talk about the toy industry, the manufacturing trials, competition, retail problems, and so on are often similar to those in other markets. (Look on Amazon.com by topic or title to find used copies of these and other books on this exciting topic.)

There are several universities in the U.S. that have departments that will analyze your product and its marketing plan for a fee of about $500 or so to determine whether they feel it has a chance for success. Products can be extremely successful; they can also be very time consuming and expensive pastimes.

Your ideas for your business may change many times as you conduct market research and talk to people. The most important point is to remain open-minded but analytical and thorough in your quest.

BUILDING A MATURE BUSINESS

What do you do differently when your business matures? Your reputation is established, you have a stable relationship with clients, and your days are filled more with income-producing projects than get-your-foot-in-the-door freebies. This is the time to establish stability and savor what you have created. Read the books, *Rich Dad, Poor Dad* (19) and *The Millionaire Next Door* (20), and see that it's common folks who save the money and invest in assets that end up having financial security and fewer sleepless nights. Spending every cent that comes in is a common practice and tempting, but foolish. Even if it's for the newest technology, if you *really* don't need it to increase business revenue, don't get it.

The keys to prosperity are:

- Save a percentage of your income that you can afford every month—pay yourself first before you pay the bills (19).
- Invest in assets first (real estate, small apartment building, stocks, bonds, etc.) that grow in value, instead of liabilities that eat your cash flow and depreciate (fancy home, expensive car, the most expensive technology, and toys) (19).
- Watch out—don't live on credit cards and leveraged assets where your income is spent on big interest payments.
- Don't buy new assets or liabilities until you can afford them—learn to delay gratification and live within your means (19,20).

Maturing businesses also can mean a lot more of the same work the entrepreneur has been doing for years. All of a sudden, the physicians are referring, more food companies need menus analyzed, the media want more interviews, and somewhere in there your family wants to see you too. What can you do? Don't quit and walk away! This is what you worked for all these years. Try these ideas instead:

1. Get rid of the most time-consuming jobs that pay the least—or hire someone to cover them, as long as you still make a decent profit as manager.

BOX 3.2 ***Interview with Becky Dorner, RD***
Owner of Becky Dorner & Associates, Akron, OH

Q: *What kind of business do you have?*

A: I have about 20 employees and two subcontractors and together we cover over 130 accounts, plus temporary staffing for vacations, etc. We consult to skilled nursing facilities, assisted living, retirement villages, acute care facilities, and MRDD group homes.

Q: *What did you feel when you were no longer satisfied with just growing the business larger?*

A: Obviously, my family is most important to me. However, my business and career are a huge part of my life. I derive a great deal of my self-value and satisfaction from working. In one year, I doubled the business income, which meant I worked day and night. I made major changes in systems, developed new policies and procedures, hired and trained a lot of staff, and increased staff benefits. And with all the hard work and success, I found I was miserable. I was not happy with how I was spending my time—it was no longer fulfilling.

Q: *What did you do to restore your enthusiasm?*

A: I spent a lot of time soul searching and worked with a business/career coach. I discovered what I truly love to do—what I am passionate about—and started spending more of my time on that (speaking, writing, marketing, and product development). I delegated what I did not enjoy—it took years to train other people to take over those jobs, but I am much happier now! I use the talents and skills of others to do what they do best. The business is a great success and everyone wins!

Q: *Why did you buy your office space?*

A: I bought and renovated a Cape Cod-style house in a commercial area and converted it into offices. I felt it was a good investment. I can potentially earn income down the road when I choose to sell it, rather than just throwing my money away on rent. And best of all, it is very comfortable for my staff.

2. Say "no" to volunteer or lower paying jobs that don't really need your skills, unless you love them—then do fewer.
3. Do the work and then find interesting activities to do outside of work—with your family and friends or by yourself—this changes the pace, while improving your attitude and you still reap the benefits of your years of labor. Sometimes surges in workload are just temporary and don't warrant any major changes.
4. Cut back on your workload since it is more lucrative now and refocus your career to include activities you have always wanted to do, like speaking, writing, becoming a chef, or mentoring young entrepreneurs.
5. Create a parallel career in something you enjoy that doesn't involve nutrition, like music, art, sewing, fishing, or managing your apartment complex.

SUBCONTRACTOR OR EMPLOYEE?

Expansion is not to be taken lightly. It must be well planned, adequately financed, and you must be willing to accept new additional responsibilities, especially management and leadership. Your accountant, lawyer, and business advisor(s) need to be consulted before any steps are taken in this direction.

Don't bring on a subcontractor to help you if only your needs are presently being met. Don't jump prematurely. Many business advisors suggest having enough work for one-and-a-half full time dietitians before a part-time associate is added. The other option is to have a consultant work as needed to cover new projects, client accounts, or office patients in order to free your time to pursue new client accounts. First, grow your business and work out the bugs, then subcontract or hire an employee—in that order—usually.

Olga Dominguez Satterwhite, RD, my seminar copresenter in 64 programs on how to start a private practice, used to tell how she contacted over 200 Spanish-surnamed physicians in the Houston area to introduce herself *before* she opened her business doors and quit her job. She hired an office receptionist and help at home before she began business so that her time could be better spent on business management, program development, and client counseling. If you carefully look at what she did, she worked smart and did things in the correct order for her—she marketed her new business while remaining gainfully employed, so her decision to quit, hire employees, and start into business were not high-risk decisions. I complemented her style at the seminars with more of a bootstrap approach because I had very little money, no assets except a paid-off Volkswagen, no family to support, and lots of time and energy when I quit my job (after 2 months of marketing to physicians).

Dietitians who own businesses that subcontract to or hire other dietitians or any employees report it can be a big challenge. You can't expect that other practitioners will have the same dedication as you do to your business. You must take the time and spend the money to interview, hire, and train good people to act as subcontractors or employees. Then you work with your client accounts to accept and trust a substitute for yourself.

Your job changes from a virtual consultant to overseeing accounts and personnel. Unless there is sufficient profit coming in, you personally may have a resultant short term loss of income when the overhead expenses increase for local travel, added secretarial services, telephone, insurance, printed materials, bookkeeping, legal fees to write agreements, and so on.

If you split the revenue generated by your subcontractor, for example 50%–50% or 60%–40%, after you deduct the added overhead, you may make less than 10% of the money generated by a subcontractor. When you consider your earlier loss of income and time spent managing, that could be breakeven. According to these same practitioners, unless you can bill three times the hourly wage you pay the subcontractor, it is probably better to bring people on as employees. In some industries, like public relations, media work, and consulting to business and industry, fees are high enough to more easily subcontract.

The IRS is very particular about who can be called contract labor and who is an employee, working under the titles "consultant" or "subcontractor." If *you* set the person's hours and days of work, offer training on how to do the job, pay by the hour, and the other person only works for you and does not have other clients, he or she meets the IRS criteria for an employee. When a person is an employee there are federal and state taxes, workman's compensation, and unemployment taxes to pay. If the person has worked several years for you as an independent contractor and then the IRS rules the person has always been an employee, there may be back taxes and penalties to pay. Check with your accountant and see Chapter 15 to avoid getting into trouble.

In his book on entrepreneurship, Joseph Mancuso discusses how to choose the team members that work best with an entrepreneur (21). The best choice is *not* an energetic, go-getter like the owner. That person may become frustrated and refuse to take orders, or become an in-house competitor instead of an aide. You want to choose a bright, but otherwise committed (family, small children, not a leader, etc.), person who benefits your company through good ideas, loyalty, and team spirit. Dietitians have had luck with subcontractors who complement their own personality traits. If the owner loves to market or sell, the subcontractor may enjoy counseling patients in a well-run office.

CASE STUDY 3.1

PRODUCT INVENTION IN AUSTRALIA

In the early 2000s, I developed the concept for a dinner plate (Fig. 3.2) that presented three nutrition messages in a visual and useable format. I had the distribution channel established via my Great Ideas in Nutrition online bookshop for dietitians, but I was a little stumped at how to get my ideas into production, particularly while running a busy private practice.

By 2005, other products had popped up overseas, but I had my plate in production and Australian dietitians loved it. I then could see that I needed to attract more attention from the general public so that it could be used for dinner rather than just as an educational model. I wanted to get the plate into stores, but what kind of stores would you expect to find such an item—pharmacies? kitchen shops? health food stores? And, how does one get a product into such stores? I sent out a few letters and tried talking to a few people, but really didn't get anywhere.

I also felt the plate needed another product that made the package more comprehensive. The plate would only be used for one or two main meals in the day—but what was my guidance for the snacks or the other meals? I decided I should write a comprehensive booklet to sell with the plate and package it all up to sell through an outlet of some kind. In fact, I felt I should add photographs to the booklet so that it continued with the theme of a visual tool for weight control. I wanted to show people how much and what to eat for breakfast and snacks and other meals that didn't fit on the plate. This project then sat on my list of "things to do" for a while.

Being a retail bookshop, I get all the prerelease catalogues from the publishers. I often spot business books which make interesting reading and buy a copy for my own interest. In early 2007, I placed one such order for a book entitled *Maverick Marketing*, by Lisa Messenger. Her concept was to publish a book to help raise the profile of your business. She suggested that you could actually try and sell copies before it was even written by developing a prerelease brochure and setting the release date several months ahead. Her ideas suggest that the book should be like a business card—reflecting the style of your organization and showcasing your products.

The book went on to suggest that you partner with like-minded businesses who may like to bulk buy copies of your book to give to their customers or staff and that this way you could fund the printing of your book, not to mention only finish writing it when you knew you had a market. In fact, this is what Messenger had done with me. She was able to show her book in the prerelease catalogue of her distributor several months in advance and find out how many bookstores had placed orders for it before it went to print.

I realized that while I knew nothing about getting a product into pharmacies or kitchen stores, I knew a lot about how the book industry worked. I decided that rather than write a booklet to go with the plate, I'd write a book that would help sell it in bookstores and box it up with a plate!

Lisa had showcased her own business very well in her own book, so I knew that she offered services in assisting people to self publish. I set up a meeting immediately. I knew what I wanted my book to do but I couldn't exactly see what should be on each page. During a consult, I started thinking about what I would show clients if I had unlimited access to foods, and it all began to fall into place. I wanted to assess all the brand-named products on the market, choose the ones with appropriate calorie contents for either weight loss or weight maintenance and show photos so they were recognizable and easy to find in the supermarket.

A year of cooking, shopping, photography and design, and a lot of spending, and it was done! The finished product was released on October 1, 2008, and it's selling really well with significant media interest.

FIGURE 3.2 ■ Dinner plate developed by Amanda Clark (see Case Study 3.1).

I have wanted to do more than that. I really feel that portion control is the way to go for most people, and that many have lost touch with what is a suitable-sized meal or snack. I want to ensure that this product has its best chance of making a difference, and for that to happen, people need to have a copy.

I have decided to take advantage of the Web email network women have, forwarding interesting, amusing, and sometimes controversial snippets around the globe to their whole address books. I wanted to test out "viral marketing." We are currently working on our online game, where players will be able to select a profile, such as "Women aiming to lose weight," which will set their calorie target for the lunch meal. They will have a selection of foods from the book to drag and drop via the "portion perfection fairy" character onto the plate and each food will give a little message and a calorie count. If you go over your calorie target, the plate smashes and you get to try again.

It's fun, has some educational value, and is a method of driving people to our site to purchase the products.

I have really loved the freedom that private dietetic practice gives me to apply my knowledge in any way that I see fit. I encourage dietitians to pursue their own interests within the field and to look for ways to make their ideas come to fruition.

Check out our websites: www.portionperfection.com.au for the game and information about the book or www.greatideas.net.au to see our online bookshop. —*Amanda Clark*

About the Author

Amanda Clark, dietitian, Advanced APD, author of *Portion Perfection* and director of Great Ideas in Nutrition, was the winner of the 2006 President's Award for Innovation from the Dietitian's Association of Australia.

A contract or letter of agreement should be signed and reviewed by your lawyer. If a subcontractor or employee is placed with a client's account, have the client agree to it in writing, and visit the client every 4 to 6 weeks. Replace the person if the client is unhappy instead of losing the account. Keep business as business.

YOU KNOW IT IS TIME TO CLOSE WHEN. . .

After all you have invested, you know it is time to close the business when (22):

- You become emotionally detached from the business and dread going to work.
- You struggle to pay the bills month after month, taxes go unpaid, and you start paying bills with credit cards.
- There is a marked increase in customer complaints, or established customers are coming less often or not coming back—and you have been trying to correct things for some time.
- You are in strong denial about how bad things are really getting—or have been for some time. You realize you haven't been listening to your banker, accountant, or family when they tried to tell you what was happening.

Some other signs of trouble may be excessive employee turnover (often a sign of a failing business) and excessive price cuts to move inventory or attract business (reduces profits and cash flow causing an even worse downward spiral). These signs can also be a call to action to do something to correct them.

SUMMARY

The keys to a successful business are:

- Work on having a relationship or quality encounter with clients.
- Have good products or services and great customer service.
- Provide good management to keep services consistent and on budget.
- Keep an open mind and be flexible to make changes when needed.
- Have credibility and shared loyalty with customers.
- Invest hard work and have perseverance.

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4 WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE "MASTERS"?

In the *2008 World-wide Entrepreneurial Dietitian Survey* that I conducted on SurveyMonkey.com, 1638 dietitians and dietetic technicians answered questions on the survey (1). Out of that number of practitioners, 60 indicated that they make $100,000 to $200,000 net income per year, and 30 made more than $200,000 net income in their best year (1). There are salaried dietitians who make more than $100,000 per year, especially those who are in business sales or executive positions, food service management, education, and research, but the median compensation for Registered Dietitians (RD) in the U.S. in 2007 was $53,300 and $36,400 for Dietetic Technicians, Registered (DTR) (2).

Since it appears that these 90 RDs are doing some things better than the rest of us, why don't we study these "masters" to learn what they do?

DEMOGRAPHICS

Let's get to know more about who these people are. Eighty-three of them said they were women and six were men. Their ages varied with the majority being in their 40s and 50s (see Fig. 4.1) (1).

How long had these practitioners been self-employed? Out of the 90 respondents (1):

- 27 were self-employed for 10 years or less
- 27 were self-employed for 11 to 20 years
- 32 were self-employed for 21 to 30 years
- 4 were self-employed for 31 or more years

It is interesting to see that 30% of this successful group had been self-employed for 10 years or less—and 60% had been entrepreneurs for 20 years or less (1). This leads me to believe that when the right formula comes together—the person and her or his personal abilities with the right idea—prosperity can happen sooner rather than later, and there is longevity. Although there are ups and downs in any business, entrepreneurs learn how to sustain their businesses once the tremendous amount of initial effort begins to pay off.

How educated are these individuals? As mentioned earlier, of the masters making more than $200,000 net income per year, 12 were RDs, 13 had Master of Science degrees, and 5 had Doctorates (1). Of the masters making $100,000 to $200,000, 12 were RDs, 39 had Master of Science degrees, and 9 had Doctorates (1). Although the masters group as a whole was more highly educated percentage-wise than the members of the American Dietetic Association, 27% had just the RD credential, which shows that being successful as an entrepreneur requires unique personal qualities but does not demand an advanced degree. It can't be overlooked however, that three-fourths of these individuals have advanced degrees which surely helped bring more credibility and a higher level of image or prestige into some work venues, and it surely helped them land consultant positions or open doors.

When asked if they had always had an entrepreneurial personality, 93% of the masters said "yes," but only 64% of those in the full survey had said "yes" to this

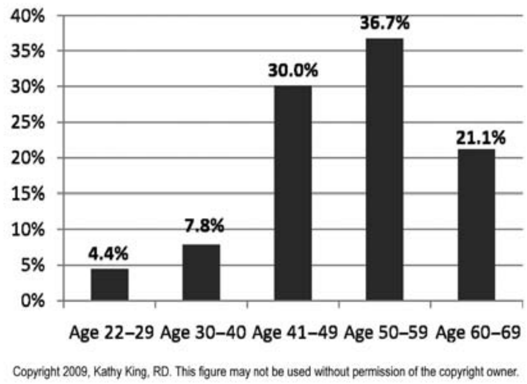

FIGURE 4.1 ■ *2008 World-wide Entrepreneurial Dietitian Survey:* Ages of "Masters" making $100,000 or more (1).

question. Members of this well-paid group identified their top reasons for starting into their own businesses (1):

1. To be their own boss
2. A more flexible schedule
3. To make more money
4. To do a variety of work
5. To be challenged and to use their creativity more

These individuals were willing to trade an 8-hour per day position for one requiring 12 hours or more in order to be their own boss and make more of the decisions governing their professional and private lives.

The time and effort invested in their entrepreneurial ventures may be hefty, but it should also be pointed out that these individuals volunteer a lot of their time and expertise to their dietetic practice groups, churches, community needy programs, and school or community groups like scouts or Boys and Girls Clubs (1).

WHAT DID IT TAKE?

Initially, 58% of the masters said they started into business while working part-time. During their first year in business, 36% worked less than 10–25 hours per week, 51% worked 26–60 hours per week, and 13% worked 61 to more than 70 hours per week. Now that their businesses are successful, how many hours per week does it take to maintain their income? This is interesting; they reported (1):

- 6.6% work less than 26 hours per week
- 26.7% work 26–40 hours per week
- 50.7% work 41–60 hours per week
- 13.3% work 61 to more than 70 hours per week

So, some of the masters have figured out how to maintain their level of income while cutting back on work hours. This can be accomplished by working in the highest paying media jobs or by creating products (such as best selling books, software programs, licensing inventions, and so on) that sell without the person's physical body being there to make the sale or deliver the service. As you can see, to make this level of income requires 64% of the respondents to work 41 to more than 70 hours per work week. Their commitment to their ventures would be overwhelming to many.

Initially, most of their planning time before opening their businesses was spent on (a) creating the product or service; (b) establishing a referral network; (c) writing handouts, forms, materials, and client contact; (d) paperwork and bookkeeping; (e) marketing planning and meeting to discuss strategies; (f) creating a business plan; (g) securing the right location; and (h) meeting with professional advisors (1).

When asked how much of their own money they invested to get their businesses started, the responses were (1):

- 36.3% invested up to $1000
- 26.35% invested $1000 to $5000
- 12.5% invested $5001 to $30,000
- 11.3% invested $30,001 to $60,000
- 6.3% invested more than $80,000

BOX 4.1 *Once You've Built a Successful Business, How Do You Stay There?*

An interview with Mia Sadler, Accredited Practicing Dietitian (APD), Managing Director, The Food Group International (aka The Food Group Australia or just "The Food Group"), Sydney, Australia

Q: *You started with a one dietitian consulting service in one local food company. You now have a team of dietitians servicing global food clients in 38 countries. How did you get there?*

A: It began with the exit strategy. The plan was to establish a global nutrition consulting agency, but I wanted the agency to one day operate without me. So right from the start, I worked under a company name that is not mine. I wore many hats—principal dietitian, receptionist, accounts payable, accounts receivable, and the rest. Whatever the task, it was recorded. All processes, procedures, tools, best practices, learnings (good and bad), and client details were documented. That way, as the business grew, I could recruit people to continue with consistent service delivery, while I focused on the future business.

Q: *How do you maintain such long-term relationships with your clients?*

A: First, we ensure that our work ethics are well matched. We have a set of company values at The Food Group, and we select and partner with clients on the basis of value compatibility. Our values (integrity, excellence, superior service, accountability, teamwork, and wisdom) are not the kind of values listed on a plaque on the wall, gathering dust. We work by them, recruit by them, and base our processes and procedures on them; so, we need our clients to value them as we do. All our value discussions take place before we commit to working with a client. This up-front investment has allowed us to sustain and grow our working relationships for the 11 years that we have been in business. At the same time, we have never had to compromise our values, our credibility, and therefore our future business.

Second, the more we know about our clients' businesses, the more value we can offer, and the more strength we add to our ongoing business relationships. Our clients and our company both invest significant time and resources to ensure that our nutrition service team understands their business. Our clients all have different focuses and competencies in nutrition, but they all share the common value of pursuing excellence. Whether they are primary producers, food manufacturers, or the leading quick service restaurant—McDonald's—as long as they maintain their commitment to create better-for-you choices, we will join them on their journey, hopefully for many years to come!

Q: *What advice do you have for dietitians who want to start a consulting business like yours?*

A: Define what success means to you and plan for it. By success, I mean not just in terms of your business but also your life. For example, success for you may include being fit and healthy, being a good parent, or giving back to your community. Once you have defined success, you can focus on those things that are most critical in achieving it.

For me, achieving business success depends on our people. This begins with clearly articulating the competencies I want in my people and recruiting talent that matches. Behavioral interviewing, validated psychometric or cognitive testing, and guidance from an occupational psychologist have helped me make the right and often difficult people choices. Once on board, I work in partnership with each team member to plan for their ongoing competency, development, and life success. This starts at orientation and never stops. To date, it's included in planning for work, overseas experience, maternity or paternity leave, career moves, and returning back to work at The Food Group. Whatever it is, the aim is always to enjoy the journey, because success for me is loving what I do! And even though I will exit one day, right now, I'm loving it too much.

For more information, contact Mia at mia.sadler@thefoodgroup.com.au.

Very few people borrowed money to cover this investment, but when they did borrow, they usually got the added money from (a) a financial institution loan, (b) credit cards, or (c) family (1). These frugal people kept their overhead low, and 74% broke even on their initial investment within 1 year or less (1). One hundred percent of them had recovered their initial investment within 4 years or less (1).

WHAT DO THEY SELL?

Below is the listing in descending order of what the masters sell to make their income (1):

1. Medical nutrition therapy (MNT)
2. Speaking
3. Business consulting
4. Writing articles and brochures
5. Wellness consulting or presenting
6. Writing books
7. Media spokesperson

The list changes, however, when you look at what the "ultra-masters" (people making over $200,000 per year) sell to generate their income (1):

1. Business consulting
2. Speaking
3. Writing books
4. MNT
5. Writing articles and brochures
6. Long-term care
7. Media spokesperson

The top clients change in this second listing from working with individual clients to working more with business clients. There were also random individuals who made most of their money in web designing, as supermarket consultants, as CAM (complementary and alternative medicine) or functional medicine consultants, as menu or recipe developers, as fitness teachers, or in self-publishing (1).

HOW IS THE LESS THAN $30,000 PER YEAR GROUP DIFFERENT FROM THE MASTERS?

Comparisons need to be made here about the differences between survey respondents who make less than $30,000 per year and these masters. Of the lower income group, 64% see less than 50 new clients per year, while the masters have 34% who see less than 50 clients but 47% who see 51–500 new clients per year (1). The fees charged for an initial patient consultation points out another reason for the large gap in income: 70% of the lower income group charge less than $50 up to $100 per initial consultation while only 26% of the masters charge in that range (1). Yet, both groups spend the same amount of time in the consultation (46–90 minutes) (1). Seventy-four percent of the masters charge $100 or more for initial consultations with patients, and only 30% of the lower income group charge over $100 for the initial patient visit (1).

Seven percent of the lower income group works more than 41 hours per week as compared with 64% of the masters (1). Sixty-six percent of the less than $30,000 per year group have 15 or fewer billable hours per week that generate income, while only 6% of the masters have so few hours per week that produce income (1). Fifty-eight percent of masters have more than 26 billable hours per week, and the lower income group had 8% with more than 26 billable hours per week.

We don't know the actual situations, but by looking at the numbers, we can see that the masters work longer hours, see more clients, and charge more for each visit.

SUMMARY

If an entrepreneur is earning less than $30,000 per year and wants to generate more income, there are at least five things to do:

1. Improve what you sell so that its perceived value is as good, or better, than your local competition.
2. Raise your prices to complement the new value of the improved services or products.
3. Contact two new potential referral agents each week and cultivate a relationship with them, so that you will have more patients or clients to see.
4. Schedule these new clients; offer excellent customer service; and thus, generate more billable hours of revenue.
5. Work smart and make good decisions—make a list of five things you could change to improve your business and start working on the list tomorrow.

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5

NURTURING CREATIVITY

Creativity remains the lifeblood of continued growth in a career. Creativity can mean a new invention or insight, or the ability to overcome obstacles by approaching them in novel ways.

Psychologists now believe that we are born with creativity but we allow it to atrophy as we grow older (1). They believe it's our social conditioning that teaches us to squelch curiosity, fear failure, and inhibit any new, nontraditional ideas. Eventually, we become so used to conforming that creative thought becomes uncomfortable. Ashley Montague once said that all men want today is "a womb with a view" (2).

Many businesses are just beginning to recognize the importance of having new, exciting ideas. They are developing innovation committees and creative think-tanks, and rewarding new ideas. Some companies have been doing it for years. The 3M Company has allowed its researchers to spend 15% of their time on whatever project interests them, since the 1920s (3). Corporations are sending their employees to training programs run by "creative consultants." Some business schools now teach creativity along with other basic courses.

As Teresa Amabile, senior associate dean for research at the Harvard Business School, found in her research, "In many companies, new ideas are met not with open minds but with time-consuming layers of evaluation" (4). She found managers in successful, creative organizations rarely offer financial rewards but instead freely and generously recognize creative work, whereas managers who kill creativity do so by failing to acknowledge innovative efforts or greet them with skepticism (4).

INTELLIGENCE AND EDUCATION

As nutrition professionals with scientific training, we often discount the importance of creativity. Creative ideas may be seen as nonscientifically based. Could our entrenchment in this way of thinking be the reason why so often we are hired to carry out a layman's or other health professional's nutrition ideas? Why aren't more of us at the forefront of the nutrition trends?

Nobel laureate, Jonas Salk, inventor of the polio vaccine, once said, "When I became a scientist, I would picture myself as a virus, or a cancer cell, and try to sense what it would be like to be either" (5). He often referred to himself as both a scientist and an artist. Intelligence is creative by nature. Creativity helps develop ways to better use our intellectual capabilities (5).

By teaching and only using today's generally accepted nutrition ideas and strategies, we are doomed to follow, instead of lead in our nutrition arena. Trying to make dietitians or dietetic technicians think just the same is a grave mistake. Yet, so often we are hesitant to try new ideas ourselves or to support our peers when they try something new like nutrition in complementary medicine or higher-level business skills in sales, marketing, product development, etc.

PERSONALITY

Creativity is not just a matter of intellect; it is a factor of personality. Experts describe a highly creative person as one willing to live with ambiguity. He does not need problems solved immediately and can afford waiting for the right idea. Creative people are often unconventional, curious, and highly motivated but easily bored (5).

Creative people are often depicted as leading chaotic lives. The truth is that business executives could learn a lot about organization from artists. According to Stephanie Winston, author of *The Organized Executive*, "Creative people are extremely disciplined in their use of time, control their environment, and are capable of focusing their attention like a laser. They are essentially not distractible, whereas many of my business clients can be distracted by the drop of a pin" (6).

Other people sometimes perceive creative people as being "different" or so ingenious as to be a "threat" to the comfortable status quo on a job. For a self-assured supervisor, these people won't pose a threat but, instead, an opportunity to have wonderful energy and new ideas coming into the system.

In Australia, they have a concept called the Tall Poppy Syndrome, which describes the event when a person becomes especially recognized or successful and he raises his (poppy) head above the status quo (where all poppies are the same height)—his peers or colleagues bring him back down (through various means like gossip, discrediting, withholding recognition, peer pressure, etc.). This lack of support for successful colleagues is not unique to Australia.

Often, creative people work best while alone. They can also be productive in a supportive environment where other people with greater skills in management or technical expertise refine and carry out their ideas. By complementing each other's areas of specialty, each person's capability for creativity can blossom. Work output is sometimes brilliant.

"STUCK"

The opposite of creativity is being "stuck," or habitual thinking. When a quick answer will not come for a problem, many people doggedly stick to the same problem-solving processes they have used all their lives (7).

When people are stuck, they often jump to conclusions before they have full understanding of the situation. On the other hand, creativity allows a good problem solver to look on all sides before committing to a solution (5).

MYTHS ABOUT CREATIVE GENIUS

In an article, *Strokes of Genius*, psychologist Perry Buffington explores the myths around the idea that very creative people are different from the rest of us. He suggests that "genius may be nothing more than a certain style of thinking" (7).

Because most people do not feel that they are capable of advanced thinking, they often fail to live up to their full potential. However, genius may be the result of using the creative potential of the brain, instead of being born with a "special" brain (8).

When Albert Einstein's brain was donated to science, it was found that it did have more glial brain cells. It is thought that these cells contribute to amalgamation of information from other areas of the brain. In fact, the extra brain development in Einstein may have been the result of his genius ways of working and thinking rather than the cause of it (8).

Myths about creative genius need to be explored to negate the powerful hold they have on our perceived ability to grow and be creative. Buffington identified the following five myths (7).

MYTH: A GENIUS CREATES MASTERPIECES OR INVENTS REVOLUTIONARY THEORIES OVERNIGHT

This is not true. Much like the average person, a genius develops ideas via incremental critical thinking and a special type of worry. For example, there is no doubt that Ludwig von Beethoven was a genius. Yet, inspection of his sketchbooks with over 5000 pages of preliminary musical scores makes it clear that Beethoven worked hard to perfect his work (7).

Inherent in this myth is the idea that creative ideas all of a sudden appear without any previous thought. According to Buffington, "It appears that efficient problem-solvers 'creatively worry' and carry a problem around with them mentally even while doing other tasks. Brief episodes of mulling over a problem are precursors to insight. What appears to be a sudden solution is actually the result of days or weeks of detailed thoughts, incremental changes, and critical evaluations, eventually allowing the solution to arrive" (7).

MYTH: GENIUSES ARE BORN

Although slightly true, there is evidence to suggest that a genius's abilities are because of practice. Ten years of practice seems to be the amount required (7,8). A period of time is needed to learn the rules of the trade or field of study. Even a would-be genius must study and learn the necessary building blocks. For instance, a master chess player must develop at least 50,000 patterns with four or five pieces in each pattern. These building blocks are developed over time: 10 years and 25,000 to 30,000 hours of creative worrying and actively studying chess (7).

Motivation and commitment are key variables in the definition of genius. Dr. John Ketteringham, coauthor of the book, *Breakthroughs!*, states that originators of great ideas "come from all strata of society and can be anyone from distinguished research scientists to high school dropouts" (9).

MYTH: AN INDIVIDUAL GENIUS IS CONSISTENTLY CREATIVE THROUGHOUT HIS OR HER LIFE

This is not true. For example, Einstein rejected the statistical laws of quantum mechanics as an explanation of how our universe works and as a result removed himself from the forefront of new thought in this area. In later years, Einstein himself stated that this inability to see far enough into the future made him and his views a "genuine old museum piece" (10).

Until recently, dietitians have had the image of being slow to accept or apply new ideas in nutrition. This slowness often has made our programs and business ideas also-rans, instead of on the leading edge of nutrition innovation. It's encouraging to see support for programming on herbs and alternative therapies, functional medicine, nutrition genomics, and members' enthusiasm for the Nutrition in Complementary Care (NCC) Dietetic Practice Group.

MYTH: TO BE A GENIUS, ONE MUST CREATE ORIGINAL WORKS

Often the creative genius lies in the ability to do a common thing "different or better." It's not necessary to create a breakthrough idea to be considered immensely successful in life.

A *breakthrough* is defined as a product or service that proves to be much more than a fad or trend. It can change the way people live and can create huge new markets where none existed before, like gourmet bottled water or the microwave (9).

Copying others' work is certainly not suggested, because it shows lack of creative thought and respect of ownership. Learning from another is the way most ideas are developed.

MYTH: GENIUS IS ALWAYS RESPECTED AND ACKNOWLEDGED

Not so. The true worth of a person's ideas may be seen after the person's death or fall from popularity. What is genius in one set of circumstances may be simple mediocrity in another. In other words, the acknowledgment of creative genius is an interaction between the artistic work or scientific theory and the current needs of the audience (10).

Ketteringham states, "The popular myth is that inventors see a need in the marketplace and try to satisfy it. In most cases, we found that they were driven by their own intellectual curiosities and personal needs to solve a problem" (9).

CREATIVITY TRAINING

The purpose of creativity training is to help people avoid becoming stuck or escape from it to find better solutions. For years, experts have been trying to find out how people come up with creative ideas.

The moment of creative insight often does not come when a person tries the hardest but when he or she least expects it. In most cases, creative people had been grappling with the problem consciously and subconsciously for a long time before their sudden insight (2).

The major contributors to the development of creative thought are the commitment of adequate time, energy, and free-flowing thoughts. Old barriers (time, money, resources, etc.) and old ways of doing things should not be allowed to influence the flow of ideas. Reality can be dealt with later, after the full potential of the idea has come forth. Another idea to help stimulate creativity includes associating with other creative people who encourage new ideas to flow. Whenever a person is stuck, he or she should alter the pace, change rooms, or go for a walk. Let the subconscious mind work with the problem while the person does something else (5).

TECHNIQUES

Faced with the job of fostering new ideas on a daily basis, businesspeople soon develop their own style. Some common techniques follow.

BRAINSTORMING VERSUS CREATIVE THINKING

In the early 1950s, Alex Osborn developed the notion of brainstorming, initially designed to increase the creativity of American scientists and engineers. The technique allows any idea to be put on the table. Criticism is not allowed; bizarre ideas are welcome; quantity is encouraged; and no critiquing takes place until the ideas are generated (7).

Recent studies have compared brainstorming groups and critical thinking groups (creative worrying practiced by most geniuses). The result supports the genius way of thinking. Two groups of undergraduates were chosen as participants. Both groups were asked to invent brand names for a deodorant and an automobile. One group was allowed to use the brainstorming technique with no instructions. The other group, critical thinkers, was offered instructions that placed more emphasis on analyzing the ideas as they were produced. The names generated were then rated on a quality scale by a third group of students. As expected, the brainstorming group generated more ideas than the other group. However, on closer inspection, they did not create as many "great ideas." In other words, critical evaluation, or creative worrying, increases the quality of ideas. Critical judgment is essential from the moment the idea is conceived and it is what separates average ideas from genius-type ones (7).

HOW CAN BUSINESSES FOSTER CREATIVITY?

There is no set formula for fostering creativity. The company that designs a "creative workplace" has no more chance than any other company of engendering a breakthrough idea, according to Ketteringham. He states, "We found that breakthrough ideas grew in rich soil, poor soil, and no soil at all" (9).

Management can help by allowing teamwork and exchange of new ideas to take place. It also can help by not overmanaging a new idea. New ideas need to be given time and room to develop to the full potential in a supportive atmosphere.

At 3M, they use the "lead user" approach, which means they collect information from the early users of new ideas, not from the people who follow the crowd once the idea is a hit. When 3M team members have the beginning of a good idea, they know there are probably lead users in the public who are many stages ahead on the development. Through networking and following leads to authors of articles, speakers, government researchers, and amateur inventors, they track down the people who are on the leading edge of a new concept. These experts help the 3M people understand the breakthrough idea they are seeking and save untold amounts of trial and error as well as years of invested time to assess the idea's potential and whether it should be developed (11).

SUMMARY

The creative dietitian will read this information and start to relax while she or he plots the course for change. Sarah and Paul Edwards, authors of *Making It on Your Own*, a book on how to start a business from home, give the following suggestions on "what to do when you don't know what to do" (12):

1. **Don't worry.** Decide instead that you need to solve the problem and then go after it.
2. **Trust your gut.** One way to make sure you do something right is to do it wrong first, but not for long. However, intuition can often be accurate and a very dependable barometer for how you really feel about something.
3. **Focus on the desired outcome.** If you're caught up in the problem, the solutions aren't readily apparent. Look at it objectively.
4. **Think of several solutions.** Generate as many options as possible before you decide which is best.
5. **Talk with an outsider.** Talk it through with someone and look or listen for new ideas or perspectives. Seek out people you respect who listen well and don't always agree with you. This may be a good time to consider talking to mentors, peer confidants, or professional advisors.
6. **Don't just stand there, do something.** Often, lack of action sets you back as much as taking the wrong action. Try out an option in a small way if you can, to see if it works.

Every business venture has problems and every businessperson has times of indecision. The successful businessperson is the one who learns to solve problems, comes up with new options, or reacts to situations that need feedback quickly and efficiently.

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6 BUILDING YOUR CREDIBILITY

Not being taken seriously is a common complaint of new entrepreneurs. It's a problem if you work out of your home, or if you look or sound very young. Institutions still discriminate against self-employed people. Banks, for example, categorically used to refuse credit card merchant accounts of home-based businesses, and some temporary employment agencies won't send personnel to a home office (1). These problems are improving, but for individuals who look young or inexperienced, they are very real. The longer a person stays in business and gains more credibility, the more these barriers diminish.

THREE SOURCES OF POWER

Self-employed people need power in order to attract clients, business financing, and support from others. In his book, *Games People Play*, Dr. Eric Berne describes the three sources of power, which he feels lead to credibility (2):

1. **Position power** is the authority and respect you command because of the position you hold within an established organization. Ways to capitalize on position power are the following:

   - Refer to yourself as "President," "Owner," "Senior Partner," or something similar.
   - Highlight former positions: "Former director of. . ." or "Former consultant to. . ."
   - Take a part-time teaching position that will show authority: "Instructor at. . ."
   - Become active in trade and professional organizations where you work to be elected to positions of authority and visibility.
   - Land a position on the media or as a columnist in a newspaper or magazine.

2. **Cultural power** arises from the values of the culture within which you work. The academic degrees you hold, the schools you attended, the people you know, the clients you've served, the way you dress—each field and each community has its own set of expected credentials.

   - **Look the part.** Successful people look and act a certain way. How you look and act is your affair, but if you want the approval of others in power, it helps to look successful.
   - **Become involved in business and business organizations so that you will know the unwritten way to do things.** It will give you more power, more clout, and will probably save you money.

3. **Personal power** is the authority you command by the force of your own personality and the results you produce. The other powers may get you in the door, but only if you produce results will your credibility grow.

CREDIBILITY IS THE GOAL

The remainder of this chapter is adapted from material developed by Orlando Barone, used with his permission. Educator, lecturer, trainer, *and author of* Your Voice Is Your Business, *Barone has for 30 years designed, developed, and delivered internationally acclaimed training in self-presentation and interpersonal effectiveness. He has instructed at the graduate level in training and development and is on the adjunct faculty of Villanova University and Harvard University* (3).

Credibility is a perception others can have about you; it means they believe and trust you. Having credibility with others gives you freedom to act because others trust you will do it well.

Studies of the most important qualities in scientists, managers, leaders, and salespeople always put credibility at or near the top. Most healthcare providers believe that credibility is essential to their effectiveness.

Strong credibility can sustain a professional relationship even in severe adversity. Credibility is the basis of all lasting and fruitful human relationships. It forms the basis for open communication, teamwork, and mutual respect.

Strong credibility is difficult to build, but once established, it's very resistant to erosion. However, once destroyed, credibility possibly will never be reestablished. It's curious how so many politicians have been reelected after they have been convicted of crimes. Of course, some have been reelected after they died!

COMPONENTS OF CREDIBILITY

Four basic terms act as building blocks that help develop credibility. These terms are honesty, responsiveness, consistency or reliability, and forethought. Since having credibility is so important to a career, these four terms will be described in more detail (3).

Honesty

The primary building block of credibility is honesty or truthfulness. People must feel that you are being honest with them. Credibility will never be built if others think or even suspect you are lying. Credibility can be tarnished whether or not you knowingly tell an untruth.

Honesty generates confidence. If people think you are telling the truth, they will tend to have confidence in what you say. If people (patients, clients, peers, employers, etc.) have confidence in what you say, they do not need further verification beyond your word.

Confidence means people do not second-guess you. You say it, and the matter is put to rest. There is no endless debate about what you really meant. When confidence does not exist, your statement is the beginning of the matter, not the end of it.

The perception of honesty means people believe you. Communication is clean, clear, and efficient. Messages are taken at face value, not analyzed and reprocessed. People listen for your content rather than for your motive.

Responsiveness

Responsiveness occurs when others believe you will come through for them. They feel that you have access to the resources needed, and that you have the intelligence, energy, and ability to make things happen.

Promises must be kept. Responsiveness is built on honesty, but it goes beyond honesty. When your weight loss proposal arrives at your client's office on Tuesday as promised, or when you call back your clients in a timely manner, your credibility is established. When you have to state honestly that the proposal was mailed on time and you don't know what delayed it, credibility tends to deteriorate.

The perception of unresponsiveness, sometimes seen as irresponsibility, is deadly to credibility. Others often perceive you as being half-hearted or only giving "lip service."

On the positive side, responsiveness generates loyalty. If others think you will "come through" for them, they will do so for you. Responsiveness is actually a form of loyalty, the best form. If people perceive that you have that kind of loyalty, they will return it.

This is not a loyalty born of obligation. This is a reasoned loyalty, earned loyalty, and loyalty rooted in legitimate self-interest. If credibility is strong, this loyalty will endure. Others will stay with you in a crisis; in other words, you have a right to ask for their loyalty when times become rough for you.

A dietitian who offers extra time or energy to a consultant account or client shows responsiveness and, of course, expects loyalty in return. If loyalty is not forthcoming, the client's credibility may be lost, and the dietitian may not choose to be responsive in the future.

The following is a good example of how responsiveness works in brief encounters: if a patient requests an appointment for a diet consultation at 7:00 AM (before normal working hours), but then the patient fails to show up, it is doubtful that the dietitian will agree to reschedule at the patient's convenience again. Loyalty was not returned and therefore, the patient's credibility was compromised.

Consistency or Reliability

When you are consistent and reliable, others believe they can depend on you. They believe you will not give your support one day and retract it the next day. You do not change your personality or behave erratically as far as other people are concerned.

Your credibility will suffer if you constantly change career courses or if you begin a new job before adequately finishing the last. It will suffer if you switch loyalties too often. As someone who is given a task, you should not have to be concerned whether to change course and leave him or her with many hours of wasted energy.

Sometimes reliability simply means that you are available and present. Reliability adds depth to responsiveness over time. There is a quality of constancy about your working relationship. Others have access to you; they can find you. You will not scare them off with mood changes or messages that you are too busy for them.

Credibility not only means that others believe what you say. They also believe that what you say today, you will say tomorrow. This quality is really stability, a decision-making process that reaches conclusions sound enough that frequent changes of mind do not happen.

Forethought

Forethought means what you say makes sense to other people. The things you say seem to be based on sound suppositions, on researched information, and logic. You show a command of the topic or situation. You seem to understand the way things really are. This aspect of credibility is often overlooked, yet its absence erodes credibility. It appears a person does not use forethought when he uses inappropriate, quick, off-the-cuff remarks. Comments also may be poor due to the speaker's lack of expertise, knowledge, or intelligence.

Forethought generates respect. Respect is really a sense of security. Others feel secure when you know what you are doing.

Respect also means that other people feel you understand enough about a situation to make intelligent statements on it. Dietitians who do not know enough about sports nutrition and the requirements of training or competition lose credibility with athletes by making statements that seem irrelevant and uninformed.

Being knowledgeable is essential in building credibility. Using your knowledge to say things that make good sense is a critical part of the perception of credibility.

CREDIBILITY SHOULD NOT BE CONFUSED

Since having credibility engenders many deep emotions, it is often confused with other feelings that people have for one another (3).

CREDIBILITY IS NOT RAPPORT

Many people confuse credibility with being personable, well liked, or sociable. It's possible to have excellent rapport with someone and yet fail to have any credibility with him or her at all.

Credibility never covers all areas, issues, and topics. You may have credibility as a clinical renal dietitian, but totally lack credibility as a wellness dietitian. If you have no wish to establish your credibility as a wellness dietitian, there is no problem.

The credibility issue arises only in those areas in which you want to build or maintain credibility. If you want to be credible as a renal dietitian, and you are not, you have a problem. Others may think you are a wonderful person, but you may still lack credibility as a renal dietitian. The rapport is no substitute.

In addition, the credibility issue arises only with those persons with whom you want to establish credibility. You may want credibility with your clients as a culinary expert, but have no wish to establish your credibility as a dietitian with your preacher. You may want to establish credibility with your preacher as a choir leader.

So, you may have rapport with someone at all times, but you can't possibly have credibility with someone in all areas, or with all people in any one area.

While rapport is useful and positive in a relationship, it's not essential to credibility. You can have very strong credibility with someone who would not spend one more minute than necessary with you.

Confusing credibility with rapport can cause anxiety and hurt feelings. For example, as a consultant, you may fail to sell yourself to a potential client who is also your friend. The client may not believe your argument that you are best qualified for the job if he has never known you as an expert in that field.

CREDIBILITY IS NOT AUTHORITY

Managers often confuse their organizational power or authority with credibility. The manager is wearing the badge and giving the orders, so he or she feels he or she has credibility with his people.

Credibility is built between one person and another. It is intrinsic to the relationship between the two people. They believe in certain things about your character, competence, experience, and knowledge. They learn these things about you as you relate to one another. Your authority is not something they learn; it goes with your position within that organization.

You may be obeyed because you have authority. Others may show you respect because you have authority. But you will never have credibility with them simply because you have authority.

Interestingly, credibility can give you a kind of authority. If you are credible on an issue, you are perceived as "authoritative," having sound knowledge and competence in that area. This quality can cause people to follow you even when you have no formal authority at all. On the other hand, subordinates have been known to abandon ship on a manager with all the authority in the world—because the manager lost credibility!

CREDIBILITY IS NOT FEAR

You may have power over other people, either organizational or brute power. Others may do your bidding, but you will not necessarily have a shred of credibility with them. In fact, people who use intimidation frequently damage their credibility when they intimidate.

CREDIBILITY IS NOT SUBMISSIVENESS

All three of the above, rapport, authority, and intimidation, can bring about submissiveness even if they do not engender credibility. Because you are personable and popular, you may cause some to follow your wishes, perhaps because the person does not perceive himself or herself to be very popular.

If you are submissive, there is an undertone of coercion. You are acting against your will. If you go in someone's direction because of his credibility, there is never coercion, or the feeling of coercion. You go because you believe in him or her.

CREDIBILITY IS NOT AWE

Finally, someone may be awestruck, enraptured by you and your charisma, but you may fail to have a shred of credibility with him. If you perform some spectacular stunt or feat, you might well engender the feeling of awe, but you will have no more credibility than a waterfall. You will have credibility as someone who can engender awe in others.

Credibility is always built over time, as a result of sustained contact between two people. Awe comes in a sudden flash and can leave just as suddenly. Credibility, once built, never leaves suddenly, except through some calamitous event.

Remember that credibility always has a basis in reason and logic. It is always built over time, and it brings about a feeling often different from awe.

PROXY CREDIBILITY

Proxy credibility is any perception that eases or shortens the process of building credibility with you. Examples are reputation, rumor, rapport, and several other personal promotional tools (3).

REPUTATION

If you are well regarded, well credentialed, or have a good record of performance, your reputation is enhanced, which creates a favorable climate and builds credibility for yourself, your company, and your profession.

RAPPORT

If someone likes you, enjoys your company, shares common interests, and feels comfortable with you, the path to credibility is smoothed.

SUMMARY

Credibility is essential for a long, sustained career in any field. It makes day-to-day dealings with people more productive and pleasant. Credibility opens doors of opportunity and lowers resistance to ideas one wants to develop. Credibility is built day by day as you work and interrelate with other people. High achievers place attaining credibility as a top priority.

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ETHICS AND MALPRACTICE

The ethical manner in which people conduct their businesses determines to a large extent the loyalty of clients and the support of peers. Clients want to feel they are being honestly served for a fair price. Our peers expect us to conduct ourselves professionally, honestly, and within the law. They expect us to give accurate information and not to engage in questionable dealings. It is also important to understand and interpret ethics from a multicultural perspective, and to understand that a person from another culture may interpret statements and actions differently than we do (1).

Commonly, professional people who get into trouble ethically, legally, or because of malpractice, go out of business. Occasionally, however, there is that rare instance where a person benefits from all of the publicity and ends up with a booming business. If the breach is bad enough, a lawsuit, or loss of license or professional membership may occur.

All too often in the past, health professionals were ridiculed or ousted from their professional groups because they had tried or believed in something new and different, but completely ethical and legal. For a profession and its members to lead in their areas of expertise, exploration of new ideas is mandatory. When judging the merit or ethical nature of a new idea, peers and organizations must show some tolerance.

WHO JUDGES ETHICS?

Ethics in private practice may be "judged" by our professional and business peers, by government agencies, such as the judicial system, the Internal Revenue Service, the Public Health Department, and by business organizations, such as the Better Business Bureau and the local Chamber of Commerce. As long as no one complains, probably no one will ever be concerned about you or your business. That is one good reason to take complaints seriously and follow them to resolution. However, fear of ethical breaches should not paralyze you or make you compromise on all matters that you feel very strongly are right.

PROFESSIONAL PROCESS

If the person is an employee or contractual consultant, an ethical matter could simply be addressed in-house. If the person is in private practice, more than likely it is the local or state dietetic organization or state licensing board that will question a professional ethics problem. If the matter is serious enough, the Ethics Committee of the American Dietetic Association (ADA) will review the case in terms of considering censoring or revocation of membership.

Peers have the obligation to handle an ethical review in a professional manner, and not to commit slander, libel, and character assassination. The accused individual has the basic right to be considered in the clear until proven otherwise.

THE INDIVIDUAL

Ultimately, it is the individual practitioner who must live with his or her own decisions. We all have varying degrees of restrictions that we have placed on our actions, according to our value systems. We tempt our ethical boundaries every time we don't refuse a physician who wants a kickback, or when we give less than our best care because we run short of time, or when we discuss our fees at the local dietetic meeting (could be interpreted as price-fixing).

HONESTY IN BUSINESS

In their article, *Why Be Honest If Honesty Doesn't Pay?*, authors Bhide and Stevenson have found in extensive interviews that treachery can pay (2). There is no compelling economic reason to tell the truth or to keep one's word. In the real world, punishment for the treacherous is neither swift nor sure, even when wrongdoing has clearly been shown. Conscience, rather than calculation, explains why most businesspeople keep their words and deal fairly with one another. It is the absence of predictable financial rewards that makes honesty a moral quality to be cherished (2).

Because of Enron, WorldCom, and other corporate fraud instances, laws are being changed to help protect investors and insure the reliability of a corporation's financial books. But the line has been crossed, and it will be hard to have businesses return to valuing honesty and credibility, when the financial reward is so great and the punishment is so small.

WHAT THEN IS ETHICAL?

The ADA and its credentialing agency, the Commission on Dietetic Registration have written a Code of Ethics for the Profession of Dietetics. A copy of the full list can be obtained from the ADA at 800-877-1600, or online at http://www.eatright.org. The main components of the standards include the following (3):

- That a member practices honesty, integrity, and fairness
- That members provide professional services with objectivity and sensitivity with respect for the unique needs and values of individuals, and do not discriminate
- That professional qualifications are presented accurately
- That sufficient information is provided for patients to make informed decisions
- That conflicts of interest and the appearance of conflicts are avoided
- That competency of practice is maintained
- That the professional does not engage in sexual harassment
- That confidentiality of information is respected
- That controversial material is substantiated and the interpretation is based on scientific principles
- That advertising statements and product representation are truthful and do not misrepresent the product nor mislead the consumers

UP-TO-DATE KNOWLEDGE

As professional dietitians and dietetic technicians, we are expected to give the best quality work we are capable of doing. To do that, we have an obligation to remain current and up-to-date in our field of knowledge. Our knowledge is what we have to market. Therefore, every effort should be made to have our knowledge timely, unbiased, well thought out, and of such quality that it is ahead of the competition.

SELF-REFERRALS

Established private practitioners normally consider it ethical to accept new patients who refer themselves as long as the service being asked for is within the professional's scope of practice. The professional relationship between the patient and the practitioner is similar to when a patient goes to see a family guidance or a stop-smoking counselor—no referral is needed unless the patient wants insurance coverage to help pay for the visit. Why would eating be controlled by a medical referral? The dietitian is the trained expert in the nutrition field, and nutrition is the area of service. Nutrition practitioners do not make medical diagnoses from symptoms. They make nutritional assessments, nutritional diagnoses, and provide nutritional care plans. Patients who need medical care are given several names of competent medical professionals or are referred to the local medical society.

COMPUTING DIETS

Computing diet limits for all patients is commonplace in private practice. Most private practitioners find that diet orders change from specific limits or chemical scores to just the medical diagnosis as referring physicians gain confidence in them. It seems that we have all come to realize that it is premature for them to guess a calorie level or nutrient needs before we make a diet history and assessment.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF PATIENT RECORDS

Your patients' records need to be kept confidential. A patient has the right to see his or her own chart; therefore, care should be taken when you make or even repeat comments in the chart that are not related to the patient's nutritional care. If a patient requests that his or her records be sent to his or her physician, clinic, or other dietitian, get it in writing and photocopy the materials—keep the original copy and send the other. It is recommended that you keep the old patient charts for as long as you are in business. If the office storage space becomes a problem, box the charts that have not been used for many years, label the box, and store it in the attic.

REFERRALS TO OTHER PROFESSIONALS

It is considered good patient care to refer patients to other professionals whom you feel could help the patients with their problems. This is often done in the case of anorexia nervosa, when suicidal statements are made, when the patient needs medical care, or when more testing is needed. If the patient has a referring physician, you should try to work through that physician to help the patient.

Referral of patients to other professionals does put you at some risk, especially if you only give one or two names. You may be held responsible if patients are very unhappy with the care they receive from the other professional—you and the other professional may be sued. Therefore, give several names of specialists you highly respect, also suggest that the patient seek help from the local medical society or the county health department, or look in the Yellow Pages.

It is ethical to suggest that patients seek a second opinion in matters of health. Care should be taken not to alarm patients unnecessarily or to condemn their medical care. Consulting nutritionists state that seeing questionable medical care is not an uncommon occurrence.

QUESTIONING DIET ORDERS

For a nutritionist to question a diet order that is not clear, unreasonable, or incorrect is ethical, if not mandatory. Part of what the patient and the public expect from a professionally trained nutritionist is that decisions are made in the best interest of the patient.

"ORDERING" LABORATORY TESTS

According to Sue Rodwell Williams, PhD, RD, from California, some private practitioners "order" appropriate laboratory tests for their patients through arrangements made with a local physician. To do this, at least two major criteria must be met. First, the dietitian must be a clinical nutrition specialist and be recognized by the medical community as such; and second, sound protocols must be written jointly by the practitioner and a physician, and be filed with a nearby reputable clinical laboratory. The protocols should be reviewed and updated periodically by the dietitian and physician. Additionally, you should not hesitate to recommend to a physician that certain tests would be appropriate for nutritional assessment. Mutual respect and good working relationships are prerequisites for this kind of trust to take place. See "Finger-Stick Blood Screening" under the "Malpractice" heading.

SELLING SUPPLEMENTS AND OTHER PRODUCTS

In consideration of the competitive nature of healthcare today, some practitioners increase their income and the convenience of their patients by selling products like recommended cookbooks, herb books, kitchen gadgets, and nutritional or herbal supplements (4). Many health professionals have been doing this for years with prescriptions, eyeglasses, prostheses, braces, crutches, and so on. The products are legal, and selling them is ethical and legal—but care must be taken to allow the patient the option of buying those products somewhere else.

The fear is that the health professional may unfairly influence the patient to buy a recommended product from the healthcare provider without comparing prices from elsewhere and without having the adequate time to determine whether the product is wanted. On the flip side, some high-quality products are hard to find and it will save the patient's time and money to have those products available and not have to pay for the shipping.

Guidelines for selling products by health professionals have been published for years and are summarized below (5):

- Provide patients with enough information so they know what they are being asked to buy and what to ask for if they go to another retailer.
- Disclose that you are making a profit from the sale of the products.
- Tell patients they are free to buy the products wherever they like, but stress the minimum quality standards or recommended brands.
- If possible, offer several products with a range of prices.
- Do not recruit patients in any manner for multilevel marketing programs or buying clubs.

WHAT IS UNETHICAL?

Other than failing to follow the previously mentioned ethical practices, it is also unethical to commit theft, fraud, and other illegal acts. Many activities are open to interpretation, while others are very clearly defined by the local and federal government.

ADVERTISING

Regardless of its intent, an advertisement is unethical if it is deceptive (6). Although enforcement may be a problem, the law supports this position.

BRIBERY OR KICKBACK

Bribery is an action on the part of an employee or consultant that permits a third party to gain unfair advantage in dealings with the employer or client account in return for being enriched (e.g., kickbacks). This is both unethical and illegal (6). Gifts can also be a form of bribery and many companies and government agencies set stringent limits on the value of accepted items (usually under $25) (6).

As it relates to our profession, a "kickback" is a payment that comes from a noncontractual favoritism, which usually involves restraint of trade. For example, a referring physician or clinic wants to charge a percentage of your fee merely for the referral of a patient, and if you refuse, the referral would be made to a competitor instead. It can also occur when a consultant dietitian awards a contract for a client account to a food service company in return for receiving remuneration "under the table."

The government believes that patients should not have to pay to be referred for proper care (fees would undoubtedly be raised to cover the cost of kickbacks). Client accounts should be able to have fair, honest contracts without the negotiator making a profit, unless the profit is part of the hiring agreement.

A point of clarification should be made here, which concerns office sharing and paying a percentage of your income for it. If office space or services are being exchanged in return for seeing patients, it is, therefore, not considered a kickback to pay for the space.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The rule of thumb on conflict of interest centers on concealment and whether all parties are aware that a professional is "wearing more than one hat" (6). For example, it is very common for sponsoring organizations to ask their speakers if they work for a food or pharmaceutical company, and whether their products will be mentioned in the speech. The concern is, whether the audience is getting unbiased information or commercial announcements. Conflict of interest also happens when a contract is awarded to a relative or a close friend and the client account is unaware of the relationship. If the client knows the relationship and agrees with the decision, it is not a conflict.

FIRING EMPLOYEES

From legal and ethical standpoints, employees do not want to be fired "at the whim" of a supervisor or employer. They want a due process where they can state their case and be judged fairly (6). The employer must justify why the employee should be terminated. It helps to have documentation and to show that attempts to work with the employee or employer have been made.

IGNORANCE OF THE LAW

Ignorance of the law does not constitute a defense or justification from a legal or ethical standpoint (6).

INFORMED CONSENT

Simply put, if someone is potentially at risk for using a product or diet (e.g., because of side effects or possible allergic reaction to an herbal supplement), the consumer should know about it ahead of time. The information can be written on a patient information sheet, on a label, or accompanying pamphlet. If the consumer knowingly buys the product, consent is implied. Failure to obtain informed consent is unethical and may subject the offender to damages under civil law (6).

MOONLIGHTING

Moonlighting (holding a second job) is neither unethical nor illegal. There may be a problem, however, if you work "on the side" for a competitor or customer of your major client account or employer (it may be seen as a conflict of interest).

PRICE-FIXING

Price-fixing is the conspiracy by "competitors" in the same market to set prices, and is both unethical and illegal. This is when professionals discuss in writing or verbally what to charge for services in a local area, or when they encourage a new practitioner to call around to check the "going prices" of allied health professionals in the local area. The concern is that the buying public is not getting the best deal because everyone who provides a certain service is influenced to charge a certain fee—instead of allowing competition to prevail.

That being said, physicians and clinics have reported that managed care and insurance agencies have been practicing price-fixing for some time. When physicians want to charge a lower or higher price than the area's "going rate," they often are either penalized until the price is changed or they are reimbursed at a smaller percentage.

PRACTICING MEDICINE

State medical licensing boards and medical societies are very concerned when they feel people overstep their professional scopes of practice into practicing medicine. The line is not always clearly defined, but it usually involves *making diagnoses from the patient's symptoms and tests (radiographs, CAT scans, blood tests, etc.), and representing oneself as "curing" a patient.*

Screening for glucose or cholesterol problems is now so common in grocery stores and wellness health screens that by itself, *without diagnosing,* is not considered practicing medicine. Laboratory results must be reported in comparison to their "normal" ranges. When the results are out of the norm, people are referred back to their physicians.

Several physicians or medical societies have accused private practitioners of practicing medicine. The known instances revolved around allergy testing, making a medical diet based upon symptoms, and poor word choice in an advertisement. The problems were resolved but only after much trouble and embarrassment. Care must be taken not to insinuate that medical diagnoses are being made.

MISREPRESENTATION OF OWNERSHIP OF IDEAS

Ideas have value. To protect the ownership of new ideas, the government created copyrights, patents, and trademarks. Most ideas are evolutions or conglomerations of thoughts from many sources. "New" ideas are often better ways of stating or doing an old concept.

As we progress in business, we evaluate our ideas and keep the ones that work and then discard the rest. We also evaluate ideas, programs, materials, speeches, and business techniques that we see around us and adopt what we think will work for our business.

Ethically, the important point to remember is that we should respect the legal protection offered by the copyright, patent, or trademark. Also, there may be a unique business concept closely associated with a competitor in your market. If you copy the idea, do not be surprised if the person feels you have infringed upon her or his business. Although you have not broken any laws, you may have generated unnecessary bad will for your business and may have risked an ethics charge in the profession for lack of fairness or integrity.

Given the opportunity, many people are happy to give a copyright release or negotiate some equitable agreement. All too often, it seems that the very people, who become upset when their own work is used without permission, do not give second thoughts about photocopying someone else's chart, teaching materials, or book chapter.

Certainly, not all ethical and legal issues have been discussed, just some of the major reasons for concern for self-employed practitioners. For answers to other questions, call the appropriate legal or business advisor or the ADA.

MALPRACTICE

Nutritional malpractice occurs when a dietitian fails to meet the accepted standard of care and the action results in harm to the patient. Although there have been cases where dietitians have been sued for malpractice, the possibility of having more cases in the future is very real. As dietitians become more professionally visible, as we take the initiative to prescribe diets, as malnutrition is diagnosed in institutions more often, and as more attorneys use "blind pleading" in suits for their clients, wherein more professionals other than just physicians are implicated, the risk of a suit is more likely (7).

Life and business are not risk free; however, to have a basic understanding of the legal system as it applies to malpractice may help minimize the risk and its accompanying expense and embarrassment.

LEGAL PRINCIPLES

In their article, "Malpractice Law and the Dietitian," Elizabeth and Daniel Reidy have stated, "Each person is required by the law to exercise a certain standard of care to avoid causing injury to the person or property of others. If a person fails to meet that standard and that failure causes harm to another person or another's property, then that person is liable for the damage. This is the basic law of negligence. Dietitians—like physicians, lawyers, accountants, and other professionals—must exercise the skill and knowledge normally possessed by members in good standing of their profession" (8).

There is no theoretical minimum harm a patient has to prove. Simply demonstrating that negligence of proper care on the part of the dietitian that caused discomfort to the patient or delayed the patient's recovery process constitutes the basis for a lawsuit. However, if the patient cannot prove that the dietitian's care caused some injury to him or her, there cannot be a finding of liability against the dietitian (8).

POSSIBLE LIABILITY SITUATIONS

Whenever dietitians practice their profession, whether or not they are paid for it, they are potentially at risk for liability and must meet the professional standards of practice. Other instances where liability may be tested are in situations where food from a kitchen causes food poisoning, where a nursing home patient dies because of or is diagnosed with malnutrition, and where there are miscalculations on diet instructions, such as the amount of protein or potassium in a renal diet (7). Dietitians who violate the accepted management principles run the risk of being charged with administrative malpractice.

PROTECTING YOURSELF FROM MALPRACTICE

Along with giving good care, a dietitian should stay current with new advances or practices in the field of nutrition. In a court of law, documentation of proper care and communication about the patient's poor eating habits to the proper channels are extremely important. Records should show that the proper information was given to the patient, his or her progress was adequately followed, or if he or she did not return or follow it, it should be stated so, and the referring physician should be advised of the patient's progress in writing.

FINGER-STICK BLOOD SCREENING

According to an announcement in the ADA Courier, "Members covered by ADA-sponsored liability insurance are protected against malpractice suits when performing finger-stick blood screening, a procedure many dietetic professionals include in their practice as a client service. This simple screening technique can identify possible health problems related to blood sugar and cholesterol. When questionable results are obtained, the client is referred to his or her physician for further laboratory analysis. Diet modifications are made only after the client's condition has been assessed. Malpractice insurance coverage for eligible members is effective, provided that the RD practitioner has received training on the finger-stick blood screening techniques" (9).

WHAT IS LIBEL AND HOW IS IT DIFFERENT?

Legally, libel is any statement or representation published without just cause or excuse, or by pictures, effigies, or other signs tending to expose another person, corporation, or product to public hatred, contempt, or ridicule (7). Calling someone a "quack" or "incompetent" could cause defamation.

You should not, however, be discouraged from stating the facts as you know them, backed up with scientific evidence. Such subjects as the danger of a severely low-calorie diet regime and the nutritional inadequacy of some foods are important to the public, and it is the responsibility of our profession to warn the public.

Don Reuben, an attorney for Reuben and Proctor in Chicago, Illinois, has stated that in cases where a dietitian makes a public statement about an issue, "A dietitian's key defense against a public person (corporation) or government official who sues for libel is that the suing party must prove the dietitian knew it was libelous at the time of the statement. A dietitian is an expert and a professionally trained authority who has the right to express nutrition facts as he or she sees them under fair comment protection" (7).

Victor Herbert, trained as both a physician and a lawyer, has stated, "If a private individual or company sues you for speaking the truth as you see it, without malice, countersue on the grounds of malicious harassment and abuse of process. Ask the court to order the plaintiff to pay your legal fees, as suggested by Federal Judge A. Sofaer in *NNFA (National Nutritional Foods Association) v Whelan and Stare* (78 Civ. 6276 [ADS], U.S. District Court, Southern District of New York) (1980)" (7).

Betty Wedman, who was threatened with a libel suit by a food company for a statement she made, has stated, "From personal experience let me emphasize the need for daily, detailed logs of conversations that could be used in a court of law, if litigation were pursued. Keep records and widely read them, check out your facts with reference books and other professionals, and you need not be intimidated by the food industry, drug manufacturers, physicians, or patients" (7).

Malpractice insurance coverage will usually cover your court costs and up to a maximum amount for a settlement for nutrition-related libel suits. Check with your insurance agent or policy concerning all items covered.

SUMMARY

The dietitian's main concern should always be the welfare of his or her patient or client. Excessive measures need not be practiced just out of fear of liability. By offering quality, humanistic care, and good management practices, and by taking the steps to document their services, practitioners should be able to conduct business with a minimum fear of risk.

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ORGANIZATIONS AND RESOURCES

American Dietetic Association. Check this ADA website to read the more recent information on ethics as it relates to dietetic practitioners: http://eatright.org/cps/rde/xchg/ada/hs.xsl/education_779_ENU_HTML.htm.

Ethics Resource Center, 2345 Crystal Drive, #201, Arlington, VA 22202. http://www.ethics.org.

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CREATING A GOOD BUSINESS IMAGE

8

Every new business and its owner will eventually develop an image in the mind of the public. The important thing is for that image to be a good one. Having a positive, successful image is what many large corporations, politicians, and movie stars spend untold amounts of money to achieve. They know their image will usually decide their success—whether their products sell, they get a vote, or remain a star (1).

Consultant nutritionists report that as their professional images look more successful, their businesses attract new clientele with a minimum of effort. Good images make patients, physicians, and businesspeople want to use their services. Everyone likes to feel that their nutritionist (or physician or dentist) is the best, the most sought after, the most qualified, and the most successful.

According to business experts, Paul and Sarah Edwards, authors of *Working from Home*, "Until you've bought from a business and tested it, all you have to go on is image. Image is where many small businesses fall down, however. Started on too tight a budget or operated too casually, a home or small business can look like an amateur effort" (2).

YOUR OWN STYLE

When creating an image, the first thing that comes to mind is physical appearance; however, what is most important is who we are, what we stand for, our "message," our tactfulness, our stability, our credibility, and the appearance of our success.

Successful entrepreneurs have various professional approaches. Some are very conservative in dress and manner, and traditional in instructing patients or in consulting to business accounts. Others have flashy appearances and seek out unconventional nutrition information. As long as the person's practice is ethical and meets clients' needs, it's not necessary for everyone's approach to be the same.

Creativity and uniqueness in the development of a business will help create an image that is distinctive from its competition. One image is only better than another if the practitioner feels more comfortable with it, or if it's more successful in reaching people and producing better outcomes and more income. It doesn't matter if the practitioner's peers like it.

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE STAND FOR

Choose battles carefully. Others' opinions about us are greatly influenced by what we choose to defend, our honesty, and how we fight our battles. It's important that we have opinions and that they are well thought out and evidence-based. Do not be a person who lacks loyalty and changes his or her opinions to please whoever is ahead. Defend your arguments with facts and fairly listen to others' points of view. Also, be willing to accept a majority vote or new evidence that substantiates another point of view. Become known for your honesty, integrity, and fairness.

The public's opinion of health organizations is also influenced by the alliances they make with commercial companies. One day, will we look back on our national organization's alliances with wealthy food companies that offered food products that evidence-based research cannot defend, and shake our heads? While attending a medical convention recently, I heard very disappointed physicians state how they felt they were trained to be "pill pushers" for pharmaceutical companies instead of biochemical diagnosticians. The public deserves better from healthcare professionals.

APPEARANCE AND FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Because of stiff competition and the fast-paced nature of this society, a person seldom has the opportunity to make up for a poor first impression. A well-qualified dietitian may never get the chance to show what he or she knows because he or she did not "first get her foot in the door."

Having a good appearance increases the chances that a consultant's creative ideas will be heard. A counselor's effectiveness on the job is also influenced by his or her appearance. Part of whether a patient or his family responds to counseling is dependent on their first impression of the counselor, and whether credibility and a relationship have been established.

Although it may seem vain and foolish to put too much emphasis on outward appearance, it is equally foolhardy to put too little value on it. A story about an East Coast student illustrates the importance the public gives on overall appearance and clothing. A student dressed in two different ways, on two different days, and then went to ask people for money in a New York City subway. He used the same words on both days, "I've lost my wallet; can I borrow 30 cents to get home?" On the first day, the student had a day's growth of beard and was dressed slovenly in old clothes. On the second day, he was clean-shaven and dressed in a three-piece suit. The difference in the amount of money he collected was astounding—about $19 on the first day and more than $300 on the second day! The public responded to how he took care of himself, his dress, the status or power his appearance implied, and whether he was telling a lie (begging) or not (really lost his wallet).

To show examples of how dress and appearance influence feelings about someone, think how you would feel when:

1. A very close relative of yours is in the hospital, and during your visit, a young medical person comes into the room. The fellow is wearing a white jacket with a stethoscope around his neck. He is also wearing a loud-colored paisley tie. Do you wonder whether he is really the physician in charge, a student, or a nurse? Do you question his seriousness?
2. You are down to the final two candidates for the head dietitian for a corporate wellness fundraising campaign. You must hire the best one for the job. Both women speak equally well and have similar grooming. One candidate has worn shirtwaist dresses on both interviews and the other has worn a linen suit on her first interview and a black suit on her second interview. Do you feel the tendency to hire the candidate who dressed more like a corporate executive?

A dietitian should strive to be a good example of the nutrition and health professions, and should "practice what he or she preaches." That means he or she should have near normal weight, eat well, and have a healthy appearance. Carolyn Worthington, a registered dietitian who specializes in recruiting dietitians, states that, "Nothing diminishes a candidate's job prospects more than being very overweight. The overweight dietitian destroys her or his credibility with clients and medical staffs." Just like a cardiologist who smokes or a preacher who lies loses credibility in the eyes of some of his or her clients, extreme obesity and poor

"I want you to walk two miles a day ... and take my dog with you."

health habits can also create a credibility problem for a dietitian.

Other aspects of a good physical image and appearance are posture, direct eye contact while speaking, a firm handshake, and a body language that is confident, positive, and not filled with nervous movement. Speaking in a clear, bold manner and making sure that statements are well thought out also contribute to good image.

TACTFULNESS AND MANNER

Along with physical appearance, people notice and respond to a professional's tactfulness and manner. The old adage holds true, "He was right, but he lost the argument because of the way he handled it." People in business find that they are not only selling a commodity or service, but also themselves to the client, their families, and professional peers.

Businesspeople have the task of finding the happy medium between being aggressive and knowing when to be passive and pull back. They must learn when to make a point, and when to let another's point of view dictate. Novices tend to experience greater swings and to react in one extreme manner or the other. Experience and self-confidence help develop a more self-assured, moderate attitude and approach. This transition is difficult for most. Until the last 30 years, women have never been encouraged to be assertive. Consultant nutritionists, coming from meeker hospital roles into trying to distinguish themselves as businesspersons, have definitely experienced this confusion. Time and experience in the field prove to be the best teachers.

The "Rule of 250," developed by a sales trainer, briefly states that every person we meet has a sphere of influence with other people, such as employer, family, neighbors, and so on, that may affect as many as 250 more people. That means, a tactless comment, a bad encounter, or a very positive experience can have influence on a potentially large number of people. The image of a businessperson in the eyes of the public is greatly affected by his or her small day-to-day dealings and the manner in which he or she handled them.

Some suggestions that could improve tactfulness with your patients, clients, referring physicians, leasing agents, professional counselors, etc., include:

1. Be very cautious about what you are going to say when you feel you have been attacked. Becoming defensive and "striking back" is *not* the best response. Instead, try to relax and state something like, "I am sorry you feel that way," or "I don't feel that was necessary to say."
2. Be brief and direct in your word choices and speak in a slow, nonemotional tone. Conduct your business directly with the individuals involved and do not leave long messages with their spouses or secretaries. Secondhand messages have a way of being misinterpreted.
3. When people ask, "Are you worth that much money?" consultants can answer by saying, "I certainly am; let me explain what I can do for you."
4. If a physician states that he or she only charges $65 for a visit, and asks you why you charge $125, a good answer is, "That is true, but the difference may be in how long we spend with each patient. I spend 1.5 hours with a patient for that fee."
5. If a patient does not respond to the counseling and appears to have no intention of doing so, it is not out of line to suggest that, "We evidently do not respond well to each other, and I feel that perhaps another counselor could help you more. Would you like me to refer you to someone else?"
6. If a professional advisor (lawyer, accountant, etc.) has not performed their work well, *talk directly to the individual* and state, "Your work is not the quality I expected and I am disappointed. Some of it is not what we discussed. I would like you to reevaluate the charges on the bill you sent me."

STABILITY AND CREDIBILITY

In his book, *Winning Images*, Robert Shook states, "People need to know that their relationships with you are durable. Everyone realizes that flash-in-the-pan types cannot be counted on, and such an image scares people away" (1).

A service type of business, such as nutrition counseling, is intangible; therefore, its need to look stable and credible is even greater. Most beginning practitioners will not be in a financial position to afford an expensive office in the best location, so other means to look stable and prosperous must be found.

The use of high-quality business cards and brochures, as well as handout materials, gives the appearance of professionalism and can engender a sense of trust in others. Offering a personalized instruction and developing high-quality programs give credibility to a business and its owner. Completion of projects by the deadline and within the proposed budget builds a good reputation. Doing something when you say, you will sounds simple, but an individual or a company that actually follows this principle is rare.

Keeping appointments and arriving on time are important and appreciated. Clients and patients are also expected to come and meet with a consultant nutritionist at or near the appointment time. Physicians, who are notoriously late in seeing their patients, will find that their patients will not accept this discourtesy anymore, as they used to.

Second chances are seldom given today to professionals who do not perform as they have promised. Many people, whose talents border on genius, achieve only mediocre results from their careers because they lack the necessary follow-through and persistence to perform well. In business, less-gifted people continually outperform highly educated and gifted persons because they provide consistently good service (1).

To enjoy a long and rewarding career, an entrepreneur should provide outstanding work and good and timely information. The clients should feel that they receive the full value of services rendered.

SUCCESS BREEDS SUCCESS

People like to deal with successful people because being successful may mean that they are good at what they do. When given a choice, people want to deal with the best. To create an image of success, do outstanding work, and become successful. The performance and reputation of a professional will attract the public and will bring in business referrals as time passes.

When starting a new business, there are some lessons that can be incorporated to reduce the amount of time needed to appear as a winner.

1. First, appear busy to the client. Patients question how good a professional is if they can make an appointment at any time on any day they call. It is not misrepresentation to state several available appointment times during the week instead of saying, “Any time you want, Tuesday or Wednesday—I’m open.” One practitioner has found that as she traveled on business and became less available in her office, the demand for her services has increased because her professional image has become more successful.

   One practitioner in California, after being in business for 3 years, had an actual 8-month waiting period for nonemergency patients to make an appointment. Patients must have felt privileged to see such a successful nutritionist. Why else would they have agreed to wait so long?

   When working in a medical complex or clinic area, professionals are discouraged from taking extended breaks in the public areas. Prospective clients and referring physicians take notice of others who don’t appear to be busy.
2. Framed diplomas, degrees, or awards displayed on office walls are also a graphic way to show success and accomplishment. Desk sets and trophies have adorned offices of businesspeople for years, so there is no reason for plastic food models and free calorie charts to be the only highlights of a nutritionist’s office!

   The image of success is undoubtedly the most significant reason many people are able to demand such high prices for their work. Artists, for example, who establish their reputation of being distinctive and expensive, may soon get more for their work than many unknown artists, who have as much or more talent. The secret is in their ability to build a winning image, not in their talent to paint on canvas (1).

SUMMARY

When entrepreneurs become successful in their businesses, they usually find that other people, who could not be bothered before now, seek advice and agree with them on the issues. Referrals of new clients and jobs are received with minimum effort, as compared to that needed to start the business. Fees go up to improve the profit margin. More importantly, job satisfaction increases because more options open in the nutritionist's life.

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9

COUNSELING EXPERTISE

Counseling in the outpatient setting has continued to evolve into the long-term, relationship-based psychotherapeutic style of counseling identified in this chapter, 23 years ago in the first edition. Counselors in private practice found that what they had been taught about counseling in the medical model of therapy (short-term intervention with loads of information for the patient) often didn't change behaviors nor produce the outcomes patients needed to be healthier (1). Change is difficult and more information won't necessarily make it happen—there are other barriers and variables with which to work. Nutrition counselors needed more therapy options, and more training and supervision by other more qualified counselors.

NUTRITION THERAPISTS

A definition offered by the Nutrition Therapists' subgroup states, "Nutrition Therapists integrate theories and techniques of counseling psychology into nutrition practice to facilitate changes in clients' beliefs and choices related to food, health, and weight. Ideally, they have training and education in counseling and psychology, and practice in a multidisciplinary framework" (2).

Our success as nutrition therapists depends on our ability to help clients identify their barriers and level of motivation, learn and apply new information, and practice new skills. Dietitians who become counselors need to realize that their empathy, ability to establish relationships, and counseling expertise determine the quality of their output. When nutrition therapists have problems getting their businesses established, it may be for several reasons, including their lack of relationship-building and counseling skills.

Developing high-quality counseling skills is a time-consuming, complex task. It often means changing old, familiar, but unsuccessful, counseling habits. Do not expect to achieve perfect skills within a few weeks or months. It takes time to practice the new techniques learned through course work, seminars, self-study, and supervision. Every new client walks in the door with an interesting, challenging mix of expectations, preconceived ideas, and food preferences. What works for one client won't necessarily apply to another.

The day-to-day job of counseling clients can be extremely stressful and draining. You need the ability to "turn off" your business mind when you're not working, to better protect yourself from being emotionally drained and burned out.

This chapter and others intend to share some basic insights and ideas for producing successful counseling sessions and business practices. Advanced counseling skills are beyond the scope of this book. Please refer to the resources at the back of this chapter for more in-depth information.

Successful practitioners have their own style of patient counseling. The amount of information, number of sessions, and emphasis on wellness, nondiet therapies, intuitive eating skills, behavior modification, or psychology are the counselor's decision and vary with each patient.

NUTRITION EDUCATION OR PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC COUNSELING?

For too long, dietitians used nutrition education as counseling. Experience has shown us handing out lists of foods and calculating diets, and explaining the physiology of the disease will not necessarily create compliance nor motivate patients to change their behaviors. *We know what's best for them; they just need to do it!* This approach works when the client makes the effort to read, learn, and apply the content (3). What then is the difference between nutrition education and more advanced counseling skills (Table 9.1)?

Advanced counseling skills include (1):

- Relationship-building skills: empathy, warmth, and genuineness
- Helping skills: attending, helping a client explore, and active listening
- Ability to gain collaboration and to empower the client
- Ability to match each client's needs with the appropriate cognitive–behavioral strategies
- Sensitivity to multicultural and other client-specific uniqueness
- Ability to sustain a long-term counseling relationship
- Ability to assess and teach developmental skills

TABLE 9.1 NUTRITION EDUCATION VS. CLIENT-CENTERED COUNSELING (4,5)

Content-Based Education	Psychotherapeutic Counseling
Short term	Open-ended (based on client's needs)
Content-based (learning assumed)	Relationship-oriented; counselor is trainer
Improve knowledge and skills	Resolution of issues and barriers
Work on behaviors	Work on thoughts, feelings, and behaviors
Address cognitive deficits	Address motivation denial, and resistance
Success measured objectively (e.g., knowledge, behavior change)	Success is measured subjectively (e.g., happiness, mood shifts, relationships)

Goals of counseling are the following (1):

- Increase clients' self-awareness, decrease denial of problems that affect their nutrition or weight, and give encouragement these problems can be resolved.
- Help client become aware of inner strengths in order to function independently and challenge old beliefs.
- Help client feel responsible for his or her own feelings, thoughts, behaviors, and relationships instead of holding onto the "victim" role.
- Help client take more risks like being more flexible or tolerating more incongruities.
- Help client trust more and give new behaviors and thoughts a chance.
- Help client become more conscious of alternative choices when responding to stress and to not always turn to food.
- Help client achieve self-acceptance.

QUALIFICATIONS OF A COUNSELOR

Not everyone has the personality and patience to be a good counselor. The personal attributes usually associated with a successful counselor include empathy, optimism, good communication skills, sensitivity, patience, creativity, teaching ability, and enthusiasm.

CLINICAL JUDGMENT IS IMPERATIVE TO GOOD NUTRITION COUNSELING

Everyone recognizes that a practitioner's counseling skills and clinical judgment mature with years of experience. Without this practical experience, it is difficult but not impossible for a nutrition therapist to be proficient at counseling or to have developed sound clinical judgment. A consultant must be aware of common drugs and their side effects, know how to do assessment tests, and be aware of the laboratory chemical values as they relate to nutrition.

RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING SKILLS ARE NECESSARY FOR EFFECTIVE COUNSELING

Before counselors can develop plans for a client's behavior change, the counselor must understand the client's needs (3). The development of a "helping relationship" that projects empathy, understanding, and trust needs to precede any development of plans and strategies.

The nutrition therapist encourages clients to talk about themselves and their feelings. A client needs to feel safe in reporting failures as he or she practices new thoughts and behaviors, so adjustments can be made to the care plan.

Being a good nutrition counselor involves possessing interpersonal skills that promote positive outcomes in counseling. A successful counselor is one who genuinely cares about and is committed to patients. Although a counselor wants to be warm, caring, empathetic, and so on, it is important that the counselor remain professional. Exercise caution. There is a point in counseling where becoming too close and familiar with patients may jeopardize your ability to act as a counselor to them.

Several other traits are helpful. A positive attitude keeps the client and you interested in continuing to work together. One needs to be positive and even-tempered to deal with counseling on a day-to-day basis. Being assertive in a caring way and not being afraid of dealing with issues that inhibit progress is important. Nutrition counseling is not passive but is a very active procedure.

COGNITIVE–BEHAVIORAL THERAPY SKILLS ARE IMPORTANT TO COUNSELORS

Along with the ability to dispense information, a practitioner needs to be able to promote behavior changes in clients. Behavioral therapy skills include being able to define a problem, design plans and strategies to treat a problem, and to evaluate and make necessary changes. Behavioral therapy uses various techniques, such as behavior modification, stimulus control, and cognitive restructuring to help the client change his behavior.

For example, if your client admits having many failed attempts at weight control, find one eating behavior that has caused problems and work with the client to come up with a solution. Start with one incremental step. For many clients, it may be merely reducing fat intake at dinner or avoiding the morning donut.

AN UNDERSTANDING OF PSYCHOLOGY AND MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING ARE IMPORTANT

By understanding clients' level of motivation or other barriers to change, a good counselor can then facilitate finding ways to satisfy their needs in non–self-defeating or food-oriented ways. An appreciation for psychology also helps in perspective—the counselor is part of the solution, not part of the problem. As an example, if the counselor fails to comprehend a patient's frustration with changing his or her diet and lectures him or her, any possibility of helping the client may be lost. The counselor must know about cognitive restructuring—how to help a client confront irrational thoughts and choose new ways of thinking.

When counseling is totally dominated by client requests and tangential topics, little psychological or behavior change will take place. A session that is totally dominated by the counselor who provides only advice without listening to the client's concerns can be equally unproductive. The ideal is a mix of client and counselor interaction. Two very good books on the subject of counseling are *Nutrition Therapy: Advanced Counseling Skills* with 45 contributing authors (1) and Linda Snetselaar's *Nutrition Counseling Skills for the Nutrition Care Process* (6); please refer to these resources for more in-depth discussion.

TEACHING SKILLS HELP ENSURE THE PATIENT LEARNS THE NEW INFORMATION

The content must be geared to the client's level of understanding. A patient is often "turned off" by language and nutrition information that is either over his or her head or is too elementary, and thus, unchallenging and uninteresting. Presentations should be organized because random discussions are hard to recall. A good teacher knows how to help patients reach their goals by using various teaching methods and only the information the patients "need" to know. As a patient's needs change, a good teacher should be flexible enough to adjust the patient's care plan to handle new problems. If a patient doesn't respond to one type of approach, you learn to try another.

THE ABILITY TO SELL IS A VITAL SKILL OFTEN OVERLOOKED

Selling is based on meeting the clients' needs and exciting them with the importance of nutrition intervention. For example, a client may not realize why the physician wants him or her to control his or her blood sugar and how diet changes can make that happen. Benefits to the client are important selling points. In nutrition counseling, you sell the client, family, physicians, and all others involved on the value of nutrition intervention.

