

Dean Fenwick on Choosing Professional Services for Denturists

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Dean Fenwick has been a respected advocate; educator; and software developer for the denturist profession for the last 20 years. He founded Specialized Office Systems Inc. - a company which has been solely committed to providing practice management solutions for denturists with the DOMx (Denturist Office Manager) application and service. I heard Dean speak at Technorama last year and he had a lot to say about business practices and observations on world class businesses like Tesla, Amazon, West Jet and how they each communicate differently to customers than the average in their respective sectors. Interesting stuff. So I called him and told him about the theme of this issue for Denturism Canada magazine and asked if I could email him a few questions with the answers published in the magazine. He agreed enthusiastically and asked me how approx. how many words for this for this email interview. I said about 750 to 1000 words. Dean was silent for a moment and said "Hmmm, you should probably just ask one question then." Here is the result.

Dean, as an entrepreneur yourself how you choose professional services?

First, thanks for reaching out to me Chad. I have some passionate opinions on this topic for sure!

I have read that Charles Franklin Kettering often touted that a question well defined is half solved so let's start by defining what professional services are.

"Professional services are occupations in the tertiary sector of the economy requiring special training ... involve providing specialist business support to businesses of all sizes and in all sectors; this can include tax advice, supporting a company with accounting, IT services or providing management advice"

- Wikipedia.org

That definition is particularly telling, and it reminds me of an experience I had. Many years ago, on my return from a denturist convention, I took a cab from the airport to home. The driver was a very interesting and affable person and did a good job getting me home using the proper route. This was, of course, before drivers had GPS help. On my arrival he gave me his business card for in the event I require a ride again. I thought that was a rather unique thing to do for a taxi driver. The business card had his name on it and below his name was: Taxi Service; Tailor; Tax Returns and Investment Advice. True story. He did a great job getting me home safely and made me feel good, but I think it would be extremely unlikely that that he could be the very best at all four services. No one wants a generalist. When is the last time you heard someone bragging about their successful surgery performed by the generalist?

I have a strong belief in specialized service. Specialization is not only at the core of being a denturist it is also literally the niche of my business philosophy and service. I do not service dentists or any other sector. This specialization has allowed me to do the best job possible without having to put any company resources to appeasing another industry. Denturists are very different from dentists. Denturists have less help and often do data entry themselves and do not have an assistant in the operatory to dictate chart notes to. A denturist wants to use a portable device wirelessly without worry of connectivity issues in or outside the clinic. Specializing has allowed me to stay laser focused on helping denturists and the industry at large. I have had the opportunity to work directly with various

provincial colleges in Canada and the NDA in the USA on patient charting standards and recommendations. I have always had the pleasure of working with DAC over the years staying vigilant on electronic billing and insurance claim adjudication matters. I taught patient record keeping at NAIT for the denturist program there for four years and I believe I have the world record for most denturist conventions personally attended at over 200 between Canada and the USA. Google "global TV denturist" and click on the link about VCC if you want to hear about my passion for the industry. My point is that when it comes to professional services I completely believe in specialization - complete, persistent, insane immersion and dedication to become an expert. Therefore, when I chose professional services for my business I first look for a real specialist in that area of need. When I hire computer programmers I look for very specialized skill sets. Those specialists command a higher wage but, in my experience, they are far more efficient and can add much more value to my business than they cost.

I will say that being a specialist is a pre-requisite but there are other factors. Getting back to our definition: "professional services are in the tertiary sector of our economy". Tertiary is derived from the Latin word tertius or 3rd. Professional services are the third sector in our economy. The first is raw materials and the second is manufactured goods. This means professional service is different than material goods or even a specialized tool. It means you will be dealing with a human being and likely an ongoing relationship at that. You are going to have to like that person or people. You are going to want to share the same business belief system. I always apply the "energy giver" or "energy zapper" test to anything I am going to buy. It is a simple question: is this product, service or person giving me energy or zapping my energy? Am I getting enthused and inspired to do better and great things? or do I want to go home and take a nap after working with this person. I had an accountant who was a highly qualified specialist at foreign subsidiary tax law. I hired him because I had a Canadian corporation and a USA subsidiary. This specialist always seemed to think the sky was falling and he fed me all that stress. He would sigh a lot and complain that I didn't do this or that as if I should have known to fill out a FBAR FinCEN Report 114!? I kept him for two years and that was 23 months too long. The next specialized accountant I hired was such a pleasure!! He just emailed me the exact forms to fill out when they should be filled out and stayed on top of all my accounting needs.

The professional service I get from my current specialized accountant always makes me feel in control and inspired. What a difference!!