

Going Beyond Clinical Dentistry

A Strategic Guide to Additional Income Streams for Dentists

Aprio[®] 

Introduction

“What else should I do with my time, expertise and income?”

Many dentists have a natural inclination to continually invest in their personal and professional growth. This is the mindset that has driven them through years of schooling and training to deliver high-quality care to their patients.

But as the dental industry evolves into the future, more practitioners are asking themselves: *What else should I do with my time, expertise, and income? Should I pursue additional goals?* Whether they are driven by a unique personal passion, financial growth, or long-term security, dentists are increasingly seeking opportunities to generate more income beyond the traditional operatory.

Whether they are an established practice owner or a rising associate, this guide is designed to help dentists understand the benefits, risks, and strategic steps involved in creating additional income streams. Filled with compelling, time-tested insights and best practices from Aprio's experienced dental advisors, this eBook outlines pathways both within and outside of dentistry and provides dentists with practical advice to structure their side ventures wisely.

Dentistry is demanding profession

but it also offers unique flexibility and opportunities to expand your reach beyond patient care. This context is important to consider when looking at the state of the industry post-pandemic, in which many practices saw increases in cancellations and utilization. Not only are forward-thinking practitioners brainstorming ways to boost practice growth, but they are also exploring ways to expand their own impact and income.

Whether it is speaking at conferences, launching a podcast, or investing outside the field entirely in assets like real estate, dentists should take a careful, measured approach to creating income streams outside of their practice. It is critical for practitioners to look inward and explore the motivations, opportunities, and pitfalls associated with stepping into life beyond clinical dentistry. From an external perspective, they also need to think about what additional income streams could mean for the operational and financial health of their practice.



Chapter 1: Why Dentists Look Beyond Clinical Work

Based on decades of experience working with dentists across the country, Aprio's dental advisory team has identified four primary factors that motivate dentists to further diversify their income. These motivators include:

1

PROFESSIONAL PASSION

Most dentists are lifelong lovers of learning and have experienced significant academic success before they even start practicing. Practitioners often desire to deepen their knowledge, make greater contributions to the field in the form of a specialty, and share insights through teaching or content creation.

2

FINANCIAL GROWTH

Many dentists consider bolstering their nest eggs as they get closer to retirement, acknowledging that their business won't necessarily fund their lifestyle once they clock out for good. Other dentists dream about developing their practices into regional or national brands or expanding through new locations. In both situations, practitioners often pursue other non-clinical ventures — like professional speaking, consulting, or real estate investment — to garner additional income.

3

RESEARCH & INNOVATION

Some dentists — especially those who run tech-forward practices or focus on a specialty — may start collaborations with product manufacturers, leading to more opportunities to generate income. These opportunities may include conducting trials with a new product or piece of dental technology or giving feedback on a new tool.

4

PERSONAL INFLUENCE

In today's digital age, platforms and social apps like Instagram and TikTok have created a new medium for experts in all industries to build influence, foster trust, and generate income. By building a personal brand or a following as an industry influencer, dentists can increase their chances of securing media placement, podcasting, or public speaking gigs.

Regardless of the motivator, dentists may feel more fulfilled and can generate more income by branching out into new avenues — but it is paramount to approach every new venture with a solid, predetermined plan.

Chapter 2: Start With Your Personal Why

Before launching a new side project, dentists need to pause and spend time clarifying their motivation. For instance, do you love dentistry and want to deepen your role within the field? Are you looking to scale your income for long-term wealth? Do you want more time, flexibility, or creative fulfillment outside of clinical patient care? Your answers to these questions will not only influence the path you take but how you measure success.

Before diving into the following chapters, ask yourself a few more questions:

- Are you passionate about clinical dentistry, or do you see yourself moving into more strategic or public-facing roles?
- Is your practice currently optimized for financial growth, or are you leaving revenue on the table that could support other ventures?
- Will stepping away from the chair impact your practice's profitability — and if so, are you prepared for that?