CLIENT EXPECTATIONS CAN GREATLY INFLUENCE RECEPTIVITY TO COUNSELING

If a client expects the counselor to be domineering and antagonistic or friendly and helpful, the client may treat counselors as if they were actually playing that role (6). Through experience, counselors learn to perceive what the client is expecting from them. Qualified counselors then try to correct or validate clients' preconceived beliefs.

Clients also come to nutrition counseling sessions with feelings about themselves that may act as barriers to behavior change. A young, obese woman may say she wants to lose weight but may be so fearful of attention from men, she keeps her weight stable. A man may come for nutrition instruction for hypertension but he may want his wife to feel responsible for what he eats. A counselor learns to perceive a client's needs and level of motivation. The client is then supported in his or her desire for change and encouraged to take responsibility for his own constructive behavior.

WELLNESS APPROACH

A counselor may choose to incorporate an emphasis on "wellness" in nutrition consultations. This approach believes that nutrition information should not be separated from other lifestyle decisions. Counseling sessions might include a health risk appraisal and discussion of the client's fitness and exercise program or referral to a fitness specialist.

The counselor may identify a client's inability to handle stress or a dependence on alcohol, drugs, or smoking. The client is then encouraged to consider a change in behavior and perhaps a referral to another program or specialist. To be qualified to discuss these other topics, a nutrition therapist must be familiar with health risk factors and their effect on health. A nutrition therapist might take course work or seminars on wellness, health education, and exercise physiology.

NONDIET AND INTUITIVE EATING APPROACHES

The nondiet and intuitive eating approaches to weight issues are growing in popularity with the rise and fall of each new fad diet. These philosophies center on size acceptance, relearning how to recognize satiety, and joyful movement instead of forced exercise. The past years of "diet" foods and miracle diets have not reduced the overall weight of the population. Emphasis on being super thin and fit has not worked for the majority, so what's left? Many people are learning to eat various healthy foods in modest amounts until comfortably satisfied and moving their bodies to have fun (e.g., riding bicycles with the kids, taking a tai chi class, meeting the ladies for a dawn tennis match, and so on). In addition, most programs teach loving yourself and feeling good about yourself, no matter how much you weigh.

FUNCTIONAL NUTRITION THERAPY

Functional medicine is an evidence-based, systems biology assessment of an individual's unique biochemical function and needs. Nutrition intervention is a cornerstone of therapy in restoring balance and function of body systems. This type of practice requires postinternship education and training to understand the biochemical pathways and absorb and apply the volumes of new terminology, laboratory nutrition assessments, treatment protocols, and so on. It is one way wherein medicine will respond to the growing problems in chronic care. Because nutrition intervention is at the root of the therapy, it stands to reason that more dietitians will need this type of training and education.

VARIOUS APPROACHES ALL "SELL"

Experienced nutrition therapists bring a wealth of practical knowledge. Counseling sessions are usually a mixture of what has worked in the past along with a few ideas the counselor has learned from education or training. Here are examples of different approaches:

- Many practitioners do not give a diet plan at the first counseling session. They feel the initial session should be used to establish a relationship, collect data, teach patients how to measure foods for computer analysis, make assessments, and determine habits and needs. A later session is used for giving more instructions after the assessments are completed. A sports practitioner sees patients initially for 30 minutes to instruct the clients on how to fill out the computer food intake record; then begins counseling at the next session.
- Some practitioners offer instruction in "packages." A consultation for diabetes or heart disease is sold in a package of three or more visits to assure understanding and compliance. A weight loss program may be 8 to 12 weeks of individual or group sessions.
- Other practitioners provide written nutrition instructions at the first visit, of approximately 1 hour or 2 hours, and schedule follow-up visits every 1 to 2 weeks while setting no limitations on the duration of therapy.
- Practitioners may incorporate various activities in their programs: computer nutrient analysis, menu planning, grocery shopping, skinfold analysis or impedance body analysis, individualized fitness program and workout, and long-term follow-up. Sometimes, the nutrition consultant handles all of these functions, and other times, they're in association with a fitness specialist.
- Practitioners sometimes choose to send their patients a lifestyle or food questionnaire in advance or sometimes ask that patients arrive 30 minutes early so that session time is not spent filling out the forms. Others want to fill out the questionnaire with the patient in order to interpret insinuations and body language.
- Some practitioners who work with obesity spend time on psychological issues related to food and lifestyle choices and do not use scales or other measurements at all. They work with the nondiet approach and relearning eating and exercise habits. Effort is made

to improve the person's self-esteem and feeling of self-worth.
- Check out Chapter 17 on prices and fees to see how much nutrition therapists normally charge for counseling.

THE SESSIONS

Before beginning with a new patient, a counselor should prepare for the role of diagnostician by reviewing all available data on the patient (6). If the patient's chart is accessible, it should be reviewed. However, in private practice and outpatient clinics, it is usually necessary to start your own chart and put in copies of chemical scores, intake analysis, anthropometric results, interview sheets, progress notes, etc., as you have them.

THE INTRODUCTION

The patients' first exposure to you and your office begins to form their opinion of your ability to help them. Trust and respect for the counselor are important motivators to patients. Small, fairly simple actions on your part can help engender good feelings. Try to start counseling sessions on time. Make the office warm and inviting. Greet the patient and his or her family. Offer a beverage to drink. Begin with exploring small talk about the patient; share some of yourself. Find out about the patient and his or her needs. It sounds so elementary, but many medical professionals are so consumed with their own needs or the patient's disease that they forget that it should be all about the patient (6).

THE INTERVIEW AND ASSESSMENT

The session begins with an explanation of the counseling relationship, describing enough so the client knows precisely what will take place (6). If the client has other expectations, this is the time to have them known. You act as a diagnostician, evaluate the client's level of motivation and nutrition status, and relate his food intake data to behavioral indicators (6). Assessments can be made of many categories of information:

- Biochemical studies
- Functional medicine labs
- Anthropometric studies
- Vital and health statistics
- Socioeconomic data
- Additional medical information

A client's behavior must be assessed (1,6):

- General health practices
- Attitudes, beliefs, and information
- Physical activities
- Educational achievements and language skills
- Economic considerations
- Environmental considerations
- Family issues
- Social considerations

MOTIVATION

Motivation must be assessed because it is essential for compliance. Clients are motivated by their own needs more than by the counselor's desires (6). Therefore, in order to assist the somewhat motivated clients, you need to determine their stage of change and what you can do to help the client progress through the stages by determining what is important to them. Clients also become motivated when they see results. To that end, it is important for the counselor to initially encourage more intermediate, easily reached goals.

NUTRITIONAL CARE OR TREATMENT PLAN

This plan can be developed once assessments are made and problems are identified. In the treatment phase, the counselor assumes the role of both expert and mutual problem solver (3,6). Most novice counselors tend to follow one extreme or the other—expert or empathizer. The counselor who knows everything and makes all of the decisions may overwhelm patients. On the other hand, as mentioned earlier, counselors may become ineffective if they become too friendly or liberal with clients and their diet needs. Clients often seek assistance in setting limits for themselves. A good balance of the two roles is optimal.

TREATMENT PHASE

In the treatment phase, problems, behaviors, inconsistencies, and wrong beliefs are matched with possible solutions or rational alternatives. Desired changes or goals are ranked, and the client determines which small achievable goal he or she will work on first.

When assuming the training role, the nutrition therapist facilitates change, and the client practices new choices and behaviors until they are achieved. At each visit, the client shares the successes, challenges, and problems since the last visit. Solutions are discussed that are acceptable to the patient—considering what is known about him now. The patient has time to react, ponder, argue, and provide input. For many reasons, if the counselor determines it's necessary, a patient may be referred to another health professional.

Keep It Simple

Good counselors attempt to keep instructions as simple as possible. People remember more of the information they hear in the beginning of instruction, so discuss top priority items first. Most patients who come to see nutrition counselors have already decided to give the counselor a chance to help. The important determinants are whether the patient and his or her family understand and respect what the counselor says, and whether the changes are reasonable, given the patient and his or her lifestyle.

Factors associated with compliance:

- Belief that following a diet is necessary for good health
- Supportive family members
- High level of concern over consequences of noncompliance
- Eagerness to reject the sick role
- Feeling comfortable about ability to cope with the diet

Factors associated with noncompliance:

- Living alone
- Lack of symptoms or pain
- Failure to communicate purpose of diet treatment adequately
- Multiple restrictions
- Poverty or unemployment
- Depression

When teaching nutrition information, a counselor produces her best results when she uses various tools and methods. We remember 10% of what we read, 20% of what we hear, 30% of what we see, 50% of what we see and hear, and 80% of what we ourselves say. To increase compliance, combine visual aids, verbal instructions, written instructions, and learner feedback.

To improve adherence and understanding, it is important that the patients receive only the instruction materials and handouts that apply to their lifestyle changes or eating pattern—not every free booklet on low-fat foods or diabetes. If the patients or their families express an interest for more recipes or other material, additional materials can be offered.

CONCLUDING A SESSION

To conclude a session, it's suggested that the client summarize the agreed-upon goal for the next visit and the most important points to remember from that day's session. Except in very rare cases, patients need follow-up visits in order to make permanent changes in their behavior. Clients like to know they can contact you in between visits by phone or email.

EVALUATION/FOLLOW-UP

The counselor uses the follow-up sessions as a time to reinforce the positive behaviors and provide immediate feedback on any completed projects, behavior records, or questions. In evaluating clients, counselors again become diagnosticians (6). If no solution to the problem has been reached, counseling reverts to the assessment or treatment phase.

ENDING CARE

When it is time to conclude therapy, the practitioner and client should come to a mutual agreement that the client is ready to stop, or that any possible benefits from counseling have been achieved. Monitoring the patient with appointments (emails or phone calls) every 3 to 6 months helps identify and solve problems that tend to appear when living in the real world.

Although the goal of the counseling is to provide clients with long-term, self-management goals and skills, many clients may need to remain in treatment longer to maintain the change in eating habits. By being available by phone, by email, and by appointments after structured care has ended, a counselor can help a patient better handle relapses and new problems. Also, clients that were unmotivated earlier may feel comfortable about reentry into counseling at a later date.

SELF-EVALUATION

Because a practitioner's success as a counselor depends to a large extent on the patients' outcomes, a counselor needs to evaluate whether his or her patients have succeeded. It is the patients' responsibility, not the counselor's, to make changes in their lives. The counselor's responsibility is to make the patient aware of the food and lifestyle habits necessary for good health, to help the patient identify and alter barriers, and to facilitate changes in motivated patients.

DOCUMENTATION

Records should be kept on each patient and his or her progress. The information is not only important and useful to the consultant; it may prove essential in a dispute or malpractice suit. In courts of law, the statement is often made that if the service wasn't documented, it didn't happen—where is the proof?

Whatever method of recording a practitioner uses or if she or he just states the pertinent facts is not important. The most important point is for objective changes, such as improved chemical scores or anthropometric values to be documented along with behavior and belief changes.

COUNSELING ONLINE

As explored by Linda McDonald in *Going Global with Nutrition Counseling* (7), "Counseling and educating by email is a developing communication method that links professional expertise with consumer needs in a convenient, informal format." Clients like having feedback when it's pertinent and not having to take off work or spend as much time going to appointments. Counselors like the convenience of answering emails in their free time, when they have more time to ponder client questions. They also enjoy generating income while wearing their sweats.

Courts of law have found that email communication is a unique medium for conflict resolution. Some divorced spouses who haven't been able to get along in person are court ordered to only communicate by email because it makes handling problems more objective and less emotional (8). Along this same line, nutrition clients sometimes open up more in emails than in person—it is less personal to say something to a screen than to another person.

Communicating with your patients is one thing, but some dietitians are also giving nutrition information and advice to the world from their websites. A few dietitians charge for their services and others offer free nutrition assessment, diet analysis, or diet plans, which are actually paid for by selling advertising to companies who want exposure to the people coming to the site or to sell them products (7). See Chapters 22–24 for more discussion on the creation of such sites and legal pros and cons.

THE FUTURE: FUNCTIONAL NUTRITION THERAPY

This section was written by Diana Noland
Functional medicine considers evidence-based, systems biology assessment of a client and his or her biochemical individuality to develop the best intervention plan for personalized therapy with nutrition as the cornerstone. It is a joy to practice as a functional medicine nutritionist to improve patients' outcomes by the incorporation of a functional medicine nutrition assessment and intervention into the primary care physician's treatment plan. Often, other members of the chronic care team like chiropractors, acupuncturists, and biological dentists are involved, and you experience the exhilarating teamwork with one goal—to restore that patient's health.

In the past decade, we have begun to use the test results from the emerging field of nutrition genomics to add more depth and accuracy in personalizing recommendations. Most of my postgraduate training, learning how to look for metabolic imbalances that are nutritionally and biochemically based has been through functional and integrative educational programs, keeping current in the literature, and working with physicians and labs who taught me how to clinically utilize the functional test results within my nutritional scope of practice.

Remember acid–base balance and the Krebs cycle of years ago? They are alive and well and are more relevant today than we ever thought. What is becoming clearer in working with the challenge of chronic disease is that there are eight basic metabolic nutritional pathways in the body that the functional medicine nutritionist needs to learn to more accurately understand the metabolic root causes of an illness (9):

1. Mineral status: tissue minerals, acid–base balance, calcium balance
2. Protein status: acid–base balance, growth and repair, enzymes, amino acids
3. Fatty acid status: control of inflammation and hormones, structure, neurological health
4. Methylation: folic acid, B6, B12, TMG (betaine), S-adenosyl methionine (SAMe) nutrient dependent
5. Vitamin D and cofactors: vitamin D, A, K and evaluating Phos-Ca-Mag balance
6. Hydration: total body water, intracellular, extracellular hydration
7. Oxidative stress and antioxidant status: C, E, CoQ10, Phytonutrients/curcumin, etc.
8. Elimination systems and gastrointestinal health: how to restore gut health and kidney function

GUT HEALTH

Restoring gut health is a good place for a nutritionist to start with a patient because it is the inner tube of the body where nutrients enter, it functions in critical pathways in detoxification, and it's the location of about 70% of our immune system. The gut has an enteric nervous system that rivals the brain and spine and it houses 95% of the body's serotonin, usually thought of as a brain hormone (9). The gut may be damaged by multiple factors such as poor diet, stress, toxins, prescription drugs, infection, etc., causing what is labeled a "leaky gut," or "intestinal permeability." This physiological change can allow large proteins to enter the blood and lymph circulation triggering autoimmune reactions and allergies.

Restoring the gut environment will provide long-reaching benefits to overall health. Functional medicine has provided a disciplined architecture to start toward a restoration of the gastrointestinal tract called the "4 Rs." They stand for (9):

- *Remove* (offending pathogens and toxins)
- *Replace* (replenish enzymes, nutritional whole foods, and digestive factors which may be lacking)
- *Reinoculate* (reintroduction of desirable bacteria)
- *Repair* (reduce inflammation and repair gut lining)

With each nutrition assessment completed, I first approach the "detective" work by collecting the diet data, medical and nutritional history, anthropometrics, and laboratory testing ordered by the team to look for patterns of subclinical metabolic imbalances. For example, the person could have a vitamin C insufficiency and it would show up as periodontal disease (NHANES III). Or, a person could have a vitamin D insufficiency and it would show up as a tendency toward depression, which is "worse during winter months" or is initiated by the Standard American Diet (SAD) of low fruits and vegetables and many highly processed foods. So often, the nutritional component is overlooked and the patient is directed toward pharmaceuticals first instead of considering nutrients and diet.

The following case quickly emerged to be a pattern involving probable genetic tendencies and poor *methylation,* a ubiquitous metabolic pathway moving methyl/three-carbon groups, which depend on adequate nutrient levels of vitamin B6, B12, folic acid, and trimethylglycine (10).

BOX 9.1 ***Methylation***

The pattern of methylation has recently become an important topic for research. The overall methylation state in a cell might also be a precipitating factor in carcinogenesis as evidence suggests that genome-wide hypomethylation can lead to chromosome instability and increased mutation rates (11,12).

Methylation is a protector of the delicate DNA as it reproduces; it protects our silenced genes from expressing negative behavior, aids in detoxification of enzyme systems, and many others. Each functional medicine nutritionist practices his or her own style but when following its principles, we usually all reach the same patient outcomes. The results of the nutritional therapy in this case study were exceptional and illustrate the potential importance of nutrition assessment and intervention in chronic disease management.

PATIENT PROFILE

During the initial visit, the patient looked attractive, of normal weight but pale. She is a counselor by education, however, was unable to work consistently; she had seen five physicians so far for her asthma over the years. Upon her annual physical 3½ years ago, her Pap smear revealed cervical dysplasia CIN I and +HPV, which continued to progress. After a loop electrosurgical excision procedure (LEEP), cervical dysplasia progressed to CIN III and a surgical conization was recommended (cervical conization is performed if the results of a cervical biopsy have found a precancerous condition in the cervix).

Initial assessment when patient presented for care:

- A 33-year-old married woman, no children, pale skin
- Weight 138 lb / height 69 in / BMI 20.5 / 20.7% body fat / BP 112/62
- *Family history*: mother ETOH (alcohol intake significant), GF (m) and uncle (m) depression
- *Medical Symptoms Questionnaire (MSQ)* score is 57 points; good is <25; primary symptoms (see under history); this is a basic assessment tool used by functional medicine practitioners
- *Medical history*: fatigue, asthma, eczema, depression, cervical dysplasia
- *Current medical status*: cervical dysplasia (postLEEP) + 3-month diagnosis

CIN III / +HPV × 3 years. Medical plan: conization

- *Current medications*: singular, birth control pills (BCP) (↓*Folic acid*), ibuprofen (Advil) (↓*Folic acid*), cortisone prn (↓*Folic acid, Ca, Mg, K, Se, Zn, Vitamin C, D*), antihistamines prn (Arrows indicate that the medication lowers the availability of the nutrients.)
- *Diet history*: eats out 50%; eats SAD (Standard American Diet), low vegetable intake, high casein/milk intake; ETOH 2–3 servings per week
- *Supplement history*: none
- *Physical activity*: weights/treadmill 45 minutes daily

With each assessment, starting with the first, it's helpful to navigate and assess the patient's story by populating a model called the Functional Medicine Matrix™ illustrated below (Fig. 9.1).

Although this woman appeared to be healthy except for cervical dysplasia, from a functional point of view, there were some major red flags:

- Depression history with family history of ETOH mother; GF (m) and uncle (m) severe depression
- Long-term use of BCP, cortisone, and ibuprofen (Advil) medications—all deplete folic acid (13)
- Very poor energy levels, with 10+ hours sleep and still fatigued when awaken
- Resistant +HPV >3 years with progression to precancerous cells
- Medications required to control asthma and allergies

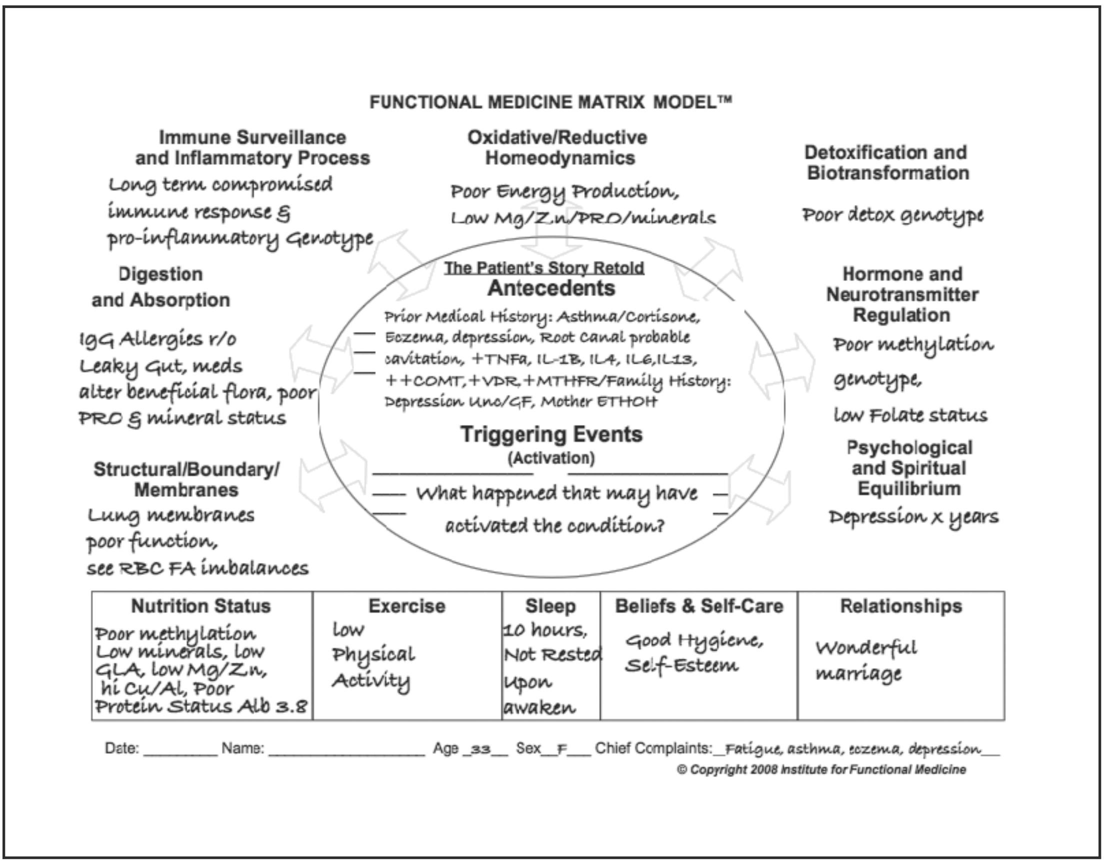

FIGURE 9.1 ■ Functional medicine matrix model.

From the initial assessment, more testing was requested through her physician with the following significant findings received within 2 weeks. The functional medicine review of labs looks for more "optimum levels," rather than only "within normal" lab references. Also, more nutritional laboratory tests are ordered in functional medicine. The following lab results were considered significant:

- Comprehensive Metabolic Panel: Within Normal Limits (WNL), but low-end sodium/ chloride/ electrolytes
  - Lipids: mildly elevated total cholesterol
- Functional Nutrition Laboratory Tests:
  - (Low) magnesium, zinc, and iodine; (hi) copper and aluminum (toxic)
  - Low all essential amino acids (plasma)
  - Red blood cell (RBC) fatty acid: low gamma linolenic acid (GLA) omega-6; low stearic/oleic fatty acid ratio
  - Vitamin D 25-hydroxy (serum) scored 17 (optimum >40–100) (14)
  - Bioelectric Impedance Analysis: phase angle scored 6.5 (normal is 7.5–8.5) (implies lack of cell membrane fluidity)
  - Formiminoglutamic acid (FIGLU-folic acid marker) (hi—indicator of lack of folic acid), Homocysteine scored 8.7 (optimum 5–6) (high-end normal—indicator of poor methylation) (15)
  - Casein/milk IgG allergic response (0 = no allergy) scored +3 out of 4
- **Genomic Testing—**A positive notation (+) signifies the presence of a variant associated with suboptimal protein function. A negative notation (−) signifies the presence of the more common variant that is associated with optimal protein function. Because we inherit a pair of genes, we have two copies. Therefore, the complete results will contain either a +/+, +/−, or −/−.
  - Genomic Methylation markers: ++COMT (*catechol-O-methyltransferase polymorphism*), +/−MTHFR (*methylenetetrahydrofolate reductase polymorphism*) (16,17) (implies risk of reduced methylation activity)
  - Genomic Vitamin D Receptor +/− VDR (implies risk of reduced vitamin D receptor activity, responsible for calcium transport)
  - Genomic inflammatory markers: +/− IL-1B, +/−TNFa, +/−IL-4, +/−IL-6, +/−IL-13 (implies increased tendency to express inflammatory conditions like asthma, allergies, etc.)

Initial nutrition intervention plan for 2 months, then reevaluate.

Diet:

- Casein free
- Whole foods organic diet with fish 2x weekly
- Sea salt ½ tsp daily on food (continue as long-term maintenance)
- Rice Protein "Detox" Shake daily for 2 months

Beverages:

- Pure spring water
- Green tea

Supplements:

- Multivitamin (MVI) with vitamin B6 (25–50 mg) with iodine (*rec maintenance long term*)
- Folic Acid (5-MTHF): 800 mcg BID (*rec maintenance long term*)
- Sulfurophane (indole-3-carbinol from broccoli): 1 cap BID (*rec cruciferous vegetables 5x wk*) Folic acid and indole-3-carbinol are known to promote healthy gonadol hormone and glandular tissue (breasts, ovaries/prostate, uterus, and cervix).
- Black currant oil: 370 mg GLA daily (*rec maintenance Omega 3-6-9 long term*)
- Magnesium taurate: 200 mg daily (*rec hi-folate veg/calcium-rich foods maint diet*)

- B12 (methylcobalamin - sublingual): 1000 mcg daily
- Iodine: 450 mcg daily (3x RDA) *(important for health of gonadol tissues)*
- Zinc carnosine: 75 mg daily
- Probiotics: 450 billion *Lactobacillus acidophilus/Lactobacillus bifidus* daily

Medical Report/Two Months:

- Two-month repeat Pap smear: no HPV; no cervical dysplasia; medical plan: monitor/no conization
- Fifty percent decrease in inhaler (no asthma episodes since intervention)
- Decreased use of ibuprofen (Advil)
- Increased energy
- Started training to work as a counselor with abused children

Medical Report/Two Years:

- Pap smears continue to test normal
- One episode of asthma when visiting abroad and exposed to mold
- Working as a counselor with abused children
- Happy!

Laboratory test follow-up available/all other blood chemistries WNL:

- Vitamin D, scored 47 (optimum >40–100)
- Cholesterol, WNL

The patient is very appreciative of her health changes. She came initially seeking therapy as a possible way to stop the need for conization of her cervix and to prevent cervical cancer, but instead experienced many other improvements like decreased medication, more energy, and more joy in life. She is committed to continuing basic supplementation to support her genotype and eat a lot more vegetables!

CASE STUDY 9.1

INTUITIVE EATING

One of the most fundamental truths by which I live my life and the basis for my nutrition therapy practice is the belief that we are all born with the wisdom we need for eating and, actually, about every aspect of living. The caveat, of course, is that we must listen to this internal wisdom and feel a strong conviction that it will lead us to productive choices. We must also ward off the inaccurate and misguided, although often well meaning, external advice and myths with which we are constantly bombarded. This deep conviction of mine led me to the ideas which I put into my part of the writing of *Intuitive Eating*, a book I coauthored in 1995, along with what was added in the second edition in 2003, as well as the new material in the audio version that was released in January, 2009.

So what happens in counseling when you receive a referral that you know is antithetical to your belief system—in fact, so counter to what you teach that you know it can do your patient great harm? That's the position I found myself in a couple of years ago. I spoke to this lovely, articulate man, whom, for the sake of confidentiality, I'm going to call Jerry, who told me that his doctor had given him my card, as well as the phone number to a rapid weight loss program at a local hospital. Just to be clear, this program was so geared to speedy results that it only allowed 3500 calories a week—that's right—500 calories per day for a man who was over 6 ft tall. He had a blood pressure of 114 over 81, a cholesterol level of 154 but with a weight of 280 pounds and elevated blood sugar levels, he was heading toward diabetes.

Reconciling Opposite Paths

What was I to do? In my heart I knew this program would only set him up for failure by slowing his metabolism and lowering his self-esteem when he would ultimately fall off the wagon. Should I tell him to come see me after he'd gone through the program? Or should I give him all of the reasons why this program was bound to fail? Or was there a better alternative—something unique that some dietitians might feel uncomfortable handling? Well, I didn't have to think about my answer for more than a moment and I suggested to Jerry that he might truly benefit by coming in to see me while he was going through the program. By engaging in nutrition therapy, he would have the opportunity to learn about intuitive eating and prepare for dealing with normal food at the completion of the program. Little did I know at the time, but Jerry was going to go beyond this expectation and reach new heights of intuitive eating, even while in the program. But more on that later. . .

I want to be very clear about the sensitivity, which I felt was necessary to maintain during our first session. Of course, I knew that in the long run, the chances of a program such as this to succeed were slim or none. Yet, I didn't want to tear something down that I knew sounded very exciting to Jerry. I certainly did not want to be a part of setting him up for the ultimate failure. My goal was to be supportive during his journey, teach him about intuitive eating, and know that we would develop the kind of trusting relationship that could hold him, as he would go through the hard times. He was excited about the quick weight loss program; in fact, he felt that it was his only hope for avoiding the diabetes with which each of his family members was struggling.

Now, all of this may sound like a cop-out to you. Shouldn't I have given him the hard line about rapid weight loss? Shouldn't I have told him that program was worse than any diet he had been on and failed? If I believed so much in intuitive eating, shouldn't I have tried to convince him that this was the only way to go? NO, NO, NO! Taking away his excitement and spirit and trying to convince him to do something else would only lead him to resentment, go away, and never have the opportunity to truly heal his relationship with food.

Treatment

And so I began the treatment. I helped him first to understand that the majority of the overeating he had done in his past was a mechanism for pushing away some very difficult feelings he had been experiencing in his life. Instead of continuing to see himself as a failure because of his overeating and bingeing, he began to accept that this behavior was actually a creative coping mechanism that had helped him survive his life. Later in the treatment, I helped him understand that much of this overeating was also a result of a normal psychological reaction to the deprivation of past diets, as well as the result of the rebellion against being told what to do when on a diet. But that part would have to wait to be introduced until he began to recognize and express some of these feelings while on this current medically supervised diet. Remember, I didn't want to discourage him. Instead, I began to teach him the skills that would be fundamental to handling his feelings without using food. These skills included:

- Self-nurturance
- Making time for meals
- Identifying his feelings and learning to sit with them
- Finding enjoyable and satisfying experiences in life
- Challenging his distorted thoughts, and shifting negative self-talk to positive self-talk

I also encouraged him to start to notice his sensations of hunger and fullness while on the diet. I taught him about the value of making peace with food and that he would be able to experience that freedom when normal eating was introduced to him. We talked about satisfaction in eating—again, an experience to which he could look forward to at a later time. We also talked about the value of movement in his life. In the past, exercise had been associated with dieting. When the diet failed, the exercise disappeared. I helped him to appreciate the wind on his cheeks during his long hikes and the opportunity these hikes gave him for solitude from his busy life. But above all, I taught him to be patient with himself during this process. As he began to fall off the track of the diet, as was expected, he learned to forgive himself, speak kindly to himself, and look at each time as a learning experience that could shine some light on his thoughts and feelings.

Patient's Experiences

So here are some of the experiences that Jerry did have. First of all, he used his training to observe hunger sensations to give himself permission to have more of the packets of "milkshake" than the program allowed. These milkshakes, whether in liquid form or turned into pudding form were the only food allowed in the beginning of the program. He felt a bit defiant at breaking the rules but knew that his body was more of an expert about what he needed than the "experts" who ran the program. As a result of eating more than was allotted (6600 calories/week vs. 3500), he began to lose more weight than anyone in his group. He was astonished by that as were the other participants and the doctors. Rather than beating himself up for breaking the rules, he honored his internal wisdom. Had he been critical of himself, he would have likely begun to binge, as a method of self-punishment, and drop out of the program.

At the end of 2 months, Jerry couldn't put one more shake in his mouth! Fortunately, at this point, frozen meals and peanut butter energy bars were introduced into the program. He promptly ordered two boxes of bars and, just as promptly, ate all 48 bars as soon as they arrived. Rather than condemning himself for this seeming indiscretion, he used his new tools of cognitive restructuring and positive self-talk to explain to himself that this behavior might be expected for someone who hadn't eaten solid food for 2 months and who had just taken a 2-hour hike, leaving him extremely depleted. He basically dusted himself off and got right back on his path.

Around this time, his calorie intake was up to 1500 to 2000 per day, although the program still called for only 500 to 600 calories per day. With the new variety of foods and the increase of calories, came an unexpected occurrence—Jerry's blood pressure started creeping up to 137 over 90. When we discovered that the sodium content of these meals totaled 4000–5000 mg per day, Jerry began to question the program. Some of his thoughts included the following: How could this program, as it was structured, be truly beneficial if he had lost more weight than anyone else while eating far more than anyone? Why did his blood pressure spike from normal to above normal when he was eating the food provided by the program? And, additionally, why was the program's staff *angry with him,* whenever he told them how he had deviated from the program? Why did they want him to follow it perfectly, when he was doing so well following his own signals? After taking some time to reflect on these questions as well as his own internal progress, Jerry dropped out of the program a couple of weeks shy of its proposed 13-week length, continuing to maintain his achievement of having lost more weight than any of the remaining people who were still in the program.

After leaving the program, Jerry continued private sessions with me, refining his intuitive eating skills and getting the support he needed through the ups and downs of reentering the world of normal eating while dealing with his stressful life. Was Jerry able to maintain his total weight loss? At the end of the program, Jerry had lost 58 pounds and was weighing in the 220s for the first time in years. While dealing with a number of serious stressors in his life, including losing his job, he needed to work his way through some rebound overeating experiences, gaining back about 25 pounds within a few months. During the following year of treatment with me, he was able to maintain his weight in the high 240s (a net weight loss of over 30 pounds) while on the path to rediscovering his inner intuitive eater. When his treatment ended, he was able to acknowledge a sense of peace and safety in his relationship with food. He now had tools for managing his life and tolerating his feelings without using food and was committed to maintaining this new way of living.

To finish, I found this unique, flexible treatment to be extremely satisfying. It had been so important to stay in the role of supporter and teacher, rather than nay-sayer or

proselytizer. By stepping back and allowing Jerry to go through his process in his own way, he was able to discover the wonders of learning about his internal wisdom and ultimately trusting the power of this wisdom. The feelings of failure he had always held around his eating experience shifted to feelings of self-assurance. I hope this story will open up new thoughts in the realm of approaching patients who have their own agenda, even though you may know better!
—Elyse Resch

About the Author

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SUMMARY

Change is difficult to achieve. The belief held by some clients and many third-party payers that lasting changes in food behaviors require only a few therapy sessions is an illusion. Change has a complex nature. Nutrition therapists and clients should not feel as if they failed when a perfect, smoothly functioning set of skills is not achieved in a few weeks. The goal of nutrition counseling is achieved when the client integrates healthy nutrition guidelines for a lifetime.

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MANAGING YOUR BUSINESS

III

WORDS OF WISDOM

Unless you try to do something beyond what you have already mastered, you will never grow.

Ronald E. Osborn

To dream anything that you want to dream. That is the beauty of the human mind. To do anything that you want to do. That is the strength of the human will. To trust yourself to test your limits. That is the courage to succeed.

Bernard Edmonds

10

BUSINESS PLAN

Successful dietetic business ventures started in many different ways and under a variety of circumstances. Some business opportunities are handed to the nutritionist by a physician or a chance phone call from a future client, others are outgrowths of jobs, and still others start without contacts or encouragement from anyone. Many businesses are painstakingly researched for years, and others are created over lunch on a napkin. In the 2008 survey, 33.2% out of 1373 dietitians said they wrote a business plan before starting their businesses, but 55.2% of the 30 dietitians making over $200,000 net per year said they used a plan (1). Across the board in all income brackets, the majority of dietitians (83%–86%) said they planned their businesses in a year or less (1).

DEVELOPING THE VENTURE ON PAPER

Business consultants agree that a potential business owner should put his or her plans in writing while doing research on the feasibility of his or her future venture (2). The tool used to do that this is called a *business plan* or feasibility study. Its purpose is to share information, find problems, organize the business, and raise capital. This business tool has more written about it and has more resources to help you create it than any other in business (3). There are online websites, software templates (online and at office supply stores), and business consultants ready and willing to help you produce your plan (4). A few available resources are listed at the end of this chapter.

Unfortunately, it's not rare for a future entrepreneur to be so sold on an idea for a new business that he is totally blind to obvious reasons why the idea has a poor chance at success. Some examples are locating the business too close to the strongest competition—a nationally known hospital with a free clinic—or wanting to become a culinary consultant to only Greek restaurants in Omaha. Although these ideas have a chance of working, it may take too long before one can generate adequate income.

An experienced businessperson or professional advisor can look over the executive summary and business plan and find overlooked problems. Having your ideas clearly stated will help reduce the amount of time needed by paid advisors to assess your business needs. Most banks and all potential venture capital investors will request this information when considering a loan or investment. Businesspeople take the time to prepare these documents because they are useful, provide insight to the business owner, and give the appearance of having one's act together.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

If you had to rank all of the components of the business plan, the executive summary will float to the top. Why? It is because the executive summary captures in less than one typed page (and 1 minute of reading) the general excitement, potential success, and resources required for a new product line extension or new business venture. The proposed scope of a new business—what you will sell, to whom, where, how, and when—can all be stated briefly in the executive summary. It introduces the concept to the decision makers. It must stimulate them to read on, to analyze, and to buy into the idea. Without that stimulation, without that decision maker beginning to grasp the concept and share its excitement, the chances are remote that there will be full consideration of the business plan (5). If the plan is being used to attract financial backing, the executive summary should briefly spell out how much money is needed (6) (Fig. 10.1).

Although it's at the beginning of a business plan, the executive summary should be written last after all the facts have been explored. The executive summary should (7):

- Describe in detail the business and its goals.
- Identify the business ownership and the legal structure.
- Discuss skills and experience you (and any partners) bring to the business.
- Identify advantages you and your business have over your competitors.
- Identify your financial needs to create the venture.

Jim Rose, RD, former food service director and entrepreneur, stated in *Hospital Food and Nutrition Focus*, "Write your executive summary in present tense, active voice. Avoid the 'shalls' and 'wills'. Use verbs that show action, and presume existence of the project. Make sentences short. Make paragraphs short. Use some bold or highlighted text—sparingly. However, don't be too dramatic, trite, or obviously overblown. Include all the essential information. The executive summary must be possible to read in less than 1 minute. The first 15 seconds of reading are critical; during that period, the decision maker determines whether to put it aside, trash it, or continue reading" (5).

When writing the executive summary, think of it as a promotional description of your venture. Avoid unnecessary details and concentrate on the strong, salable points.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The lines in our hospital cafeteria are getting longer, especially at lunch. Why? Our reputation for good food has spread. The local business community is routinely dining here—paying premium prices, providing us with excellent profits. However, seating is at a premium, serving areas are congested, and customers are turning away.

Creating a deli operation in the vending area (now rarely used except during off-hours) that is contiguous to the cafeteria opens up opportunities for take-out services, tapping into new target markets and improving returns on profits.

A 50-seat deli operation faces no real competition within six city blocks. Only five percent of the potential population is now dining with us but the percentage is growing—due to office building expansions with no food service operations included. Deli sales are growing in this region by twelve percent per year.

A capital investment of ___ provides a net return on investment of ___ on annual operations. Breakeven is at month ___. Operating breakeven is at ___ in annual sales. All gross revenues are based on an aggregate ___ cost of goods sold.

Renovation of the vending area requires $___. The current vending activities are incorporated into the deli operations scheme, offering expanded selections during off-hours.

Adequate labor pools exist, with recruitment simplified by our current food service recruitment programming. Management talent is already on staff.

FIGURE 10.1 ■ Example of executive summary (5).

BUSINESS PLAN

The business plan starts with a title page, followed by the table of contents, and then the executive summary. By the time the rest of the plan is researched and written, you should have enough information to evaluate whether your business concept is viable, so you can estimate how much the venture will cost. Your plan can help you organize your venture and set priorities for better time and resource management. The marketing plan (Chapter 11) will be needed to fill out the business plan and to make an accurate assessment of what will "sell."

Business consultants will charge from $1500 to $15,000 or more to research and fill out a business plan, but you can do it yourself. An accountant can be very helpful with much of the information. Typically, a plan will be 5 to 30 pages long, but consultants report they have seen ones with hundreds of pages when the project necessitated it. The larger size in no way improves acceptance of the plan; it may turn many readers away completely. The important point is to cover the subjects well with pertinent information. The plan should be assessed annually and should be updated and changed as needed.

A banker or venture capitalist uses a plan to evaluate whether he or she wants to invest in a business. In truth, according to experts who study funding for entrepreneurs' ventures, the chance of venture capitalists being interested in a new service business is almost nonexistent; they look for faster growth markets and entrepreneurs with extensive business experience (8).

In his book *How to Start, Finance, and Manage Your Own Small Business,* Joseph Mancuso, goes into great detail about what a plan should include and highlight (9). He also shares results of his research on what items "sell" to a venture capitalist or banker on a plan.

HOW A BUSINESS PLAN IS READ

Although a business plan needs to be complete and thorough, the average banker only spends 5 minutes looking it over. Therefore, the plan's layout and highlighted information are extremely important. In his research, Mancuso and others have found typical steps in those 5 minutes of reading (2,5,8,9).

Step 1. Determine the characteristics of the project, industry, and company. Is this a growing market of interest to the public? Is competition doing well? Is anyone making much money in this field? Could this company or project do well?

Step 2. Determine the caliber of the people in the deal. Turn to the back of the plan and scan the résumés. This step, most venture capitalists claim, is the single most important aspect of the business plan. The names of employees or founders, board of directors, current investors, and names of professional advisors are scanned in hopes of finding a familiar name. *The reputation and quality of the business team or entrepreneur will sell a plan better than any other single item.*

Step 3. Determine the terms of the deal. What is being offered in return for the money? How much is needed, and how will it be used?

Step 4. Read the latest balance sheet. Is the company making a profit or just scraping by? Are the income projections reasonable considering the balance sheet? Do the managers plan to pay themselves salaries that are reasonable?

Step 5. Determine what is different about this deal. This difference is the eventual pivotal issue on whether an investor chooses to back a business venture. Is there an unusual feature in the service or product? Nutrition is "hot," but are your programs designed to take advantage of it? Are they exciting? Does the company have a patent or a significant lead over competition? Does the strength of the company match the skills needed to succeed in this industry? Does the inexperienced owner recognize his or her limitations and have good advisors, or is there an imbalance? Good ideas or products that are better than others will attract capital.

Step 6. Give the plan a once-over lightly. After the above analysis, the final minute is usually spent thumbing through the business plan. A casual look at product literature, graphs, unusual exhibits, published articles, and letters of agreement support the argument for unusual enclosures. Although additional items seldom make a difference to the outcome, they can extend the readership.

If the plan is rejected, it is customarily returned to you. When trying to interest a banker in your venture, it is not out of line to ask why it was rejected. If the banker wants to work with you, he or she may suggest ways to improve the plan, offer a smaller loan, or ask for more collateral to secure the loan.

When an investor looks at a variety of business plans, Mancuso found that four elements determine which one is chosen first (9):

1. The company, department, or persons submitting the plan
2. Its geographic location
3. Length of business plan—shorter ones are read first
4. Quality of cover—interesting but not necessarily expensive

William Sahlman, chairman of the board for the Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation, asks, "What's wrong with most business plans? Most waste too much ink on numbers and devote too little to the information that really matters (the people, opportunity, the big picture, and risks or rewards). Financial projections for a new company—especially detailed, month-by-month projections—are an act of imagination. Don't misunderstand me: business plans should include some numbers *(for a nutrition therapist, it could be projected through referrals and follow-up visits)*. The business model should also address the breakeven issue: at what level of sales does the business begin to make a profit? When does cash flow turn positive?" (2)

WRITING A BUSINESS PLAN

A business plan is a personal document. Yet, there are some common ideas that should be considered when writing a plan. The different segments of the plan can be written in narrative form, as an outline, or in numbered, highlighted points. The easier it is to read and grasp the unique features, the better.

The order of the business plan is not as important as what information is included and how the information is highlighted. Adding too much detail can be a mistake. All of the following points of explanation do not have to be included; choose those that fit your needs.

SIX-STEP OUTLINE FOR BUSINESS PLAN

1. **Introduction.** The title page, table of contents, and executive summary come first.
2. **Company Profile.** What is the mission of your company? What is your company going to sell—products and services? Describe any unique features of your company. What are the short-term and long-range goals of the business? What objectives will be used to reach those goals? List the anticipated stages of growth and development. Identify any proprietary information or trade advantages your company may have (patents, copyrights, trademarks, established brands, etc.).
3. **Market Analysis.** This section describes the market environment your business wants to enter. It shows whether you have carefully assessed its opportunities (new trends or ventures that could help your business) and

threats (new negative trends or strong competitors who could stifle your business). End by discussing why you are unique within the market compared with the competitor.

4. **Marketing Plan.** This part should detail your business position, brand development plans, sales, pricing, and product strategies, promotion plans, referral agents, and potential strategic alliances. (See Chapter 11 for more details.)

   What is the business position? How will the brand be developed? Who will sell the services and how? How will the business be advertised? What budgeted amount will be spent for promotion?

   Who are the end users of your services? Describe them demographically. How will they be reached? Who are the intermediate referral agents (physicians, clinics, corporations, hospitals, etc.)? How can they be reached?

   Is the business seasonal? Are there any proposed government regulations expected to affect your business (new regulations that do not include the RD or DTR, coverage for MNT, etc.)?

5. **Financial Plan.** You will need to offer financial reports. (You may need some help to produce projections on a company without any financial history. Ask your banker about which reports he needs.)

   If you are already in business or purchasing an ongoing practice, show present and past balance sheets, tax returns, and profit and loss statements.

   If just starting out, list projected start-up costs. Present pro forma balance sheets, giving the effect of the proposed financing. What is your repayment plan? Give yearly projections of revenues and earnings for 2 to 5 years (don't waste too much time on this, as everyone knows it is being fabricated). Be positive about your potential, but be as honest as possible when projecting future business revenues. Bankers and others have seen hundreds of plans and often discount ones with obvious padding.

6. **Appendices.** Your résumé can go here along with any published articles defending your market projections, your unique product brochures, product samples, newspaper articles about your business, letters of agreement, and so on.

CASE STUDY 10.1

ENTREPRENEURIAL NUTRITIONISTS IN INDIA

Three of us, all in the profession of nutrition and dietetics with multiple years of clinical experience, decided to approach nutrition differently, but we were quite clueless where to start. After some thought, we came up with the acronym NICHE, for Nutrition Information, Counselling, and Health Education.

We ran a health awareness program for the public in NICHE's first month of existence in January, 2000, but it flopped. Then, we were asked to do a 2-hour session on nutrition and health awareness for a software company. One of the senior employees who heard us was so impressed that he spoke with his boss about additional services such as one-on-one diet counseling for the employees and improving their cafeteria menu. Thus, began a long partnership between NICHE and Indian corporations.

In the year 2000, there was no other nutrition consulting firm that had forayed into corporate consulting in India. So, there was no example to follow, no lessons to learn, and no competition! We just went with the flow.

Before the end of that year, both of my colleagues had left the company due to personal reasons, and I was handling the firm alone. I had managed to hire a junior dietitian to work with me, and when I got the second client—the largest one thus far—we had four members on the team. In 2001, the economic downturn affected us. We almost lost a client, no new companies wanted to look at nutrition services, but we hung in there. As always, preventive healthcare took a backseat in the corporations. It was only in the year 2003 that things started to look up again. Growth was slow but steady until 2007. For many reasons, there were not many long-term clients signing with us.

During this period, many weight loss and fitness centers began to mushroom. They offered better salaries and incentives to dietitians and nutritionists to "sell" their weight loss packages. As a result, some of the dietitians that came for an interview at NICHE, demanded higher salaries even though our jobs didn't require sales work. Moreover, several of the dietitians that had joined NICHE were compelled to leave for reasons like marriage, childbirth, or relocation of husband, etc. The staff turnover was becoming greater with every passing year. Apart from professional work, I was also handling HR, management, and accounting work since NICHE was a small consulting firm.

In 2007, online nutrition consulting was starting in India, and I briefly consulted for a company setting up such a project here. In 2008, I realized that I had to either expand big time or shut down.

Just when I was worrying about which path to take, I was approached by an online health consulting firm called ChiHealth, which was still in its infancy. It made business and professional sense to merge with them and work together. So, in October, 2008, the ChiHealth office took over running my NICHE administrative, finance, and marketing duties, and I got to oversee the nutrition and diet consultation work—something that I love to do. I continue with my interests like writing for the media, participating in networking and social activities, and so on.

Even though I write this piece as the Director of Wellness in ChiHealth, I will always treasure the 8 years that I spent in giving birth to and nurturing NICHE to what it is today. This journey would not be possible if not for my ever-supportive and encouraging husband, and to my team, each of them contributing to the growth and success of the firm. It helped

that our clients believed in our work and trusted NICHE wholeheartedly. I always believe that whatever the business or profession may be, it is hard work, honesty, and humbleness that pays rich dividends. —*Sheela Krishnaswamy, RD, Bangalore, India.* Check out ChiHealth at www.chihealth.in and NICHE at www.niche4nutrition.com.

About the Author

Sheela Krishnaswamy, RD, is the Director of Wellness in ChiHealth (her present company) and the Founder of NICHE (her former company). She has over 25 years of professional experience.

SUMMARY

The business plan should be considered as a working tool, one that is just as valuable for internal audit as external promotion or fund raising. A well-thought-out executive summary that outlines expectations for a business venture and a plan to carry out those concepts are invaluable in translating ideas into a successful business.

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RESOURCES

BizPlan Builder Interactive. Available at: http://www.jian. com (fee).

Business Plan Pro 11.0. Available at: http://www.palo-alto. com (fee).

Plan Write Software. Available at: http://www.brs-inc.com (fee).

Small Business Administration. SBA Readiness Tool. Available at: http://web.sba.gov/sbtn/sbat/index.cfm?Tool=4.

There are several other free tools online that can be accessed to help you write business plans, marketing plans, and assess your personality traits, etc.

11

MARKETING DECISIONS

Twenty-five years ago, the need for marketing became obvious to practitioners in the dietetic profession. We now know that having educational credentials, good products, and licensure will not make clients flock to our doors. It takes more. Clients must need or want what we have to sell. We like to think that people can't live without us, but they can. If all we give out is information, the Web takes care of that.

By 2005, it was estimated that 8 in 10 Americans worked giving service instead of manufacturing products. Dietitians counseled, consulted, worked in long-term care, did marketing for grocery chains, and disseminating information—all of these are services.

Too much of our past marketing strategies were based on the product model (1). According to Harry Beckwith, marketing expert with 35 years of experience, the *service marketing model* is based on newer information (1,2):

- **Keep it simple.** In our increasingly busy and overcommunicated society, nothing works more powerfully in marketing than simplicity. Market one focus with one positioning statement about your business. Don't confuse customers by being the "jack of all trades." You may offer more services but market the most significant one.
- **What customers really do.** When choosing a service business (e.g., when a physician refers a client for counseling on a low-fat cardiac diet), customers generally do one of the following three things: (a) nothing at all, (b) do it themselves (go on the Internet or call the American Heart Association), or (c) use your services. Seldom do they go to a competitor.
- **It's all about relationships.** People will buy from people they like and with whom they have relationships. It's very hard to compare services, so customers use other criteria for choosing.
- **The fastest, cheapest, and best way to market your services is to do it yourself or through your employees.**
- **People want to avoid making a bad choice; they seldom seek a superior choice.** That's why they will go to someone they "know" who did a good counseling job for a neighbor instead of trying someone new, and why "building a better mousetrap" doesn't always guarantee business success.
- **People tend to buy what they hear most about or what seems most familiar.** That's why you should take the time and spend the money to advertise your presence in your marketplace—create your "brand." Name brands are purchased in 13 out of 14 sales. People don't have the time to look around and they learn to trust a brand's reputation for good service over time, which is important because they can't see the quality of a service before it's purchased.
- **Don't assume that behaviors will follow attitudes.** Just because people think they should eat healthy or stop smoking doesn't mean they will. Remember that next time when you think about starting a "healthy" fast food restaurant.
- **Research and data have a remarkable ability to fool people.**

Focus groups don't tell more about market dynamics than a good critical thinker can. Look for people to give you advice who think for themselves and draw from a wide perspective.

- **Even if you have an "inferior" product (e.g., experts agree Microsoft DOS was inferior to Apple) from a technical or critical standpoint, you can still make money if your product solves customers' problems.** It just becomes more important to get the other elements in the marketing mix right (3).

How will people know what we sell? Eventually, they will know it by word of mouth. However, in today's competitive markets with limited budgets and shortened timelines, most businesspeople find that *organized, aggressive marketing is essential.*

Marketing's goal is consumer satisfaction. Too often in the past, we only offered what we felt our target markets should have. That has changed. Good tasting food—gourmet or gluttonous—and information on nutrition are "big business" now, attracting many people into the fields that were once ours by default.

MARKETING IN HEALTHCARE

The American health sector tried hard to resist the encroachment of marketing philosophy. Marketing activities, such as sales and advertising, were not viewed favorably in an industry traditionally grounded in helping and caring. Health marketing seemed to be an oxymoron or at least "commercial" and nonprofessional. Yet, when the costs of healthcare began to spiral upward, and the number of patients began to decline, a few innovative hospitals hired marketing professionals. Competitive change was launched. Today, billions of budget dollars are dedicated to consumer healthcare marketing activities.

MARKETING DEFINED

To encapsulate the many formal definitions that have evolved to describe the function of marketing, it simply means: Those activities necessary for the delivery of services or products from the producer to the customer, to satisfy the customer and to meet the objectives of the business (4). These activities include:

- Product or service development
- Market research
- Advertising
- Public relations
- Sales promotion
- Customer service
- Sales

The above definition requires the following two visions: (a) assessing and reacting to trends in the marketplace and (b) the higher purpose of your business or mission that should keep you focused and on track. For brief definitions of many of the terms used in this chapter, see Table 11.1.

TRENDS

First, the marketing function involves an ongoing process of anticipating problems and opportunities through regularly analyzing the trends in the marketplace. Trends can be local, national, or global. Examples of "big" national trends include the following:

- Population growing older with a huge Baby Boom group about to hit.
- Obesity is the number one malnutrition problem.
- Large number (44–48 million) of Americans are uninsured for health problems.
- Big interest by some in culinary skills and organic foods while the majority of Americans are seeking "ready-to-serve homemade" carryout.
- Too much junk mail—30% of all mail is thrown away before opening.
- E-commerce will catch on more and change the way we live and communicate.

TABLE 11.1 MARKETING DEFINITIONS (5,6)

Term	Definition
Advertising	A paid form of communication about an organization and/or its products that is transmitted to a target audience through a mass medium.
Brand	Name, term, symbol, design, or combination of these that identifies a seller's products and differentiates them from competitors' products.
Marketing	Those activities necessary for the delivery of services or products from the producer to the customer to satisfy the customer and to meet the objectives of the business.
Marketing mix (4 Ps)	A mix consisting of four major variables: product, price, place or distribution, and promotion.
Marketing plan	The written document or blueprint for implementing and controlling an organization's marketing activities.
Market niche	A narrow segment of the potential larger target market that your product or service can satisfy best without as much competition. Marketing dollars are often invested more wisely when pursuing the correct niche.
Mission statement	A declaration of the business you are in and its "higher purpose." It sets your course, improves focus, and helps you decide what your goals should be.
Product or service	Anything offered in the marketplace to be exchanged for something of value (i.e., money, commitment to change, etc.).
Public relations	Marketing activities designed to create a positive image for you or your business in which to do business, earn recognition, and gain acceptance.
Publicity	Publicity is free media coverage of some newsworthy story or event. Look for a news "hook" that will interest the media and its audiences.
Social marketing	Activities that influence attitudes, beliefs, or lifestyle choices for the benefit of a person or the public. Media campaigns for stop smoking, pro-literacy, low-cholesterol diets, and the "food guide pyramid" are all examples of social marketing.
Strategic assumptions	Statements about trends in the external environment that will affect the future and may present opportunities or threats to your business.
SWOT analysis	An analysis used to assess your internal or personal strengths (S) or weaknesses (W), and the external opportunities (O) or threats (T) in the marketplace that may affect your plans.
Target market	Primary customer group chosen for the marketing campaign. The group members usually have similar needs, wants, or desires.

STRATEGIC ASSUMPTIONS

In response to trends, you then develop *strategic assumptions* on what you expect the market to do. Strategic assumption statements should be concise and easily understood. They help you by excluding activities and investments that, although they seem attractive, would deplete the company's time and resources if you followed them (5).

These assumptions could be as simple as, "The population base in the Phoenix area will continue to grow older, faster than the U.S. population," or "As long as this region is in a deep recession, wellness is not a high priority for most corporations, *except* as a healthcare cost-cutting tool." By deciding what the strategic assumptions are for your business area, you can better anticipate what will sell and how to sell it.

You base your short- and long-term marketing decisions on your assumptions and alter them as your assumptions change. Continuing with the examples, during the recession, you know that, in the short-term, you should immediately change the marketing focus for your corporate weight loss program. Your pitch should change from highlighting the satisfied participants and pounds lost, to how much less they would spend on healthcare following your program. Long-term, if you live in Phoenix, you may decide that over the next 3 years, your major services will be changed to satisfy the needs of people more than 60 years old.

MISSION

A second vision associated with marketing is your business *mission*. A mission statement tells the "higher purpose" why your business exists. It could be "To provide high-quality, catered, healthy gourmet entrees and low-fat desserts to the city of Midland," or "My mission is to become a consumer–educator in nutrition through the broadcast and newspaper media with special emphasis on disease prevention and vegetarian eating." The mission statement sets your course. It helps you decide what your goals should be to keep your allocation of resources focused. You may have many different business or career opportunities that present themselves during the course of the day or year. Underlying your decisions on which ones to take should be your ultimate dedication to your mission.

MARKETING MIX

The four Ps of marketing are the variables you have to work with to influence the buyer to purchase your product or service. The standard marketing mix concept was developed by professor Jerome McCarthy in the early 1960s (7).

1. **Product.** This refers to the product or services the business sells.
2. **Price.** The money customers must pay for it.
3. **Place.** Location or where the customer will purchase the product.
4. **Promotion.** The marketing or advertising used to attract customers.

By altering the above variables, a business can attract different target or niche markets. For example, by choosing a place or location in a very wealthy area of town, the practitioner has committed to produce a more comprehensive, high-end product at a higher price to cover increased costs with more expensive looking packaging and stylish, tasteful promotion.

According to marketing expert and author, Philip Kotler, "the four Ps are from a seller's point of view. The four Cs are from the customers' viewpoint. Marketers sell products, but customers buy *customer value*. Customers are interested in more than the price; they want to know the *costs* of obtaining and using the product. Customers want *convenience* when seeking to buy; and finally, customers want two-way *communication* not promotion" (7).

MARKETING STRATEGIES

Entrepreneurs soon learn that it's easier and less expensive to sell something else to a satisfied customer than it is to find another customer. Some marketing experts estimate that businesses spend five times more to attract new customers than they do to keep old ones (1). In fact, the most successful service businesses become that way because of repeat customers (1,2,7). The strategy is to "grow" a customer; the key is to move the customer through a series of stages, which is described in the following, that strengthen the relationship between the customer and the business (7):

1. *First-time customers* have no history or commitment to your company—keep them satisfied.
2. *Repeat customers* not only buy again, but they may spend more.
3. *The one-on-one client relationship* is next with personalized care and attention.
4. *The best customers become advocates* and tout your business to others.
5. *In some industries, the customer is so close, the relationship becomes a partnership,* like when an independent caterer becomes the exclusive provider of catered meals in a banquet facility.

BOX 11.1 *Marketing Approaches*

CONCENTRATED MARKETING

In this approach, you identify one target market but sell multiple products or services to that market. If a patient is referred to you for a lower calorie diabetic diet, what else could you sell to that person? What about a group weight loss class with an exercise component, or grocery store tour, nutritional supplements, or low-fat cooking classes, or cookbooks discounted 10% from bookstore prices? By having a line of products or services, you can satisfy your patients' needs better and generate more revenue. If you have a catering business and someone comes to you wanting food for a special event, what else could you offer to that person? What about flowers, table decorations, musicians, linens, theme parties, or photography? You may only do the catering and everything else could be subcontracted to others.

DIFFERENTIATED MARKETING

Differentiated marketing repackages a proven or new product to fit the needs of new target markets. This could be as simple as adapting a group weight loss program to fit the needs of patients in cardiac rehabilitation. You could offer a "senior meal" selection in your cafeteria at a lower price to attract a new target market. Keep good records on your clients or patients. Try to identify who are your best-buying customers and keep in touch with them through a newsletter or year-end thank you note. The goal is to develop ongoing relationships that don't end when a consultation session or catered event is over. Every client has a sphere of influence that could mean increased business for you.

UNDIFFERENTIATED MARKETING

Undifferentiated marketing involves introducing only a single version of the product in the hope it will appeal to everyone. The original Coca-Cola was a good example of this strategy, but so is a nutrition presentation on healthy eating or one on disease prevention through nutrition.

6. *The highest view of the customer is the part owner,* where the customer actually becomes part of the enterprise through an investment or bartered agreement.

USING STRATEGIES

An OB/GYN physician in Lewisville, Texas, sends a year-end, signed letter to each of his patients thanking them for their business and discussing what new benefits he offers. His office also sends very attractive thank you cards for patient referrals and reminders for yearly Pap smears. He keeps two large scrapbooks with baby pictures and thank you notes from happy parents on the lobby coffee table to help establish his credibility with expectant mothers. After delivery of a baby, he brings new mothers a baby picture frame and a newborn T-shirt that says, "Hand Delivered by Dr. Franklin." He happens to be popular with the nurses, not because he is easy to work with but because he has empathy for his patients and gives good medical care. He is an example of the kind of healthcare specialist who will succeed in the future—a good clinician who is patient-oriented and skilled in marketing.

Market research and your own creativity and ingenuity can help you find niches in the marketplace where your products can flourish without heavy competition—at least initially (8). You will make better marketing decisions if you use the product life cycle model described earlier. Choosing the right point on the curve to enter the market is an art as well as a science. See Chapter 21 on promotion ideas.

SOCIAL MARKETING

Social marketing focuses on changing personal or social behavior for the benefit of the person or public. It is used to accomplish the following three objectives (9,10):

1. Disseminate new data and information to individuals like why to reduce their intake of high trans fatty acids or high aspartame-containing foods.

2. Offset the negative effects of a practice or promotional effort by a group or organization like warning the public about highly processed or fast food.
3. Motivate people to move from intention to action like motivating clients to take control of their weight.

For a program to succeed, it must meet the following conditions (11):

- Adequate resources
- Strong support from agency administrators and community leaders
- Marketing skills and savvy
- Clear authority to make the necessary marketing decisions and implement them in a timely fashion

SELLING YOURSELF

While credibility and visibility are necessary to successful marketing, they aren't the total package. You must also know specifically what *message* you want to communicate. What benefits does your business provide? Key words can form your "elevator" 20-second message. For example, "I'm a registered dietitian who has counseled over 6000 patients in the past 35 years. My business also provides state-of-the-art nutrition presentations and personal consultations."

In addition to credibility, visibility, and a message, you need to create an image. Image determines how people view you, how much they value you, and whether they are attracted to you. Social and psychological research have found that the more similar you are to your audience in terms of attitude, values, interests, and background, the more attractive you will be to them (10). See Chapter 8.

Your image is the first impression potential customers receive about you. It must convey your expertise, professionalism, responsiveness, and reliability as well as create warm, positive expectations.

In the 2008 survey on entrepreneurial dietitians, the majority of dietitians (59%) said that they spent 10% of their start-up dollars on marketing and in their most successful year as well (12). There were of course others (11%) who spent 21% to over 40% of their budget on marketing in their best year. Their most successful marketing techniques in descending order were the following (12):

- Word of mouth from earlier jobs or contacts
- Networking with other health or business professionals
- Business cards
- Personal meeting or phone calls to potential referral agents
- Networking with dietetic peers
- Brochures or flyers
- Speaking
- Website
- Writing articles or newspaper columns
- Calling leads who were referred by a third party
- Membership in national dietetic association
- Membership in national dietetic practice groups
- Membership in local dietetic practice groups
- Volunteering

It is interesting to note that exhibiting at FNCE (American Dietetic Association's [ADA] annual convention) came in 24th (last) and exhibiting in ADA's Product Marketplace came in at 22nd (out of 24 options) (12).

Following are six marketing rules that can help you get your message across in any kind of informal speech (10):

1. **Appearance.** Use your attire and posture to project confidence, competence, and status. Strive for a look that emphasizes quality and conservatism in both dress and gestures. You don't have to have an extensive wardrobe but do have several "President-of-the-Company" suits to wear when power and prestige are called for. In other circumstances, like when working with sports teams, wear appropriate sports clothing. Work on looking and acting successful.

2. **Nonverbal behavior.** Make direct eye contact. Combined with smiling and nodding, eye contact helps create an image of social attraction, power, and credibility.
3. **Verbal behavior.** Use simple, direct language without jargon; speak clearly and concisely. If you need a speech coach to get rid of poor grammar, slang, a bad accent, or whatever, hire one!
4. **Involvement.** Listen actively and carefully; tailor your message to your audience—whether one person or a thousand.
5. **Illustration.** Your words should paint pictures in the minds of your audience. They will remember better what you have to say. Support important points with examples (and references if necessary).
6. **Control.** Stay in control of your image, your message, and your audience's response by deciding ahead of time exactly what you're going to say and how you're going to say it.

WHAT *NOT* TO DO IN A NEW BUSINESS (13,14)

MISTAKE 1: NOT HAVING A PLAN FOR HOW YOU ARE GOING TO CREATE AND MARKET YOUR BUSINESS

You have a good education, successful clinical job history, and decent relationships with clients and colleagues, and you want to be a consultant to sports teams (something you have never done). Aren't skills and reputation transferrable?

MISTAKE 2: JUMPING IN FULL-TIME WITHOUT A GOLDEN HANDSHAKE FROM YOUR JOB

You may need to test the waters to see if there is business potential out there for you before you quit and lose your fringe benefits. Try working your venture on the side to work out the bugs while you stay employed. If there is an opportunity to get severance pay for downsizing, consider taking it.

MISTAKE 3: BELIEVING EMPTY PROMISES OF FUTURE WORK

Get it in writing if a physician says he wants you to work 3 days per week in his clinic! Try working evenings or Saturday mornings to see if the patient load is stable. It's easy to underestimate what it will take to survive as an entrepreneur. Don't count on others handing you business.

MISTAKE 4: NOT CALLING PEOPLE YOU DON'T ALREADY KNOW

You must network and let everyone know who you are and what your business does. You have to make phone calls and join organizations to become known.

MISTAKE 5: WASTING A LOT OF MONEY ON DEAD-END MARKETING AND BUYERS WHO AREN'T SERIOUS

A small business can't afford to waste money or time on nonproductive marketing. Drop things that don't work—if an ad doesn't generate even one phone call in 2 or 3 months, change what it says or drop it and cut your loses. If a spa wants you to offer a proposal to consult with its guests, ask direct questions like: What is your timeline on this project—when would I start? How many guests do you see each week?

MISTAKE 6: UNDERESTIMATING WHAT IT WILL TAKE TO START THE BUSINESS AND COVER LIVING EXPENSES

Don't live off credit cards except in an emergency. Don't live beyond your means. Cut back until the money comes in. Remember there will be lean months ahead, so save some profit to use during the slower times.

MISTAKE 7: POOR TIME MANAGEMENT CAUSING POOR OUTPUT

Business life can be feast or famine. If several jobs come in at once with similar deadlines, hire an assistant to help relieve some of the pressure and assure adequate time to maintain quality.

MARKETING AN INTANGIBLE SERVICE

In most cases, dietitians deliver intangible services, instead of tangible products. Service marketing has some unique concerns:

- First, the service provider is selling something the potential customer can't see, feel, or evaluate before he buys it. However, he can hold an attractive brochure or see quality in the business card and other surrogates that represent the service.
- Second, the production, delivery, and customer evaluation of the service occur at the same moment in time. If the customer does not like the quality of the service, it can make things very awkward. The buyer places a high degree of confidence in the abilities of the service provider. In return, the provider must be sensitive to the needs of the buyer and adapt the service as it is happening, to fit those needs.

Because services usually are one-on-one, customers will seldom tell you what they think—if they are unhappy, they just don't return. So, don't assume everything was okay if no concerns were mentioned. During the delivery of your service, ask questions, actively listen, and backtrack if you have to in order to assure understanding.

It's your job to create a high perceived value about the benefits of your services through advertising and other forms of promotion (14). Use a distinctive looking "brand" on all of your promotion materials—that is, use your logo and business name on your business cards, brochure, letterhead, advertisements, and so on. This makes you appear more successful and organized, plus a brand creates the benefit of instant recognition. When a customer thinks of a culinary Registered Dietitian (RD), he or she thinks of Mary Hess, Anne Piatek, or Chef Kyle. When he or she wants a hospital software program, he or she thinks of Ellyn Luros and Computrition, or when continuing education self-study courses, I want him or her to think of Helm Publishing.

MARKETING AN INVENTION TO A MANUFACTURER

When you want to sell an invention, there are several things to consider.

- First, manufacturers are contacted by thousands of people each year who have good ideas for new products. So don't be discouraged if they want you to sign a form stating the manufacturer doesn't owe you anything if they thought of it first. Also, most large manufacturers have their own research and development departments that come up with new ideas, and they often discourage bosses from buying an idea that could be developed in-house.
- Second, if you can't patent your product (in other words, it doesn't have any new ingredients or process or outcome), then often its value isn't as great because other companies can copy it legally and exactly, if it becomes popular.
- Third, if you have a product that still needs lots of work, or one that is only for a small select population, such as for patients with high uric acid levels, or one that has never proven itself on the market, it's usually not worth as much to the manufacturer. Today, because of the cost of introducing a new product on the market, many companies would rather buy out a

small profitable company with products that are selling than start with an unknown product. According to *Advertising Age*, it costs $10–$20 million to test market, advertise, and then introduce a new product nationwide into grocery stores.

Charlie McCann, a former new products manager for Coca-Cola of New York, once told me that the only way a small, underfinanced company can make a lot of money on a new idea is as the granola inventors did. Come out with a product that sells like wildfire and then sellout to General Mills or Kellogg before everyone else jumps on the bandwagon and puts you out of business. There are thousands of exceptions to that rule, most notably, Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream, Steve Job's Apple Computers, and American Beverage Company's Soho.

Along with product samples, a "package" to interest a manufacturer could include the following:

- A proposal with a market analysis and the product positioning (this entails determining whom the product is designed to sell to, and why they would buy it)
- A label sample
- A package design
- A trademarked slogan and logo

When you have developed a product you are proud of, it's time to contact a patent and contract lawyer to get feedback on how to protect your specific product. You also must determine what you want from an agreement with a manufacturer, for example an outright sale, up-front amount plus royalty, staff position, and so on. A businessperson with experience in this area is also very valuable, especially in determining whom to contact and how.

If you know individuals who could open doors for you or introduce you to the right people, use them. In some instances, you may choose to use someone as an agent who knows the industry and will work for a finder's fee if he brings a buyer to you. From my own experience, don't expect someone to come in and do the work unless you can pay them or give them a small ownership in the product.

SEVERAL OPTIONS FOR SELLING A PRODUCT

A manufacturer may show more than a casual interest in your product and want to offer a 90-day contract to look it over. You will have to decide if you want to take it off the market for that period and allow a company to get to know the product inside out. It may be your best chance to make a sale (and to make some money because you will charge for the contract), or it could be a mistake.

One option is an outright sale of your product to the company that will manufacture it and take it to market. Some companies have a policy of always owning everything they manufacture—it's cleaner that way—no inventors to get in the way. You could sell outright for one lump sum or sell for an up-front sum and a percentage of future sales, or to make the agreement work, you may accept only a percentage of sales, but that's risky unless you really trust the company will produce as promised. You will want assurances that the manufacturer will not sit on the product, reduce the quality of the product below the expectations of the target market, price it above what the market will pay, package it poorly, or poorly promote it.

Another option is a license-use agreement where you retain ownership of the product but sell the manufacturer the exclusive or nonexclusive right to produce the product for a specific period of time. This offers the advantage that you still ultimately own the product, but if you chose the wrong partner again, the product may not be worth much when it's returned. When you still own the product and a customer is hurt by it, whether from the original formulation or how it was manufactured, you could have liability risk.

Dietitians have become partners with programmers, venture capitalists, small manufacturers, marketing specialists, and others to get their products to market. Call your advisors and lawyer and involve them in securing a contract that will protect you and your product.

There are no guidelines on how much you can sell a product for or how much percentage to negotiate for. It all depends on how much a buyer is willing to pay and how bad you want to work with that buyer. The value is influenced by the uniqueness of the product, the size of the potential market, the markup and profit potential, the strength of the competition, and whether the product is already a proven success with packaging, trade name, patents, and copyrights established. The more you have done on the product, the greater the value.

WRITING THE MARKETING PLAN

For many projects, the marketing plan serves as the organization's sales tool. Along with a business plan, a marketing plan is essential when you start a business.

Once you have identified one or more "big ideas," work through the following eight steps and evaluate the market potential for your concept(s). The trick is to adopt an objective approach and to thoroughly analyze as you go (14,15).

STEP 1: IDENTIFY THE PRODUCT LINE AND TARGET MARKET

There are three basic parts to this step: identify the major product, narrow possibilities, and identify other opportunities.

- **Identify the major product and target market:** What is the "big idea"? What are the services or products you could sell? Who will buy it? Too many people wrongly believe they have universal products or services that *everyone* needs. They are surprised when only a few want it. The target market is the market segment that you intend to satisfy with your product or service. Therefore, it should fit their needs best and be packaged to attract that group. Traditionally, markets were subdivided by geographic area. Today, customers are more likely to be differentiated by gender, age, income, educational level, profession, and other measurable personal characteristics. The newest market segmentation schemes are based on particular lifestyles that predict customer purchase decisions (15).

  Profitable survival requires some combination of a creative idea and a superior capacity for execution. Entrepreneurs can't rely on just inventing new services or anticipating a trend. They must also execute well, especially if their concept can be easily copied (5).

  Successful ventures don't always proceed in the direction they started, a significant proportion develop entirely new markets and products. If customers that were expected to place orders don't, the entrepreneur must rework the concept while looking for new opportunities to exploit (5).
- **Narrow the possibilities:** Ask yourself questions that will define areas of concentration. Think in terms of a 3- to 5-year period. The purpose of this section is to make your target market as specific as possible. Who do you like working with the most? What client settings do you enjoy the most? Who will buy your product the most? Describe the characteristics of your target market.
- **Identify other opportunities:** During your evaluation phase, you may have thought of secondary target markets that could use your service. Identify them, but concentrate on your primary market.

STEP 2: CONDUCT MARKET RESEARCH

Here you will begin to find out if your assumptions about your "big idea" and its target market will work. Without knowing it, you probably have started your market research already. Have you started talking to people about the possibility of your venture? Have you started attending seminars or reading about ventures similar to the one you want to start? If so, you have started to research the waters.

- **General Situational Analysis:** What are the general characteristics of the market where you want to sell your product or service? What are the trends? Is the marketplace expanding? Shrinking? Is technology coming in rapidly? Are your current skills capable to meet the needs? What does your target market spend its money on? Primary market research is the research you conduct yourself. Secondary research involves statistics and information collected by someone else, such as businesses, or trade, government, university, and professional groups. Use both sources to be assured that you have thoroughly researched the concept. The Internet can help you with this process.

  Talk discretely to potential customers and trusted referral agents or business associates about your plans. Ask open-ended questions and get them to give you feedback on the concepts.

  Mailed surveys today must compete with mounds of junk mail and solicitations. Don't mail surveys! Call people and you may find that a few minutes on the phone with someone could give you all the information you need in a fraction of the time and effort. Write out questions and have them ready when you call (2) or send an email with a link to an online survey and offer an attractive perk to the person for taking the survey.
- **SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) Analysis:** The strengths and weaknesses are internal characteristics. In other words, what do you (or your employees) do well that could make this project a success? What are your weaknesses that must be delegated, retrained, or compensated for to make this project work? Opportunities and threats are in your external environment or marketplace. The opening of a new fitness center or research unit could offer you an opportunity to use your new product or service. Things that could threaten the success of your project are like an oversupply of outpatient dietitians, changing government regulations, or a recession.
- **Analysis of the competition:** Go deeper in your analysis. Identify your competition, its locations, its products or services, and any advantages or disadvantages it may have. The purpose is to find niches or weaknesses that the competition has for you to position your services or products as "different or better." When entering the marketplace, it's important to determine if you are a leader or a follower. A leader sets the pace and usually has the largest market share, such as Quaker Oats in the oat cereal market. A follower like Total oatmeal marketed itself as being different and better in the one area in which Quaker Oats was weak: fortification. Without an advantage over its competition, a product or service must either compete on price or spend lots of money on advertising to make a niche for itself.

STEP 3: SETTING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Define what you want to achieve, given the mission you have chosen. Make *goals* as succinct and measurable as possible. Identify short-term goals that can be accomplished in several months to a year and long-term goals that will take 3 to 5 years. Reevaluation of the marketplace through trends and strategic assumptions is a continuous process that will help keep the business goals on target. Think about the *driving force* of your project or career—the ultimate goals that will make you feel you succeeded professionally. Write down specific profit and marketing *objectives* that will help you reach your goals. Also, write down bailout signals that if they occur, would mean it's time to change direction or abandon the project.

STEP 4: DETERMINE MAJOR STRATEGIES

Here is the place to determine your marketing mix, or the 4 Ps of marketing for your product or service: Product, Price, Place, and Promotion (some people add Packaging as a fifth option). What you decide can determine the success of your venture. You know your *product* or *service* but take a few minutes to describe its *positioning* in the marketplace. Your business position message should (2):

- Have only one focus
- Set you apart from competitors
- Its goal is to have customers think of your business first.

For example, Italian Food Tours is an American business that plans culinary adventures for women's groups to Italy.

What is its market niche? What benefits will the consumer get? How is it unique? What are your *pricing* strategies (see Chapter 17)? *Place* refers to the location or distribution system where the customer buys your product or service. Is it convenient? If it's a product for the grocery shelf, where will it be sold? The key is to make your products or services as available and convenient as possible. What means of *promotion* do you plan to use (see Chapter 21)? Specifically explain your promotion plans.

STEP 5: DEVELOP ACTION PLANS AND ASSIGN RESPONSIBILITIES

Take the strategies in Step 4 and break them down into specific activities and add a timetable with dates, list the resources required, the budget allocation, and the deadlines. Assign responsibilities if there is someone other than you also working on the project, such as a printer, graphic artist, publicist, and so on. Don't assume anything. Stay on top of the project.

STEP 6: ESTABLISH A FINANCIAL REPORTING SYSTEM

Which resources will it take to complete your project and market it? What return on investment do you expect? How much do you have to sell to breakeven? Is the return worth the effort and investment? Look at the project over a 3- to 5-year span, not just start-up costs.

STEP 7: MEASURE AND EVALUATE RESULTS

If your research and estimates are favorable, what criteria will you use along the way to show you are on the right track to your goals?

STEP 8: ENLIST SUPPORT

If you have a client account, supervisor, or family who will be affected by this plan, how do you intend to approach them? What points can you offer that will sell the concept? Will this plan need to be formally packaged and presented, and if so, to whom and when?

When you produce this tangible report of your best research on the feasibility and costs involved in promoting your product or service, you will have a feel for whether the project should go forward.

USE THE MARKETING CAPABILITIES OF ADA

The ADA has an extremely capable staff of professionals at headquarters, along with volunteers, that produce a terrific number of marketing opportunities for members with services or products to sell or for you to gain exposure. For a few chosen members, there are the media ambassador and state-sponsored media representative programs. You can be on the national resource list of experts who are called at times by the media, the nationwide referral network, and sometimes ADA leaders might call on you to offer your expertise in position papers or testimony.

If you have an idea for a study kit, audiotape program, book, or other publication, you can submit a proposal to ADA's Publication Department for consideration by the Publication Committee. If you have a research study or project that is unique, consider writing an article for the ADA Journal. Your idea could be a major presentation or a poster display at ADA's annual meeting. If you belong to a dietetic practice group, you could present the idea at a meeting or write about it in a newsletter. There is the Product Marketplace for members to exhibit their products and services on the first day of the annual convention and there are commercial booths available in the exhibit area. There are many similar opportunities at the state level for leadership and marketing opportunities.

SUMMARY

The marketplace is always changing, and what sells today, may sell half as well or twice as well next year. Be watchful of business trends and read about changes in public-buying habits. Listen to stories that make the news and get feedback from your clients about what's important to them. Ask each client how he or she heard about your service or product and then use that market research in the future.

The marketing plan organizes your promotion efforts and helps you assess how best to reach the people who will buy what you sell. Whether it's a formal document or a couple pages in a spiral notebook, these functions must be considered for an entrepreneur to be successful in his or her business.

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12 LEGAL FORMS OF BUSINESS OWNERSHIP

Disclaimer: Talk to your business advisors about your self-employment plans, your financial state, your possible risks or liabilities, your family's needs, and get their opinions on which form of business might suit your needs best. Read the discussion below so you know some of the terms and pros and cons of each business structure before you go. States vary in their rules and laws, and federal tax laws are constantly changing.

When starting your business, there are three basic business structures from which to choose:

- Sole proprietor
- Partnership
- Corporation (C [full] or S [small] corporation or an LLC [Limited Liability Corporation] or Professional Corporation).

In the 2008 full survey of entrepreneurial dietitians, by far the most common form of business structure is sole proprietorship (1):

- 69% were sole proprietors
- 12.1% were LLCs
- 8.5% were S corporations
- 4% were in full corporations
- 3.5% were in partnerships
- 2.8% in professional corporations

Dietitians making over $100,000 per year (net), chose business forms that offered more protection, increased tax benefits, and limits on their liability (1):

- 37.1% were sole proprietors
- 27% were S corporations
- 16.9% were full corporations
- 11.2% were LLCs
- 5.6% were partnerships and
- 2.2% were professional corporations

The type of structure is often vital to the success of a business:

- It can affect your ability to attract financial backing.
- It can negatively increase the cost and paperwork of doing business.
- It affects what you pay in taxes.
- It determines the extent your personal belongings are at risk if the business gets into trouble (or if a spouse loses a lawsuit in a community property state).

The structure also affects the amount of control you have running the business and the amount of bookkeeping you must do. Also, the more partners or investors you have, the more bookkeeping is required (2–4).

No business form is best for all purposes. A sole proprietorship offers freedom, but if a person needs money, it may be useful to find a partner with capital. At the same time, disagreement between partners on something so simple as how to spend the profit has undermined many ventures. A corporation may require too much money and bookkeeping to make it feasible for a very small operation, or it may give the tax write-offs that the owner needs.

To organize your business in the most advantageous way, talk with a good small-business lawyer at the outset. Because tax laws are in a state of flux, consult with an accountant or CPA as well. You will feel more comfortable with business, if you become familiar with the different types of ownership and their pros and cons (Table 12.1).

TABLE 12.1 FORMS OF BUSINESS ORGANIZATION (2–9)

Advantages	**Disadvantages**
Sole Proprietorship	
Low start-up costs	Unlimited liability
Greatest freedom from regulation	Lack of continuity if owner dies
Owner in direct control	Difficulty raising capital
Minimal working capital required	
Tax advantage to small owner	
All profits to owner	
Partnership	
Ease of formation	Unlimited liability
Low start-up costs	Lack of continuity
Additional source of capital	Divided authority
Broader management base	Difficulty in raising additional capital
Possible tax advantage	Difficulty finding suitable partners
Limited outside regulation	
Corporation (Full or C)	
Limited liability	Closely regulated
Specialized management	Most expensive (feeds, taxes, bookkeeping)
Ownership is transferable	Charter restrictions
Continuous existence	Extensive recordkeeping
Legal entity	Double taxation
Possible tax advantages	
Relative ease of raising capital	
Corporation (Small or S)	
Limited liability	State fees—initial and yearly
Profit taxed once	Added bookkeeping and business records
Ownership is transferable	One class of stock, 75 maximum investors
Legal entity	Money borrowed can't lower taxes for owner
Limited outside regulation	
Only salary subject to 15.3% self-employment tax	
Limited Liability Corporation (LLC or LLP)	
Limited liability	Legal limits not tested in court
Legal entity separate from owners	Salary and profits subject to Social Security and Medicare taxes (15.3%)
Profit taxed once	Stock easier to sell than membership in LLC
Money borrowed can reduce taxes	

To be recognized for tax purposes, whatever form you choose must be a genuine business—in other words, started and pursued in good faith to make a "profit." This makes it different from a hobby or philanthropic work. It's the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), not local or state laws, that decides your federal tax and business status (2). Your work will be classed as a business if it produces a profit in 2 years out of 5 consecutive years.

FEDERAL IDENTIFICATION NUMBER

Each employer must be registered with the IRS on Form SS-4 to comply with Federal Income Tax, Social Security, and Unemployment Insurance regulations. This form requests a federal identification number that should be used when filing your taxes and when you're paid by a client, instead of your Social Security number. Your local IRS office can give or mail you the form, your accountant will have it, or you can fill it out online at the IRS website (apply for an Employer Identification Number [EIN] online, http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/article/0,,id=98350,00.html).

FEDERAL AND STATE REGULATIONS

EMPLOYEE CONSIDERATIONS

You must make periodic payments and/or file quarterly reports about payroll taxes and other mandatory deductions, if you have any employees, including officers of a corporation, but not the sole proprietor or partners (5). You should talk to your accountant or CPA about the ramifications of having full- or part-time employees or subcontractors and contact these government agencies for information, assistance, and forms:

- Social Security Administration: (800) 772-1213; http://www.ssa.gov
- Federal Withholding (IRS): (800) 829-1040; http://www.irs.ustreas.gov
- Workers' Compensation: Contact your state unemployment office

PERMITS, LICENSES, AND DBA TRADE NAME FORMS

In most localities, a person can do a business under his or her own name without registering it with anyone. In other locations, certain types of businesses need a permit, a small business license, or various other documents that someone at your state taxation department, city hall, and county courthouse can advise you about. Some states require professionals and consultants to have business licenses or add sales tax to their invoices given to clients, so a sales tax license is necessary.

