

# Occupational Health Nurse Entrepreneurs: What Does it Take?

By Dianne Dyck

Nurse entrepreneurs are now, more common in Canada; but what does it take to become an Occupational Health Nurse (OHN) entrepreneur? How does the OHN prepare to venture out into the marketplace? What knowledge, skills and expertise are needed to succeed? The purpose of this article is to explore entrepreneurship and how it can apply to the field of Occupational Health Nursing. The intent is to provide the OHN with an understanding of what it takes to succeed as an independent practitioner and as a businessperson.

## Entrepreneurship

An entrepreneur is a person who organizes and operates a business or businesses, taking on greater than normal financial risks in order to do so<sup>i</sup>; it is also defined as a person who starts a business and is willing to risk loss in order to make money.<sup>ii</sup>

Entrepreneurship is described as “the pursuit of opportunity beyond resources controlled”.<sup>iii</sup> Stevenson’s definition involves the term “*pursuit*” which implies a singular, relentless focus. The OHN entrepreneur focuses on attracting the needed resources so as to limit the consumption of their limited cash reserves. “*Opportunity*” implies offering an innovative product/service, or creating a better version of an existing product/service, or marketing an existing product to new customers, or a combination of all three approaches. “*Beyond resources controlled*” points out the tendency for entrepreneurs, at the onset, to keep their expenditures low while investing their own time and personal funds. In some cases, this is adequate to bring a new venture on line to the point where it becomes viable.

Entrepreneurs take on a number of risks:

- *Demand risk*, which relates to how willing prospective customers are to adopt the business solution being offered by the entrepreneur.
- *Technology risk*, which is high when software, engineering or scientific breakthroughs are required to bring a solution to fruition.
- *Execution risk*, which relates to the entrepreneur’s ability to attract suitable employees and partners who can implement the proposed business plan
- *Financing risk*, which relates to whether external capital is available on reasonable terms or not.<sup>iv</sup>

The OHN entrepreneur must recognize that the management of “all risks” is not within their control; rather, they have to address the risks that they are able to through their business and professional actions.

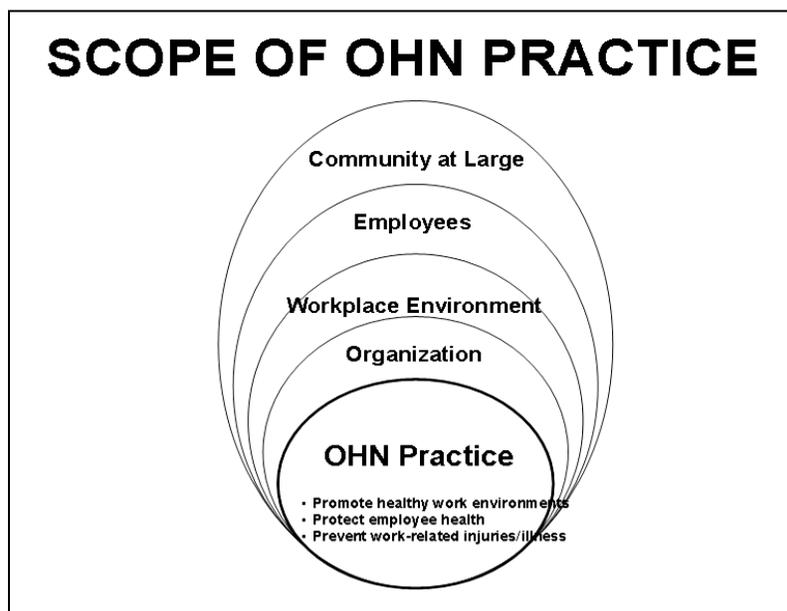
Interestingly, entrepreneurs tend to display a number of common characteristics, namely self-confidence; tenaciousness; a strong drive to succeed; a willingness to challenge the status quo; fearlessness; an appreciation of their limitations; and a willingness to try, fail and start over again having learned from the previous experience.<sup>v</sup> So to succeed, the OHN needs to come up with a business idea, and have the knowledge, skill, courage and willingness to take that business concept to fruition.

