



Sculpt your CAREER

INDEPENDENT CONTRACTING: APPLYING CREATIVITY TO PATIENT CARE AND BUSINESS



If a single practice doesn't fuel your passions, consider working with multiple practices.

BY PAUL B. JOHNSON, MD

When I first graduated from an ASOPRS (American Society of Ophthalmic Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery) fellowship at Wills Eye Hospital in Philadelphia, I was surprised to learn that most ophthalmology practices do not have a need for a full-time oculoplastic surgeon. Like many new grads, I wanted the security of a full-time position and signed on as an associate at a multi-specialty ophthalmology practice. I did so with the knowledge that I would be seeing a great deal of general ophthalmology patients.

I then had an idea: What if I could start my own practice, not as a traditional brick-and-mortar practice, but as a mosaic of several different practices? With confidence in my skills, a passion for organization, and a healthy dose of fear, I resigned from my position as an associate and formed my own professional corporation. The mission of my business has been to serve as an independent contractor in Oculoplastics and Aesthetics in a number of varied settings. Within three months of forming my corporation, I had set up independent contracting agreements with five different practices: three ophthalmology practices, one plastic surgery practice, and one med-spa.

FLEXIBILITY AND FREEDOM

This business model has allowed me a great deal of flexibility and freedom. I have had the opportunity to meet so many amazing people across the greater Philadelphia area, and I have learned from all of them. By contracting with many different kinds of practices, I'm able to use my entire array of skills. In some locations I'm doing primarily blepha-

roplasties and injectables, while in others I'm performing more complicated skin cancer reconstructions and tear duct repairs. Throughout this journey, I have discovered my passion for the business aspects of medicine—especially marketing, budgeting, and negotiating contracts that work for everyone involved. It allows me to bring the same creativity that I bring to the operating room to all the different components of running a business.

WORTH NOTING

With all the advantages that come with independent contracting, there are some disadvantages. A good deal of time is spent in the car. It also takes a little more time to build trust with the staff at each office when you're only there once or twice a week. I am constantly keeping my finger on the pulse of all the different practices in the region in order to generate new opportunities. My current challenge is that I've gotten so busy that I have had to expand time at the busier offices and consolidate time at the others. All of this requires a great deal of effort, but I have never been more fulfilled in my career. I love what I do and am committed to learning new skills, making new connections, and growing my business in order to best serve the patients of this vibrant metropolitan area. ■

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