DOING BUSINESS AS

If you want to use a trade name or fictitious business name other than your own as a sole proprietor or partnership, you will need to check county files to see if the name is available. If it is, then register it at the county clerk's office or some similar place as a "fictitious" or trade name or doing business as (DBA) name. This form lets people know that "Seattle Nutrition Consultants" is Jane Perkins's business. This form is necessary to obtain bank accounts in the business name or to bill clients in your county.

SOLE PROPRIETORSHIP

If you plan a low-risk business, carry liability and malpractice insurance, or if you don't own many assets, a sole proprietorship may be your best bet. It means a one-owner (or two spouses) operation. This is the business form chosen most often by new business owners and private practitioners (6). The owner is responsible for all debts of the business, and he or she reaps all its profits. Other than for initial questions and occasional problems, lawyers are seldom needed. They're the least involved of the business structures under the least government control (6). It's interesting to note that in 1995, of the nation's 501,000 attorneys, 281,000 filed taxes as sole proprietorships and another 134,000 filed as partnerships (7). Nine out of ten attorney businesses are not organized as corporations (7).

STARTING A SOLE PROPRIETORSHIP

Anyone can start a proprietorship by simply stating that you are "open for business." Fill out a Form SS-4 to receive a federal ID number if you have employees. To conduct business in your area, you may need a local license, permit, or trade name form filed. Otherwise, very little is required of you. You should keep business records and bank accounts separate from personal records for tax purposes.

TAXES

At the end of the year, your tax advisor can help you fill out and file the appropriate forms that briefly list your income and expenses (schedule C) and can help you arrive at a net profit or loss. The IRS will look closely at your deductions and whether it appears you are actively pursuing your business or just trying to write off your purchases and travel.

As a sole owner, your profits are only taxed once as your personal income. The business profit is not taxed separately. A business loss can be deducted from any other income for that year. You will pay self-employment social security and Medicare taxes (15.3% on net income). If you have employees, you will also pay payroll taxes, worker's compensation, unemployment tax, fringe benefits, and so on (2). A proprietor may invest in an Individual Retirement Account (IRA), 401-K, Roth IRA, or Simplified Employee Pension (SEP) to help reduce taxable income. Changes in tax laws happen yearly, so check with your accountant before filing taxes and regularly read business news.

ADVANTAGES OF SOLE PROPRIETORSHIP

Most practitioners choose the sole proprietorship route in business because it's less expensive and less cumbersome, and they like to have as much control as possible and to have the option of making all the decisions. There are no partners or stockholders trying to lobby you, usurp your power, or cut corners and change the quality of service. If you do not like the way the secretarial service answers the phone or how your lawyer works with you—you make a change. This way of doing business can be very efficient and fast with only one person making the final decisions.

A sole proprietorship can offer a business owner the freedom to act out dreams or wishes with only the obvious limitations of time, effort, and money. At least no person is in the position of changing your company name or the way you counsel patients unless you allow him or her to do it.

Lawsuits can be minimized by being very careful and clear about all business agreements and by having them in writing. Also, by carrying malpractice and other liability insurance, litigation expenses and losses can be kept to a minimum. However, if you plan to have a business that publishes controversial exposés, manufactures a food or beverage, pursues large contracts, or in other ways handles large sums of money (or you personally own many assets), for peace of mind, the corporate or LLC structure that limits your liability may be more in order.

DISADVANTAGES OF SOLE PROPRIETORSHIP

The most obvious disadvantage to a sole proprietorship is the unlimited liability the owner must assume. An owner is personally liable for all the debts of business, its obligations, and suits against it. People who have won a suit against you may claim your house, car, savings, and other possessions. Additionally, your business assets are potentially at risk if you have personal debts that are unpaid. Malpractice insurance will cover you in a lawsuit against your professional nutrition practice, but not for your business ventures, financial responsibilities, and unpaid bills.

Another disadvantage that many sole proprietors, especially women, experience is lack of credit. Credit can be difficult to attract both personally from lack of assets and for the business because of lack of track record and business experience. Limited credit makes it hard when an owner needs extra money to expand into a new office, publish a booklet, or cover the cash flow when a big creditor does not pay on time (2).

A sole proprietorship's success is very dependent upon the abilities, energy, and output of the owner. Also, if the owner gets sick or has personal problems that affect his or her work, the business usually suffers. Should the owner pass away, the enthusiasm and knowledge of how to conduct the enterprise usually goes with him or her unless continuation plans were developed to lead the family and employees through this time until the business is sold or it functions on its own with new management. If a sole proprietorship is sold, the new owner may take over the assets and contacts, but all the business bank accounts, licenses, federal taxpayer identification number, and state sales tax number have to be reestablished in the new owner's name (7).

PARTNERSHIPS

Two or more people may begin business as partners. The advantage of this type of arrangement is that one partner may complement the talents or resources of another. Another alternative to a partnership could be for one person to hire the other as a consultant or employee.

Increased financial investment, a broader scope of expertise, or influential personal contacts are advantages of having a partner. A partner may be a well-known person who will attract business. Legally, a partnership is a group of persons having a common business interest, each doing something to make the business succeed (3). However, because of internal problems, our mobile society, and changing priorities, the average partnership only lasts 18 months (5).

Partners must get along well. They should be clearly able to do better as a team than they could separately. Partnerships take special understanding and a definite amount of patience. The biggest hurdles to work out are differences in value systems and expectations, lack of delineated of roles (partners step into each other's territory), and unequal contributions of start-up money (the major contributor may expect final say on all decisions) (3).

Successful partners often attribute their working relationships to the fact that they first had talked about exactly how the business would run and what would be done "in case this happens" before the partnership was formed. Also, they had to accept that in many instances, the "good of the business" had to prevail over their own opinions.

A partnership agreement should always be put in writing with the aid of your lawyer. The agreement should describe the proposed business in detail and state the business name. It should tell (2–4,6):

- What each partner's initial investment will be either in money or in other valuable consideration
- The percentage ownership of each partner and how profits and losses will be divided
- How much time each partner will give to the business
- Who can sign the checks or if two signatures are required
- Who can sign contracts, incur liabilities, and sell assets
- What each partner's functions, duties, and powers are
- How the business will be managed
- What happens if a partner wants to get out
- How a new partner can be admitted
- Who will arbitrate if partners disagree
- How the partnership can be dissolved
- How the value of any partner's interest will be computed
- What happens when a partner dies, divorces, goes bankrupt, becomes unable to function
- The size and nature of "key-person life insurance policies" to be carried

Financially, a partnership may be able to get bank loans more easily than a sole owner. Often, this is true because the assets of two people instead of one are used to secure the loan.

The partnership must file a year-end tax return, but it doesn't pay taxes. The return is for information only, identifying each partner and showing her or his income and deductions from the partnership. The profit or loss is divided among the owners using preagreed-upon percentages. Each partner must attach a copy of the partnership's tax return to his or her personal one and pay any due tax on the year's income.

PARTNERSHIP PITFALLS (2–4,6)

1. To be recognized as a partner for tax purposes, a person must actually contribute money, time, reputation, or something else of value. A joint venture merely to share an office or expenses is not a partnership according to the IRS.
2. Conversely, people may sometimes be liable as partners, as determined by the IRS or courts because they functioned as partners.
3. Bookkeeping for a partnership can become complicated if the partners own different percentages or draw unequally for expenses—aggravation can occur when partners don't perform as agreed in the beginning.
4. Partnership income is passed through to each partner each year on paper even when the partnership decides to retain the profit for future expansion, so taxes may be owed on money that is never actually received.
5. A partnership is only as stable as its weakest member. Usually, it dissolves if a partner doesn't perform, dies or withdraws, becomes insane or incompetent, or goes bankrupt.
6. The riskiest drawback is that every partner can be held liable for what the other partners do. This means that one partner binds the others when she or he signs a contract or check. If one partner causes an accident, all can be sued. If one partner is dishonest, all may be prosecuted.

PARTNERSHIP BUY–SELL AGREEMENT

In case a partner wants to leave the business, a preagreed-upon buy–sell agreement could help make the dissolution easier. *Negotiate this agreement when the partnership is formed*. The agreement should include the following points (4):

- A formula to determine the value of the business at the time of a sellout, taking into account initial contributions by each partner, assets, debts, and goodwill generated since the business start-up.
- Terms governing the sale—for example, an up-front payment plus monthly payments over a 5-year period at 6% interest.
- Provisions in the event of death of a partner to protect the survivors against the estate of the deceased. In many states, families can demand that the business assets be liquidated in order to get their inheritance. To cope with the added expense of one less person running the business, partners should consider carrying life insurance (key-person insurance) on each other.
- An agreement should be made up front before it ever becomes necessary to determine how deadlocked negotiations can be resolved—probably through arbitration.

LIMITED PARTNERSHIPS

If a limited partnership is formed, the "limited partners" will have no personal liability for business indebtedness or the acts of their partners. To have a limited partnership, there must be at least one "general" partner who is legally responsible for all business indebtedness and the acts of all general partners. A primary drawback to using a limited partnership, depending on how you look at it, is the requirement that limited partners can't play an active role in the management of the business or the partnership affairs. Limited partnerships are used most often when the partners want to have some of the advantages of a corporation (limited liability) but pay income taxes as a partnership (2).

CORPORATIONS

A corporation is a legal form of business granted by states. A corporation can be created from a new business or an already existing one (a sole proprietorship or partnership). The corporate structure (C or full, S, LLC and professional corporation forms) is the second most common business form in America. Incorporated businesses generate over 88% of total U.S. profits (8).

A corporation is a legal entity separate from its owners with its own property, debts, and responsibilities. Even though shareholders may own the corporate stock, they do not owe the bills, unless they helped secure loans with personal assets or with personal loans. As a shareholder, your personal property is not at risk for your business debts (2).

State laws govern corporations and they differ on the specifics, but generally a corporation is formed by filing articles of incorporation, along with paying a fee to the Secretary of State of any state in the United States. Each state's records are checked to make sure that no one else is using your proposed business name, and the incorporation forms are checked for completeness. If all is well, you will automatically be sent a charter. Today, this can be done online with a credit card in most states.

The new corporation then issues shares of its total issue of stock (6). In a closely held corporation, only the owner's family and friends own shares. No shares are sold to others, so control of the business is maintained. Selling shares is one way to generate capital to run the business but because it dilutes control and can complicate business as you grow, many advisors recommend trying to borrow the money first. People who buy your stock take a chance that the corporation will be successful, and they don't have to be paid back if it's a failure.

The corporation name must include one of the three following words: "Inc.," "Corp.," or "Ltd." It's required so that others will know they are doing business with a corporation (2).

It's important that a business owner seek legal advice when planning to incorporate. It's possible to incorporate your business yourself. However, if you are sued or audited and the appropriate records have not been filed or filled out, it could be far more costly to remedy. Fees charged by lawyers to incorporate a business can vary from \$800 to \$3500; check around to find the best fee for the level of service. For a smaller fee, there are legal firms on the Internet that will file the forms for you. However, they may offer limited business advice that may be too general in nature for your needs, but it's an option. The more you know about incorporation, the more you can do for yourself.

CORPORATE ADVANTAGES

Some of the advantages of a closely held C or "full" corporation (2,6):

- Owners risk only the money they put into their corporation. It can go broke, and the owners can stay solvent.
- The corporation generally has greater borrowing power than other business structures. More frequently, however, banks have been asking for loans to be secured by shareholders' personal assets as well.
- A shareholder can transfer his or her part ownership to someone else instantly by selling it or by giving or bequeathing his or her stock certificates.
- Corporate executives can deduct many expenses from their gross income that probably can't be deducted as a sole proprietor, for example, the cost of key-person life insurance, the full cost of health insurance, and only half the deduction for social security is taken

out of the executive's pay. The corporation pays the other half.

- If an executive or any employee lives on company premises "for the convenience of the corporation," he need not pay anything for it, as well as for company-supplied food, vehicle, and so on.
- Fringe benefits can be better in terms of pension plans, profit sharing, and stock purchase plans.

CORPORATE DISADVANTAGES (2–4)

- Incorporation is more costly—both to begin and maintain (fees, bookkeeping, records, holding mandatory meetings, and electing directors).
- Corporate income is taxed twice—first on its profits, and then shareholders pay tax on the distributed dividends.
- Owners can't write off corporate losses on their personal income tax, nor deduct personal loans or expansion money given to the corporation when it's short of cash.
- Many banks and businesses will not accept a corporate signature on a loan without a personal guarantee by one or more of the executives.
- An executive's salary must be "reasonable" in the IRS's eyes or it may be disallowed as a business expense. (This has had new meaning recently, because CEO bonuses and salaries have reached new heights without much oversight.)
- Shareholders may sue a director if his or her incompetence or misdeeds cause the corporation to lose money.
- Some states tax corporations more heavily than individuals.
- If corporate stock is offered to the public, the corporations must conform to the complicated rules of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).
- Business structure is more difficult to change if your business needs change.

S CORPORATION ELECTION

If a corporation has fewer than 75 shareholders and meets other specifications, an "S Corporation," offered by the federal government for small businesses, should be considered unless you live in California and other states that do not recognize subchapter S corporations. It offers the same limitation on liability as a "full" corporation, but like the sole proprietorship and partnership, the business itself pays no income tax. All profits or losses become part of the individual's personal income tax responsibility. Benefits are also slightly different from a full corporation, so talk to your attorney and accountant about the pros and cons for you. Many private practitioners have been advised to choose this business form. For more information, contact the IRS through their website (http://www.irs.gov) and request IRS publication 589.

LIMITED LIABILITY CORPORATION OR LIMITED LIABILITY PARTNERSHIP

The limited liability company (LLC) or limited liability partnership (LLP) for professional organizations is rapidly becoming a very popular business form in those states that offer the option. An LLC files "articles of organization" with the state and is governed by an operating agreement that's comparable to a partnership agreement (7). Some states will allow only one person to form an LLC and others require at least two persons. This form of business structure is similar to a limited partnership or S corporation in that earnings or deductions are passed on to shareholders in proportion to their ownership (7–8). LLCs limit your personal liabilities for business debt or losses. It's a fairly new structure and it has not been proven in court whether it protects as well as a corporation. You can buy books on how to form your own LLC or go online and have a legal firm file it for you. Again, the drawback here is too little individualized advice.

FINAL WORDS ON CORPORATIONS

Dietitians, as members of the healthcare professions are being advised to think seriously about some form of incorporation for their businesses because of the interest in suing healthcare professionals. If a practitioner chooses this route, it's important to emphasize that all business and contracts should be done in the corporate name. This will establish that it's the corporation doing the work. Also, try to secure loans with only corporate assets and carry liability and malpractice insurance for the type of services or products you offer.

CASE STUDY 12.1

DIETETIC PERSONNEL SERVICES IN THE PHILIPPINES

BusinessTeam Nutrition Management Systems, Inc. (BusinessTeam), is the pioneer company in the Philippines in dietetic personnel services. To build a healthy world has been its advocacy with the vision of becoming the dominant nutrition management service provider. Its missions are to collaborate with agencies and corporations in the promotion of nutrition and wellness and to promote the dietetics profession.

Established in 2003, we initially deployed three nutrition educators to lecture on basic nutrition to industrial workers for a major food company. Since then, BusinessTeam has grown to provide a whole range of nutrition services. The nutrition education interventions offered are:

- Nutrition counseling
- Lectures and workshops on proper food and nutrition
- Effective stress management
- Proper physical fitness
- Organization of wellness fairs
- Customized nutrition and wellness programs to meet the specific needs of our clients

Our modules have been developed and adapted from existing successful nutrition programs by our experts and practitioner consultants who are registered nutritionist—dietitians (RNDs).

BusinessTeam has built a pool of nutrition consultants and resource speakers who have extensive education, networking, and work experience in the following fields:

- Dietetics
- Food services
- Hospital practice
- Research
- Academic
- Relationship building with health professionals
- Educational leadership

We maintain a roster of up to 1000 RNDs nationwide who have been trained to upgrade the image of the profession and to build their competencies. They are deployed on a project basis to year-round engagements for our clients. To ensure the high quality of our services, we have a Research and Development group composed of highly trained and experienced RNDs, a research analyst, and statistician.

Our clientele come from several industries—food, communication, power and utilities, various other manufacturing and service businesses, and educational institutions, as well as civic organizations.

Our latest thrust is a nutrition concept that encompasses our vision and missions: Nutrition TOURISM.

T—Train and travel to hone the skills and competencies as well as expand the knowledge of the RNDs through an exchange program

O—Outreach programs to the different communities to promote nutrition and wellness

U—Updates by sharing the current information in the field of foods and nutrition
R—Research as a basis and component of our nutrition programs
I—Image building of the RNDs to heighten the credibility of the profession as the expert in foods and nutrition
S—Spirituality and Social Responsibility. As a part of our corporate social responsibility, we have developed a program package that will address malnutrition and hope to contribute to the Millennium Development Goal of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger in 2015
M—Management principles are applied in all these components

—Grace L. Cadayona, RND, founder and the CEO of BusinessTeam Nutrition Management Systems, Inc.

About the Author

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SUMMARY

It's not necessary to become overly concerned about areas of business that are completely unfamiliar to you. There are many resources and advisors to offer help. You will know more with every discussion and decision you make. Rest assured also, once a decision has been made on the business structure, it can be changed; however, it may mean additional effort and money.

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See additional Resources at end of Chapter 3.

13 PROTECTING YOUR IDEAS AND INTERESTS

Business owners want to know how to keep others from taking their ideas and how to protect their property from lawsuits. The best means of protection are copyrights, patents, trademarks, incorporation, and insurance, but there are other options, including written agreements and personal discretion.

With time and experience, the ability to "read" an individual or situation and evaluate the risk involved will come to you more easily. Through networking over the years and your own savvy, the development of ideas will become relatively nonfearful.

PUBLIC DOMAIN

A distinction needs to be made about what kinds of ideas can be protected legally or claimed for ownership. Any new and original literary, graphic, audio, mechanical, video, process series, or ingredient may be protected as belonging to an individual or company. All "common knowledge" and nonunique items are in the "public domain." They can't be the sole property of any person or business. Examples of common items are the words "food," "juice," and "nutritionist," the Food Guide Pyramid, other government materials, and the common medical diets (although unique manuals can be copyrighted that use this information). Everyone can use all items in the public domain.

HAVE IT IN WRITING

To avoid confusion and lawsuits, the best advice is not to assume anything about even a simple agreement; discuss it thoroughly and have it in writing and signed by the parties involved. Initially, use lawyers to look over all agreements, especially on all risky, important, and costly agreements. No one should start a job "on good faith" unless you are willing not to collect for the services—unless you know the person and have experienced working with him or her.

PERSONAL DISCRETION

Many good creative ideas become public property because the originator of the idea talked about it indiscreetly. Exceptionally different and quality ideas are of great value personally, also financially, and should be treated as such. Obviously, in the development of your ideas, consultants or professional advisors may need to be involved, but there is better recourse if any of these individuals take an idea. Businesspeople will tell you that the best way to avoid being fearful in business is to work with only ethical, honest people who come highly recommended, or ones you have checked out through references.

If an original idea must be discussed with a company or an individual you don't know, have a trusted acquaintance present who could witness the conversation, or ask to record the session on tape, or ask that a nondisclosure agreement be signed (Fig 13.1). If handled tactfully, no one will be embarrassed or threatened by the precautions. You usually do not need written protection to speak with advisors like bankers, Small Business Administration (SCORE, ACE), and other professional small business advisors. Usually, book proposals going to

NONDISCLOSURE AGREEMENT

____________________ agrees to maintain the confidentiality of all proprietary information and trade secrets concerning Diet Chefs, Inc.'s products, services, and printed information of which he or she becomes aware. This obligation of confidentiality shall survive the termination of this Agreement.

Agreed and Accepter:	Diet Chef, Inc.
____________________	____________________
____________________	____________________
Date	Date

FIGURE 13.1 ■ Sample nondisclosure agreement.

publishers and query letters to magazines or journals are not at risk.

TRADE SECRETS AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Trade secrets and intellectual property are ideas and materials that make the business unique. A trade secret may be protected by not telling anyone about it, which may hinder its usefulness, or by having nondisclosure agreements. Intellectual property may be protected through copyrights, trademarks, or patents.

COPYRIGHTS

Copyrights are issued by the U.S. Copyright Office for intellectual property: books and pamphlets for new diet programs with original elements that have not been used before and for other artistic, musical, dramatic, audiovisual, choreographic, or literary creations. *Ownership of copyright exists when the work is completed in any tangible form* regardless of whether it is ever registered or the date of registration (1). The copyright notice should appear on all published works distributed to the public. The use of the copyright notice is the responsibility of the copyright owner and does not require permission from the Copyright Office. To have your questions answered, visit this website: http://www.copyright.gov/circs/circ1.pdf.

Who Can Claim Copyright? (2)

Copyright protection exists from the time the work is created in fixed form. The copyright in the work of authorship immediately becomes the property of the author who created the work. Only the author or those deriving their rights through the author can rightfully claim copyright. In the case of works made for hire, the employer, and not the employee, is considered to be the author. Section 101 of the copyright law defines a "work made for hire" as:

1. A work prepared by an employee within the scope of his or her employment
2. A work specially ordered or commissioned for use as:
   - A contribution to a collective work

- A part of a motion picture or other audiovisual work
- A translation
- A supplementary work
- A compilation
- An instructional text
- A test
- An answer material for a test
- An atlas

3. If the parties expressly agree in a written instrument signed by them that the work shall be considered a work made for hire

The authors of a joint work are co-owners of the copyright in the work, unless there is an agreement to the contrary. Copyright in each separate contribution to a periodical or other collective work is distinct from copyright in the collective work as a whole and vests initially with the author of the contribution.

Copyright Secured Automatically upon Creation (2)

The way in which copyright protection is secured is frequently misunderstood. No publication or registration or other action in the Copyright Office is required to secure copyright. There are, however, certain definite advantages to registration. Copyright is secured automatically when the work is created, and a work is "created" when it is fixed in a copy or phonorecord for the first time. *Copies* are material objects from which a work can be read or visually perceived either directly or with the aid of a machine or device, such as books, manuscripts, sheet music, film, videotape, or microfilm.

Publication (2)

Publication is no longer the key to obtaining federal copyright as it was under the Copyright Act of 1909. However, publication remains important to copyright owners.

Rights

The copyright law grants copyright owners certain exclusive rights to their works, including the rights of reproduction and of public performance. Only copyright owners have the right to make or authorize copies of educational materials, slides, articles, or videotapes and to show their videos publicly (3,4). An owner may grant permission to others for limited use of one or more of these exclusive rights. Some owners will charge a fee, while others will allow free use.

The copyright term is effective for the life of the author and 70 years after the author's death. Works created for hire, and certain anonymous and pseudonymous works can be copyrighted for 95 years from publication or 120 years from creation, whichever is shorter.

The notice should be on copies of the work in an obvious location to give reasonable notice of the claim of copyright. The required copyright generally consists of the following three elements:

- The first is the © symbol, the word "Copyright," or "Copr."
- The second is the year of publication.
- The third is the name of the copyright owner.

An example of a typical copyright is "Copyright 2010 Nutrition Daily."

In books, pamphlets, and other publications, a printed reminder is usually added that states, "*This material may not be copied or reproduced in any manner without the written permission of the copyright owner.*" Lawyers who specialize in copyright law suggest that newly published material with the copyright notice be sent to someone out of state by certified mail. The postage receipt will show when the copyright was first used. In case of a copyright dispute, the documented date may prove to be significant.

Copyright forms and information may be obtained online (http://lcweb.loc.gov/copyright/), by writing Register of Copyrights, Copyright Office, Library of Congress, Washington 20559, or a local federally authorized library, or by calling (202) 707-3000 (for information) or (202) 707-9100 (order forms). The copyright application filing fee online is $35 plus an electronic file of the completed work or $45 for paper submission. The registration process will take about 16 weeks and copyright registration is effective on the date that all the necessary items (application, fee, and samples) are received in the Copyright Office. The form is simple enough for most people to fill out. It's highly recommended that if you are going to register something, you do it within 3 months of going public with the copyrighted material.

As the copyright owner, you, not the government, are responsible for protecting the use of the copyrighted material. If the copyright is abused, you or your lawyer can send a "cease-and-desist" order to the infringing person or organization to ask that the use be stopped. Going to court is costly, but it can be used as a last resort. If you sue someone for unauthorized infringement and you win, you may be awarded statutory damages and attorney's fees or an additional $50,000 over actual damages and profit (5).

As an example of how a copyright infringement can be handled, one nutritionist found out that one of her contract OB/GYN clinics was photocopying her copyrighted prenatal brochure and handing it out to all new patients. She made an appointment to discuss the situation with the clinic director. She stated that her contract agreement did not allow uncontrolled use of her copyrighted materials. The clinic agreed to purchase the brochures at a bulk rate of $1 each with 500 brochures as the minimum order.

Other ways to discourage misuse of your copyrighted material include the use of the following:

- Odd size paper that does not easily fit on a photocopier
- Blue or brown ink that does not photocopy well
- The new paper and inks that do not reproduce at all on a photocopier

Formerly employed dietitians are usually in a quandary about ownership of materials and programs they developed while employed. Lawyers agree that if you were paid as an employee when you developed the copyrighted materials for your employer and if you did not have another prearranged agreement, the employer owns them. A former employer, however, can't keep you from practicing your profession or using your expertise, so you can create different materials on the same subject. If you want to develop unique materials to use at work and you want to own the copyright, do the work on your own time and at your own expense. This assumes you have not signed an agreement giving your employer rights to all your ideas while employed (common in Research & Development).

If you want to use reprints or copies of other persons' copyrighted material, articles, newspaper stories, and so on, you should request permission first (see Copyright Release Form in Fig 13.2).

COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT USING COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL

Q: *I recently purchased several videotapes on exercise at the store. Can I show them during my group weight loss class at the hospital?*
A: No. The exemption allowing teachers to show videotapes in the classroom applies only to nonprofit educational institutions, such as K–12, colleges, and universities (*section* 110) (1).

Q: *When I give lectures, I show slides of charts and cartoons from books and the newspaper. Is this legal?*
A: No, although it is often done, it is not legal without permission from the copyright owner. Photographs in books and magazines are protected by copyrights, just like the written material (section 102) (3).

Q: *My public library has books on nutrition. May I photocopy from them?*
A: Yes, but only small portions may be copied. The library photocopying exception to the copyright law allows an individual to make a single copy of one article from a magazine or one chapter from a book owned by a public library, provided the copy is made only for the personal use of the individual (section 108) (3).

PERMISSION

[Date]

Dear ___________:

I am preparing an educational exercise and nutrition booklet for the patients at the Medical Treatment Center, Garland, Texas. May I please have your permission to include the following:

Table 4-2 Fun Ways to Add Exercise to Your Day In: Johnson P. *Exercise for the Weak at Heart.* New York: Brown & Co.; 2010

Unless you indicate otherwise, I will use the following credit line:

Use by permission. Copyright 2010 Brown & Co.

I would greatly appreciate your consent to this request. For your convenience, a release statement is found below. Please sign and return this letter to me. A second copy has been included for your files.

Permission is hereby granted for the use requested above.

_________________________ _________________

Name Date

Sincerely,

Jan Jones, R.D.
101 Harland Street
Garland, TX 75075

FIGURE 13.2 ■ Sample request to reprint copyrighted material.

Q: *I live in a small town and I am sure no one will know whether I have the permission of the copyright owner to photocopy her educational materials in a book from Aspen Publishers. Aspen can't give me permission—I've already called. Why should I write for permission?*
A: By using the material without permission, you are stealing or trespassing on the owner's rights. Infringement of copyright can result either in a civil lawsuit brought by the copyright owner and/or criminal lawsuit brought by the U.S. government, which carries heavy fines and possible prison sentence (3). Do you really want to risk getting caught when it's so easy to write? You can find publishers' addresses at the library and the American Dietetic Association (ADA) will help you contact any dietitian.

Q: *What if I write and I never hear back, or the owner wants me to pay $100 for the rights?*
A: Do not use the copyrighted work unless you have written permission (keep the letters on file) and you pay whatever fee is charged. There may also be other restrictions, such as the number of copies or size of the group or whatever.

Q: *I have a chart I want to use in my handouts for a seminar I teach. There isn't any author's name on it, and I tried contacting the person who gave it to me—she doesn't know who the original author is either. What can I do?*
A: Document your efforts to find ownership of the chart and put it in your files for future reference. You will have it in case the owner ever appears and you need to show you tried to find him or her. After the fact, ask the person for proof of his or her ownership, and if you still want to use the chart, ask permission. If he or she gives permission, add the copyright information to the sheet. Pay any agreed-upon fee.

TRADEMARKS

The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office issues trademarks to provide national recognition of a name, logo, or phrase that symbolizes certain products or services. Examples of common product trademarks include: Coca-Cola ®, Kleenex ®, and Crayola ®. When a trademark stands for a service offered by a business instead of a product, it is referred to as a "service mark" (SM). Examples of common service marks include the logo of ADA, McDonald's name, and Prudential's rock.

A trade or commercial name is a business name used to identify a partnership, company or other organization—it's not eligible to become a trademark. Incorporation of the business will protect the company name from use by others in the original state and where the business legally expands its markets. There is no provision in the trademark law for the registration of trade names used merely to identify a business. However, you can control your name if it's written or spelled in an unusual manner or it's in artwork created to stand for your company (5). For example, Entrepreneur Business Group is a company name and its product *Entrepreneur Magazine* is trademarked.

Before filing an application, a search of trademarks should be made in the Search Room of the Trademark Examining Operation located in the Crystal Plaza Building No.2, 2011 Jefferson Davis Highway, Arlington, Virginia, or online at http://tess2.uspto.gov/bin/gate.exe?f=tess&state=303r1k.1.1. Any trademark that is too similar to one already filed will not be accepted for registration. The search can be conducted by any individual. Trademark lawyers have contacts with companies who can do the research for a fee. You can also call the Chamber of Commerce in Arlington, Virginia, and get the names of several trademark search companies that will research a trademark for around $100. Applications and more information can be obtained from the Patent and Trademark Office, Arlington, VA 22202 or call (800) 786-9199, (703) 308-9000 (Hotline), or (703) 308-4357 or go online (www.uspto.gov) (5). Current fees can be found at http://ebiz1.uspto.gov/vision-service/Product_Services_P/msgShowProductSets?category=T and http://www.uspto.gov/web/offices/ac/ido/oeip/catalog/prices/priclist.htm.

To establish rights to a trademark, you file a trademark application with three copies of the mark *as it's actually used in commerce* along with the fee for each class of goods. The term of the trademark registration is 20 years from the date of issue, and it may be renewed at the end of each 20-year term as long as the mark is still used in commerce (3). *For a trademark to maintain its protection, it must be used* (6).

Once a registration is issued, you may give notice of registration by using the ® circle symbol or the phrase "Registered Trademark." Registration symbols may not be used prior to registration, but it's recommended that trademark owners use a ™ or "SM" to indicate claim of ownership until the application for a federally registered mark is finally approved (6–8).

Trademark rights are protected under common law; in other words, the mark belongs to the first user as soon as it's used in commerce, whether or not it's ever registered. However, registering a trademark does have its advantages: it shows official claim of ownership and exclusive right to use the mark on the goods mentioned in the registration. There is no time limitation on when an application for registering a trademark can be filed.

The owner of the trademark, not the government, is responsible for protecting the mark from being used by others. If you are going to go to the trouble and expense of getting a trademark on a name, make it distinctive as well as meaningful. Words in the public domain like "juice" and "food" are too common to be given a trademark. If the words are too common, either the trademark will not be granted or you will be in court all the time trying to keep other people from using the words. It's not worth it.

Business owners claim that trademarks are often more effective than patents because trademarks hold up in court, are less expensive to obtain, are transferable, and they last for the lifetime of the company (6).

PATENTS

Patents are issued to inventors to help protect inventions from being used without the inventor's permission. To be patented, an invention must have a useful purpose for existing and it must have some new, never before patented element that makes it unique. A new patent can be issued on a new process, machine, composition of matter, or any new and useful improvements on an old patent.

A patent is effective for 17 years. Thereafter, the invention is considered to be in the public domain and anyone can use it. Because of this fact, some inventors decide not to patent a product that can't be easily duplicated so that they own it exclusively. The owners of Coca-Cola chose not to patent their product many years ago so the formula (which was only recently disclosed) would remain a company trade secret. The President of A&W Root Beer once explained that their product didn't have any proprietary protection (patent) in the market—except for its image and reputation—and the fact people loved the root beer served in the frosty mugs.

Patent claims and/or designs must be researched either at the Patent Office or at one of the federally designated libraries across the U.S. A search will tell you what claims have already been issued on similar patents. You may have to alter your product's claims after you conduct a search. A search by a lawyer will range from $3500 or more depending on the complexity of the item researched. There are inventors groups in your Yellow Pages and through other sources like the Internet that will do searches for you for more than $500, but you should thoroughly check out any firm first before using it.

What does it take to patent the new product you've dreamed up? "Persistence and perseverance," says patent attorney Ken Schaefer (5). The patenting process can be costly and lengthy, too. Filing cost will be hundreds of dollars and the lawyer's time may add another $1000 to $25,000 or more. If there are designs and intricate circuitry, you may need an engineer for the drawings. An attorney's legal fees for a court dispute can mount to the tens of thousands of dollars (6). Once you get a "notice of allowance," which means your patent has been approved you have to pay an "issue fee" of several hundred more dollars. The entire process takes at least 20 months. Even with all that time and money involved, the Patent and Trademark Office issues about 1400 patents every week, but they estimate only 5% of all patents are ever developed for market. More information and an application can be obtained from the Patent and Trademark Office, Washington, DC 20231 or forms can be downloaded directly from www.uspto.gov/web/forms/.

INSURANCE

Insurance was originally devised as a means of spreading the risk of having bad luck through a group instead of being shouldered by one individual. It has always been common to insure material possessions, but when starting a private practice, insurance to pay your salary in case of disability and malpractice insurance are recommended. The costs of malpractice and office insurance premiums are deductible as business expenses.

Malpractice insurance is available to cover the high cost of legal representation and the high incidence of threatened and actual lawsuits against not only physicians but also all persons who come in contact with the patient. Contact ADA to see insurance providers it recommends.

Disability insurance pays income when the insured person becomes ill or disabled and is not able to work up to capacity. It's suggested for sole-supported, self-employed people because they aren't eligible for worker's compensation, unemployment benefits, or sick time, except through programs set up by their own company. Social Security disability insurance requires 6 months of no income before payments can begin. No income for an extended period could mean loss of the business as well as personal property. It's sometimes difficult to qualify for disability insurance if you have a business based out of your home, so if you work or consult somewhere else, highlight that location for disability insurance purposes.

Office insurance should include fire, theft, and liability coverage. This coverage is common and can usually be obtained from a practitioner's existing home insurance company. Office coverage is necessary because many medical buildings' insurance policies don't cover tenants' furnishings, possessions, loss of business, or visitors' accidents. When working out of your home, it's still necessary to carry extra insurance for times when clients visit and to cover your computer and other office equipment.

Auto insurance on business-owned vehicles is common and necessary. In case of an accident involving the business car, the liability coverage should be especially good because the public believes that a business has more assets and the possibility of a lawsuit after an accident may be greater. The cost of the coverage is comparable to personal auto insurance, unless younger members of the family or persons with poor driving records are allowed to drive the car.

INCORPORATION

Many persons choose to incorporate their businesses to reduce the risk of losing their personal property for business dealings. A corporation is a complete, legal entity separate from its shareholders with its own assets. If all business is conducted in the corporate name and under its umbrella, the corporation's assets alone are at jeopardy for the failures and lawsuits of the business (see Chapter 12 for more information).

BUSINESS QUESTIONS

Q: *I have a consulting business where I contract with several medical clinics to offer medical nutrition therapy. Our agreements are in writing. A year ago, my mother became ill and I had to find someone to cover for me for 4 months. I found a local dietitian and we had a written agreement with a noncompete clause. For the past year, she continued to cover one of my accounts and I received a percentage of her income. Now the clinic wants her to work there as an employee without my involvement. The clinic and dietitian have asked me to walk away without any compensation. Do I have any rights here? Should I just walk away?*

A: Of course you have rights! You need to show your written agreements to a good small business lawyer and ask what your options are. Depending on what your noncompete clause says, most people would agree the dietitian (or the clinic) should compensate you for giving up the clinic account to the other dietitian. If your agreements are valid and binding, I would allow your lawyer to negotiate an agreement in a meeting with the clinic business manager or director and the other dietitian. If your agreements are vague or not easily defended in court, you may have to walk away because the cost of legal action wouldn't be worth it.

Q: *A year and a half ago, I subcontracted with a dietitian to cover my private practice several days each week while I pursued an advanced degree. We had a verbal agreement, and she was paid for each patient she instructed. There was never any question that she was an independent contractor who was responsible for her own taxes and benefits. At the end of the year, I gave her a 1099 Miscellaneous Income form to file with her income taxes. Two months ago, we had a falling out over a patient billing issue and I let her go. To my surprise, she went and filed for unemployment benefits as an employee who was fired. The case is pending, but I may lose. What can I do?*

A: Whoa! Don't you wish the agreement had been in writing? You, of course, need to see a lawyer with employer/employee rights experience. The fact that you gave the dietitian a Form 1099 will help, but there are other criteria that the IRS uses to determine if a person is an independent contractor or employee—no matter what you two had agreed (see Chapters 3 and 15). The main guidelines involve whether you gave her special training or she came in with the required knowledge; whether you determined when she would work and where or she made her own schedule; and whether she only worked for you or she marketed herself and her business to other accounts. Your lawyer will advise you about the criteria that your state unemployment office uses.

As you can tell, there are many gray areas. You may be surprised to hear your lawyer say not to admit guilt but settle instead of fighting. Unfortunately, many cases are solved that way because the cost of legal action may be more than the cost of the settlement. Try to stay calm and rational, you both knew what you had agreed, but you need to keep an open mind at this point and determine how to minimize your loss—both in legal fees and potential settlement. Good Luck!

Note: These answers should not be construed as legal advice. They are presented to describe potential business situations that may confront practitioners in normal business dealings.

SUMMARY

Starting a business venture is not a risk-free endeavor. In fact, it requires an individual to constantly be confronted with numerous important decisions, to initiate new untried ideas, to counsel patients on medical-related nutrition programs, and to risk financial loss.

The best ways to protect yourself are:

- To be ethical
- To ask advice of people who are successful in business
- To make well thought out decisions
- To document all important agreements and clients' visits in writing
- To learn from experience

Most people who have been in business for some time suggest that a person take reasonable precautionary measures and then go on with business and living.

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CHOOSING YOUR BUSINESS ADVISORS

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Now that your business venture is developed on paper, you need to evaluate who will make up your team of mentors and professional advisors. You could do it alone. However, to give yourself a better shot at success, create an informal network of advisors you can turn to when you need them. You may be surprised to discover how many people are willing to help you—if you seek them out.

Business authors Sarah and Paul Edwards tell of a sales trainer who needed more information to develop her business, and she noticed a course available at UCLA. She didn't have time to take the course, so she hired the instructor to give her a series of private instructions. The instructor became an important mentor and introduced her to many business prospects (1).

A team of advisors could include a CPA, lawyer, accountant, banker, insurance agent, business consultant, investment counselor, and a marketing, advertising, or public relations consultant. You will benefit from each profession's expertise and learn different perspectives on the same issues. These advisors will evaluate your business, its liability, marketability, and legalities.

In the *2008 World-wide Entrepreneurial Dietitian Survey*, the 1196 respondents who answered this question said that the advisors who they felt helped them the most were (2):

1. Dietetic peers (were most helpful)
2. Family and friends
3. CPA or accountant
4. Nutrition Entrepreneurs—National Dietetic Practice Group
5. Mentors
6. Attorney
7. Small business advisor

Dietitian "masters" had different experiences; their most helpful advisors in descending order were (2):

1. CPA or accountant
2. Family or friends
3. Attorney
4. Dietetic peers
5. Mentors
6. Web designer
7. Nutrition Entrepreneurs—National Dietetic Practice Group

In their column "Working Smarter" in *Home Office Computing* magazine, the Edwards give a few steps to attract benefactors (1):

1. **Go to the source.** Go to the best. Go to the people who are clearly authorities. If they can't help you, they may know people who are even better for you to know.
2. **Ask specific questions.** Many mentors and advisors will want to help, but only if it appears that you have done your homework first.
3. **Be willing to pay.** Most people take it as a compliment when you ask for their help. But if what you need requires more than a short phone conversation or taking them to lunch, offer to pay for their expertise. Certainly, asking lawyers and accountants for advice on your business will cost you when they work on your business. A private consultation with an expert shouldn't cost

more than $50 to $150 per hour. With the right expert, it will pay for itself many times.

4. **Accept and try their advice.** Of course, evaluate whether it fits your needs, but if it fits, put in enough effort to see if the idea works. Otherwise, be willing to explain why you didn't try it.
5. **Express appreciation.** Most people like being appreciated, and that's one of the reasons why they help each other. A phone call, note, or thoughtful gift can go a long way in building a relationship. Also, let your benefactors know that they can call on you if they need to.
6. **Pass on good advice.** Establish yourself as a resource for others, someone whom others can turn to. You'll be amazed when the doors open for you.

LOCATING PROFESSIONAL ADVISORS

When seeking professional guidance, obtain several different names of highly recommended specialists. Ask for referrals from your friends, other small business owners, and the Small Business Administration (3–4). Look for names of recommended professional consultants or free advisors from SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives) who have experience setting up and working with small businesses.

Be specific in what you are looking for. Remember also that you interview the consultant. They work for you, so don't be intimidated and feel that you must hire or work with the first person you interview. Consider the following questions as guidelines when discussing the services of a paid business consultant and her or his suitability for your practice (3–4):

1. What is the experience of the consultant in your area of business? A divorce lawyer or large corporate banker or accountant will not fit your needs.
2. What specific services does the consultant propose for your practice?
3. Approximately, how much will you be charged? If it will be on an hourly basis, obtain an estimate of how many hours the consultant feels your practice will take.
4. Will phone calls be charged? Although fees are important, be aware that bargain rates sometimes get you bargain services.
5. Does the professional advisor have the time to give you? Will you get both adequate advice and reasonable turnaround times on contracted work?

The better you know your needs, or the more work you can do for yourself, the less you have to pay someone else. Before you commit yourself to a specific consultant, ask yourself (4):

- Was I comfortable?
- Did the advisor seem interested in me and my practice?
- Does the advisor have the time for my work? Will I be a priority?

Keep records of all correspondence with a contract consultant. Follow up any telephone conversations with a letter reiterating any points you feel uneasy about or that you feel were important to highlight. Keep a copy of the letter for yourself. Don't assume anything about an agreement—always ask! Change to another consultant and transfer your records if you are unhappy with the work you receive. *As a rule, don't hire family and professional friends to do your work, because it is so hard to fire Uncle Charlie when the job isn't done right or on time.*

Learn how to use each consultant's expertise to your best advantage. Talking with other business owners and professionals will help supplement the research and reading you must do before going into private practice. See Table 14.1 Business Management Team.

TABLE 14.1 BUSINESS MANAGEMENT TEAM (3–5)

Advisor	Area of Expertise
Attorney	Form of business structure
	Contracts and letters of agreement
	Office leases
	Copyrights, trademarks, patents
	Lawsuits
Accountant or CPA	Bookkeeping systems advice
	Financial statements/audits
	Employee deductions
	Tax decisions
	Income tax records and reports
Banker	Loans
	Credit information
	IRA, 401-K, and SEP accounts
	Business checking and savings
	Community trends
Business Consultant	Networking and contacts
	Business strategies
	Setting priorities
	Management skills and decisions
	Marketing suggestions
Public Relations/ Advertising	Image development
	Logo design
	Business cards/brochures
	Market research
	Promotion ideas
	Advertising layouts
	Media contacts
Investment Counselor	Retirement options
	Investment advice
	College savings plans
	Asset management
	401(K) plans

ATTORNEY

Look for an attorney you can trust with reasonable fees. Trust means you believe the attorney can do the job, is competent, and cares about helping you (5).

The legal fee quoted to you may be misleading. Often, the lawyer with the lowest hourly rate is not always the lowest total bill, especially if the attorney is not familiar with the legal problems of your type of business. An attorney may spend a lot of time at your expense learning what to do. Legal services are the last of the "cottage industries," meaning that each item is custom made—usually from preformed documents on software (5). There is a great deal of discretion involved when an attorney does his or her job, so take the time to find a good one—one who takes your business seriously and has the time to work for you.

On matters such as suing or countersuing, obtain a second (independent) decision before pursuing it. Make sure that you agree with the language and possible consequences of any legal action before you let your lawyer take action in your name. You have to live with the results. Once you have considered all sides, the costs and probable outcome, you may decide to walk away or go to arbitration. Over the years, many businesspeople have told me that "only the lawyers seem to make anything from a lawsuit."

Good legal advice at the beginning of your practice can prevent problems in years to come. A lawyer will help you understand regulations and licenses. He or she can write or look over all your contracts or letters of agreement. Most importantly, a lawyer will help you develop the appropriate structure for your practice—sole proprietorship, partnership, LLC, full or S corporations, and professional corporations. A lawyer can help you copyright materials, trademark your business logo, or patent a product. Attorney fees range from $150 per hour in smaller communities up to $300 per hour or more for specialized work. They usually charge for phone calls.

ACCOUNTANT OR CPA

Accountants are divided into two groups: those who are Certified Public Accountants (CPAs) and those who are not certified. States award certification and verify whether the recipient has completed a 2-year apprenticeship under a CPA. The person must pass a series of difficult tests in the areas of auditing, accounting, and business law. CPAs are accountants with an assured high level of skill; however, other accountants may be highly qualified, but not certified. In most states, a bookkeeper is not required to meet any standards to use the title, but he or she may be knowledgeable and perfectly matched for your business. The main thing you need is someone with practical small business experience, and that person may be hard to find!

As you look for an accountant or bookkeeper, ask other businesspeople whom they use. Your best source of information is a satisfied customer.

Your accountant should help structure your practice to your best tax advantage. He or she will be valuable in helping you choose a bookkeeping or record system that will fit your needs. If the system is set up correctly and simply, you should be able to do the bookkeeping yourself, aided by year-end income tax assistance. An accountant can prepare financial reports that help determine business strategies, or marketing and tax analysis, or help obtain financial backing. Some accountants also give advice on how a business should be operated; this is called management services.

The hourly fee for an accountant or CPA usually ranges from $75 to $275 per hour or more. A bookkeeper may charge $30 to more than $60 per hour. Always ask for an estimate of time and fees before the work begins. Inform your financial advisor of any time limitations you have, and request the work be completed by that date. Beware of "bargains" such as new people or staff that just arrived from a large corporate position, or a new graduate for "special" rates. They may take twice as long, and a supervisor may charge full price to look over their work. Even more critical, the person may not have any small business experience, and an accountant should be a valuable business resource.

BANKER

Get to know your area banks and the services they offer. Even if you don't intend to borrow working capital from a bank, your business accounts will make you a welcome customer. Get to know a bank officer. A friendly banker is more important than which bank you use. Discuss your plans for your practice with him or her. An experienced banker can give you a wealth of valuable business information, not only on financial matters, interest rates, and how to keep your credit rating points high but also on trends in the community.

Ask for a small business loan officer or vice president of the bank when you want to talk about a business loan. Try to use the same personnel when doing your banking, and speak up if you are always directed to new, inexperienced people. Banking personnel don't charge for their services and can be good advisors.

BUSINESS CONSULTANT

A business consultant will advise you on major decisions, such as your central business concept, location, image development, fees, marketing, new market areas, and so on. Good, affordable consultants for small businesses are hard to find, but well worth the research time. Their fees range from $75 to $150 per hour or more.

Very good, free services available in larger cities are the SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives, website available at http://www.score.org) and ACE (Active Corps Executives) programs of the Small Business Administration. These two programs will work to match you with a retired or active businessperson who can answer your business questions. Their knowledge and experiences can be valuable resources. Many local banks, Chambers of Commerce, YMCAs or YWCAs, universities, and adult education courses offer programs to help the beginning and expanding business owner as well.

PUBLIC RELATIONS, MARKETING, AND ADVERTISING CONSULTANTS

As your business grows, you may need one of these experts. The services of these three specialists often overlap, depending upon the consultant and her or his business knowledge and skills. Public relations experts specialize in letting the world know you have arrived. They use their contacts and expertise to put you and your business venture in front of the public. That may sound intimidating, but it may be as simple as being interviewed by a local newspaper or radio station. Many businesspeople credit their success to having a public relations firm working for them at a crucial stage in their business. As nutrition practice becomes more sophisticated, public imaging will, no doubt, be more important.

Hiring a public relations firm is expensive (ranging from $1500 to $4500 or more per month, often for a minimum of 6 to 12 months). Be careful and specific in your negotiations on prices and services. To assure that you like what is being produced, ask to be involved in all stages of development.

A marketing or advertising firm usually can offer logo development, business card and brochure design, market research, and advertising savvy—marketing avenues that get your message to your target markets. Again, fees can vary greatly from a few hundred dollars to many thousands. Advertising fees can be a percentage of the cost of the ad campaign, or it can be a project fee. Most firms can create the artwork and broadcast ads.

Get quotes from several firms and be honest about what you can afford to pay. Often, if they need the business or they especially want to work with you, they will negotiate a fair price for your needs. All of the options are independent of one another so don't feel you have to buy a full package. Buy what will work best. To determine that, you can talk to people who have marketed other services in your area and to several marketing firms until you feel comfortable with the answers.

If you want to do your own marketing and feel confident you can generate the artwork or wording, look into using a local university's art department or freelance artist. All newspapers, magazines, and radio and television stations offer free advice through their sales consultants. Not only can they assist with simple suggestions, but they can also advise you on the best time to run your ad, for example, morning spots on radio or Sunday newspapers, and so on. Use the experts to help sell your products or services, or to improve your image.

SUMMARY

The wise use of professional advisors can save you time, energy, and money. Their combined expertise will enable you to enter into your business venture confident that your organization will run at its optimum. They are also an expensive investment that you need to stay on top of—don't assume the work will be done as you expect. Continue to stay involved, and have checkpoints and meetings along the way. Stay in touch with people you want to work with through a phone call, a card, an email, and a small holiday gift even when their services aren't needed at that time—it's easier than starting over with someone new.

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MONEY AND FINANCE

To most people, the measure of success in business is to make money. Others may say a business that pays its bills while it satisfies its clients is more successful. Whatever your definition is, a business venture that doesn't make enough money is either a hobby or one that has a limited life span. But more than generating revenue, the profit needs to be wisely invested in assets like a small office or other real estate, stocks, bonds, or minerals to grow into a stable financial package for your retirement or to pass on to your heirs.

A financially successful business usually starts with sufficient capital investment, followed by fair prices, good collection of revenue, paying bills on time and appropriate record keeping for you, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), and any lender. Managing money and keeping records should not be difficult tasks. The challenge is to know what needs to be done.

If you are a consultant to a wellness program, it may advertise that it was created for the enjoyment and health benefit of the employees, but cutting medical insurance costs is usually the underlying reason for in-house programs. From the beginning, you should establish the financial record keeping that shows your programs are successful and cost-effective. Anecdotes from successful clients can be used in marketing, but the management will want good numbers to document successful programs.

INITIAL INVESTMENT

Before anyone will be able to help you secure a loan or set up your books, he or she will need to know what you plan to do. The information generated in the business plan will be beneficial, also knowing the type of business structure you will use and your estimation of your start-up costs. Good financing offers peace of mind, the option of changing your mind, and freedom to create without survival being in peril.

In the 2008 survey, 1360 dietitians identified how much money they personally invested into the start-up of their businesses (1):

- 54.8% spent $1000 or less
- 30.4% spent $1001–$5000
- 9.0% spent $5001–$15,000
- 2.9% spent $15,001–$30,000
- 1.7% spent $30,001–$60,000
- 0.4% spent $60,001–$80,000
- 0.8% spent >$80,000

As mentioned earlier, 45.4% stated that they broke even in 6 months or less; 26.8% took 7 months to 1 year to breakeven; and 18.6% took 13 months to 2 years to breakeven. That means that 90.8% of the entrepreneurs broke even in 2 years or less!

Practitioners with well-equipped, well-staffed offices in rented space pay the higher fees. They usually develop the appearance of stability and success much sooner than low-budget small ventures. However, investing more money into a business will not necessarily make it more successful. Nevertheless, an adequately financed venture has a better chance of becoming a lucrative business faster.

Practitioners who either have more time than money or those who want to keep the risk and investment low make smaller investments. This is possible by scaling back on all overhead expenditures like sharing office space in a physician's office or health club, or by working from home, and by doing more public speaking and free media work instead of an expensive public relations campaign for your business.

SOURCES OF FINANCING

One reality to face in developing a business venture is the money commitment. Financial experts encourage new business owners to try to use someone else's money for part of the capital (bank loan), instead of exhausting personal assets and credit sources. This maintains the owner's financial strength. The owner may need to contribute later during financial emergencies or expansion projects.

The majority of dietitians in the 2008 survey financed their businesses themselves with savings or from earnings from another job or from revenue generated by the entrepreneurial venture (1). When practitioners did borrow money, the most common loans were (1):

- 18.1% used credit cards
- 12.1% used a family loan
- 5.3% used a bank or financial institution
- 2.6% used a business partner
- 1.8% used a mortgage on a property

For growth and expansion of the business (once it had proved itself), a few more practitioners borrowed from the same sources as above and in the same order (1).

The most common sources of business financing are (2):

- **Personal savings:** The primary source of capital for most new businesses comes from savings, second mortgages, and personal credit sources. Credit cards should be saved for emergencies, not day-to-day expenditures. High credit card debt will keep most lenders from giving you a loan. Being even a day or two late paying the monthly bill can increase your interest rate to over 20%.
- **Friends and relatives:** Often, this money is interest free or at low interest, which can be very beneficial when starting out, but there may be hard feelings if the loan isn't paid back as expected.
- **Banks and credit unions:** These are the most common sources of loans. They want to be involved in successful ventures, and you must show you have done your homework on business planning and have a repayment schedule to attract a loan. Small Business Administration (SBA) loans are usually handled through designated banks and require 20% to 30% of the needed loan amount to be contributed by the business owner. The loan application and supporting documents will take you many hours to produce and many people who have gone after an SBA loan say that you usually have to have capital to invest in order to attract a loan.
- **Venture capital firms:** These firms help expanding companies grow in exchange for equity or partial ownership and a strong involvement in the business.
- **Angel investors:** These are people with money who want to help small businesses grow in return for stock, but most don't want involvement on a daily basis (3).

Your success in obtaining funding depends on your assets, business expertise, connections, and your ability to sell yourself and your business plan.

Lending institutions are in business to make money by loaning money for an interest fee. Loaning money involves taking a risk that the new business will be successful, and the owner is hardworking, honest, and reliable. To be successful in obtaining a loan, you must be prepared and organized. You must know exactly how much money you need, why you need it, and how you will pay it back (4,5).

It's common for a lending institution to require you to invest a certain percentage of your own money if a loan is granted, or it may ask you to place your money in an account and borrow against it or secure the loan with personal assets. If you are seeking an expansion or recapitalization loan, your financial business records for the past 3 years, personal credit records, and business reputation will be evaluated.

COMMERCIAL BANKS

Commercial banks are the most common lending institutions. They offer many services besides checking and savings accounts. Banks offer basic financial counseling and credit analysis at no cost to regular customers. Most commercial banks make short-, intermediate-, and long-term loans. You may be asked to put personal property, Certificates of Deposit, savings, or other assets of value up as collateral. Occasionally, where you have established credit, you may be asked only to sign for the loan. When you use assets to secure a loan, they aren't to be sold, spent, or used until the lending institution releases them. Read your loan agreement carefully before you sign.

CREDIT UNIONS

Credit unions usually offer low-cost checking accounts, savings accounts, and low interest loans on autos, personal loans, home improvement (to create a business office), and sometimes on larger items.

SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

The SBA of the U.S. Government is another resource alternative for a new or established business loan. The law stipulates that SBA loans can be made only to businesses that are unable to get funds from banks or other private sources. This is usually because the personal assets or type of business will not qualify for a regular loan (except at high interest rates), not because the person is a poor risk. A bank, however, will usually make the loan, guaranteed by the SBA up to as much as 70% to 80%. Especially with new businesses, the SBA may ask you to contribute 20% to 50% of the initial investment.

Occasionally, the SBA will make the loan itself, but this is rare. Only one quarter of the total 30,000 or so loans the SBA makes or guarantees each year goes to new businesses, so competition is tough. Less than 10% of SBA loans go to women-owned businesses each year, although the SBA reports that women are more successful in starting a small business (4). Interest rates on an SBA loan are attractive because they are lower than what banks usually offer. As attitudes change and economic bailout packages dry up funds in the federal government, SBA money becomes more or less available.

The SBA requires extensive information about you and your business venture. You can pull the information together or hire an accountant or a certified public accountant (CPA) to put the proposal together for you or to guide you in assembling and filling out the documentation required. It used to take months for SBA loans to be approved, but now, the process has been reduced to several weeks if the paperwork is in order—and the money is available.

SBA loan programs are generally intended to encourage longer-term small business financing, but actual loan maturities are based on the ability to repay, the purpose of the loan, and the useful life of the assets financed (5). Maximum loan maturities have been established which include the following: (a) 25 years for real estate, (b) up to 10 years for equipment (depends on the useful life), and (c) generally up to 7 years for working capital (5).

LOAN PACKAGE

The loan package is the finalized presentation compiled to secure a loan from a bank, investor, venture capitalist, SBA, or a combination of these sources (4). It succinctly presents your basic idea through the executive summary and plan. In a nutshell, it explains who you are, your financial status, and how the money will be used and repaid. Usually, having an accountant or CPA provide a review of the figures presented substantially improves the chances for getting a loan. A review is less involved and less expensive than an audit and is only as accurate as the figures used, yet it often satisfies bankers because it offers some limited assurance about the reliability of the financial information (4).

Typically, bankers will request or appreciate having the items listed in Box 15.1. Ask what is necessary, and then use your best judgment on the other items depending on your loan needs (4–6).

BOX 15.1 ***Items Needed for a Loan Package***

Cover letter
Table of Contents
General Information

- Business name, names of principals, Social Security number of each owner, and the business address
- Purpose of the loan—exactly why is it needed
- Amount required

Business Description

- History and nature of the business
- Business plan with its market analysis (products and competition)

BALANCE SHEET

Assets		
Cash in checking account	$	________
Cash in savings account		________
Credit union savings account		________
Life insurance cash value		________
House fair market value		________
Car(s) (fair value)		________
Furniture and personal effects		________
Other		________
		________
Total Assets	$	________
Liabilities		
Balance on car loan	$	________
		________
Home mortgage		________
Credit cards		________
		________
Other		________
		________
		________
Total Liabilities	$	________
Net Worth (Assets minus liabilities)	$	________

FIGURE 15.1 ■ Sample balance sheet.

Management Profile

- Personal history of each owner (resume, business experience, letters of reference)

Company Information

- Copies of contracts you already have signed, lease agreements, insurance carried, etc.

Financial Information

- Personal balance sheet and your personal income tax returns for the past 3 years (Fig. 15.1)
- If already in business:
  - Company balance sheet and past 3 years of tax returns

PROFIT AND LOSS STATEMENT
(Date)

Income	
Nutrition counseling	$ ________
Public speaking	________
Nursing home consultation	________
Book royalties	________
Other	________
	________
Total income	$ ________
Losses (or Expenses)	
Rent	$ ________
Utilities	________
Telephone and answering service	________
Equipment	________
Salaries or consultant fees	________
Insurance	________
Auto	________
Benefits	________
Supplies	________
Other	________
Total expenses	$ ________
Net income	$ ________
Other reductions	
Taxes	$ ________
Depreciation	________
Other noncash reduction	________
Adjusted net income	$ ________

FIGURE 15.2 ■ Sample profit and loss statement.

- Company profit and loss statement (Fig. 15.2)
- Ages of accounts receivable and payables as of current date
- Business cash flow projections for at least 1 year (Fig. 15.3)
- Source of repayment
- Requested duration of loan
- Collateral to be offered to secure the loan (official appraisals of assets may be necessary when the market value is not easily determined)

CASH FLOW IN

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr, etc.
1. Beginning cash balance				
2. (Income sources)				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				

Total cash available:______________

CASH FLOW OUT

Operating Expenses

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.

Capital Expense

1. Loan payments
2. Income tax and Social Security

Total cash required

- Cash available less cash required
- Money to be borrowed (if negative total)
- Debit payments (if positive)
- Ending cash balance
- Operating loan balance (at end of period)

FIGURE 15.3 ■ Sample cash flow planning form.

WHAT BANKERS LOOK FOR IN A BUSINESS LOAN (5–7)

- **Experience and track record:** You may be new to this venture, but you must convince the banker that you have been successful in your career and other projects you have managed. Use your business plan to show your expertise.
- **Personal and business credit:** Bankers will look closely at your personal credit history, credit score, and how you have repaid debt in the past. Get a copy of your credit report and make sure it is accurate.
- **Personal investment:** Banks want to see that you have confidence in your venture by investing your own assets as well.
- **Collateral:** Besides personal investment, banks usually want something to secure the loan. This could be real estate, your home, a car, Certificates of Deposit, or other assets.
- **Repayment plan:** Explain how you will repay the loan from what sources of revenue. This plan must look feasible so ask for more repayment time to keep the payments lower.

CREDIT SCORES

Each person who makes purchases on credit in the U.S. begins to generate a credit report at the three big credit reporting agencies: Equifax, Experian, and Trans Union. The best score you can have is 850 points, and the median score for people with the best credit is 720 points (8). (You lose points for having too many credit card accounts, by having high balances—even if they are paid on time and, of course, for chronically late or delinquent accounts.)

Does it make any difference what your score is? It can make a BIG difference! According to *Kiplinger's Personal Finance Advisor* newsletter (8), for example, on a 30-year fixed rate mortgage of $250,000, having a score of 700 will cost $21 per month more in interest, or $7560 over the life of the loan. If the person's credit score is 675, he or she will pay an extra $112 a month, or $40,320 over the life of the mortgage.

How do you improve your score?

1. Only have one or two credit cards that you pay on in a timely manner—not just the minimum payment—keep the balances low.
2. Don't be tempted by the numerous mailed promotions for credit cards, and the 10% discount at checkout desks to start a new credit card—too many cards will hurt your credit score.
3. Annually, look at your credit reports (they are easy to find in search engines under "credit reports") and make sure that the information is accurate and no one else's credit has been merged with yours. If you shared credit accounts with a former spouse, make sure your report reflects separation of the accounts and get bad reports removed through working with your ex-spouse and the credit agency if they were not your purchases.
4. Remember that it may take 6 months to a year to repair a minor flaw (8). A big blemish, such as paying bills 30 days late, will take 3 to 4 years to be removed from your record (8). For a free estimate of your score, visit www.eloan.com.

Before beginning to prepare all of these documents, ask your individual loan agent what forms he or she needs. Most business consultants suggest that the loan package be typed and bound in an attractive folder or notebook (6).

Numerous options exist on loans, so work with your loan officer and financial counselor to choose one that fits your needs. Loans termed "line of credit" are very helpful for peace of mind and yet do not usually cost anything if you don't use the money. A loan may be set up so that during the first 6 months or first year, you only make interest payments. A bank may request that you submit semiannual or yearly financial status reports, but occasionally, nothing may be needed.

WHEN THE ANSWER IS "NO"

Don't look at a "no" answer as a total defeat. Ask the banker what else he or she needs and go back several times to achieve your desired results or until an agreement will not work out. Many loan officers make loan decisions based on past experience with certain professions or industries; being turned down may have nothing to do with you. Move on to the next institution and improve your package presentation.

There are times when you should *not* accept a loan if one is offered, for example:

- The term of the loan may be too short, so the payments may be too high and stressful each month.
- The interest rate may be too high and the payback amount outrageous.
- The loan may tie up all of your assets as collateral and limit your future growth instead of helping it.
- There may be closing costs on the loan worth thousands of dollars.

If you can, either try to find another funding source or do without the loan until bills are paid down more and terms improve. If you *really need* to use someone else's money to grow and prosper, consider the loan interest, closing costs, and so on, as the cost of doing business.

MANAGING MONEY

Whether you decide to incorporate your business or not, when your business begins to make money, it has a life of its own. The money generated must be accounted for. Records on incoming revenue should match bank deposits into the business bank account. All business expenses, plus the owner's salary or consultant fee, should be paid by check from that account. Personal expenses for groceries or the house note should only be paid out of funds appropriately transferred to the owner's personal account.

Banks usually charge higher service charges on business accounts than on personal ones, but the charges are deductible. Large amounts of business money should not be left in a non–interest-bearing checking account when it will not be used immediately. A checking-with-interest, savings, money market, or other interest account should be used even for just a few weeks to generate interest.

A business check should be written and cashed when you need petty cash. Cash taken in as payment from clients should be recorded as income and deposited, not pocketed or used.

GOOD BANKING RELATIONSHIPS

In his column in the *Dallas Business Journal*, bank executive Guy Bodine suggests that small business owners take the time to develop a relationship with their bankers before they need a loan. He gives the following eight points to help the relationship grow (9):

1. Meet your banker for lunch and keep your banker informed.
2. Educate your banker on the type of business you run, and make him or her come to your place of business.
3. Seek counsel from your banker.
4. Build credibility.
5. Limit surprises.
6. Do your homework: Develop a business plan.
7. Submit timely financial information to your banker—good and bad.
8. Keep your money deposited in the bank.

CASH FLOW

Cash flow is just what the name states, the flow of money through the business—how much money is coming in regularly, as compared to that needed to pay current bills. As a new business owner, it should be assumed that it may take 6 months or more before enough money will come in to cover all expenses. When planning for working capital in your start-up costs, allow enough to keep cash flowing and bills paid. Limited cash flow is not only frustrating, but if it becomes serious, more money may have to be borrowed or supplied by the owner to keep the business open. Cash flow can also be a problem for established businesses when unexpected economic downturns happen, large emergency expenditures increase the debt load, or joint venture partners back out at the last minute.

Suggestions for improving cash flow include the following (6):

- Request all payments at the time of the visit from patients; get up-front and interim payments for projects and retainers for consultant positions.
- Improve collection efforts on outstanding accounts, especially the larger ones.
- Lower inventories of purchased items, including supplies, teaching materials, printed diets, and promotion materials.
- Avoid making new purchases that will increase the business overhead and either deplete savings or create additional time payments.
- Deposit temporary excess funds in a savings account or money market fund to draw interest.
- Evaluate when to take cash discounts and pay a bill quickly to save money or when to delay paying bills until the end of the pay period to conserve cash outflow. Request longer payback periods from large accounts you spend a lot of money with each year—they may give you 60 or 90 days.

OFFERING CREDIT CARD USAGE

Most self-employed nutrition professionals offer the use of credit cards to their clients as a means of payment. Many clients like this convenience and the fact that they can then delay their payments. Credit cards help attract patients who would have delayed or avoided coming because of lack of ready cash. People who conduct group classes have found that there is less resistance to the up-front fee when credit cards can be used. According to credit card experts, a business can expect from a 10% to 50% increase in sales and about twice the average cash purchase, when it starts offering credit cards as a payment method (10).

A representative from your local bank can explain the service to you but check around for the best services and prices. Today, it is difficult but not impossible to become a merchant who offers credit card usage from a home-based office. However, you must have a good personal credit rating. To process credit cards, you will need charge forms and an imprinter, software for your office computer, or the automated swipe equipment to buy or rent for anywhere from $125 to $1200. You can input the charges by hand into your computer or swipe the card and get immediate confirmation that the card was charged. You will be charged 2% to 6% per bill, plus a processing fee of about $0.25 to $0.35 or more per item.

You can increase your fee slightly to cover the service charge cost but that would mean that all patients are subsidizing the credit card users. Actually, the increase in business may offset the added service charge so that no fee increase would be necessary.

ONLINE CREDIT CARD PAYMENT

The newest credit card innovations are online and eventually wireless payment of bills through services like PayPal and Billpoint (11). These two services are great ways to make payments to individuals and small businesses. Both services make their money by charging the seller (card user) a small fixed fee and a percentage of the total dollar amount sent on each transaction. PayPal is used in an estimated one quarter of all eBay auctions. And Billpoint, which is partly owned by eBay, is used many more times. The services can be used to have patients pay you, clients pay you, and you pay your bills, or send money to pay for your next printing job, instead of sending a certified check or wire transfer. To use PayPal, go to its Website and in a secure area, fill out a short registration form, enter your credit card number, and type in the email address of the recipient—PayPal takes care of the rest.

COLLECTION

Patients should be asked to pay at the time of the visit. When insurance is involved, you can call their insurance companies, PPOs, and HMOs to ask for co-pay amounts or whether your bill is covered at all. Ask patients to pay you the co-pay amount or the full amount and give them an itemized receipt or superbill (see Chapter 18. You can order a billing form at http://www.eatrightPA.org or from http://www.maryannhodorowicz.com).

The older your accounts receivable grow, the less likely you will be able to collect them. In a service business such as nutrition counseling, since no inventory is lost, no write-off can be taken for bad debts (except for actual expenses such as teaching materials, computer printouts, etc.). Therefore, new practitioners must realize that the money has to be collected or else the nutrition appointment didn't have financial value. When you sell a product like catered food, the actual expenses can be deducted, but not the lost profit if the bill is not paid.

A written contract or letter of agreement for a completed consultant job is very good proof that the other party should pay you. You may have to get a lawyer and go to court to get the money. You will be able to deduct your actual expenses for the job and the cost to recover the money. But the actual cost of lost time, mental aggravation, and legal fees may mean you are only breaking even or less. Timely collection of funds should be a business priority. The purpose of establishing credit policies and setting credit limits helps assure collection of accounts, and they set limits on the risk of loss.

Contracts or letters of agreement can be written for large consultant contracts so your fee and expenses can be submitted bimonthly and paid in 2 weeks. Another option is to break the total expense for a project into thirds, for example, and have one portion paid up front when the proposal is signed, another halfway through the project, and one at the end upon completion. You can always stop or slow down work if the agreed-upon payment is not made in a timely manner.

BILLING

If billing becomes necessary, here are some hints:

- Date statements as of the last day of the preceding month, rather than the first day of the current month. The customer will be inclined to pay sooner, since the statement appears to be a month older.
- Quickly identify delinquent accounts and speed up the collection process with a more vigorous follow-up. Accounts delinquent over 60 days should receive a pleasant, tactful phone call from you, or someone representing your business, requesting that a payment be mailed by a deadline date. If you don't receive payment or if the balance doesn't shortly follow a partial payment, a second tactful call should be made. Request immediate payment before the account is turned over to collection.

Collection agencies state that small medical bills are one of the hardest types of bills to collect. They state that any account over 6 months old, and often only 2 to 3 months, usually isn't collectible. Most agencies charge 50% of the bill as their fee if they collect it, and few will touch an account with under $100 outstanding.

Credit is costly if you can't collect. As an example, you provide $100 worth of services to a client, and your profit margin is 25%. If the patient never pays, you will have to collect $400 worth of fees just to recover the uncollected $100. When you consider how much you have invested in your business, you can easily appreciate why businesspeople can't tolerate delinquent accounts.

BOOKKEEPING

Accounting or bookkeeping keeps track of money you earn or spend and what you own and owe, that is, your worth. Your income (revenue minus expenses) is recorded on an income (profit and loss) statement (see Fig. 15.2). Your net worth is assets minus liabilities and is recorded on the balance sheet (see Fig 15.1).

A good bookkeeping system is necessary to record all of your financial transactions, but it should be simple enough for you to use yourself. The larger and more complex the business is, the more comprehensive, but not necessarily the more complicated, the bookkeeping system must be. The information generated will help you know your financial position, evaluate success, and pinpoint problems. These records can also help you make comparisons from year to year and help make more accurate projections for the future.

A good accountant or CPA will be able to help you choose the system most appropriate for your business. Over the years, my business has used several manual and software programs to keep our books. The two software programs small business owners say that they use the most in my experience are Quick Books Pro and Peach Tree. My best suggestion is keep it simple—don't create a monster that you don't need.

There are various low-cost simple bean counting software programs available for under $100. For full-powered accounting packages for mail order and other businesses with inventories or a large number of billing needs, there are good programs for under $500. Don't expect that accountant on a white horse to set the program up for you and you get away with knowing nothing! Read the book, learn the system, and either set the system up for yourself or pay someone trained in the system to do it, while you sit there and answer all the questions and watch how it is being done. You will *need* to know how to do it!

BUDGET

In his book, *Private Practice*, Jack D. McCue, says "fewer than 2% of (medical) practices have a budget" (12). The number of self-employed dietitians using a budget is no doubt as small. Agreeing on a budget, forces you to examine projected expenses and agree on the gross income, hours of work, and charges necessary to generate the projected net income.

Budget projections are very difficult to make during a year when a person's income is dependent on inconsistent projects and short-term consultant jobs. In those cases, a budget for each project and good fiscal management can help assure the year is balanced financially.

Another option is running monthly profit and loss and sales records to compare with the previous month's records, as well as the previous year's records, for the same period. This process makes you immediately aware of changes in income so purchases can be made or delayed, and bills can be paid or stretched out until the last of the credit period.

CASH VERSUS ACCRUAL ACCOUNTING

The IRS will ask that you to indicate which form of accounting you use in your bookkeeping—cash or accrual. Cash accounting is when you record income as you receive it and expenses as you pay them. When you record income as it is earned, not necessarily collected, it is called accrual accounting.

Accrual accounting is usually used in businesses that have large inventories of products where flexibility of figures and dates may be beneficial. Financial consultants usually suggest that service businesses such as consulting and private nutrition practices use cash accounting because it's simple and easy to use. A few years ago, Congress passed legislation allowing many small businesses that formerly had to use the accrual method to use the cash method. The advantage of this is expenses can be deducted when they are paid, not expensed over a long period, and uncollected income doesn't have to be counted, which saves on tax payments.

RECORD KEEPING

The following list shows the typical progression of record keeping for a physician-referred patient's visit.

1. Record patient's appointment and phone number. Call patient day before to remind about the appointment.
2. Obtain medical diagnosis, written or verbal diet order from referring physician, along with pertinent chemical scores.
3. During the appointment, fill out initial interview sheet, assessment, history, and food analysis (or questionnaire given to patient in advance by email or hardcopy). Make nutritional diagnosis.
4. Give patient written diet handouts.
5. Give the patient an itemized bill and request payment as he or she gets ready to leave. Mark the bill paid on patient's form.
6. Give an appointment card to the patient if there is to be another visit and make an entry in the appointment book or in online calendar.
7. List the payment on the bank deposit slip. Mark the bill paid in accounting system.
8. Send a follow-up communiqué to the referring physician. File the patient's folder.

Each day, record all income (checks and cash) on the business bank deposit slip and credit card deposit records in the accounting system. All bills should be listed as you pay them under expenses. The check date, check number, amount, and deduction code or account should also be listed.

Monthly, all income and expenses should be tallied and totals to date brought forward. You should also know how much money is uncollected in accounts receivable and how old each account is. Send bills out biweekly to shorten the collection cycle.

Whatever method you choose for bookkeeping, never lose sight of the fact that as the owner, you will ultimately be held responsible for the accuracy of the reporting system and its figures.

RECORD RETENTION

Files need to be kept on your business for important documents and records of business transactions. There isn't total agreement among experts as to the actual length of time to hold records, so check with your own advisors.

A suggested record retention schedule follows.

Permanent

- Audit reports of accountants, financial statements
- Capital stock and bond records
- Cash books and charts of accounts
- Cancelled checks for important payments
- Contracts and leases still in effect
- Correspondence (legal and important matters)
- Deeds, mortgages, bills of sale, appraisals
- Insurance records, claims, policies, etc.
- Patient files
- Corporate minute books of meetings
- Tax returns and worksheets
- Trademark registrations and copyright certificates

Seven Years

- Accident reports and claims
- Accounts payable and receivable ledgers
- Cancelled business checks (see permanent listing)
- Contracts and leases (expired)
- Invoices
- Payroll records
- Purchase orders and sales records

Three Years

- Correspondence (general)
- Employee applications and personnel records (terminated)
- Insurance policies (expired)

One Year

- Bank reconciliations
- Correspondence (routine)

TAXES

Learn which forms to file and how to fill them out, dates to file, and tips to minimize overpayment or underpayment of estimated taxes. Even if your accountant or CPA fills out the forms, you should be familiar with what he or she is doing.

As a self-employed person, you have various tax obligations, in addition to filing the federal and state income tax forms. You will need to estimate your federal tax commitment and pay it quarterly, up to 100% of what you paid the previous year if your income is under $150,000 or 110% if your income was over $150,000. There are also self-employment taxes (Social Security and Medicare) at the rate of 15.3% of your adjusted income as well as additional state or local taxes (income or sales). However, 50% of the self-employment tax is deductible on the 1040 Form. When you have employees, you must withhold and turn in federal income tax, Social Security, and Medicare plus match the employee's contribution to the last two.

Partnerships must file returns and specifically state the income items and deductions, but the profit or loss is passed through to the partners, according to the percentage of ownership. Corporations must file and pay taxes on any profit and shareholders must pay tax on dividends. S corporations do not pay taxes but have their profit or loss reflected on the shareholders' tax returns (unless the state does not recognize S corporations, and then they are taxed as a corporation). Some states also have personal/business property tax to pay each year on the value of the vehicles, copier, desks, etc., owned by the business. For people who own their own business real estate, there is also property tax to pay.

DEDUCTIONS

Check with your accountant or CPA for present tax laws on deductions. Self-employed practitioners usually deduct the following expenses (10,12–14):

- Office supplies, postage, teaching materials, etc.
- Rent paid for a commercial office or a home–office (if it meets IRS rule, used regularly and exclusively for your business), plus a percentage of the real estate taxes, mortgage interest, utilities, insurance, depreciation, repairs, and cleaning cost
- Cost of gas, water, and electricity at a commercial place of business
- Advertising and promotion
- Telephone, answering service, fax, modem, computer, and copy machine (present tax laws allow up to $24,000 deduction in the year you buy equipment without having to depreciate it, otherwise the expenditure must be depreciated over the life of the car, copier, etc.)
- Hire of office assistants and subcontractors
- Dues to professional societies (social clubs are usually excluded)
- Cost of operating an automobile for business (the amount varies each year)
- Furniture purchased new; used furniture can be depreciated but not deducted

- Professional books, newsletters, journals that help you run your business or keep you current
- Usually, 50% of the cost for business-related meals and entertaining
- Job hunting expense, if not looking for first job or a position in an unrelated field
- Expenses incurred in attending business conventions; be careful, if mixed with pleasure
- Gifts to clients up to $25.00 each—buy a gift instead of a meal to take the full deduction
- Health insurance
- Disability insurance if you have a C corporation as an employee benefit
- Contribution to retirement accounts
- Interest on loans and credit cards if business-related
- Bank charges and credit card processing fees on business accounts
- Professional licenses and fees
- Special uniforms
- Social Security taxes: deduct half of your payment

Any additional types of deductions should be discussed with your tax advisor. Personal, living, or family expenses are *not deductible.* These would be items such as:

- Withdrawals of money from the business by owner
- Insurance paid on a dwelling house
- Life insurance premiums
- Payments made for house rent, food, clothing (except uniforms), servants, upkeep of pleasure auto, etc.

Possible Deductible Home–Office Expenses (10)
(If the IRS criteria are met: exclusive use and principal place of business)

- Cleaning, repair, trash collection, and maintenance of a home office
- Condominium association fees
- Household furniture converted to use in the home office
- Household supplies used in the business space
- Mortgage interest (partial)
- Real estate taxes (partial)
- Security system
- Second telephone line, if it is used exclusively for the business, and business long distance on the first line
- Utilities attributable to business use of home

LOANS

Since money borrowed is not considered taxable income, repayment of the loan is not an allowable deduction. Interest paid on a business loan can be deducted.

RETIREMENT PLANS

Individual Retirement Arrangement (IRA), Simplified Employee Pension (SEP), 401 (k), Savings Incentive Match Plan for Employees (SIMPLE), and Defined Benefit Plan are examples of retirement plans self-employed people can use. These plans allow an entrepreneur to invest in tax-deductible accounts that accrue interest tax-free until retirement. Roth is an IRA funded with after tax money, but after maturity, the withdrawals are tax-free. Each option has its advantages and limitations. Before choosing the program(s) you will use, talk to your investment counselor, banker, accountant, and insurance agencies to see what they offer.

BUYING/SELLING AN ONGOING PRIVATE PRACTICE

Today, more successful dietitians own their own businesses, but with our mobile society, their businesses might be for sale. After years of working on a private practice, it is painful to think about giving it up, especially if the owner just lets it dissolve instead of selling it. However, determining the value of a service-type business whose success is closely associated with the personality of the owner is not easy.

Stuart Rosenblum, CPA with Wilkin and Guttenplan, made a nationwide study of how to set purchase values on various types of businesses (15). Although he did not identify a medical-related private practice, he did mention several service businesses. He estimated that an employment agency owner could ask 0.75 to 1.0 times the gross annual income, equipment included, for the business (the price varying with the business reputation, specialization, and client relations). The owner of an insurance agency with its policies renewed each year could ask 1 to 2 times the amount of the annual renewal commissions. A travel agency owner with good contacts but no ongoing revenue from prior sales could only charge .04 to .1 times the annual gross revenue for his or her business. The major determining factor in valuing a business is how much ongoing worth can be transferred to the new owner.

A buyer should consider the following factors (11,14):

- **Profitability.** What is the future profit potential of the business? Start by analyzing balance sheets and profit and loss statements of the present owner for the past 5 years, or however long the practice has existed. If these forms are not available, ask for copies of the income tax forms. Are the profits satisfactory? Have profits continued to grow? Ask the seller to prepare a projected statement of profit and loss for the next 2 months and compare it to your own estimations.
- **Tangible and intangible assets.** The most common are inventories, computer, furniture, and teaching materials. Make sure that they are in working order and not outdated. Consider whether the items are something you can use. If the asking value seems too high, call around to obtain estimates of similar equipment from dealers of new or secondhand items. Intangible assets would include the business name, any trademarks, copyrights, patents, or similar items. Make sure the seller owns the assets and can prove it. If a third party also has rights to the assets, a written consent assigning the rights to you must be obtained. The assets could be licensed to you for your unrestricted use as the buyer of the business. Also, be sure that the seller is restricted from adapting the trademark to use again.
- **Goodwill.** This is the dollar amount that the owner is asking for the favorable public and professional attitudes toward his or her going business. You should be realistic in determining how much you should pay for goodwill. Since it is payment for favorable public attitude, you should make some effort to check this attitude. Judge the value of this intangible asset by estimating how much more income you will make through buying the going business versus starting a new one. How much of the business will stay, and how much will be lost because of the present owner leaving? Even with the owner's best marketing efforts, his or her client accounts at nursing homes, drug rehabilitation centers, corporate wellness, or physicians' offices may not choose to contract with you for nutrition services. If that is the case, the business owner can't include those contracts in his or her determination of the worth of the business.
- **Liabilities.** You should be sure that there are no outstanding debts or liens on the assets. The seller should pay off all accumulated debts before signing an agreement.
- **Business worth.** After you have researched the above variables, there is still the question of worth. Determine this through negotiation and bargaining. Are you sure that local physicians and contracts will use your services? Do you have any verbal or letters of agreements to that effect? Have you carefully evaluated the lease agreement, zoning, the growing competition, and other possible factors that may affect your business? Will

the seller train you in running the business or offer any other intangible services?

Some business owners have sold out, only to start a new business in competition with the buyer. Consider placing limitations on the seller's right to compete with you for a specific period of time and within a specified geographic area. As a safeguard against costly errors, get legal advice before signing any agreement.

Items typically covered in a contract selling a small business are the following (14):

1. A description of what is being sold
2. The purchase price
3. The method of payment
4. A statement of how adjustments will be handled at closing (prepaid insurance, rent, remaining inventory, etc.)
5. Buyer's assumption of contracts and liabilities
6. Seller's warranties (against false statements and inaccurate financial data)
7. Seller's obligation and assumption of risk pending closing
8. Covenant of seller not to compete and any limitations
9. Time, place, and procedures of closing

The seller and buyer must comply with the bulk sales law of the state in which the transaction takes place. The purposes of this law are to make certain that the seller does not sell out, pocket the proceeds, and disappear, leaving creditors unpaid. The seller must furnish a sworn list of his or her creditors, and you, as the buyer, must give notice to the creditors of the pending sale. Otherwise, the seller's creditors may be able to claim the personal property you purchased (14).

PAYMENT

There are several ways in which practitioners have negotiated the payment for a practice. One is a lump sum of money up front. Another way is time payments with either a balloon note at the end of 3 to 5 years, or money up front followed by regular monthly or quarterly payments for several years. Another option is to pay an up-front amount, followed by a percentage of the gross income for a period of 1 to 5 years.

When the buyer and seller can't agree on the worth of the practice, several have used the last option: up-front money followed by a percentage. To keep sales from dropping, it's advisable for the seller to train the buyer on how to run the business and market it to present and future accounts or clients.

INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR OR EMPLOYEE?