## Occupational Health Nurse Preparation<sup>vi</sup>

The academic preparation in Occupational Health Nursing tends to be composed of a theoretical basis, as well as work experience. The focus is on the OHNs being prepared to provide value to an organization by assisting with its operational efficiency, loss control, injury/illness management, and disability management.

The scope of Occupational Health Nursing Practice (Figure 1), can positively impact the organization, the workplace environment, the employees and the community at large.

Figure 1: Scope of Occupational Health Nursing Practice<sup>vii</sup>



In terms of **operational efficiency**, OHNs:

- provide customized, effective OH&S Programs;
- promote the integration of employee services into organization/ company strategic plans and operations;
- align OH&S Program goals with corporate/operational goals and objectives;
- promote worker wellness and fitness-to-work, thereby improving worker productivity, reducing expenses and improving organization/ company profits;
- assist new workers to integrate into the workplace;
- monitor the work environment in terms of hazard control, thereby reducing operational downtime, reducing expenses and improving organization/company profits;
- provide anticipatory guidance on potential workplace problems and offer counselling so as to enable the organization/company to avoid/mitigate the negative impacts;
- monitor worker well-being and workplace injury/illness with a view to loss control and prevention;
- strive to enhance employee morale by working closely with employees and epitomizing the message that the organization/company cares for them personally; and
- promote the organization/company as a “responsible corporate citizen”.<sup>viii</sup>

**Loss control** means minimizing loss due to people, property, process, plant or profit damages/threats. According to Louis Allen, “Minimizing loss is as much of an improvement as is the maximization of profit.”<sup>ix</sup> In terms of occupational health nursing, prevention involves the activities associated with “health-protecting behaviour”. The emphasis is on guarding or defending an individual or group against specific illness/injury.

In regards to operational production and service demands, OHNs can support the workplace by:

- ensuring workers are fit-to-work;
- ensuring the worksite is free of uncontrolled hazards;
- medically monitoring workers exposed to known hazards;
- conducting risk assessments;
- communicating the nature and severity of identified risks;
- promoting worker well-being;
- conducting human factor/ergonomic assessments and identifying suitable remedial actions;
- participating in emergency response activities;
- facilitating critical incident stress debriefing post-incident; and
- assisting with the management of strategic OH&S issues.

In essence, OHNs contribute to promoting and maintaining worker health and safety, as well as workplace safety. By controlling losses, OHNs contribute to the enhancement of organization/company profits.

OHNs have a major role to play in the areas of injury/illness management and disability management. Through **client advocacy** — the activity associated with pleading or representing an employee’s or organization’s cause, OHNs act as a **client liaison** — the position of responsibility within an organization for maintaining communication links with external individuals, agencies or organizations.

OHNs are ideally educated, skilled, experienced and positioned within an organization to facilitate injury/illness management and disability management. They are competent at:

- mitigating the workplace illness/injury through timely response and referral for medical treatment;
- determining worker fitness to work;
- managing injury/illness cases;
- co-managing insurer (government/private insurers) responsibilities and actions;
- coordinating disability management assistance;
- assisting workers to successfully return to work in a safe and timely manner;
- negotiating service provider contracts and activities;
- evaluating the outcomes and determining the return on investment for the organization/company; and
- conducting trend analyses with a view to illness/injury prevention and the introduction of suitable loss control measures.

In terms of managing a Disability Management Program, the OHN is positioned and capable of:

- supporting all the operations with the development and implementation of the Disability Management Program and the related practices;
- assisting the operations and employees with disability management and related labour relations issues and resolutions that may affect employee employability;
- investigating and assisting with the preparation of WCB reports on behalf of the organization and its employees;
- supporting the operations and employees with their individual disability management and work accommodation performances;
- mentoring and coaching line management on attendance and disability management-related issues and practices that can affect employee employability;
- coordinating disability management services internally and externally with insurers and other healthcare providers;
- ensuring that employee personal health information is maintained in a confidential manner;
- providing disability management education;
- assisting the organization to comply with the applicable legislation (*Workers' Compensation Acts*, *Canada Labour Code*<sup>x</sup>, Human Rights legislation) and industry standards for disability management;
- maintaining the organization's disability management data management system (workers' compensation and non-occupational disabilities);
- conducting disability management performance audits and preparing the resulting reports;
- providing strong attendance support and disability management leadership; and
- representing the organization's business interests on government, industry, and professional committees/forums.