Ultimately, the dentists who succeed in adding new streams of income or side projects are the ones who know who they are and what they want. Some dentists will find more purpose and profit in the operator, using their earnings to invest passively and build wealth for the future. Other dentists will find their voice in education or influencing and use their brand to open new doors.

Whichever route you choose, it's important to build a solid strategy that supports your goals — professionally, operationally, and financially.



Chapter 3: Define the Path Forward

When it comes to dentists, income diversification generally falls into two categories: inside or outside of the industry. For the purposes of this eBook, we will unpack both paths separately, highlighting examples of activities and key factors dentists must consider before committing to a plan of action.

Opportunities for Diversification Within Dentistry

Dentists who choose to pursue income generation opportunities within the field often focus on deepening their expertise within a specific industry niche, clinical practice philosophy, or specialization. These activities may include:

- Securing public speaking placements at conferences, industry events, or continuing education courses
- Hosting/guest hosting industry podcasts or creating educational content for fellow practitioners or patients
- Offering growth or clinical consulting services to other dental practitioners



Starting up new ventures within dentistry may seem like the low risk move, but it doesn't come without its own set of complexities. Here are a few considerations to keep in mind:

- **Start small:** You may be eager and excited to start your new venture, but it's important to build a foundation and gradually increase your activity and investment as your budget and bottom line allow. Continue to track your income and expenses and immediately enlist the help of a qualified accounting and financial advisory team to make sure your practice can withstand these changes.
- **Separation is key:** For dentists who are actively growing businesses or investments outside of their practices, we often recommend creating a separate LLC and bank account to finance those activities. Commingling finances and accounts between your outside venture and your practice can be risky from a financial reporting perspective. It's important to keep your business billing and insurance policies separate, as well.
- **Weigh the risk of shifting focus:** Sit down with your dental CPA and advisory team and scenario-plan how pursuing additional income streams could impact your business. For instance, will clinical production rates drop if you step away from the chair? Will your core practice suffer if you're stretched too thin? If this is a risk, then you may opt to budget for hiring a new associate to pick up your workload if your new venture requires you to spend less time treating patients.

Opportunities for Income Diversification Outside Dentistry

Instead of homing in on a particular specialty or skill within dentistry, some practitioners choose to pursue ventures outside of the field entirely. These activities may include:

- Real estate investments
- Opening a med spa to focus on aesthetic services like Botox
- Opening a non-dental business (for instance, purchasing franchise locations)
- Consulting in unrelated fields



New ventures aren't just a financial decision — they're a time and energy commitment.

Dentists who choose to pursue avenues outside of the field must evaluate if they can truly take on another business without sacrificing their clinical focus or mental bandwidth. Furthermore, it's important to remember that:

- **Instant ROI is not guaranteed:** Keep in mind that passive income generators often don't deliver tax savings early on. At Aprio, we caution dentists against using income from side ventures to “mask” underperformance in the core practice. If your business is underperforming and you funnel money into it from a side venture, you're not solving the problem — you're just hiding it. The danger becomes even more pronounced in multi-owner practices where personal and professional interests begin to collide. Continue to keep your practice and side-venture finances separate and work with a dental-specific CPA and advisory team to develop realistic projections and goals.
- **Compliance should be top of mind — especially with real estate investments:** When pursuing a business venture outside dentistry, it's paramount for practitioners to enlist the help of a credentialed tax expert immediately. When it comes to ventures like real estate, dentists must be mindful of IRS classifications and depreciation rules; in particular, real estate classifications (e.g., vacation home vs. investment property) can drastically impact tax deductions. Furthermore, while real estate properties can offer long-term stability and tax advantages (such as cost segregation), dentists must understand that their passive real estate losses may not be deductible if they are not classified as real estate professionals by the IRS.