As mentioned earlier in the book, the IRS is very particular about who is claiming to be a self-employed independent contractor and who is actually an employee. The self-employed person may be taking deductions like health insurance or home office that reduce the taxes paid. The key to who is employed and who is self-employed is essentially a matter of control—who calls the shots with regard to how you work (10). IRS Publication 937 details the guidelines, but following are some major distinctions:

- An employee must comply with your instructions about when, where, and how to work.
- An employee is trained to perform services in a particular way; independent contractors use their own methods and work for several accounts.
- An employee is integrated into the business; to remain independent, a contractor should avoid having permanent office space on the client's site.
- An independent contractor will more likely be incorporated and have a separate business with his own equipment, tools, or materials; projects will have end points and not be open ended.
- An employee is paid by the hour, week, or month; an independent contractor

is usually paid by the job or on a commission.

SUMMARY

Regardless of the type of business you have and what you sell, there are common problems shared by most businesses. There are also common business practices that may improve a business or business venture:

- Use a budget, and become involved in the regular evaluation of the output of your business and financial status.
- Keep accounting systems relevant and effective—reevaluate regularly. Take calculated, well-thought-out risks.
- Use prosperous periods to reduce your firm's debts and strengthen finances.

Many businesses and financial consultants encourage new business owners to use their first year in business to become established in the marketplace, while keeping overhead minimized. The second year should be used for gaining stability and becoming financially secure. The third year on could be used for expansion and calculated risks. To be rewarded with longevity, a business must first have a stable income generated from clientele support.

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START-UP DECISIONS AND COSTS

16

The cost of starting a business venture can vary greatly, depending on the region of the country and the tastes of the practitioner. Some feel that if they are going to start a business, they are going to do it right. Others try to see how little they can spend and still have the venture fly. Both can be successful, but both also have failed.

Investing a large sum in overhead each month to cover prime office space, extensive advertising, a secretary's salary, and new furnishings can create a successful, stable image right from the start. This should logically attract more business—eventually. Eventually is the important word. There is a point where adding more money to create a good business will not necessarily bring in more clientele faster. However, an equally bad error can be made by not investing enough to give clients the feeling that you will be there next week.

Before trying to guess how much you are willing to spend on this venture, first decide what kind of office, furnishings, services, staffing, and marketing you would ideally like to have. Then estimate the cost to see if you can afford it. Compromises may have to be made. It may be that initially, the office must be shared with another professional to cut the rental fee, or have it subleased for only 2–3 days per week.

As mentioned earlier, most business consultants encourage new business owners to buy only the essentials, look for affordable quality, and keep the overhead low, especially during the first year. During the second year, try to increase the profit and savings and ordinarily, wait until the third year to expand and invest in more expensive ventures. The years involved are not as important as the business and financial growth that should logically take place first.

It's a well-known fact in business that the more metropolitan the area and the more ideal the rental space, the higher the cost, unless the area is overbuilt. This is especially true in the East and West coasts and in more urbanized areas, compared with rural America. You must pay more for office space and services when competition drives up the costs. Fees for consultants can reflect these higher costs. The figures that follow are just rough estimates of the costs involved. Call around in your local area to get more accurate figures (Table 16.1).

IMPORTANCE OF WORKING CAPITAL

Up-front money is initially invested to buy or rent the essentials to start your business, for example, office space, printed materials, business cards, scale, calipers, insurance, telephone, answering service, furniture, and so on. The money that maintains these essentials and your salary are the working capital. Therefore, when estimating your expenses, recognize that there are two categories: up-front money to open the doors and maintenance money (working capital) to sustain the business. When planning a business, these two categories don't include the money being generated by clients.

TABLE 16.1 SAMPLE START-UP COST ESTIMATES

Needs	Cost Estimates/Issues
Working Capital	Have 6 months of capital available before starting (may be in savings or in a bank line of credit)
Lease	
Deposit	Damage and rent last month
Monthly rent	$12 to more than $45/square foot per year
Nameplates	$45 to $250
Parking	Is staff parking included in rent? Is cost high for clients?
Utilities	
Deposit	Amount varies. If you don't have a separate meter, negotiate amount based upon your estimated usage
Telephone	
Deposit	Amount varies
Installation	$100 to $800
Phone	You may buy or lease a phone system (2-line system about $50/month)
Business line (monthly rate)	$25 to $65/line
Yellow pages listing	One line is free; everything else is extra.
White pages listing	Listing is free, but boldface is extra.
Long-distance service	$10/month, plus phone bill charges
Services	
Answering service	$7 (phone company) to $125/month for live person
Answering machine	$40 to $300, one time purchase, more features cost more
Call forwarding	$2/month
Call waiting	$2/month
Accountant fees	$50 to $150 /hour
CPA	$75 to $300/hour, higher fees for more specialized and experienced
Attorney fees	$150 to more than $300/hour
Temporary secretarial service	$12 to $24/hour
Receptionist-secretary	Salary varies, $10 to $20/hour plus benefits
Virtual assistant	$25 to $40/hour, may be on retainer with a guaranteed number of hours per month
Cleaning service	$65 to $90/visit
Insurance	
Office liability, theft, and fire	$350 to $1250/year (when you own the building)
Malpractice	About $100 to $250/year, depends on the company and coverage
Disability	$25 to $40/month
Health	Amount varies, $250 to $400/month
Life	Amount varies, $25 to $50/month, depends on amount of payout and your age
*Office Supplies**	
Announcements	$25 to $65/100
Business cards	$10 to more than $99/1000
Letterhead	$25 to $60/100
Envelopes	$18 to $75/1000
Brochure	Varies greatly; get several quotes: $0.15 to $1.50/brochure
Logo	Artist fees vary greatly
Bookkeeping system	$60 to $500
Copying and printing	Shop for best prices; prices vary with quantity printed
Postage and miscellaneous	Keep supplies in modest amounts
Handouts and teaching materials	Keep in modest supply
Equipment and Furniture	
Medical scale:	More than $200
Copier	$75 to $250/month to rent or more than $1500 to buy
Calipers (good ones)	$100 to $450
Computer and software	$1000 to $3000 to buy new
Printer	$150 inkjet and $350 to $700 for laser
Fax machine	More than $300; may be a combination copier, scanner, answering machine, and fax
Furnishings and carpet	Amount varies greatly
Advertising	Experts suggest 10%–15% of the budget for advertising first year
Incorporation	$300 to $3500; cheaper legal fees online, but same filing fees

*Many office supply stores offer nice products for printers you can print yourself—represented by the lower numbers in this table.

The working capital should be readily available, but it does not have to be in your checking account. It could be a prearranged line of credit from your bank that isn't used unless it is needed—or any one of a number of choices mentioned earlier. As a reminder, arrange to have 6 months of working capital.

OFFICE SPACE

Choosing the correct office location, along with good marketing, may decide your ultimate success in business more than your nutritional expertise. Your office space can be instrumental in conveying stability, credibility, and success to patients and clients—or just the opposite.

Novices to business often don't know what to look for. Some choose office space that costs very little but, unfortunately, they sometimes do not get the quality they paid for. Others sign high-dollar leases that destine them to work more just to pay the rent. Some practitioners have found that sharing office space with a physician or even renting a space in the same building with an influential or controversial physician may keep other physicians from referring patients.

Knowing that some practitioners work successfully out of their homes, others try it, but have dismal luck. You can avoid most of these problems with a little research and objective evaluation.

OFFICE SPACE RENTAL

The ideal office location is convenient, accessible, and one that presents a good image. Clients will be more tolerant of inconveniences such as limited or paid parking, no elevator service, and little waiting room space, as your relationship with them grows. However, you can avoid these problems by anticipating them and by seeking a better location.

It may take several years before your business can attract clients from very far away. Practitioners suggest that offices should be located near the prospective clientele. Market research should help identify that area of a town. Avoid being too close to other more established entrepreneurial nutritionists unless you plan to specialize in other nutrition services not offered by competitors.

If you want to counsel patients, choose office space in a medical complex instead of an office building. You may find that you will attract more patients, if the physicians in the building are good referral agents. Fewer patients may get "lost" between being referred and actually scheduling a nutrition consultation.

Although "store-front" businesses in shopping malls or corner retail centers can do very well, private practitioners are not known for choosing these locations—yet. As emergency medical centers and daytime outpatient services become more prevalent in retail areas, maybe dietitians will opt to be there too.

There are a few final points on a rental location. Before signing the lease, closely evaluate your neighbors, the surrounding businesses in the area, and the landlord. If you are signing a long-term lease, it is important to know if the area is going downhill, if neighboring renters are disruptive, or if the landlord maintains the property well.

SEEING PATIENTS AT YOUR HOME

Before starting a private practice out of your own home, realize that the home environment can be a blessing or a big mistake. The home setting should be as professional as any private office. That means no interruptions or phone calls during patient interviews, and the place should be a comfortable, clean, and uncluttered setting. If the home does not have an appropriate waiting area, it may be necessary to allow more time between appointments.

A positive benefit of working out of one's home is that patients and clients seem to relax more quickly. This eases counseling sessions. Also, it is convenient for you since it requires no travel, and overhead is reduced; therefore, profit per hour can be higher.

On the negative side of using one's own home:

- It may be an intrusion into the privacy of your family.
- Patients or physicians may be hesitant to use your services.
- You may feel tied to the work setting.
- The image of the business may not appear established and successful.

It's usually a poor business decision to use your home to see patients or clients when it is difficult to find a large apartment or condominium complex.

If a den or another room is used exclusively for seeing patients or as your office, a percentage of the square footage and a portion of the related expenses may be a business tax deduction. A multipurpose room, such as a living room or den with the family television can't be used as a deduction. Consult with your financial advisor about your specific situation.

Zoning laws for your neighborhood should be checked before starting to see patients at your home. The laws were written to protect the neighborhood quality of life from any undue disruption, excessive traffic, or commercialism. Practitioners who work quietly out of their homes and have only one patient per hour do not find zoning a problem. If it becomes one, it may be possible to obtain a zoning variance for your business. Unless the zoning is correct for a business at home, an outside sign is usually not permitted.

HOME VISITS

Private practitioners in both rural and affluent areas have had success when visiting patients in their own homes. Patients enjoy the convenience.

For practitioners, home visits are not an efficient use of time, if they pull him or her away from the office where other patients could be seen. If, however, the practitioner does home visits instead of renting an office, the savings could make it a good option.

It's advisable when scheduling home visits to require a 24-hour notice of any cancellation, or a fee will be charged. This is especially applicable when working with very affluent, busy individuals who want your services, but they have lots of changes in their daily schedules. For these people, seeing a nutritionist at home is like seeing a personal trainer—it works well, but scheduling can be a problem. It should not be at your expense.

Travel time, gas, and other related costs must be figured to help you decide your home visit fees. Some practitioners charge their patients a flat rate while others charge according to the total time involved.

As home visits become more commonplace or when insurance coverage more readily applies to home rehabilitation, this option may be very viable and popular.

OFFICE LAYOUT

If you can afford it, it's always a nice touch to have a receptionist or a secretary—even one shared in common with other offices—to greet patients as they arrive. Patients expect to have a place to sit and wait, and a more private place for the nutrition consultation. Except for group meetings and large families, seldom will there be times when the waiting room will need more than four chairs and your office more than two.

Most practitioners decorate their offices to fit their own tastes, not as a medical clinic. Patients seem more at ease with warmer surroundings.

To establish credibility immediately, practitioners' certificates, diplomas, and awards should be framed and displayed in their offices. Patients do notice and read these items.

OFFICE SAFETY

For the sake of safety, it's advisable to have an office fire extinguisher, flashlight, and smoke alarm. A diagram of the exits should be attached to the back of the main door. The furniture and decorations in the waiting room and in your office should not be obviously dangerous or fragile. Any steps or stairways should be well marked and well lighted.

When clients are being seen in the evenings, it's best to ask group members to leave together or to call the building security person to make sure that the client or you get into your cars without problems. When you are working before or after normal business hours (when few people are around), keep the office door locked. This precaution also applies whenever working out of your home—do not just let people you do not know walk into an unlocked house. With a little care, potentially negative situations may be avoided.

OFFICE AGREEMENTS

RENTAL OR LEASE

The following guidelines may be helpful to you when renting space:

- Do not accept the stated rental fee at face value. Virtually all rents are negotiable unless there is a shortage of office space in the area.
- Be on the lookout for especially attractive bargains caused by the economy or overbuilding, or another professional who has too much room and wants to sublease some. Some property owners may be strapped for cash and be willing to make attractive offers.
- Look for ways to operate with a minimum amount of space. Should your business be successful, chances are good you will be able to find additional space when it is needed.
- When the business is growing and expenses are covered, practitioners seeking to serve a larger market area should consider renting two smaller offices at different locations (for example, one close to downtown and one in the suburbs), rather than one large one. This doubles the exposure and convenience of the business to its clients, while holding down the cost of doing business, if it's planned well.
- Be aware that many leases have additions that boost the rental costs well above the base price per square foot. Maintenance or management fees may not have limitations on escalation. Compute these costs into the amount of the lease before signing.
- In negotiating for counseling space, be sure to mention that your business will not need special plumbing, extra electrical outlets, or private lavatory facilities—this will mean less expense and fewer problems for the building owner, and the rental could begin sooner.
- Be sure to ask what the rental fee includes, such as, shared waiting room, receptionist, utilities, insurance, carpeting, and so on. Discuss who will own any shelving, carpeting, or other additions you may pay for in your office—usually the landlord takes ownership if it is "installed," unless another arrangement was agreed upon. If you want to cover the floor but not leave the carpet when you move out, use an Oriental-style or other rug.
- Will any months of free rent be offered to you as an enticement to rent?
- Check to make sure you can sublease your space in case the need arises.
- Most leases run a minimum of 1 to 3 years, but occasionally special concessions can be made for new or small businesses. Realize that the shorter the term of the lease, probably the sooner the rent will go up.
- Have a lawyer review the terms of the lease.

The major advantages of having a rental space of your own are that you can control its use, you can decorate it to your tastes, materials and patient records are readily available, and a business phone can be permanently installed. All of these elements help contribute to a more smoothly run operation and the appearance of order and prosperity. In a food management or similar practice, the office locale can be more flexible, especially when clients seldom come to the office.

Deposits

Before moving into a rented space, it may be necessary to pay not only the rent for the first month, but also the rent for the last month and a sizable damage deposit. In general, it may amount to three or more times the monthly rent! Ask your financial advisor about local state laws governing the money held by the landlord and your rights to interest, early payback, and so on.

Rental Fees

Rent is quoted in two basic ways: a monthly rate, such as $650 per month or as cost per square foot. The cost per square foot is usually for 1 year unless indicated otherwise. It may range from $12 per square foot in some locales to $45 or more in others. To figure your rent, first determine the total number of square feet to be rented, then multiply that figure times the cost per square foot to arrive at the total cost per year; finally, divide by 12 months to arrive at your monthly rent.

CO-LEASING

Co-leasing takes place when two partners or other people agree to rent an office jointly. This is an advantage when the square footage is too large for one, and it is useful to share the cost. If the office space is only large enough for one person at a time, the days are alternated.

It is not advisable to co-lease with another nutritionist, unless you are partners and working for the same goals. Otherwise, trying to advertise two businesses selling the same or similar service under the same telephone number, and handling "walk-in" patients without intruding on the territory of each other has proved too troublesome.

It is again extremely important that you choose a co-lessee well, and that a lawyer reviews the lease agreement. The agreement may hold you both equally responsible for damage or theft that your co-lessee or his or her clients inflict. It may leave you with the full responsibility if the other person moves or leaves and does not fulfill the entire lease agreement.

No doubt, if you and the other co-lessee present yourselves as "one" to the landlord, he or she will expect you both to be responsible for the property and the terms of the lease. You could therefore agree that each of you is responsible for any damage that happens in your space or during your rental time, and each co-lessee owes half the rent for the full term of the agreement. Again, make sure you can sublease the space if necessary. Read the agreement carefully, change terms as necessary and make additions, and then submit it back to the landlord.

SUBLEASING

Sharing office space is an alternative for those who want all the amenities of a nice office and locale, but at less expense. In addition to the office telephone and answering service, copy machine and receptionist may be shared. Again, all agreements should be in writing and should be reviewed by a lawyer.

An office may be subleased from a speech therapist or psychologist who only needs the office several days per week or who has too much space for his or her business. The office rent and expenses can be split according to the percentage of the week each uses the office, or for whatever amount you agree upon. Be sure to negotiate and get the best deal for yourself as you would with any landlord.

SHARING OFFICE SPACE WITH A PHYSICIAN OR CLINIC

Several different options are possible in this instance:

- A private practitioner could pay rent and remain independent and do her own billing, marketing, printing of materials, and scheduling of her own appointments while subleasing or renting space.
- Another option would be to give a percentage of the consultant fee in return for the use of the office and its amenities.
- A third option is to negotiate a retainer fee, where you see patients for the physician or clinic during a designated time in return for receiving a retainer fee—this is a good option when your services are sought after but the patient load is variable.
- A final option that some practitioners are still able to find is office space for free so that nutrition services are more accessible to the patient.

As you negotiate rent with a physician or clinic, private practitioners warn that office managers and doctors sometimes overestimate the number of persons you will see. Agree on a financial arrangement you can afford, not on one based on huge expectations.

Close association with other professionals can provide numerous benefits. Several very successful practitioners report that much of their success when they first started in business came from having one or more "mentor" physicians who promoted them. Some physicians charge for the space, but others offer it for free out of friendship and respect for the practitioner and as a service to patients.

Depending on your individual situation, some important questions need to be discussed with the physician: Will you be able to see other doctors' patients at the office? Who will schedule, pull charts, and bill patients? Can you use the copy machine? Who will market you and how? Remember that the more services you request, the more you may have to spend. Write down all agreements and have a signed copy for each party. A simple letter of agreement will work. A termination/separation clause is advisable. When a contract is coming up for renewal, you should start negotiating at least a month in advance to work out all differences.

OTHER EXPENSES

Parking

In some locations, parking space is at a premium, especially in downtown or medical center areas. If a parking lot is owned by your building, does the lease include spaces? Can they be added when negotiating the lease?

Name Plates and Floor Directories

Most office buildings have some kind of directory outside the building, in the main lobby, or on each floor, in addition to door nameplates. Seldom will a landlord of a medical building allow you to print your own—they like them standardized. This again could be a lease option to negotiate. Don't assume anything; one practitioner had to pay up to $26 per line for four partners on six floors.

Utilities

When utilities are not included in the lease, utility companies can give you an estimate of your monthly bill. For electricity, they will need to know the number of watts of each light and how many hours per week it will be used in addition to the estimated usage of other equipment, such as air conditioning or computer. For gas heating, the square footage of your office can be used in determining an estimate. A money deposit or a letter of credit may be necessary to obtain new service. If you live in the area, try to negotiate using your established good credit at home.

Telephone

The ongoing changes in phone service will necessitate that you check on the best telephone coverage available locally. To survive, a business must have good telephone service and coverage.

A new business phone system may cost $100 to $800 or more to install with new wiring, digital subscriber line (DSL), and multiline equipment. Converting an existing private line in an office or at home is usually only a fraction of that cost. If you have never had a business line, the telephone company may ask for a deposit—call for an estimate. The monthly fee for the business telephone line will range from approximately $25–$65 or more per line.

Other services you may consider for your phone are call waiting, call forwarding, conference lines, and a limited service line. Call waiting will allow you to accept a second incoming call while keeping the first call on the line. Call forwarding allows you to transfer your incoming phone calls to another phone number where you or your answering service can answer it. Limited service lines are not available everywhere, but the line allows a limited number of outgoing calls to be made each month for a reduced rate. Calls above the limit are charged extra; incoming calls are not counted. The rates and availability of these services vary—so call your local company for more information.

Whenever you pay for a telephone line, business or personal, you will be given a listing in the white pages for free; bold print is extra. To have a yellow pages listing, you must have a business line. One listing under the most appropriate heading (probably "Dietitian" or "Nutritionist") will be given to you. Additional listings, bold print, extra lines, logo, a large ad, and so on will cost extra and will be billed monthly or however you arrange. If you share office space with someone who already has a business phone, for an added fee, you can have your name added to that line. It then will be in information and in the yellow pages.

Answering Service

When you begin your business, the phone should be answered during normal business hours, Monday through Friday. An answering service or voice mail can give you coverage when you are away from the phone. The public is familiar with talking to a machine and will use it if the message is clear, creative, and of good quality. It's a personal decision whether you want to give out your cell phone number.

SERVICES

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT/RECEPTIONIST

There is little doubt that a small business owner would enjoy using the services of an assistant or receptionist; however, there are ways to have the duties covered without the full cost of an employee. According to surveys conducted by popular magazines for women, a good assistant is usually paid as much as a good entry-level dietitian.

Some alternatives are to hire someone part-time for several mornings per week, set up your office so that you can handle it yourself, use a temporary service at peak times of the year, hire a dietetic technician, or find shared office space where services of a receptionist are included.

VIRTUAL ASSISTANT

Virtual assistants cover similar skills to those of an administrative assistant, but the person may also have specialized skills in writing, marketing, editing, and so on—and the person may live in Hong Kong. This person is hired to help relieve your work burden on a daily or per project basis. Some virtual assistants ask for a monthly retainer, which will cover a specified number of hours with additional hours charged on a per hour rate. Others will help out on a project basis.

INSURANCE

MALPRACTICE

Call the American Dietetic Association to find the most current malpractice carrier and policy information. Prices vary according to the number of hours worked, the desired limits on coverage, and whether media work is covered, as well as traditional services. There are several companies with different types of coverage available.

OFFICE LIABILITY AND FURNISHINGS

When clients or patients visit your office, there is always the risk that someone will get hurt on the premises. In rental space, the landlord usually carries liability coverage, but the coverage is often limited. Insurance for office contents in case of fire, theft, or other loss is easily acquired, along with the liability coverage. When sharing space at an office or clinic of a physician, good liability coverage may already be available to you under their policy—check. When working out of your home, home insurance companies ask they be notified so coverage can be increased. Some insurance companies are reluctant to offer home office coverage for expensive electronic equipment like computers, laser printers, and so on. Check around to find a good policy.

DISABILITY

Disability insurance will provide a certain level of limited income while you are ill or disabled. The most expensive coverage begins after only 15 days of illness and lasts 5 to 10 years up to life. To reduce premium cost, choose coverage that starts after 60 or 90 days of illness and lasts for only 1 or 2 years. You may feel this insurance is an unnecessary added cost, but statistically, more people get ill or disabled by an accident, chemo treatments, chronic diseases, and so forth than get killed. If you are your sole support, or you have family that depends on your income, this insurance can keep your life stable while you recover.

The premium and disability coverage are dependent on your age, health, and present income. Unfortunately, self-employed individuals have a more difficult time qualifying for this type of insurance, according to most companies. Check with several insurance companies, including ADA, to see what they have to offer and compare costs and coverage. If you are still employed, start the coverage before you quit your job.

HEALTH

Health insurance is a necessity with healthcare costs of today. *One hospital stay for 1 week or more could wipe out the savings and business of an uninsured person.* To help reduce the cost of a policy, try to join under a spouse's policy, contact local HMOs or PPOs, or join a group policy (through executive clubs, rural cooperatives, small business owner groups, local chambers of commerce, or local insurance brokers). In some cases, if you have two or more employees in your business, you can qualify as a group. Another way to keep premium payments lower is to choose major medical coverage instead of a comprehensive policy. You would have to pay the first $2500 to $5000 of a bill, but then coverage may be 80% after that. Prices and coverage vary so greatly you will need to take the time to get several quotes. Do not go uninsured.

LIFE

Life insurance to pay off your loans and debts, as well as to help support your family in case of your death is an important consideration. Term life insurance is the least expensive for the amount of coverage if you are younger and in good health. However, as a person grows older, the yearly premiums may increase quickly, unless you choose a policy with a guaranteed premium.

Variations of whole life policies are readily available today. This type of policy is more expensive from the beginning, but eventually can act as a savings account to be borrowed against. This type of policy has a definite total price; therefore, premiums do not continue indefinitely as with term insurance.

OFFICE SUPPLIES

BUSINESS CARDS

Before ordering cards, make sure your address and phone number are stable. A graphic designer can design your cards, or you can choose from the layout options at a quick-print store. Because of the cost savings, most businesses order 500 or 1000 cards at a time. Cost for printing depends on the layout, paper, ink, embossing, and number of ink colors used. The first time the cards are run, there may be design and layout fees. When the ink color is changed to one not commonly used, there is an ink clean-up charge. Four-color laser cards can be printed from a computer file in a few minutes.

LETTERHEADS

If the letterhead paper or ink is special, it is more economical to print a larger amount because of the one-time charges for ink clean up, embossing, imprinting, and so on. You can also print the heading as you print letters if you keep the letterhead paper stock on hand.

An economical way to send out a large mailing or form letter on your letterhead is to produce an attractive, clean master copy, and reproduce it on good paper, or print it on a good quality laser or inkjet printer (logo, your name and address, and letter all at the same time). Do not use heavily textured paper, because this interferes with the ink attaching to the paper. A 24# weight paper at 90–102 brightness works great. Business letters are usually sent on 8 1/2″ × 11″ paper, but notes can be on any size with the appropriate size envelopes.

BROCHURES

Good quality brochures are assets to a business; typesetting or desktop publishing is highly recommended. To save money, the brochure could be a self-mailer, but for times when the best image is required, use an envelope. Before printing your brochure, have several people read it and offer suggestions. Make sure it's copyedited and free of errors before it's printed.

BOOKKEEPING SYSTEM

A beginning bookkeeping system with an appointment book, cash ledger, receipts, and file folders can be purchased for under \$60. Simple software systems are available for under \$100. Your accountant or CPA may request that you purchase a definite kind but most are reasonable. It may be to your benefit to use Quicken, QuickBooks Pro, Peach Tree, or another system that can be emailed to your accountant for monthly or quarterly reports and review (see Chapter 15). You can easily convert the final year-end tallies into an income tax return or send the file to your accountant. Don't purchase a more complicated or expensive system than you need. Upgrade the system as your needs mature.

DIETS AND HANDOUTS

The most important criteria for patient or client materials are to write them in simple, clear language on impressive paper with an easy-to-read layout. Also, don't load the patient down with every free booklet available on a subject—pick the best ones, free or not. Use online and computer capabilities to personalize materials.

EQUIPMENT AND FURNISHINGS

MEDICAL SCALE

If a scale is used, a good balance beam medical scale is suggested. A waist-high balance beam is not suggested, because it is awkward for very heavy patients to stand on the scale without touching the beam. Spring scales are not always accurate.

SKINFOLD CALIPER

For consultants who work with weight loss, sports nutrition, or nutrition assessment, calipers are a must. They range in price from approximately \$5 for the plastic ones to \$175–\$250 for the metal ones to \$450 for the computerized ones.

COMPUTER

A computer, its components, printer, and software are necessities in business for email, word processing, nutrient assessment, desktop publishing, scanning, blogs, website sales, search engines, and so on. For businesses where you write manuscripts and letters, search databases, and communicate with other businesses, a computer and fax are standard office equipment.

COPIER

When the volume warrants it, consider buying a photocopier—new or rebuilt. Practitioners state having a plain paper copier to reproduce forms, bills, bulk mailings, instruction materials, and so on saves tons of office time. At the start of a business, it may be more economical to share a copier or find a convenient quick copy store. Used, rebuilt copiers are available for reasonable prices. Also, if your needs are small, consider buying an all-in-one machine that scans, prints, photocopies, and acts as a fax and answering machine.

OFFICE FURNITURE

Prices vary with personal taste. Make the setting comfortable for yourself and the client. For dietitians who will be seeing patients who are very large, buy sturdy chairs without armrests or with a wide area between armrests, and not so soft that standing up becomes embarrassing.

For practitioners who will be meeting with executives from large corporations or when image is important to clients, consider buying pre-owned office furniture from a reseller or business auction house. Because the furniture is used, it costs less but the quality is usually superior to new fiberboard furniture at the same price.

MARKETING

ADVERTISING

Business consultants suggest that at least 10% to 15% of your budget be allocated to cover the cost of the kickoff campaign of the first year in marketing, such as newspaper ads, business lunches, brochures, and direct-mail letters. Also, allow 10% or more of each additional year's budget for ongoing marketing.

SUMMARY

Although you may think this covers all of the applicable expenses, there will be more. Memberships and subscriptions will need to be budgeted. Things break and delivery fees will be higher than anticipated. It all takes money—that's why you need additional cash to cover petty cash expenses and unexpected larger expenses.

Remember to buy only what you need. Keep your overhead low. Spend your money on things that produce the most bang for the buck—such as an impedance machine that measures percentage of body fat and creates another source of revenue instead of buying new curtains when the old ones will do fine. Good preplanning makes the evolution of a business an anticipated pleasure, instead of a crisis management seminar.

17

PRICES AND FEES

An important element of managing money is knowing the value of your time and effort. Too often we spend countless hours doing $12-per-hour office work when we should be doing $125-per-hour "boss work" like making public presentations or negotiating contracts or patient counseling. If you have something more important that you could be doing and you have the money to pay for it, don't sit around doing work that can be easily delegated.

PRICING STRATEGIES

One decision you must make about each service or product you offer is its price. The price creates an image for a product, as compared to its competitors, that makes it very attractive to its target markets or it turns them off. The perceived value of the product or service must warrant the price being asked.

Historically, dietitians have charged very little for their services and products, but that is changing. We still tend to underestimate the size of the market willing to buy a "Chevy" option and we keep offering the "Kia." Perhaps, we have worked with limited budgets too long.

Do you know that there are dietitians charging $225 to $300 for an initial diet consultation of about 1.5 hours with an additional 30 to 60 minutes for paperwork? Do you realize that there are some dietitians charging $2000 or more to speak for an hour, $3000 per day to act as a media spokesperson, or $500 per day to work in a food booth for a commercial company? A practitioner doesn't start out at these prices, but they evolve as the person's skills, reputation, speaking ability, knowledge, body of accomplishments, and sphere of contacts evolve. Does this take 2, 5, 10, 20, or 50 years? The answer is "yes"; it takes different amounts of time for different people to evolve. Some of course, remain at the status quo, never testing the boundaries nor exploring the possibilities.

The six common pricing strategies are the following (1):

1. **Demand oriented:** You set the price according to what you think the market is willing to pay; all the strategies use a little of this method.
2. **Skimming:** You charge a very high price to reach a small, elite, and profitable market.
3. **Trading down:** You add a lower-priced, less prestigious service to your existing elite service; this is used to expand to a less elite market segment.
4. **Trading up:** You introduce an elite expensive service to increase the status of other generally lower priced services and to attract new buyers.
5. **Cost plus:** You start with what it costs you to produce the service or product and then add a mark up according to institution policy (commonly used on books, clothing, etc.).
6. **Under bidding:** You set the price with a low profit margin to be more attractive than competitors; this often makes you work very hard with nothing to show for your efforts.

COMMON QUESTION

Q: *There seems to be a great variation in the cost of nutrition services. As a new consulting nutritionist, I am struggling to create an image and become known. How do I charge?*

A: In any transaction, each party gives up something to obtain something else. Price must reflect the perception of a fair exchange by both parties.

Even when no money is exchanged such as with free public health services, donation of time to dietetic or trade organizations, giving free speeches, and the like, there is still an exchange of something valued. If you don't feel the exchange is fair, you usually won't continue doing it.

In addition to monetary value, price may reflect the value of your time, effort, personal services, caring, loyalty, power or prestige, goodwill, and many other nonmonetary components. A higher price generally connotes more value placed on the product or service that a client receives. Unless there is some advantage to your service as compared to the competition, you will only be able to compete on price.

Many dietitians jeopardize their ability to give time-consuming, higher-quality services because their prices are so low that they must spend their time seeing many more people just to make ends meet. It appears that the nonmonetary variables such as the uniqueness of the knowledge we share, the highly individualized care, the considerable overhead, and the initial program development time often have not been considered.

No matter what price you charge, the "perceived value" felt by the buyer must be equal to or higher than your fee to continue to attract customers. The best way to justify your worth is through measuring the outcome you produce through your consultation.

(Answered by Marianne Franz, MBA, RD, Louisiana Tech)

ESTABLISHING FEES

It's illegal (price-fixing) for us to discuss what charges you could ask for your services in a local area. But we can share the results of the *2008 World-wide Entrepreneurial Dietitian Survey* because the results don't identify local markets or individuals in any specific country. After you see how other dietitians value their time, you can decide for yourself what you need to charge.

We can also discuss the following factors to evaluate when you establish fees for your work:

- How much expertise and experience does the work require?
- How difficult or demanding is the job?
- How much total time will the job, paperwork, and follow-up take?
- How much direct overhead cost (handouts, teaching materials, travel expense, hiring another consultant to help, secretarial time, computer use, etc.) and indirect overhead (to maintain office, telephone, insurance, etc.) will be expensed to this job?
- What will the market bear so that you don't price yourself out of it?

Fees are a curious item. If you charge a small fee, sometimes, not always, patients, physicians, and clients think that you aren't as good as the competition. If you charge a fee that your reputation, years of experience, or expertise can't support, no one will pay it. Arriving at "correct" fees for different types of jobs is more a process of negotiation and learning from experience. As a practitioner becomes known for quality work and a good reputation, new business will come his or her way. The fee will become less important because people are willing to pay for what they feel is the best. According to Harry Beckwith, marketing consultant, your fees aren't too high until 25% of your clients complain (2).

SURVEY RESULTS ON FEES (3)

Survey respondents (1369) were asked how they determine what to charge for their services (3).

- 47.4% based on what other professionals are charging
- 27.3% based on what the market will bear

- 13.3% based on education and experience
- 6.8% based on best guess
- 5.3% based on percentage over expenses

FEE STRUCTURES (3,4)

FLAT RATES

The same fee is charged for the same service to any client. It is used when selling the same service again and again because you have a good idea of the time and expense involved. It is easy to use for speaking engagements, routine clinical consults, and group classes.

PER HOUR RATES

The hours of work are variable or may be unknown in advance so a fee is charged only for the hours worked. It is used for subcontracting, long therapy sessions, and consulting projects. Clients are most comfortable with an approximate time frame or maximum number of hours.

PER HEAD RATE

This rate changes according to the number of individuals who participate. This rate is often used for workshops, teaching, or speaking to groups who "pay at the door." It does involve some risk, but if attendance is good, you can do very well. You can couple this rate with a flat rate to charge for a minimum number with each extra person at an added fee.

PROJECT RATE

This rate covers the development of a project similar to writing a series of educational booklets or comparing bids from contract food service companies for client accounts. Clients like project rates because they are easy to compare. This rate includes your expenses, overhead, profit, and some room for miscalculations or unexpected delays. If the client is at fault for the delays, your agreement should make him or her responsible for any added costs. After signing the contract, if the project is cancelled through no fault of yours, you should have some compensation for your lost income. To protect yourself from nonpayment, consider asking for your fee in thirds (one third upon signing an agreement, one third midway, and one third at the end upon completion and approval) or half the amount up front and half at the end.

RETAINER FEE

You ask for a retainer fee when the client wants you to be "available" whether for a consultant account, physician's office, or on a Board of Directors of an organization. The amount you charge may be based on your normal hourly rate or whatever you feel your availability is worth. A retainer should be tied to a limit (such as one 8-hour day per week or 40 hours per month or whatever) and anything over that amount should be charged extra. If you presently work at a job on commission where you take all the risk and the workload is inconsistent, but you feel that the client wants you, negotiate to have the job changed to a retainer so you can depend on a more stable income.

CONTINGENCY FEE OR COMMISSION PAYMENT

You are paid only if the project is successful or the sale is made. Writers are sometimes asked to work on speculation, and employment recruiters or many salespersons work on commission. The risk is high because a lot of time and overhead may be invested without any promise of income, but the income is usually hefty when it does come. If someone asks that you work on commission, make sure the reward is worth it either financially or professionally.

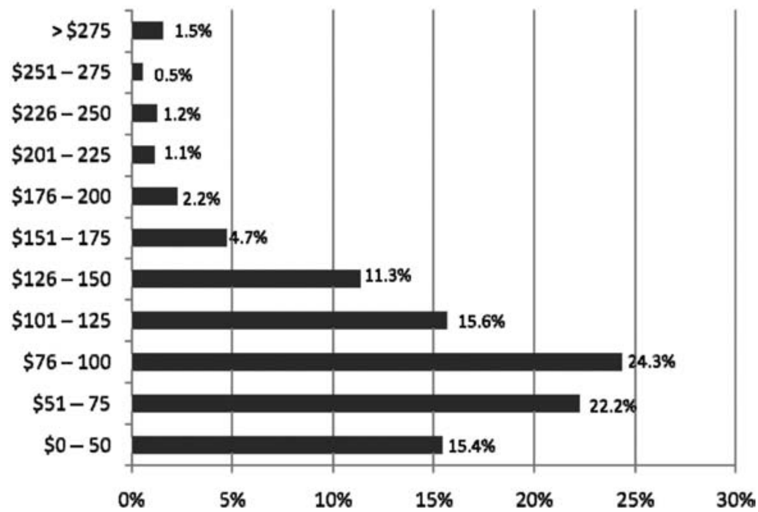

FIGURE 17.1 ■ Fee for the initial consultation (3). 929 respondents.

FEES IN DIFFERENT SETTINGS

DIET INSTRUCTION FEES

These fees should be consistent or based on an hourly rate so that patients feel that they are charged fairly. There is no standardized way of charging for nutrition consultations. Some practitioners charge by the hour but charge a minimum fee for very short appointments. They give their patients an estimate when asked how much the fees are. Other practitioners charge by the visit and then try to keep the appointment within a certain time range.

In the survey, 929 respondents reported how much they charge for an initial appointment with a patient, client, or athlete (3). See Figure 17.1.

When asked how long the initial appointment lasts, 931 respondents answered and helped explain why some dietitians would charge less than $50 for an initial appointment. See Figure 17.2.

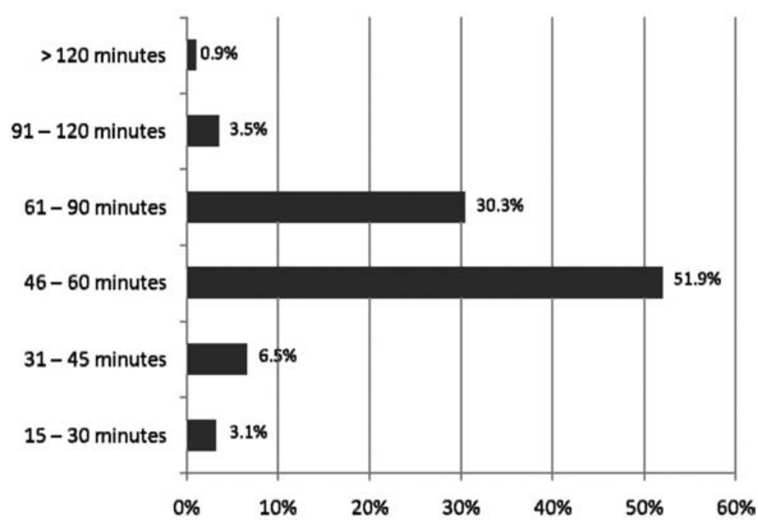

FIGURE 17.2 ■ Duration of the initial appointment (3). 931 respondents.

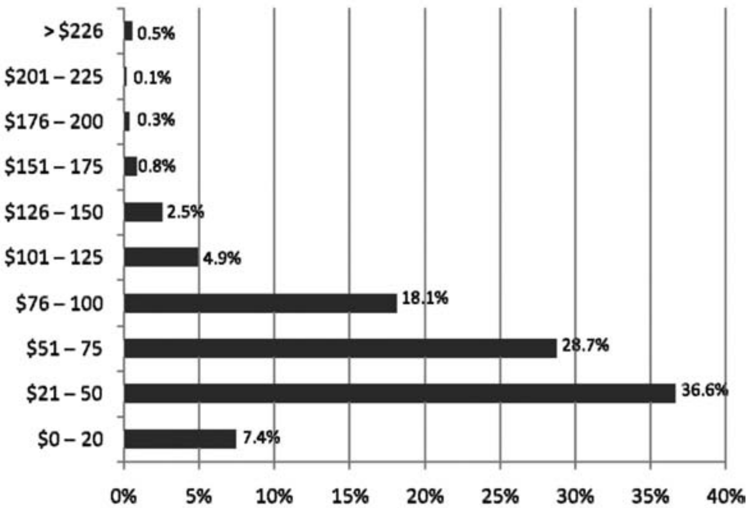

FIGURE 17.3 ■ Fee for the follow-up appointment (3). 917 respondents.

The cost of a follow-up appointment was explored next (Fig 17.3).

When asked how long the follow-up appointment usually lasts, 923 respondents answered and helped explain why some dietitians would charge $20 or less for a follow-up appointment (Fig 17.4).

Some practitioners have programs where the diet consultation "package" takes 3 to 8 or more visits. Printed diets are given out only after much education and assessment has taken place. The program commitment is made clear in the beginning. The fees are either paid in cash or credit card up-front, or payments are heavily weighted up front or paid as they go.

Following this same way of thinking, many practitioners automatically include several follow-up visits in the fees charged to clients. It's commonly agreed that a one-visit instruction *rarely* changes behavior. By having the follow-up included, patients learn the importance of long-term commitment to change.

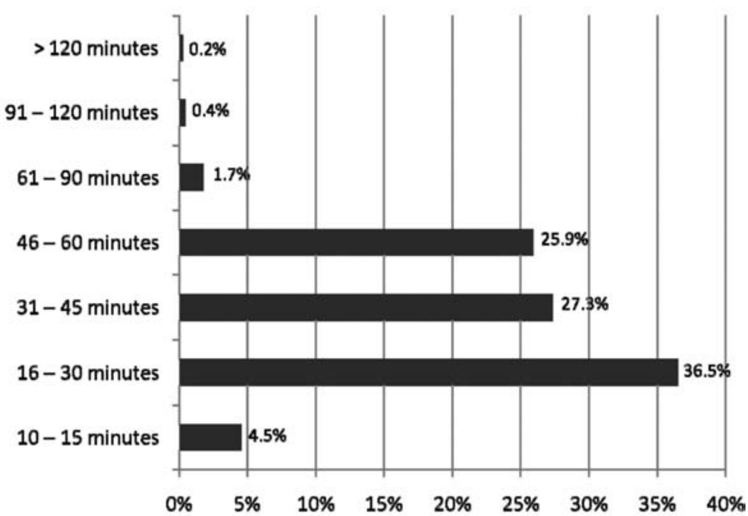

FIGURE 17.4 ■ Duration of the typical follow-up appointment (3). 923 respondents.

Group classes for weight loss, gourmet, "natural," or heart-healthy cooking are very popular with the public. For the private practitioner, group classes represent a challenge, a creative outlet, and the possibility of making more income per hour because of reaching more people at a time. Here are two hints that may be helpful to a practitioner thinking about doing group classes: first, preregister attendees instead of letting them show up at the door, so that you can cancel if attendance will be poor or adjust your room and handouts if a large number plan to come. Second, collect the fee for ongoing classes at the first session or when preregistering so that attendance will be better and your budget more stable.

When asked in the survey if practitioners accept Medicare or insurance, 34.6% (292 respondents) said yes, and 65.4% (551 respondents) said no (3). When asked what percentage of their clients use insurance or Medicare if they accept it, the amount ranged from 50% to 90% (3).

PUBLIC SPEAKING

Speaking to professional groups or lay audiences can be very satisfying and fun. It should also be financially rewarding. Organizers often work harder to have a better audience turnout when they are excited about the speaker and there is a fee to cover. Occasionally, there will be times when you choose to give a free talk. Let the organizers know that you are waiving the normal fee, so they don't tell everyone you work for free. If the organization is nonprofit, ask for a receipt showing that you donated your fee, or ask that they write you a check, which you will deposit and write back to them. Check with your accountant because they don't always agree on what is necessary for tax deduction purposes.

When you first begin public speaking, you may not be familiar with what organizations are willing to pay. The best way to find out is to ask the person who calls to set up an engagement. They know what their fee boundaries are, and most people are very willing to share and negotiate with you. If the fee is low, try asking for more; also ask that your travel costs be covered or include an extra amount in your fee to cover local travel expenses. Always take your business cards and brochures to pass out and let everyone know where to find you. An easy alternative is printing the information on the handouts for your presentation.

As you become an established and sought-after speaker or an author of some note, your fees can reflect this. Travel and accommodations will be included for out-of-town travel. However, although the fees will be much higher, when you consider the travel time to distant speeches and any lost income while away from the business, the actual net income may be modest. Speakers often look on the opportunity as one to grow professionally, to travel and meet new people, and to sell books, products, consulting services, or whatever. With the cost of air travel today, many program planners schedule their meetings so that speakers and attendees can stay over a Saturday night.

Survey results showed that 546 respondents were professional speakers. Out of that number, 227 spoke for national or international groups, which garnered the highest fees (3) (Fig. 17.5).

Survey results showed that the most popular fee for state and national dietetic meetings and local business groups was in the bottom range, \$100 to \$500. However, looking at the local groups category, for example, the majority 83.2% (406) charged \$500 or less, but 82 people charged \$501 to less than \$7500 in the same venues. The point is that groups will pay more for high-quality presentations. Forty-six percent of speakers gave speeches at low or no cost for less than a year while they learned their speaking skills; another 25% gave speeches at low or no cost for 1 to 2 years. When promoting themselves as a speaker, 12.4% (49) of dietitian speakers use an agent or speaker's bureau; 16.5% (65) usually sell a book at presentations; and 8.2% (31) negotiate a book signing at most speeches (3).

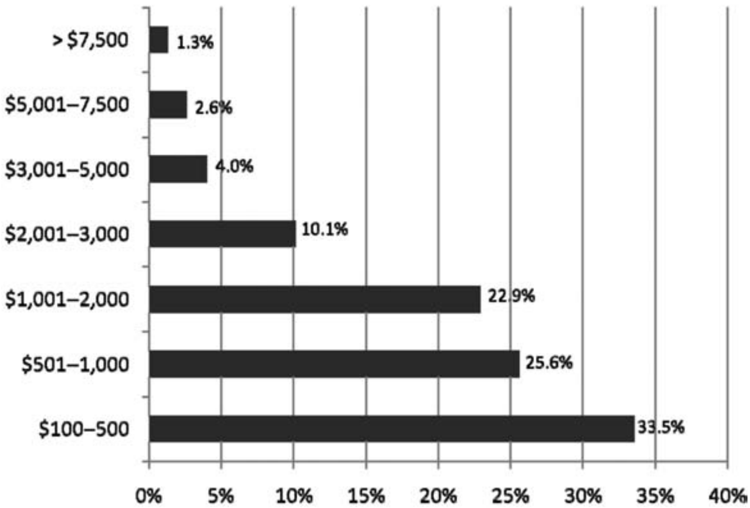

FIGURE 17.5 ■ Speaking fees for national or international groups (3). 227 respondents.

CONSULTING TO BUSINESSES, MEDIA, OR SPORTS TEAMS

Consulting to businesses usually comes after years of specialized training or experience in the field. However, young practitioners with expertise in sports nutrition, wellness, kids programming, media spokesperson work, and other emerging areas are also being successful.

If you are stumped on how much to ask for a consultant job, ask the client to make an offer, like a daily rate to make a media tour. At least then you would know the ballpark they are in, and you can then negotiate if it is too low. Don't answer too quickly and agree to a figure without doing your own calculations first. Clients are often hesitant about mentioning a fee first, in case you would have been willing to work for much less.

Charging Commercial Clients

This fee should be different than charging a patient in a private consultation because what you produce, like a menu, video script, article for publication, or whatever will potentially bring in revenue to the client. You can always negotiate to arrive at the final agreement. What you want to avoid is coming in too low so you don't make money or coming in so high that you sour the client on using your services. You are looking for a well-thought-out beginning asking price with room to negotiate. The factors to consider in pricing your services are the following:

- The popularity and recognition factor of your name and reputation. How the product will be used and the profit potential for the client.
- Your best estimate plus a cushion on the number of hours and other resources this project will cost you.
- Consider asking for a royalty for as long as the item is in use. Ask for editorial or revision rights to update the product as needed or yearly. And finally, if the client wants to state that you are a staff member or consultant, ask for a retainer fee and have a letter of agreement on your rights and liability limitations. Talk to your professional advisors concerning your protection, proposal, fees, and before signing anything.
- Have your agreement on fees, expected outcomes, review process, project aborting, etc. down in writing and signed before you start work.
- Ask for a nonrefundable portion of your fee up front to cover some expenses in case the project plans change.

BOX 17.1 ***When You Aren't Sure What to Charge: A Personal Experience***

Many years ago, I was contacted by a national food company about possibly becoming its media spokesperson for a healthy fish product. I sent my demo tapes for evaluation, and the contact woman called to say that I was chosen for the job. We discussed the dates and cities for the media tour, my training at the home office, and my availability—then she asked what I would charge per day.

Well, I hadn't done this work for 9 years—which was one of the reasons I was chosen—they wanted a fresh face that wasn't associated with other products. Normally in these situations, I would pick a number out of the sky and say it immediately. The last time I had worked, I had been paid $300 per day, so surely the fee would be up to $450 or $500 per day by now. But, I had just seen the movie, *Working Girl*, in which Melanie Griffith fakes her way through some negotiations and says something like, "I'm sure you have more experience in that matter and can lead us." So, I said, "I can call around to find out the going rate or you can make me an offer. Whichever you want!" The woman responded, "We normally pay $1200 per day, is that in your ballpark?" I calmly replied with a huge smile on my face, "Yes, that would be fine. And when did you say we could begin?" —Kathy King

If you set the fee yourself, use your best calculations on what it will cost you to do the job: estimate your hours, supplies, computer usage, secretarial time, telephone, fax, mail, travel, and needed profit. Then estimate more hours to do the job by approximately one fourth to one third. Most often the problem is not that we set our fee too low, but that we underestimate how long a job will take. Coming in under budget is always acceptable, if it happens. More negotiation suggestions are found in Chapter 19.

In the survey, 749 dietitians consult to businesses (e.g., to create wellness programs, consult to sports teams or spas, design a kitchen layout, or create a new marketing program for a food product) and identified how they charge (3):

- 65% charge by the hour with an estimated number of hours
- 28% charge by the project with a bid or quote
- 7% charge work on retainer with an hourly amount for any additional work

See Figure 17.6 for hourly fees.

Survey results for media spokesperson work according to 209 respondents are in Figure 17.7.

Survey results for what dietitians charge when consulting with other individual

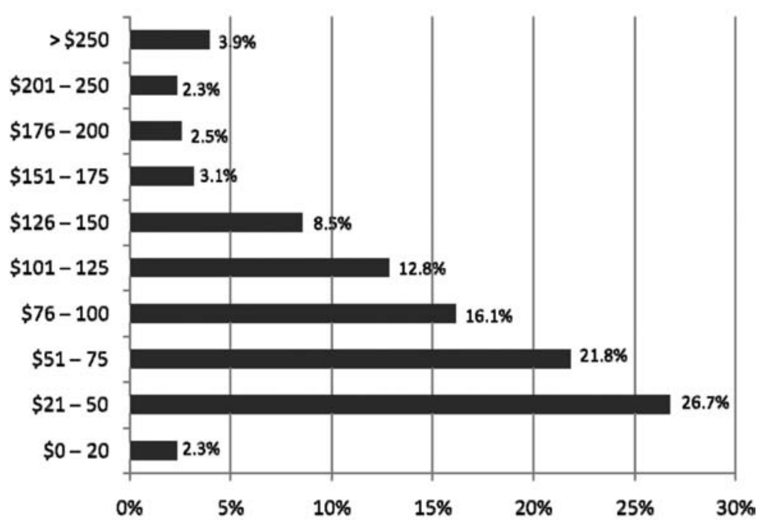

FIGURE 17.6 ■ Hourly fees when consulting to businesses (3). 775 respondents.

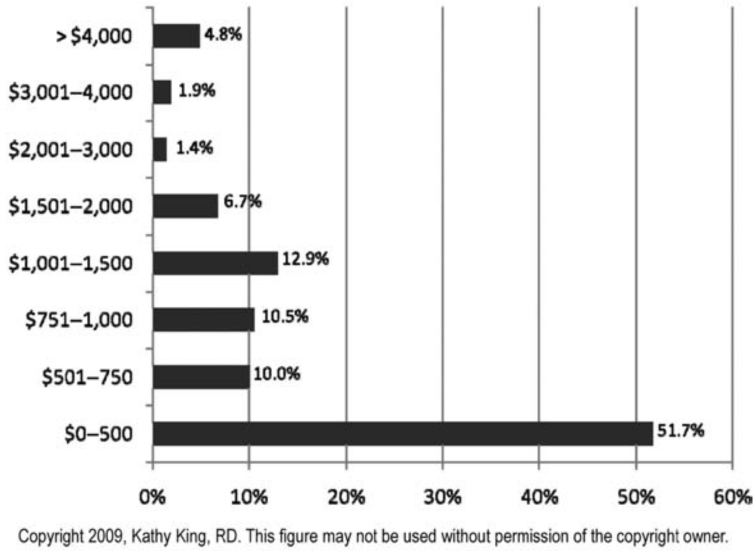

FIGURE 17.7 ■ Fees per day as a media spokesperson (3). 209 respondents.

professionals or the public (e.g., web design, coaching, personal chef, etc.) are found in Figure 17.8 (3).

Survey results for what dietitians charge per hour when consulting in long-term care are found in Figure 17.9 (3).

COMMON QUESTION

Q. *What can I use for arguments to substantiate why as a consultant should I be paid $75 per hour? I am competing with dietitians who are willing to work as a part-time employee for $23 per hour.*

A. First, realize a few things about our profession and our marketplaces. Professionally, *we* are in a state of transition from being somewhat passive to more assertive nutrition experts who ask a competitive fee for service or as a wage. Each of us is making the transition according to our own timetables and by what our lifestyles dictate. If someone loses a job to a more flamboyant peer or suddenly becomes the

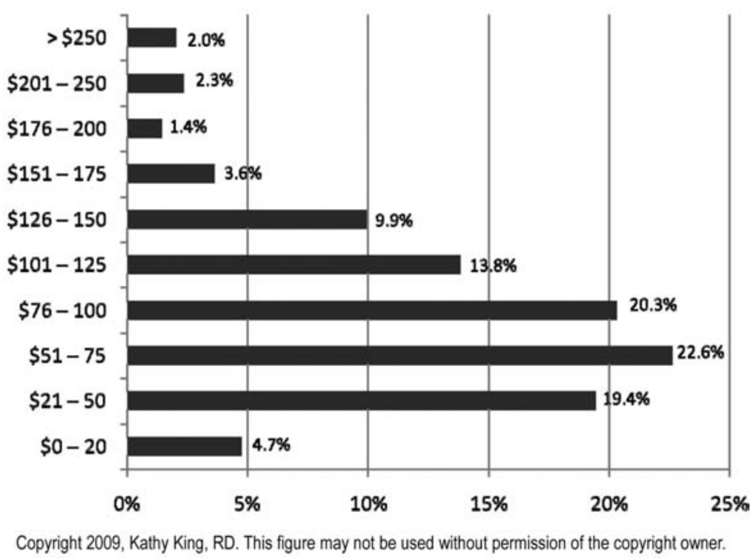

FIGURE 17.8 ■ Fees charged other professionals and the public per hour (3). 443 respondents.

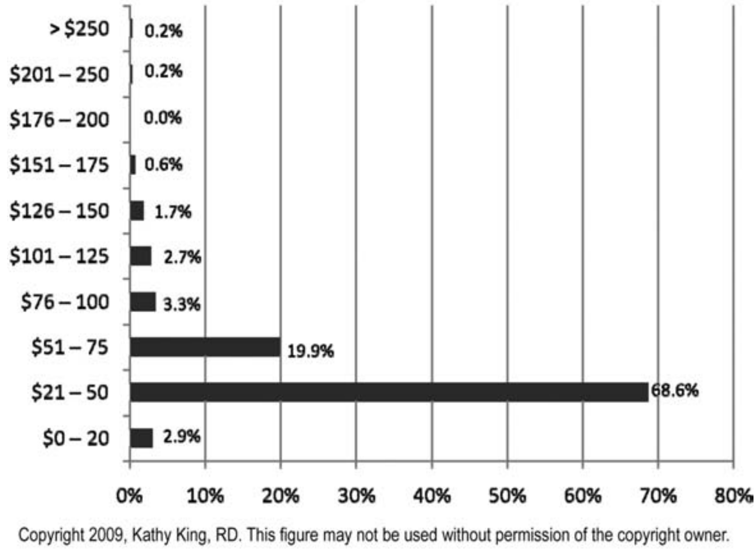

FIGURE 17.9 ■ Fees charged in long-term care per hour (3). 522 respondents.

family's sole support, awareness and attitude changes evolve more quickly.

Next, not every client or consultant position is willing to pay the higher fee, no matter how good you are. In other words, you won't get every job, nor will you want every job you go after. Some jobs aren't worth more than $18 per hour.

In some instances, if you really want the position, your only other option is to negotiate to do all of the required work in fewer hours for the same total income. For example, if there is $2000 budgeted for nutrition consultation each month, sell the client on the idea that the money is a flat fee paid to have the job completed and not tied to being on the job physically for 87 hours per month or whatever. You will complete all the group classes, counseling, assessments, documentation, menu review, or whatever is required and be at the job 25 to 35 hours per month or more often if needed. You will have to use your time well and produce for the client, but the pay is better and you didn't lose the job. The client will have his or her nutrition needs met and still be within budget.

If a prospective client is comparing your consultant fee against that of a $23-per-hour employee, there are some good points that may help your case, but first and foremost, you must realize that *the client must believe and be convinced that you are worth that fee* or no amount of logic will sway him or her otherwise! Possible selling points are:

- As a consultant, you are bringing your own teaching materials, DVDs, weight loss program, and previously successful seminars. The client doesn't have to pay for development time and a program with an unproven track record.
- When the cost of fringe benefits and Social Security, etc., are added to the hourly wage, the amount may increase by one third to one half.
- As a consultant, you come prepared for the job and can produce better work in a shorter period of time.
- If you have been marketing yourself well and using the media or other exposure to build recognition of your name, this is a selling point that may help attract more business to the client or attendees to the program.
- If you have expertise in computers, culinary skills, kitchen marketing, eating disorder programs, or you know people who could be beneficial to the client's programs or staff, try sharing enough with the client in the additional benefits you could bring to the job.

Once a "sell" is made to the client, realize that your arguments can't be just campaign promises if you want to keep the position. You promised short-term excellence and the client will expect you to deliver.

SUMMARY

Prices and fees are good barometers of self-confidence and self-image. Do you see how this all works together? As you learn to do more skills and increase your body of achievements, you feel more self-confident and what you feel about yourself goes up the scale. Testing the waters and asking for more money if the service or product warrants it, isn't as big an issue.

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18 REIMBURSEMENT

Mary Ann Hodorowicz

Over the years, more and more dietetic professionals who provide medical nutrition therapy (MNT) seek to obtain third-party (insurance) reimbursement for MNT. In this chapter, an overview of Medicare is provided, along with Medicare's coverage guidelines for MNT (as of January 2, 2009). Also outlined is a summary of key protocols for increasing MNT reimbursement success with private payers. This information is essential for increasing reimbursement success, whether the registered dietitian (RD) is self-employed in a private practice, working as an independent contractor in an already-existing facility, or providing MNT as a traditional employee in a traditional hospital setting.

TYPES OF PAYERS

There are significant differences between government healthcare insurance and private payer insurances.

GOVERNMENT PAYERS

These payers consist of both federal and state programs. The largest is Medicare, which serves the elderly and/or the disabled, and Medicaid, which targets certain low-income groups. Medicaid is a joint federal and state healthcare program, authorized by Title XIX of the Social Security Act, to provide medical care for low-income individuals with limited resources regardless of age. Medicaid programs and the services they provide vary from state to state. There are also various other smaller programs that provide healthcare insurance for children, rural underserved populations, veterans, and Native Americans.

> Within Medicare, reimbursement for MNT in diabetes, nondialysis renal disease, and postkidney transplant is achievable when all Medicare MNT benefit guidelines are met.

PRIVATE PAYERS

Nongovernment or private payers consist of plans operated by nonprofit companies (such as Blue Cross and Blue Shield), for-profit companies (including managed care), and self-insured employers. Most provide health plans to individuals and groups for prepaid premiums. It is not uncommon for individuals to have both government and private insurance, such as a Medicare beneficiary with a secondary health plan from their former employer.

What is important to note is that private payer reimbursement success for MNT increases when:

- The severity of the illness increases (e.g., diabetes mellitus is more severe than food allergies).
- Provided in more recognized settings (in the payer's eyes, a hospital-based outpatient MNT clinic is generally

more recognizable than private practice settings).

- The RD has provider status with the payer.
- The MNT is medically necessary.
- The MNT fees are reasonable (in eyes of physician, payer, and patient).
- Correct claim forms and correct coding are used.
- The status of claims is tracked by the RD, so that denials are promptly, rigorously, and persistently appealed, with the aid of patient's MNT outcomes, research data proving cost-effectiveness of MNT, testimonial letters from patient and physician, etc.

Before the precise details of the Medicare MNT benefit are provided, it is important for the reader to have a basic understanding of the Medicare system. Below is an overview of our national federally funded health insurance system.

MEDICARE BASICS: AN OVERVIEW

The Medicare program was established by Title XVIII of the Social Security Act of 1965 in response to the specific medical care needs of:

- Persons age 65 or older
- Certain disabled persons younger than age 65 who are eligible for Social Security disability payment programs for more than 2 years
- People of all ages with end-stage renal disease (permanent kidney failure)

Individuals covered by Medicare are referred to as "beneficiaries." Medicare is governed by federal law and is administered by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services also known as CMS. This governing body used to be called HCFA or the Healthcare Financing Administration. CMS is within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The responsibilities of CMS include formulation of policy and guidelines, contract oversight and operation, maintenance and review of utilization records, and general financing of Medicare. Employee payroll deductions fund the Medicare benefits covered under Part A. Twenty-five percent of Part B costs are paid for by the beneficiaries' annual premium dollars, while 75% of these costs come from tax dollars.

MEDICARE PART A, B, C, AND D

Medicare Part A is known as hospital insurance. It covers inpatient hospital care, skilled nursing facility (SNF) care following a hospital stay, home healthcare services, and hospice care. Virtually all persons age 65 or older are automatically entitled to Medicare Part A. Disabled persons meeting certain requirements are also eligible for Part A, as are persons with end-stage renal disease. There is no application or annual renewal fee.

Medicare Part B is known as medical insurance. It provides coverage for outpatient services such as physician services (doctor visits), emergency room visits, ambulance transportation, laboratory and other diagnostic tests, durable medical equipment, outpatient hospital services, outpatient therapy, various other outpatient health services, and for home healthcare services for which Part A does not pay. Medicare Part B insurance is optional. Persons age 65 or older who are Part A enrollees can pay an additional monthly premium to receive benefits under Part B. This amount is automatically taken from the beneficiary's monthly Social Security check before it is mailed to the beneficiary. The Part B deductible in the year 2009 is $135. Therefore, in 2009, the $135 deductible has to be entirely met by the beneficiary before Medicare will pay any amount of money on a claim for that beneficiary. Services that are not reimbursable by Medicare are never applied toward the annual deductible.

MNT is a Medicare Part B benefit.

Medicare Part C is known as the Medicare Advantage Plan. Its former name was Medicare+Choice. Beneficiaries may choose to get their Medicare coverage through a private-managed care plan.

The benefit to the beneficiary is that most offer various *additional* benefits not paid for by Medicare, such as dental care, hearing aids, eyeglasses, and other noncovered items and services. Enrollment in any of these plans is voluntary and available at the same time a beneficiary is first entitled to Parts A and B. A beneficiary must have both Parts A and B to be eligible to enroll in Part C.

Medicare Part D is the Medicare Prescription Drug Program that took effect in 2006. The program gives beneficiaries a choice of prescription drug payment plans provided mostly through private plans that offer various types of coverage. It is voluntary and available at the same time a beneficiary is first entitled to Parts A and B.

PAYMENT OF SERVICES: PRIMARY VS. SECONDARY PAYER

With regard to payment of all healthcare claims, the rule is that the patient's "primary" insurance pays first. What is important to know is this: just because a person is 65 years old or older does not necessarily mean that Medicare is his or her primary insurance. There are several conditions that could make this person's private insurance the "primary" one. If one of these conditions exists, then the claim is to be sent to the primary insurance first . . . not Medicare.

The Medicare provider *(including the Medicare RD provider)* must determine if Medicare is the primary or secondary insurance before the service is furnished. This is quickly and easily accomplished by the beneficiary completing a form specifically designed for this purpose by CMS. It is titled "Medicare Secondary Payer Form" and is available on CMS' website at ~~http://~~ www.cms.hhs.gov.

MEDICARE CLAIMS PROCESSING

Medicare Administrative Contractors, or MACs, serve as the primary point of contact for:

- Medicare coverage and billing requirements
- Processing and payment of Medicare fee-for-service claims for Medicare providers' respective jurisdictions
- Provider enrollment

MACs are actually healthcare insurance companies in strategic geographical locations with whom Medicare contracts to perform these services. Medicare providers are assigned to their local designated MAC based on their geographic location and are reimbursed by MACs under Medicare Part B for Part B services and under Medicare Part A for Part A services.

MEDICARE'S REMITTANCE ADVICE

After a claim has been received and processed, a MAC produces a Remittance Advice (RA), which is a vehicle to communicate (to providers, billers, and suppliers) all claim processing decisions such as payments, unmet beneficiary deductibles, adjustments, rejections, and denials. It may serve as a companion to a claim payment(s) or as an explanation when there is no payment. The RA explains the reimbursement decisions including the reasons for payments and adjustments of processed claims. A provider may receive an RA from Medicare transmitted in an electronic format, called the Electronic Remittance Advice (ERA), or in a paper format, called the Standard Paper Remittance Advice (SPR).

MEDICARE DEDUCTIBLE AND CO-PAYMENT CHARGES

The Medicare deductible is the amount that must be paid by a Medicare beneficiary *before* Medicare will pay for any items or services for that individual. In the year 2009, the

Medicare Part B deductible is $135 per year. A co-payment (coinsurance) is the portion of the cost of an item or service that the Medicare beneficiary must pay. It is *illegal* to routinely excuse Medicare beneficiaries from insurance co-payments and deductibles. It is *legal*, however, to waive the fee or the coinsurance payment for a beneficiary with a genuine financial hardship. The provider of the service does not define financial hardship. . .Medicare does.

HIPAA REGULATIONS

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) mandates strict standards and procedures that promote standardization and efficiency in the healthcare industry. The law helps streamline the administration of healthcare by requiring basic standards for conducting several transactions in electronic form, including processing claims and payments. It also governs disclosure of electronic patient-protected health information and provides the minimum safeguards required to ensure the security of electronic healthcare information. Below are three of the most common questions among healthcare providers with regard to HIPPA and its provisions:

1. *"Do the HIPAA laws pertain to me?"* HIPAA laws pertain to any healthcare provider (including the Medicare RD provider who is providing MNT or other service to patients, and/or is billing Medicare or any other healthcare plan for MNT or other services) **IF:** The provider or the provider's office conducts *any* of the following transactions *electronically* (which includes faxing from a computer), or the provider has someone else conduct them *electronically* on her or his behalf, such as a clearinghouse or billing service:
   - Submitting claims or managed care encounter information
   - Checking claim status inquiry and response
   - Checking eligibility and receiving a response
   - Checking referral certifications and authorizations
   - Enrolling in and canceling a health plan
   - Receiving healthcare payments and remittance advice
   - Providing coordination of benefits

   If the provider conducts *any* of these transactions electronically, the provider is a covered entity and must comply with all HIPAA requirements, regardless of the size of the practice.

   If the provider conducts *all* of the above transactions on paper, by phone or by fax (from a dedicated fax machine, as opposed to faxing from a computer), the provider is *not* a HIPAA-covered entity and the HIPAA laws do NOT pertain to the provider.
2. *"Do I have to submit claims to Medicare electronically?"* HIPAA law requires that all claims submitted to Medicare be submitted electronically in the HIPAA standard format. Only providers who meet certain exceptions may continue to submit claims on paper. One of the major exceptions is for claims submitted by "a small provider of services or supplier."
3. *"What is the National Provider Identification Number and do I have to get one?"* The administrative simplification provisions of HIPAA established the National Provider Identification (NPI) number for providers, health plans, and employers. HIPAA will require that healthcare providers, health plans, and employers have standard national numbers that identify them on all standard medical transactions, including referrals, prescriptions, etc. The NPI number is a new 10-digit number issued by CMS. It will replace all legacy provider PINs currently used, including the PIN issued to Medicare providers upon enrollment. If the

provider is a HIPAA-covered entity, it must obtain and use the new NPI number. The provider is assigned only one NPI number and it will never change. Non-HIPAA providers are also eligible for the number.

> HIPAA-covered Medicare RD providers must obtain and use their NPI numbers on all medical transactions. RDs do not automatically become Medicare providers once they have a NPI, or vice versa. RDs still need to enroll with Medicare to qualify as a Medicare MNT provider.

MEDICARE MNT REIMBURSEMENT

INTRODUCTION

In 2002, MNT became a Medicare benefit under Medicare Part B for these specific diseases and conditions:

1. Diabetes: Type 1, Type 2, and gestational diabetes
2. Nondialysis chronic kidney disease
3. Post–kidney transplant for a period of 36 months

The benefit legislation described MNT as: *"Nutritional diagnostic, therapy, and counseling services for the purpose of disease management, which are furnished by a registered dietitian or nutrition professional."*

When CMS authorized the Medicare MNT benefit, it stipulated that specific rules had to be followed in order for providers to be reimbursed for furnishing the MNT. These rules are commonly referred to as "coverage guidelines."

Medicare Part B directly reimburses RDs who are certified Medicare providers for MNT furnished to beneficiaries with these diseases/medical conditions. Medicare beneficiaries must meet specific medical necessity requirements to be eligible for the MNT benefit. In addition, there are several coverage guidelines that must also be met in order for the RD to bill Medicare for the MNT and receive direct reimbursement.

RDS' OPTIONS WITH REGARD TO MEDICARE MNT BILLING

The RD has four options with regard to Medicare MNT:

B = Bill Medicare Part B for the covered MNT; RD must be Medicare provider.

R = Do not become a Medicare provider and refer the beneficiary for covered MNT to a RD who is a Medicare provider.

O = Opt out of the Medicare Program and enter into a private contract with each beneficiary.

X = Exclude Medicare involvement:

- For statutorily excluded MNT (example, hyperlipidemia MNT). When MNT in other disease states is statutorily (legislatively) excluded from the Medicare MNT benefit, the beneficiary and the RD provider can interact freely without involvement with Medicare, and without having to adhere to any of the Medicare MNT guidelines, restrictions or limitations. However, the beneficiary should be told verbally that:
  - The MNT service is prescribed by his or her physician but it is an *excluded* benefit in Medicare.
  - That the beneficiary will be responsible for the full MNT fee.
- When the Medicare beneficiary does not qualify for the Medicare MNT benefit (example, when beneficiary does not meet one of the diagnostic lab criteria). RD may still furnish the covered MNT, but cannot bill Medicare. RD can, however, bill the:
  - Beneficiary directly
  - Beneficiary's supplemental (secondary) insurance

Coverage guidelines also stipulate that the MNT can only be furnished in ambulatory (outpatient) settings (e.g., private practice, physician's office, ambulatory clinic, hospital outpatient department, renal dialysis facility, and in nonmedical type of environments such as the beneficiary's home, a senior congregate meal site, etc.). The MNT benefit does *not* extend to beneficiaries in an inpatient stay in a hospital, or to those in a skilled nursing facility. Effective January 1, 2006, Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) services now include outpatient MNT services as billable FQHC visits when the FQHC meets all relevant program requirements for the provision of such services as set forth in the federal regulations in part 410, subpart G for MNT. The MNT benefit does not extend to beneficiaries who are inpatients in a hospital, to those residing in a skilled nursing facility, nor to those receiving renal dialysis.

HOW THE RD BECOMES A CERTIFIED MEDICARE PROVIDER

For an RD to enroll in Medicare as a certified Medicare provider, the RD is to:

- Contact his or her local MAC (previously known as the Medicare carrier), specifically the Customer Service Representative (CSR) listed for Medicare Part B benefits. RDs can access the name and contact information of their MAC on ADA's website (http://www.eatright.org) or CMS' website (http://www.cms.hhs.gov).
- Explain to the MAC's CSR the type of practice setting she or he works in.
- Ask the CSR which *additional* forms must be sent in order to enroll in Medicare as a provider and begin billing for Medicare MNT in her or his practice setting.
- The form that is required is the:
  - *CMS 855I: Medicare Enrollment Application for Physicians and Nonphysician Practitioners*. This form must be completed by a physician or nonphysician practitioners who render medical services to Medicare beneficiaries. Following enrollment, this form should also be used to report any changes, deletions, or additions to information previously submitted.
- The forms that may be required, per the RD's practice setting, are the:
  - *CMS 855B: Application for Healthcare Suppliers*. This form should be used to establish a provider *group* or other supplier that will bill MACs for services rendered. It is not used for individual enrollment.
  - *CMS 855R: Medicare Enrollment Application Reassignment of Medicare Benefits*. The CMS 855R form is used to officially reassign the RD's benefits (reimbursement) to the employer/organization for services she or he provided as part of that organization. The organization must also be a Medicare entity provider.

These forms can be accessed and printed from the CMS website at http://www.cms.hhs.gov or from the MACs. No fees are required to submit the forms.

The RD should not submit any MNT claims to Medicare until receipt of the NPI number, as this number must be on the MNT claim forms. The RD can, however, *furnish* the MNT once the enrollment application is in the mail. In this scenario, the RD would simply hold all the claims and submit them after the NPI number is received. The allowed time period for submitting claims to Medicare is 12 months from the date of service.

REIMBURSEMENT: Pre-MNT PHASE

To assure that the Medicare beneficiary is actually *entitled to* and *eligible for* the Medicare MNT benefit, best practice would indicate that the RD implement the following steps:

1. **Verify entitlement to MNT: Determine if the beneficiary has Medicare Part B Insurance.** Medicare MNT is a Part B benefit. Because Medicare Part B insurance is optional, the RD or office staff must verify that the senior has Part B insurance, and thus entitled to the MNT. It is important to make a copy of the actual Medicare card (front and back)

before furnishing the MNT; this data is used on the claim and helps ensure accurate and timely reimbursement. The websites of several Medicare carriers now allow Medicare providers to check if the beneficiary has Part B insurance. The ADA website has just been recently updated to include a direct link to each state carrier's web page that explains how providers in their state can verify eligibility for any Medicare Part B service.

2. **Determine if the beneficiary has previously utilized any part of or all of the covered MNT hours.** Determining if previous MNT services were provided to Medicare beneficiaries is also important for successful reimbursement and to be in compliance with MNT utilization limits. Several MACs' websites now allow providers access to the history of a patient's claims, such as the number of MNT hours furnished in the calendar year; eventually, all will provide this access. If not determined via the MAC website, the RD or office staff should make every effort to determine if the beneficiary has used any of his or her MNT benefit hours in the *initial* (first calendar year) episode of care and/or in the *follow-up* (each calendar year after the first) episode of care.
3. **Verify eligibility of the beneficiary to receive MNT: Obtain physician's referral and diagnostic lab criteria for diabetes and/or predialysis chronic kidney disease (CKD).** A beneficiary's utilization of the Medicare MNT benefit also depends on establishing medical necessity for the initial and follow-up MNT. This is accomplished by the RD obtaining:
   - A written referral for the initial and/or follow-up MNT from the senior's treating physician. A referral for MNT is a required coverage guideline.
   - Documentation of diagnostic laboratory criteria for diabetes or predialysis kidney disease for the initial MNT. The referral can only be completed by a physician (MD or DO) who is treating the beneficiary. Medicare has stipulated that it cannot be completed by other ancillary healthcare professionals, such as nurses, advance nurse practitioners or those with PhD degrees. The Medicare MNT referral must include the following information:
   - Order for MNT
   - Beneficiary's diagnosis or *International Classification of Diseases, Ninth Revision* (*ICD-9*) diagnosis code related to a disease/condition covered in the MNT benefit (diabetes, predialysis kidney disease, or the period of 36 months following a kidney transplant)
   - Physician's signature (cannot be stamped or signed by someone else)
   - Physician's NPI number
   - Date
   - Beneficiary's name

   A joint task force of the American Dietetic Association and the American Association of Diabetes Educators (AADE) developed a universal referral form for ordering MNT and diabetes self-management education (DSME). It is available for downloading on the websites of the ADA and AADE.

- Additional Hours. Medicare also reimburses for *additional* hours over and above the 3 in the first calendar year, and over and above the 2 in all subsequent years. The hours can be increased only if **the treating physician determines there is a change in the patient's** *medical condition, diagnosis, or treatment regimen* that requires a change in MNT, or the patient demonstrates a lack of understanding of the diet. All coverage rules must be adhered to, which include the following:
  - A new physician's referral is obtained for the extra hours.

- There is documentation on the referral of:
  - The reason for the extra hours (medical necessity documentation).
  - The exact number of extra hours ordered.
- **Obtaining diagnostic laboratory criteria to verify beneficiary eligibility for MNT.** The Medicare provider RD must have written documentation in the beneficiary's chart of Medicare's diagnostic criterion for diabetes and/or nondialysis chronic kidney disease (CKD) before the MNT is furnished.

  For diabetes MNT, <u>one</u> of the following diagnostic criteria must be documented in the chart:
  - A fasting blood glucose (FBG) of greater than or equal to 126 mg/dl on two different occasions.
  - A 2-hour post–glucose challenge test of greater than or equal to 200 mg/dl on two different occasions.
  - A random glucose test or greater than or equal to 200 mg/dl for a person with symptoms of uncontrolled diabetes.

  For nondialysis chronic kidney disease MNT, the following diagnostic criteria must be documented:
  - A glomerular filtration rate (GFR) of 13–50 mL/min per 1.73 m^2 (the RD can use the Cockcroft-Gault equation to manually calculate the GFR). For kidney transplantation MNT, the criterion is the time period of 36 months after the date of the kidney transplant. Documentation that the beneficiary is within this time period is required.

4. **Comply with the Medicare Secondary Payer (MSP) regulations.** Often times, the question arises, "Who pays first, Medicare or the beneficiary's secondary insurance?" Federal law requires that the primary insurance is billed first and pays first. Medicare is not always the primary source of payment, even if the beneficiary has met all the entitlement and eligibility requirements for the benefit.

   Failure of the provider to maintain a system of identifying the primary payer for each service encounter is viewed as a violation of the provider agreement with Medicare and could result in financial penalties and denial of claims.
5. **Communicating beneficiary's MNT benefits.** One of the RD's most important responsibilities is to communicate all aspects of the MNT benefit to the beneficiary. The beneficiary has the right to be told in advance of the following:
   - Utilization limits: This is the number of hours that are covered in the initial and follow-up MNT episodes of care.
   - Co-payments and deductibles: Medicare provider RDs may forgive the co-payment because of a patient having a financial hardship (hardship criteria are established by CMS).
6. **Verify Medicare MNT provider eligibility.** As discussed earlier, persons who are eligible to provide Medicare MNT and bill Medicare Part B for the service are qualified nutrition professionals; this includes RDs.
7. **Determine if beneficiary needs Advance Beneficiary Notice (ABN).** The purpose of the ABN form is to help beneficiaries make an informed choice about whether they want to receive a covered service, knowing that they may be responsible for the payment if Medicare denies payment. With regard to MNT, an ABN is not required for the 3 hours of MNT provided in the initial episode of care, or for the 2 hours in the follow-up episode. It is required, however, prior to furnishing *additional* MNT over and above these utilization limits. Remember, a second referral from the treating physician is also required. Although Medicare

does reimburse for additional MNT hours and has not yet set a limit on these hours, it does require that certain conditions must exist in order for the hours to be covered. It is because of these conditions that the ABN is necessary. Once the beneficiary signs the ABN, he or she cannot expect financial responsibility for the MNT claim to be waived. If the beneficiary refuses to sign the ABN, the RD *can* directly bill the beneficiary if all required ABN criteria are met. Medicare has its own ABN form, which Medicare providers are required to use; it can be accessed and downloaded via the CMS website.

8. **Use of clinical protocols for furnishing Medicare MNT.** When furnishing the MNT benefit, Medicare's final regulations state that "RDs and nutritionists must use nationally recognized protocols, such as those developed by the ADA" (1). These protocols, also known as MNT Evidence-Based Guides for Practice (or nutrition practice guidelines) can be either purchased directly from the ADA or in some cases, downloaded with no charge from its website.

REIMBURSEMENT: Post-MNT BILLING PHASE

It is very important that the Medicare provider RD understands and knows how to follow the MNT billing rules set forth by Medicare. The RD can be held accountable by CMS for errors in billing or for otherwise not adhering to the guidelines of the MNT benefit.

1. **CPT procedure codes for MNT.** CMS requires that one of five approved MNT procedure codes be used when submitting claims to Medicare for payment of MNT. These codes are included in the American Medical Association's (AMA) Current Procedural Terminology (CPT) code book. (CPT codes and descriptions are copyrighted by [2000] American Medical Association. All rights reserved.)

The MNT codes are time based. The actual code is listed only one time on the claim form along with the number of units of the code that was furnished in the MNT visit. Below is a description of each code (set in boldface):

- **97802: Medical nutrition therapy, initial assessment and intervention, individual, face-to-face with the patient, each 15 minutes** (used only once in first year for initial visit). *Note*: The MNT is considered "initial" if the beneficiary has not received MNT for diabetes or renal disease in the past 3 years.
- **97803: Reassessment and intervention, individual, face-to-face with patient, each 15 minutes.**
- **97804: Group (or more individual[s]), each 30 minutes.** *Note*: Group is two or more patients; not all patients in the group need to be Medicare patients. Guests do not count as patients.
- **G0270 and G0271:** CMS requires the use of these two different MNT CPT codes for billing *additional* hours of MNT beyond the 3 hours in initial episode of care in first calendar year, and beyond the 2 hours in follow-up episode of care in each subsequent calendar year with a physician's referral:
  - **G0270: Medical nutrition therapy; reassessment and subsequent intervention(s) following second referral in same year for change in diagnosis, medical condition, or treatment regimen (including additional hours needed for renal disease), individual, face-to-face with the patient, each 15 minutes.** *Note*: Code is for billing additional

hours of **individual** MNT beyond the 3 hours in the first initial episode of care in the first calendar year, and/or beyond the 2 hours in the follow-up episode of care.

- **G0271: Medical nutrition therapy reassessment and subsequent interventions(s) following second referral in same year for change in diagnosis, medical condition, or treatment regimen (including additional hours needed for renal disease) group (two or more individuals), each 30 minutes.** *Note*: Group is for two or more patients; not all patients in the group need to be Medicare patients. Guests do not count as patients. *Note*: Code is for billing additional hours of group MNT beyond the 3 hours in the first initial episode of care in the first calendar year and/or beyond the 2 hours in the follow-up episode of care in each subsequent calendar year.

Now that qualified dietitians and nutrition professionals may bill Medicare directly under these CPT codes, it is expected that eventually, all private payers will also require these codes on MNT claims. However, the coding requirements of private payers are by no means uniform, and some require other non-MNT codes.

The only sure way to know which code to use is to consult the specific payer. Some providers still require the use of physician's evaluation and management (E&M) CPT codes for billing the MNT service, yet others require that the MNT be billed under the physician provider number as "incident to" physician's services. Yet others require use of other codes related to patient education, nutritional counseling, training, medical team conferences, telephone services, and online medical evaluation.

2. ***ICD-9* diagnosis codes on MNT claims.** *ICD-9* stands for *International Classification of Diseases, Clinical Modification, Ninth Revision* (1). The disease(s) diagnosed by the beneficiary's physician must be entered on the MNT claim that is sent to Medicare for reimbursement. A narrative description of the disease is not written on the claim. Instead, the disease is matched to the correct *ICD-9* diagnosis code, and only the code is entered on the claim.

   Because RDs are not allowed to make a medical diagnosis or to assign an *ICD-9* diagnosis code, it is very important that the RD obtains the code from the beneficiary's physician on the MNT referral.

   Periodically, *ICD-9* codes are updated. RD who furnishes Medicare MNT should have a current *ICD-9* code book at her or his disposal.

3. **MNT claim forms.** Most payers stipulate the specific forms on which MNT claims are to be filed. Their provider manuals normally include the details of how to fill out the required claim forms. CMS requires that institutional providers, such as hospitals, use the electronic *UB-92* claim form to bill Part A for services and items rendered and covered under Part A. CMS now allows these organizations to send MNT claims, a Part B service, to the Part A division on the electronic UB-92 form. Small providers, however, are permitted to use the paper version of this form, which has been updated and now called the *UB-04* paper form.

   MNT services furnished in independent, noninstitutionalized settings, such as clinics and private practices, are typically billed on the *CMS-1500* or its electronic equivalent. RDs must submit the original "red" CMS-1500 form to Medicare; photocopies or computer-generated forms will not be accepted.

   Whether the RD fills out the claim form or works with a billing department, it is well worth the time to study how claims are filed and how to track their success rate. As an advocate for the value and reimbursement of RD services, the RD can help the MNT program obtain better reimbursement, making the RD a more valuable member of the healthcare team.

4. **Revenue codes on UB92 claim forms.** For providers who do bill for MNT on the UB-92 (CMS-1450) form, a *revenue code* is required in addition to the CPT procedure code. A revenue code is assigned to each hospital charge to denote the type of service and where it is performed—for example, lab service, radiograph, surgery, clinic, education, and training, etc.