In summary, OHNs are OH&S professionals that have much to offer to an organization, union, employees, the workplace environment and the community at large. But does the Occupational Health Nursing educational program prepare the OHN to strike out on their own to start a business or to master a new venture?

### **Entrepreneurship: Preparation**

To enter the world of entrepreneurship, the OHN is advised to keep a few important tips in mind. To begin with do your homework and learn from the failures of others. Gottlieb recommends studying the business ventures that failed because those companies tended to make common mistakes that led to their business failure. He said that having the humility to learn from the mistakes of others before making them yourself, is the secret to success.<sup>xi</sup>

Secondly, make very sure that the planned business venture is what you really want to undertake. It will involve lots of hard work, and in some instances, disappointment. Amini said. "If this is something you really want, then think long-term, and be persistent. The vast majority of great entrepreneurs failed multiple times before they finally found the business idea that took off and brought them success".<sup>xii</sup>

Thirdly, seek out "problems to solve", as opposed to "having a solution, and then searching for a problem" to which it will apply.<sup>xiii</sup>

Fourthly, be passionate and driven by the desire to achieve and make a difference. Bachenheimer maintains, "The most important traits are passion and persistence, but these must not be confused with arrogance and stubbornness."<sup>xiv</sup>

Lastly, talk to successful entrepreneurs and get their advice on what it took for them to achieve success. As well, read books, network with people they admire, look into great educational programs<sup>xv</sup>, and seek a "shadowing opportunity" with a successful entrepreneur.

## **The OHN Entrepreneur: Essential Skills**

To move into business, the OHN needs to possess the knowledge and skills that extend above and beyond Occupational Health Nursing. The business world is vastly different from the employee role or internal consultant role. To succeed, the OHN entrepreneur requires a mix of business, relationship, analytical, technical specialist and consulting skills.

### ***Business Skills***

The core management/ business skills include planning, organizing, directing, and controlling the business aspects of the organization, as well as the ability to conceptualize — better known as being able to "see the big picture". When setting up a business, the OHN needs to register the business; obtain a Goods and Services Tax (GST) number; purchase business as well as errors and omission insurance and/or malpractice coverage; set up a Workers' Compensation account if employees are to be employed; and become familiar with labour law and Standards Labour. In preparation, the OHN should take educational courses in business development and implementation, organizational behaviour, accounting, risk management and communication, information system management, project management, computer systems, delivering oral presentations, and strategic issues management. Besides attending small business workshops, accessing online support, and researching entrepreneurial "best practices", the OHN might elect to undertake a Master in Business Administration.

### ***Relationship Skills***

Relationship skills, or people skills, involve the ability to work with and through people to get the work done. They include the ability to communicate, lead, and motivate people, as well as the ability to listen, empathize, care for, and support employees in a constructive manner. The related coursework would involve topics like effective communication and interviewing, relationship building, negotiation and mediation, facilitation, team building, effective coaching, client advocacy, and change management. It would also include knowing how to create a supportive work environment, so that employee performance can be maximized.<sup>xvi</sup>

### ***Analytical Skills***

Analytical skills involve the ability to visualize, gather information, articulate, analyze, conceptualize, or solve both complex and uncomplicated problems by making decisions that are sensible given the available information.<sup>xvii,xviii</sup> For the OHN, this translates to possessing advanced skills in root-cause analysis, problem solving, auditing, benchmarking, and program evaluation and improvement. These analytical skills are only as valuable as is the OHN's ability to "sell" the clients on the importance of the results.

