



# **Business - Setting the Vision and Tone in the Solo Professional's Practice - Where Will You Locate?**

By Dr. Linda Hancock

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled "All Psyched Up" for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of "Life is An Adventure...every step of the way" and "Open for Business Success" is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email [office@drlindahancock.com](mailto:office@drlindahancock.com)

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There are several things to consider when you are deciding where to begin your business. Real estate agents are known for the slogan "location, location, location". There are several things that you will need to weigh before you secure a business address.

**Country** - We live in a world that seems to be shrinking due to transportation and technological advances. You may decide to start your business in a country other than the one where you were living. This is likely possible but, may take some time in order to gain the country's appropriate work visa and licensing. You may need to hire a lawyer to help you prepare the documentation. Remember, that moving from your professional and personal supports may be difficult, especially when you do not have someone to help you through the stress that can be associated with starting a new business.

**Region** - You will need to research the requirements for practising in the area that you are considering. There may be government or professional organization expectations to fulfill before you move into the region. It is likely wise NOT to lease, rent or buy any property until you have the necessary documentation to do so.

**Community** - Each community has its own flavour of economic, ethnic and and cultural influences. Consider the attitudes that the residents may hold towards your profession. Some cultures, for example, are not open to dealing with professionals. What competition would you face in that community? Are there other agencies or professionals with whom you can partner? Are you comfortable and feel that it is a safe and welcome place to be? Remember you will be settling here with your business and may even move close by so you will need to be contented there.

**Building** - You will need to locate an office that is convenient for you and your clients. Is there transit nearby or parking available? Perhaps another professional has suitable space to accommodate you for a rental fee. You might be able to rent or purchase a facility and then sub-let space to other business professionals. For four years, for example I arranged my hours so that I could rent my office to another psychologist. We shared the monthly expenses equally even though he only wanted the space for less than half of the week. By agreeing to sign a three-year lease and do some painting, I was able to negotiate a rent that could be paid with a half day of client income in a month. Consider special needs you and the client may have including wheelchair accessibility and bathroom convenience. And remember, that renovations are seldom completed in the timeframe quoted by contractors so you may be unable to open the business on the date you planned. This will result in lost income. One of my friends was to open her dental therapist office in November but the site was not ready for clients until spring!

Other considerations include costs for utilities, taxes and repairs. Ensure that you are diligent in your research efforts so that you are not surprised by unexpected costs.

If you have never secured an office before, especially if you are planning to buy one, it is wise to take someone who is familiar with construction and business with you. That person will be not only experienced but also objective and may save you from a lot of grief by pointing out structural problems with the building or other factors that might interfere with your business goals. You will be thankful if you friend notices and warns you about nearby railway tracks - especially if you are planning to open a peaceful spa!

Choosing a location for your business can be an adventure that leads to either bad flashbacks or pleasant memories. Make sure you take your time and consider the strengths and weaknesses of each option that is available to you.