   The cost of outpatient MNT services must be billed to Medicare with revenue code 942, Education and Training. However, some private payers may deny claims that use code 942, as they do not pay for "education." Alternative revenue codes that may be accepted are 940 (Other Therapeutic Services), 510 or 512 (Outpatient Clinic), or 761 (Observation). Terminology is very important, so it is wise to keep in close contact with the hospital's contract agent during negotiations with a payer.

5. **Medicare's MNT utilization limits.** Medicare reimburses for 3 hours of individual and group MNT furnished in the first, initial calendar year ("initial episode of care") and 2 hours in all follow-up, subsequent calendar years after the first ("follow-up episode of care") as long as all the coverage guidelines are met.

   Note that these limits are based on a calendar year (January 1 through December 31). The RD cannot carry over initial or follow-up hours to the next calendar year, once the MNT has begun; if not used during this time period, the hours are lost.

   Medicare reimburses for *additional* hours of MNT over and above the 3 initial hours and over and above the two follow-up hours if all coverage rules are adhered to:
   - Documentation of medical necessity for the additional hours of MNT is obtained by the RD.
   - Medical necessity is documented; that is, the treating physician determines that there is a change in the patient's *medical condition, diagnosis, or treatment regimen* that requires a change in MNT, or the patient demonstrates a lack of understanding of the diet.
   - Another physician's referral is obtained for the extra MNT hours, with the reason (medical necessity) for the hours written on the referral.
   - As of January 2009, Medicare has not set a limit on the number of additional hours it will pay for.

6. **Expansion of Medicare telehealth services to include MNT.** Effective January 1, 2006, CMS added *individual* MNT to the list of Medicare telehealth services.

   RDs can now furnish and receive payment for individual telehealth MNT using codes 97802, 97803, and G0270. Group telehealth MNT is not reimbursable. Medicare beneficiaries with diabetes or nondialysis kidney disease who reside in rural health professional shortage areas defined by the federal government now have improved access to Medicare MNT. Several additional coverage guidelines apply, and all the guidelines for non-telehealth MNT also must be met to obtain reimbursement.

7. **What types of MNT cannot be billed to Medicare.** The RD cannot bill Medicare for the following:
   - MNT in noncovered disease states
   - MNT as "incident to physician's services"
   - Diabetes, predialysis CKD and renal transplant MNT when beneficiary does NOT meet Medicare's clinical

lab criteria for diabetes and predialysis CKD, or does NOT meet Medicare postkidney transplant time frame for renal transplant MNT.

But the Medicare beneficiary and/or the beneficiary's *supplemental* insurance may be billed for MNT in noncovered disease states.

8. **Medicare MNT reimbursement rates.** Reimbursement for Medicare MNT is a Part B benefit and based on Medicare's physicians' fee schedule (MPFS). The Medicare MNT rate is 85% of the MPFS. CMS' allowed, adjusted MNT rates for the RD's geographical locations can be accessed on the CMS' website and also on ADA's website. Because of CMS now assigning relative value units, also referred to as work values to MNT codes, the MNT rate is higher for:
   - MNT furnished in noninstitutional-type settings, such as a private practice, because of greater practice expenses.
   - Initial MNT, because of greater work effort than follow-up MNT.
   - Individual MNT, as opposed to group MNT.
9. **How much is paid by Medicare and by the beneficiary for Medicare MNT?** Medicare pays 80% of the allowed adjusted payment amount, and the beneficiary is responsible for 20% of the allowed payment amount, plus any unmet annual deductible.
10. **RD accepting assignment from medicare.** The MNT benefit coverage guidelines require that the RD who enrolls as a Medicare provider must accept "assignment" with regard to Medicare payment for MNT. Accepting assignment means that the RD must accept Medicare's approved, adjusted, assigned MNT reimbursement as payment *in full* for the MNT that was furnished and billed. The RD may not bill the beneficiary, nor his or her secondary insurance, for the difference between the Medicare approved amount and the RD's MNT charge.

    The RD is expected to collect the MNT co-payment from the beneficiary and any of the beneficiary's unmet annual deductible.

    Reimbursement from private payers is generally not governed by "assignment," but most often is governed by the contractual discounts stipulated in the provider's contract or by fixed (capitated) dollar amounts paid to HMO providers per month by the insurance plan for all services delivered to a HMO member that month. Every contract the RD enters into with the private payer can have different coverage guidelines for MNT.
11. **MNT fees charged by RD.** Many RDs feel that the best way to determine fees for the MNT is to conduct a fee survey in the area, and base their fee on what is being charged by the competition. Knowing what other RDs in other practice settings are charging is a factor, but using it as the sole factor can be likened to comparing apples to oranges. The MNT fee should be customized as it is to be based on several factors, including *all* costs incurred in providing MNT. Once the usual and customary fee schedule is determined, the RD should abide by this schedule fee for all her or his MNT clients.
12. **CMS' Physician's Quality Reporting Initiative.** In the summer of 2007, CMS launched a new voluntary Medicare Part B provider incentive program called the Physician Quality Reporting Initiative (PQRI). In addition to physicians, the program also extends to select nonphysician providers, including RDs. The PQRI provides financial incentives for these providers who meet and report

to Medicare predefined quality measures on their claim forms, using select CPT codes. This incentive is a bonus payment, subject to a cap (2% in 2009) of total allowed charges on claims covered under the Medicare physician fee schedule. More information on this program, including a summary of the quality measures that can be used by RDs who provide MNT, can be found on the websites of CMS and the ADA.

13. **MNT documentation.** Communication among team members is important to provide consistent, quality care to persons with diabetes and nondialysis kidney disease. Documentation is one form of communication and is a necessary part of medical care. Documentation is also essential for verifying the quality of care delivered and determining outcomes of care. ADA's Evidence-Based Nutrition Practice Guidelines provide resources to enable RDs to meet MNT charting essentials.

SUMMARY

Medical nutrition therapy has great potential for advancing the health of people, whether it is through disease prevention or treatment. For RDs to continue to provide this valuable service to people of all ages, it is critical that RDs learn about the structure of insurance plans for filing claims and learn and adhere to the payers' detailed coverage guidelines for MNT. What is an absolute certainty is that these guidelines will change, so having a system to keep you and your staff updated is also critical.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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19 NEGOTIATION, SELLING, AND CONTRACTS

Historically, negotiating resulted in one person as the victor and the other as the victim. Stronger individuals used negotiations to control the opposition. As a result, the final agreement usually heavily favored the victor. The victim accepted the agreement, but later often did not follow through in good faith or learned to manipulate to gain lost ground.

WINNING NEGOTIATIONS

In the last 25 years or so, a new era of negotiation strategy has evolved in business called win-win negotiation (1). With this strategy, both parties feel they benefit from the agreement. Now everyone can become quite adept at representing themselves and their points of view, while expecting the other party to negotiate in good faith. Some compromise may be necessary by both parties. Of course, other businesspeople feel compromise is not good—that both parties leave unhappy. Instead both parties should disclose what they want from the agreement and work toward making that happen. Whatever your choice, avoid being a victim when negotiating.

When negotiations stall on an unbalanced or unfairly weighted agreement, it's not uncommon today to hear the "victim" try to nudge the other party into a better agreement. He or she might say, "I can't see how I will benefit from this agreement as it stands. Would you be willing to agree on. . . ?" Or, "We both need to feel that we benefit from this agreement or we shouldn't do it. What do you need to make that happen?"

SUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATIONS

There are many good books published on the art of negotiation. In reality though, after you know a few guidelines, the only way to gain expertise is through experience. One negotiation prepares you for the next one. You often learn as much by a session that went poorly as by one easily won that lacked challenge. Your confidence will grow with each one.

Negotiation should be seen as a game of minds, each vying for its needs to be met without having to give up too much in return. When taken in this light, negotiation can be fun and challenging, worthy of thorough research, and time to develop the strategy. When negotiating:

- Don't share all of your information up front.
- Clarify each point during your discussions.
- Document each concession as each party makes it, so parties can't renege later.
- Determine who the other party's leader is as soon as possible; it may not be the person speaking.

Consider the following points to avoid (2):

- Don't be overwhelmed by the successful position or status of the other party. You are there to negotiate for something you both want. Don't start off by creating the wrong business relationship.
- Don't worry about the results. Walking away should always be an option.
- Don't negotiate over the phone. Don't oversell and push too hard or too far.

- Don't appear too uptight, but don't relax!
- Don't "lose your cool" and get angry, unless it's needed for dramatic effect.
- Don't allow the other person to intimidate or manipulate you with dramatic posturing, anger, or "drama queen" tactics.

Advantage points to remember (3):

- Try to set up the negotiations on your own ground or somewhere neutral where you will feel comfortable. The other party's home ground or office may be intimidating.
- Wear your "power" outfit so you feel comfortable and in control. Overdressing in business attire may prove to be successful in some instances.
- Don't say something you will be sorry about later. Don't quote figures and offer services until you have a chance to think about them because once spoken, they may be difficult to change. If you don't know what to say, try, "I am very interested in what you're suggesting. Let me research it and get back to you tomorrow."
- Be aware of your body language. Sometimes, it gives information that may be to the other party's advantage. Nervous movements may sabotage an otherwise strong presentation.
- If you aren't comfortable with negotiating for yourself, hire a qualified lawyer or other business advisor to go with you to help carry the session or have them coach you before you go into the negotiation session.

STEPS IN NEGOTIATING

STEP 1: QUALIFY THE OTHER PARTY

Is the other party a "middle man" who can only pass along information or the one in charge? Are the businesspersons who want you to write restaurant menus truly solid and well financed? Does the fitness center have any intention of contracting with you after you share your nutrition proposal with them? How do you know the other party is worth your investment of time, effort, and money?

The best answer to all of the above questions is to ask tactful, straightforward questions of the other party. Don't be so caught up in trying to impress them, you fail to evaluate them! Another method of qualifying someone is to ask for references or D&B rating. The reputation of a business or its owner can give clues to whether they are credible and honest. Call the Better Business Bureau to see if there are any complaints against the company.

STEP 2: WHAT ARE THE OTHER PARTY'S "NEEDS," AND ARE THEY OVER A BARREL FOR SOME REASON?

By knowing as much as you can about what the other party "needs" from the negotiation, you have a better negotiating position. Examples could be the Health Department has given them a 30-day ultimatum to clean up the food service or that business is slow and your name and reputation will draw more clients.

Use this information to your advantage, but don't always share the fact that you know their problems. Some of the greatest challenges in negotiating are to evaluate the other party and decide how open you should be, and how much *not* to share.

STEP 3: ARE THERE ANY "DESIRES" THAT ARE STRONG?

In some instances, people or businesses may be more motivated by what they would like or want than what they need. They may want to be the first hospital to offer corporate wellness in the city and may disproportionately allocate funds to it; the sports team coach may want a nutritionist to work with the players, so they can win "state" this year; or a restaurateur may want his or her menu to appeal to more clientele by offering nutritious menu items.

STEP 4: DETERMINE YOUR NUMBERS

What do you need and want from the negotiations? Determine your financial breakeven point and the amount of profit you will need to make the project worth your time. Develop statistics, illustrations, and logical arguments to support and defend your views. What can you ask for, but be willing to give up as a concession? *Never ask for the minimum you will accept*. Ask for more, and then expect that the final agreement will probably be somewhere in between.

STEP 5: DO YOU HAVE A "SEARS PLAN" READY?

Jean Yancey, a former small business advisor in Denver, Colorado, encouraged people to offer the "Sears Plan" (good, better, and best alternatives). If the other party doesn't like one alternative you offer, have another ready to go. The *best* offer would be the most comprehensive and costly. The *better* offer is a good compromise. The *good* offer will at least get your foot in the door or provide an option in case negotiations stall. Offer fewer services at each level so your expenses are less.

STEP 6: DETERMINE WHAT OTHER ITEMS BESIDES MONEY YOU WILL ASK FOR IN THE AGREEMENT

What interim payments and reports will you want? Ask for regular monthly payments or for some projects, one third up front, a third at midpoint, and the final payment upon completion. What about royalties for as long as your materials are used? What about editorial or revision rights when programs become dated? Are travel, office, mail, and phone expenses included? What staffing or support services will you expect? What marketing support will you request?

SELLING

A sale takes place when a client or patient agrees to pay for a service or product. To survive in business, sales must happen. Of course, everyone wants to offer products that are in such demand they "sell themselves," but that is a rarity. People don't like to be sold, but they love to buy (4).

Dietitians can increase their sales by improving their presentation skills and by taking better advantage of sales opportunities. Constantly be aware of instances where your nutrition services can be appropriately sold.

GETTING YOUR FOOT IN THE DOOR

Often before you can sell a physician or corporate leader on your services, you must first get past their secretaries. In a corporation, go as high as you can to give your sales presentation. You want to reach the decision maker(s), but you may have to start several levels below.

Some tricks of the trade shared by Barry Wishner, RD, are to make the client feel that he or she is special, part of an exclusive club. Say, "I have heard that your obstetrics practice is one of the most progressive, patient education-oriented practices in the area. I have a nutrition service that OB patients love, which will generate increased revenue for your practice. Can I have 5 minutes of Dr. Johnson's time to explain it to her?" It also works to appeal to their human nature by saying something similar to, "I had a baby 5 years ago. I am a dietitian, but I know how difficult it is to keep your weight gain under control. Do you offer a nutrition group class to your patients? I have my brochure and sample patient education booklet, could I have 5 minutes of Dr. Johnson's time to explain my program?"

Sometimes it works to stop by a physician's office, and ask to schedule an appointment that day to talk to the physician. If he or she is unavailable, then ask to talk with the head nurse. If the nurse will talk to you and your message sounds interesting, you may be scooted into the physician's office in between the next two patients.

Try using someone as a referral to get to see the top person. Once you have established good rapport with a businessperson or physician, it is not out of place to ask if he or she knows of other CEOs, wellness directors, or physicians who might be interested in your program. Ask if you could use his or her name as a referral.

A-B-C ACCOUNTS

In any business, no matter what you sell, there will be some people who use your services or buy your products more often than others ("A" accounts). Sales experts agree that most of your time and resources should be spent maintaining and keeping your "A" accounts happy. "B" accounts use your services on an irregular basis, but given good service or added attention, some might become "A" accounts. "C" accounts rarely, if ever, use your services. They might be contacted yearly in a mass mailing.

All three accounts could be in the same medical practice or may be very cordial to you at local Chamber of Commerce meetings. Some will be major clients and some won't. The important lesson to learn is that you spend your time and resources where they are most effective. *Take the time to identify who supports you. Keep your "A" accounts happy!*

THE SALES PRESENTATION

The sales presentation includes the following four major components, each with a specific purpose (3):

1. **Introduction.** The purpose of the introduction is to establish with the prospective client how you are different from all the others waiting to sell a similar product. You do this by making statements that focus attention, specify direct benefits, or warn of danger. For example, "From your year-end report, I saw that your company spends more than $5500 per employee on health insurance. We have a wellness program that reduced medical expenses at the Reider Company by 20% last year."
2. **Investigative Phase.** This phase is one of the most important in the modern-day sales process. Get the buyer to define his or her other needs, wants, and expectations. Do this by asking open-ended questions and by listening to the answers. The information obtained in this exchange will help you personalize your presentation and perhaps think of new products to sell. For example, "Have you ever tried any employee nutrition education seminars?" Or, "What are your company's three worst employee health problems in your opinion?"
3. **Presentation Phase.** During this phase, carefully choose facts for their effect on your client. Show how his or her needs will be met by what you have to offer. Buyers base their decisions on fact and emotion. Garner emotional support for you and your services. If you see that the buyer is drifting or does not appear to understand, go back to the investigative phase and refocus attention by asking more questions. You need to be flexible. The outcome of this phase should be a natural progression to the close.
4. **Closing.** This is the time to bring the presentation to a close, either by asking for a sale or other commitment. One way to accomplish this is by summarizing the client's needs and identifying solutions you have to offer. Ask when you can begin, how you can provide more assistance, or when you can provide more information. Your purposes may have been to introduce yourself and explain your services.

Several ideas for closings might be: "If we have an agreement next week, how soon can I get started?" Or, "What more can I give you to help you make your decision?" Or, "Is there any reason why you wouldn't want to offer a weight loss program to your employees, given all the possible benefits?" Or, "Can I count on your commitment to this program for the coming year?"

Even if the client is not interested in your services at this time, leave the session as friends and on a positive note. If the client isn't ready to give an answer, ask when you can call for his or her answer. Don't give up. After the sales call, drop a note into the mail thanking the prospect for his or her time.

PROPOSALS

A proposal is a comprehensive marketing tool used to present the selling points of an idea. One could be used to interest a corporation in using you to create its nutrition wellness program, to interest a clinic director in providing an obesity seminar, or to interest a financial backer in a new product or business venture.

Proposals can range from a simple one-page typewritten information sheet to a typeset, bound presentation containing a volume of pages, along with a PowerPoint show and taste session. The scope of the proposal is determined by what is expected, what is used by the competition, and what will be impressive enough to make the sell. The experienced practitioner is not the only one to use a proposal. The novice may find it to be the very marketing boost to build his or her business more quickly.

Proposals should only be long enough to interest the client and make the sell. *Care should be exercised so that explanations of projects are not so detailed that clients can carry them out themselves without you.*

Proposals usually represent many hours or days of research of the market and the client so the proposed item is "positioned" correctly to fit the client's needs. A proposal may include all or part of the following:

- An introduction or explanation of the scope of the proposal
- An overview of the market and its potential
- A short analysis of the competition
- Background information about the client and his or her needs
- Your answer in fulfilling the client's needs
- Why you are best for the job (include resume and references)
- Estimates of costs and potential income
- Any final selling points

A proposal should build in excitement and interest, as it leads to the answers you have to offer. Which points you use and their order are at your discretion. You want clients to feel that they can't live without you and what you have to offer.

Whenever possible, the proposal should be made in person to the entire staff of decision-makers. Questions and any confusion can be handled immediately. An experienced negotiator may choose to paraphrase the proposal and offer a shorter written copy.

However, instances may arise when a proposal must be mailed or left at an office. When you are not there to give the introduction and to promote the concept with tact and enthusiasm, a letter of introduction and a written document must do it for you. A phone call should be timed to coincide with the day the person receives the document. If the contact person must sell the concept to others, when preparing the proposal, enlist his or her help. Ask what selling points, statistics, or other information he or she feels will be needed to impress the others. The answers you receive may give you great insight into the client company and its real interests.

There is always some fear of risk in giving a potential client the opportunity to see a truly unique, clever idea, such as an invention or new business concept. A proposal should never be detailed on how you will do your job; in most proposals, you are selling the client on using you, your creativity, and expertise. It's fairly standard to ask before the proposal is offered that the ideas be considered privileged information or to have "confidential" stamped on the proposal. As an added safeguard, if you are very worried about controlling the concept, it is acceptable to bring another person with you as an associate (and witness). Finally, you can ask that the client sign a Nondisclosure Agreement (see Chapter 13). However, some people will take offense to being asked, or will refuse to do so on legal grounds (they may have already had plans to pursue the idea). For example, you may be one of several people presenting a proposal on being a nutritionist for a new food company.

If an agreement is never reached, but your unique idea is used by the client, you could sue if your case is strong enough (a witness or written agreement may be necessary to do so). You will have to be able to prove the unique idea was owned by you through copyrights, trademarks, or patents.

A proposal provides a perfect opportunity again to offer the "Sears Plan" to a client: the "good, better, and best" approach. Anticipate that the client may be hesitant to buy the most comprehensive plan you have to offer. Be ready to promote the contingency plan of lesser cost, in case the first one doesn't sell. A third "at least you got your foot in the door" plan could be either offered initially, or you could wait and use it if all else fails.

Presenting a proposal may lead to other new ideas or ventures between you and the client; or, it may only help your client decide what he or she doesn't want to do. Whatever the extent of the agreement to work together, it should be outlined, signed, and all parties should have a copy.

ASSERTIVENESS IN BUSINESS GROWS IN TIME

As Herb Cohen states in his book, *Negotiate This!*, we actually negotiate several times per day, every day of our lives (3). Whether we need a refund on poor service, a package delivered on time, or the secretary to answer the phone more pleasantly, we are trying to have our wishes met. We sometimes have to become more assertive to do it.

To be more effective in your work and to negotiate better contracts and consultant fees, it helps to know when and how to stand your ground. For persons who are not used to being assertive, finding a happy medium between being passive and being overbearing or stubborn is a necessity. Finesse will develop in time.

AGREEMENTS

Agreements, or exchanges of promises between two parties, can take several forms. The more common are a verbal agreement, a bid, letter of agreement, or contract. Some forms do not offer the business novice much protection, in case the other party does not perform as expected. Contracts are more detailed but are sometimes too complex and expensive. The best agreements are between two reputable people who have adequately discussed their expectations with the other person.

VERBAL OR GENTLEMAN'S AGREEMENTS

Verbal or gentleman's agreements for fees and services are usually considered legally binding in most states and are very common. Professional consultants and advisors often quote their fees for certain services and we agree to them verbally. We may agree to consult at a physician's office or a health club on a handshake. Verbal agreements are fine when you know the other party, and both of you know what is expected and perform accordingly. In cases where there are misunderstandings or one person does not produce as expected, a verbal agreement can prove to be inadequate protection.

COMMON QUESTION

Q: *I am negotiating with a physician to offer nutrition consultation in his or her office. I am willing to work hard, take a financial risk, and build the program. But what guarantees do I have that as soon as I have become successful financially, I won't be replaced? How can I protect myself before I make the investment?*

A: If the physician is a fair and honest person, there are ways to avoid problems. If he or she is not, the situation probably will be out of your control. First, realize that it is only a good deal if you both feel you have been fairly compensated for what you have each contributed. So get out in the open what each of you is offering the other. You may be offering time, effort, and some money, and the physician is offering client referrals, facilities, and some money. Later on as you become successful, the possibility of being replaced is reduced if the following have taken place:

- You have a working relationship with the physician and the staff and you are considered an asset.
- You are closely identified with the nutrition program and, if you go, so will the program and client load.
- Each of you feels fairly compensated. Also, incentives should be built in so that extra work or effort on your part is rewarded.
- You developed the teaching materials on your own time and copyrighted them. Your programs can only be used as long as you are a consultant there.
- Finally, before beginning, you and the physician should put your agreement in writing. At this time, try to add a simple partnership buy-out agreement in case the physician wants the program but wants to replace you.

You may be surprised; it may be the physician who fears you leaving more than the other way around.

BIDS

A bid, or cost estimate for a job, is legal. It can be a good agreement if it's specific as to expected output and date of completion, and both parties agree to any changes in writing. The most common shortcoming of bids is too little shared information. To help remedy this, bids may be accompanied by an explanation or sample of a similar finished product or a proposal (Fig. 19.1).

LETTER OF AGREEMENT

A letter of agreement is also legally binding but less formal and complicated than a contract. For many people, a letter is also less intimidating. To be good, this form of agreement must be comprehensive and may include the following information:

- What the agreement is for (i.e., services, product, etc.)?
- Who is providing it?
- When?
- Where?
- For how much?
- How often?
- Who is paying for it, on what schedule, or by what process, (i.e., billing by invoice, or automatic monthly payment, etc.)?
- Any additional provisions?
- Terms of the agreement?
- Termination clause by either party?

A letter of agreement may be written in the form of a short exchange of promises (Fig. 19.2). It may be in the form of a business or personal letter that outlines what the agreement is as the writer understands it. It's suggested that both parties sign the agreement. However, courts of law will often stand behind a letter that was sent by certified mail (return receipt requested) when no rebuttal was made, and the work was allowed to progress as if the agreement was accepted.

It's highly suggested that you consult with your lawyer concerning the provisions you should include in your letters of

SMITH & JONES NUTRITION SERVICES, INC
2530 Ridgeway, Tucson, AZ 85728

BID

For development of a diet manual for EARTH GROWN FOODS on lacto-ovo vegetarian diets for the following limitations:

- Low Calorie
- Low Cholesterol
- Diabetic
- Low Salt

The manual will include sample menus, nutrient charts, references for recipes, fresh produce lists, and a brand-name food guide. The finished manual will contain approximately 100 pages.

Completion date: One month from the acceptance of this bid.

Project cost: $10,000

Accepted by:

________________________ ________________
Earth Grown Foods Date

FIGURE 19.1 ■ Sample bid.

agreement to cover your particular business. After you're more familiar with this type of agreement, you will seldom need legal input, except in cases of higher risk.

CONTRACTS

Contracts are used when the risk is greater, the money higher, and when more control is needed. Legal input is highly recommended for the development or review of all contracts before one is signed.

A contract may have any number of provisions and limitations. Don't be hoodwinked when someone tells you, "You can look it over if you want. It's just a standard contract." Take the time to read every word and ask questions about clauses you don't understand.

Parties to a contract exchange promises. These may be expressed (i.e., communicated explicitly and clearly, either in verbal or written form) or implied (i.e., deduced from actions or behavior) (5).

THE WOMAN'S HOSPITAL
7600 Jones Street
Atlanta, GA 30303

January 19, 2010

Ms. Stephanie White, R.D.
Nutrition Consultant Services of Atlanta, Inc.
7800 Fannin, Suite 203
Atlanta, GA 30310

Dear Stephanie:

This letter is to confirm our telephone conversation of January 18, 2010.

As agreed in our conversation, your firm will provide its services to this hospital according to the following provisions:

1. The hospital agrees to pay $95 per outpatient consultation to Nutrition Consultant Services of Atlanta, Inc. No other benefits or privileges are offered or implied.
2. This agreement shall be for six (6) months and automatically renewable at the end of each six month period.
3. Appointments will be coordinated by the Food Service Department and Nursing Service. Initially, a nutrition consultant will be available Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 9 am to 5 pm. Lunch break will be from 11:15-12:00 noon.
4. A patient interview sheet will be sent to each referring physician and a copy put into each patient's chart by the nutritionist of Nutrition Consultant Services of Atlanta, Inc.
5. A super bill will be given by the nutritionist to each patient to file with his or her insurance company, and full payment will be expected at the time of the visit at the clinic cashier's desk.
6. This agreement may be terminated by either party, with thirty (30) days written notice.

Thank you for your assistance. If you have any questions concerning the agreement, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Sincerely,

Cary D. Henry
Administrator

FIGURE 19.2 ■ Sample letter of agreement.

Proper contracts involve the following ethical conditions (6):

1. One party makes an offer, which is accepted by the other party.
2. Each party must offer the other consideration (i.e., something of value) in return for what it is to receive from the other party.
3. Both parties must act of their own free will, free of duress, and undue influence.
4. The agreement cannot include fraudulent claims or representations or violate the law.
5. Certain types of contracts must be in written form (e.g., real estate).

One item of great concern to consultants, employees, and subcontractors is the *noncompete clause* in a contract. If one is used, it must be reasonable. Most noncompete clauses state clients provided by the contractor or employer are not to be taken or approached for a period of time after the consultant or employee leaves. Some add that "no directly competing business can be started by the consultant within a certain radius of the business for a period of time." Recently, courts of law have said that special training or proprietary information must be taught to the employee or consultant by an employer in order for a noncompete clause to be used. Check with a lawyer in your state before signing an agreement with a noncompete clause.

Generating a contract can be expensive and time-consuming. Your legal bill will be less if you know what you want. Write a bulleted list of what you have agreed to do, what the client wants, and any special provisions, such as who will pay for what up-front or who has final edit on the materials. Tell your lawyer to make the contract:

- Practical
- Easy to understand
- Complete to protect your reasonable interests

Unless cautioned otherwise, some lawyers produce very expensive documents that are so detailed and overwhelming that no one will sign them.

SUMMARY

Underlying this discussion on negotiating and agreements should be the awareness that the outcomes work best when both parties are honest, open, and work in good faith. No written document can make people work together well if the relationship is poor. When the quality of output becomes poor, no one is happy with the results. So, work to maintain good relationships. Learning how to "read" the other party and keeping control of your advantage points becomes easier with experience and trial and error.

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20 OFFICE POLICY AND DEALING WITH CLIENTS

There are other factors besides your knowledge and nutrition information given to clients that influence their opinion of your services. Clients usually expect their association with you and your office to be courteous, organized, efficient, reasonable in cost, and timely. Actually, our clients' expectations are no different from our own.

CREATING AN EFFECTIVE OPERATION

Competition is growing for the consumer's dollar, and a business owner can't afford to turn clients off with inadequate service. Personalized care of clients should begin when they first call to ask about your services or schedule an appointment. Attempts should be made to also impress clients with the nondietetic functions of your operation.

Establish office hours and days and try to follow your schedule as closely as possible to help develop an image of stability and continuity. As long as clients can leave a message for you, it is not necessary to be available in the office, in person, 5 days a week. In the beginning, try to condense your patient instructions and interviews with other clients to only a few days per week. The remaining days can then be used to hold down another job while you start your business, or give you time to market your business, write, or whatever.

Telephone coverage for your business is extremely important. The telephone is your clients' major link with you. During normal business hours, Monday through Friday, clients should be able to either reach you by phone or leave a message with a secretary, answering service, or voice mail machine. If you can't answer the phone yourself and you don't want to give out your cell phone number, be sure to take the time to instruct the secretary or answering service on what to say and what information to ask for. Check your messages regularly and have someone call to check for you when you are out of town. Messages on telephone answering recorders should be well prepared—keep trying until you record a message that people will not only listen to, but also respond to. A higher level of service is perceived when calls are returned promptly.

Some hints that may be important to you, concerning your telephone answering service include the following:

1. Don't allow your services and fees to be given over the phone by someone, unless the person is trained to properly "market" your business. Have them say, "I will be happy to take your name and number and have Ms. Buckmaster, the nutritionist, call you back."
2. Caution your answering service or secretary about giving out your private home phone number and address.
3. When you are out of town, instruct your answering service to tell people that "Ms. Buckmaster will be in the office to return your call on Monday, July 10; can she call you back at that time, or is this an emergency?" If you have another dietitian who knows your practice, you might have the answering service say, "Mary Jones, RD, is covering all calls and I can have her

call you if you wish." If it is an emergency, have the number of the covering dietitian or the local hospital clinical nutrition department. In case you need to be reached, leave a number where your secretary/answering service can reach you or leave a message.

SCHEDULING

When you schedule appointments with new patients, use that time to "market" your services. Ask questions about the patient and his or her nutritional needs, pertinent laboratory values, and referring physician's name. Request that the patient bring a copy of the most recent laboratory results and, if available, the physician's written referral for the appointment. Explain what the patient will receive in the way of individualized care and information. State approximately how long the appointment will take and how much it will cost. Make sure that the patient knows the directions to your office, the suite number, where to park (if it's a problem), and the date and time of the appointment. Request that the patient give 24-hour notice if the appointment has to be changed or cancelled.

OFFICE SETTING

The office setting should be quiet, comfortable, and professional. The office furnishings usually are not as important as the atmosphere, hospitality, and service provided. However, because of the image they want to portray and their clients' expectations, some private practitioners spend extra for more affluent looking office space and interiors. Alanna Dittoe, RD, a private practitioner in San Francisco, reports that in a survey of her office patients, the majority mentioned the office coffee as the best amenity. Offering tea, coffee, water, or a snack in an office setting can be "that little extra" that make patients feel more at home.

CHARTS

The chart system for your office can be as expensive as a computer system or the color-coded system, or as simple as a manila folder for each patient. Because of the importance of documentation of a patient's progress, it is best to have the patient's nutrition chart available for all visits. The patient's medical chart is usually only available when you work in a medical office.

The information to include in the patient's chart is name, address, work and home phone numbers, their physician's name, the referring physician's name (if different), and a copy of the diet prescription, if available, pertinent laboratory values, a diet evaluation, action plan, and goals. The follow-up sessions should have any changes in laboratory values and other objective measurements listed, as well as more subjective comments, both pro and con. After the initial instruction and when something significant happens to a patient, the referring physician should be notified and the contact documented.

PRODUCTS FOR SALE

Publications for your clients to read enhance the service and contribute to the positive positioning and image of your practice. Any booklets, programs, etc., that you write should definitely have the copyright notice added to them. Include the cost of handouts and diets in the fee for the instruction. Many nutrition therapists keep a supply of books, booklets, and other educational items they know patients want to buy. In most states, sales tax must be collected, and a sales tax, or even vendor's license, may be necessary.

If you sell food supplements, food products, or herbs, make sure you check expiration dates and rotate your inventory when new products come in. If you recommend supplements to clients, make sure they know that they can buy them from other sources and that you do make a profit on the products.

DIETS AND DIET MANUALS

When preparing printed diets, the typeface should be easy to read, not script, as some people with poor eyesight also have trouble reading single-spaced 10-point font.

Information overload is a common problem. Avoid giving clients too many publications. Start with one or two at the initial visit and assess what each person needs or wants. Patients and their families can only absorb a small amount of information on a new subject at any one time. Save the less specific material and the larger number of booklets for the few clients who want them.

Many practitioners report their patients are impressed when they use folders to hold take-home materials. The folder usually has pockets on the inside to hold the diet and any booklets. On the outside of the folder, print the company name or logo for easy identification of the contents and for advertising purposes or attach a business card to the folder to provide your address and phone number.

Diet manuals are readily available to all practitioners today, including American Dietetic Association's (ADA) and many states' manuals. In writing your own diets, you may choose good ideas from several manuals and from your experience. If you are unaware of your local medical community's nutritional biases, try to purchase diet manuals from the local hospitals, or make an appointment with a hospital dietitian to discuss them. Pages should not be photocopied directly from a manual, unless it was designed for that purpose or you request permission from the copyright owner.

In private practice, it is not necessary to have a large variety of different diets, such as in the hospital. Practitioners report that the most common nutrition therapies are the following: weight loss, diabetic, gluten free, hypoglycemic, low salt, low cholesterol, hyperlipidemia diets, allergy, high potassium, normal pregnancy, eating disorders, and good nutrition for the healthy individual. Specialties in your medical community may dictate that other diets be developed.

DISTINCTIVE SERVICE

Private practitioners and outpatient counselors know their consultative sessions and handout materials need to be different and better than those provided by free hospital clinics or by physicians' nurses or secretaries. Practitioners must create this difference, or patients and clients will balk at paying the fee. The key words are "quality," "individualized," and "personalized."

Many dietitians, though not all, think that it is important to use different terminology, such as the following, in private practice from that used in acute care settings: "diet" could be "nutritional care plan" or "food plan," and "diet order" could be "nutrition prescription." Some practitioners call the people they instruct "clients" instead of patients, especially in more wellness-oriented settings. *Always remember, differentiate patients from their illness. In other words, a person is not a diabetic or a hypertensive but, instead, a person with diabetes or hypertension.*

Whether a consultant wears a white jacket or a laboratory coat is a personal choice. Some patients appear to feel intimidated by the authority signified by the white, while others expect the white jacket or laboratory coat, which shows that you are the nutrition authority.

COLLECTING FEES AND ENDING A SESSION

The end of the interview is a good time to talk about rescheduling a visit, or to discuss why it is not necessary. This is a good "ending" subject and lets the client know the visit is over. As you are winding up, be sure to incorporate some system to collect the fee. You may simply state, "I will make out your receipt now—how do you want to pay for your instruction?" or "The fee for the initial visit is $____ and revisits are $____. I will give you an itemized receipt that you can attach to your insurance company's form, along with a copy of the referral slip from your doctor. Depending on your policy, you can submit these materials to get reimbursed for our visit." If you have a secretary or receptionist, be sure to train him or her on how to collect fees as well.

If a patient continues to linger after the closing of the session and you have other commitments, you can either relax and take a minute longer, or you can try standing up and walking slowly toward the door to show him or her out, and simply state, "I want to thank you very much for coming. I am sorry to rush, but I have another patient waiting."

COMMON QUESTIONS

Q: *I can't get physicians to refer patients to me, and the patients who call me from my brochure and newspaper advertisement don't show up. What can I do?*

A: Your services could be so new that physicians and prospective patients haven't learned how to use them yet (even when you try to tell them). Or, there could be some more painful answers like you haven't and don't know how to establish your credibility (check Chapter 6), your appearance or personality may not meet the expectations of your target markets, or you could be saying the wrong things or the right things in the wrong way.

Before you change too many things on your own, I would talk to a business consultant, mentor, or coach. In the long term, this could save you a lot of time and money. You can usually find a person like this in the Yellow Pages, through contacts in professional or business groups, or the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) through the Small Business Administration (SBA). Talk to the person over the phone and if you like him or her, get an appointment.

In preparation for the appointment, write down what you say to prospective patients over the phone and to physicians when you interview with them. Go over your marketing strategies like the prices, promotion, products, and location(s) you use for your business. Take copies of your brochure and advertisements. Listen to what the person suggests as solutions and try them out since you have nothing to lose. Don't get discouraged! We all have things to learn.

One dietitian who had this same problem had to work on lowering her voice because she sounded like she was 12 years old over the phone, instead of 29. An advisor told a short, young-looking woman to buy suits, instead of wearing such feminine dresses in pastel colors that lacked any "power." Similarly, a male dietitian who consulted to major hospitals and corporations for very big fees found that he was most successful in landing the accounts when he dressed in expensive suits and shoes like the successful corporate president he was (virtual corporation—one person with temporary help as needed).

One experienced clinical dietitian opened her business charging the same higher fees as a practitioner who had been in business in the area for many years and was very well established. It took a while for the new dietitian's business to grow because there was price resistance, since she was new and unknown in the community. Does this mean every dietitian should start with low prices as a marketing strategy? Of course not! It just means it takes time for a business to become established. If the level of service matches the price asked, and the target market needs the service or product and can afford it, the business will grow.

Once you try a few new ideas and they seem to be working, go back to see the physicians who have not been referring to you and start building a rapport with them and their office staff. Use some of the ideas mentioned in Chapter 21 on Promotion. Good luck!

Q: *My patients aren't returning after the first visit. What might be wrong? What can I do?*

A: There are many reasons why patients don't return. Some reasons are in your control; others are not. The reason physicians overbook and some dentists and psychiatrists charge for no-shows is because a certain number of patients will not keep appointments. This point known, there are still professionals who do not have a problem with no-shows, and there are times when each of us experiences it more frequently.

After allowing for bad weather, business advisors will tell you that it is significant whether patients don't show at all or they call to reschedule. Not calling or showing up is more symptomatic of a problem. Some of the more obvious reasons patients do not return are the following:

- They feel no commitment to the care plan because you did not involve them enough in developing it, or it did not fit their true lifestyle.
- It was not their choice to make the appointment, and they only gave lip service while there.
- The patients did not understand the importance of follow-up and how it would improve their chances for successful behavior change.
- They followed your suggested guidelines and did not get results—or they got results without following it.
- You did not impress them with the consultation, your manner, or something about the office visit. (Some patients will not take advice from traditional-thinking, young, or inexperienced counselors.)
- The fee was too high for what they felt they received, or for their present income.
- The consultation style and approach may have been too threatening, embarrassing, or too familiar to suit the patient. (We do not always hit it off with every patient.)
- The instruction materials or consultation may have been too confusing or too elementary, even insulting for adults.
- The patient may believe his or her present habits fit his or her needs better, and he is not willing to change. Maybe the suggestions weren't reasonable—or maybe they were, but not at this time.

The following are areas you may want to evaluate and improve if you deem them a problem:

- Are you marketing and describing your services well over the phone when the patient calls for an appointment? Fees should be mentioned up front, along with what you have to offer and what commitment you expect from the patient. The patient should feel he knows what to expect.
- Do you impress upon your patients the importance of follow-up visits?
- Is the patient's visit a pleasant one? Is he greeted and given good, timely service?
- Are you up-to-date and knowledgeable in nutrition and counseling? Can you offer various solutions, and are you flexible enough to make changes when they are needed?
- Are your counseling sessions organized and professionally handled?
- Do you have the appearance of a credible, competent, stable professional? Can you change your appearance to look more like what is "expected" by your clientele?
- Are your fees too high or low for what you offer or for your local community? Could you offer more in the way of services or package them better?

Two of the best ways to take the mystery out of this process are by sending a note to remind patients a week in advance, and by calling all patients a day ahead to remind them of the appointment and to ask how they are doing. Calling a patient can serve several purposes: the patient may feel more at ease about stating a problem, he or she may decide to make a greater commitment because of your apparent interest, or he or she may cancel future appointments on the spot.

EMPLOYEE CONSIDERATIONS

If you decide to budget an office employee into your business, there are several considerations to think about:

1. Administrative assistant is the term used for secretary in most business settings.
2. How will the person spend his or her day? Write a job description.
3. In the beginning, can he or she work mornings or a short week to help keep overhead lower?
4. Decide how much you can afford to pay. It may be worth paying a little more to keep someone who speaks well on the phone, and is courteous and efficient in the office.
5. Decide what skills are most important for running of your office before you start to interview applicants.
6. Talk to your financial advisor about what "perks," if any, you can offer as present or future incentives to your employee(s).
7. Discuss with your accountant or CPA the difference in costs to you for an employee versus leased or temporary labor (payroll taxes, social security, worker's compensation, added paper work, pension plan, etc.).

To assure the person represents you well, take adequate time of your own to train the new assistant. You should decide whether to teach him or her how to market your business on the phone or just to take messages. Office policies need to be determined and procedures established to carry out the daily routines. A poor employee can harm your business, so do not hesitate to terminate someone who does not work out.

Although there is added expense in having an employee who can perform such duties as typing, mailing, screening, confirming patient appointments, scheduling new patients, collecting fees, and greeting clients, they can be as valuable as your right arm.

Several private practitioners have hired registered dietetic technicians (DTRs) in their offices to cover the secretarial duties, as well as to conduct initial interviews with patients and fill out the needed medical, laboratory, and nutritional data. They are very happy with the DTRs and highly recommend that other dietitians consider hiring them too. It may take time to find the right person(s), but it is worth it, if in the future, you generate more income and have a better-functioning business.

SUMMARY

Other than having a good background in clinical nutrition and excellent counseling skills, it's just as important that a consultant have good management and business skills to succeed. A practitioner should strive to produce distinctive service and establish relationships with clients, patients, the public, and professional peers.

TAKING YOUR IDEAS TO MARKET

IV

WORDS OF WISDOM

Every job is a self-portrait of the person who did it.
Autograph your work with excellence.

Author Unknown

Quality is never an accident; it is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction and skillful execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives.

Willa A. Foster

PROMOTING YOUR VENTURE

21

A commitment to promotion, a component of marketing, is essential in any business, small or large. Lack of sufficient promotion is one reason so many businesses stagnate or fail to attract customers. When economic times get tough, advertising is one of the first budget items cut, which often makes sales even worse—it can be the wrong thing to do!

MARKETING A SERVICE: COUNSELING OR MANAGEMENT

Marketing is concerned with getting and keeping customers. Product intangibility has its greatest effect on the process of trying to get customers. How do you propose to sell something, like nutrition counseling or management consulting, that a customer can't hold in his hand, feel, or see?

Intangible services can seldom be tried out in advance. Prospective buyers are generally forced to depend on surrogates to assess what they probably will get. They can look at before and after pictures of weight loss patients. They can talk to current users of your services. They can see and hold your elegant calling card, brochure, or business proposal in its attractive binder. Service marketing expert, Harry Beckwith, states that there are four keys to successful service marketing (1):

1. **Price:** The more it costs (to a point), the better it seems. If customers come to you because you offer the lowest price, they will leave when someone else's price is better. If that's all they care about, work to offer more. Make the perceived value much higher than the cost.
2. **Brand:** It creates a powerful barrier to entry for aspiring competitors. When people think of nutrition, you want them to think of you. Choose a memorable business name—not initials, not frivolous, not commonplace. To entice memory, the name should be unique, short, sensory, creative, and outstanding. Your personal name may be good. Spend time and money to have your logo and name in front of potential customers, but back it up with good service.
3. **Packaging:** When you are timid about investing in your brochure, office, business cards, presentations, and so on, you're saying you lack confidence and passion for your enterprise. Usually, timid marketing doesn't work.
4. **Relationships:** Business is personal, especially in a service where you are sitting across from a person. Show clients you are interested in them; offer them a beverage and remember what they chose; remember important details about them (write notes), and ask how they want something done. Don't work with "toxic" clients and employees—get rid of them. They will drain you and will run off other productive client relationships. The eight keys to lasting relationships are: (1)
   - **Natural affinity.** Work with people you like and who like you.
   - **Trust.**
   - **Speed.** Answer the needs of your customers in this computer age with next-day shipping, same-day email, or phone response; people now expect things to be done fast.

- **Apparent expertise.** Look like you are well respected in your profession (mount certificates on the wall), look successful, and keep current with the newest research.
- **Sacrifice.** Bend over backward to please the customer by meeting an earlier deadline, or calling to find out the answer to a client's question on a food product.
- **Completeness.** If you want to be known as an expert in nutrition, don't know about only one disease; if you design kitchens, you must know about equipment, ventilation systems, and building codes. Be complete!
- **Magic words.** Know the magic words of relationships—the client's name, "Thanks," "How are you doing?" and "Welcome."
- **Passion.** Passion will attract people to you and make them want to return. If you love what you do, it will show. Passion is worth billions!

It is easy to understand why banks build large, sturdy buildings, and hire articulate consultants in business suits. Also, why proposals are in "executive" typeset and leather bindings, and why architects laboriously draw renderings of buildings. It explains why insurance companies offer "a piece of the rock," put you under a "blanket of protection," or in "good hands."

ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN MARKETING

Public relations programs are designed to create a positive climate in which a company or group can do business, earn recognition, and gain acceptance. Marketing programs set forth strategies for selling or promoting products and services for which funding is sought or consideration is to be gained. Such strategies define an organization's competitive edge and its position within the marketplace (2).

Public relations (PR) is primarily a communications tool, whereas marketing also includes needs assessment, product development, pricing, and distribution. PR seeks to influence attitudes, whereas marketing tries to elicit specific behaviors, such as buying, joining, etc. PR defines the image of an organization, whereas marketing defines the organization's goals, business mission, customers, services, and so on (2).

Selling products or services, or soliciting funds should take place after public relations and marketing campaigns have opened the doors, creating a favorable climate for success (2). Effective public relations does not necessarily require costly expenditures. It does require a clear understanding of an organization's image, products, and marketplace.

Elements of successful PR and marketing campaigns include the following (2):

- Planned, not left to chance
- Continuous, not single shot
- Proactive, not just reactive, to events and problems
- Clearly focused with well-defined goals, timetables, and specific assignments
- Well-managed, evaluated, and revised regularly

PROMOTION

Promotion is the communication you use to help others become familiar with you, and your services or products. Promotion has become more important to dietitians than ever before because of the changes in the marketplace.

First, consumers are now shopping around to find the best nutrition services and products for their money. Second, there is confusion today in the public's mind about who to believe in the nutrition field. Finally, dietitians aren't the only legitimate players in the nutrition arena. We may have had ownership in the past in some market areas through default, but today that is no longer the case. Nutrition is in demand by the consumer; it's therefore a competitive area of business (3).

Dietitians often neglect to plan and oversee adequate promotion for programs, not realizing that poor attendance or lackluster promotion reflects back on the program. Actually, it shows lack of foresight and follow-through if a practitioner devotes total attention to the development of an excellent program, and yet fails to insure the success of the program through adequate promotion (4).

Promotion will attract far more clients to our doors than any form of legislation. Because the healthcare focus is evolving to more health promotion and to attracting the "well" individual, we must accept that our services are among the many nutrition options available to each consumer. Therefore, dietitians must learn how to promote themselves and their products.

PROMOTION TOOLS

There are many tools that can be used in promotion. The target market, your budget, the degree of competition, and the image you want to project usually determine which technique you select. Some promotional tools are far more effective in reaching the target market, but it may also be very expensive (like television or color advertisements in magazines). Other techniques may better meet the expectations of the target markets, for example, tasteful brochures and business cards at a one-on-one meeting. Medical professionals have been slow in using less traditional promotion tools, such as billboards and neon signs, but sending a bouquet of balloons or Holiday deli tray to top referring physicians' offices have been very effective.

When trying to evaluate which forms of promotion to use, public relations experts suggest you go down a list of the promotion options, and hypothetically try to fit the service or product to it. Look for ideas that are creative, unique, and in good taste. See Table 21.1.

Promotion is most successful when a plan is designed for multiple exposures of the name or message to the target market over an extended period. For a weight loss program at a fitness center, promotion could include:

- Newspaper and radio advertisements
- Free media publicity
- Direct mail promotion
- In-house newsletter promotion to members
- Gym bags printed with the program name and logo at registration
- Program T-shirts when fitness goals are met

TABLE 21.1 PROMOTION TOOLS FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

Getting Involved	Tools	Web Promotion	Getting Visible
Networking	Business cards	Web page	Media appearances
Speeches and seminars	Yellow Page advertisements	Banner advertisement	Radio or television advertising
Volunteering	Postcards	Involvement in list serves	National speaking
Holding office in dietetic groups	Coupons	Email signature information	Publicity: newspapers, magazines, and business publications
	Phone hold messages	Column on a website	Your own book
	Referral forms for physicians' patients	Online directories	Hosting a radio program
	Résumé	Hosting chat sessions	Hosting or being a guest on a television show
	Brochures and flyers	Email newsletters	
	Portfolios for clients' materials		
	Trade directories		
	Newsletters		
	Samples and giveaways (T-shirts, mugs, etc.)		
	Media bio		

These are just a few promotion ideas; there are dozens more.

There are advertising and public relations firms and individual consultants that can create promotional campaigns for a fee. For most dietitians that is not always an affordable option, but it may be a wise investment for selected projects. Promotion costs should be seen as part of the necessary expense and investment made to create demand for what you sell. The challenge is to choose wisely, and be cost effective when investing in promotional programs.

WHAT TOOLS DO ENTREPRENEURIAL NUTRITIONISTS FIND WORK BEST?

As mentioned in Chapter 11 on marketing, when Registered Dietitians (RDs) and Registered Dietetic Technicians (DTRs) identified their most successful promotion tools in the 2008 survey, they didn't choose the expensive options (5). In descending order out of 24 options, they ranked what worked best (5):

1. Word-of-mouth marketing
2. Networking with other health or business professionals
3. Business cards
4. Networking with dietetic peers
5. Personal meeting or phone calls to potential referral agents
6. Speaking
7. Brochures or flyers
8. Website
9. Writing articles or newspaper columns
10. Calling leads referred to you by a third party
11. Membership in the national dietetic association
12. Membership in the national dietetic practice group
13. Membership in the local dietetic practice group
14. Local volunteering
15. Local health fairs
16. Television spots or interviews
17. Newspaper advertisements
18. Direct mail campaigns
19. Radio spots or interviews
20. Cold calling possible leads (buyers)
21. Discounts for first-time customers
22. Exhibiting at Product Market Place at the Food and Nutrition Conference and Expo (FNCE)
23. Hiring a marketing firm
24. Exhibiting in a commercial booth at FNCE (ADA's annual convention)

You can see that the most effective promotion tools cost more in time and effort than in dollars.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF PROMOTIONAL TOOLS

ONE-ON-ONE COMMUNICATION

One-on-one communication can be your most effective form of promotion. It affords the opportunity to speak, hear, see, and exchange viewpoints face-to-face. As the promoter, you have the opportunity to read the body language and expressions of your listener and then adjust your presentation for best impact. Your employees should be trained in excellent customer service, which starts with good interpersonal communication.

Satisfied customers are walking promoters of inestimable value. Through word-of-mouth advertising, listeners may be more influenced to try a dietitian's service because the promoter lends credibility as a satisfied customer.

PUBLIC SPEAKING

Speaking to individuals and groups is considered an efficient way to market. It lets you get your messages across and establish your credibility at the same time to large numbers of people.

Speaking does not come easily for some people, but there are Toastmasters groups and others to join that allow you to practice your skills in a supportive atmosphere. You can also hire a speaking coach to help you with slang, organizing your ideas, and the dramatics of speaking.

Whether speaking to a women's club, a state dietetic association, or a large national chef's association, the following are some suggestions that will make speaking more predictable and enjoyable:

- **Ask for an appropriate speaking fee.** When you are paid to speak, place it as a higher priority, and get more excited and rehearsed. Your enthusiasm is often contagious. The fee should cover your honorarium, travel, preparation time, handouts, food samples, or whatever. As you become better known, your fee will greatly increase. Local speakers usually make \$50 to \$500 for presentations. National speakers can make \$500 to \$3000 and keynote speakers often make \$1500 to \$10,000. See Chapter 17 to see the range of what dietitians and dietetic technicians charge for speaking. Of course, writing a best-selling book helps increase your fees. If a meeting planner can't afford your fee, negotiate. For example, ask to sell your books, or at an all-day meeting, offer to do a second presentation (since you will be there anyway) and ask for 1½ times your normal fee for both speeches. It makes the trip more profitable for you, and it saves the sponsor money by not having to pay for travel and honorarium for a second speaker. You can handle all of these arrangements yourself, or hire an administrative assistant or agent to do it for you.
- **Find out as much as you can about the audience, its needs, and any human interest facts. What specifically do they want you to speak on?** Who will be in the audience and how much do they know about the proposed topic? What are their educational backgrounds? Have they heard other speakers on this subject? Will there be questions, debate, etc., afterward?
- **Find out about the logistics: physical building, room, audiovisual capabilities (PowerPoint projector), and whether they will reprint handouts.** Request a letter or email of confirmation with the date, time, place, topic, expenses that will be reimbursed, and honorarium. Be sure to request a cancellation clause of at least 30 days or more, and for professional speakers, a partial payment if cancelled within that timeframe.
- **Be sure to mark your calendar and get the name and phone number of the person who called.**

LOGO

A logo is a symbol. If it is used to identify a product, it is called a trademark. If it is used for a service, it is called a service mark. Logos can be fun, or highbrow and sophisticated, or somewhere in between. Logos are used to identify the business and draw attention to whatever they are used on, such as stationery, posters, business cards, brochures, or billboards (Fig. 21.1).

BUSINESS OWNER

Private practitioners are potentially their own best marketing assets. Your personality, image, communication and business skills, and expertise in nutrition will be ultimately responsible for attracting and keeping clients. Look good and look professional! Look healthy!

Business advisors suggest business people to use at least the following four practices to help promote their business.

First, use the phone and its marketing potential, talk to clients regularly, confirm appointments, and respond to referring physicians. Call back people who want to know about your services. Take time to

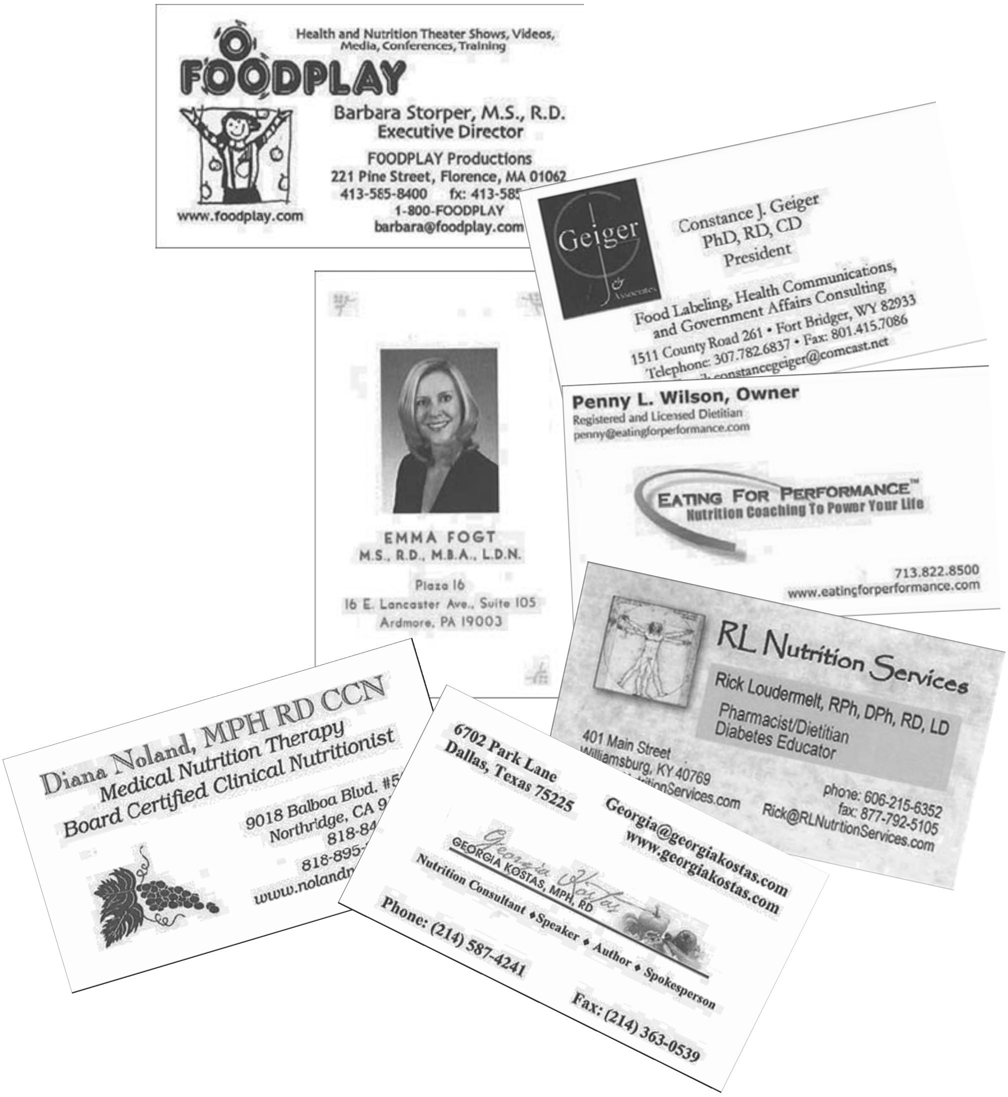

FIGURE 21.1 ■ Logo and business card samples.

show an interest in their needs, to tell them briefly what you have to offer, to let them know what you will expect from them, and to discuss an appointment time and your fees. By taking time to market your services instead of just scheduling an appointment, the client will become excited about the expected personalized care.

Second, use your writing skills to correspond with people on a timely basis and to publish. For those who feel weak in this area, there are adult education classes, books, and editors to help you. Write thank you notes for courtesies shown by others.

Third, use public speaking to make yourself more visible in your community and to interest people in nutrition. Speaking to clubs, community groups, PTAs, and at conferences will make people recognize you as a nutrition specialist.

Fourth, become involved in several local or national organizations that could benefit you personally or professionally. Attend meetings, support activities, and run for offices. Dietetic organizations, including Dietetic Practice Groups, need input from active, assertive dietitians on their way up. Small business owners' groups, executive clubs, Chamber of Commerce, and local political groups offer opportunities to become involved.

WRITING FOR PUBLICATION

Writing is an ideal medium for practitioners to distinguish and promote themselves by communicating with the public or their peers. Writing for lay periodicals or books provides the opportunity to reach a potentially large audience, to share your views, to be paid for your work, and to become known.

Writing for publication in professional journals does not pay directly, but it helps establish you as a knowledgeable, qualified professional and excellent resource. Articles also lend credibility to your programs and services. This type of promotion may also attract more business in the form of referrals or consultation opportunities.

BUSINESS CARDS

Business cards should always be carried and handed out. They can be powerful marketing tools and one of the least expensive. Other peoples' cards should be saved and used the next time you want to network or you need some information. Business cards should list your name, credentials, business name, phone number with area code, email address, website, and full address.

Some considerations to think about: do you want to print appointment information on the back of the card? Does the card look too cluttered as it's laid out? Can everyone read the typeface (script and Old English are difficult to read)? Since card sizes are fairly standard, will choosing another size of card make your card stand out, or be thrown away? How can you best use color, style, paper, and design to attract attention to your card? (see Fig. 21.1).

LETTERS AND NOTES

Many business people have boosted their careers through well-written letters. All too often, we overlook the contribution that impressive correspondence can provide. The neatness and grammatical correctness is as important as the content of a letter. Letters with numerous corrections or misspelled words are poorly received.

Busy people will often refuse to read obvious mass mailings, such as those addressed to "Dear Sirs," "Dear Philadelphia Physicians," or those that are poorly photocopied. By using mail merge on your computer, you should be able to send out an original letter each time. Creativity, time, effort, and money must be invested to ensure that your letters are read. Business consultants suggest that even on mass mailings, the signature and heading should be individualized whenever possible.

DIRECT MAIL

Direct mail is used when you know specifically whom you want to contact (usually potential clients, buyers, or referral agents), and when you want to increase your chances of attracting a higher-percentage response.

Personalize the mailed piece as much as possible to increase the readership. To increase the chance of having the direct mail piece read:

- Put a return address, with the sender's name or business, on the outside.
- Add a question or statement to grab the readers' attention.
- Add a photo or drawing on a self-mailer to make the sender seem more familiar.

Direct mail is used for brochures, marketing surveys, announcements, and to acquaint potential clients or referral agents to your services. Postcards have become more popular because they can be read without opening. Membership lists from your local medical society or national dietetic practice groups, the Yellow Pages, and shared business cards are good sources of names and addresses. Many organizations ask for a fee and an explanation of how the membership lists will be used before use is granted (Fig. 21.2).

RÉSUMÉ

A résumé can be a very effective marketing tool. It should highlight your skills and experience that best qualify you for the position you are seeking. It can either be chronological (listing your experience in reverse chronological order) or functional (highlighting your skills and responsibilities). Résumés can also be used along with letters of introduction to open doors for you, or to establish credibility in a proposal, or to help introduce you at a speaking engagement.

A variation of the résumé would be a curriculum vitae or vita (an expanded detailed version that includes published books and papers). The biographical sketch (in paragraph form) is often used for introduction purposes at speeches.

Laser-printed résumés look impressive. Word processing can make updating a résumé very easy. However, the most important qualities are that it's free of any typographical errors and it's interesting and accurate.

LETTERS OF REFERENCE

Letters of reference written by prominent people who know you and your work are impressive. They help establish credibility and may help open doors for you. Keep the original on file, and use good photocopies.

BROCHURES

Brochures are used to introduce and promote. It's not imperative for a private practitioner to have a brochure, but many have found that attractive; clever ones attract business and easily pay for themselves.

The most important things to remember about a brochure are:

- Write the information with the customers' needs utmost in mind; talk about "benefits." How will your product or services make the customer happier, healthier, more fulfilled, and so on? *Don't just list what you have to offer!*
- Make the brochure attractive, simple to read, and interesting. Leave open space and use bullets to make scanning easier.
- Your readers may be interested in seeing a good picture of you.
- Add statements from satisfied customers.
- When consulting to businesses, add a listing of former clients.

Brochures seldom list fees because it dates them and sometimes makes them poorly received. If insurance sometimes covers your services or there is an employer co-pay program, it could be mentioned in the brochure. Your name, business name, address, phone number, email address, and website should be highlighted. It is highly suggested that brochures be typeset and printed on good quality paper. See brochure in Figure 21.2.

PORTFOLIO

There are times when dietitians want to show the scope of their creativity and samples of their work, such as creative menus, educational materials, media work, or catering ideas. When a business is new and its reputation and yours are unknown, a portfolio may be the marketing tool you need.

A portfolio is similar to a scrapbook or a slide show designed graphically to show what you have to sell. The portfolio may be in a commercially available portfolio folder, on a tripod display with charts, or on audio tapes or DVDs for dietitians who do media work. Presenting a portfolio to the client helps make the intangible promise tangible, enticing, and clearly defined.

FIGURE 21.2 ■ Brochure sample.

The cost of a portfolio can vary greatly, depending on what is included. Items may range from professionally produced food photos to just copies or samples of educational materials, authored articles, menus, snapshots, letters of reference, and newspaper coverage. Occasionally, it is worth paying a professional artist or calligrapher to add a special touch. Unfortunately, many of us never use samples of our past creativity to help us win the next contract.

POSTERS

Using posters to promote seminars and classes has proved to be successful for some practitioners. To save money on printing costs, a large number of poster "shells" (ones with four-color designs) can be printed at one time with the artwork, logo, business name, and phone number. The date, place, time, and event can be added as the posters are used. Sometimes a pad is attached with tear-off cards for potential customers to send in for more information.

If the posters are not too large, most stores, health clubs, and beauty shops that allow posters are willing to let you have display space to solicit their customers. When you use this type of marketing and you want to use the locations more than once, call or stop by when the event is over, and take the posters down and thank the owner.

PRESS KITS

Press kits are commonly used to interest the media in writing or broadcasting a story to help you promote your services, product, book, or speaking engagement. The kit may include a variety of items:

- A cover letter addressed to the person
- A press release on the service, product, or book you wish to publicize
- A sample of the product or book, a copy of newspaper articles, or critical reviews
- A résumé and short biographical sketch, or media bio
- A 5″ × 7″ black-and-white glossy photo of you or the product

Press kits should be descriptive, attractive, and to the point. They should explain why the public would be interested in the topic. Although press kits can be very elaborate with printed covers and numerous photos, they can also be as simple as several of the above items placed in a large folder with pockets.

BANNERS

Banners draw attention and create name recognition. They can be used at a "fun run" finish line, in a lobby during a wellness festival, or over the cafeteria door to promote the new line of "light and natural" foods. Banners can be made with paper and paint; however, they can be reused several times if they are made from cloth or heavy vinyl. Banners are great promotional tools for a large area where crowds are gathered, and they also create a festive mood (6).

GIVEAWAYS

Giveaways (T-shirts, notebooks, mugs, gym bags, etc.) with the program name or logo are popular promotion items. The more useful and practical the item, the more it will be used and the name or logo displayed. (These items can be sold as fundraisers, rather than be given away.)

FREE PROMOTION

EMAIL SIGNATURE

As will be mentioned in the next chapters, using the signature capability on your email is a very easy way to let each person you write to know:

- Your name
- Address, phone, toll free number, and fax
- Website with a hot link to take them there

- Slogan, main product line, mission statement, favorite quote, or one sentence bio

MEDIA

Working with the media—radio, television, and newspapers—gives free marketing exposure to practitioners. One can do years of public speaking and not reach a fraction of the number of people who watch one television program or read a newspaper.

Nutrition, fitness, and health are "hot" topics right now and probably will be for several years to come. Experts in these fields who have a flair for that type of work and have something unique to say are sought after.

Media people are looking for stories and information that will interest the public. It can be classified as controversial, human interest, new research, exposes, practical, or a scoop story, but it has to have a "hook" or a "handle" (some unique element to attract the audience). Working with the media is discussed in Chapter 28.

Many practitioners got their first start with the media during National Nutrition Month. We sometimes forget that there are 11 other months to work with also. We do not have to wait until we are invited to contribute. If you plan to have a successful business, it is imperative people know about you. Through a phone call, introductory letter, over lunch, or at an office interview, however possible, try to talk to the local media program directors and newspaper writers. A private practitioner in Chicago reports she has been quoted or consulted on articles over 50 times in the last year in local newspapers. She sent her card, introduced herself, and offered to act as a resource person. Eventually, she was credited with a byline in the article for what she contributed.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT (PSA)

The media inconsistently welcome PSAs. The PSA can announce a new series of diabetes classes or discuss childhood obesity for an hour on the radio. It can be printed in a newspaper, read on the air, or it can be a live interview. Obvious commercial promotions for your business or to sell something are not permitted unless you pay for commercial time or space. The lead time for PSAs ranges from 3 to 8 weeks, so call ahead and plan accordingly.

Radio and television stations support PSAs because of the service they provide to the community and because it looks good on their record when they reapply for their broadcast licenses. Newspapers usually feel PSAs increase readership.

It's become common for commercial food and beverage companies to hire dietitians as media spokespeople to offer PSAs. The dietitians are trained to provide interviews on an educational topic relating to food or nutrition and to interject the information about the company's product.

PUBLICITY

Publicity is free media coverage of some newsworthy story, program, or event. It is easily recognized as the media coverage for a local health fair or of the local school children during National Nutrition Month. In a recent newspaper article, it mentioned that a man named Lawrence "Herkie" Herkimer was going to be in the *Sports Illustrated* (SI) magazine for the second time in 40 years talking about cheerleading and cheerleading camps. "I've got a soft spot in my heart for *SI*," says Herkie. "Back in the mid-50s, they did a story on me and it really helped establish my company." That is what good publicity can do for you.

Practitioners can call or write the media with their requests for publicity. For planned events, such as the beginning of weight loss classes for teenagers or a sports nutrition conference, the media should be contacted several weeks in advance. When planning a special event, consider including a local celebrity or cosponsorship with a philanthropic organization to improve the possibility of media coverage and to attract a larger attendance.

Publicity comes at no cost, but it may be sporadic or completely upstaged if a bigger news item breaks the same day as your story.

In an article by Peter Miller, "Be Your Own Publicist," he suggests the following references if you want to reach the media yourself, many libraries will have these resources, and they may be available online (6):

- Bacon's *Publicity Checker* lists more than 18,000 newspapers and magazines, as well as 100,000 media contacts. (800) 621-0561.
- *Broadcasting Yearbook* covers radio, television and cable, and their staffs. (800) 638-7827.
- *Gale Directory of Publications* provides information on 25,000 newspapers, magazines, journals, and newsletters. (313) 961-2242.
- *Hudson's Newsletter Directory* provides listing of 4000 newsletters by subject. (914) 876-2081.

Small companies can compete with large corporations with megabucks for media coverage; if you follow some very basic premises tested and proven by publicist Peter Miller (6):

- Write about a topic, not about yourself.
- Be factual.
- Include your name, address, and phone number at the top of the page.
- Be brief. Limit the news release to one page, but also include a cover page addressed to the individual reporter or editor; there may be a brief biography of yourself and a short history of the business or product.
- State on the news release "For Immediate Release," which means use it anytime.
- Describe your material as a "news release."

Using this approach, Miller helped a small contact lens company in Washington, DC go from five employees working in an apartment to a 40% increase in sales and offers from all over the world to buy the firm. The publicity program cost approximately $200 over a period of 7 months (6). The money paid for printing, postage, and photocopying. His time was donated because he was using them in his master's thesis. He was able to generate exposure in *Newsweek*, the *Washington Post,* and in the United Press International (UPI).

PAID ADVERTISING

It is ethical, professional, and highly recommended that you consider using advertising. The U.S. government encourages professionals to advertise, in hopes of producing more competitive services and better values for the public. Professional organizations are recognizing that it's becoming a fact of life for their members, and stress it be done tastefully.

Most practitioners use advertising as an ongoing budget item used to attract clients. Others use it only at times for special events, for new program announcements, and at the beginning of seasonal peak periods (for example, September and January for weight loss). Whenever it is used, there are two guidelines that should always be followed:

- First, make it clever and distinctive.
- Second, plan to have a campaign, not just a single advertisement. Estimates vary that the average person must see or hear an advertisement between 5 and 11 times before he or she remembers it, so repetition is necessary (7).

A good rule of thumb to determine how much to spend on advertising is 5% to 10% of the gross annual budget. This is after the initial expense of 15% for the first year. Another way would be to divide the cost of the advertising by the cost of the product you are selling or initial consultation fee. Evaluate if the number of new clients needed to breakeven on the advertising is reasonable (it's too expensive if you have to see 20 new patients per month just to pay for advertising). There is a point where putting more money into advertisements will not bring more clients or profit to your office. When you first begin a business, budget an amount you can afford to spend, and look for other previously mentioned ways to market yourself for less cost.

Most dietitians cannot afford to compete with the amount of advertising purchased by commercial weight loss and other nutrition programs. Where we spend our advertising money and the distinctiveness of our advertising are all the more important, because our funds may be tight. To help determine what works for you, *ask clients and patients how they heard about your business*. Look over the list from the 2008 survey mentioned earlier in the chapter on what worked for other dietitians.

The Yellow Pages and the media all have free sales personnel that can assist clients in determining the best way to use their advertising dollar and help with advertisement ideas on a limited basis.

If a practitioner wants help on an overall advertising strategy, plus artwork and a slogan, an advertising agency or public relations firm can do it, as well as students and professors at your local colleges and universities. Obtain estimates before you agree to have work done, because good firms are usually expensive.

Fees often range from $2500 to $15,000 or more (advertising not included) to set up an advertising campaign with a logo and slogan for a small business. Fees are less if you come up with the ideas yourself.

YELLOW PAGES OR TELEPHONE BOOK

Telephone books offer a business the opportunity to advertise to everyone who owns a telephone, for a year. Most businesses find this type of advertising very productive.

Patients and clients know to look under "Dietitians" or "Nutritionists" to find a consulting nutritionist listing. Occasionally, practitioners also list under such titles as "Reducing and Weight Loss," "Physical Fitness," or "Catering." One listing in the Yellow Pages and white pages is offered when you have a business phone. All other listings, display advertisements, extra lines, or bold print are an extra charge.

It is highly recommended that a telephone book listing include the words "Registered Dietitian." The telephone company does not police their listings, so anyone can be listed under a title we, and the public, assume to be ours alone. Choosing a generic business name without reference to having a professionally trained dietitian involved may cause business to be lost. Examples would be "Big Pines Consultant Services" or "Moore & Associates, Inc."

To help save money but still have a good size advertisement and several listings, buy only one larger advertisement and refer the other listings to it, such as "See advertisement under *Nutritionists*." Put the advertisement under the listing where you think it will be seen best and where clients would look for your name first.

The telephone book closing dates for ordering your advertisement is usually 3 to 5 months before the books are available. Plan ahead and call to ask for assistance. Evaluate your listings each year and try new ideas that might work better. Ask new clients how they heard about your business to see if the advertisements really work.

NEWSPAPERS

Dietitians use newspaper advertisements with varying degrees of success. The wording and placement of the advertisement are critical. It must be distinctive enough to catch the reader's eye. The competition to attract attention is very stiff in a newspaper, especially a large daily one. Advertisements should run on a regular basis in order to be remembered. Scheduling ads regularly also makes the cost of each individual advertisement more reasonable.

Large daily newspapers have good exposure, but they also have a lot of clutter and are only partly read by most people. Readers go to the sections that interest them most and skim the rest. Fortunately, newspapers know what sections are read most and by whom. Advice columns, horoscopes, comics, letters to the editors, sports score pages and, in small towns, the obituaries are usually read closely. Although women's sections are usually read well, on coupon day, that is often not the case. Request the advertisement to be placed on a page that is mostly writing, so your advertisement will stand out and not be lost among the huge furniture display advertisements.

Small newspapers and weekly papers are usually read more closely and have a loyal but smaller readership. The cost of advertising is more reasonable. The preferred placement guidelines for an advertisement are the same as mentioned for large newspapers. Also, smaller papers are usually more open to the idea of a nutrition column written by a local person, or articles that are contributed locally.

An advertisement should catch your attention with a catchy word, phrase, graphic design, photo, or something. It should be easy to read and understand, plus it should be clever. The phone number should stand out. It's not necessary to condense your brochure or calling card into an advertisement. In fact, you will attract more attention with the headline, "Ready for Bikini Season?" than with "Nutritional Consultation by a Professional." If you can't think of an idea you like, check the advertisements other businesses are using and see what you like and dislike about them. If you have an idea but need artwork, go to a graphic artist. If you don't see a good idea, budget in an advertising firm or advertising student for the creation of the advertisement.

RADIO

Radio advertising can be geared to a very specific group of the population, depending on the type of music played and the time of day. Radio stations know from surveys their listeners' average ages, the percentages of men and women, their approximate income, and educational levels.

To be remembered, radio advertisements must be repeated. Sales people from stations will offer several "packages" of advertisement lengths and airing times to make the campaign more reasonable. They often will help with writing the advertisement and have a station person record it or read it live. Smaller stations have lower advertising fees because fewer people listen to them. In fact, it's the listenership that determines how much a station charges in a given market, but all fees are negotiable. The longer you decide to commit to their station, the lower the rate you will be charged. Don't accept the first figures you are quoted. Take your time and check for the best air times and prices for the target market you want. Classical stations are sometimes a very good choice to attract affluent patients for private consults, and "easy listening" for the over 40-year-old group, and so on.

Businesses that can afford regular radio advertising report are very successful. Smaller businesses with lower budgets and irregular use of radio advertising report hit or miss success. According to business consultants, if you plan to use advertising, you need to commit enough financial support to produce results or you should not do it at all.

TELEVISION

A television advertisement is extremely expensive to produce and to show on the air. Again, it must be repeated to be effective, and the types of programs being shown determine who the audiences will be. Television advertising reaches a large number of viewers, but is so expensive it would be very difficult for a consultant working alone to breakeven on the number of added customers it would attract. One person usually doesn't generate enough income in 1 hour to cover this expenditure and other overhead, too. It may be possible that several consultants working together, or working for one person, could generate enough added income to warrant television advertising, but exhaust all avenues for getting free television exposure first.

A reasonable television advertisement can be produced for $2000 to $15,000, depending on whether you hire someone to act or you do it yourself. The airtime varies greatly, depending on whether it is a small, local cable station or prime time on a major network. The better the viewership and time slot for the advertisement, the higher the cost—from $1500 to $50,000 or more per week for a daily advertisement.

One private practitioner did invest with a partner in television advertising to promote their quick weight loss program in the fall, during the popular afternoon talk shows. The advertisements cost $30,000 per week for several weeks and they did fill 50 weight loss classes with 12 people each at about $400 per person up-front (plus a weekly fee for meal-replacement beverages), or over a quarter million dollars in gross income in 30 days. Figuring the cost of the advertisement, the airtime, the meeting rooms, the secretarial time, the educational materials, and the instructors to handle all those people, there was still a good profit—but very high risk if it had not worked.

Infomercials can also be very lucrative (selling more than 10,000 products in a day), but you would need to work with a company that already has the phone banks, credit card capabilities, staffing, actors, and video production ready to go.

WEB

The Internet has high reach (worldwide access) and high impact (7). It is low cost for the number of potential customers who can be reached, although it may cost thousands to design and maintain a website. At first glance, there seems to be low selectivity (who can access your site); however, through skillful use of meta tags and key phrases, you can greatly increase the chances of search engines finding your site and bringing the right customers (see Chapters 22–24).

KEEPING CUSTOMERS

After you have successfully attracted customers, it's important to keep them. Experts suggest that it costs businesses five times more to attract a new client than to sell another item to a former customer. Customers are assets for more than just a source of revenue. They are "walking promoters" of your services and an advertising medium of great value. Each person has a sphere of influence that reaches far beyond his or her immediate family and business peers to a potential of several hundred people.

There are numerous ways to strengthen relationships with clients or referral agents that can be carried out with a minimum amount of effort on your part, once the system is established.

- Phone calls
- Personal notes
- Rapport established by showing genuine concern
- Newsletters (by mail or email)
- Email communication
- Gifts and cards around holidays and special events
- Coffee or luncheon appointments
- In-services for staff

CASE STUDY 21.1

"STREAM"-LINE YOUR BUSINESS

Streaming video is here to stay, and for those of us who have teenage children (I have three!), we know this has become a wildly popular mode of entertainment and education that's available 24/7. Studies have shown that people prefer watching information rather than reading it, leading to greater retention of material. This high-quality, cost-saving technique has, for many companies and professionals, become a practical and affordable way to market themselves and their businesses.

Just as the word "blog" has become an everyday term, laced throughout countless websites, streaming video can be seen everywhere from the biggest boardrooms to the smallest bedrooms. Online video clips are able to be accessed from any computer that has an Internet connection, which easily transfers live or prerecorded images over long distances.

Some nutrition entrepreneurs have ventured into using streaming video on their own websites, and if you've taken this first step, try taking the plunge and explore the endless possibilities for posting your video on social networking sites, like YouTube, MySpace, or Facebook. You can even pitch your video clip to your local television station to help them add a moving picture to your story. Professionally produced videos are welcomed by many busy producers, saving them the time, money, and manpower it otherwise would have taken to send out a camera crew to interview you.

But before you push the "record" button on your camcorder, here are a few key points to consider:

- If you're setting up shop from your home, be sure you have a **tripod** to keep your camera stable. Don't just lean the camera on a countertop. If you're doing a cooking demo, be sure to check to see that you're staying with the frame of the shot and try not to move around too much. Although, it may be difficult in this situation, be sure to look up at the camera. Maintaining eye contact with your audience is imperative, and don't forget to smile! (You'll probably need plenty of time to practice coordinating all of this ahead of time.)
- Proper **lighting** is essential, and it may be worthwhile to invest in professional fixtures if you plan to self-shoot. A dark, dreamy atmosphere will present a solemn message; a bright environment will be seen as uplifting and will highlight you more clearly.
- Be aware of **background noise** such as airplanes flying overhead, dogs barking, neighbors mowing their lawn, phones ringing, or trucks going by, just to name a few of the reasons camera crews had to stop filming when at my house.
- Be sure your backdrop is **neat and clean.** A more simple setting will be less distracting and will help you become the focus of attention, allowing the audience to focus on your message instead of what's piled up on your desk. Pictures are better than a thousand words, and sometimes the word is clutter! Try taking a tour of your own home with an objective eye and take a still photo of your room before you film. Those same objects you stare at everyday could be a real eyesore as a backdrop.
- **Do a sound check.** Be sure that the location of your camera is picking up the sound of your voice. You may want to purchase a separate inexpensive recording device or microphone to improve sound clarity. Your message will have no impact if it can't be heard.
- **Dress for your audience, but dress for success.** If you are doing a piece for a corporate audience, a suit or blazer would be appropriate, and sitting at a desk may be the right setting. For a more relaxed crowd (homemakers) or for kids and teens, more casual attire might work best, always keeping professionalism in mind (i.e., no torn jeans, tank tops, low-cut blouses, or clothing that sports logos or designer names). For cooking demos, be sure to tie

your hair back, keep your nails short and neat, and perhaps wear an apron to lend credibility. As with any television or video interview, avoid wearing wild patterns, stripes, and plaids, and big pieces of jewelry or dangling earrings. The camera loves solid, bold colors like pink, aqua, blue, green, or purple.

- **Master the message.** Once you post your video to a site, thousands of people could tune in. Be sure that your message is clear, and above all, accurate, in layman's terms.
- **Practice makes perfect.** When doing taped interviews, I still feel the pressure to get it right on the first take, but when you're the producer, you don't have to feel that same pressure. Once you have your message down, try practicing in different settings and perhaps try wearing different outfits. Do whatever makes you feel comfortable without feeling distracted.

This is your show, illuminating your skills and expertise, so try to make the most of it and try to have fun. For further information log on to www.eatright.org/media to help you get ready for a marketing tool that keeps on working while you sleep. All it takes are some lights, camera, and action!—*Bonnie Taub-Dix, MA, RD, CDN*

About the Author

Bonnie Taub-Dix, MA, RD, CDN, is a National Spokesperson for the American Dietetic Association; Director of BTD Nutrition Consultants; Co-author of *Kosher By Design Lightens Up* (Artscroll, 2008); Food & Nutrition Blogger, *USA Today*, http://tinyurl.com/5ogx9w; and an Advisory Board Member, *Family Circle Magazine*.

CASE STUDY 21.2

MARKETING YOURSELF THROUGH SPEAKING

Savor Your Life Today, Inc. helps overwhelmed and overbooked people *find purpose* and *stop* overworking and overeating to live happily and healthfully ever after. Speaking is the number one strategy that I use to attract clients through workshops, lunch and learns, keynote presentations, and teleclasses.

What Does Your Audience Need?

To obtain paid presentations, you must identify topics that your target audience truly needs and you are also passionate about. What do you do that helps your market solve a problem or make their life easier?

Understanding your audience is the key to future referrals. Whether you are speaking to 20 or 200 people, know *why* your message is important for them to hear. After you master the art of connecting with 20 audience members, you will be able to make each person in an audience of 200 feel as though you are talking directly to them. Showing empathy and understanding of your audience's life's challenges and creating practical solutions will have you connecting with them and getting more referrals.

The Presentation

Tell great stories. Stories help people think about their lives in a different way. Keep a "story journal"—moments of challenge, crisis, or a life lesson you have learned. For a 1-hour presentation, plan on three key messages and three stories. Your stories become the framework for your talking points. People will forget your tools, but they will never forget your stories.

Before You Speak

Develop a speaker agreement form. It should include the name of your business, the presentation topic, a description of the audience, your fee, audio visual needs, transportation arrangements, lodging, meals, and anything else relevant to the success of this presentation. Ask for a 50% down payment when the agreement is signed to hold the date for you.

Your Time and Fees

Dietitians crave for details and love to research. To save time, keep in mind that getting it done is sometimes better than having it perfect. Think about your hourly fee and calculate how many hours it will take to prepare this presentation. Before citing your fee, always ask for their budget. Only discuss your fee over the phone or in person never via email. Ask for the highest fee you can say without choking, then be quiet and wait. As a Registered Dietitian, strive to get paid for your stellar overdelivery.

The latest American Dietetic Association's *Nutrition and You* trends survey shows that consumers rated the Registered Dietitian as the most credible nutrition information source. People are waiting to hear what you have to say! What are you waiting for? —*Chere Bork, MS RD LN, Licensed Executive Wellcoach ®, Founder of Savor Your Life Today, Inc. http://www.cherebork.com*

SUMMARY

Attracting and keeping clients is necessary to survive in business. Selling and promotion should always be major priorities of any business, whether new or established. Private practitioners soon learn to carry a supply of calling cards wherever they go. Stepping forward to shake hands and introducing yourself becomes second nature. Although many things seem awkward at first, after so many hours and days are invested, it becomes very easy to share your enthusiasm.

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This is the most comprehensive book ever written on marketing dietetics.

USING THE INTERNET IN YOUR BUSINESS

22

Teresa Pangan

The Internet has a huge variety of uses from quick communication with the world and in-depth scientific research to bookkeeping, world-wide conferencing, and informal sharing of videos, photos, résumé, stories on YouTube, blogs, and LinkedIn. Owning a website is only a small part of its potential. Following are several ways to use the Internet in your professional work, regardless of whether you or your company has a website.