### ***Technical Specialist Skills***

Technical specialist skills involve the ability to understand and use the techniques, knowledge and tools specific to the industry, or to ones area of expertise. For OHNs, these skills include:

- Fitness-to-work assessments;
- Health surveillance;
- Medical monitoring;
- Emergency care;
- Hazard/risk assessment;
- Work site evaluation;
- Emergency planning and response;
- Event investigation;
- Disability case management;
- Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD);
- Program development;
- Standard setting;
- Training program development and delivery;
- Professional networking;
- Regulatory knowledge;
- Human factors analysis;
- Technical communication;
- Quality assurance;
- Environment/public health management;
- Social marketing;
- Strategic issues management;
- Health promotion;
- Risk management and communication;
- Program evaluation; and
- Occupational Health Nursing Research.

However, OHNs also need the knowledge and skills in disability management programming, occupational health (and ideally occupational health & safety [OH&S]) governance and stewardship, industrial hygiene, workplace wellness programming, epidemiology (the study of disease in man), and integrated workplace health management. Armed with this technical specialist knowledge, the OHN can present as an expert in the field and serve as a valuable resource to an organization.

### ***Consulting Skills***

Consulting skills include the ability to provide influence, recommendations, and expertise in the area of occupational health and occupational health nursing, without direct power to make changes. Regardless of the degree of involvement, the consultant does not own the problem: the client *always* does. Hence, it is up to the client to own the solution.

To prepare for entrepreneurship, the OHN should undertake a consulting certificate, like the one offered through the Canadian Society of Safety Engineers. Strong written, oral and non-verbal communication skills are critical. Most colleges and university offer courses in business writing.

## **OHN Entrepreneurs: Their Recommendations**

A number of successful OHN entrepreneurs agreed to share their pathway to entrepreneurship, as well as to offer tips to future OHN entrepreneurs.

### **Fay Benard**

Entrepreneurship was never a career goal for me, but the steps that I took certainly provided me with a strong foundation for the journey. I strove to enhance my education so that I would have the tools to be viewed as an expert in my field. I had graduated from a nursing diploma program; so after almost 20 years of nursing practice, I returned to university to complete my Bachelor in Nursing. As my interest in Occupational Health Nursing flourished, I completed my Occupational Health Nursing Certificate, a certificate in Human Resources Management, and a Masters in Nursing with a focus on management and occupational health. Within these programs, I was fortunate to have selected an optional course on computer program development, which also ending up playing a significant role in my private practice. My general nursing and emergency nursing experience, occupational health nursing experience, management experience of a two-site Occupational Service, as well as the experience of being local president of a nursing union, positioned me to be able to wear the “hats of all the key workplace partners” in problem solving and developing successful workplace health programs. Finally, my experience in working for a private occupational health provider, whose owners did not have a medical background, was key in me coming to the realization that I could provide a better, more effective service.

The vision was born and enhanced by two partners (OHNs) who had previously worked with me. It was supported by a confidence that we had the requisite tools and experience to grow a successful company while remaining true to our professional code of practice. It was our desire to create “win-win” programs for employers and employees. It required the commitment and passion of the three of us to succeed throughout the years. It required us to give up our employment, invest personal start-up funds, and keep going even when the dollars weren’t flowing in. In the end, we had 15 years of success and enjoyed the partnerships that we forged with our customers. When I decided to retire, we sold our business; but we never regretted the choice we made to become entrepreneurs.

Based on my experience, I would like to offer other OHNs some tips:

- Have a vision for the services you wish to provide. Envision what your services will look and feel like; start developing a manual of what you will provide, and how you will provide it (your employees and customers will be reassured by having this information).
- Develop a business plan which defines your goals and how you will get there. There are many business plan models available online or through your financial institution.
- Seek out people that can be mentors or who can help you find the expertise you may need, e.g., marketing resources, bookkeeping, accounting, computer resources or programming. Initially, we hired these type of resources on a contract basis and their expertise greatly contributed to our growth.
- Develop a financial plan that will help you to know when you may need to expand, purchase equipment, or to hire more resources, as well as how to do that successfully. Review the plan frequently, especially before adding or deleting any key contracts.
- As rewarding as working for yourself, or for your own company may be, be prepared that you will likely work more hours than you ever did as an employee.

