



# Starting or Developing a Private Practice - How Big Will You Build

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## 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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Each business owner has an idea of how big they would like to build their practice. Much of their planning depends on the amount of time they wish to invest, the type of responsibilities they want to undertake and the reason that they started the business. My coworker, Richard started a part-time psychology practice to pay for his children's secondary education. I followed his example in order to "test the waters" regarding whether I could move from my government job into my own private practice on a full-time basis. Another peer uses his part-time practice fees to pay for a house in the mountains.

The type of business you will operate can range in size from one which provides a few extra dollars a month to a strong and financially strong operation with dozens of partners and employees. There are several factors that influence the size of the practice you will build including:

1. **DESIRE** - People with different personalities have different ideas about what they would like in their careers. Some have strong entrepreneur spirits and are happiest when they are putting together large conglomerates. On the other hand, there are individuals who wish to remain independent and practice their craft without any partners or staff.

2. **FINANCIAL INVESTMENT** - If you are able to invest, finance or borrow money easily, you may be tempted to start your practice on a scale larger than those who begin on their own and expand when the money is available to do so. Sometimes, forming a partnership allows those involved to develop a corporation or partnership in which they can pool their money or secure larger start-up loans. You will need to consider the amount of income that you and your partners require from the company each month and what the risk might be for everyone should one or more partners decides to leave in the future.

3. **TIME INVESTMENT** - I worked four hours in the first month of my business. Because I had a full-time position and was a little hesitant about leaving my salary and benefits, I didn't market or make specific efforts to increase my clientele. In less than two years, I was so busy working in the evenings and weekends that I decided to hire a Business Manager to help me decide if it was feasible to open a full-time private practice. My hourly fee was four times my government rate per hour and he convinced me that my pension and employee benefits could easily be replaced with private coverage. As I invested more and more of my time, the business grew.

When you are determining your vision for the business, it is important to consider how big you want it to grow and what you are willing to do for that to happen. No matter what you choose, it is important that you are able to turn every day into an amazing adventure.