COMMON USES OF EMAIL

QUICK COMMUNICATION

With the increased use of computers and the Internet by individuals, email can be a convenient and inexpensive mechanism for communication. It can aid the health-care delivery process by allowing written follow-up on instructions, quicker test results, and dissemination of educational materials to patients. It is a means for business clients and consultant dietitians to easily communicate with each other. At the same time, issues of privacy, confidentiality, and security must be addressed to ensure the efficacy and effectiveness of email.

INDIVIDUAL THERAPY

There also are an abundance of uses for email in professional work beyond a simple communication vehicle. Email has been used as a method to enhance therapy with patients, both in one-on-one and group settings. It also can be useful for surveying clients or members.

A 3-month study on patients with eating disorders found that email therapy looks promising in treating patients with bulimia nervosa (1). Twenty-three patients were asked to email a daily diary of their eating habits and feelings. Psychiatrists responded with advice, encouragement, and other comments. The therapists estimated it took them a maximum of 10 minutes to read and respond to each patient's email. Researchers found there was a significant reduction in depression and symptoms. These results illustrate that a patient's treatment can be enhanced with the combination of email contact and office visits.

GROUP THERAPY

Email can be effective in a group support setting. Often people connect when they are not involved in a face-to-face encounter. Email is famous for drawing out people who have difficulty expressing themselves (2). Many patients feel more comfortable expressing their feelings in the comfort of their own home or own pajamas. Email affords them this benefit. With the crazy schedules of people today, email can be squeezed in between activities or left until winding down at the end of the day.

There are several companies that will host a listserv for a monthly fee or on a per email basis. The advantage of a listserv is you can have closed membership or limited access to the group. Additionally, you can set up the list so all postings are scanned or preapproved by an appointed moderator. When first starting out, you may want to be the moderator and as things progress, allow members to post without prior approval.

Email group support can be most effective for those groups of patients where issues outside of food need to be addressed. Groups of patients with eating disorders come immediately to mind; newly diagnosed individuals with diabetes, cardiac problems, and weight management are other groups.

SURVEYS

Surveys are easy to set up through emails. Emails can include a "hot" link that takes participants directly to a survey by merely clicking on the highlighted address. Possible uses include the following:

- Customer satisfaction or feedback
- Employee satisfaction or assessment
- Input for a new member service or project
- Opinions of customers regarding a product or service
- Input for an upcoming meeting
- Feedback on effectiveness of a meeting

Results of surveys can be viewed in spreadsheet format, graphs, or placed into presentation software. Results can provide insight for making informed business decisions.

Many sites that specialize in surveys offer a free survey version to assess. The number of questions and participants may be limited, so determine your needs before you buy or commit yourself. Following are sample sites to begin your search:

- http://www.supersurvey.com
- http://www.freeonlinesurveys.com
- http://www.surveymonkey.com
- http://www.zoomerang.com

To locate other sites, use the following keywords: "surveys, online."

INFORMATION THERAPY FOR PATIENTS

Information therapy is a practical tool for RDs in private practice, public health, and clinical practice. Heading the "information therapy" movement is the Washington, DC, based Center for Information Therapy (http://www.informationtherapy.org/). It is a nonprofit division of Healthwise that aims to support information therapy programs and conduct research to assess impact on

Box 22.1 ***Information Therapy Scenario***

Sheila has been hospitalized for a heart attack. Before she is discharged, she will be issued an electronic prescription via a secure message system for "information therapy," an Internet-based patient education tool.

First, Sheila receives an email that contains links to specific, physician-approved online information relevant to her diagnosis and postdischarge needs. By the time Sheila arrives home, her email has arrived. When she is ready, she can sit down at her computer and visit all the links in her "information therapy" email. In Sheila's case, the links listed are links to "heart disease development overview," information about "treatment for heart disease," and "how to prepare for a visit to a Registered Dietitian (RD) and exercise physiologist."

The email begins by explaining to Sheila this information is part of the process of care for her heart disease, and encourages her to read and study it. By the time Sheila meets with her RD for the first time, she will have completed 3 days of food and activity records and read an overview of medical nutrition therapy for heart disease. This initial visit preparation will help dietitians in assessing and working a patient through the precontemplation, contemplation, and preparation for action stages of behavior change.

healthcare quality. The nonprofit organization defines information therapy as the "*prescription of right information to the right patient at the right time to help people make appropriate decisions of care*." The information is current, evidence-based, and void of commercial interests or advertising.

Pilot tests are being conducted on information therapy with positive preliminary results and feedback. It makes patients aware of the intricacies of their health and any diseases that affect them. It takes them into the pros and cons of their care options. It helps people share in medical decisions and come closer to the self-care and self-management model of healthcare (3).

Currently, there is no reimbursement for information therapy. According to a survey by the American Medical Association, the biggest barrier to therapy is lack of compensation (4). However, inroads are being made with payers and policymakers to reimburse providers for information therapy services.

The concepts of information therapy are not new. Hospital librarians, consumer health librarians, and patient educators already provide these kinds of services. The intent is to standardize this information service into the treatment process for patients.

Dietitians can become involved in shaping information therapy to improve its effectiveness. A valuable addition to the initial "information therapy" email could include links to content on why it is important for heart disease patients to visit an RD and content to erase some of the myths associated with RDs—*we can teach you how to eat your favorite foods, not take them away*. On the negative side, there could be the scenario that diets are prescribed over email instead of referring patients to dietitians.

SEARCHING THE WEB

Searching on the Internet today can be compared to dragging a net across the surface of the ocean. While a great deal may be caught in the net, there is still a wealth of information that is deep and, therefore, missed. The reason is simple: much of the web's information is buried far down on dynamically generated web pages.

DYNAMIC WEB PAGES

Dynamic web pages are created based on a user's input. A simple illustration is a search engine. When a search is performed with keywords, the search engine uses the words entered into its query box to search its database (index) that is stored offline. It matches the user's words with words in its index. The results are assembled together onto a "dynamic" web page based on the matches it found in its database.

Another example of the use of a dynamic web page is MEDLINE, a database filled with information from 4300 biomedical journals. When looking for medical information in MEDLINE, you enter an author's name, search term, or journal title. A search engine searches the MEDLINE database and returns a list of results. The list of results you see is a dynamically generated page. Additionally, you can click on a result that closely matches the topic you want to locate. This will initiate the process of creating another dynamically generated web page. The journal title, article title, abstract, authors, date, issue, full-text, and other information is retrieved from the MEDLINE database to be displayed on the dynamic web page. The web page you see (with the journal article information) is not a web page that a web developer created and posted on the Internet. It's created "on the fly." This should clarify why there is a huge amount of valuable information that standard search engines never find.

THE DEEP WEB AND SURFACE WEB

Traditional search engines create their indices by spidering, or crawling surface web pages that are all linked together. To be discovered, the webpage must be static and linked to other pages. Traditional search engines can't "see" or retrieve content in the deep web. Those pages do not exist until they are created dynamically on the spot as the result of a specific search into an online database. Because traditional search engine crawlers can't probe beneath the surface, the deep web is hidden to them.

The deep web differs from "surface" web in the way it obtains its indexed data. The "surface" web uses search engines and subject directories for finding information. Subject directories obtain their information from authors submitting their own web pages for a listing and search engines "crawl" or "spider" documents by following one hypertext link to another. Simply stated, when indexing a given document or page, if the crawler encounters a hypertext link on that page to another document, it records that incidence and schedules that new page for later crawling. Like ripples propagating across a pond, in this manner search engine crawlers are able to extend their indexes further and further from their starting points. On the other hand, the deep web has systematic information entered into a database that is below the Internet surface and not accessible to search engine crawling. Examples of deep web sources are:

- National Climatic Data Center (http://lwf.ncdc.noaa.gov/oa/ncdc.html)
- U.S. Census (http://www.census.gov)
- NIH PubMed—this has the MEDLINE database (http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez)
- U.S. Patents (http://patft.uspto.gov)
- New York Online Access to Health—NOAH (http://www.noah-health.org)

Deep websites tend to have content that is narrower and deeper than "surface" websites. Also, more than half of the deep web content resides in topic-specific databases (5). With proper searching techniques, deep web searches can turn up very valuable information. As part of your web search strategy, spend a little time looking for databases in your field or topic of study or research. Search the main stream search engines using a topic keyword and keyword "database" or "directory" to find databases with invisible web pages. For academic research topics, great starting points are the Librarians' Internet Index (http://lii.org) with over 20,000 websites compiled by public librarians, and Infomine (http://infomine.ucr.edu) with over 125,000 websites compiled by academic librarians from the University of California and elsewhere.

The exception is Google Scholar (http://scholar.google.com). Google Scholar is part of the public or visible web. It contains citations to journal articles and other publications with links to publishers or other sources where one can try to access the full text of the items. This is convenient, but results in Google Scholar are only a small fraction of all the scholarly publications that exist online.

OTHER INTERNET SEARCH HELPERS

There are two additional Internet search helpers for keeping up-to-date in your area of specialty: email news services and web page change notification software.

EMAIL NEWS SERVICES

These services are offered by medical and news websites. They are daily or weekly emails to announce breaking news on a medical topic or topics that you select. Headlines and abstracts with links to the full-text articles are emailed according to the frequency you set up. They are a good way to keep abreast of hot topics in the media. Frequently, the writers are medical journalists and may or may not have any experience or formal training in the topic they are writing on. Also, the content is typically targeted to consumers and may have little informative value to a health professional. However, it is an easy method to keep on top of breaking news stories. Scan the top news sites and medical portal sites for email services. To find email news services, use the following keywords: "health email news." The American Dietetic Association (ADA) initiated its own email news service in August 2002, for its members. Check http://www.eatright.org for more information.

WEB PAGE CHANGE NOTIFICATION

Web page change notification software is a program set up on your computer to connect to the Internet and check whether content on web pages you specify have been updated. This tool is excellent for monitoring valuable web pages in your area of specialty. The program can be set up to check daily, weekly, or monthly. There are several programs that will do this, which you can have for free or for less than $100. To find a web page change notification program, go to a download or software site like http://www.download.com and use the following keywords: "web page notification."

RSS

RSS stands for "Really Simple Syndication," and is a protocol that websites use to distribute their content. Websites that use RSS create special files, called "feeds," that are updated periodically to contain the sites' latest information. Using RSS feeds is an easy and efficient way to keep track of new updates when a site adds new content. Instead of checking site A, site B, and site C everyday to see if there's anything new, you can subscribe to each site's RSS feed and will be instantly notified by your RSS reader when new content is added.

An RSS reader is an application you use to view RSS feeds. Similar to how an email application gathers messages from multiple email accounts, an RSS reader gathers feeds from multiple sites so you can view them in one location. There are two types of RSS readers: web readers and Desktop readers. The difference between the two is fairly minimal. The main advantage of web readers is that they store all of your subscribed feeds on the Internet, so you can access them on any computer. Another option is Desktop readers, which download subscribed feeds to your hard drive, so you can view them even if you don't have an Internet connection.

Google Reader (web), FeedDemon (Windows), and NewsFire (Mac) are popular readers that are available for free. Once you select an RSS reader, you can start subscribing to site feeds. If a feed exists for a site, many modern browsers will display an RSS icon in the right corner of the location bar. Also, most sites display an RSS icon somewhere on the page. Clicking on either of these icons will allow you to subscribe to the site's feed.

If you have a website, consider adding in RSS for pages that users would be interested in being notified of updates. An active RSS feed can help your website's ranking in search engines and even create "buzz" about your site. To find out how to set your own site RSS, use the following keywords: "RSS news feeds for website."

WEB AND VIDEO CONFERENCES

EQUIPMENT

Web conferencing refers to technologies that allow people to communicate or "conference" over the Internet. Web conferencing is based on tools that most of us use on a daily basis—computer, telephone, camera, headset, and the Internet. For the best-quality video, look for a webcam with a 2.0 megapixel sensor, and make sure the webcam's top resolution is true and not interpolated—a method that tries to trick the eye into seeing more visual information than the image really offers. Also, pay attention to the webcam's frames per second. This is an indication of the quality of motion being captured. The best consumer-level webcams today offer 30 fps. Webcams typically come with software that lets you use the camera with instant messaging and other programs supporting video chat.

The different technologies for web conferencing include:

- Stream audio (downloading sound data onto the user's computer so it is processed and performed at a steady speed to avoid pauses in the sound)
- Stream video (downloading video data onto the user's computer so it is processed and performed at a steady speed to avoid pauses in the picture)
- VoIP (voice-over-IP) and web-based chat

VOICE-OVER-IP

Voice-over-IP (VoIP) is a two-way audio transmission over an Internet connection through computers that has gained popularity in recent years for web conferencing. It is inexpensive (free in many cases) and easy to set up. Both users must have microphones and speakers attached to their computers (most computers have built-in speakers today), and a VoIP software program. Then the users can use VoIP to talk to one another, similar to talking on the telephone, but through microphones. Many e-conferencing solutions include a VoIP component.

Free VoIP software programs are:

- Skype (http://www.Skype.com) offers one-to-one videoconferencing
- Yugma (http://www.yugma.com) offers up to 10 participants in videoconference at levels: free, professional, and enterprise
- Eyejot (http://www.eyejot.com) no download required to get started and its unique feature is its ability to email video

WEBINARS

Web conferences or webinars typical setup is where a presenter provides content over the Internet using a form of slide show presentation (PowerPoint), or streaming video. Attendees view the presentation by logging into the web conference, and communicate with the moderator either through their phones or through web-based chat. The moderator can interact with participants, view a list of who attended the conference, and manage the communication during the event.

Many e-conferencing solutions offer meeting tools that allow you to poll participants before, during, or after the meeting or presentation. Results of the polling can be tabulated in real time and can be incorporated into the conference.

Purchasing options include:

- "Renting" or licensing web conferencing software that is hosted on the vendor's server on a pay-per-use or monthly use basis
- Purchasing the software retail or from a reseller, and hosting it on your own server
- Working with a full-service vendor who will supply the planning, marketing, and production of your event, as well as the web conferencing software

Web conference providers include:

- WebEx (http://www.webex.com)—affordable monthly plans if you are communicating or presenting from your desktop frequently. You can share and lead remote participants through your desktop applications with the ability to integrate a webcam
- Adobe Acrobat Connect Pro (http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobatconnect/)—audio and video conferencing, file sharing, and whiteboard. It is a complete web communications solution. The price is flexible with several pay-per-use plans. The only software requirement is Adobe Flash Player
- GoToWebinar (http://www.gotowebinar.com)—online event product with a self-service interface enabling you to plan, deliver, record, and analyze Webinars quickly and easily without technical support
- KRM (http://www.KRM.com)—audio and web conferencing event services

To locate more web conference solutions, enter the following keywords: "online meetings," "online collaboration," or "web presentation."

Prices for a 1.5-hour online web conference range from $25 to $350. Often, pricing is done on a per-minute basis per user. Features included vary, but they typically provide online training tutorials. Before deciding, test a couple out. Most offer free seminars. They vary in their services, features, and ease of use. Before your first web conference, plan in training time and extra setup time. A dry run is also a good idea.

USES OF WEB CONFERENCING

Web conferencing solutions can be used in a variety of innovative ways to allow people to communicate with each other more effectively across any distance at any time. Some common uses of web conferencing technologies include:

- Employee orientation
- Focus groups
- Sales presentations
- Training
- Meetings
- Educational presentations (teleseminars) to small or large groups using PowerPoint
- Support group or therapy sessions

Web conferencing solutions are available to anyone with access to a computer and an Internet connection. The most obvious benefit from the use of web conferencing is a decrease in travel expenses. Solutions can promote effective communication among colleagues in separate offices and can offer a way to communicate with large audiences for relatively low cost.

When searching for a solution that best meets your needs, screen several vendors. The number of participants in a web conference can determine the type of technology that is needed; also, which types of materials to be presented: slide presentation, streaming audio, sharing computer program documents (e.g., Word files). Evaluate if special services, like event or project management, are required and select a vendor based on what it can provide. Remember that some degree of technical support is needed for all web conferencing solutions.

SUMMARY

In the not-so-distant future, we will be electronically communicating with patients to deliver just-in-time care. Patients will give feedback throughout the week on their handheld and home computers. Daily, and even hourly, blood pressure, blood sugars, food records, and thought journals, will be stored online for those health professionals treating a patient to access at any time. Physicians and healthcare providers will be able to set triggers or thresholds for data that will initiate an email to the patient's healthcare team members. For example, when a patient's blood sugar rises above a specified amount, an email is sent to his or her physician, RD, case worker, and the patient. The email contains the high blood sugar value and a tailored message to the patient on what they should do before the doctor or physician's assistant calls.

Education and advanced training of practitioners already take place in the convenience of their offices or home, online, and everywhere else by handheld palm-size computers. For dietitians selling products or services, the capabilities of business software often replace a bookkeeper or greatly reduce the number of hours needed. The software helps an entrepreneur keep overhead lower while at the same time improving customer service, credit card processing, invoice generation, and keeping track of accounts receivables and payables.

In-person meetings will become rarer as technology improves and costs of travel go up. As young professionals raised with new technology (and thus they have a level of comfort not understood or known by older managers) take positions of influence, technology use will blossom into even more facets of daily life.

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23 WEBSITE BASICS

Teresa Pangan

DO I NEED A WEBSITE?

Yes, no, maybe, not sure if the investment is worth it? Or, should I try to save money and create it myself? The decision whether or not to create a website should be made after careful assessment of what you expect that website to accomplish. This chapter will help you to make that assessment.

The first critical step is for you to establish specific purposes for the website and rank those purposes by importance. In other words, you need a plan. It is akin to having a roadmap for a trip, you need to know where you are going before setting out on the huge task of designing a website. Without a well-plotted roadmap, you may take several detours and worse yet, may never reach your destination. Before you can decide what all you want in your website, you must know what you are setting out to do with the website. It sounds so simple, yet it is too often overlooked in practice.

ESTABLISHING PURPOSES AND PRIORITIES

Without a clear purpose, the website cannot be effective. Several common website purposes are listed below. Select one as your primary purpose and then rank others that apply as secondary purposes (1). These are critical to convey to your website designer and developer.

1. **Improve/create business or professional image.** This purpose strives to increase credibility in a specific field (e.g., professional organizations, dietetic programs) or increase visibility as an expert in a specialty area (treatment of burns, diabetes, medical nutrition therapy [MNT], kitchen design, or menu consultation).
2. **Better serve your current clients.** Enhanced customer service is often the primary reason why existing businesses establish new websites. Examples of this purpose include interactive customer service of all types, product and service descriptions, selling products or services, “brochure” and company directories, FAQ (frequently asked questions), hours of operation, regularly used client forms easily accessible for clients, members area for current clients, and online order form that allows clients to pick up items at their next appointment.
3. **Attract new clients/customers/members.** This covers both local and outside local geographical area. A common vision today is to expand a reach of business outside local geographic borders to national and even international customers. Fifteen years ago, this was only possible if your business was a large corporation with large resources. Now, with the Internet, a high search engine ranking for a website allows a business to reach a broader audience, possibly hundreds and thousands more potential customers than a local reach. Also, it is common for potential customers to

go straight to the Internet and search for a local business on the Internet, bypassing phone book or even surpassing the reach of word-of-mouth referrals. The Internet is easy and quick for potential customers wanting to locate a specific service or product at that moment.

4. **Market products.** The marketing of products or services is closely associated with attracting new customers, but they aren't always the same thing. A registered dietitian (RD) or a dietetic technician, registered (DTR) who gives food safety demonstrations, for instance, might attract new customers by displaying past projects on the web, expecting that sales will come later. The design of that website will be different from the design of a site meant for online retail sale of educational materials.
5. **Provide educational resources.** This is usually a secondary purpose, unless you sell continuing education. It may be used to attract repeat visits to a site or promote goodwill. Dietetics professionals might include sample diets or information on the basic food groups or an area of expertise like eating disorders or allergies. Organizations might see education as the primary purpose of their websites. One example would be an association that serves as a clearinghouse for information about a rare disease.
6. **Sell products or services.** This requires an e-commerce setup where customers can shop and pay online. The focus here is on user-friendliness and speed. It is also a good idea to give multiple ways for users to be reassured they have purchased the correct product and their purchase was a wise decision. This is done through visual images in the shopping cart of what the user purchased: prominent shipping information, confirmation emails with order and shipment information, and professional-looking e-commerce setup and emails. Shopping malls, corner stores, and other physical retail outlets require careful attention to details such as layout and decor. E-stores are no different. Something as simple as listing the steps of placing an order and having the buttons clearly marked can make customers happy, yet many sites neglect to do it.

WEBSITE COMMUNICATION APPLICATION

The variety of website styles is infinite, but virtually, all websites communicate at one of these three levels:

- The *first level* is strictly informative and functions much like an online brochure by listing the business services, activities, personnel, office locations, telephone numbers, etc. A more elaborate version might go one step further and include detailed information on topics related to services or products offered.
  Goal: Relay information about the business to users, establish credibility, and identify the uniqueness of the business over its competitors.
  Benefits: Saves money because it is less costly to create a first-level website than a professional print brochure. Also, it saves time because information presented can answer questions for users and avoid phone calls from users inquiring about the basics of business.
- At the *second level*, websites are interactive by inviting an exchange of information through online forums, customer service, discussion groups, blogs, reply forms, etc.
  Goal: Start forming a relationship with users. User feels heard and important, and a sense of connectedness to the business.
  Benefits: Users that feel a relationship with a business are more likely to return to the website. When they have a need for a product or service the

business offers, they are much more likely to consider making purchases at that business.

- At the *third level*, websites are designed to "do business" with the user. This category includes e-commerce sites where items are sold, plus renewing memberships, making appointments, interactive continuing education, or fund raising.

  Goal: Making it easy for user to "do business" with you from the comfort of their own computer. The action depends on the "business" of the website, whether to purchase a product or service, call and schedule an appointment, take an online course, call and request a quote for business services, or enter information online to request a quote.

  Benefits: Business is done via the website thus saving overhead costs of doing business in a brick and mortar location. Physical office may be required for a portion of the interaction with the user, but the website is an integral part of what the user experiences during their purchase of a product or service with the business. Depending on nature of business, it can potentially attract customers outside the local geographic area.

HOW MANY "HITS" (VISITS) WILL I GET?

Numbers are important, but they tell only part of the story. In theory, your new website will put you in contact with more people than you could reach with a 1-minute Super Bowl advertising slot. The often misunderstood irony is that the number of users that visit your website homepage is not important. Instead, the number of target market users that visit your homepage is what you want to focus on. Most websites will succeed or fail on their ability to attract "hits" (visits) from people who are already interested in what that website has to offer—their target market. Obviously, the mass retailers look for massive numbers of site visits but most websites achieve their success from a special niche. The gross number of site visits is far less significant than what you achieve in new sales or new memberships or whatever else has a direct impact on your success or bottom line. If you will pardon the pun, only the "net" amount is important.

A well-designed website will attract customers, members, clients, etc., who are actively looking for what you have to offer. To make this happen, however, you have to identify your target market. Actually, you may have more than one target market, but each will have an identifiable set of characteristics. The site should then be designed to attract visits by web users who share one or more of those characteristics.

Take a few minutes to write down all you know about who your target market is—people interested in what you have to offer. Write down their age range, gender, marital status, whether they have children, and possibly, the number of children, hobbies, preference to eat out or cook, physically active or inactive, rent or own their house, etc. The more mature your business, the more detailed your target market description will become. This information is especially important for the designer who will need to select colors and photographs targeted to this audience.

A helpful exercise to determine who you are looking to attract is to ask, "What are the pains, challenges, and needs of someone that would buy my service or product?" Once you brainstorm this question, you can begin to paint a picture of whom they are and whom you are looking to attract—your target market.

WHO WILL DESIGN THE SITE?

Some readers may be thinking of creating their own websites. For those with the time and ability, that may be the way to go. The starting point, however, should be a library or bookstore. You will need working knowledge of site navigation, graphics, hosting options, and numerous other technical factors that will determine how your website will function. Study the guidebooks and be prepared to work and rework the site as needed to fix the glitches that are bound to crop up. Instructions for a do-it-yourself project are beyond the scope of this chapter. That is probably just as well because site design is a developing art, and the technology and recommended guidelines change frequently.

CHOOSING A WEB DESIGNER

There are numerous individuals and firms who can design your site for a fee. The preferred methods for locating a designer are to look at sites you admire and ask for the designer's name and through referrals by other business owners. The trick is to find an appropriate designer for your needs and price range. You can obtain a basic website in an off-the-shelf format for a fraction of what custom design services will cost. You should visit sites created in the same format you are considering. However, the most important test is if sites in a designer's portfolio perform the functions identified in your plan. Can they do what you want done and can they do it effectively?

The choice of a website designer can be difficult because the average web user sees only the result, not the technical decisions that go into producing that result. The user can appreciate a pleasing visual layout, but may not notice details of the functional design. Both elements—style and function—are critical to the effectiveness of a website. The following steps are suggested to help you make an informed choice about a web designer:

- Look at the design firm's portfolio long enough and hard enough to decide whether you like their work (2).
- Obtain references and contact as many customers of the firm as it takes to give you a reasonably consistent rating of the firm's performance.
- Ask the designer to walk you through the design process, step by step, to make sure you will be invited to review and comment at frequent intervals.
- Determine the timetable for the initial design process, but also ask about response time for postproduction glitches (There will be some!) and for updates, etc.
- Determine the approximate cost and how costs beyond the upper range are communicated and approved. (A cost *range* is usually appropriate because the designer can't foresee how the project will change as he or she learns more about your needs and you learn more about what the website can do for you.)
- Decide whether you like the designer because personal chemistry, especially the element of trust, can help or hinder a project of this magnitude.
- Ask about cross-browser compatibility—some design firms only design for the latest version of Internet Explorer. Determine if your target market is corporate based or home based. Designing for all browsers and browser versions is also unrealistic, but top browsers and releases in last 2 years is a good guide if your audience consists of the home user market.

The above suggestions hint at a postproduction relationship. Unless you plan to part ways with the design firm as soon as the site is up and running, you might ask about additional services:

- **Maintenance**—Does the design firm offer maintenance beyond the initial site set-up?
- **Training**—Will they train your personnel to maintain your site?
- **Hosting**—Does the company offer hosting services? You may avoid buck-passing by having a single firm responsible for design, maintenance, and hosting.
- **E-commerce solutions**—Can they develop an e-commerce package, if

this is in your future expansion plans? Do they offer a secure server, shopping cart software, or online credit card acceptance setup?

- **Database setup and management**—Do they have the capacity to setup a database-driven site for interactivity (for such things as a site search function, online shopping, or online directories)?
- **Mailing list management**—Who will update and maintain the email list for newsletters and promotions? Do they have a solution you can manage yourself if costs are a concern?

WILL EVERYBODY KNOW MY NAME?

DOMAIN NAMES

Each website is identified by a specific IP (Internet Protocol) address. An IP address is numerical and looks something like this: 123.000.123.00 (3). Because words are much easier to remember, each IP address is also assigned a domain name. Each Uniform Resource Locator (URL) (http://www.yoursite.com) or domain name is the distinct name that is associated with one specific IP address. A Domain Name Server (DNS) keeps track of which domain names are assigned to which IP addresses. From this hodgepodge of technicalities comes one simple conclusion: you need a domain name that you can call your own.

CHOOSING A DOMAIN NAME

The following are some helpful hints for choosing a name:

- Choose a domain name that closely matches your company's name or what your company does.
- Keep the domain name short and easy to spell. An exception is if the domain has a ring or rhythm to it, you can go a little longer in domain length but it must be easy to spell. If it has a rhythm to it, it is often easy for people to remember.
- Choose a domain name that is distinctive and easily recalled.

REGISTERING A DOMAIN NAME

Expect some frustration here. No two websites can have the same domain name. (Similar names with different suffixes, such as ".com" or ".org," are actually different names.) With millions of domain names already in use, there is a good chance that your first choice of a name for your site has been taken, and maybe even the second and third choice.

Go to http://www.internic.com, http://www.register.com, or http://www.networksolutions.com to see if your name is available. Find the link for *Whois*—this is the database of already-purchased domain names with listings of who the owners are.

Although it is sometimes possible to purchase rights from an owner who previously registered the name you want, it's easiest to keep searching until you find a name that is both acceptable and available. The gold standard is the .com domain extension. It is possible to market successfully a .net, .org, or .info domain extension for a business too. Do not give up; I have found creative names available with .com extensions.

It is very important to make certain that your name or business is listed as the registrant in the application for a domain name. That determines who "owns" the name. You do not want to find out at some future date that your site designer or your hosting service controls the use of the name that identifies your organization on the web. Communicate this with your web designer from the beginning. Domain names are the number one challenge in my business over the years because business owners unknowingly let a domain name expire, not keep their contact email listed current with their domain name, or allow their previous designer be listed as the Registrant.

COST OF A DOMAIN NAME

The cost of maintaining a domain name varies from one registration service to the next. Current annual rates generally run in the range of $30 to $45.

TRADEMARK YOUR DOMAIN NAME?

There have been disputes over who is entitled to register a domain name. Obviously, Nike, the footwear giant, should be entitled to the name "nike.com," but does "tyco.com" go to Tyco Electronics or Tyco the toy maker, each a giant in its own industry? Although you may never get into a legal hassle over your domain name, you should give it as much protection as is reasonably possible (3). See Chapter 13 and ask your attorney about the necessity of registering your domain name with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. This does not guarantee that no one will ever challenge your ownership, but it does strengthen your case if a challenge does develop. (*In a small business, no one loses much sleep over this issue*.) It is important, if registering a domain name, you consider the trademark implications.

I HAVE AN ADDRESS, BUT WHERE IS MY HOME?

Perhaps the most difficult concept to grasp is the fact that every website needs a home. More exactly, there has to be a physical device (a "server") that stores—electronically—all the computer code that constitutes any given website. Generally, the physical location of that device is insignificant, so long as the server is connected to the Internet. There are several options (4):

- **Web hosting company.** Without question, this is the recommended option for hosting a serious website. A shared hosting package is sufficient for 98% of non–Fortune 500 businesses on the Internet. A dedicated server is only needed for extremely large sites or sites that require third party software be installed on the servers.
- **"Free" web space from Internet service providers (ISPs), cybermalls, e-commerce services, etc.** Some hosting services are "free," but there are some drawbacks: they tend to lack space and features, and most require that you invest in advertising with a banner ad, pop-up ad box, or logo. Another disadvantage is that the website can't use its own distinct domain name or URL. Instead, the site must use a URL that is a subdomain under the host's domain name. (For example, instead of having your own name, http://www.yourname.com, you would be a subdomain of the company, http://www.thehostingcompany.com/yourname.) If you change hosting services in the future, you will have to change your URL as well. The bottom line is that you should carefully research why the service is "free" before committing to hosting with a free web space provider.
- **You can be your own server.** You could host your site on your own server from your business location with the appropriate hardware and software. The biggest benefit of hosting your own site is that you have complete control over the site. For a small enterprise, however, the cost far outweighs any benefits. For the larger organization, self-hosting may make sense, but it should not be attempted unless you have experienced personnel to set up and maintain the server.

CHOOSING A WEB HOSTING COMPANY

There are multitudes of web hosting companies available. Conducting a simple search with the key words "web hosting" will give you an exhaustive list from which to choose. Start first with each company's home page. See how the information is organized, and how much information you can get from each website. The hosting package that you will need depends on what you want to do with your site. If you are planning on a simple informative site, you can get a basic shared hosting package anywhere from $15 to $20 per month from a reputable web hosting company. There are plans for less too, but typically anything less than this is cutting down on customer service and this is not worth the cost savings. For a serious business website, you want hosting with support 7 days a week—both email and telephone support. If you are planning on building an e-commerce site or using any interactivity that requires a database, plans will start at $20 to $60 depending on your needs.

Typically, the web company maintaining your website will have several recommendations for web hosting companies as each hosting company is set up slightly differently.

Also, if you have any database-driven features or forms on your website, they will require specific programming languages to be operational. Get hosting specs from the website company that designed your site to make sure your site is functional.

WHAT SHOULD MY SITE LOOK LIKE?

The overall look and feel of your site should reflect the image you want to portray. If your business has brochures, business cards, etc., that you already like, continue with the "look" and tone (colors, wording, style of writing, etc.) on your website. This may entail using slightly different colors and design elements online, but the overall atmosphere is consistent with the offline feel.

A website's tone is a very important design decision. This sets a site's overall atmosphere and mood. The tone information will be used to determine a site's colors, design accents (bullets, horizontal bars, buttons, etc.), font, and layout. Most importantly, the tone should be consistent throughout the site. In the marketing world, the tone and atmosphere that your business creates is part of its branding platform.

Come up with three adjectives to describe the tone you want visitors to your site to feel when browsing your site. What adjectives do you want visitors to use to describe your site to their friends? Business-like? Cutting-edge? Warm and inviting? Energetic and passionate? If you want a warm, inviting site, consider which colors would portray that image. If your business is geared toward children, consider which fonts, colors, and graphics would give your site a lively, fun tone.

DESIGN LIMITATIONS

Graphics

When using graphics, it is important to remember that the more graphics on a page, the slower the page will appear on the screen to the user. Graphics should enhance a web page and its message. Graphics need to have a purpose or else their purpose is simply to slow the download time of the page (5,6).

Animation

Animation can be overused or used incorrectly. Any animated feature on a page will draw the viewer's attention to that spot. If you want their attention drawn there, then use it. If you don't have a purpose for drawing attention, then don't use it (7). Even with high-speed connections being commonplace today, research finds that animations that take longer than 3 seconds to load detract from the users' experience and are best not placed on a homepage as visitors will leave before the animation finishes loading.

Fonts

There are only a few standard fonts that can be used for main body text on your site that you can be assured all computers will have installed on both Mac and PCs. If you use a nonstandard font, you run the risk that most computer browsers will show the words with their standard font, instead of your font (8). If you feel the need to use a nonstandard font, you can make titles with the nonstandard font as a graphic and use a standard font in the body text.

WHAT SHOULD I PUT ON MY SITE?

Content is the core of the Internet. It's one of the unique advantages of the Internet. What content is included, how it's packaged, and whether it's easy to access determine if a website shines among the rest or is lost on the web.

Take time to plan your content for its launch and how it will expand over the next few years. The content included must be of value to your target market. What topics are your target market looking for? It must be updated and changed frequently. New and updated content gives your viewers a reason to come back to your site. Adding interaction gives another reason for visitors to come to your site and revisit it.

ADDING INTERACTION

Interaction (two-way communication with visitors) sets the Internet apart from traditional media. It engages visitors. It's very effective at establishing a nonemotional relationship with visitors. Interaction adds value to the viewer and is a great method for starting to establish a customer relationship (9,10).

Feedback helps your viewers contribute to your site through suggesting links to your site or giving feedback or their opinion in a poll. Visitors feel a sense of contribution if the questions are worded properly and if their input is taken seriously. Typically, demographic questions are included in order to get to know site visitors better—keep it to only a few to increase chances that the questions are completed.

An *email newsletter* can be used to announce new services, provide dates and locations of presentations, tips on using products, brief articles, or information left out of publications. The newsletter must provide something your target market values. Typically, a newsletter encourages readers to visit your website. By pulling your target market to your site, they will more likely buy or do what you really want them to do—view a page with advertisers' banners, read a collection of articles you wrote, or schedule a one-on-one chat with you.

A *blog* can be used to carry on an informal conversion with your users. It is easy to post an entry several times a week on something you read or saw that is of interest and even better that is of value to your users. Viewers can be invited to post their comments. It is a more informal interaction application than an email newsletter. It is also easy to get something posted quickly. The biggest flaw in blogs is an owner that does not take the time to post. I find many business owners are just too busy to post to a blog regularly. Users will not stop to read a blog with less than bimonthly entries. Users need to feel the blog information is current and cutting edge.

Discussion groups, *chat rooms*, and *webcasts* are effective methods of interactive communication. You can host a discussion group that focuses on a topic of interest to your target market or set up a chat system for customer service. Another option for chat is where visitors with a question press a button on the screen and it sounds a telephone ring on the computer at the other end to alert whoever is taking calls that someone is online with a question. This is one-to-one chat. Customer service is the most common use for this, but there are many other uses like dietitian-on-call, online customized food orders, and tutoring during an educator's office hours. Chat and webcasts also can be used for two-way discussions at preset times with a leader in charge or a guest speaker where questions are held until after the speaker is done presenting online. Webcasts are online presentations/lecturers with a speaker and audience online at the same time. Webcast provider costs have decreased drastically in recent years. It is an affordable option for many businesses to host a lecture for free or for a low fee where users are allowed to ask questions at the end or at set times throughout the presentation (see Chapter 22).

A *calculator* is a great interactive tool for users. A calculator can be as straightforward as a calorie calculator or more advanced as an eating disorder risk calculator (score indicates a risk level for development of an eating disorder) or nutrient assessment calculator. Calculators typically require a skilled web programmer and an investment up front to build it. After the initial investment though, there is no maintenance cost. Be sure to allow for both metric and U.S. measurements in calculations as users may be international. The key is to find a calculator for an outcome that your target market finds useful or interesting. Think over your user's typical day, what would help them at work or even after work hours? Calculators can be an effective method for drawing in visitors to your site. One step further is to create a simple calculator and offer to give users the coding so they can integrate the calculator on the website of their own business. You are giving your user something of value for free and when it is displayed on their site it can say, "Provided by. . ." and insert your name. Visitors to their site will see your name and search engines will pick up your site name on your user's site. That helps your search engine rankings significantly.

This list of ways to add interaction is far from exhaustive. Use your imagination and take advantage of this unique edge interaction on the Internet offers.

ADDING VIDEO

Video is a very popular and effective website addition. According to the YouTube Fact Sheet (http://www.youtube.com/t/fact_sheet), 10 hours of video were uploaded every minute at the end of 2008 (November, 2008). Video is a visual that keeps users captivated because it is entertaining and informative.

Before embarking into videos, understand that they can take up a lot of web page space (file size) and bandwidth. Be sure to check with your web host if you are not sure how much storage or bandwidth you are provided. If you are paying a monthly fee for web hosting, you could exceed your limits and be charged an extra fee if too many people view your video file. Every time someone clicks to view the video, they will be taking up some of your allocated bandwidth. Also find out what video file extensions are supported on your website hosting package.

Record your video with any video camera and export or have a media specialist convert to the format allowed on your hosting server. The most common ones are the following:

- MPG—MPEG video file, a widely accepted format because it often produces the smallest file size
- MP4—MPEG-4 video file
- AVI—Audio video interleave file: this is the default format used by many editing programs
- MOV—Apple QuickTime movie
- WMV—Windows media video file
- SWF—Macromedia flash movie
- FLV—Flash video files

Most website videos should be no longer than 2 minutes. If your video segment is longer, give careful consideration to the size and value the video will relay to your audience. The intent is for the video to be watched and to either build credibility or persuade a viewer to purchase your product or service.

You can edit your video yourself using software that costs less than $50 or hire a media specialist to edit and save you time learning the software. You will also need to select an output video display screen size. The smaller the screen size, the quicker the start and load time, and the lower the storage and bandwidth. Larger screens (640 × 480) require more storage, higher quality video, and will start loading slower than small screens (320 × 240). During the editing phase, this needs to be decided.

The last step is for your webmaster or media specialist to upload your video file and embed it using the protocol accepted by your website hosting server. Most hosting companies will have support documentation to indicate how to embed the file properly. Make sure there are buttons for start, stop, and pause on the video display to give users control when they view the video.

Keep in mind you do not need to shoot professional-looking video to bring value to your site. Video can be used to demonstrate how to use a product, prepare a recipe, complete a form or worksheet, convey speaking and media spot samples, estimate serving sizes, and give your site personality and energy.

The following are examples of sites with videos:

http://www.reconnectwithfood.com news/index.htm
http://www.reconnectwithfood.com
http://www.hopewarshaw.com

CONFIDENTIALITY

Keep in mind, whenever you are asking for information from visitors, you need to prominently display or link to a privacy and confidentiality statement. This statement should tell visitors what data you are collecting, how the site will use collected data, who will have access to the data (third parties need to be identified), how visitors can revise/update their data, and if data will be reported as individuals or as a group. Many sites, unfortunately, do not post this policy information.

Be certain your system is secure for emails as well. Encryption is a possibility. Limit the employees who have access to clients' and patients' emails. Be sure all email-handling procedures treat email as confidential. An increasingly popular method of security for email is to go through a website rather than an email box. You receive an email informing you there is a message waiting online. You must then log onto a website to read your waiting messages or print your orders. The message is stored and read in a secure area on the website. The user can compose and send messages while logged onto the website. Users do not need to download the email onto their own hard drive. This is an avenue for providing secure communication.

ELEMENTS EVERY WEBSITE SHOULD HAVE

There are features every website should include for credibility and user friendliness.

HOME PAGE

The home page answers the questions "Where am I?" and "What does this site do?" (11). This is accomplished through graphics and text. The graphics include a large logo and company name prominently displayed, and design elements strategically placed to lead a first-time visitor's eyes through the screen from top left to bottom right. The home page has three goals:

1. Give a purposeful first impression—this is the tone and atmosphere you want to portray to visitors. This is your company's personality portrayed visually.
2. Get visitors quickly to where they are going—put yourself in the shoes of visitors that are coming to your site referred to you through search engines or some marketing campaign you placed. What are they looking for? Prominently display links to what most people are looking for when they get to your site. Easy to understand navigation is important for your major site areas.
3. Tell first-time visitors what you do—you want to include at least two sentences of text and more if design allows more content. Users do not read below the fold (the bottom of the screen) typically on a home page. Avoid using only graphics on the

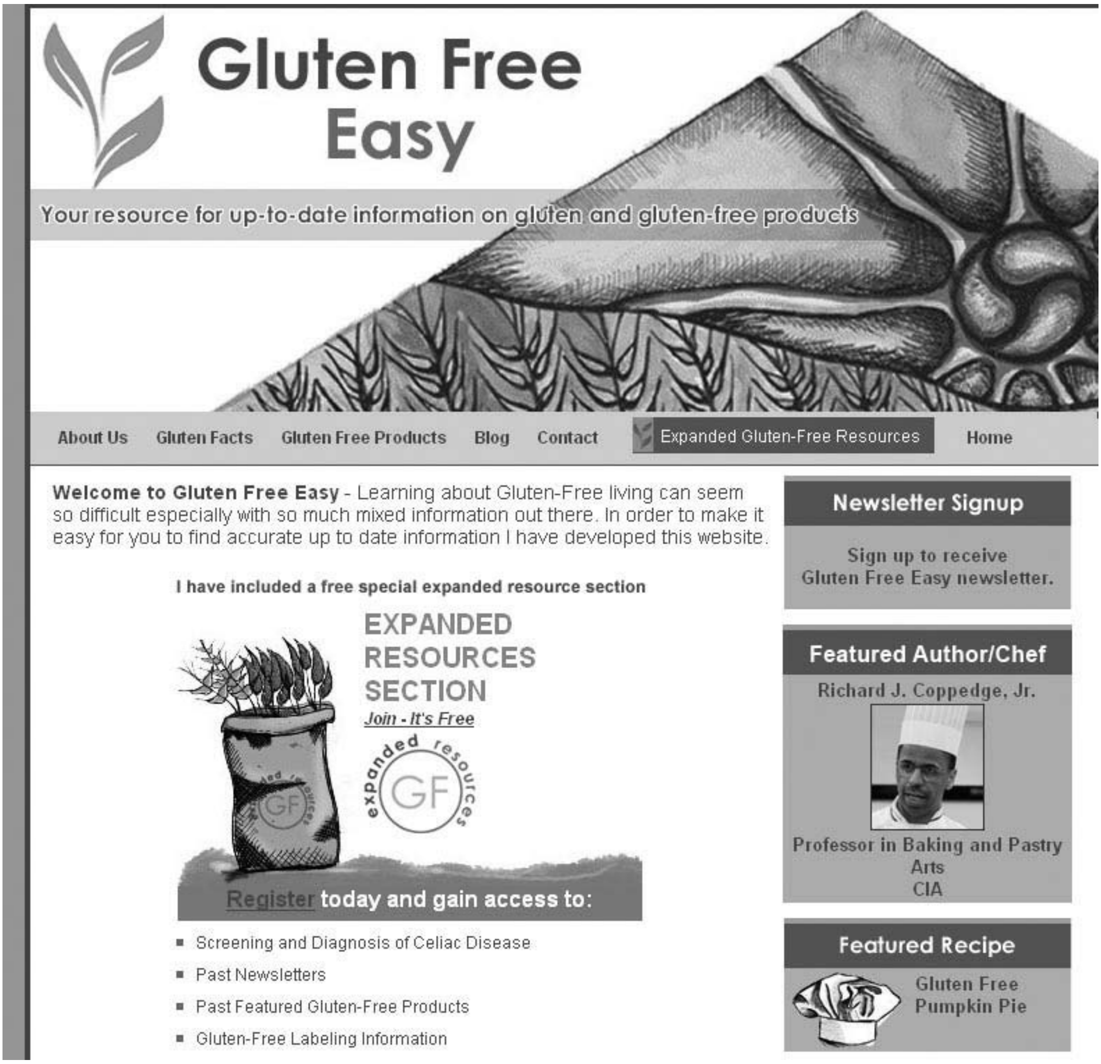

FIGURE 23.1 ■ Gluten Free Easy home page example. http://www.glutenfreeeasy.com (from Marlisa Brown).

home page (11). Search engines can't index words in graphics. When a visitor enters a search phrase at a search engine, the search engine index matches the search phrase to text words found at sites it has visited. A home page with graphics and no text misses being indexed properly and thus isn't found by search engines. The home page example above has both graphics and text that work together to answer the questions "Where am I?" and "What does this site do?" See Figures 23.1 and 23.2 for examples of how to layout a home page.

ABOUT/BIO

This is information on the business and owner. It should give some history on the business and the purpose of the website in a brief format. Include a résumé or highlights of your professional career and training too. The main purpose of the bio page is to establish your credibility, experience,

FIGURE 23.2 ■ Home page example. http://www.robinplotkin.com (from Robin Plotkin).

and training in your line of business. Keep text minimal while trying to achieve this. See Figure 23.3 for a sample bio.

NAVIGATION HELPS

The navigation helps are determined by the size of the site and expectations of visitors. Examples of navigation helps are a navigation bar that remains consistent throughout the site, site map, site search engine, index page, next page prompts, introductory pages to website areas, and top and bottom prompts. *Every web page should have a text navigation bar.*

SERVICES/PRODUCTS

Make it easy to locate products and services. If you establish credibility through purposeful design and well-worded content, users will begin to trust you and want to see if they can use what you have to offer. Cross-promote products and services throughout all your pages to make it easy for users to jump to specifics and how to purchase. Focus on descriptions and details around benefits to users. Your goal is for your site users to buy your product or service so you must talk to the benefit they will gain by purchasing from you. If

FIGURE 23.3 ■ "About" page example. http://www.kerigans.com (from Keri Gans).

you can link the benefit to a problem the user has, that's even better. Lack of time, increased productivity, and lowered costs are good benefits to communicate in your content to users. See Figure 23.4 for an example of cross-promoting products and services.

ADVERTISERS/SPONSORS

Disclose all sponsors and advertisers and how they are involved in the site. Whether they contribute any content and, if so, that content should be clearly indicated. Also, an advertising policy should be described. Several big health websites in the late 1990s received stiff criticism that hurt their credibility when it was disclosed that they were misleading visitors regarding advertisers' contributions to the site.

PRIVACY/CONFIDENTIALITY

This refers to any information collected at the site. If visitors are required or voluntarily give information, disclose what will be done with the information, who will have access to the information (any third parties), how users can update/modify their

FIGURE 23.4 ■ Example of cross-promoting on pages services/products. http://www.gettingthatjumpstart.com (from Beverly Price, RD, MA, RYT - Principal, Jump Start® Consulting, LLC).

personnel information, and if information will be reported as individuals or a group (12). Box 23.1 contains sample wording.

CONTACT INFORMATION

This should be displayed on every page or link every page to a separate contact page. The contact page may have directions or a map to the office location. Also, commonly asked questions can be posted here. The idea is someone looking for this information may go right to your contact page and not take time to look throughout the site for the answer. Save your time on the phone by posting answers on the contact page. See Figure 23.5 for a sample of using contact information.

The following are additional website areas to consider:

- Testimonials/comments from satisfied clients/users
- FAQ—frequently asked questions, often these are questions that take a significant amount of time to answer on the phone regarding business products or services. Save your time by posting them on your site. FAQs are also great ways to plant questions for users, questions that draw the user into identifying their need for your product or service.
- Site map/search—especially useful if your site is large with many pages
- Map to office—at least two versions, "zoom-in" and "zoom-out" should be included
- Results—page with success stories, results achieved for clients, or case studies
- News—way of illustrating to users that you keep up-to-date in the field and are an expert (If credibility or fast changing, cutting-edge information is part of your industry, this is a great page to include on your site.)
- Media—listing of media interviews and coverage; helpful to establish credibility for book authors and speakers
- Video clips—from various speaking or media interviews to show your skills in action
- Clients/Partnerships—listing of major clients, if names are recognizable, include small logos that users can identify immediately. (This helps establish credibility.)

BOX 23.1 ***Sample Privacy Wording***

Privacy Policy

When you visit our website to browse or read information, we automatically collect and store the following through our website traffic logs: the name of the domain and host from which you access the Internet; the IP address of the computer you are using; the browser software you use and your operating system; the date and time you access our sites; and the Internet address of the site from which you linked directly to our site.

We use this information only as anonymous aggregate data to determine the number of visitors to different sections of our site, to ensure the site is working properly, and to help us make our site more useful. None of this information collected is personally identifiable information. We do not use it to track or record information about individuals.

Information We Collect

We collect personally identifying information, such as your name, street address, email address, phone number, and any other information you provide to us only as needed for the fulfillment of orders of products from [name of business] website.

Credit card information entered in the checkout process is in a secure area using secure socket layer (SSL) encryption to protect the information. We do not save this information. This information is only sent to our online merchant vendor to obtain an approval for the credit card purchase, none of the card number or expiration date is stored.

How We Use and Disclose Information

We use temporary "cookies" or tracking mechanisms (session IDs) as part of passing information through the shopping cart and checkout process. No personally identifiable information is passed through session variables or temporary cookies. Instead, the cookies allow us to remember items placed in your shopping cart. Once you finish checking out or close your browser window or 20 minutes passes, the session ID (cookie) is deleted from your computer.

If you order products, we collect personally identifiable information. This includes name, address, email, and any other information needed for fulfillment of your request.

If you contact us to order products from the website, we use the information to fulfill your order or contact you about your order. We do not use this information for any other purposes or make it available to any third parties.

We use SSL encryption to protect the transmission of the information you submit to us when you use our secure checkout process. The information you provide to us is processed securely.

Please do not use email to send any sensitive information like your credit card or charge card numbers to [name of business]. Any email that you send us is not secure against interception. Please contact us instead via phone or mail if you will be providing sensitive information.

Mailing Lists

You have the option of signing up for an email newsletter. If you do so, we will email you regularly with new programs and products. We do not share or sell our email lists with anyone not connected with [name of business].

Outside Links

[Name of business] may provide as a convenience to you, links to websites operated by other entities and persons, but makes no representations about any other website that you may access through this one. Any link to a non-[name of business] website does not mean that [name of business] endorses or accepts any responsibility for the content, or the use of such website.

ARE THERE OTHER ISSUES I NEED TO BE CONCERNED WITH?

BROWSER COMPATIBILITY

Users who purchase nutrition-related products and services often will be accessing websites from their home computer. Home computers typically are not updated as frequently as corporate computers. It is key to relay this information to your website designer. There are significant differences in coding designs for different browsers and in some cases, even for different browser versions. For home users, it is recommended you design for

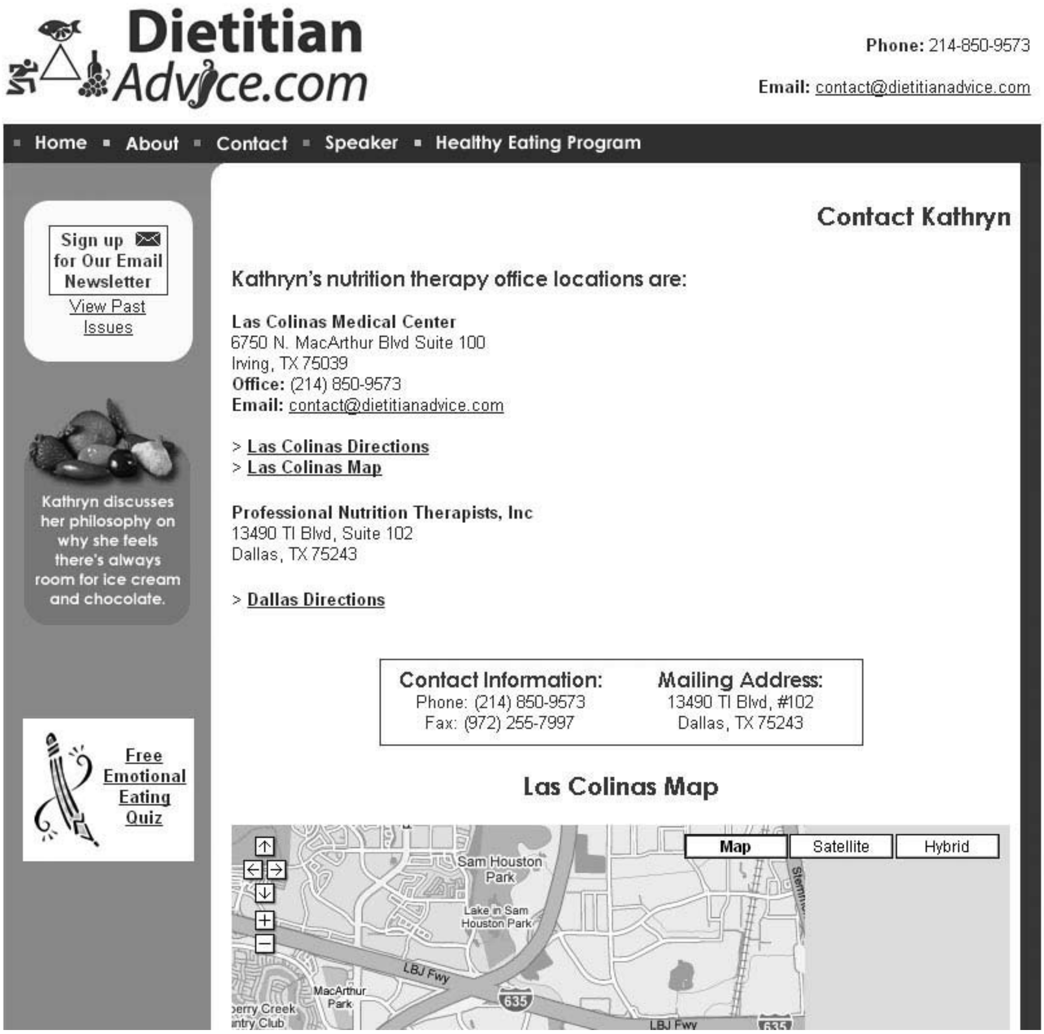

FIGURE 23.5 ■ Dietitian Advice: contact page with map. http://www.dietitianadvice.com (from Kathryn Fink).

the top browsers—those with 10% or more of the user market and go back to any versions released in last 2 years. Also, look at your website traffic logs. They can tell you the browser and browser version of users that have visited your site. Many website design companies set up their designing processes to target mid- or larger-sized companies and in reality, only design to the browser Internet Explorer and only Microsoft supported versions. This is far from reality when your user base is accessing from home.

SECURITY

Security for a website is both security of your visitor's information, as well as security of your site's information. There are several methods of promoting security. The more methods you employ, the more secure your site will be. You should constantly be updating your security methods and checking for security problems.

The first step to check the security of your site is finding out more about your web hosting company's security methods.

You can ask them to provide you a copy of their security policy. It is important to know who has access to your site files within their company as well as what methods of security they employ to prevent hackers from accessing your site files and using email servers to send out spam (firewalls, encryption, etc.).

As mentioned earlier, if you are asking viewers for any personal information, you should have a copy of your privacy policy available on your website.

Protecting Your Content

Stealing content on the Internet, unfortunately, is a common practice. Content can be lifted and posted on another site—so the other site gets credit for writing the information.

The most basic way to protect your content is to display your copyright notice; the "c" in a circle or the word "Copyright" followed by the date and your name (i.e., ©2009, Mary Jane or ©2009, [Your Company Name]). Copyright protection is assumed even without the copyright notice, but by posting the notice, you are warning users who think about stealing your content to stop and take heed of your notice.

For photographs and graphics, use digital watermarks on your images. A digital watermark is encoded in an image file. If someone copies your image file off of the Internet, the digital watermark stays with the image. Your images can also be tracked through digital imaging companies with a watermark.

If you find a graphic from your site or content verbatim posted on another site, a strong cease and desist email to the site owner warning them of the infringement and asking that the content come down in 24 hours or you will take legal action typically will push the owner to take the content or graphic down.

MALPRACTICE

Carefully review any statements on your website concerning nutrition treatment, "cures," outcomes, and professional qualifications to guard against malpractice. Are you promising cures? Do you claim your care meets the highest standards?

Why is Stating That You "Meet High Standards" a Problem?

You are making a promise and if the reader finds out there are newer research findings, you can be found at fault. It isn't that RDs don't meet high standards, you just don't want to set yourself up for legal problems. As RD, if you made this statement about "highest standards," you would need to be very careful about updating content all the time. This part of the malpractice information is taken from a health lawyer's column in an online health publication. Now, there is even insurance for spelling and grammatical errors in Internet content. The insurance covers errors that occur in how your advice appears on someone's screen, and they follow your advice and it wasn't what you intended. When your content is out there for the world to see, new issues surface and this is one of them. These are red flags for malpractice problems (13). It may be in your best interest to rewrite these areas so they provide general information without promises.

Why is Answering a Question a Problem if the Information is Accurate?

Online message boards or forums, blogs, and questions emailed to you from website visitors who are not established patients are potential malpractice landmines. Make sure that the answers you post to questions do not establish a professional–patient relationship—even if you have never seen the person, it could look different (13).

The problem isn't the information you are providing, it's more the lack of adequate patient information and too many assumptions you are basing the information on. The patients may not be revealing everything about their case, and very importantly, you probably didn't conduct a thorough assessment, which should be done before ever dispensing treatment advice. The problem is that the person reading the information or receiving your response may believe you are treating them. If they do, you can get in hot water because you have not performed an assessment. You must obtain a consent from an online "patient" before starting any type of counseling or MNT relationship. Practitioners must be aware they need to use caution in posting answers to message boards and to questions emailed off the website. Any erroneous advice you provide, perhaps caused by incomplete information from the patient, could lead to a malpractice claim. Also, ask yourself if the appropriate course for a patient's question is a face-to-face meeting or phone consultation rather than a "cyber chat." Advise the person appropriately.

It is important to respect state licensure. If a state outside of yours doesn't have licensure, it's fine to counsel a patient there, but if there is licensure, you need to look deeper into the licensure specifics. Dietetic licensure encompasses a state's scope of practice for dietetics. It is designed to protect the public from fraudulent practice and services being provided by untrained persons. If you work in a state that has licensure and work only with clients who also live in that state, professional liability insurance is sufficient if practicing within American Dietetic Association's (ADA) scope of practice (14,15). Crossing state lines to states without any required dietetics licensure also is covered. The gray areas begin when counseling clients who live in states outside yours that have mandatory dietetics licensure. In these states, avoid establishing a professional–patient relationship with individuals.

Many health practitioners offer information based on established standards of care such as those published by the ADA, the American Diabetes Association, and other professional associations (14). This is done instead of counseling online. The result is avoidance of counseling online and establishing a professional–patient relationship.

When responding to nutrition questions via email, only answer specific questions for established patients (13). Create office policies that designate for what purposes patients can use email (16). Discourage the submission of revealing questions and information in email. This type of information is best handled over a telephone, office visit, or during a secure web conference.

Posting frequently asked questions often protects against malpractice while still providing desired health information. All informational content and emails should include a disclaimer such as:

> *Information contained in this website (email) is general in nature and should not be relied on for medical treatment. If you need nutritional advice or services, please contact a registered dietitian in your area.*

There are fewer risks in using the Internet for scheduling and administrative functions. For instance, email can be a good way to do appointment reminders and schedule appointments. Post established protocols and turnaround times on your site.

Print copies of all communications with patients and place a copy in the patients' records (17). It's recommended that an autoresponder (an automatic email response setup by your email program) be configured in your email system (16,18) to acknowledge receipt of all patient messages (consult your email help center). Here is an example autoresponder message:

> *Nutrition Company at contact@nutritioncompany.com has received your email. We will respond to you within 48 business hours. If this requires an immediate response, call our office at 972-321-XXXX. If you have not previously checked, you are encouraged to view our Frequently Asked Questions at http://www.nutritioncompany.com/faqs/ to see if your question has been answered there.*

Request patients to notify you when they receive your messages. Lastly, perform regular backups of email into long-term storage and keep for the same amount of time as paper records (13).

The American Medical Association (AMA) has developed guidelines for medical and health information communication: Guidelines for Physician–Patient Electronic Communications (http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/2386.html) (13). Although these guidelines were developed for the AMA websites and visitors to these sites, they also are useful to other providers and users of health information on the web.

My disclaimer: This information is not comprehensive and is not meant as a substitute for legal counsel. If you have questions or concerns, consult a lawyer specializing in Internet law.

TESTING AND PROOFING THE SITE

It's essential to test and proof your site before letting visitors have access to it. Because browsers and browser versions can display pages differently, it's important to check all the major browsers. Look at your site with Microsoft Internet Explorer (http://www.microsoft.com), FireFox (http://www.mozilla.com/en-US/firefox/), and Safari (http://www.apple.com/safari/) (19). Browser updates are released periodically, and each update becomes a new browser version (e.g., Internet Explorer 7.0, Internet Explorer 8.0). You can check the company's website to see what the newest version of the browser is, and then find computers that have that version of the browser, as well as the last two browser versions. New browser versions can be updated onto your computer right off of the Internet. Check at least two of the previous versions of each browser.

MAINTENANCE AND REPEAT TRAFFIC

In addition to creating value on your site, something must change on your site periodically to bring visitors back and create repeat traffic. The following are examples for content that might change on your site to draw repeat traffic:

- Useful articles on a topic of value to your target market with new ones added monthly
- New sweepstakes every month
- Blog entries
- Podcasts
- New articles added monthly on how to use a nutrition calculator posted on your site
- Weekly chat or webcast hosted by different experts
- A nutrition tip that changes every 2 weeks
- Monthly feature of a vegetable and fruit with tips on buying, storing, and how to prepare
- Food service special diet menus that cycle weekly

The first time visitors browse your site, they may not buy your service or product nor comprehend the information you are providing. It may be on their second, third, or fourth visit when this desired behavior occurs. This is why repeat traffic is a key to success.

Related to this are time and money. Time and money must be budgeted for maintenance right at the start of planning a website. One of the biggest mistakes that small businesses make in developing a website is not allotting sufficient time to update the site and not allotting sufficient money to promote it.

Before the website is finished, determine who will be responsible for updating and adding to the website once it is operational. Someone will need to be responsible for coordinating new content, maintaining the graphic and editorial standards, and ensuring that the programming and linkages of all pages remain intact and functional. Don't let your site go stale by starving it of resources just as you begin to develop a following of clients.

Webmasters often are the best people for the job. Many have reasonable rates for maintenance. Another option is to contract someone to train you on how to update your site (if you didn't develop it). Allow sufficient budget for training on how to update your site. Some dietitians combine the two. They reserve the simplest monthly/quarterly updates/revisions for themselves to carry out, and the more advanced revisions and additions to the site are done by a contracted webmaster.

THE LAST STEP

After planning, developing, evaluating objectives, and making changes to your website, the cycle starts again. Think about how you want your business to grow, and begin to plan and outline those changes. Then take action on those plans, collect feedback, evaluate the results, and incorporate what you learn into your site. A website is a work in progress. It constantly evolves to respond to the needs of its visitors. Think of your online business like a garden that thrives with attention, careful watering, and pruning.

CASE STUDY 23.1

FEED YOUR CAREER, LLC

Feed Your Career, LLC, was founded by Teresa Pangan, PhD, RD, and Mandi Wong, RD/LD. The venture was launched in October 2008. It took Teresa and Mandi almost 2 years to bring Feed Your Career, LLC, to fruition.

They started off by developing a detailed business plan that included a competitive market analysis, company overview, marketing strategies and company financials. They also signed a partnership agreement that clearly laid out roles, expectations, and terms for managing the business. Finally, they each took a strength and personality assessment to learn more about their working styles and to identify areas where their talents could be best utilized.

The web development phase took almost 9 months to complete. They hired a branding marketer to cultivate a positive, professional company image. They also hired a graphic designer to create a custom logo for long-term visibility. The website design concept was developed using a wire frame methodology. The result is http://www.feedyourcareer.com.

This comprehensive career management website offers food and nutrition professionals a wealth of tools and information including customized career and personality assessments, articles from leading career experts, well-matched career opportunities, a professional directory for networking, continuing education events, a career product and service marketplace, a personalized career manager, and inspirational success stories. They also have a regularly updated career blog and interactive discussion board on career topics.

Website Logistics

Domain Name: http://www.FeedYourCareer.com

Website Planning

Primary Purpose

- Create a comprehensive career management website for food and nutrition professionals
- Highlight career opportunities and promote companies that hire and support food and nutrition professionals
- Provide solutions and strategies for achieving career fulfillment in the food and nutrition industry
- Develop a strong online community for food and nutrition professionals to support one another
- Ultimately, empower food and nutrition professionals with tools and resources to create job satisfaction and career fulfillment

Secondary Purpose

- Promote the registered dietitian as the nutrition expert and build relationships with companies that hire dietitians

Target Markets

1. Employers that hire food and nutrition professionals
2. New dietetic graduates
3. Career changers
4. Professionals that are dissatisfied with their current job/career status

Value or Pain and Challenge Satisfying

Target Markets Pains

Employers that hire food and nutrition professionals

- How can I find qualified candidates quickly with the least amount of time and stress?

New dietetic graduates

- What job opportunities are available to new graduates or RD-eligible graduates?
- What opportunities are available in the location that I want?
- How can my résumé stand out from the rest?
- How can I best prepare myself for the interview?

Career changers

- What job opportunities are available that match my needs, interests, strengths, and personality?
- How can I really sell myself during the interview?

Professionals dissatisfied with their current job

- How do I change my current situation so I feel more passionate about my job and career?
- What job opportunities would match well with my needs, interests, strengths, and personality?

What Value Will "Feed Your Career, LLC" Provide to Address the Pains of the Target Markets?

Employers that hire food and nutrition professionals

- Flexible and easy payment options including multiple listing discounts
- Visually appealing job posting that accentuate unique benefits of position
- Prescreening questions for potential applicants
- Direct access to food and nutrition professionals with various backgrounds, education, and experience levels
- Opportunity to create branding campaign for company image

New dietetic graduates

- Job filtering capability based on career status (new graduate and RD-eligible)
- Resources for résumé writing and interviewing

Career changers

- Articles from career experts specifically for career changers
- Directory to network with professionals and employers

Professionals dissatisfied with their current job

- Personality and career assessments to help identify their strengths and recommended job tasks
- Free career manager to help organize their ideas and create an action plan
- Articles from career experts specifically for professionals that are stuck
- Inspirational success stories from other food and nutrition professionals

Branding Essence

- Passionate
- Resourceful
- "I can" mindset
- Credible
- "WebMD meets Oprah on career fulfillment"

Low-Cost Promotion Methods

American Dietetic Association's Food and Nutrition Conference and Expo (FNCE)—October, 2008

Mandi and Teresa purchased booth space and promoted their business at two events held during this national conference—the *Product Marketplace* and the *Center for Career*

Opportunities. Informational postcards were passed out to visitors along with customized fortune cookies that included their logo, website address, and inspirational career quotes. They gathered email addresses and took individual photos that students and professionals could have the option of including in their online profile and in the Feed Your Career Professional Directory.

iPod Raffle
Anyone who registered before November 15, 2008, was eligible to win an Apple iPod. This raffle was heavily promoted at ADA FNCE.

Healthy e-Cards
Mandi and Teresa hired a graphic designer to create custom e-cards that includes inspirational quotes and messages. This value-added product is available to registered users who sign up for a free account.

Blog
A career blog was setup to use as a forum for discussing career-related topics, sharing ideas, and connecting with users. It also was an effective tool for increasing search engine rankings.

e-Newsletter
Registered users receive a monthly e-zine that highlights expansions on the website along with cutting edge career news. It also draws readers back to the site to view new additions and features.

Email Invite
This is the ability for Feed Your Career users to invite others to join. Users generate an email inviting other colleagues to join Feed Your Career and benefit from all the career management site features.

Referral Program
Registered users can post a Feed Your Career logo on their site with a referral link built into coding. The site owner receives a percentage of any Feed Your Career job posting sales generated from visitors on their site that clicked on the Feed Your Career logo. The program brings in money for the site owner for any sales made and PR for Feed Your Career on external websites—a win/win program.

No-Cost Promotion Methods

Dietetic Practice Group (DPG) Websites
Teresa and Mandi are active members of Dietitians in Business and Communications (DBC) as well as of Nutrition Entrepreneurs (NE). They utilized these DPG's value-added services and included their company information in the "Movers and Shakers" section of the DBC website and Products/Services section of the NE website.

LinkedIn
Teresa and Mandi use LinkedIn to network with other food and nutrition professionals and promote their website.

Personalized Emails
Teresa and Mandi send personal emails and individual e-cards to newly registered users.
—Mandi Wong, RD, LD, http://www.FeedYourCareer.com

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Teresa Pangan, PhD, RD, founded her first website design and development company 11 years ago. She primarily works with nutrition-related businesses and organizations. Her present website design and development company, Webnoxious, is located in Highland Village, Texas.

SUMMARY

A website is growing in popularity as a marketing tool. It will be required for businesses within the next 5 years or so as people become even more dependent on the Internet to give them the location of the business (with map), contact information, hours of business, basic products or services, and bio of the owner or history of the business. As newer generations of dietetics professionals grow in influence on how businesses work and how people communicate, older media will be less important or be the next "floppy disk."

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PROMOTING YOUR WEBSITE

24

Teresa Pangan

Have you ever dreamed about getting thousands of targeted visitors to your website each month? It is possible. Promoting a website to draw in potential customers is a reality for small businesses and can be done on a small budget. What it requires is a significant time investment. After you read this chapter, you will know how to get started promoting your website yourself or if you partner with a website design company, what questions to ask, and how to formulate specific promotion goals. The payoff is gold—targeted traffic coming to your website.

From the first draft of your website, plan on budgeting time for online promotions. During the design phase of a website, a lot of time is spent optimizing it, so search engines will find your site. Next, a site typically is submitted to search engines. During the postwebsite design phase, a site's promotion time is directed into activities like:

- Reciprocal marketing
- Posting to listservs
- Advertising in an email newsletter
- Writing blog entries
- Emailing out an e-zine

The Promotions Worksheet shown in Figure 24.1 can help you create your promotion plan for your website. Before reading any further, make a commitment to set aside time to promote your website. Through the years in my experience, this has been the number one downfall small business entrepreneurs make—they do not take the time to work on their website promotion.

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

It's commonplace to refer to the web for information on an existing business or to locate a new business. Telephone book pages are not being ruffled nearly as much in this day of cyberspace. This emphasizes the importance of paying careful attention to your site's ranking in the search engines. The term "optimizing" for search engines means taking steps to increase your ranking on the search engine results listings for "keyword phrases" that relate to your website and the services and products you offer. There are several simple things that can be done to increase your site's position in a search engine's results list:

- First, the search engine optimization process starts with determining your critical keyword phrases.
- Next, the keyword phrases are placed in strategic locations throughout your website.
- Finally, different pages on your site will be indexed for different terms since they cover different topics. Use keyword phrases related to each page's topic in titles, headings, image alt tags, meta tags, text, and links.

KEYWORD ANALYSIS

"Keywords" refer to words your target market enters in the "search" box in search engines for topics, products, services, or names. To discover what these words

Web Promotions Worksheet

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

1. Brainstorm 25—50 keywords that describe your business/website.

2. Refine keywords to best 10—15 keywords and keyword phrases (critical keyword phrases).

3. Description Meta Tag: Describe site in 1 to 3 sentences (150 characters or less) using at least 2 keyword phrases.

4. Keyword Meta Tag: List top 10 critical keyword phrases, do not put same words next to each other or repeat a word more than 4 times in the entire list.

5. Site Title: Use for site submission to search engines (60 characters or less) Try writing in several and count 40 and 60 characters, including spaces.

SEARCH ENGINE SUBMISSION

Date(s) submitted/resubmitted to search engines:

Date(s) checked site in search engines:

PROMOTION METHODS: Choose which ones to pursue, give date begun, and any details.

	Date Begun	Details
Signature file		
Writing for byline		
Discussion groups		
Press release		
Links		
Reciprocal marketing		
Buying links		
Social bookmarking		
Pay per click ads		
E-mail ads		
Sponsorships		
Additional ideas		

FIGURE 24.1 ■ Promotions worksheet.

are, ask members of your target market for words they would use to describe your business—ask your clients or customers who have purchased your products for phrases they would use to find your products.

A common mistake for website developers is to only use keywords *they* feel are most logical to locate the website they are developing. The words may be different than the target audience would use. An example is the word "dietitian." If the public is your target market, it is best to use additional words like "nutritionist," or "dietician" (spelled with a "c") along with dietitian (spelled with a "t") on your website. The words nutritionist and dietitian are more commonly entered on search engines.

Keywords

To begin, brainstorm 25–50 keywords to describe your site. Then narrow these keywords down to the best 10–15 keywords and keyword phrases (2–3 word phrases). Go with keywords and keyword phrases that (1):

- Are simple
- Are not hard to spell
- Include synonyms
- Include plurals if your target market enters plurals at the search engines

Rarely is a single keyword appropriate. A single keyword is misleading. For example, "consultant." Does consultant refer to a food service consultant, banking consultant, party planning consultant, or tax consultant? Visitors will be disappointed if they come to your site using the keyword "consultant" and expected tax information. The goal is bringing targeted traffic—buyers interested in what you have to "sell"—not just traffic.

INTEGRATING KEYWORD ANALYSIS RESULTS INTO YOUR WEBSITE

After identifying your critical keyword phrases, they need to be sprinkled at strategic locations throughout your site.

Meta Tags

Meta tags are hypertext markup language (HTML) code tags (the behind-the-scenes programming code for web pages) that are placed in a Web page's program coding. Browsers do not display meta tags; they simply skip over them. Meta tags are intended as a method for web developers to communicate information to search engines and other developers. The most talked about meta tags that relate to search engine rankings are:

- Keywords
- Description

Meta means "information." Meta tags are information about other data. See Figure 24.2 for an example of meta tags. For years, meta tags have been a critical part of improving your search engine positioning. However, because of "spamming" techniques (repeating the same words over and over for pages), and refinement of search engine relevancy equations, the weight given to meta tags by search engines has diminished over recent years.

Meta tags are still important to develop. However, do not be misled into thinking they will drastically boost your ranking. By following all of the search engine optimization techniques recommended in this chapter, your search engine results ranking will increase significantly, but following only one will not do it alone.

FIGURE 24.2 ■ Meta tags from Nancy Clark, RD (http://www.nancyclarkrd.com).

Description Meta Tag

This is a brief description of the content of a particular web page or site. It should not be more than 250 characters including spaces since this is the maximum length most search engines will index (2,3). Use at least two of your critical keyword phrases in the description.

Think of the description meta tag as a very short billboard advertisement. Some search engines will use the description meta tag as the description displayed in its results listing. It should reflect the content on that page or site accurately and enticingly.

Keyword Meta Tag

Use your top ten keyword phrases together to create your keyword meta tag. See Figure 24.2 for an example of a keyword meta tag. List them in order of importance with the most important listed first. Repeat them no more than three times. The maximum length is 750 characters, including spaces. Typically, you will not come close to using that many characters, but this is the cutoff point for most search engines. Also, do not place the same word next to each other. For example, do not insert these keyword phrases together: "sports nutrition," "nutrition education materials" (3,4). The word "nutrition" is consecutively repeated. Reversing the order would be fine. Along with that rule, no word should be repeated more than four times in the entire keyword meta tag. The word nutrition is often used in multiple keyword phrases (nutrition educator, nutrition expert, nutrition education materials, nutrition menus, nutrition services) and may result in appearing more than four times. Search engine software programs will leave out your site altogether if they detect that a keyword meta tag is repeating a word too often or words are too close together.

Use Keywords in the Body Copy

Make sure keyword phrases appear in the text on each page where the description meta tag is inserted because search engines cross-reference keywords in meta tags with the content of the page. They will not index keywords and phrases that do not appear in the webpages text as well. Search engines are constantly refining their equations to locate webpages that have higher relevancy for a search phrase. They require that words on a page's titles, alt graphic tags, headings, and meta tags must also appear on a page's text for relevancy. (Alt tags are "alternative text" programmed into a webpage that is displayed. With most browsers, this text appears when you put your mouse over an image or icon.)

- **First 25 words**—important area to include critical keyword phrases; include at least one or preferably two phrases (4).
- **Last 25 words**—search engines also look here. Search engine owners believe that it must be an accurate descriptive word or phrase for that page's content, if a keyword phrase appears in the first and last 25 words (4).

Title

Title refers to the uppermost phrase in your browser window. It appears as a "bookmark title" if you bookmark the page. See Figure 24.3 for an example of a title.

Use descriptive words in your title. The title should tell visitors what to expect on that page, not on the entire site. If possible, start with a keyword. Search engines do index titles, and the more you can pack into it, the better. Words like "Welcome, One," or "Best," are poor choices to start a title. They are a waste of prime search engine real estate (4).

A title length should be 60 characters or less. The first 40 characters should contain at least one critical keyword or keyword phrase. Some search engines index 60 characters, others index 40 characters.

Examples:

"Nutrition: prevention and chronic disease (41 characters); management services (61 characters)"

"Plant based recipes: easy to make (35 characters) in thirty minutes (52 characters)"

FIGURE 24.3 ■ Web page title sample from Banister Nutrition (http://www.BanisterNutrition.com).

Words in Links

Another behind-the-scene technique that contributes to a higher search engine ranking is words in links. A search engine gives more weight to words highlighted in a link than nonlinked content text. Words like "click here" will not help your search engine rankings, but the phrases "diabetes menu planning" and "vegetarian recipes" (words in blue with underlining) linked to the appropriate pages will. A good web page designer will know how to do this.

Links should describe what a visitor expects to find when they follow the link. It is not necessary to link an entire sentence, just the descriptive keywords.

Alt Image Tag

This is an optional HTML tag used to label a graphic. Alt image tags are displayed when moving your mouse over an image or icon (called "mousing"), a phrase will appear over the graphic. See Figure 24.3 for an example of an alt image tag. Not all web designers remember to program this in. Ask your developer to include alt tags for all your graphics. Search engines will index these words. They cannot read words in a graphic or artwork, but they can read words programmed into an alt tag.

It is a mistake to use very generic words in an alt tag. Examples are:

- Fruit
- Man

Descriptive alt tags will generate more keywords for a search engine to index and helps explain the purpose of a graphic. Improved alt tags for the examples given above are:

- Delicious ideas for a smoothie that is packed with optimal nutrition
- Patient with cancer visits dietitian for diet to alleviate chemotherapy side effects

SEARCH ENGINE SUBMISSION

Once a site is optimized, it is ready to be submitted to the search engines. It's important to wait until a site is completely ready to go before submitting it. The resultant search engine ranking will be higher with a completed site than with a rushed, not quite finished one.

There are two methods for entering a site into search engines and subject directories:

1. Use a free or paid submission service.
2. Enter your website by hand.

The second option is the most time consuming, but it's often more effective than the first option. Many experts recommend entering a site by hand into the top search engines and subject directories (5,6). When submitted by hand, the submissions can be customized. Submission services, both free and commercial, use software to submit a site. Some customization can be done, but not as much as by hand. Many search engines say they are on the lookout for software programs because it is ten times more likely spamming is present with software programs.

SITE SUBMISSION SERVICES

If you are tight on time, here is a sampling of services that can enter your website into 25 or more search engines and subject directories:

@Submit
http://www.uswebsites.com/submit
NetMechanic
http://www.netmechanic.com

To find more search engine submission services, use keywords: **<submission + "search engine">**. Fill in the name of each search engine you want to use.

ENTERING YOUR SITE BY HAND

To enter by hand, go to any of the sites below for a list of links to search engines and subject directories.

Search Engine Guide
http://searchenginewatch.com/2156221

For more sites with links to search engines, use the keywords: **<Internet + "search engine" + directories>**.

Go to each search engine or subject directory and look for a link labeled something like "Add Link," "Add URL," or "Recommend a Site." They are frequently located near the bottom of the page in small type. Use your completed promotions worksheet for keywords, descriptions, and titles requested in each search engine submission form.

Two to four weeks after submitting your site, check your site's position in all the top search engines and subject directories. This should be done even if you used a submission service. You may need to re-enter your site if it is not listed yet. Many sites never make it into a search engine's index.

In addition to general search engines and subject directories, there are some specialized health search engines and subject directories (7). Here are some you should consider submitting your site to:

Medical Matrix
http://www.medmatrix.org/index.asp
MedHunt
http://www.hon.ch/MedHunt

PROMOTION METHODS: MORE TIME BUT LOW COST

EMAIL SIGNATURE FILE

A signature file is an Internet business card tacked onto the end of your email messages. It tells people you communicate with on the Internet: who you are, what you do, and how to contact you. There are four basic parts to a signature file: name, contact information, website address (URL), and teaser line.

Name

Give your full professional name with credentials and the name of your company or employer.

Contact Information

This includes email address, telephone number, fax number, and address. Not all this contact information is necessary, but at least one form of contact should be included.

With email addresses, be sure to put "mail to:" before the actual email address. This tells the email software program to pop up an empty email box with your email address in the "to" box.

For example, in a signature file, it is: email: mail to: Lynda@crazy4RDs.com.

Website Address (URL)

Include your (URL) website/webpage address in your signature file, if you have one. Be sure to put "http://" before the web address. This ensures that the web address is an active link; viewers can click on it and go to your site immediately.

Example: www.hunger.com; in signature file, it is: http://www.hunger.com.

Teaser Line

A teaser line provides at least one or two strong reasons to draw people to visit your website or contact you when they read your signature file. It should convey the benefits of your services, products, or content.

A teaser line gives more information on your products or services than saying simply "Nutrition Consultant," "Book Author," "Educator," or "Nutrition Manager."

Examples:

- "The roots of education are bitter, but the fruit is sweet." – Aristotle
- See our special Valentine's Day offer, get 20% off all weight loss nutrition videos this week only
- Food trends and news in supermarket products
- Get free tips for controlling your blood pressure
- Managing quality nutritional care and people

Teaser lines are often quotes, specials, phrases, enticements with the word "free," or a condensed mission statement.

Overall, signature files should be no more than 50 words and 5 lines. The idea is to catch the attention of a viewer and entice them to contact you or keep you in mind for future reference.

Most email software programs have an option for creating signature files. Consult the help menu of your email program. This way, every time you send an email, it will automatically attach your email signature.

Two examples of email signature files are:

Krista Foley, RD, LD
Nutrition Visions http://www.nutritionvisions.com
"Learn to manage your weight for a lifetime."
email: mail to: Krista@nutritionvisions.com

Tanner Bonneman, MS, RD
Scott County Hospital Nutrition Services
"Food to nourish the soul."
http://www.sch.org
email: mail to: Tanner@sch.org

Use your signature file every time you send out an email message. It's the simplest method to increase visibility and to bring visitors to your site.

WRITING FOR A BYLINE

An old-fashioned promotion method is to write content for another website—for a fee or simply for the exposure—and always ask to include your byline with a few words about yourself and a link to your website. Websites are frequently in need of new, fresh content. Find sites where your target market spends time. To write content, you should be well-read and up-to-date on the topic. Choose topics that your target market may be interested in reading.

DISCUSSION GROUPS

A very effective way to promote a site is by posting comments to online discussion groups where potential customers are subscribers to the group (8). By becoming respected in the discussion group as an expert on a topic, people will come to trust and respect you. Be sure to include your email signature file on all postings. Be forewarned, this promotion method can eat up a lot of time, but it is very effective when done properly for the "right" reasons, like establishing your career as a speaker or author or establishing credibility in a specialized area in which you offer services.

Press Release

A press release can be a very cost-effective promotion method especially if you are offering something unique at your website. Press releases are frequently used to announce new websites. *However, the only way a media outlet is going to be interested in your story is if you stand out from other websites.* You need to find a "hook" when developing your idea for a press release. A press release should focus on benefits to the user (see Chapter 21).

It is critical that you create a newsworthy press release. *Thousands of press releases are generated everyday and sent to the various media*. Give your reader a reason to set it aside for further research and not throw into the round filing cabinet on the floor next to his or her desk. Resources on writing an effective press release are:

PRW	http://www.press-release-writing.com

For more sites with press release writing tips, use the keywords: **<"press release" + "tips">**.

There are free and pay services for distributing a press release. It may be effective to pay for help in distribution. Here are some distribution services that are both pay and free.

WebWire	http://www.webwire.com
URL Wire	http://www.urlwire.com
eRelease	http://www.ereleases.com

For more sites that distribute press releases, use the keywords: **<"press release" + "services">**. So you will understand it more clearly, don't waste your time with this type of marketing unless you have a *very unique idea*, *product*, or *service*.

LINKS

Links can refer to many things. There are reciprocal links, buying links, social bookmark links, and natural links.

Reciprocal Links

Reciprocal links are when website A links to website B and website B links back to website A. This link building tactic has been used throughout the web for many years and its main purpose is to help websites increase their search engine rankings.