- Ensure you have professional liability insurance. We were able to obtain this for our whole company through our professional association at a reasonable cost. You will also need Workers' Compensation coverage for any employees. Larger companies will require proof of this coverage.
- Develop the key performance measures that will demonstrate your success in delivering cost-effective programs, as well as group data that can help your customers to develop preventative health programs. Purchase or develop a computer database that will track this type of data and provide report information.
- Finally, have fun and hold true to your vision and passion.

### **Shelly Bischoff**

Prior to beginning my consulting practice in 2005, I considered many factors. One of the most important considerations was whether I was fit to be successful as an OHN entrepreneur, or not. Although I was excited and confident in my abilities, I wondered if my personality was conducive to making the planned transition. I paid for a vocational assessment completed by a psychologist specializing in employment transition services. I underwent a series of tests designed to assist individuals to identify their vocational strengths. My test scores were the highest in entrepreneurial, sales and management career paths. This assessment was very worthwhile because it confirmed to me that my planned employment transition was complimentary to my personality traits and characteristics.

Another resource that I engaged was a business coach. My coach and I made an arrangement where his fee would be based on a percentage of the revenue made within the first 18 months of business start-up. This arrangement was an incentive for both the coach and me to attain successful outcomes within the first two years of business. Having a business coach was the best return on the investments that I made as part of the start to my business.

A third strategy implemented, was to achieve certification in the three primary disciplines associated with my OHN specialty practice: Occupational Health Nursing, Human Resources, and Occupational Health & Safety. Achieving national certification in these disciplines afforded me the credibility, knowledge and competency to provide enhanced service to clients.

Volunteering has always played an important role in my career and continues to be essential element 11 years into my practice. Volunteering provides me with the opportunity to meet, network and work with many Occupational Health and affiliated professionals. My volunteer time is shared between my professional associations: the Alberta Occupational Health Nurses Association (AOHNA), the Canadian Society of Safety Engineers (CSSE), and the Human Resources Institute of Alberta (HRIA). The gratification of volunteering with these associations exceeds any business value that I considered achieving when I started my career.

Lastly, I make it my business to remain current on the new and emerging issues in the field of OH Nursing; this enables me to be a credible voice for independent nursing practice.

At the onset, the challenges involved with becoming an OHN entrepreneur can seem daunting; however for OHNs with a propensity to work in independent practice, the transition is well-worth the effort!

## **Brenda DeJong**

In 1996, I started my independent practice and have just celebrated my 20th anniversary as a self-employed OHN. I recall being psychologically ready to leap into solo practice when a company buy-out provided me with six months of salary. While much of the detailed “legal” nuances of starting my consulting practice have been long forgotten, I am still reminded of the personal support, the mentoring and the advice that I received from business colleagues, friends in business and my professional networks. This support was critical to my success.

One of the most challenging elements encountered was placing a dollar value on my services. To get a market comparison, I researched what my competitors and other similar service providers, were charging. While my fees have since more than doubled, initially finding out what similar entrepreneurs were charging was a worthwhile market research endeavour. My suggestion is: “Do not be afraid to charge for your true worth.”

When I began consulting, I focused on my technical specialist skills. My business plan and marketing materials listed the skills that I could offer and the solutions that I could provide. Typically, an organization was calling me because they had a problem for me to solve. As time went on and my confidence grew, I found repeat business conversations often began with, “Are you able to help us with X?” – I very rarely said “no”. If I did not think that I had the skills or the ability to help, I would find someone who could. This became a very lucrative “sub-contracting” approach. Once I established the contractor fee, I would bill the client on my contractor’s behalf and, as advised by my mentors, add 20 per cent for myself. This approach expanded my client list and significantly added to the service offerings. Importantly, I did not have to hire employees. Luckily, networking with professional practice groups provided me with the needed resources for this sub-contracting base.