Chapter 4: Operational, Financial, and Legal Factors to Consider

Once you have determined whether you want to stay in or out of dentistry, it's important to get a deep understanding of how the operational, financial, and legal aspects of your practice will be affected by your side venture. Below, we have broken out key considerations into three buckets: operations, finances, and legal matters.

Operational Implications: Can Your Practice Run Without You?

When dentists step away from the chair to pursue external projects, practice operations can suffer if they are not carefully managed. Take a step back and ask yourself the following questions related to associate leadership, production, and staffing:

- Do you have a strong office manager or dental associate who can lead operations when you're away?
- If you're the primary revenue driver, how will your absence impact practice income?
- Will you need to bring in another associate to maintain patient flow and case acceptance rates?



It's important to get clarity on these questions to help prevent burnout, financial shortfalls, and morale issues within your team. For dentists in partnerships or group practices with multiple owners, outside ventures can introduce another layer of complexity. For instance, if one owner begins generating more income outside the practice while production declines, tension could arise within the practice, especially in cases where the owners share financial responsibilities.

Therefore, it's important for dentists and multi-owner teams to discuss the division of labor within the practice, and whether new ventures should be co-owned or separate. Dentists should also provide clear boundaries and expectations around compensation tied to clinical roles versus ownership roles.

If you are part of a multi-owner practice, make sure to prioritize these considerations before you start your new venture:

- Entity structure: Most dentists can run minor side activities through their practice so long as they follow clear accounting and financial reporting processes. If the dentist starts earning significant income from their side venture, it is essential to use a separate LLC to facilitate those business activities.
- Insurance and liability: Dentists should keep in mind that additional ventures may require separate insurance policies, outside of the policies that cover their existing practice. Separating policies shields other owners who may not be involved in the side venture from potential liability.
- Taxes: Dentists should work with a qualified dental CPA to track all income and associated expenses from their side venture and optimize tax planning, outside of the existing practice. As we mentioned earlier, commingling finances will only create more headaches and could even expose your existing practice to audit risk.
- Estate planning: Dentists who pursue side ventures should ensure their estate plans cover their activities outside of the succession plans they may have developed with their partners or co-owners. Aside from co-ownership, dentists should also clearly communicate with their spouse or life partner about the separate estate plan and relevant financial structures to ensure cohesion.

Financial Considerations: Structure Matters

When it comes to additional income, structure is key. Whether they are podcasting, speaking, or selling educational content, solo dentists may decide to run income through their existing practice (with separate accounting line items for income and expenses), or create a separate legal entity (LLCs and S-corporations are the most common) if their income source is significant or involves unique liability issues.

As we mentioned earlier, it is vital for dentists to keep clean financial records for each income stream and understand the unique tax implications of each revenue source. Dentists should also evaluate the opportunity cost of pursuing their outside venture – what are they giving up in their practice to pursue side activities? Is the trade-off worth it? An experienced dental CPA or financial advisor can help run the scenarios and implications of your side venture to determine whether it makes financial sense for your personal goals and practice.





Final Thoughts: The Power of Professional Guidance

For many dentists, pursuing side ventures and diversifying income is a powerful way to grow professionally — but it also requires clarity and discipline. Whether you are passionate about teaching, aspire to influence, want to try your hand at real estate, or simply want to plan wisely for retirement, remember that the most successful dentists start by maximizing their core practice — and then scale with strategy.

Most importantly, every dentist (regardless of their personal goals) can benefit from the help of a strong, industry-specific advisory team. Before starting a new venture, remember to schedule a meeting with your dental CPA and advisory team to discuss the financial and tax implications of your side venture, as well as goals and timelines. Investing in good advice may come with upfront costs, but it can pay dividends in efficiency and long-term success in the activities you choose to pursue.

Aprio's dental team is here to help you plan your side venture, demystify the process, and position you for success. Let's work together to build a future that works for your practice, your passion, and your peace of mind.

Contact our
team today.