Seek links on other sites that satisfy these criteria:

1. Sites/pages with content, products, or services related to yours and not on a page with a long list of different topics unrelated to your business.
2. The page your link will be posted on should have less than 20 outbound links (links going to external websites), and preferably, less than 10.
3. For the greatest value, the page your link is posted on should be rich in content, not just a listing of links.
4. Anchor text is the wording in the link, the underlined text that web users soon learn means "Click on me to find out more information." Anchored text ranks higher than non-linked text in search engine formulas.
5. When your anchor text is used on another's website, it should contain your keyword(s), not "Click here," or "Visit website" or simply your company name, you want to use your keywords in the anchor text if at all possible.

Buying Links

Buying links involves paying a site or service for the purchase of links on other sites. Typically, the sites links are bought on having similar content or products to yours. The goal is achieving the optimal criteria listing under reciprocal linking through a purchasing plan.

TIP

If you want to see benefits from purchased links on popular sites, you need to keep them live for a while. Search engines know that people purchase links, which is why they take the age of the inbound links into account when determining the ranking of a website.

If you are going to buy text links, here are some things to consider:

- Buy text links from sites with content, products, services, or goals similar to yours.
- Do not buy all your links; it looks suspicious to search engines. Mix in some nonpaid links on sites related to your website content and services.
- Text links within the content of a website will generally be more effective than a text link within the footer or the sidebar of a website.
- Keep links posted for at least 2 months and closer to 6 months if your budget can afford it.

Social Bookmarking

A social bookmark is a link that marks a web page so you can find it easily again and so you can share it with others, usually by posting it to one of several dozen social-bookmarking websites. Millions of web users flood social-bookmarking sites to search for information. Users need to specify some keywords, often referred to as tags, which categorize information. This allows other users with similar taste to view the links by topic, category, and so on.

Social bookmarking is unique because of its ability to generate traffic by sharing links. Since bookmarks are categorized, if your business is included in a social bookmarking website, you will drive targeted traffic from the bookmark site to your website from users searching within your category. Also, Google is now including social bookmarking in its results ranking equation.

As a website owner, you want to encourage people to bookmark your pages at social bookmarking websites to bring you traffic and increase your ranking in Google. A creative way to encourage your visitors to do this is to include coding at the bottom of your website key pages that allows users to bookmark your page in their favorite bookmarking site right from your webpage. Coding to do this is free at TheBookmarketer, http://www.seo-writer.com/tools/bookmarker.php. You may need to have your webmaster install the coding, but on content-rich pages, the potential traffic it could bring and its increased search engine ranking is worth looking into.

Common social bookmarking sites are:

- Digg (http://www.digg.com)
- Yahoo! Buzz (http://buzz.yahoo.com)
- Technorati (http://www.technorati.com)
- Delicious (http://delicious.com)
- StumbleUpon (http://www.stumbleupon.com)

Natural Links

Natural links are simply links that naturally happen through content on a site. The focus on this type of site is content and only good content. Links evolve in the content over time, and there is no strategy for links and getting links on a site that pursues natural links. If you plan on going the natural link building route, make sure you get found by search engines and the top authority sites in your field. Good content is no good to anyone unless it can be found. Be sure that at least a couple sites other than your own have links to your site. That gets the process of being indexed in search engines started.

A strategic method of natural linking is reserving a location on your pages for related content (called "Related resources" or "Similar topics"), which is often on the right hand column of pages where you link to other pages on your own site. It works to lead visitors through your site and is a simple method to include links on your pages with keyword phrases. Keyword phrases used in links on your pages result in a higher weighing in search engines for these phrases.

NETWORK, NETWORK, NETWORK

Despite being a very simple thing to do, many websites miss out on the traffic that can be gained from networking.

Done right, a well-built network of contacts, friends, and like-minded bloggers can seriously help you get the link-love you need, both directly and indirectly. Here are a few tips for working your network to get more traffic to your site:

- Include an email signature file on *all* outgoing emails. This can be setup to be automatically entered in all outgoing emails. Include an email signature even to those people concerning non–website-related matters. You never know from where your next *best* customer will come.
- Comment and participate on blogs within your niche. The goal is to get to be known as the expert in your niche area. Take time to create well-thought-out blog comments. Include bulleted lists and subheadings in your blog comment if you can.
- Start a blog yourself. This is an easy way for your visitors to post their mark on your site; they will be back in the future to check in on it. Include links to other good blogs on your blog.
- Find forums, newsletters, and groups in your topic and participate on them. The goal is to be known as an expert, to be respected for creating value for visitors.
- Join social networking sites: LinkedIn (http://www.linkedin.com), Facebook (http://www.facebook.com), and Feed Your Career (http://www.feedyourcareer.com). Show your personality with a professional twist. Golden rule is anything you post or send online must be okay for your mother or boss to see.
- Be generous. If you respect your network and you work hard to be part of the community surrounding your topic, the rewards can really pay off.

PROMOTION METHODS: LOWER COST

Most small businesses do not have large promotion budgets. The following promotion methods require a little investment. In the long term, they can pay for themselves by attracting target market visitors to your site.

Before getting deep into low-cost promotion methods, you need to become familiar with the term CPM. CPM is cost per thousand (9). The "M" stands for 1000. Advertising prices generally are stated in terms of CPM, or cost per thousand impressions.

For sponsorships, "impressions" refers to the number of times the sponsorship's advertisements webpage is loaded. One thousand impressions do not mean that the advertisement was seen 1000 times. A visitor may choose not to look at the advertisement even though it is loaded at the top or bottom of the webpage they are reading.

In email advertising, impressions are the number of email messages sent out that contained the advertisement. Just like for sponsorships, an email impression does not mean that the advertisement was read. Recipients may delete the message without opening it. Email newsletters are often forwarded to colleagues to read, which increases the number of people who read the advertisement.

> "Click through" or "clickthru" is when a visitor clicks on a banner advertisement or clicks on a link in an email advertisement (10). This is a more accurate accounting method, but does not always translate into the number of people who saw the banner or email advertisement because a visitor may cancel before the page completely loads.
>
> "Click-through rate" is the percentage of people viewing your advertisement that click through (11).

PAY-PER-CLICK ADVERTISING

Pay-per-click campaigns are very popular and can be a productive way to promote your site and jumpstart website traffic to your site if you just opened your doors. Successful campaigns have three major parts: research and implementation, measurement, and analysis and adjustment.

Pay-per-Click Campaigns: Research and Implementation

It is preferred to start with a single pay-per-click provider and use several different keywords. The goal of your first campaign is to identify the most successful keyword phrases. Shortly after starting the campaign, you will know which keywords are the most productive—follow the numbers. Then you can invest in pay-per-click campaigns with several providers.

Pay-per-Click Metrics: Measurement

Keep track of the progress of all your campaigns. At minimum, measure and track:

- Times each specific keyword advertisement was clicked
- Number of people exposed to your advertisement
- Daily unique visitors
- Hourly unique visitors
- First-time visitors
- Average page views per hour
- Page views per visit
- Page views today
- Visits today

A visit contains all the pages viewed from a user's entry to the site, browsing, and then exiting from the site. Thus, one visit contains one or more page views.

Pay-per-Click Analysis: Adjustment

When you look at the above metrics, which keywords brought you the most targeted traffic to your site? Which brought the most sales? Adjust your providers and keywords accordingly.

Top pay-per-click providers are:

- Google AdWords (http://adwords.google.com/select/Login)
- Ask (http://asl.ask.com)
- Miva (http://www.miva.com)
- Yahoo! Search Marketing (http://smallbusiness.yahoo.com)
- MSN Ad Center (https://adcenter.microsoft.com)

Pay-per-click campaigns require constant attention to be successful. If you do not have the time to keep on top of managing it, do not start, it will not be cost-effective (low return on investment [ROI]) in the long term. You also may consider hiring an advertisement management service. Locate one using the keywords: "pay-per-click management."

EMAIL

Email newsletters are an overlooked form of promotion. They also can be the most cost-effective. There are thousands of email newsletters, some operated by websites and others by companies. Many allow advertisers to have a text advertisement for a small fee.

Email newsletters vary quite a bit in their content. Some are brief with the purpose of announcing new products, others are content rich and lengthy. Typically, you want to focus on those that are content rich. Lists of email newsletters are at: http://www.bestezines.com/.

To find email newsletters on a specific topic use the keywords: "email newsletter" + "keyword for topic."

Search by keywords to locate newsletters that offer topics your target market is interested in and will likely subscribe to. For example, if you have a website that offers customized menu and recipe writing for the well-to-do, consider advertising in email newsletters on vacations at well-known health spas in the summer and exclusive ski resorts in the winter.

Before handing over some money to advertise in an email newsletter, read at least two past issues. First, check the number of advertisements the newsletter allows. Too many advertisements turn readers off. Readers program themselves to skip over the long list of advertisements. The placement of the advertisements is important too. If the ads are all placed in the same location, readers will also learn to skip them. The ideal is for only a handful of advertisements to be accepted and the ads to be placed randomly throughout the newsletter (8). Avoid having your advertisement placed at the very beginning or end of the newsletter—these are the least read placements. Research indicates near the middle is better (8).

SPONSORSHIPS

A sponsorship is when an advertiser pays to sponsor content, usually a section of website or an email newsletter. In the case of a site, the sponsorship may include banners or buttons on the site, and possibly a tag line (12).

The disadvantage is a large initial investment being required before a financial return. However, sponsorships in recent years have gained popularity over banner advertisements. Part of the draw is the flexibility of sponsorships. A company can sponsor content with a low-end involvement like a simple tag line: "This section is brought to you by MediNutrition, Inc." Or, there could be a more involved sponsorship commitment with banner advertisements, content in an entire section, an email newsletter tag line, or even a miniwebsite within the website. Arrangements vary widely, depending on several factors (9):

- Whether sponsorship is exclusive or joint
- How much of the site is included
- How involved the sponsor gets
- What the sponsor plans to accomplish

Sponsorships are effective for building brand awareness in a particular niche market (12). The secret is to go where your customers are already spending time, and sponsor content they read. Sponsorship pricing varies depending on the popularity of the site, structure of the arrangement, and the sponsor's level of involvement. Often, there is a monthly fee with an extra charge when email newsletters are distributed. Unfortunately, there are presently no organized resources on locating or arranging sponsorships. The best method is to approach sites where you believe your target market is spending time.

CASE STUDY 24.1

THE ROAD TO WEBSITE SUCCESS

In 1999, I attended a Nutrition Entrepreneurs Dietetic Practice Group Regional Workshop in New York City. One session that was of particular interest to me was about the Internet and how dietitians should consider creating their own websites. While I was sitting in the session, I started thinking of different domain names for my future website. I couldn't wait to get back home to San Francisco to type it in and see if my top choice was available. Sure enough, http://www.nutritionexpert.com was available so I reserved it!

My next step was to find someone to design my site on a reasonable budget. I scoured the Internet looking at different sites that I liked and then I tried to figure out who designed the site. Through this process, I found someone who specialized in website development for professional speakers and decided I would hire her. At the time, she only charged $25 an hour and she lived in Utah. I also went to a professional photographer to get a headshot for my website. I really didn't like my first headshot, which cost me about $150. A few years later, I did my first redesign and also had some new headshots done with a well-respected photographer in San Francisco. Those headshots cost me about $400, which was a lot of money but well worth it. As a media spokesperson, image is very important since clients are deciding whether or not they want to hire you to represent their company. At this point, I had the following pages on my webpage: bio, speaking, counseling, consulting, sports nutrition, and personal training.

The great thing about a website is you can change it as your goals and business focus change. In January 2007, I decided I needed a major redesign with a "cleaner" look. I also wanted to add my media demo video and create an electronic press kit (EPK), which included my demo, downloadable photos, and a one-sheet bio. It could then be used by PR firms and save me the cost of production and postage for my press kit. I decided I wanted to hire a new designer and got about 8 bids and portfolios from web designers on Craigslist.com. I looked in Los Angeles and San Francisco although at this time, I lived in Kansas City. After evaluating all of their bids and portfolios, I chose my designer who I continue to work with today and who has designed an additional site for me. For me, it has always been very important to have a site that is very easy to navigate and looks very professional. I also had new headshots taken again which cost me about $500. In early 2008, I did another redesign by moving my buttons to the top of my website and also adding my speaking demo to my speaking page. My website is my biggest marketing tool and every year it brings in a significant amount of new business for me.

As my career goals have changed, my website also has changed to showcase the areas where I want my business to grow. For example, I am no longer trying to grow my counseling business nor am I personal training. I took both of these off my website while adding a blog and my video demos for speaking and media. It is important to try to stay as current as possible with technology and consider the numerous opportunities available to you for getting your voice heard such as: podcasts, webinars, video streaming, blogging, YouTube, and e-books.

Mitzi's Top Twelve Website Tips

1. Hire a professional to take some great headshots. I am a believer in getting quality headshots, which will usually cost you more. Consider asking a local modeling agency who they would recommend for headshots. As always, look at their portfolio.
2. Put up only professional-looking websites. This is the first impression you will make on people who find you online. Does this mean you have to spend $5000? Absolutely not! You can create a very professional site for as little as $800–$1500. For me, I have spent less than $5000 on my site since 1999 and that includes one original design, three redesigns, updates with video, photos, and so on. Look at other sites that you like and make sure you give your designer at least 3–5 examples of other well-designed sites so he or she can get idea of what you like.
3. Reserve a domain name on sites such as www.godaddy.com. However, be aware that people are lurking around watching the domain names that you are searching, so my advice is if you want a domain name and it is available reserve it immediately! A few years ago, I looked up a domain name that was available but then I had to go to a meeting. The next day, I went back to get it and about 1 hour after I searched the day before, someone else reserved it!
4. Find a designer who is a good match for you. You can start by looking at the bottom of your favorite websites as they will often include the designer. Then go to the designer's website and look at their entire portfolio. You should also try to get a recommendation from a current/past client. Try to be as specific as possible about what you want so you can get an accurate quote.
5. Decide if you want to make small changes yourself or if you want your designer to control all of it. I purchased Dreamweaver CS3 and self-taught myself the very basics of simple copy changes. Anything else, I have my designer do.
6. Determine what part of your business you want to grow and make sure your website reflects it.
7. Determine your audience. You must know your target market, as it can change how your website is designed.
8. Get links on other sites to improve your search engine ranking.
9. Create a blog within your website.
10. Add video to your site.
11. Offer a free e-newsletter. I use Constant Contact.
12. Ask for feedback! This is critical. Sometimes we get so close to a project that we might not see something that doesn't look so good. During one of my redesigns, my good friend told me the kiwi on the homepage was too boring. I changed it to a strawberry to add more color. She was right!

Good luck and see you on the web! *—Mitzi Dulan, RD, CSSD, co-author, The All-Pro Diet; http://www.nutritionexpert.com and www.fuellikeachampion.com*

SUMMARY

Websites can market your business to the world, but like every other kind of promotion, they take resources and time to create, use, and maintain effectively. By using the strategies and tips shared in this chapter, you will be able to optimize your website to be ranked higher by search engines and customers.

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RESOURCES

General Web Development

- Web Developer's Journal: http://WebDevelopersJournal.com.

Domain Names

- InterNIC website: http://rs.internic.net.
- Registration Authority: http://www.register.com.

Trademarks

- Trademark FAQs: http://www.uspto.gov/web/offices/tac/tmfaq.htm.

Copyrights

- U.S. Copyright Office website: http://www.copyright.gov.

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V DEVELOPING YOUR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

WORDS OF WISDOM

If you don't invest very much, then defeat doesn't hurt very much and winning is not very exciting.

Dick Vermeil

Never, never, never quit.

Winston Churchill

CONSULTING IN LONG-TERM CARE

25

Becky Dorner

By the year 2030, the older adult (more than 65 years of age) population in the U.S. will more than double to 71 million, or 20% of the total population (1). For the first time in our nation's history, 1 in 5 Americans will be more than 65 years old; and some states will have 1 in 4 people in this category (1). In addition, people older than age 85 will more than double to 5% of the population (2). Eighty percent of this population has at least one chronic condition, many of which can be treated cost effectively with medical nutrition therapy (1).

Many opportunities are available for those who enjoy working with older adults in nursing facilities, assisted living facilities, retirement centers, residential care centers, homecare, congregate feeding, or Meals on Wheels. This chapter will discuss the entrepreneurial opportunities to work as a consultant dietitian (RD) for agencies and facilities that provide care and services to older adults and other long-term healthcare groups. The focus will be on long-term care (LTC) facilities such as, nursing homes, because these are where most consultant RDs work.

REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

In its quest to protect the public and maintain Medicare/Medicaid funding, the government has developed very precise regulations governing licensed nursing facilities. Because federal regulations require a qualified dietitian to perform certain duties, and so many nursing home residents are undernourished, opportunities are readily available for dietitians to apply their skills in the LTC industry.

Many smaller facilities of 100 beds or fewer do not require a full-time dietitian and prefer the more cost-effective option of using a consultant RD. Most of these facilities employ a full-time certified dietary manager (CDM) to run the food service operation, and utilize a consultant RD to oversee the clinical needs of the facility. The RD may also guide the CDM to provide high-quality food service, assure safe food and sanitation, provide appropriate special diets, control costs, and meet the many diverse needs of today's nursing facility population.

CONSULTING IN LONG-TERM CARE

If you like working with older adults, and you are looking for diversity and challenge in your career, LTC may be a great choice for you. Consultant RDs must use various knowledge and skills in both food service and clinical nutrition. Today's skilled nursing facilities provide highly skilled care and rehabilitation services. Many of them serve multiple generations, providing new challenges in catering to food and nutrition demands. The high acuity levels of residents translate into the need for more intense nutritional intervention because of complications such as unintentional weight loss, dehydration, pressure ulcers, undernutrition, and protein energy malnutrition.

Clinical challenges to the RD include provision of medical nutrition therapy (MNT) for:

- Therapeutic diets for multiple comorbidities, renal dialysis, ventilator patients
- Enteral and parenteral feedings
- Those who cannot consume enough food to maintain nutritional status (and need nutrient dense foods and fluids)
- Dysphagia patients who need altered consistencies of foods and fluids
- End-of-life nutrition and hydration needs
- Providing for the needs of obese residents who may also have multiple comorbidities including pressure ulcers, nonhealing wounds, and protein energy malnutrition

The greatest challenge in LTC may be to assure a quality experience at mealtime:

- Providing safe, wholesome, and high-quality foods that meet the needs of each patient
- While promoting a dining environment that is conducive to a pleasant and dignified social experience, promoting independence with eating
- Providing feeding assistance for those who need it and assuring adequate intake to meet nutritional needs

The demands of clinical documentation become great as federal nursing home regulations specify the need for Medicare patients to be assessed in the first 5 days, with reassessment at 14 days, 30 days, and a minimum of every 90 days thereafter. Regulations are very specific regarding parameters for nutrition care, unintentional weight loss, pressure ulcers, hydration, enteral feedings, and dining issues.

Dietitian consultants in LTC are expected to have an excellent working knowledge of the following:

- Federal and state nursing home regulations
- The survey process
- Nutritional assessment and care planning
- Nutrition interventions for the older adult
- Food service and sanitation
- Cost control
- Therapeutic diets, and more

Because the RD is acting as a consultant, the expectation is that his or her knowledge level is well above the level of an employee. In addition, because most consultants work with multiple facilities, information sharing among facilities is important, but one must be careful not to share any confidential information.

STANDARDS OF PRACTICE IN LONG-TERM CARE

The climate in LTC is extremely litigious. Facility professionals, including RDs, may be named in lawsuits related to malnutrition, weight loss, pressure ulcers, diabetes, dysphagia, and more. Because of all the intense regulations in LTC and current litigious environment, being up-to-date on critical information is imperative for RDs practicing in this area. They should also keep malpractice insurance policies current.

The Consultant Dietitians in Health Care Facilities (CD-HCF), a dietetic practice group of the American Dietetic Association (ADA), provides members a great deal of information and resources on the practice of dietetics in LTC. These are great resources for anyone new (or even those who are experienced) to the field. There are also state CD-HCF organizations, and even some local chapters. CD-HCF publishes helpful resources for RDs practicing in the LTC setting.

ADA has recently released the new Standards of Professional Practice (SOPP). CD-HCF publishes the SOPP for RDs and DTRs (Dietetic Technicians, Registered) practicing in LTC.

CHANGES AFFECTING LONG-TERM CARE

I have worked in the industry for more than 25 years and the one thing I know to be true is that change is constant in long-term healthcare. One of the major changes today is the movement toward person-centered care. This is a very positive culture change in most facilities because it focuses on the needs of each individual, and allows more choices in making decisions about everyday life. Dining is one of the first areas that facilities target for change because food is so special to individuals on so many levels: social, emotional, physical, etc. RDs can take an active role in leading the food service department to make positive changes to the dining atmosphere and the methods of service such as select menus, buffet dining, waiter/waitress service, and more.

Contrary to the positive person-centered–care movement, nursing facilities continue to experience some negative changes. Staffing shortages are a real challenge that affects all areas, especially the nursing department. Changes to the surveyor guidance have increased scrutiny in the areas of food safety, sanitation, unintentional weight loss, and nutrition, making surveys a challenge. Cutbacks in reimbursement for Medicare and Medicaid have forced facilities to tighten their budgets despite increased consumer pressure (from advocacy groups, residents, and families) which creates demands for improvement in quality of care, customer service, and hospitality. Of course, a lack of improvement in these areas leads to increased occurrence of litigation cases. Changes in the use of technology, such as the use of electronic medical records, will result in better efficiencies and improved quality of care in the future. All of this creates challenges and opportunities for consultant RDs to concentrate on more high quality cost effective and efficient healthcare interventions.

EMPLOYER'S EXPECTATIONS

Consultant dietitians must devote themselves to continual learning to keep up with the rapid pace of change. Even though clinical documentation consumes most of a consultant's time, just keeping up with documentation is not enough. Clients who contract with consultants expect them to identify potential problems, bring viable solutions, and implement systems that work. They expect consultants to keep them informed about concerns in their facilities, and share new information on nutrition, survey trends, regulatory changes, etc. Clients expect consultants to ask them what *their* needs are (what's important to them as customers) and then fulfill those needs. They want consultants to address quality issues, cost control issues, and provide new solutions for old problems.

Clients want consultants who have entrepreneurial skills including the ability to:

- Think for themselves
- Make good decisions
- Work independently
- Manage projects and time wisely, and
- Take calculated risks

To obtain business, consultant RDs must be able to sell themselves and the benefits of their services. Good communication skills (speaking/writing skills) are necessary to communicate messages clearly.

In addition, the consultant must be financially savvy and learn:

- How to read profit and loss statements
- How to develop and follow a budget, and
- How to advise the facility on how to control costs

Consultants must know their value: how their work saves money, decreases costs, decreases patients' health complications, increases customer satisfaction, quality of care and quality of life, and improves the image of the facility. A consultant must also have time management and organizational skills to prioritize and get all of these tasks done in the limited amount of time available. The bottom line is that clients expect positive results for the money they invest in paying a consultant RD.

OTHER OPPORTUNITIES IN LONG-TERM CARE

Many additional opportunities are available for consulting work in the LTC area outside of the nursing home setting. Assisted Living Facilities (ALF) have varying needs for RDs. Each state has its own regulations (there are currently no federal regulations for ALF), so it is best to check the regulations for your state. Generally speaking, most state regulations will support the use of an RD to approve menus that meet the state nutritional guidelines, conduct staff training on sanitation and food safety, develop overall protocols for nutritional care, and provide a minimal amount of clinical support. Most ALFs do not want to be considered institutions and their focus is to provide hospitality service, not intensive healthcare. Residents must be able to live fairly independently with minimal assistance for personal needs. Since hospitality is the focus, fine dining and restaurant style service is common. Some ALFs will want RDs to be involved with providing in-services to the kitchen staff on a regular basis to assure proper knowledge of food safety, sanitation, preparation, and special diet. Some will want to purchase menus or menu services, or have an RD do a sanitation inspection on a regular basis. And some will want the RD's involvement to assist with prevention or intervention for unintentional weight loss, diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and other nutritional issues. The work hours are not as demanding or as steady in this area. Most ALFs will only use an RD on a very limited basis (once per quarter or once per month).

Retirement villages and independent living facilities may use a consultant RD if they have a nursing facility or ALF associated with them. Otherwise, the involvement of an RD is usually limited, although some may hire RDs to provide preventative care services, such as presentations on proper diet or one-on-one counseling for residents.

Developmentally disabled/Physically disabled (DDPD) facilities also need the assistance of consultant RDs. These are usually smaller group home settings with 8 to 10 residents. They may be adults or adolescents. There are also larger facilities, but most of the care of DDPD residents is moving into the community setting with a goal of assimilating residents into society. RDs are needed for consultation on menus, special diet, nutrition education, counseling, food preparation, safety, and service.

Home health and hospice care is an area where RDs are needed but, unfortunately, funding is not available through Medicare/Medicaid to pay for RD services. This work is often sporadic and difficult to schedule. The assigned home visits may come few and far between and may necessitate a lot of driving time. Remember to negotiate a fee that will cover your visit plus preparation time, travel, reviewing charts, documentation, and a percentage of development time for educational materials. It's best to negotiate being involved in care plan meetings so that staff can get to know you and refer appropriate patients to you. Developing protocols for referrals, educating, and marketing your services to the nursing staff are also essential.

Correctional institutions are also growing areas of dietetic practice. Correctional facilities need RDs to consult on menus, special diets, food preparation, and sanitation. These areas are also highly regulated, so it is important to understand the state and federal regulations for correctional food service. The main difference for the consultant in these areas is the issue of personal safety when visiting a facility.

STARTING A BUSINESS IN LONG-TERM CARE CONSULTING

To get started in long-term care, a RD must have knowledge of the field and the regulations governing various settings. To be a well-rounded consultant, one must really have some experience working in LTC settings, have knowledge of the state and federal regulations and the survey process, have skills in clinical documentation and care of the older adult, and have a clear understanding of food preparation, food safety, sanitation, and meal service.

For those just starting, a sole proprietorship is the most reasonable form of business; however, be sure to have proper liability coverage. As you grow, if you plan to employ or subcontract to other RDs, DTRs or CDMs, incorporating in the form of an S Corporation, LLC, or C Corporation to protect your assets is the best. Realize when setting your fees that consulting may require quite a bit of driving time, depending on your geographic location in relationship to your contracted accounts.

As with any other businesses, a good bookkeeping system is essential. Many LTC accounts prefer to pay every 45 to 60 days after the invoice is received. The initial wait may be long, but it is a good, steady income. Consider running credit checks on individual facilities before accepting them to help assure payment for your services. Most consultants work 30 days before billing, and then wait another 45 to 60 days before collecting on the invoice. (This means you won't be paid for your work until up to 3 months after the work is completed.) If you can negotiate a better payment terms, do so. For a sample contract, contact CDH-CF Dietetic Practice Group. See contact information at the end of this chapter.

DETERMINING A REASONABLE AMOUNT OF TIME TO CONSULT

The amount of time it will take to complete your work is totally dependent on what is expected. A great resource for calculating the amount of time needed to consult to a facility is the CD-HCF "Adequacy of Consultant Hours Worksheet." When interviewing for a position as a consultant dietitian, ask the following questions:

- What is the RD's role in relationship to the Certified Dietary Manager (CDM) or Dietetic Technician, Registered (DTR)?
- What dietary concerns do you have? What dietary or nutrition concerns have been cited on the past three surveys?
- What are your facility's quality indicators for unintentional weight loss, pressure ulcers, and dehydration? What kinds of systems do you have in place for intervening on these problems?
- Do you need assistance with your dining program? With sanitation/food safety? In-services?
- Are there any staffing concerns that might inhibit nutrition care?
- Can I do a mock survey on my first visit to better determine your needs?
- Are there clearly defined roles and responsibilities (agreed upon by the consultant and facility)?
- What is the time allowed for monthly consulting work? (Be sure it is reasonable time for the work expected—ask for more time if expectations are too high for the time allotted.)

SUMMARY

To be successful in LTC consulting, it takes the following magic ingredients:

- A desire to achieve your dreams
- The ability to focus your time and talents on your goals
- The drive to overcome all obstacles

- The ability to value mistakes and learn from them, and
- A commitment to constant improvement

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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2. U.S. Census Bureau. *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2008 (127th Edition)*,Washington, DC, 2007. Available at: http://www.census.gov/statab/www/ and http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/tables/08s0010.pdf. Accessed December 8, 2008.

RESOURCES

Administration on Aging. http://www.aoa.dhhs.gov.

American Assoc. of Retired Persons (AARP). http://www.aarp.org.

American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging. http://www.aahsa.org.

American Health Care Association. http://www.ahca.org.

American Heart Association. http://www.americanheart.org.

American Diabetes Organization. http://www.diabetes.org.

ASPEN. http://www.clinnutr.org.

Becky Dorner & Associates, Inc. http://www.BeckyDorner.com 1–800-342-0285. (Free email magazine, free membership with discount pricing and valuable resources, articles, FAQs and more.)

Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services. http://www.cms.gov.

Consultant Dietitians in Health Care Facilities. http://www.cdhcf.org.

Dietetics Online (LTC/ALF site–many links). http://www.dietetics.com.

Food Code 2005. http://www.vm.cfsan.fda.gov/;dms/fc99-toc.html.

Gateway to Government Food Safety Info. http://www.foodsafety.gov.

Healthy Aging (DPG of ADA). http://www.gndpg.org.

National Institute on Aging. http://www.nih.gov/nia.

National Kidney Foundation. http://www.kidney.org.

National Pressure Ulcer Advisory Panel. http://www.NPUAP.org.

The National Food Safety Database. http://www.foodsafety.org or http://www.foodinfonet.com/safety.html.

USDA Food Safety & Inspection Service. http://www.FSIS.usda.gov.

Web MD. http://www.webmd.com.

TAPPING THE FOOD AND CULINARY MARKETS

26

Mary Abbott Hess and Jane Grant Tougas

Dietary guidelines, food pyramids, and nutrition labels pack a lot of information, but when it comes right down to it, *eating* is believing. Survey after survey confirms that people want food that not only tastes great but is also easy to prepare and economical. For dietetics professionals, some excellent ways to promote healthful eating are to give food demonstrations, write cookbooks, and develop recipes and menus that are as flavorful and convenient as they are nutritious.

Traditionally, food skills were considered important primarily for dietitians in foodservice and food management. Today, practitioners in *all* areas of dietetics need food-related knowledge and skills. Counselors must be prepared to teach clients how to select and prepare foods, especially when those clients are on modified diets. Community dietitians must be ready to inform caretakers how to cook for family members of all ages. In addition, the demand for dietitians with excellent food communication skills is growing. Restaurants and supermarkets are hiring dietitians to provide nutrition information for menus and to respond to customer queries, and more and more dietitians are active in the food industry and the media.

FOOD AND CULINARY PROFESSIONALS

To strengthen the positioning of dietitians as *food and nutrition* experts, the Food & Culinary Professionals dietetic practice group of The American Dietetic Association (ADA), a group with more than 2200 members, is committed to developing food expertise throughout the profession of dietetics. The group's website (http://www.foodculinaryprofs.org) identifies core food and culinary competencies for entry-level practitioners. In 2006, these competencies were revised to include 11 key areas:

- Sensory perception and evaluation
- Basic cooking skills
- Cooking techniques
- Menu and meal planning
- Ingredient selection
- Recipe development/modification
- Communicating about food
- Supermarkets
- Food safety
- Sustainable agriculture
- Food trends

The Food & Culinary Professionals dietetic practice group provides programs, publications, and continuing education to upgrade the culinary skills of practitioners. The group's listserv and practice subgroups (supermarkets, food safety, and restaurant practice) keep members advised of emerging issues and are a source of information, networking, and professional support.

The scope of food and culinary practice is great, and there are many avenues that an entrepreneurial nutritionist can pursue. Pursuing academic courses, online courses in culinary nutrition, or courses at culinary schools are ways to enhance food and culinary competencies and marry them to prior nutrition expertise. In this chapter, we will review some basic food demonstration, recipe development, menu planning, and cookbook writing skills that can enhance your impact as a food and nutrition communicator.

COOKING DEMONSTRATIONS

Trend spotter Faith Popcorn calls it "homemaking voyeurism," watching *other* people cook. The popularity of the Food Network, Home & Garden Television, and PBS food programming, as well as *Iron Chef*, *Top Chef*, and other cooking competitions is a testimony to this phenomenon. Food demonstrations have also become a part of the regular line-up on morning television. Appearing on these shows, and in their respective series, has made personalities such as Julia Child, Martha Stewart, Emeril Lagasse, Rick Bayless, Bobbie Flay, Mario Batali, and Jacques Pépin contemporary legends.

Across the nation, chefs (the famous and the not so famous) are teaching in restaurants, community colleges, and community centers. Culinary schools are doing a booming business, offering both basic and advanced cooking classes. Even grocery stores and farmers markets offer food demonstrations and classes. National organizations such as the American Institute of Wine & Food and the American Culinary Federation sponsor programs all over the country showcasing the work of food experts. The Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York, offers an excellent series of instructional videos, and the food sections of many newspapers list local cooking classes and demonstrations. The exhibition *Bon Appetit! Julia Child's Kitchen* at the Smithsonian at the Museum of American History in Washington, DC showcases the kitchen that Julia Child used in filming many of her classic cooking shows. Many Americans learned to cook by watching Child on public television.

Food demonstrations are a great show-and-tell opportunity for dietitians. Cooking classes allow exploration of new ingredients, flavors, and procedures in an environment that is conducive to experimentation and discovery. Learning is enhanced when people are able to smell, touch, and taste healthful food as well as watch it being prepared.

One of the best ways to master a new skill is by observation and practice. This is as true for learning how to cook as it is for learning how to present food demonstrations. Start by watching various television food shows and taking some notes. You will notice significant differences in skill, technique, content, organization, sanitation, and personal style. Some really good cooks simply can't explain clearly what they are doing and why. Some are strong, engaging personalities with minimal cooking skill and poor techniques. Others excel at succinctly describing and demonstrating proper technique, while also entertaining and sharing insights on topics such as nutrition and food history.

After you have done some basic research, try planning a food demonstration, and practice setting up and presenting the demonstration in a limited amount of time. Have an imaginary audience or, if it is comfortable for you, invite friends or neighbors to observe. When you are confident of your skills, try offering classes at your worksite or in a community setting. After additional practice, consider approaching the media, including local cable stations that may be looking for programming (see Box 26.1).

If you are not particularly comfortable handling food, find a local chef with whom to partner. Work out your individual roles. Many chefs have great cooking skills but are uncomfortable explaining them. If there is good rapport between you and the chef, a team approach can be interesting and fun. Many chefs, particularly those educated by dietitians involved in the American Culinary Federation certification, welcome the opportunity to work with dietitians.

BOX 26.1 ***How to be an Effective Food Demonstrator***

At an ADA meeting some years ago, Chef Michael Moskwa and Suzanne Vieira, MS, RD, both of whom were on the faculty of Johnson and Wales University, presented a session titled "Marketing Your Message with Food: Culinary Demonstrations." Chef Moskwa, who hosted a weekly television show for several years, provided 10 tips for effective food demonstrations that remain good guidelines today.

1. **Use clear, unadorned equipment.** Glass bowls and plain equipment are best to show ingredients and amounts.
2. **Use sensory words to describe food.** Words such as "juicy," "crunch," and "spicy" engage the viewers' senses.
3. **Use household measurements, not metric.** Americans do not relate to grams and liters.
4. **Make sanitation obvious, but not rigid.** Keep work areas clean and neat. Keep tasting spoons handy.
5. **Choose colorful ingredients.** Bright colors create visual impact and pizzazz.
6. **Focus on the food.** Don't confuse a food demonstration with a nutrition lecture. Mention one or two nutrients and a nutrient benefit, but concentrate on the food.
7. **Be entertaining and informative.** When you are on television, remember your viewers have their remotes handy!
8. **Wear plain clothing.** Your clothes should not be distracting. No rings or dangling earrings. Neutral clothing keeps the focus on the food and your message.
9. **Be aware of taste bias.** Respect individual preferences and offer alternatives for different palates.
10. **Always be prepared.** Identify your most important message or technique. Bring everything you need. Be prepared to show and tell in less time than you expect to have. If you are using an overhead mirror, adjust it properly so the audience can see.

Almost all demonstrations conclude with construction of a finished presentation plate. You might have seen Graham Kerr's television series on healthy cooking, in which he analyzed his plate presentations with colorful architectural-style renderings to demonstrate the importance of food placement and color. The ultimate goal is to create a plate that makes observers say, "Wow!" and think, "Yes! I can do that!"

RECIPE DEVELOPMENT AND TESTING

From the food technologist's point of view, a recipe is a chemical formula. From the chef's point of view, a recipe is a *magic* formula. It's up to the dietitian to blend the science and art into a seamless whole that customers will experience as great-tasting, health-promoting food. No matter where you practice dietetics, communicating about food and nutrition through recipes and menus will significantly enhance your ability to promote healthful eating.

A recipe is a form of communication and must be targeted to an audience. For example, a young mother's lifestyle, health concerns, and available time for cooking are quite different from those of retired empty nesters. Likewise, a person with diabetes or kidney disease will have nutritional needs that differ from someone in cardiac rehabilitation. Economic conditions, literacy level, family traditions, ethnicity, and cultural/religious heritage are additional considerations. Depending on the target audience, your recipes can appear in newspapers, magazines, books, calendars, or on posters, bookmarks, websites, or client materials.

COOKING TERMS

Many recipes and books by chefs and very experienced cooks assume that recipe users know basic cooking terminology and methods. For example, instructions may say "Blanch green beans." Blanching entails briefly cooking vegetables in boiling water and then "shocking" them in ice water to retain their bright colors. Inexperienced cooks need to know that to blanch beans, one must:

1. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil.
2. Fill a large mixing bowl with cold water; add about 20 ice cubes.
3. Put trimmed beans in boiling water for 1 minute only.
4. Drain beans and plunge them into ice water to quick chill. Drain well.

Explaining each cooking method and technique in detail, however, can result in a long recipe that appears complex and time-consuming. Complexity and time commitment not only scare inexperienced cooks, but also turn off people who know how to cook but are too busy to enjoy it. The trick is to be as brief as possible while still being very clear. Some famous cookbook authors, such as Maida Heatter, are known for their very specific directions. Although Heatter's recipes do tend to be long, the cook who follows each step knows what to expect and can be confident that the recipe will work, taste wonderful, and look beautiful. Cookbooks, such as Julia Child's *The Way to Cook*, use photos to enhance instruction and understanding. Unfortunately, not all cookbooks have the production budget for expensive food photography.

IS THE RECIPE FAIL-PROOF?

Everyone has a story about "the recipe that didn't work." Make sure that the story is never about one of your recipes! Those who spend the time and money to use your recipes deserve to be successful when they follow the recipe exactly. Test and test again. Here are some points to remember as you are establishing your recipe-testing procedures:

- **Set up your laboratory—your kitchen.** Use an oven thermometer to check the accuracy of your oven. Make sure you have all the basic measuring utensils (good quality measuring cups and spoons, a food scale, a timer, meat and candy thermometers, etc.). Measure carefully and document exactly what you do.
- **Use only the kitchen appliances, tools, and gadgets you would expect to find in your readers' kitchens.** Avoid unusual ingredients (unless you are developing an ethnic recipe in which such ingredients are essential). Try to use as few bowls and utensils as possible.
- **Plan ahead so you can prepare a detailed grocery list.** If you are going to be testing a lot of recipes, group them according to common ingredients.
- **Think about what you are going to do with all that prepared food!** Serve it to family and friends; freeze it to eat later; make arrangements to donate it to a local shelter; or deliver it to a homebound or elderly person you know.

When testing a recipe, remember these tips:

- **Develop a worksheet** so you can keep track of the ingredients and methods you try and what you finally use (see Fig. 26.1).
- **Measure ingredients very carefully.** Measure liquids in glass or clear plastic measuring cups intended for liquids; measure dry or solid ingredients in metal or plastic cups that can be leveled off with a straight edge, such as a knife. If the recipe specifies sifted flour, sift before measuring. Disregard that some flour comes presifted and sift it again.
- **Use whole purchase units** when possible. For example, using 1 (15-ounce) can of tomato sauce, rather than 2 cups of tomato sauce, makes shopping easier and avoids leftovers.
- **Use large eggs.** Do not substitute other sizes unless there is a specific reason to do so.

Recipe Working Title: Date Tested:
Project: Recipe Source:

Test #: Number of Servings:
Total Yield: Serving Size:
Pan(s)/Equipment Required: Pan Prep:

Cooking Temp: Preheat: ____Yes _____No
Total Cooking Time:

Ingredients & Quantities	Adjustments/Substitutions
______________________	______________________
______________________	______________________
______________________	______________________
______________________	______________________
______________________	______________________
______________________	______________________
______________________	______________________

Method (Steps of Preparation)

1. ____
2. ____
3. ____
4. ____
5. ____
6. ____
7. ____
8. ____

Notes for Nutrient Calculation (deduction for waste, discarded ingredients and weight):

Garnish:

Serving Suggestions:

Secondary Recipes Required:

Comments/Taste/Evaluation:

FIGURE 26.1 ■ Recipe testing form.

- **Specify pan sizes**, especially for baked goods. Measure skillets and baking pans across the top, not the bottom. Remember that thickness influences cooking time and texture.
- **Keep track of how long it should take an average cook to make the recipe.** Also note how long it takes to complete steps, such as reducing the liquid or cooking the vegetables. You

might want to add this information to the recipe. Inexperienced cooks don't know what consistency or degree of doneness is correct, so time estimates help.

- **Taste test.** Get some second opinions. For example, if the dish is meant for children, enlist the help of a taste-testing youngster or two. Recipes with reduced salt or fat may require several taste tests with varying levels of additional herbs, flavoring agents, or different cooking techniques. Recipes suitable for modified diets should be flavorful enough for anyone to enjoy.
- If you are planning to make adjustments/substitutions to create a healthier dish, you might want to **make the original recipe first** to see what it looks, smells, and tastes like—these are the baseline expectations. Make any adjustments/substitutions you want to try and prepare the dish again. Give your new recipe a name that describes it but does not create a taste expectation you cannot deliver.

The finished product must look and smell appetizing. If you have made adjustments/substitutions, the revised recipe does not have to taste *exactly* like the original, but the flavor should be balanced and the texture should be appropriate for the dish. If you want to try some changes in types or amounts of ingredients, method of preparation, cooking time, and so on, retest the recipe until you are happy with the final product. If your recipes don't taste wonderful, they will disappoint the people who use them and will destroy your credibility.

- Keep in mind that a recipe is a chemical formula. Because chemicals react in different ways under various conditions, you may not be able to halve or double a recipe, and expect it to turn out the same as the original "formula." **When testing a recipe, prepare the *entire* recipe.** You need to know the final yield (volume) to determine the appropriate number of portions.
- Many recipe testers take a photo of the final dish as a reference.
- When testing a lot of recipes, it is useful to **draft written descriptions** to refer to at a later time.
- **Know when to give up.** Some ideas that look great on paper may not work—ever!

ADAPTING RECIPES TO MEET MEDICAL NEEDS

When modifying recipes to meet a specific nutritional need, review the recipe and determine if it is appropriate to modify. Certain recipes can be prepared with substitute ingredients if adjustments are made to assure pleasing texture and flavor. Other recipes, however, will never be successful without particular ingredients. Sometimes, it is wiser to substitute another recipe entirely rather than create a poor imitation of the real thing. For example, there is no such thing as a low-fat croissant.

Low Fat

When adjusting recipes to meet nutritional needs, the most common modification is in the type or amount of fat. There are hundreds of low-fat and "healthy" cookbooks available that describe how to modify fat content. Dietitians are writing more and more of these books. Some are successful; some are not. Similarly, some low-fat recipes are wonderful, while others disappoint. For example, although it is a commonly suggested modification, simply substituting fat-free yogurt for sour cream or substituting skim milk for cream usually does not work. Even substituting low-fat or fat-free salad dressings for full-fat dressings requires taste testing (Box 26.2).

Substitutions like these can be successful, however, if other ingredients and seasonings are adjusted appropriately and if the recipes are tested and evaluated. For example, adding chopped scallions, celery, fennel, or herbs can provide flavor and texture that greatly enhance a low-fat dish.

BOX 26.2 ***Techniques to Reduce Fat Content***

- Use cooking techniques that require little or no fat, such as grilling, broiling, roasting, poaching, steaming, stewing, or baking.
- Use nonstick pans or pan spray to reduce the amount of fat used to control "sticking."
- To enhance mouthfeel and "gloss," add a small amount (1 tablespoon) of butter or margarine to a sauce immediately before serving, rather than using fat earlier in preparation.
- For "creamy" soups, use pureed vegetables thinned with broth or skim or evaporated skim milk. Add the appropriate seasonings.
- Meringue cookies and tart shells are easy to make and fat free. Use them with fresh fruit or sorbet for a luxurious low-fat dessert. Some stores and bakeries sell ready-made baked meringue shells. Shake powdered sugar over cakes instead of rich frostings, or spread frostings thinly rather than piling it on.
- Reconsider what portion sizes are adequate and appropriate. Use different pan sizes or reduce portions. For example, make smaller muffins or bake brownies in a larger pan to create a "thinner" product. Smaller means fewer calories and less fat per serving.
- Use low-fat salad dressing as a meat or poultry marinade and drain it before cooking. Before doing a nutrient analysis of the recipe, deduct the discarded marinade.
- When using fat, choose the optimal type and use only the amount needed to create a delicious product. Olive, safflower, sesame, and canola oils are considered more "heart healthy" than other oils. Various olive oils have different flavors; canola is bland and neutral. A small amount of chicken fat (also monounsaturated) adds a lot of flavor to sautéed onions. Intense flavors help minimize the amount of fats needed. For example, nut oils and seasoned oils (lemon, basil, or garlic oil) can be brushed over cooked vegetables just before serving. Butter has a distinct flavor and should be used where appropriate.
- Toast nuts to intensify their flavor and use half the amount called for in recipes.
- A mixture of nonfat yogurt and ricotta cheese can fill in for cream cheese in desserts and dips. Fat-free buttermilk can be seasoned to use in delicious low-fat salad dressings and to make low-fat mashed potatoes and some sauces. Find some cheeses you like with low or moderate amounts of fat. Sprinkle sharp shredded cheese over salads and casseroles, just a little provides big flavor and a boost of calcium.
- Find ways to use more legumes. They are rich in nutrients and low in fat.
- Enjoy baked vegetable chips and whole grain crackers or flatbreads. Both can be crushed and used for crispy, flavorful toppings on soups, casseroles, or salads.
- When possible, shift the balance in a recipe to increase the amount of vegetables, grains, and fruit, while reducing the amount of meat and/or sauces. This adjustment will reduce total fat, while boosting essential nutrients.
- Cut leftover bread into small cubes, dip in stock to infuse flavor, and bake until crisp. A nonfried, crunchy alternative—these tiny croutons add texture to salads and can be used as a topping for soups and casseroles.
- Use fruit salsas and chutney (fat free) instead of mayonnaise or sauces with hot or cold meats and to mix with poultry or seafood for high-protein salads.
- Thinly slice steak and other meats. "Fan" the slices on a plate to make 3 or 4 ounces look like a much larger portion of meat.
- When vegetables are being used as ingredients, roast, grill, or "sweat" them rather than sautéing them in fat.

Simply expecting a recipe to taste good is not enough. Only taste testing will tell.

Low Sugar

Lowering sugar content is another common recipe modification. Remember that sugar adds more than sweetness to many recipes. For example, it enhances browning and adds crispness to baked goods. Sometimes, simply using less sugar is satisfactory. Use sugar substitutes or alternative sweeteners to add more sweetness with fewer grams of carbohydrates, but always test to be sure that both flavor and texture are acceptable.

Although individuals with diabetes or hypoglycemia still need to count the carbohydrates in their foods, they are less likely to be on the "sugar-free" diets of the past.

Low Salt

When salt must be restricted, use other flavoring ingredients, such as fresh herbs, garlic, pepper spices, lemon juice, or citrus zest, to perk up flavor. Often, sodium can be reduced significantly by reducing the amount of salt used in the early stages of cooking and adding some salt just before serving. Course-grain kosher salt has less sodium per teaspoon than regular fine-grain salt. Some sea salts, and new special salts, also have less sodium per teaspoon. Most Americans eat far too much sodium, so using light or unsalted canned broth and reduced-sodium soy sauce and other prepared sauces makes sense even if you are not creating a low-salt recipe. Sodium intake is an emerging area of concern and many no- and low-sodium products are entering the marketplace. In some recipes, small amounts of monosodium glutamate (MSG) can be used to intensify and blend flavors and replace salt. MSG is a potent flavor enhancer with one third of the sodium of salt.

Increased Nutrients

Recipes can also be adjusted by adding ingredients that boost nutritional value. Vegetables, fruits, legumes, and grains rich in fiber and phytochemicals will improve the nutrient profile of many recipes. Using fat-free or low-fat milk, buttermilk, and yogurt boost calcium and protein. The concept of nutrient density has reemerged as a focus on nutrient-rich foods—that is, foods that provide high levels of positive nutrients per calorie. When developing recipes, dietitians should always try to incorporate nutrient-rich ingredients both to maximize the healthfulness of the food and to provide reasonable calorie levels. Artfully using fruits and vegetables as edible garnishes can also make plate presentation more attractive.

Many foods used as recipe ingredients are available in fortified or enriched forms to boost their nutrient contribution. Flour and many types of pasta now have added folate as well as other vitamin Bs, iron, and fiber; fruit juices are available with added calcium and/or vitamin C; fortified rice and soy beverages can be used as milk substitutes in preparing foods for those with lactose intolerance.

RECIPE WRITING

Whether you are writing recipes for publication or for presentation handouts, the most important thing to remember is consistency. Choose a recipe format and develop an alphabetical style sheet to keep track of your decisions on matters such as capitalization, spelling, and word choice (see list of resources at the end of this chapter for books that discuss various recipe formats).

If you are writing for a magazine or newspaper, study the publication's recipe style and follow it as closely as you can. If you are writing a cookbook, review other cookbooks you enjoy using, select a recipe style you like, and stick with it. Basic cooking techniques are explained particularly well in the Culinary Institute of America's *Techniques of Healthy Cooking* and in Julia Child's *The Way to Cook*. Techniques for low-fat baking are explained in Alice Medrich's book, *Chocolate and the Art of Low-Fat Desserts*.

Eventually, a copyeditor will edit your recipes into the proper style for a particular publication. This task will be much easier if you have been consistent in the recipes you submit. Below are some general guidelines for recipe writing.

A RECIPE FOR YOUR RECIPES

Ideally, the person who is using one of your recipes will read it through once before beginning to cook. Less methodical cooks, however, will dive right in. For these people, especially, it is important to be as clear as you can and to anticipate any areas where you are potentially confusing.

Title

"Baked Alaska" and "Better than Robert Redford Cake" aside, make your recipe titles fairly simple and descriptive of the dish. If you are preparing recipes for a book that will be indexed, straightforward titles will make it easier for readers to find what they are seeking.

Headnotes

In this introductory blurb, you can include an acknowledgment, a historical fact, serving ideas, tips on seasonal ingredients, a personal recommendation, or even a fond memory associated with the dish. Be creative. Remember that some people enjoy reading recipes more than they enjoy cooking them! (Not every recipe has a headnote, but this information can give a recipe some extra pizzazz.)

Ingredients

List ingredients in the order they will be used. When order doesn't matter or when several ingredients are added at the same time, list the dry ingredients in descending order according to volume followed by the liquid ingredients, also in descending order by volume. Include water in the ingredient listing only if it must be heated or chilled before use. Avoid using brand names unless, of course, you are developing a recipe for a food manufacturer. Use standard kitchen measurements and avoid abbreviations (exception: F for Fahrenheit). A "dash" or a "pinch" can be used for less than 1/8 teaspoon of dried herbs.

Be as clear as possible about amounts, sizes, weights, and dried/canned/packaged versus fresh. For example, if you say, "1 can of tomato sauce," the reader might interpret this to mean an 8-ounce, a 15-ounce, or a 29-ounce can. The amount of tomato sauce used would dramatically alter the character and success of the recipe. Different types of food have different standard sized cans and packages. Check the weight and list it. When possible, give measurements in both units and weight, such as:

- 1 (8-ounce) can tomato sauce
- 1 (16-ounce) package angel hair pasta
- 6 medium potatoes (about 2 pounds)
- 4 ounces of cheddar cheese, shredded (about 1 cup)
- 1 medium pork chop (about 5 ounces)
- 1 (10-ounce) package frozen leaf spinach
- 3 cups fresh spinach leaves, packed tightly
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh oregano

Because you learned it in school and see it on measuring cups, you might assume that 1 cup (volume) equals 8 ounces (weight). Don't convert weights to measures based on this 8 ounces = 1 cup assumption. While the formula is true for water, foods have widely varying weights per volume measure. For example, a cup of unsifted, all-purpose flour weighs about 4 ounces (115 grams), 1 cup of rice weighs 5.5 ounces (150 grams), and 1 cup of honey weighs a whopping 13 ounces (369 grams). For baking, it is especially important to list both weights and measures. Check ingredient amounts by weight *and* measure when testing recipes.

Include preparation procedures, such as peeling, chopping, slicing, separating, thawing, bringing to room temperature, and precooking in the ingredient list. For example:

- 1 large baking potato, peeled, cooked, chilled, sliced
- 2 (15.8-ounce) cans kidney beans, drained, liquid reserved

Be aware of the impact one misplaced word can have. For example, measuring before or after chopping or processing can make a significant difference, as in:

- ½ cup chopped walnuts versus ½ cup walnuts, chopped
- ½ cup whipping cream versus ½ cup cream, whipped versus ½ cup whipped cream

If an ingredient is used more than once, you can take one of two approaches:

- List the total amount needed the first time the item is used, and add the word "divided," as in "2 cups of flour, divided." The cook then knows the *total* amount of flour needed. In the recipe method, you will instruct the cook how much flour to use at different points in the recipe.

- List the ingredient twice in the appropriate amounts as it occurs in the recipe. This option takes up slightly more space but may prevent errors.

Method
Write the recipe instructions in a concise, logical, efficient order. Begin sentences with a verb followed by equipment, treatment, time, and doneness check. For example, "Place onion slices in a 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium heat. Stir about 3 minutes until onion is limp and transparent."

Either number the recipe steps or divide them into short paragraphs.

- If appropriate, begin by stating oven temperature for preheating in °F and identify any pots or pans that must be prepared.
- Explain what type and size bowls, utensils, and appliances to use and how to combine ingredients.
- Explain what type and size of cooking vessels to use and how to cook ingredients. Use standard pan sizes. When testing a recipe, check that pan sizes are appropriate.
- When needed, specify a test for doneness: for roasted meats, a temperature using a meat thermometer; for cakes, until top is firm and an inserted toothpick comes out clean; and for cookies, until they are slightly brown around edges.
- Make garnishing, serving, and menu suggestions.

When referring to a mixture of ingredients, identify it by its primary ingredient. For example, say the "egg mixture" or the "flour mixture." When conveying cooking information, describe the method and time and give some visual clues about how the food should look; for example, "Sauté chopped shallots until transparent, about 3 minutes." The method section can end with food storage information, food safety tips, or how to vary recipes or make substitutions.

Yield
Note how many portions the recipe yields. In your notes, you will want to weigh or measure the total yield (e.g., "2 quarts" of soup). In some cases, it will be helpful to note the portion size as well (e.g., "8 (1 cup) servings"). Many recipes featured in newspapers give an unrealistically large or small number of portions. Indicate a portion that is adequate but not excessive. Recipes for people with diabetes or on calorie-controlled diets should provide "standard" exchange portions.

Nutrient Analysis
A basic per serving nutrient analysis includes calories, carbohydrate, protein, and fat. For some audiences, it may be appropriate to include cholesterol, sodium, and fiber; to break fat into saturated, polyunsaturated, and monounsaturated; or to note if the recipe is a good source of certain vitamins or minerals. Sometimes, this information is given in nutrition labeling format.

Because of variations in ingredients and measurements from cook to cook, all calculated or computed values can only be approximations. The nutrient analysis usually does not include optional ingredients and herb garnishes, the fat used to grease pans, or suggested accompaniments, unless specific amounts are given. Always calculate considering the directions, taking care to measure anything discarded or changed in form during preparation. Calculating from the ingredient list only is inviting error. Culinary experience and skill will improve your accuracy.

When a *range of servings* is indicated, the larger number is typically used for the nutrient calculations. If there is a *range in the amount of an ingredient*, the smaller amount is typically used. Some analysts, however, prefer to calculate the midpoint of a range. When a recipe lists a choice of ingredients, the first ingredient is the one used in the calculation. Salt is figured only if the recipe calls for a specific amount. Salt added to cooking water is usually not calculated because the cooking water is discarded and so little salt is absorbed. (Also see discussion below.)

Subsidiary Recipes

When a recipe includes several components, for example, a layer cake with frosting and filling, or poultry with stuffing and gravy, break it down into subsidiary or secondary recipes and label them clearly so the reader can follow the process easily. If some secondary recipes are used in more than one main recipe, consider having a special section on basic recipes and refer the reader to that section as needed. Combine recipes as used in the final nutrition calculation of the dish. You may end up using all of the salad ingredients but only half of the dressing subrecipe.

May I Use Your Recipe?

Like a formula, a recipe can't be copyrighted (although a cookbook can be), but that doesn't make it acceptable to claim other people's work as your own. Ethically, plagiarism is plagiarism. Recipe writing can be a gray area, one in which the Golden Rule definitely applies.

If you plan to use someone else's recipe in a presentation, ask permission first and be sure to give that person or his or her book appropriate credit. If you intend to publish someone else's recipe in an article or book, you must obtain permission either directly from the author of the recipe, or in the case of a recipe in a book, from the publisher. Even if you change the title or make minor adjustments in the ingredients or method, if the recipe is essentially the work of someone else, you should seek permission for its use.

On the other hand, if you are inspired by someone else's recipe, but with substantive changes make it your own, you need not seek reprint permission. In addition, some recipes are considered "standards"; for example, basic pastry dough or cake batters don't require permission to use. Likewise, recipes from manufacturers and food advisory groups, such as the Produce Marketing Association or the Lamb Council, generally can be used without prior permission, although a credit line is appreciated.

Send a permission form to request use of a recipe (see Chapter 12). Include the recipe you want to use and its source. Explain how and where you would like to use it. In addition, note exactly how you intend to credit the author/publication—for example, at the end of the recipe or in a list of acknowledgments. Create a check-off area at the bottom of your letter for the recipe author/publisher to respond with "yes" or "no" and include a self-addressed stamped envelope for the person to return the permission to you. It is best to do this by mail to have a signed original for your records but you can also do this via email or fax. Keep in mind that some authors and publishers will charge you a reprint fee, which can be based on how many copies of the recipe will be printed (as in a book, newspaper, or magazine) and/or how a book containing the recipe will be priced for sale. If the fee is unacceptable, use another recipe (Box 26.3).

BOX 26.3 ***Recipe Writer's Checklist***

___ Does the title describe the recipe?
___ Does the headnote add some interesting or useful information?
___ Are the ingredients correct and in the proper order of use?
___ Are all the measurements correct? (One typo can lead to disaster!)
___ Is the method explained clearly and in a logical progression?
___ Are there any simple preparation steps that could be moved to the ingredient list?
___ Are all the ingredients in the method on the ingredient list?
___ Are all the divided and reserved ingredients used?
___ Are the pot and pan measurements standard and correct?
___ Are the cooking temperatures and times correct?
___ Is the recipe yield indicated?
___ Is the specified portion adequate and appropriate?

NUTRIENT CALCULATIONS AND ANALYSIS

More than ever before, consumers want to know what is in the food they eat. Because nutrition labels on supermarket food list calories and grams of key nutrients per serving, many consumers want comparable data on the recipes they prepare at home.

RUNNING THE NUMBERS

You can't believe everything you read in a nutrient analysis/calculation. For example, the values printed with recipes in some newspapers, magazines, and cookbooks are quite often incorrect or misleading. One common cause of error is using the ingredient list for input data without adjusting for losses such as unused pan drippings from poultry or discarded marinade. Nutrient values should be accurate but not unrealistically specific. The rounding rules used for food labels offer sensible guidelines:

- Round 0–50 calories to the nearest 5-calorie increment. Round 50 or more calories to the nearest 10-calorie increment.
- Round grams of carbohydrate, protein, fat, and fiber to the nearest gram.
- Round cholesterol to the nearest 5 milligrams.
- Round milligrams of sodium to the nearest 5 milligrams if less than 140 milligrams, and to the nearest 10 milligrams if over 140 milligrams.

Inappropriate specificity, such as 13.628 grams of fat, is also misleading. This calculated value, for example, should be rounded to 14 grams. Remember that even excellent databases are based on averaged values of many food samples, and home cooks don't measure with gram scales.

While nutrient calculations and computer printouts will be very specific, you should translate these numbers to consumer-friendly data. Before calculating a recipe, review it to determine if all ingredients should be included in the calculation. Your recipe testing notes should indicate if pan drippings, fat from the top of soup, or gravy were discarded. If so, delete the gram weight of discarded fat. To do this, weigh the pan drippings in a small bowl or blot the pan drippings on paper toweling and weigh it. Subtract the weight of the empty bowl or the clean paper toweling.

Chicken is a common ingredient that presents calculation challenges. The amount of fat gained or lost in cooking depends on the cooking method, length of cooking time, cooking temperature, and the addition of other ingredients. If poultry skin is removed before eating, the skin must be removed and its weight subtracted for the nutrient calculation.

To be accurate, "nutrient analysis" is the analytical values of nutrients in a food done by various extraction techniques in an analytical laboratory, while the term "nutrient calculation" is the better terminology for estimations from a database, manufacturers' information or labels. Sometimes, these calculations are called nutrient analysis, but true nutrient analysis requires blended samples and specific extraction and techniques for determining nutrient levels. The information in databases is from nutrient analysis, but practitioners who use database information are doing nutrient calculations.

Proper nutrient calculation is far more than just entering ingredients into a computer program. A database includes many similar foods (e.g., types of canned tomatoes or grades of ground beef), and the correct item must be entered. Many dietitians prefer to buy nutrient database programs and do their own data entry. Others use the services of companies that specialize in nutrient analysis. The decision is often based on variables such as volume of recipes to be calculated, cost of purchased "analysis" versus the cost of software, and the time availability and computer skills of the dietitian doing the work. Even when the recipe is sent out for calculation, you must check the computed values carefully for accuracy. As the author and recipe developer, *you* are responsible for printed nutrient values.

FORMAT

The format for nutrition information on recipes varies according to the audience and how the information will be used. In some cases, you may use a sentence listing calories and grams of fat. Other times, a food label format or food exchanges may be appropriate. Think about what your audience wants to know and avoid providing more information than they want or need. Most nutrient software programs provide more information than you will share with readers, but keep records of all your calculations in case you receive questions from readers or your editor.

SELECTING ANALYSIS SOFTWARE

Many nutrient computer software programs are available. *Microcomputer Software Collection*, produced by the Food and Nutrition Information Center (FNIC) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), offers a comprehensive listing. In addition, the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* carries classified ads placed by software companies. Some are reviewed in the "New in Review" section. Software companies also exhibit at the association's Food and Nutrition Conference and Expo each year. Almost all of these companies offer demonstration diskettes or a preview of some type.

Do your homework before you invest! Ask colleagues which programs they use and if they are satisfied. Because software is designed for many uses (foodservice and planning management, inventory and cost control, nutrition labeling, recipe or meal analysis, menu planning, etc.), you must be sure that the program you purchase matches your needs. Before purchasing a program, you need to understand the quality and quantity of the database. How many items are listed? Does it include the specific nutrients you need? What is the basic cost? How often is it updated? What is the fee for obtaining database updates and enhancements? Is there a toll-free number for assistance? When is the assistance available?

In addition to knowing how many foods are in the database, you may also want to know some of the actual foods. For example, if you are working with ethnic foods, you will want to know if the database includes them. In addition, you will want to know how difficult it is to add foods to the existing database. Imported and ethnic foods now carry nutrition labels but they are not in some databases.

If you're going to use the program primarily for recipe calculation, make sure the process is simple. Are food items easy to access or must you use a code? What information prints out in the report? Can all the nutrient information be viewed on the computer screen prior to printing? Can the program convert data to a label format? *Bowes & Church's Food Values of Portions Commonly Used* and many databases have "holes" in their micronutrient and macronutrient information because some information had not yet been collected when the databases were compiled. Also, formulations of prepared foods change as do portions. Do you know how many grams that muffin weighs?

You need to know if a database uses a zero for missing information as well as for absence of a nutrient, or if it specifically identifies missing information. You may have to estimate a value from a similar ingredient rather than use zeros for unknown amounts. For example, if the database you use does not have fiber values for a particular legume, like adzuki beans, you should enter the fiber value of a similar legume, like kidney beans or small red beans, to calculate an estimated value. An educated guess is better than a zero for a missing value. All calculations should be checked for missing data. You might be missing a lot if you only look at the bottom line of nutrient totals.

Finally, newer software packages often do not work on older hardware. Determine whether your computer meets the software company's minimum requirements. You will need to know what operating system your computer runs on (MAC, DOS, Windows, UNIX) and the minimum memory

(RAM) and hard disk space requirements for the software. The more inclusive databases require larger memory, as do programs that provide graphics and extensive statistics.

CREATING MENUS

While some of us love to cook and take great pleasure in preparing food to share with family and friends, others (perhaps the majority), seek the quickest and easiest way to get food on the table. For people who prefer assembling food, rather than cooking, the food industry provides a full range of convenience and takeout options. And Americans aren't shy about using these options. Many families rely on a mixture of fast food, restaurant takeout, prepared foods from grocery or convenience stores, and frozen or microwaveable foods.

Although home cooking allows more control of ingredients and nutrients and is usually more economical, lack of food knowledge and cooking skills in most American homes presents a huge obstacle to cooking from scratch.

By suggesting meals and menus, home cooked or otherwise, dietitians can translate nutrient needs into food choices that complement each other, delight the senses, provide essential nutrients and preserve the budget. As in any type of communication, knowing your audience is rule number one (Fig. 26.2). Things to consider include:

- How much time does your audience generally have to prepare meals?
- What skill level can you expect?

Nutritive Value
____Key protective nutrients provided
(1 day should equal total requirements)
____3 or more food groups per meal
____Moderate in calories, fat, saturated fat, etc.

Food Selection
____Familiar food and ingredients
____Color variety
____Appealing flavors and aromas
____Temperature variety
____Contrasting textures
____Varied cooking methods
____Variety in food shape and size for plate appeal
____Creativity in presentation
____Meal suitable to time, occasion, weather

People Being Served
____Age-appropriate menu
____Ethnic/cultural/religious preferences respected
____Special dietary needs met

Available Resources
____Ingredients available
____Food costs appropriate/affordable
____Reasonable preparation time
____Cooking and storage equipment realistic
____Appropriate use of prepared foods/ingredients
____Cooking/food assembly ability reasonable

FIGURE 26.2 ■ Meal planning and evaluation checklist.

- What cooking equipment can you assume people have at home?
- Do you need to accommodate any medical nutritional needs?
- Are there any age-related considerations?
- Does your audience have ethnic or cultural food preferences or food traditions?
- Is food budget a consideration?
- What are the least expensive and most nutritious options if budget is limited?

In an individual counseling situation, you will have access to this type of information from dietary assessments and medical records. In family situations, however, household members can differ dramatically in nutrient needs and food preferences. Among larger groups of people, needs vary even among members of the same group. For example, teen athletes are different from sedentary teens. And within both groups, women's needs differ from men's.

One thing everyone has in common, however, is an appreciation for taste. And because we eat with our eyes as well as with our taste buds, suggesting foods and combinations that are exciting and beautiful can make food messages even more appealing. Borrow good ideas from chefs and other food experts. Scan food magazines, cookbooks, and newspaper food pages for menu combinations and ideas. Go to the library or bookstore and peruse award-winning cookbooks. Evaluate what is appealing to you and why. When you go to restaurants, look at plate presentations.

COOKBOOKS

Cookbook writing is an ancient art. One of the earliest cookbook authors was the Greek scientist Epicurius, whom we recall in the term "epicurean." Through the late 18th century, upper-class people who could afford fine ingredients wrote most cookbooks. When women began to write cookbooks, they often published their work anonymously as did other women writers of the time. With titles such as *The Frugal Housewife*, *Cookery Recipes*, and *The Young Housekeeper's Friend*, these cookbooks were meant for everyday use and included family health tips as well as recipes.

Today, anyone can publish a cookbook—and they do! Contemporary cookbooks are often more than a collection of recipes. They preserve ethnic and religious traditions, create adventure, promote health, poke fun, celebrate the seasons, and act as memoirs and simply revel in sensual pleasures of food. No wonder so many people enjoy reading cookbooks.

If you have been tossing around an idea for a cookbook, here are some tips on how to start to bring that idea to fruition:

- Think about exactly what you want your cookbook to be. What is your theme? Who is your audience? Write a very brief description. Don't worry about your writing style. This description is for your eyes only to help keep you centered on your idea as you do some research.
- Conduct market research. Check the Internet. Go to a few bookstores and to the library and examine cookbooks similar to what you want to do. Are there already a lot of cookbooks using your idea? How could you make your cookbook different? If there are very few cookbooks using your idea, ask yourself why? Is the audience for your concept too small to support profitable sales? Is your idea so new that not many books have been written about it yet?
- While at the bookstore or library, make a list of publishers who have released books similar to what you have in mind. Make notes on recipe styles that appeal to you. Also pay attention to the number of recipes, book formats, size of books, and photography and illustrations.
- You can also check *Books in Print* at your library. This publication, which is available in print form and online, lists all cookbooks currently in print. *Literary Marketplace* and *Writer's Market*,

BOX 26.4 ***Publishing Options***

- A **publishing house** usually offers an author an advance against sales and royalties (percentage of sales) and other options, such as paperback rights. If you are using a literary agent, he or she will take a percentage of your advance and royalties. Some publishing houses will simply buy your book outright with no royalty agreement.
- A **cookbook packager** purchases a manuscript from the author for a flat fee. The packager then designs, edits, and sells a complete book, sometimes already printed, to a publisher, who then distributes the book.
- Food and equipment manufacturers and food advisory boards occasionally commission **sponsored cookbooks** to showcase their products or to offer as premiums to customers. The author is paid a flat fee (work for hire). Usually, the sponsor is listed as the cookbook author, but the guaranteed payment is a trade-off for the glory of authorship.
- A **subsidy publisher** will produce an author's book at the expense of the author. Generally, "vanity publishing," as this approach has been called, was looked upon with some disdain but many restaurants and chefs publish their books this way.
- In **self-publishing**, the author assumes complete responsibility, including costs, from writing through distribution and promotion. The self-publisher puts together a team of experts to do what he or she is not able to accomplish alone. Some printers will offer self-publishers design, production, and printing services in one package. E-books can be published on the Internet and short-run publishers can print 1 book at a time or 100, instead of thousands. Self-publishing can be a stepping stone toward being recognized by a national publishing house. Self-published family cookbooks can be wonderful gifts and way to preserve important traditions.

both available at the library, list publishers according to subject matter, including cookbooks.

- Using what you have learned in market research, refine your original description and expand it to include some information on format, length, and overall style. Give your book a working title.

Getting your book to market means you either sell your idea to a publishing house or self-publish. The list of resources at the end of this section includes books that tell you how to write a query letter to a publisher, how to prepare a book proposal, and when and how to work with a literary agent (see Box 26.4 and Chapter 27).

If you self-publish, you will act as the "general contractor" for your cookbook. It will be up to you to conceptualize your book, identify your market, decide how many books to print, set a selling price, and manage sales. You will have more control but more responsibility and financial risk, too. For a book for commercial sale, you will need a team of subcontractors: a copyeditor, perhaps an indexer, a book designer, and production person, perhaps a photographer, and a food stylist (plus all the food and props they will need), maybe an illustrator, a printer, a distributor and, possibly, a promotion or public relations professional. Most of all, you will need money.

CASE STUDY 26.1

SUPERMARKET SAVVY: THE FRONT LINE FOR NUTRITION EDUCATION

In early 1980, Leni Reed, a dietitian in Dallas, Texas, started conducting supermarket tours at Simon–David, a local supermarket chain. After several years of escalating popularity with her supermarket tours, Leni put her expertise into a Supermarket Tour Training Kit and launched Supermarket Savvy. The kit encouraged many registered dietitians (RDs) to start their own supermarket tour businesses and nutrition education in the supermarket was off and running. To support these nutrition entrepreneurs in their new tour businesses, the *Supermarket Savvy* newsletter was launched in 1987.

In 1998, Supermarket Savvy was acquired by Linda McDonald, a registered dietitian with experience in front line nutrition education and retail foods. Today, Supermarket Savvy is a full service nutrition education resource that keeps health professionals informed on what is going on in the retail food industry, and it provides dietitians who consult with supermarkets and health-conscious consumers all the tools they need to educate their clients on shopping for health.

The *Supermarket Savvy* Newsletter is a 10- to 12-page monthly electronic newsletter that contains 12 to 15 new healthy food reviews and featured articles on health and nutrition topics. Each issue also contains a copy ready tip sheet and a comparison chart that coordinates with the feature article. Recent topics covered include antioxidants, probiotics, omega-3s, blood sugar control, metabolism, and budget shopping. Category reviews consist of topics like margarine, salad dressings, whole grains, and kid's foods. Each issue contains links for free sample offers, valued at over $150 per year, for many of the new foods reviewed so that health educators can taste as well as read about products.

The Supermarket Savvy website (http://www.supermarketsavvy.com) provides both savvy shoppers and health professionals all the tools they need to learn about and teach how to shop for health. You will find a virtual supermarket where you can peruse the aisles of "healthy" foods and develop a shopping list to take with you on your next grocery shopping trip. You can read new food reviews, make comments, and rate each product. In addition, you can purchase teaching tools such as a brand-name shopping list, presentation kits, tip sheets, comparison charts, and aisle-by-aisle teaching modules.

Today, dietitians are involved in all aspects of nutrition and culinary education in supermarkets from conducting supermarket tours to providing diabetes programs through supermarket pharmacies, from developing new supermarket brand foods to writing recipes and menus, from producing videos to doing food tastings and cooking demos. The rise in concerns about health and confusion with food labels has added to consumer's interest in nutrition, especially where they are making their food decisions—the supermarket.

Although 94% of people polled by FMI for the 2008 *Shopping for Health Survey* said that they were making an effort to eat a healthy diet, only 11% said they are successful. What distinguish these "Successful Eaters" are their attitudes and behaviors related to healthy eating. It shows in the way they shop, where they shop, how they feed their families, and where they look for information. Besides being organized, "Successful Eaters" read labels and shop in supermarkets that provide healthy in-store services such as prepared healthy foods, coupons for healthy items, tagging systems for healthy foods, recipes for healthy dishes, and nutrition education resources.

The opportunities are ripe for dietitians to provide nutrition and culinary education services in supermarkets.—*Linda McDonald, MS, RD, President of Linda McDonald Associates, Inc., DBA Supermarket Savvy.*

About the Chapter Authors

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THE "WRITE" WAY TO GET PUBLISHED

27

Susan Tornetta Magrann (updated by Kathy King)

Don't skip this chapter because you think you don't have the skills to be a writer. Writing talent is not something you are born with such as curly hair or brown eyes. Learning how to write is like mastering any new skill, whether it is skiing or developing healthy eating habits. It is the mark of a truly educated person, a necessary communication tool for the professional practitioner. You need motivation, guidance, and practice, practice, practice.

WHY WRITE?

The abundance of inaccurate nutrition articles and books written by pseudonutritionists should motivate dietitians to pick up their pencils or learn to use word processing. Complaining about nutrition misinformation will not solve the problem. Even instructing patients in a one-to-one situation won't have a tremendous impact on the public. But dietitians writing interesting articles and books about sensible nutrition will. Just think how many people you can reach with one article—probably more people than you could counsel in a lifetime.

A second motivational factor is the self-satisfaction you experience when you see your name and work in print. It is what will spur you on to write additional pieces.

Writing gives you a chance to be creative. It is like painting a beautiful picture or sewing a gorgeous outfit. You start out with a few basics—paper and pen or keyboard and an idea—and you can create a masterpiece.

Publishing can give you credibility with your readers and peers. People who write books or articles don't necessarily know more than their peers, but everyone thinks they do. Being published opens doors to speaking, media interviews, top-level committee appointments, tenure for educators, and it makes it easier to become published in the future.

You can't overlook the financial rewards, but don't spend the money yet. The publications most likely to print your first articles will probably pay poorly. But they do provide the opportunity to get established and perfect your writing skill. Besides, many of these initial contacts can serve as a network to meet the right people from bigger—and better-paying—publications.

Having had the experience of writing for various publications helped me convince a large supermarket chain that I was the person best qualified to write for a monthly nutrition newsletter for their approximately 200 stores.

There are also other financial gains from getting published. Most publishers, especially those that don't pay well, are willing to print a brief statement about your background and the location of your private practice. This can attract potential clients or business contacts. You can also include information about nutrition materials you developed and how they can be purchased.

Bartering services like this is how one dietitian is marketing her self-published book.

THE RIGHT START

Ready to dust off the old keyboard? Good. But before you begin, you should *polish your writing skills*. Attend a publishing workshop, hire a tutor, take a writing course at a local college, or at least check out library books on the topic such as *Writing with Precision* by Jefferson Bates or *On Writing Well* by William Zinsser. Two major national writer's magazines—*The Writer* and *Writer's Digest*—also offer invaluable writing tips.

Reading newspapers, magazines, and books can advance your writing education. Scrutinize what you read. Take a close look at the lead and the format of the article. Analyze what techniques the writer uses to capture your interest. If you spot a poorly written article, think about how you could improve it.

A writer whose style is worth particular study is Barbara Gibbons. Check if your newspaper carries her syndicated column the *Slim Gourmet*.

WHAT TO WRITE ABOUT

Now that your fingers are itching to write, you must focus on an idea. It is easy to come up with good ideas if you keep your eyes and ears open. Nutrition is an "in" topic. Listen to what people are talking about. Read various newspapers, magazines, and books. Watch the news.

Once you have an idea, you must make it uniquely yours by giving it a different slant. Editors want articles that are timely, and your slant can help update any nutrition subject. For example, more career women are waiting to become mothers. Why not slant your piece toward nutrition during pregnancy for women over 30?

Major national or local news stories can make a nutrition topic timely. Obesity in America is a "hot" topic, but it needs a niche like how heavy people also have fat pets. Former President Bush's dislike for broccoli opened the door for many articles on vegetables and on children who don't eat well. A recession makes food budgeting especially pertinent to the consumer.

Use your calendar to help inspire timely ideas. Waistline survival tips for holiday partying would be perfect for the December issue of a magazine. But you'd better think about Christmas in July, since editors plan months in advance.

In developing your idea, keep in mind who your readers will be and what would interest them. For example, most senior citizens do not care about basic nutrition for infants, but they may enjoy a story on healthy snacks for visiting grandchildren.

You should be able to state your idea in one sentence. Make it specific. General ideas don't sell. You are more likely to spark an editor's interest with "Ten Tips for Looking Great in a Swimsuit" than a general article covering weight reduction principles.

People love to clip recipes, and editors know it. So consider developing recipes to sell your message. Don't just write about the need to use less salt, but include recipes that show how to make delicious low-sodium dishes.

Make sure you choose a topic that is of personal interest to you. This will keep you motivated to do the research and survive numerous revisions.

THE COMPUTER AND WRITING

Computers give you the capability to compose directly onto the computer screen, correct or reword the manuscript as necessary, and then print it when you are happy with it. Most software can check the manuscript for spelling and grammar. It can be stored on software, later recalled on the screen or emailed to co-authors for review, and revised by the word, sentence, or paragraph.

Time-consuming handwritten or typed manuscripts are problems of the past. Scanners can read typed articles or manuscripts and record them on software so that you can easily store or revise them.

Internet access allows you to search stored information in larger computer databases. This allows you to conduct literature, newspaper, or scientific journal searches for the most current information and greatly reduce the amount of time needed for research. For practitioners who do not live close to a good medical or research library, this capability for accessing information is especially invaluable (see Chapter 22 for more ideas).

It is possible to have an editor or graphic artist doing layout, checking and revising your manuscript on their computers, and sending it back to your computer—all without anyone leaving their home or office.

FINDING A MAGAZINE OR NEWSPAPER PUBLISHER

After your idea is clearly defined, your next step is to find a publisher. You can start by referring to a writer's directory book that should be available in your local library. *Writer's Market*, *Writer's Yearbook*, and *Literary Market Place* are the best-known books (see Recommended Reading at the end of this chapter). They are updated yearly and contain the names of thousands of newspapers, magazines, and book publishers.

In addition, there are market listings in *Writer's Digest* and *The Writer*. You can also check websites to see if your media choices accept material from freelance writers or email the magazine department directly with your inquiry; the website may also have a "spec sheet" or writer's guidelines. Check the website and read several recent issues of the magazine or daily newspapers before contacting them.

The following is a sample of the information listed in the directories for magazines and newspapers.

1. **Name and address of the magazine or newspaper and the editor's name.** Your letter is more likely to be read if you send it to a specific editor. Since editors change frequently, check the masthead of a current issue of the publication.
2. **Type of magazine.** If your idea is about nutrition during pregnancy, you should focus on a magazine geared to women in their 20s and 30s. Obviously, magazines aimed at senior citizens or men won't be interested.
3. **Date established.** Recently established magazines are more likely to accept your material, since they have not built up a list of regular contributors. At the same time, they are more likely to fold before you ever receive payment.
4. **Circulation.** Generally, the higher the circulation, the higher the pay rate—but this will also mean more competition.
5. **Pay rates and preferred length of articles.** Editors work with a fairly set budget, so there is not much room for negotiating fees unless you're well known or have a really "hot" story.
6. **Terms of payment.** "Payment on acceptance" means that the magazine will pay you as soon as the editors agree to buy your article. "Payment on publication" means they will pay you when your article appears in the magazine. This could be several months or longer after you submit the article. "Kill fee" is a portion of the agreed-on price for an article that was assigned, but the editor decided not to use. You are still free to sell your article to another magazine.
7. **Rights purchased.** When you sell your article, you are selling the publisher the rights to reprint these words, "First serial rights." First serial rights mean the newspaper or magazine has the right to publish your article for the first time in their periodical. "Second serial rights"

gives a newspaper or magazine the right to print your article after it has already appeared in some other newspaper or magazine. This term also refers to the sale of part of a published book to a newspaper or magazine. "All rights" means the writer forfeits the right to use his or her material again in its present form. This is also true for "work-for-hire" agreements because the writer has signed away all rights to the company making the assignment.

8. **Byline.** This means your name will appear on your article.
9. **Self-Addressed Stamped Envelope (SASE).** If you do not include one, and most request it, the editor will probably not reply to your letter. Email is changing all the "rules" and can make this process faster and easier.
10. **Lead time.** Many editors request that seasonal material be submitted a specific number of months in advance. Editors have a lead time of several months, so they don't want to see ideas for a Christmas holiday article in October.

SELLING YOUR IDEA

Now that you have pinpointed which publishers are most likely to be interested in your work, you must sell them your idea.

A QUERY LETTER

Before you write your article, you should send the editor a query letter (Fig. 27.1). Most editors prefer that you do not telephone or send the complete article. The query letter is your sales tool. Since editors will formulate their impressions of you from this letter, it is wise to use quality 8½″ × 11″ stationery and to make sure your computer is printing well. Or, as mentioned before, an email may be appropriate in some circumstances.

A query letter should contain these basic components:

1. Description of your idea, why it is timely and your slant. Include an abstract of how you plan to develop your idea and a suggested length and deadline.
2. Include an explanation of why the editor's readers would want to read the article.
3. Why you are qualified to write the article and resource people you plan to interview. Include a statement about your professional background, as well as one or two samples of published works. If you haven't been published, you need not mention this fact.

The ideal query runs 1 to 2 single-spaced pages—just enough to develop your idea but short enough to be read quickly by the editor. Enclose a SASE or email address and your phone number in case the editor wants to contact you. You should receive a reply in 4 to 6 weeks. If you have not heard by that time, drop the editor a note or telephone him or her; ask whether a decision has been made about your query.

You can send simultaneous queries and even get the assignment from two or more editors. You can accept more than one assignment for the topic as long as you write different articles. This may be frowned upon, however, if the magazines are in direct competition. To increase your chance of acceptance, you should become familiar with the magazine before sending a query. Get copies from the library or purchase sample issues from the editor.

Take a close look at the magazine's format, style of writing, and length of articles. Even study the advertisements. They can provide a good insight about what type of people read the periodical. If there are advertisements for children's toys and baby food, this will clue you that the audience is mainly young parents.

A BOOK PROPOSAL

If you're interested in having a book published, the *Literary Market Place* listings will tell you what types of books a company publishes, how they want the material submitted, and what terms to expect if you're offered a book contract. The author's payment is called a royalty and is usually calculated as a percentage of the retail price of copies sold. For hardbacks, 10% is the usual base rate and 7% to 8% for paperbacks. Generally, the percentage increases if your book sells well.

You also can find a potential publisher by going to a bookstore or your own library and looking at books that cover a topic similar to the one you intend to write. Check the front of the book for the name of the publishing house. Because of the interest in nutrition today, there are publishers who are looking for dietitians with writing or recipe-development talents or someone with a "new" twist on diet and foods.

Susan Magrann, M.S., R.D.
Consulting Nutritionist
5252 Lincoln Avenue, Cypress, CA 90630
PHONE: (714) xx-xxxx

[Date]

John Smith, Editor
Today's Family
1410 First Street
Morristown, NJ 07960

Dear Mr. Smith:

Are your readers buying what they think they are buying when they go to the supermarket? Shopping today is fraught with mysterious codes and language.