I truly believe that in addition to the business, networking, problem-solving and technical skills, success will come from the OHN’s personal attributes and willingness to take risks, or simply being open and adventurous.

One of my favourite contracts that lasted over five years is not listed on the OHN’s typical skill set; but proved to be interesting and lucrative. A former client working in a hospital needed someone to work with an architect and construction team on behalf of the hospital to add a new emergency and surgical daycare department. They felt someone with healthcare, occupational health and safety, ergonomics, project management, as well as a clinical nursing background, would be ideal. I jumped at the chance and the experience was fascinating. Following the successful completion of the project, the architect firm called me to ask me if I would work with them on all their healthcare design projects. While using my “old” clinical nursing expertise was very helpful, being able to advise them on integrating human factors/ergonomics, LEAN principles, and health and safety principles into the design, proved to be a successful partnership.

The motto posted in my office was, and still is, “Leap and the net will appear” by John Burroughs. During the lean times, I learned to trust that “something” would come along, and it always did.

## **Dianne Dyck**

In planning to embark on my current business venture, I spent a number of years preparing to be ready for the future challenge. Since I wanted to consult in Occupational Health Nursing, Disability

Management and OH&S, I pursued learning opportunities in consulting, effective marketing and selling, project management, program evaluation and improvement techniques, and computer systems. I also concentrated on honing my communication skills, namely public speaking, business writing and technical writing. Importantly, garnering business contacts and supportive colleagues, proved invaluable. I learned that much of the available business development depends on “who you know, as opposed to what you know”.<sup>xix</sup>

In 10 years of business, I have grown professionally and managed to reach my business goals of:

- writing textbooks on disability management, on occupational health & safety, and a guide on how to create a psychologically safe and healthy workplace;
- facilitating advanced learning in those fields; and
- offering consulting services to a variety of Canadian and international clients.

Professionally, I worked to advance the field of OH Nursing. I promote OHNs through my writing, my teachings, and my conference presentations. Acting as a mentor, and occasionally as a coach, for OHNs are rewarding and continuous learning experiences for me. As I reflect, the rewards of entrepreneurship have been well-worth the journey and effort.

## **Juanita House**

My decision to move into independent practice as a Registered Nurse (RN), OHN wasn't deliberate; rather, it was a move of necessity. For a decade in public health practice, I worked and often felt like a “tortoise without a shell”. I was always a very dedicated RN, but I often felt out of place. The Occupational Health Nursing practice had always peaked my interest. That interest, combined with coming from a family of entrepreneurs, helped me find my “shell”, so to speak.

When approaching entrepreneurship, the single most important thing that I can stress is to think like you are writing a nursing care plan; in other words, have a business plan. You already know your RN-OHN competencies. What I had to learn were the complexities of business responsibilities; so here are the things that I absolutely encourage anyone seeking independent practice to consider:

1. Ensure you know the nuances of what your RN licensing body requires of you to practice independently.
2. Seek education in business, like entrepreneurial courses. The Government of Canada has great self-assessment tools on their website for those seeking entrepreneurship - <http://www.canadabusiness.ca/eng/page/2858/>.
3. Connect with a good accountant and a lawyer to make sure that you have the required business infrastructure and professional resources in place.
4. Know the different types of businesses that the Canada Revenue Agency allows. Whether you start as a sole proprietorship, or as an incorporated company, ensure that you understand the related financial responsibilities.
5. Seek out mentors in business and in independent practice. The Alberta Association of Nurses in Independent Practice (ARNIPP) is composed of an amazing network of RN's in Independent Practice (<http://www.privatepracticenurses.ca/>). The Alberta Occupational

Health Nurses Association (AOHNA) also has colleagues that can help the new OHN entrepreneur ([www.aohna.org](http://www.aohna.org)).

One piece of advice that I can offer is: Approach your practice with “open eyes and an open mind”. While entrepreneurship is scary at times, that fear can be either be a “paralyzer” or a “motivator”. But most OHN entrepreneurs will report that the rewards are enormous. I have always learned more when I moved past the fear with a healthy calculated approach to my business and my work.

### **Eric Stein**

To begin, I want to make a distinction between *independent practice* and *entrepreneurship*. Entrepreneurship is different from independent practice; yet somehow, both terms are interchangeably used. A person who has the desire to strike out on their own and work as a contract OHN is an independent practice practitioner rather than an entrepreneur. This distinction may be subtle, but a person working on their own may, or may not, have to develop some of the business infrastructure required by the entrepreneur. Being self-employed and working on a contract basis at casual jobs, doesn't necessarily make one an entrepreneur, or require the same amount of skills needed to create a business entity. In my mind, an entrepreneur is someone who strikes out on their own with the intent of hiring others and/or creating a business entity.

My second point would be the importance of creating a business plan in terms of what you want to offer to the marketplace. From my own experience, I did not do much initial planning and later, lived to regret that omission. For example, when I started, I worked as a contract, casual OHN, defined by CARNA as “independent practice”. It was only when I began hiring other OHNs and expanding what I was doing, that I entered the world of being an entrepreneur. I guess I became an entrepreneur without realizing it, and therefore, wasn't prepared for the work and the associated risks. Basically, I learned as I went along. Yes, I was still an OHN; but I was working as an OHN about 10% of the time and running my business the rest of the time.

Thirdly, I think an emphasis should be placed on doing a gap analysis of what services or products you want to offer, and then finding your niche market. Trying to compete with larger players, requires a great deal of time, investment, and establishing competitive prices. Having a business manager would have been beneficial; for me, it would have changed the direction that I took with my business. As we all know, the OHN cannot be all things to all people; I found that out as I went along. For example, when a client asked me to do some quantitative fit testing, I was thinking I should run out and buy a PortaCount® Pro+ Respirator Fit Tester. But I did not realize how many fit tests I would need to complete to pay off that machine, nor what the “market” was like, nor how much I would have to charge for each test. As a nurse, I didn't want to say “no”, or turn down work; so it flawed my decision-making process.

Lastly, I believe that there are different levels of entrepreneurs, each requiring different skill sets. For example, one OHN may choose to market specific services to a large number of clients; whereas, another OHN may have only a few clients to whom many different services are offered. Hence, the OHN entrepreneur needs to clearly understand the requisite skills to meet the desired business outcomes.

## Discussion

Reviewing the above commentaries, a few common themes to share with those OHNs contemplating a business endeavour, emerge:

- **Envision your future:** Dare to dream and then convert your vision into reality. This means examining what you have to offer to the marketplace and determining what the marketplace will bear and offer in return. Identify your services, your customers, their needs wants and expectations, the value of your services, and how you will handle the exchange of those services. The involved business transactions are sustainable when strong business relationships are developed and maintained.
- **Plan:** Determine what you will need to do to get yourself ready. Develop a business plan and a financial strategy. Undertake a SWOT analysis: What are the **S**trengths of your business plan? What are the **W**eaknesses? What are the **O**pportunities? What are the **T**hreats to your plan? In short, is your plan strong enough to enable you to address the risks and to succeed?
- **Prepare for the journey:** You are entering the world of business; your nursing knowledge and skills, although valuable, will not be enough to carry you forward. Seek the support of business experts to ensure that your dream is realized. Make sure that you meet the business infrastructure requirements, and arrange to have adequate business-insurance protection.
- **Hone your skills:** Identify your business, relationship, analytical, technical specialist and consulting skills; which skills need to be improved or perfected? Take action to address any noted deficits or limitations. In doing so, watch for industry-proven tools and tips that will help you to succeed.
- **Implement your plan:** Set up your business, making sure that you clearly define who you are, what you are offering, and how you are going to meet your service-quality promises. Remember: Always position yourself to under-promise and over-deliver. That means managing your market demand in accordance with what you can offer. Test the market to enable competitive pricing of your services. Produce and distribute marketing materials; make sure they speak and appeal to your customers. Seek opportunities to get your business recognized and valued by “targeted” customers. Volunteering is one way to make important business contacts. Establish your business strategy – the goal, objectives, and targets (short-term and long-term). Performance measures will allow quantification of your efforts; be sure to establish them.
- **Evaluate your efforts:** Regularly measure, quantitatively and qualitatively the success of your business. Ask your customers for feedback and improvement suggestions. Focus on continually improving your business plan, as well as your knowledge and skills. When faced with challenges, seek help from experts, coaches or mentors.
- **Sustain your passion:** You started with a dream, a dream that enticed you to become an entrepreneur. It is critical to keep that passion “alive” and motivational. If you have passion for your work, your services, your business, and what you can offer; others will “buy-in”. Passion is infectious. Having fun at what you do, is the secret.