Do fruit drinks or fruit-flavored drinks contain more fruit juice? Does the term "lite" mean low in calories? Is Instant Breakfast a nutritious meal? Does white bread contain any nutrients? The answers are all there on the products' labels.

I would like to take the mystery out of label reading by writing a 1000-word article covering the following points:

1. **HOW TO INTERPRET A PRODUCT'S NAME.**
Included would be a chart of the legal meaning for various terms.
For example:

If the Label Says:	**It Means:**
Fruit juice	100% real fruit juice
Juice drink	35 to 69% real juice
Fruit drink	10 to 34% juice
Fruit-flavored drink	less than 10% juice

(continued on next page)

FIGURE 27.1 ■ Sample query letter. *(continued)*

Your readers will probably be surprised to learn that the term "lite" can refer to other properties of the food besides calories. "Lite" corn chips aren't lower in calories; they're thinner.

2. **INGREDIENT LISTING.** You can learn a great deal about the product's composition, since ingredients are listed in descending order by weight. Included will be a description of hidden sources of sugar, salt and saturated fats. If your readers check the ingredients for Instant Breakfast, they will find that in addition to sugar, corn syrup solids, another form of sugar, is also listed.

3. **NUTRITION LABELING.** The article will have a detailed explanation of what every line means on the nutrition label and will define the term "RDI."

As for white bread, the nutrition label shows that it does contain some nutrients, although less than what is found in whole wheat bread.

I hope I will have the opportunity to help your readers become better-informed consumers.

Besides being a registered dietitian, my nutrition articles have appeared in several publications including *The Jogger*. I also write a monthly nutrition newsletter for a large supermarket chain on the West Coast. Enclosed are two samples of my work plus my curriculum vitae.

Sincerely,

Susan Magrann, MS, RD

FIGURE 27.1 ■ *(continued)*

Some years ago, Karen Mangum, RD, of Boise, Idaho, was contacted by Pacific Press because of her public speaking and good reputation. Pacific Press had decided it wanted to publish a vegetarian cookbook, and she was chosen as its author. The publisher paid for 80 colorful photographs in the book (sometimes the author must share the cost or pay for photos), and the publisher footed the bill for an eight-city media tour.

If you're working or want to be working on a book, start by sending the prospective publisher(s) a proposal. The proposal should be about 5 to 10 single-spaced pages and should contain all the elements of a good query letter, as well as a synopsis or outline of the chapters. Most publishers would also like at least two good sample chapters or some other published material that shows your writing ability. Send the proposal, along with a large return envelope with postage, so that it can be returned to you if they are not interested. For additional tips, refer to *How To Write "How-to" Books and Articles* as well as the *Writer's Handbook* (see Recommended Reading).

Since your proposal can remain under consideration for many months, it is reasonable to send it to 2 to 3 editors at the same time. However, you must inform them that others are reviewing the same material by saying "simultaneous submission" or some other similar wording.

Don't get discouraged when selling your book idea. Published dietitians tell stories about the numerous proposals they submitted before a publisher showed an interest. Lack of interest may indicate that the idea needs to be reworked, but it could also mean the "right" person had not seen it yet. Try to get as much feedback as possible from anyone who rejects it.

It is curious how some opportunities come so easily and others are hard to find. At an American Dietetic Association (ADA) Annual Meeting in the early 1980s, Kathy King, RD, and Olga Satterwhite, RD, were setting up their exhibit in the consulting nutritionist's booth when Earl Shepard, an editor for Harper & Row, walked over and asked, "How would you two ladies like to write me a book?" Kathy looked at his nametag and said, "When do you need it and what do you want it on?" This book is the result of that chance meeting. Kathy states that none of her other book proposals have had such an easy beginning. Earl said later that he had been an editor for 20 years and made the offer because of a gut feeling.

USING A LITERARY AGENT

You don't have to have a literary agent in order to sell your book. Many dietitians have sold their book ideas directly to a publisher, but the market is changing. *Many publishers will not look at manuscripts that are not submitted through agents they know and trust. Agents perform the important function of screening many of the thousands of manuscripts that are written each year and bringing only the best ones to publishers.*

Dietitians and other authors who have used agents state that they do it for several reasons:

- The agent is often able to negotiate a much larger up front advance on your book.
- The agent represents your interests during the contract negotiations to make sure you make all that you should on foreign rights and future printings, as well as assure that the publisher performs as promised with cover design, promotional support, and possible media tours. (Dietitians can negotiate this for themselves or with a lawyer, but often first time authors don't know what to ask for or where problems may arise.)
- Some agents help their clients get exposure in the media and make the right contacts in the industry.
- Some agents have writing skills and a knack for helping writers refine their book concepts before a publisher sees them.

On the down side, some agents are very busy; they may keep your work a year or more without giving you much feedback. Some agents show initial enthusiasm for an author's work but stop returning phone calls after awhile, leaving the author in a quandary.

Unless you're an established writer or have a very good book concept, it will be difficult to attract an agent. Since agents' fees are usually about 10% to 15% of your royalties plus some expenses, they want to feel certain that you will earn enough money to be worth their time and effort.

Some agents work only on verbal agreements while others have written contracts. In either case, if you feel the agent is not working well for you, you should have an understanding that you can take your manuscript and go elsewhere.

If you decide to pursue getting a literary agent, you can start by asking for suggestions from writers you know. *The Literary Market Place* contains a comprehensive listing of literary agencies.

WRITING YOUR MASTERPIECE

Congratulations! You sold your idea. Now you only have a *deadline* to worry about. This can cause panic—and an illness called "writer's block." Don't worry—it need not be terminal. There are measures to overcome the condition.

First, find a location—either at home, work, or at the library—where you can write without interruptions. If the phone is a problem, consider investing in an answering machine or unplugging the phone for several hours and putting your cell phone on mute.

Second, select the best time for you to write and force yourself to stick to it. Most people have a specific time of the day they feel most creative. You will be more productive by spending whatever amount of time you can spare every day at your "peak creative time" than trying to cram the assignment into a couple of 8-hour days.

Third, break your writing into small parts. This will keep you from feeling overwhelmed by the project.

OUTLINE

The first day will be well spent on your outline. It is essential to have some type of outline, since it makes the next step—research—much easier. An outline helps you gather and organize all the pertinent information you need. While doing your research, you may decide to revise your outline.

RESEARCH

Begin your research by reviewing materials you have at home or work. Then, you'll want to expand your information by going to a local library and/or medical library or by conducting a computer search.

Interview dietitians and other professionals who are experts on the topic. In addition to providing valuable information, they can direct you to reference books and articles.

Don't let the term *interview* scare you. It's just a fancy name for talking to someone. Most people will be flattered that you value their opinion. To avoid wasting the expert's time, prepare a list of questions before contacting him or her.

WRITING

After research comes the hardest step for most people—writing. Some would-be authors are guilty of research overkill to delay the inevitable. It sometimes helps to scan the collected research the evening before you want to finally sit down to write. The information is fresh on your mind and the best ideas often rise to the top overnight.

It is easier to write your first draft if you don't worry about it being perfect at this point. Just sit at your desk and put your thoughts on paper or screen. Don't stop for any corrections or even crossing out words. Once you force yourself to do the first draft, your work will become easier.

Next, revise and fine tune your piece. The first revision will probably be the most extensive. Keep in mind that you want your work to be clear, concise, accurate, and interesting.

Check that your lead sentence is a grabber. Unless you capture the audience's attention, they won't continue to read on. It can take a good deal of time to develop your lead, but it's definitely worth the effort.

Next, take a close look at each word. Specific and short words crowd more meaning into a small space. Cross out unnecessary words and check for spelling.

Avoid overusing a particular word especially within the same paragraph. This is when a thesaurus or a dictionary of synonyms and antonyms is valuable.

Now you're ready to study sentences. Do they flow smoothly? Are the lengths of your sentences varied? Generally, shorter sentences are easier for the reader to understand.

After sentences come paragraphs. Each paragraph should contain a main idea. Avoid paragraphs that are too long. You can even slip in some single sentence paragraphs for a change of pace.

Look for a snappy ending. The reader will then leave the story with a favorable impression.

After your first revision, put your work away for a few days, so you will be able to take a fresh look at it. Now you're ready to do your second, third, or however many additional revisions it takes to make it perfect.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Don't overlook the value of good illustrations in your book. They can increase sales. Unless you are talented, your best bet is to find a freelance professional artist and/or photographer. Contact other writers who have used local illustrators and get their recommendations. Or look in the Yellow Pages under "Artists—Commercial" and "Photographers—Commercial." There may be good, young talent at local universities and art schools.

EDITING

If you lack confidence about your writing but feel it is near perfect, pay a professional writer to edit it. You can find someone by asking business associates whom they recommend or by contacting a college with a journalism program. There may be an instructor or a senior student who could help.

Depending on your subject, you may also want an expert in that area to check your work for accuracy.

FINAL COPY

The end is almost near. You are ready to type your final copy, or let your printer do it, if you are using a computer. Don't forget to follow the guide the publisher sent you. After you've cleaned up all those typos, you're ready to mail off or email your masterpiece. Today, everyone wants the manuscript on disk, emailed electronic files, or sometimes a sample on hardcopy. Even if you self-publish a book, the printer will want the final book on disk to make the film—and it's cheaper for you than having the film made from hardcopy.

Since you've invested so much time and energy creating this literary work, you don't want someone to steal your material. If you're not familiar with copyright laws, refer to Chapter 13 on protecting your ideas.

The last step: relax. You'll need to gather strength before you start your next writing project.

One final piece of advice—resist spending your entire writer's fee buying copies of your work for friends and relatives. On second thought, why not? You should be proud of your accomplishment. And you thought you couldn't be a writer!

SELF-PUBLISHING

If you or your agent cannot find an interested publisher, you can always publish the book yourself. Of course, you have to invest your own money. But if you don't have confidence that your book will sell, why should a publisher?

Ellen Coleman, a dietitian from California, originally self-published her book, *Eating For Endurance*. She decided to self-publish because editors felt the topic did not have a wide appeal and wanted her to dilute the material. Later, she placed her book with Bull Publishing because of its wider marketing channels.

It is extremely important before you take this step that you accurately estimate your costs and determine how you are going to market the book. It may look attractive to sell 2500 books at $25 each, but look at the items below to get an idea of the costs involved in publishing your own book, consider the following expenses:

- $1500 or more for computer, desktop publishing, word processing software, and laser printer
- $250–$1500 or more for a graphic artist to prepare the book cover (art professors and students will do it for the best price)

99.9% of publishing does *not* work this way!

- $50–$250 each for copyrighted cartoons, graphs, photographs, and illustrations. An artist or photographer may want his or her money up front, or some will take a percentage of the book royalty—but I wouldn't recommend handing out percentages of ownership. It creates problems when you want to update the book and change the content, or maybe not use the items any longer, or you want to sell your rights to a publisher and the others don't agree. Better to own it outright.
- Estimates for printing a paperback can range from $6500–$8500 to print 1000 copies of a 300-page book, or $12,000 for 2500 copies, or $16,000 or more for 5000 copies (this includes a book cover in 4-color, binding, etc.). Some printers will let you pay for it over several months, but most will want their payment when the inventory is delivered. Before choosing a printer, see samples of his or her work, and confirm your timelines. Although a printer at a distant location may give you a better price than a

local one, consider the added costs of delivering the inventory and long distance calls, fax, and overnight mail to check last-minute details. The best book printer to use is one who prints books for a living, not a printer who will have to make an "exception" for your project and "find" a binder in the area.

- Direct mail costs include $520 or more per 1000 people for a direct mail promotion you send out (approximately $0.64 per person using a brochure and first-class postage with a purchased label; $0.49 each if sent bulk mail); a Journal of the American Dietetic Association (JADA) classified advertisement costs about $200+ per month; and state and dietetic practice group newsletters charge $50–$250 to run one advertisement.
- Consider selling your books through NCES or eNASCO catalogs for dietitians and other health professionals; *Tuft's University Diet & Nutrition Letter* in Boston and Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) in Washington, DC offer products and books in their newsletters. If they feel your book is a good fit for them, you can sell your books to them at a discount similar to that given to bookstores.
- Booth space costs about $450 plus all your product shipping, travel, and lodging expenses to exhibit in the Product Marketplace at ADA's annual meeting for 1 day; a large commercial booth costs $2400–$3500 for 3 days. Costs vary for other conventions such as those for home economists, nurses, or restauranteurs, but it takes many book sales to cover expenses. There is also the possibility you could share the booth with one or more entrepreneurs or publishers.
- According to Linda Hatchfeld, RD, author of *Cooking A la Heart* and founder of Appletree Press, Inc., if your book is for the public, there are three distribution channels you could use:
  - **Wholesalers** warehouse the book for you and fill orders from bookstores, but do not promote it; you pay them 50%–55% of the retail price for that service and they sell to stores at a 40%–43% discount—they make 10%–15% for warehousing your book.
  - **A distributor** will market your book to retail stores through their catalog and sales staff on consignment—they don't buy the books, they usually sell them for 42% off the retail price. Then, they split the remaining 58% into 30/70, with you getting the 70% to cover printing-paper-binding (PPB) and your profit. On a book which retails for $10, that would mean you will get $4.06 for printing, expenses, and profit.
  - **A retail bookstore** will ask for a 40%–43% discount from the retail price and perhaps the right to return any unsold copies.

Be careful about accepting "returns" on unsold books—they may be 25%–50% of the books ordered—and not be in good-enough condition to sell again (due to gummed price tags, broken or torn spines, bent pages, etc.).

If your book is more than 49 pages and you plan to sell the book in stores or through Amazon.com, you should get an International Standard Book Number (ISBN) to be printed on the back cover of your book (as well as on software, videos, audio tapes, and some calendars). This number makes it easier for bookstores to order your book or other items, and it puts your book in the *Books In Print* book and database available at all libraries and bookstores. The cost is $150 for a single ISBN number and bar code; $400 for a listing of 10 different numbers plus shipping for a 72-hour or 2-week response. To get a number and more information, call R.R. Bowker at (800) 521-8110 or go online at http://www.bowker.com.

You can easily see in this example that it could take almost 1000 copies of a book sold at wholesale just to cover your initial expenses involved in publishing and marketing the book. That is why most people who self-publish try to print as many as they think will sell over a year or two in order to save on printing. After the initial costs are paid for, any remaining inventory is profit except for on-going marketing and storage costs. Even though the cost per book drops as you order more, be realistic about how many books you might *really* sell—after every relative and friend has a copy.

If your book is for the public and you want to sell it in Barnes & Noble, Amazon.com, or wherever, it's important that the book sells well in order to remain on the shelves. Mary Hess, RD, author of *The Art of Cooking for the Diabetic,* whose first edition sold more than 350,000 copies, and *Pickles and Ice Cream,* written along with Anne Hunt, reports that her publisher told her that a trade book has about 90 days to "make it" in the large bookstores. After that, the copies are sent back to the publisher and a new book is ready to fill the space. To have a book that really sells well is the exception, not the rule. Knowing this, you can see why initial marketing is so important!

IS THERE AN E-BOOK IN YOUR FUTURE?

Since about 1998, a new form of publishing has peaked writers' interest—e-books. First, authors and publishers promoted traditional books with banners and websites. Then, some adventurous writers skipped the paper and pen, query letters and slow-moving publishers, and went directly to the public on the Internet. Websites were formed to sell the books—sometimes a chapter at a time.

Various software and hardware came to market to facilitate reading a book from Palm Pilots, Rocket e-book, desktop, or laptop computer. Now, of course, there are e-publishers who make the process even easier. One e-publisher, iUniverse, published over 15,000 new works in 2000 (1). A competitor, Fatbrain, reported that 5500 authors signed on to write books in just 4 months (1).

Self-published authors pay all the bills and make all the profits. They share a larger percentage of the selling price if they use an e-publisher (40%–70%) versus 10% from a traditional publisher. Most book prices are very reasonable, typically $3 to $10 (1). Some sites require that you have an Acrobat reader software, which is available for free download from http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep.html (2).

Helpful e-book resources:

- EBookNet (http://www.ebooknet.com) carries articles about e-book publishing and reading technology.
- The Glassbook Reader helps you read books on your computer; it has a free download at http://www.glassbook.com.
- Sites to check out: http://www.hardshell.com, http://www.sofbook.com, http://www.diskus.com, http://www.iuniverse.com, http://www.fatbrain.com, http://www.booklocker.com.

SUMMARY

Writing can be fun. It can be challenging and stimulating. Seeing your name in print, attached to a book or magazine article that you are proud of can give you, your family, and your friends a lot of fun. It will give you professional satisfaction and hopefully, some added income. By writing a successful book, you become known as an "expert," which can open doors to speaking and consulting, and it may boost your career more than any other promotion method.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Susan Magrann, MS, RD, is a Nutrition Education Consultant for a California Department of Public Health Program called "Network for a Healthy California," which promotes a comprehensive school nutrition program for low income children. In 2007, Susan received the California Dietetic Association's Award for Excellence in Community Nutrition.

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Writer's Digest. Published monthly by Writer's Digest.

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28 MEDIA SAVVY

The unfamiliar world of radio and television can unnerve health professionals who are old pros with one-on-one counseling and public speaking. Interviews with the print media are usually more relaxed, but you seldom have control over what is quoted. Why, then, become involved in something so challenging or risky? You want to communicate with a great number of people! How else can you discuss nutrition with a million people for 5 minutes or warn your entire city about a new food fad? What better way is there to quickly establish your credibility as you open a new business or sell your new book? Once your business is thriving, the media can take your career to new levels.

First chances, much less second chances, aren't always easy to get in any media venues. Because so many people recognize the value of media exposure, there is stiff competition to become a guest, especially on national programming. Local media and some cable stations are not so difficult.

Jack Hilton, author of *On Television!*, states, "The electronic media have replaced print as the basic source of information in this country, and the ordinary person is severely limited in the ability to get before a microphone and camera. In fact, even the extraordinary person has found it difficult to reach an electronic forum with regularity" (1).

Even considering all of the benefits, media work is not for everyone. Radio and television seek out people with original personalities, those with something new to say, and of course, the ability to say it with flare and authority. The pace is usually quick and then it's over.

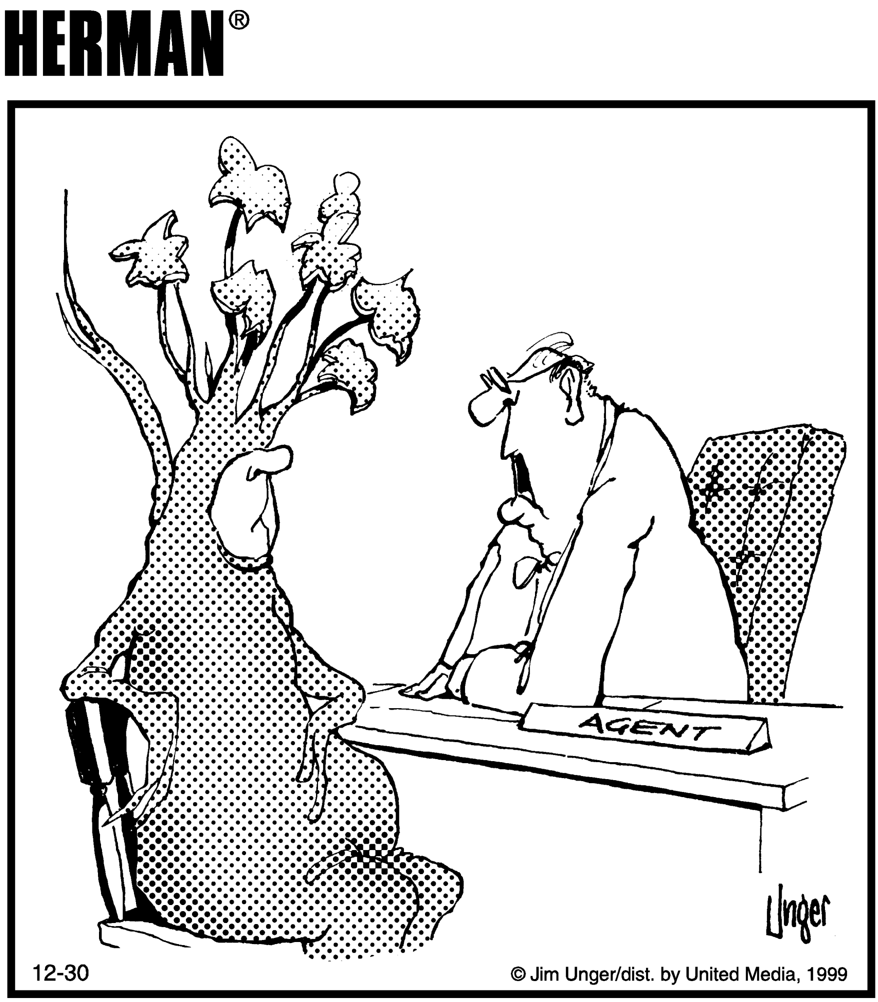
Sometimes the station or newspaper loves the interview and offers you a regular spot on the show or a weekly column on nutrition. The information you gave and your delivery clicked with the media, and you are now in demand.

At other times, the station or newspaper never has time for another interview, and you never know why. They have time for the chef, the fortune-teller, the gardener, and the police officer, but not the dietitian. At least not you. Was it something you said? Were you too predictable? What could you have done differently?

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Experts usually suggest you plan, practice, and seek training if you are really serious about pursuing the media on anything but an occasional, small-time basis. It also helps to have experience. But how can you get it, if no one will give you a chance to start? See Herman cartoon on page 313.

Practitioners have trained by first going to small local radio stations and newspapers to learn the ropes and the style that sell. If writing style is a problem, hire an editor to review your work or follow the other suggestions in Chapter 27. If speaking off the cuff is not comfortable, take communication courses, pay a tutor, or practice with another person using a tape or video recorder. It is also beneficial to watch, listen to, or read the media. Train yourself to begin thinking of angles that will make your project (or you) more



"I know you want to play Hamlet, but for this television commercial you're a stick of celery."

newsworthy. Review the media topics below:

Food demonstrations on:

- Vegetarian meals
- Eating out without gaining weight
- Natural food sources of vitamins
- Increasing the healthy omega-3s (see Chapter 26)

Discussion on:

- Can foods prevent cancer?
- Obesity in children and adults
- The aging gut—eating after 60 years old
- Sports nutrition for the everyday athlete
- What is research showing about breast feeding?
- The latest nutrition fads—do they work?
- Vitamin and mineral supplements

To prepare for call-in talk shows, read back issues of newsletters such as *Nutrition and the MD* and *Tuft's University Diet and Nutrition Letter*. Read lay publications, such as "Good Housekeeping," "Prevention," and local or national newspapers, to get a better idea what your audience is reading.

Jack Hilton offers some good suggestions to consider before joining the talk show circuit, even on the smallest scale. He states, "Watch every talk show you can. Get a feeling for the rhythm and for how much can be said. Note how questions tend to be repeated from show to show. Make up a set of questions and answer them in the microphone of a tape recorder. Listen to your voice. If you hear a continuing series of crutch words or sounds (*ah, well, I don't know, sure, maybe, and so on*), practice talking without them" (1).

It's usually less stressful to be interviewed by a newspaper writer, but answering with concise, clear statements is just as important. A relaxed interview should not be interpreted as an invitation to ramble or become too familiar. Don't make statements you hope will stay "off the record." Ask to hear the quotes the newspaper plans to use—they *may* read them to you over the phone if you have a working relationship with the reporter. Radio and television morning shows are less intense than television news because there is more time to be conversational, but it helps to be rehearsed.

LEGALITIES, LIABILITIES, AND CONTROVERSIES

When you appear on the media on the subject of nutrition, you are representing your profession and yourself as an expert. Obviously, the better you do, the more credible everyone in the industry appears. However, there are legal and liability implications involved that you must be aware of:

1. As a nutrition expert, you have the right (and civic responsibility) to state the facts on an issue as you know them and as your peers would, given thorough research. If someone sues you for what you say, they have to prove that you intended malice toward them.
2. If you are introduced as an officer or representative of your local, state, or national dietetic practice group or professional organization, you are speaking not only for yourself, but also for that organization. It is therefore very important, especially when you want to take a very controversial stand, that you think it out ahead of time. *Then, either only represent yourself by not implying otherwise or make sure the organization is in total agreement with your statement before you make it.*
3. Consider carrying media malpractice insurance (call the American Dietetic Association [ADA] at 800-877-1600 member services to get information).

To help avoid problems with controversial subjects, research the subject thoroughly and then state both sides of the controversy in a fair manner. Quote higher sources to defend your statements. Afterward, you can either state your opinion with your reasons or quote a higher source and give their reasons.

Box 28.1 presents a personal experience to help illustrate how viewers' interest is generated by controversy.

BYLINES AND PROMOTION

We miss many good opportunities to market ourselves in the media because of our hesitation to ask for, and contractually negotiate bylines and promotional credits. A byline is a written acknowledgement in a newspaper, magazine, or other printed material indicating that you were the author of, or at least a contributor to, the printed article. There have been times when dietitians have written magazine articles, assuming they would be given credit, only to find that someone at the magazine was listed as the author. The magazine edited the article to make it appear the dietitian was merely interviewed. The fee was paid, but the byline credit was worth far more.

A promotion on radio or television usually consists of a short on-air statement

BOX 28.1 *Controversy and the Media: A Personal Experience*

After years of doing media work in Denver on subjects that I thought were interesting and sometimes controversial, I learned a valuable lesson. One week, Judy Mazel, the author of the *Beverly Hills Diet*, was a guest on *NoonDay*, the NBC television program where I was a weekly nutrition authority. She appeared about 15 minutes before my segment and was lively, vivacious, and a "media event." After her segment, the hostess asked if I could quickly look over the book and critique it for my segment instead of talking about what I had planned. I told her I needed more time to do an adequate job, but suggested we give a "promo" for next week's segment where I would give a critique. At least people might wait a week before they bought the book.

That next week, I spent three times more preparation time than normal in developing my critique of Ms. Mazel's book. I called several PhDs to get their comments on some of the erroneous statements made on physiology and digestion. The show went very well, but the viewer response to the station was much greater than I expected.

A physician friend, whose opinion I respected, said it was the best show I had ever done, and he gave me a quick review. He stated that the hostess and I first got everyone's attention because we issued a warning about the book. Then my arguments began to crescendo, as each became stronger than the preceding one. At the moment when I had everyone's attention, I quoted a higher source that lent greater credibility, and the hostess made light of the author's poor knowledge of the subject.

I hadn't fully realized what had transpired, but I was glad it was pointed out to me so that I could use it again. My reviewer also told me that I should stop covering such "milk toast" subjects and go after the "hot" controversial ones.

I took my friend's advice and immediately went after the Nestle issue, the Atkins diet, stagnant schools of thought in nutrition, and the Cambridge Diet Plan (our station received its first threatening phone call for my segment on that one). To prepare for the subjects, I called national headquarters' offices to talk to people, requested printed materials, and read other professionals' reviews. I even had a personal interview with the president of Cambridge International at my home the evening before the televised program on the diet. Phone calls and letters to the station and to me increased, and the station loved it.—Kathy King

about how to contact you directly. It may be simply, "Look for Jane Jones under 'Dietitians' in the Yellow Pages," or "Jane Jones may be reached at 333-421-1234." Do not assume this will be offered to you automatically. The media person can refuse your request, but at least ask. To help establish ongoing relationships with media professionals, it helps if you accept the fact that they will not always quote you each time they call for feedback or a quote. But if you write an article or a column, that is a different matter.

PLANNING YOUR STRATEGY

There may be many motives for wanting to pursue the media, including personal challenge or promotion, business exposure, consumer crusading, or all of the above. Whatever the reason, you must demonstrate that your cause is of interest or benefit to many people. A worthy cause is often not enough in itself. Unfortunately, the importance of your cause may be less important than the style in which you sell it.

You must have something new to say about a subject, something you have discovered yourself, engineered yourself, or dramatized in a newsworthy fashion (1). Appearing each March to say, "this is National Nutrition Month" wouldn't generate much attention if it weren't for the creative dietitians willing to appear on the media, or the school children's colorful projects, or the "new" nutrition facts used to catch the audiences' attention. Television stations and newspapers love human-interest stories with visual content. It doesn't have to be spectacular, just interesting or dramatic.

Becoming involved in "causes" to get media exposure (along with other personal and professional benefits) is a tactic long used by individuals in the know (2). In many businesses, notoriety or popularity often equates with power or clout. Sometimes, doors open to us first because of our popularity or the draw of our name before our great expertise in nutrition is even considered! See the case study on "Jump with Jill" at the end of this chapter for a novel way to become known to draw the media's attention.

Some suggestions that may help you develop a sales presentation include (1):

1. **Is there a way to demonstrate a perceived benefit to many people?** Could you promote the local food pantry? Is there a local fruit or vegetable that is hitting the farmers' markets? Is your local water contaminated? Have there been several outbreaks of food poisoning at church picnics? Have you been able to convince several restaurants to offer "petite" portions as a way to satisfy smaller appetites and stop the growing obesity trend?
2. **Is there a way to package your cause to make it seem new?** Is there new research to prove your point? Selling points consist of a good strong headline, plus a specific example or anecdote that supports the headline. It's not enough to talk about nutrition; you must add the information that falls in the "*I never knew that before*" category (3). For example, "Our nutrition consulting business specializes in working with adolescent obesity. Did you know that if both parents of a child are overweight, the child *and* the dog have an 80% chance of being obese too? We are very concerned about that fact and want to teach kids and families how to break that cycle."
3. **Is there a dramatic way to illustrate your cause (before and after pictures, charts, films, slides, or testimonials)?**
4. **Can you demonstrate a particular expertise in talking about a subject of continuing public interest like dieting, eating out, or disease prevention?** (This is a favorite tactic of professionals who do not advertise widely, but who use broadcast exposure as a way to build a practice) (2).

CONTACTING THE MEDIA

You can always call and ask if you can be on a show or can talk to a reporter. By first doing your homework and observing the media, you should know whom to contact, what kind of programming they offer, and what topics are current. According to Fox News reporter, Jeff Crilley, media people love compliments and are turned off by someone who pitches an idea that was covered last week because it showed they weren't watching.

In radio and television, contact the program host first (1). If that person is unavailable or won't talk to you, speak to the producer. At a newspaper, ask to speak with the editor of the section most likely to be interested in what you have to say.

If the show or paper prefers to have requests made in writing, write a good one-page cover letter, plus a sample newspaper column or the proposed interview topics, and attach your bio or resume to show your credibility. Follow that up with a phone call. Try to call at least a couple hours before any show, so the person will have time to speak with you.

You will need to let them know your ideas, what you have to offer, and why the audience would be interested. Make sure you have a news "hook" (unique feature about your story) that will draw their interest. Remain flexible in case the reporters or station people have a new twist or approach they like better that still includes you. If the person doesn't like the idea at all, ask why. Offer to rethink the concept and offer a new proposal. Do not, however, ask for referrals to other media contacts or inquire about new approaches you might try (1). The information may be offered, but it is not their responsibility to be your public relations consultant.

Gail Levey, RD, was consulting at the New York City YMCA and Heart Association. A reporter from WCBS-TV called to ask if she would do a news segment, and she reluctantly agreed. The interview went so well; she became a "regular" on CBS News and the McNeil/Lehrer Report. She was quoted in the New York Times, and she became a contributing author to four national magazines.

"Gentle persistence is the key" to finally getting in the media, according to Jeffrey Lant, author of *The Unabashed Self-promoter's Guide: What Every Man, Woman, Child, and Organization in America Needs To Know About Getting Ahead by Exploiting the Media* (2). No one should be discouraged if turned down; just keep persisting until someone is interested or the idea finally proves that it isn't right for you.

BEFORE ARRIVING FOR THE MEDIA INTERVIEW

When you land a spot on broadcast media or an interview with a newspaper, you are selling yourself and your ideas. Be comfortable, prepared, rehearsed, and confident about your appearance. You will not be able to read a prepared speech, so reference material, notes, props, or whatever else you plan to refer to should be accessible, easy to read, and familiar to you. *Go prepared! Or don't go.*

Many broadcast media consultants encourage interviewees to *choose only three major points* they plan to emphasize. For television, all props, notes, charts, and so on, should revolve around those points. All artwork and lettering should look professionally prepared, not homemade. The possibility of "freezing" or getting off the subject is much smaller when you simplify the interview. The audience will remember what is important if it is clear, simple, and restated several times in different ways. After you make the main points, feel comfortable in discussing whatever the interviewer brings up. Plan to close with a summary of your three points.

Wardrobe is important because first appearances are crucial in all forms of the media. Don't wear anything so flashy that your clothes draw attention away from you. Don't overdress or underdress for the occasion. Clothing that you would expect to see on a bank vice president or television newscaster will be good at any hour (1).

On television the color and print of an outfit are important. Try to avoid stark white or black. Instead, use colors like gray, royal blue, purple, red, yellow, and beige. Patterned items, if you wear them, should be quiet, very small, and only one at a time. Avoid wearing herringbone, bright flowers, and too busy clothing.

Jewelry can be a problem on television because it can reflect into the camera or keep hitting a lapel microphone. Wedding rings and watches are usually fine, but large reflective bracelets, pins, necklaces, or chains may have to be taken off. Eyeglasses, especially with metal frames, can reflect the light. However, if you can't see without them and you don't wear contacts, don't take them off, because the interviewer may ask you questions about the slide showing on the monitor or a cameraperson may try to signal you.

THE BROADCAST MEDIA INTERVIEW

When an interviewer meets a knowledgeable guest, the guest usually gets more freedom to carry the conversation. However, this is not always the case, especially when the interviewer feels loss of control. So be aware and flexible concerning others' agendas.

Try to be relaxed, and don't forget to smile. Hold something in your hands if you like, but don't play with it or mutilate it. Before an interview on radio or television begins, it's usually possible to take a few minutes with the host to mention the items you feel are most important to discuss. Usually, the details on showing props, slides, charts, or whatever are worked out ahead of time with the host or an assistant, but be sure the host is aware of them and when they are to be used. It is also appropriate to ask if the host is familiar with your topic. If he or she is not, offer several key human-interest anecdotes or mention a new study that might be of interest.

Be careful not to explain everything ahead of time, because the host may unintentionally make your points in his or her introduction and may cause you to panic. This happened to me in Little Rock while I was on my initial spokesperson tour. Before my segment, as I spread out my props, I told the hostess, a former Miss America, my three points. On the air, she introduced me *and she gave my three points* while she pointed to my props, then she smiled and turned to me. I was sick. I'm seldom at a loss for words, but that taught me a lesson about disclosing too much. After that, I just gave out some interesting "aha" facts in advance, so the interviewer could turn around and use one or two in my introduction.

There are interviewers in all forms of media who enjoy controversy and antagonizing guests, but this is not usually the case. The best way to handle this type of person is to be well prepared and to remain calm. In radio and television, the audience will usually side with the person they like and respect the most.

When you take telephone calls over the air from the public, there is risk that you won't know the answers, but remaining calm is the best defense, along with a sense of humor and *being well prepared*.

You can always answer a caller with, "That's a great question! I will look it up and answer it on next week's show." However, you can only do that once or twice before viewers want to know what you do know. You can also give an educated guess and discuss both sides of the argument as you know them. When I hosted my own nationally syndicated radio talk show, I read or scanned every nutrition article, newsletter, and book I could find for 5 days a week for the first 2 months just to be prepared for the 1-hour weekly program. I also carried a three-ring, tabbed notebook with my notes on research quotes, nutritional values of generic foods, and labels from popular or new processed foods, and facts that I had looked up for earlier shows. All this preparation made it easier to sound like a nutrition guru during that 1 hour. My producer told me, "There are really only 10 questions that people ask and once you know those, you have it made," but I didn't find that to be true for nutrition.

At a newspaper, writers will write whatever they want anyway. So, keep the discussion lively, and share the facts as you know them. Try not to be drawn into emotional controversies that have no satisfactory answers. Don't be afraid to have an opinion, however. Sometimes the best answer is to briefly discuss what the research shows and to say that there is no proven or agreed-upon answer to the problem.

MEDIA SPOKESPERSON TOURS

On media spokesperson tours, just about anything can and does happen. If you decide to go into this line of work, keep a sense of humor. There will be times the interviewer tells you on the air that your product may be healthy but leaves a lot to be desired in the taste category, or only rich yuppie athletes will buy it, or whatever. They want to get a rise out of you. That is why it's so important to carefully choose which products you represent, because you may have to defend them; your credibility and reputation are closely associated with the products.

Interviews may be cut or lengthened *while you are on the air or 2 seconds before you start*. You may be told you have 30 seconds instead of the scheduled 2 minutes in which you must entertain the audience, introduce your product, and yet not be commercial. You are trying to please the audience, the station, the client, the public relations firm, your professional peers, and yourself—the pressure is intense at times. That is why the client has you trained to give the key public service messages that position your product in a good light or as the answer to a problem. For example, "A new study shows that Americans eat 50% of their daily fat in snacks," and you have healthy ideas for snacks. Or, "Caffeine can make people nervous and have sleepless nights," and you discuss herb teas without caffeine along with other caffeine-free beverages.

HANDLING THE SESSION

Be very aware of time limitations. Make your answers interesting and to the point. Unless it is the only appropriate answer, don't just answer with a yes or no. Use examples to make your selling point. It's very important that you listen to questions and conversation instead of just thinking about your next statement because you may be caught off guard with a simple, "What do you think about that, Ms. Jones?"

Bridging is a conversation tool used by anyone who wants to change the direction of questioning or not answer the question. The best guests don't evade the difficult questions—they restructure them. Before answering a question you don't like or that doesn't fit your needs, you volunteer additional or different information introduced by a lead-in clause, such as: "Let us consider the larger issue here," or "We are all upset about that, but you should be aware of," or "Another issue the public is even more upset about is" (1). Trained guests volunteer much more than the required information when they like a question. No question is sacred, and none needs to be answered slavishly. It is possible, through bridging, to bring up more interesting issues than what the interviewer asked (1).

The A or B Dilemma is when the interviewer asks a question and only gives two answers to choose from, both of which put you on the spot. An example would be, "Why do dietitians have such unrealistic ideas about what people eat? Is it because of poor training or they aren't observant?" What would you say? Probably, the best answer would be to disagree with the original statement (for example, "I don't agree. I think we feel frustration that people basically know what to eat, but make so many unhealthy choices"), or avoid the trap by offering an alternative not given by the interviewer (for example, "You know our grandmothers were right and dietitians agree—food is the best medicine—and it is so simple. Dietitians do know what most people eat, and we are distressed by it").

Don't echo any negative words like "rip-off" or *"cancer-alley"* (3). *Don't restate hostile questions used by the interviewer.* Take the high ground and know your facts.

Whenever you are on the premises of a media interview, be cautious of things you might say or do. When in a radio or television studio, always be aware that a "live" microphone or panning camera may be picking you up. When on the premises, it is not the time to mention in idle conversation to a colleague or friend that the hospital kitchen was just closed by the Health Department, or a patient is suing you for malpractice.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

After interviews, take a moment to thank interviewers for their time and express a desire to do it again sometime. If no offer is forthcoming, offer to be a resource person, leave your card, and plan to call again in a month or two.

SUMMARY

The media can open doors for an entrepreneurial dietitian and can spread the word

CASE STUDY 28.1

HOW TO BE A ROCKSTAR NUTRITIONIST (THE ABRIDGED VERSION)

I never said, "I want to be an entrepreneur when I grow up." But where do you work when you want to develop an entertainment property for kids that teaches nutrition through music? You start your own business.

Well, it didn't start that way, exactly. In fact, I performed as a "sole proprietor" for nearly a year before I even knew that that's what I was doing.

Lead with the idea, and the rest will follow. I make it sound like I had no idea what I was doing. I did, because I had a really good idea. Given the research on the effectiveness of unhealthy food advertising, and the desire kids have for sophisticated and interactive media, I wanted to create media that kids would respond to and that could also impact the staggering trends in kids' health. I opened the first incarnation of *Jump with Jill* for free at the Central Park Zoo in New York City and endured the summer heat knowing that one day soon I would be here, writing a case study on how wonderful it all was. My tenacity, and subsequent capital from clients acquired from performing in the park, attracted some of the best names in the business as my lawyer, educational consultant, producer, and sound engineer to develop recorded music, curriculum, interactive DVDs, and a national touring act. Who knew?! I knew.

Identify your strengths and hone them. I was doing this work for free, long before I knew it could make me money. Throughout my life I was both a jock and an artist, never quite fitting in at any one lunch table. By college, I had figured out that majoring in nutrition while pursuing the arts as an actor, sketch comedy writer, and most importantly (though I didn't know it at the time) touring and recording with my rock band, Sunset West, would prepare me for my career-defining job as writer and host for a kids' new show on PBS. At the urging of my boss at PBS, I moved to the epicenter of the kids' media world, New York City, to pursue my RD and Master of Science degree and work for low-paying jobs in entertainment and education. Having both the credentials and the media experience would make me indispensible as both the talent and creator.

Use every opportunity to develop your ideas. Consider school and your current job "radioactive" testing grounds for your idea. Every class assignment I was ever given and every crappy job I've ever worked was carefully used to flush out the latest development in *Jump with Jill*.

Be the Best. Know your areas well. Know who the heavy hitters are, keep tabs on their path to stardom. Go to meetings, scour the Internet, know everything that's happening that affects the path of your idea, and be a keen observer of the trends. Use this shadowing to develop a unique voice. It's a tremendous amount of work, but you make it look easy. Being the best at what you do and being very familiar with your buyer (the people paying you for your idea) will get you work. The more work you get, the more capital you have to produce. My rock 'n roll nutrition CD that accompanies the live show took an incredible amount of capital, but it is now my calling card for the next tier of performing engagements, pay level, and interest. I am officially the Rockstar Nutritionist. This is what I do.

—Jill Jayne, MS, RD

Jill Jaynes presenting *Jump with Jill* (see Case Study 28.1).

Jill Jaynes.

on healthy food. The traditional media are not emerging markets: they are older, more predictable, and fairly ho-hum. That often means that media people and audiences are looking for the unusual and outlandish, or the professional and polished. Most of the time, we fall into the second category. So, to be professional and polished, be prepared and interesting! Create flare and have something to say that isn't in every magazine and on every talk show!

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29 SPORTS AND CARDIOVASCULAR NUTRITION

Marilyn Schorin and Karen Reznick Dolins (updated by Kathy King)

These are exciting times to be a sports or cardiovascular nutritionist. Nationwide, collegiate and professional sports are growing at a significant rate. Opportunities for dietitians in these areas abound and continue to grow. Dietitians find positions at sports and fitness centers, wellness programs, cardiovascular clinics, spas, and as consultants to sports teams and athletes at all levels and abilities. They are hired as consultants to food manufacturers and as media spokespersons for health- or fitness-related products or services.

Crowds in health clubs, spas, and wellness programs, and the proliferation of bikers and runners on the streets show the public's awareness of healthy living. Clients' ages and levels of physical conditioning, as well as their motivations, vary, posing a bold challenge to a dietitian's professional capabilities. Young athletes are interested in maximizing performance with foods and timing of meals. Adult clients seek ways to become fit, prevent disease, and control their weight.

These two specialties are discussed as one in this chapter, because both have a strong exercise physiology component and deal closely with cardiac output. In practice, many places of employment offer both sports and cardiovascular rehabilitation services, making it necessary for the dietitian to know in-depth information about both. Dietitians' growing interest in this area of practice is mirrored by the growth in membership in the Sports and Cardiovascular Nutritionists (SCAN), a dietetic practice group of the American Dietetic Association (ADA).

WHAT KNOWLEDGE AND TRAINING ARE NECESSARY?

Because we are acutely sensitive to marginally trained lay people or healthcare professionals (with no background in nutrition) advertising their expertise in our field, it follows that we must have appropriate training and credentialing. Recently, a certification as Board Certified Specialists in Sports Dietetics (CSSD) has been created through the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR), the credentialing agency of the ADA (1).

In their chapter, "How to Market Sports Dietetics," Nancy DiMarco and Patti Steinmuller state that the CSSD is the premier professional sports nutrition credential and the new standard in the sports nutrition industry (1). CSSDs are qualified to assess, design, implement, and monitor performance plans that require coordinating the athlete's individualized health and nutrition needs with the demands of physical activity, sports training, and performance (see the sidebar for CSSD eligibility). Successful candidates earn the CSSD credential by meeting eligibility criteria and passing a national specialty examination. To maintain the credential, reexamination is required every 5 years. CSSDs may have advanced degrees in exercise science or have earned

BOX 29.1 *Eligibility Requirements to be a Board-Certified Specialist in Sports Dietetics (CSSD)*

- Current registered dietitian (RD) status by the CDR
- Maintenance of RD status for a minimum of 2 years from original examination date (by the time of the specialty examination date)
- Documentation of 1500 hours of specialty practice experience as an RD within the past 5 years (by the date the application is due)

Demand experience; demand excellence; demand the CSSD.

exercise or fitness credentials, such as those offered by the American College of Sports Medicine, the National Athletic Trainers' Association, or the National Strength and Conditioning Association. To locate CSSDs, use the "Find a SCAN Dietitian" feature on the website of Sports and Cardiovascular Nutritionist (SCAN), a dietetic practice group of the ADA (1).

A dietitian who is an expert in sports and cardiovascular nutrition must have at least a basic knowledge of each of the areas listed below:

- Nutritional science
- Biochemistry
- Physiology, especially exercise physiology
- Cardiovascular disease etiology and treatment
- Sports rules, training, common injuries, ergogenic aids, verbiage
- Counseling skills
- Communication skills

NUTRITION SCIENCE

First and foremost, of course, is a working knowledge of nutrition science and food composition. Sports and cardiovascular dietitians must know general information about foods, as well as facts such as, which cuts of beef offer the lowest saturated fat content and which types of fish are the best sources of omega-3 fatty acids. They must know the nutrient composition of specific brand names. For example, which brand of cereal can be recommended for its high-soluble fiber content, as well as being low in sugar and sodium? Which fast foods provide a high school athlete the most amount of carbohydrate with the least amount of fat?

Always keep abreast on the latest sports trends. For example, recommendations regarding optimal carbohydrate concentration in sports drinks have changed in recent years. The sports nutritionist should be familiar with ergogenic aids and their contents, being promoted to athletes. You should know the carbohydrate content and sources (sucrose, fructose, glucose polymers) of the various sports drinks on the market and the practical differences between them.

The mass media picks up on research published in credible medical journals and turns it into news. Articles frequently appear in the newspaper the day after a study has been published, and the implications of such studies are often exaggerated. Physicians and clients alike may ask your opinion on a story-relating intake of oat bran or garlic to blood cholesterol levels. You will gain their respect if you are ready with a knowledgeable answer.

BIOCHEMISTRY

Sports and cardiovascular dietitians need a working knowledge of the metabolism of macronutrients and the interrelationships among energy-providing fuels. A sports nutritionist should know which substrate is being used for fuel at a particular intensity of exercise. If they have not kept up with lipid metabolism, some advanced training, education, or assiduous review of the literature is critical. The biochemistry of exercise is a fascinating but complex subject; yet it is essential to grasp its intricacies in order to explain it in terms appropriate to each client. It is difficult to advise very learned athletes and fitness enthusiasts on their nutritional requirements without a comprehensive understanding of the biochemistry and physiology involved.

PHYSIOLOGY

A clear understanding of muscle morphology is necessary when talking to athletes, coaches, and trainers. The specialist in this field must know terminologies like red and white muscle fibers and fast-twitch and slow-twitch fibers when conversing with medical and exercise specialists. Cardiovascular nutritionists will be familiar, of course, with digestion from a background in dietetics, but they need more advanced knowledge of cardiovascular and respiratory physiology, as well as hormones.

CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE

Cardiovascular dietitians require greater proficiency in the treatment of heart disease. The various drugs used to treat angina, cardiac arrhythmias, and hypertension should be recognized. Special emphasis should be made to know the common nutrient interactions caused by these pharmacological agents. A dietitian's effectiveness is increased by knowing other modalities of treatment for heart patients, such as techniques for stress reduction, smoking cessation, and exercise prescription.

SPORTS KNOWLEDGE

The best way to become successful as a sports nutritionist is by knowing the sport and the people in sports. You can have all the nutrition knowledge in the world, but if you can't make it applicable to the sport you are targeting, you are of no use to an athlete, a trainer, or a team.

Make sure you know the rules of the sport. For example, some sports have weight requirements to limit weight, and other sports want increased weight. Learn about training schedules. Do athletes train throughout the year, or is there a season? How many hours per day do they train? What is their training regimen? Do they cross-train? What types of injuries are they prone to? Is nutrition considered an important adjunct in recuperation from injury? When dealing with professional athletes, this point is crucial.

Know the commonly accepted guidelines for body weight and body fat in an athlete's sport. Know that it may be different for various positions on the team. The sports nutritionist can be valuable to a sports team by measuring body composition to determine appropriate body weight based on percent body fat. Keep up on the latest research in the area of sports drinks. Be able to discuss the benefits of different beverages, including water. Know which sports are prone to problems with dehydration and know what to do about it.

Advertisements for nutritional supplements are attractive to athletes who are interested in enhancing their performance and gaining the "competitive edge." The sports nutritionist must be able to discuss this issue with the athlete without appearing judgmental. Remember that placebos often work! Visit the local health food store at regular intervals to keep in touch with the latest in ergogenics.

Know the energy requirements of the sport and which energy systems are used. Power lifters are not going to deplete their glycogen stores, so advice in this area is less valuable to them than to a basketball or soccer player. Baseball players and sprinters do not rely on endurance to win. When addressing them, hydration issues or, possibly, weight control for the player will be a more relevant topic. Gymnasts and ice skaters want strength and endurance while keeping their weight down. Full contact karate competitors have the same weight issues as wrestlers, and thus achieving the competitive weight is necessary to compete—but too much weight loss or too fast weight loss can sacrifice stamina and strength.

COUNSELING

The dietitian who concentrates on sports and cardiovascular nutrition needs to have well-honed counseling skills. Like all aspects of dietetics, counseling achieves its greatest impact when these three factors prevail: (a) the client is highly motivated; (b) a relationship is established between the counselor and the client; and (c) the nutritionist helps the client achieve small, manageable steps. Male and female athletes are motivated by improvements in performance; they constantly seek the winning edge. Nutrition has been touted to them as a type of snake oil in which anything from carbo-loading to bee pollen may provide that edge. Their motivation is, fortunately, not usually a problem.

On the other hand, the high-risk client for cardiovascular disease may feel "fine," and therefore, resist making any dietary changes. A skilled counselor can dispel resistance, increase motivation, build confidence in a client's ability to make dietary changes, and promote maintenance of positive salutary changes.

COMMUNICATION

Through a concerted effort to expand one's audience, the sports and cardiovascular dietitian can reach many people via other methods. When the message is relayed through an indirect medium, expertise in writing and public speaking is demanded. Some other effective modes of communication with clients include:

- Individualized counseling
- Classes on specific topics
- Lectures
- Articles written in lay publications
- Radio and television appearances
- Web page and sports column on website
- Online counseling

Commonly used approaches include seminars, supermarket tours, or food demonstrations. Classes may be offered through hospitals, adult education programs, junior colleges, or health clubs. More corporations welcome the opportunity to provide on-site instruction for their employees as part of corporate wellness programs.

Should the nutrition specialist prefer to avoid the constraints of regularly scheduled meetings, lectures offer an alternative avenue for educating the public. Finding an audience for lecturing is usually easy. Examples include business and professional clubs, religious and community groups, and self-help groups for topics related to nutrition and the heart. The YMCA/YWCAs, fitness clubs, coach conferences, school groups, and amateur sports groups want speakers on sports nutrition. Some lectures may be given for free to help market you and to get to know local athletes and their coaches. At other times, a fee may be paid by the sponsoring organization.

WHO ARE THE CLIENTS?

Sports and cardiovascular nutritionists have limitless opportunities. This section will be directed at four specific groups of people who provide excellent targets for our services. These are:

- Professional athletes
- Recreational athletes
- School-age athletes
- Patients with high risk of cardiovascular disease

PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES

The glamour certainly lies with the big names. Who wouldn't want to play a role in the success of superstars such as Michael Phelps, Venus Williams, or Tiger Woods? Although such opportunities are not out of the question, there are of course very few of these superstars to go around. Also, there are many other health professionals, coaches, and trainers who want the chance to work with the big-name athletes and are willing to do it for free or for a greatly reduced price. So, competition is sometimes stiff to get your foot in the door. Dietitians with professional football, basketball, hockey, and baseball

BOX 29.2 ***How Do You Create a Successful Business in a Fitness Center?***

Interview with Diana Burge

Q: *What are the keys to your success for working in a fitness center environment?*

A: My office was located in the reputable sports medical center inside the health club. I heavily marketed my business to the club's personal trainers and membership directors. I tracked those who referred the most clients, and at the end of each month, I gave a gift to the best referral agent. I provided quarterly education workshops for the trainers and the members of the club. Each client's physician received a progress report. I advertised in the local newspaper and Yellow Pages. This opened doors to speaking for groups and becoming known by the local pro sports teams.

Q: *How important was support from the club or other referral sources?*

A: I did not receive many referrals from the fitness staff for the first 1 to 2 years; it improved after I became established and better known. My main referral sources were physicians and word-of-mouth. It's important to have multiple sources though, because many physicians moved over the years or hired their own RDs and stopped referring to me.

Q: *What kind of arrangement for space do you recommend to other dietitians?*

A: I recommend having your own space—not shared space in a manager's office or employee lounge. In regard to payment, I recommend starting by paying a percentage of your income with a 30%–40% cap, but hopefully, lower. After a year, pay a flat rent per square foot. Don't expect the fitness center to provide for you. You need to be a self-starter; you need to want to work more as a subcontractor and not as an employee.

teams are usually paid good hourly fees; however, there are no full-time positions and often only sporadic hours at the beginning of a season and as needed thereafter. It's not unusual to be "paid" with a T-shirt, season tickets, or a gate pass when the teams or athletes can't afford any other compensation.

RECREATIONAL ATHLETES

Most of us will have a better chance earning a livelihood by focusing on the legions of athletes outside the realm of the top pros. Recreational athletes are overflowing our biking and running clubs, walking trails, and swimming pools. Communities abound with health-oriented adults determined to live longer and healthier. Sports and health clubs provide a source of motivated clientele who may wonder why pounds aren't dropping off as they drip buckets of sweat while working out on the Stairmaster or exercise bicycle. Other clients work out on their own and just want to know how to lose body fat and stay motivated on a diet.

Practice settings and financial arrangements vary. Some nutritionists find it helpful to set up a shop within a fitness facility or sports medicine clinic, while others benefit from setting up a referral system and counseling in their own offices. Practitioners may choose to work in a facility in a salaried position, at an hourly rate, or set their own rates and pay a percentage to the facility to help cover any overhead. Group lectures can be a practitioner's main source of income, or it can be a marketing vehicle offered for free or at a reduced cost to introduce large numbers of people to the practitioner's services. Working with the recreational athlete can be a stimulating and financially rewarding work.

SCHOOL-AGED ATHLETES

Young athletes provide a wide open market for sound nutritional advice. In the fall, an athlete may be using protein powders to bulk up for football, while the winter months may find him or her eating less than one meal per day trying to make weight for wrestling. Young girls in gymnastics and ballet often skip meals in order to reduce their weight. However, before practice, many may succumb to vending machine sweets for a quick "pick-me-up," while after practice there is fast food. A balanced dinner at home may only be picked at.

These students need help, not just in deciding what and how much to eat, but also in deciding when to eat. Salient suggestions the nutritionist can offer regarding food choices and timing of meals can make a difference in both their athletic and academic performance. These budding sportsmen and sportswomen must be shown that focusing on weight without regard to body fat or adequate nourishment is an ineffective way to achieve an athletic body.

Nutrition services are not typically included in school budgets. Funding for services may come from a parent, a Booster Club, or the Parent–Teacher Association, if there is funding. When money is tight, group talks are the most efficient vehicle for getting the message to the greatest number of people. It also gives an opportunity for nutrition misinformation to be aired. Many sports nutritionists give their time to schools without pay or with only modest payment because of the fun and satisfaction of working with the kids. It's also a good place to hone skills before trying to work with the top athletes, and it may lead to more paying clients or job referrals.

CONFIRMED HEART DISEASE

Cardiovascular disease remains a major cause of morbidity and mortality in the U.S. Personalized nutrition counseling is vital for these patients, and one day soon, it will be based on individualized biochemical analysis and genomics—and treated with functional medicine and nutritional genomic therapy. A trained registered dietitian will individualize the prescription according to the patients' preferences, making meals flavorful, attractive, and healthy. Working one-on-one and creating a relationship with each patient help compliance. The dietitian must be patient and flexible, often working slowly to change well-established habits and achieve the small goals along the way. These patients may be on a prescribed exercise program; coordination between the dietitian, exercise therapist, and cardiologist will achieve maximal results.

CASE STUDY 29.1

NANCY CLARK'S SPORTS NUTRITION PRIVATE PRACTICE

When Nancy Clark, MS, RD, was beginning her practice, she wanted the credibility that comes with being part of a large medical practice. Therefore, she contacted Dr. William Southmayd, the medical director of Sports Medicine Brookline, one of the largest athletic injury clinics in the country. He welcomed this opportunity to include a nutritionist on the medical team, and they were able to agree to terms.

Nancy set up shop in the clinic and quickly realized that despite the high traffic flow, she would have to do more than simply put out her shingle and wait for physician referrals. She embarked on a promotional campaign to the patients through brochures in the waiting room explaining the benefits of sports nutrition counseling. She coached her professional colleagues to look for possible nutrition-related conditions like anemia, stress fractures, and slow-to-heal injuries.

She increased her national visibility through speaking, writing sports nutrition columns for several lay magazines, and authoring three books, *The Athlete's Kitchen*, *Nancy Clark's Sports Nutrition Book*, and *Nancy Clark's New York Marathon Nutrition Book*.

Nancy finds it valuable to remain visible to her target markets by being a member of a local bike club and a running club in order to be athletic herself. She encourages everyone who wants to become a sports nutritionist to be patient. It takes time to build a client base.

CASE STUDY 29.2

RD'S CARDIAC PRIVATE PRACTICE

I began my private practice while working at a major medical center as a clinical dietitian. A physician with the affiliated medical school was opening a hyperlipidemia clinic and needed a registered dietitian. I made the contact, and I was off and running. When the medical school opened a cardiac rehabilitation facility, I was offered the opportunity to open a private practice in nutrition counseling.

I cut my hours back at the medical center, but my private practice soon took up so many hours, so I resigned as clinical dietitian. I maintained my contacts with the dietary department and the hospital physicians, both of whom continue to refer patients.

Once I made the move to private practice, I broadened my referral network by writing to all area cardiologists. Each letter was followed up with a phone call, and invaluable contacts were made. One medical group of six physicians preferred to have an in-house nutritionist. As this large practice provided great opportunities, I agreed to spend 1 day a week at their office on a fee-for-service basis.

Physicians were a major referral source for me, as well as being clients themselves. Now that I am well established in my community, many clients are referred by former clients. My practice has grown over the years to include a variety of corporate clients, athletes, and a teaching position at a local university.

I tried advertising in local papers early on, but found it to be unproductive. I found that word-of-mouth advertising was my best promotion. To enhance my skills, I took advantage of a nutrition counseling workshop offered by the local chapter of the American Heart Association. In addition to making me more proficient in this area, the workshop gave me the opportunity to network with other RDs involved in this type of counseling.

My advice to other RDs developing a practice in this area is to be sure that you have a strong referral network. Thanks to the attention focused on the efficacy of medical nutrition therapy for cardiac patients, few would argue with the benefits of nutrition intervention. The field is wide open. Go for it! —*Karen Reznick Dolins, EdD, RD*

SUMMARY

Although the need for adequate initial training is emphasized above, equally important is keeping up with new information and materials. Included in this area are professional meetings, reading selected journals, and networking with colleagues. SCAN of the ADA represents a broad group of RDs who are working in this area. They publish a quarterly newsletter and hold an annual symposium.

American College of Sports Medicine, headquartered in Indianapolis, Indiana, represents over 50 different professions involved in sports, exercise, and fitness. It also holds an annual meeting and publishes a monthly journal. A suggested bibliography follows.

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30 THE WELLNESS MOVEMENT

Wellness and prevention are continuing to grow in popularity, but sometimes at a slow-moving pace. Today, wellness is being promoted as the answer to the growing healthcare crisis, and according to the Wellness Councils of America (http://www.welcoa.org), more than 81% of businesses with 50 or more employees have some form of health-promotion program; most often they offer exercise, smoking cessation, back care, and stress management (1). With over 65% of the American population being overweight, nutrition, diabetes, cardiac and weight loss programs should be offered by nutrition professionals nationwide.

According to estimates of wellness consultants, of the $5000 that businesses spent on each employee in 2001, 95% was spent on diagnosis and treatment with 2% to 3% on early screening and no more than 1% to 2% on prevention (2). In 2015, experts estimate 40% of the workforce will be 60 years of age or older, as compared to only 6.2% in 2000. Given these statistics, corporate executives are beginning to think differently about wellness (3).

The research regularly offers proof that a person's cardiovascular fitness, stress management, and general health can be improved through lifestyle changes made by the individual. It has been estimated that up to 50% of healthcare expenditures are lifestyle-related and therefore potentially preventable (2).

WHAT IS WELLNESS?

Wellness is a proactive concept that focuses on health habits and disease-prevention practices (4). The term "wellness," although we consider it new and futuristic, is what many people have been saying for ages should be healthcare's major concern—prevention or keeping well people (most of us) well. Wellness involves striving for a state of health that is not just absent from disease, but optimum. People join wellness programs to be healthier, to enjoy their lives, spend more quality time with their families, and feel better.

Wellness leaders assert that wellness is a multidisciplinary approach to health. It is not just exercise or nutrition or stopping smoking or handling stress or early screening or making better choices. It is all of these and more. What wellness programs offer depends on variables such as client interests, financial support, availability of stimulating teachers, and the leadership in business. It is common for only one or two areas to be stressed more heavily, often to the exclusion of the others.

Charles Sterling, Ed.D., Executive Director of Cooper's Institute for Aerobics Research in Dallas, Texas, states, "Holistic is associated with treatments of all sorts used to attain good health. Wellness is a lifestyle-approach to realizing your best potential for physical health, mental alertness and serenity. It is not about extending your life or curing disease" (5).

In his book, *High Level Wellness*, Dr. Don Ardell explains that traditional medicine usually stops treatment when a patient's disability or symptoms no longer exist. Wellness starts taking place when patients become educated about their bodies and good health, when they practice new health habits and take responsibility for their own bodies by keeping them healthy (6).

THE WELLNESS MINDSET

For traditionally trained health professionals, the wellness concept may require a new mindset about their role as health providers. No longer does the medical professional do the work and make all of the decisions for a passive patient. Clients are taught to take responsibility for their health and well-being. The health provider becomes a teacher, a friend, and an information specialist as well.

Wellness doesn't involve quick curative measures, such as drugs and surgery; instead one works with something much more challenging—the human mind and behaviors. The wellness-oriented nutritionist works with motivating the client to change habits and giving guidance to people who may feel well, energetic, and excited about life.

Many wellness programs that employ or contract with dietitians also include chronic-disease management for obesity, diabetes, heart disease, renal problems, and other problems as needed.

People must motivate themselves, and the nutrition professional can help by using the three components of successful behavior change:

1. Raise a person's awareness and assess stage of motivation or change (use lifestyle questionnaires, stress tests, blood pressure, lab values, fitness testing, diet evaluation, and so on).
2. Provide skills and knowledge to facilitate behavior change.
3. Provide reinforcement for environmental and cultural changes (cafeteria alterations, bike tracks, follow-up visits, peer support, and so on).

Without these three factors, change seldom happens unless the client finds some new internal motivation.

A big challenge that some traditionally trained nutritionists have with wellness is making normal nutrition exciting to the listener or reader. Good marketing and communication skills are essential. Merely having fantastic handout information will not have people flocking to your door. The presentations must be interesting, fun, stimulating, creative, timely, and well-packaged. For the first time in our nutritional careers, our effectiveness may depend 80% to 90% upon our personal skills, instead of our clinical knowledge. Successful program directors are aware of that fact and are looking for self-motivated nutritionists with unique skills in effective speaking, leadership, marketing, and public relations.

A self-employed dietetics professional can work on contract in the development of a program or be paid by the hour, on retainer or contract for producing programs and seeing individual clients.

WHY WELLNESS NOW?

The wellness concept is growing and coming into its own now because of problems in our present medical system and the epidemic of chronic diseases. Also, research is being generated by reputable sources that show positive results from wellness program intervention.

The way medicine has been practiced has reached its limits in public acceptance: acute care with passive patients and too much managed care. Many physicians believe that iatrogenic care, (physician-induced problems, i.e., polypharmacy or over use of antibiotics), may cause far more damage and discomfort to a patient long-term than the flu or infection that precipitated the medical visit (7).

Most patients want good, prudent, state-of-the-art medical care from caring health professionals who involve their patients in the decision making. After the symptoms disappear, growing numbers of patients want to know how to make their bodies healthy again without drugs, if possible. Patients and their families are usually scared and motivated to adjust their life habits to help avoid problems later.

MEASURABLE RESULTS

Trying to measure the results of a wellness program is difficult. Some changes, such as attitude improvement and better quality of life, are so subjective that they are not easily quantified. The indices used are aerobic fitness, absenteeism, medical claim costs, sick days, accidents on the job, and productivity. However, variables other than the wellness program may also influence these indices.

By now we have the proof that good wellness programs do cut healthcare costs, as well as produce various results (8):

- Employers who invest in work site health promotion programs can see a return of \$3–\$6 for every dollar spent over a 2- to 5-year period; savings are seen in lower medical costs, absenteeism, worker's comp claims, short-term disability, and presenteeism (lower on-the-job efficiency due to health problems) (9).
- In a review of 42 articles on the cost savings of wellness programs, they found the following (10):
  - 28% reduction in sick leave absenteeism
  - 26% reduction in use of the healthcare benefit
  - 30% reduced worker's comp claims and disability management
- On average, healthcare claim costs for IBM employees who exercise 1 to 2 times a week are \$350 a year less than those who don't exercise at all (11).
- An analysis of GE Aircraft employees showed that medical claims submitted by the company's fitness center members decreased by 27%, while claims made by nonmembers actually rose by 17% (12).
- Canada Life Assurance Company of Toronto reported that turnover rate for wellness program participants was 1.8% as compared to the company-wide average of 18% (13).
- Union Pacific Railroad found that 80% of its workers believed the company's exercise program helped increase their productivity and 75% felt it helped them to concentrate better at work (14).

CORPORATE WELLNESS PROGRAMS

Businesses are understandably interested in the boost in productivity output and morale that good lifestyle changes can produce.

When wellness programs are introduced into the workplace, it is imperative that employees are approached correctly, especially when unions are involved. The motives for encouraging wellness can be misinterpreted, or sometimes interpreted correctly, as coming from management for purely financial reasons. But now that employees are sharing more of the healthcare costs, financial savings has taken on new meaning.

Some companies have begun programs that spread some of the financial savings around. They offer bonus plans when fewer sick days or mental health days off are used, and give bonuses for exercise participation and smoking cessation, all in the hope of changing lifestyles. Some companies use peer teachers to train and encourage their colleagues, while others use competitions or private professional counseling.

Consulting nutritionists can perform various services for a corporate program: counsel clients individually and in groups, adjust cafeteria menus, train other staff members, give speeches, write newsletters and brochures, make videos, and plan fun runs, golf tournaments, and health fairs.

There are several interesting corporate wellness programs created by dietitians. One program described by Donna Israel, PhD, RD, president of Professional Nutrition Therapists (PNT), is at Texas Instruments, Inc. in Dallas, Texas (7–15). PNT negotiated a service where nutrition therapy would be covered for its self-referred employees with nutrition-related medical problems. "The goal was to use Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT) as a toll to prevent the progression of clients' diseases to states that require more costly treatments" (15). See Donna's case study at the end of this chapter.

Another corporate dietitian, Linda Welch, MS, RD, works as the Worksite Wellness

Coordinator for the Home Depot. "Welch organizes various wellness programs—from quarterly mammogram screenings and lactation classes to annual golf and tennis tournaments. She provides one-on-one nutrition counseling for employees, coordinates lunchtime seminars, and has even conducted a healthy eating teleconference for 150,000 Home Depot employees nationwide" (16). Besides her nutrition training, Linda holds a certification as a health–fitness instructor through the American College of Sports Medicine (16).

WELLNESS IN HOSPITAL SYSTEMS

Hospital systems are interested in the wellness concept for several reasons. It offers public relations opportunities to improve the image of the hospital in the community. It may reduce healthcare costs for self-insured institutions or give premium breaks to those who have an outside insurer. It can generate income by offering community and corporate outreach programs.

Creating an in-house wellness program presents many challenges for an institution. Obtaining financing is usually not as difficult as gaining consensus about programming, staffing, and defining wellness. The most successful programs use an integrated approach to wellness, treating equally the importance of nourishment, being physically fit, and making lifestyle choices.

WELLNESS PROGRAMS COME IN MANY FORMS

Facilities for wellness programs vary from the very elaborate; with exercise equipment, pool, masseuse or masseur, jogging track, and meeting room, to only an office for one or two people to coordinate the programs for a staff of consultants in various outlying locations.

Special events offered by wellness programs include sponsoring races, health fairs, and wellness retreats, as well as educational websites, email counseling, and media spots on health topics. Classes and seminars cover topics such as:

- Alcohol or smoking cessation
- Stress management and relaxation
- Yoga or tai chi
- Prenatal care
- Parenting
- Healthful cooking
- Grocery store tours
- Vegetarian diets
- Weight loss
- Diabetic diets
- Cardiac programs
- Renal diets
- All facets of recreational sports
- Aerobic and strength exercises
- Flexibility exercises

In a corporate setting, there are also programs on self-esteem, communication, team building, time management, and wellness as a whole person or whole organization effort.

WINNING A NUTRITION POSITION IN WELLNESS

Most wellness programs assume that nutrition is a necessary component of health. However, that assumption does not necessarily include programs or having a registered dietitian (RD) or dietetic technician giving the nutrition information. Today, good information on basic nutrition is readily available. We face competition in wellness settings even in some hospitals from at least exercise instructors, health educators, nurses, exercise physiologists, and physicians. However, dietitians who distinguish themselves with exciting teaching skills, creative programs, marketing, and current nutrition knowledge, will always have jobs—it just takes time.

Several years ago, a hospital in a Denver suburb decided to cut expenses at their wellness program and only keep the programs that were generating a profit. That left only the dietitian on staff. Eventually, she built up her staff and wielded much more professional weight because she had demonstrated fiscal profitability.

Wellness programs are looking for dietitians or dietetic technicians who are assertive leaders, while being appreciative of what other wellness professionals have to offer. Appreciation of the team approach is vital. It is also important that we understand the "larger picture" of the organization and talk the language of business—that programs must contribute to financial goals.

SEEKING LEADS AND MAKING CONTACTS

Hospitals and corporations are usually very good about advertising available positions on their staff. However, to be associated with a wellness program during its beginning developmental stages, contact should be made early. In other words, it will be necessary to "cold call" many institutions to establish your interest.

Promote yourself for the position with:

- A good résumé written with emphasis on skills and experience useful in a wellness program
- Letters of reference from impressed CEOs and wellness program directors
- An impressive review of wellness research showing the cost savings of programming to establish diabetes control, improve weight loss, lower absenteeism, and reduce healthcare costs
- Provide an oral or written proposal for their program

In your portfolio, have other information available:

- Provide copies of published articles about you or your programs
- Show booklets or teaching materials you've written
- Give a brochure or flyer that promotes your programs or speaking

Finally, if you do not have enough information about the company's needs, offer suggestions on the first visit, and then offer to write a simple proposal after you meet. Return the proposal within a week so they feel your work is timely and efficient.

Wellness programs may hire consultant dietitians either individually or as part of a group of consultants. Consultants are often paid to bring expertise that is not easily found or for their passion to spearhead a program. Usually the materials and programs created belong to whoever paid for their development. Some consultants prefer to create them on their own time and then sell the materials or license the rights to an institution. These dietitians prefer to take more risk and have the responsibility for their own vacations, insurance, and continuing education hours in return for more money and freedom.

Dietitians also can be hired as employees (and acquire all of the benefits of a salaried person). The institution usually owns the developed materials and programs unless negotiated otherwise.

NUTRITION SERVICES TO OFFER

As mentioned earlier, dietitians offer various services to wellness programs. They include one-on-one nutrition counseling, or conducting weight loss classes with an exercise specialist or psychologist. More dietitians are beginning to offer diabetes education classes because diabetes and renal disease are the most expensive chronic diseases for medical insurers to cover. Others with culinary expertise work with the cafeteria to change recipes and menu items to lower fat and sugar or go "gourmet natural." Some wellness programs are also interested in dietitians who have media experience and can do media interviews, and create cable and video programs. Dietitians with writing skills and experience are in demand by programs to produce educational materials for sale or to be used with employees. Computer expertise has opened doors for some dietitians when wellness programs wanted to produce their own educational software or website.

WHY WELLNESS PROGRAMS FAIL

Even wellness programs with good financing and staffs can have problems and eventually fail. In surveys conducted by Robert Allen, PhD, and reported in "The Corporate Health-Buying Spree: Boon or

Boondoggle?," he found that there are similarities between programs that fail (6).

Six factors that contribute to failure (6):

1. Fragmentation of effort—timing, organization or marketing were off
2. Overemphasis on initial motivation—lack of long-term effect or follow through
3. Misdirected emphasis on illness—trying to motivate by avoiding disease, instead of encouraging the positive potential of a healthy lifestyle
4. Appeal to individual heroics—there is a need for a supportive environment that is not competitive
5. Overemphasis on activities as opposed to results—a successful program produces lifestyle changes, not just good attendance
6. A "we will do it for you" approach, rather than a better "together we can do it for ourselves" attitude—avoid passive programs

MARKETING AND PROMOTION ARE MUSTS!

Wellness programs recognize early that their competition is mostly from the private sector. They do not have the luxury of a "captive audience." Unlike a hospitalized patient, wellness participants are not ill and do not require immediate treatment. Therefore, employees and the community have to be enticed and excited about the programs being offered or they will go elsewhere, if they go at all.

It will take a while for the image of a center to become established and for the staff, classes, and programs to become known. More time and money must be spent up-front to acquaint prospective clients with you and what you offer. It may be necessary to market your program with introductory "brown bag" talks to nurses on the patient floors or to employees at a bank, or give a prerace or fun run talk.

To promote an individual program, such as a new weight loss series, marketing tools could include: An easy-to-remember name and logo; colorful posters, brochures, and folders for handout materials; and a personal letter to all department heads or physicians promoting the classes. Display t-shirts that will be given out at the program. Paycheck stuffers and newsletters to promote the program. Advertisements can be purchased in local newspapers. Public service announcements are effective through local media and, occasionally, a local newspaper will write an article and take photographs.

Marketing is so important and critical to the survival of your programs. Don't leave it to chance, and don't assume that someone else has it all under control. Stay on top of marketing!

CASE STUDY 30.1

PROFESSIONAL NUTRITION THERAPISTS, LLC

Professional Nutrition Therapists, LLC is a national group of over 500 RDs offering individual and group nutrition coaching for all age groups on a variety of nutrition issues including:

- Weight management
- Diabetes and hypoglycemia
- Heart disease risks: high cholesterol, triglycerides and blood pressure
- Kidney disease
- Cancer nutrition
- Digestive disorders: reflux, food sensitivities/allergy/intolerance and irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)/inflammatory bowel disease (IBD)
- Celiac disease/gluten intolerance
- Prenatal, postnatal and lactation nutrition
- Prebariatric and postbariatric surgery
- Nutrition support: tube feeding or parenteral nutrition
- Sports nutrition
- Eating disorders
- General wellness
- Complementary and alternative nutrition
- Emotional eating
- Senior nutrition

Angela Lemond (left) and Donna Israel of Professional Nutrition Therapists.

Donna Israel, PhD, RD, LPC, FADA, and Carol Ireton-Jones, PhD, RD, LD, CNSD, FACN, founded PNT in 1996. PNT is the only national group of RDs studied by Johns Hopkins University and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to prove outcomes of healthier and more productive employees in employer-based, evergreen contracting: "When comparing actual expenditures with projected expenditures, utilization of PNT is associated with cost savings for all medical service expenditures, not only claims associated with medical nutrition therapy sensitive diagnoses."

PNT's recognized group programs include in published format (CD, Internet, and hardcopy), participant, and RD facilitator versions of:

- *Energy for Life*: *Why Weight*. "This program emphasizes the seven skills proven to empower individual or groups to achieve a lifestyle in energy and health. The behavior-modification techniques are assembled in a convenient travel-anywhere pocket-sized hardcopy or software package."
- *It's a Family Thing!* "This is a 6-week healthy lifestyle program geared for the whole family that meets once a week for 2 hours. Our special "phase system" allows for practical lifestyle changes to be made slowly and family-wide. By the end of the program, families will be living a healthy, realistic plan that all can live with for life. It capitalizes on the family unit as members on a team, to work toward the same healthy way of living that will stick for a lifetime."
- *DAWN* (*Diabetes Awareness Wellness and Nutrition*). "A comprehensive diabetes education program approved by the American Diabetes Association. DAWN is a program aimed at empowering employees, their dependents, and retirees living with diabetes to move toward healthier lifestyles. DAWN utilizes an intervention approach consisting of MNT featuring personalized intervention, behavioral modifications plans, individual and group consults, participant self-management strategies, guidelines and precautions for implementing exercise programs, and outcome-based objectives proven to lower healthcare costs and increase employee productivity. Recent research indicates that the use of a Diabetes Specialist Team provides better outcomes for patients and lower overall healthcare costs as compared to the generalist approach of the Primary Care Physician (PCP) alone.
- *Aging Gracefully*. An optimal eating program for healthy aging if you are over 50 or working with someone over 50 or planning on being over 50 some day.

Studies show that fewer calories may be needed, but just as many nutrients. Topics that can be covered with up-to-date and practical take-home applications:

- Healthful eating guides
- Nutritional analysis
- Drug/nutrient interactions
- Researchers' recommendations for protecting your memory and brain
- What to do if you have dementia
- Help in caring for a loved one with dementia
- Warning signs, evaluations, and treatments
- Challenging behavior coping suggestions
- Physical activity/exercise agendas
- Caring for the caregiver

Although over 500 RDs have profited from working in the PNT network, PNT continues to recruit qualified, dynamic, entrepreneurial, and like-minded professionals. We are looking for stars in the dietetic field who strive "to see all ships rise" in the PNT network of RDs. Several levels of professional nutrition skills are needed especially sales and marketing, and individual consultation specialties from parenteral to weight management. We are particularly impressed by RDs who have a vision for the endless possibilities of dietetics.

PNT is headquartered in Dallas, TX at 13490 TI Blvd, Suite 102, Dallas, TX 75243 (972-238-1811, http://www.foodtherapyrd.com).

SUMMARY

It is important to know your market niche for your wellness program. What does the management want and need? What are the needs of the participants (consider using a survey or health risk appraisal)? What are their demographics—do they need prenatal classes or healthy aging programs—or both?

Hone your communication skills. The wellness setting is all about talking to people—from the CEO to the janitor. Ongoing contracts with client accounts are dependent on you producing successful outcomes. Don't oversell what you can produce, but don't be afraid of stretching your comfort zone and trying skills you know you have!

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31 CONTINUED COMPETENCY

Our consumers take it for granted that dietitians and dietetic technicians stay current with new advances in the field of nutrition. However, staying up-to-date is not a task that can be accomplished by attending a meeting or two a year and skimming a monthly journal.

The rate of change in nutrition and its related specialties is happening faster than we have ever experienced before, and it will continue that way as medicine goes into biochemical and genetic individuality with nutrition as the foundational therapy. Money is being earmarked for research in nutrition, and "new" breakthroughs are regularly hitting the media. Government expectations are demanding nutrition documentation and positive outcomes. "Outside" competition in nutrition practice is growing. The use of high technology, the computer and the Internet in particular, requires that we add new skills and modes of information delivery to our practice. The public expects us to take stands on issues and provide better information than they can get from a television reporter. As you can see, maintaining the status quo will drop us behind.

New emerging fields of study like functional medicine started by Jeffrey Bland, PhD, have biochemistry and nutrition therapy as cornerstones of their philosophy. Nutrition therapy believes in reestablishing the normal function or balance of body function by removing toxins, replacing gut bacteria and needed nutrients, and rebalancing the nutrients needed for normal organ function and biochemical processes in the body. Normal function is influenced positively by nutrients and genetics, or negatively by some prescription drugs, caffeine or alcohol, poor or imbalanced eating, genetics, toxins, and other factors. Nutrition therapy on the cellular level and genetics will be the new ways medicine is practiced in the future, and we will need training in functional nutrition therapy and nutritional genomics as well.

Merely getting 75 hours of continuing education credit every 5 years, even with the portfolio, will keep a dietitian registered but depending on the quality of the programs and the subjects chosen, a practitioner may or may not learn anything new.

A practitioner's goal should not be to stay registered, but instead to become an expert in some areas of dietetics and remain an expert with all your heart, mind, and soul.

As the marketplaces continue to change, especially for entrepreneurs, it is imperative that we gain nondietetic experience by attending other disciplines' seminars and educational training. We should also review lay literature and world business/economic periodicals regularly. Nutrition can no longer be seen as a narrow field of study. It is a major element of life intertwined and influenced by many other constituents.

In business, the practitioner is greatly affected by the local and national economies, healthcare and consumer trends, insurance coverage, competition, and available financing. The more knowledgeable an entrepreneur is about these topics, the more prepared one will be to handle business life.

Educators tell us that the mark of an educated person is knowing where to look up something. If you subscribe to several newsletters and take the time to read the periodical reviews in the back of the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, scanning nutrition-related literature is relatively simple. Purchasing all the most expensive resource books is not necessary, as long as you have several current ones, or use the web for continual research. World and economic news can be found encapsulated in the daily newspapers, on the web, and on television. Business news is found in magazines, trade journals, newspapers, and newsletters.

The following list of resources is not meant to be a complete list or an endorsement. Practitioners have shared the names of references and resources that have been beneficial to them. You may have additional ones that fit your needs better. Before subscribing to the periodicals, buy a few issues at a newsstand, look up journals in a library, or try online literature searches. Take advantage of trial offers, and don't hesitate to end your subscription to publications that do not fit your needs or interests. Staying current can be costly, both in time and money, so evaluate your references carefully. Please read the following editorial on this topic by Jim Rose, MS, RD, DHCFA, LD, that he wrote over 23 years ago—he was a man of vision.

BOX 31.1 ***The New Dietetics***

For over 50 years, a few basic diet therapy regimens have consumed the majority of our labor hours. Calorie control, diabetes limitations, and sodium and fat modifications have taken the front seat in terms of interest and deployment of resources. Our menus are devised in accord with the premises of these diets; our very world has depended upon providing services to those patients—patients with diagnoses of obesity, heart disease, diabetes, renal disease, and many others.

In the last decade we have become more sophisticated in our provision of nutritional care. We now focus more closely on laboratory values, on protein (nitrogen) and calorie ratios, and on measuring the relative risk of malnutrition. But the content of the diets we provide has really not changed. There are still low sodium products, controlled fat products, and "magic" mixtures that emanate from the nourishment centers. The nutrients in favor may differ from setting to setting but our basic approach to treatment has been static.

America is in the bionic age. Artificial organs, transplants, and other such medical wonders are becoming commonplace in some settings. Few deny that soon the lifelong behavior modification requirements for clients with diabetes mellitus will no longer be necessary—an artificial or transplanted pancreas will eliminate the need for diet control. Liberality in treatment of the aged and increasing knowledge of consumers concerning nutrition has altered the requirements for our services. Sodium modification is no longer universally viewed as the treatment of choice for hypertension and coronary artery disease. Our bread and butter theories are not held in high esteem in all medical circles.

The implications for our profession are clear. Recognizing that many of us and our peers possess insufficient current knowledge to bridge the gap from the old to the new dietetics, we have a responsibility to provide meaningful continuing education for the seasoned—not just the novice—practitioner.

If we bury our noses in current staffing configurations and fail to look to the future promised by new research, we will be poorly equipped to have a role in the new dietetics.

Certainly, our entire future does not rest on research in the nutrient–brain matrix, bioengineering, genetics, or functional nutrition therapy, but how many of our dietitians have even heard of the research? How many of us have enough familiarity with these activities to respond to the questions of consumers or physicians? If we are acquainted with the research, are we discounting it as "not yet proven," rather than preparing ourselves for potential opportunities?

Are we ready and willing to look beyond our old realm, our old world? Are we prepared to adapt our entrepreneurial approach to the new reality of medical advances? —James C. Rose, MS, RD, DHCFA, LD, Editor

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SUGGESTED RESOURCES

Newsletters and Journals

American Journal of Clinical Nutrition
Consumer Reports
Cooks Illustrated
Environmental Nutrition
FDA Consumer
Gourmet Magazine
Harvard Medical School Health Letter (The)
Journal of American Dietetic Association
Journal of Nutrition Education
Journal of Nutrition for the Elderly
Kiplinger Washington Letter
Nutrition Action
Columbia University Health and Nutrition Forum
Nutrition and the M.D
Healthy Weight Network
Today's Dietitian
Topics in Clinical Nutrition
Tufts University Diet & Nutrition Letter

Websites with Reliable Nutrition

http://www.arborcom.com
http://www.navigator.tufts.edu
http://www.mlm.nih.gov
http://www.amhrt.org
http://www.medscape.com
http://www.vrg.org
http://www.WebMD.org

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