## Conclusion

The OHN, if adequately prepared, can establish a new business and venture into the marketplace as an entrepreneur prepared to succeed. However, as pointed out, the traditional academic

Occupational Health Nursing programs offer only the basics; it is up to the OHN to get ready to meet the challenge of entrepreneurship.

## Author



Dianne Dyck is a Certified Occupational Health Nurse and Occupational Health & Safety Specialist who has worked for private and public-funded agencies to develop Occupational Health, Occupational Health & Safety, Disability Management, and Workplace Wellness programs. As an educator, Dianne has developed a number of courses in the fields of Disability Management, Occupational Health and Safety, Human Resources (Integrated Workplace Health Management). Her current publications are *Disability Management: Theory, Strategy and Industry Practice 5<sup>th</sup> ed.*, *Occupational Health & Safety: Theory, Strategy and Industry Practice 3rd ed.*, and *A Practical Guide to Psychological Health & Safety in the Workplace*. Dianne also teaches the Integrated Disability Management Programs at the University of Fredericton.

## Contributors: Thank You

On behalf of the OHNs readership, a “thank you” is extended to all the contributors; your insight on your entrepreneurial experience is much appreciated. Please join in reviewing the contributor bios.

### Fay Benard, MN, OHNC

Fay was co-owner and president of The ECM Group, a company that specialized in the provision of disability management, occupational health, and travel health services to large and small public and private employers. Fay retired from active nursing practice in 2012. During her career, she brought the following expertise to her various roles:

- A Master of Nursing Degree with specialization in administration and occupational health.
- Certification in Personnel Administration and Occupational Health Nursing.
- Experience in the provision of educational sessions in disability and health-related topics to large and small groups.
- Experience as an instructor and in course development for Grant McEwan Community College’s Disability Management Program.

### **Shelly Bischoff RN, OHNC, COHN(C), CHRP, CHSC**

Shelly is a Senior Occupational Health Consultant. Since 1996, she has worked with both public- and private-sector organizations in the areas of Occupational Health, Safety, Wellness and Disability Management. She now consults to organizations across Canada. She is a national speaker in her areas of expertise and an instructor with the University of New Brunswick Health & Safety Certificate, and Occupational Health Nursing Certificate programs. Contact at: [shelly@ptolemyassociates.com](mailto:shelly@ptolemyassociates.com)

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Brenda is the owner and senior consultant for WorkWell Consulting (established in 1996), a British Columbia-based organizational health, safety and ergonomics service provider. With over 30 years of experience, Brenda specializes in the areas of disability management (including attendance management), organizational health and safety (including legislative requirements), and ergonomics. Brenda also provides clinical, ergonomics and health and safety advice with architectural firms on healthcare design. The majority of her work has been in manufacturing, retail, office, healthcare, laboratory, industrial (including warehouses), telecommunications, agriculture, insurance, education and municipal government sectors. Contact at: [brendadejong@telus.net](mailto:brendadejong@telus.net)

### **Juanita House, RN, BN, COHN(C), OHNC, LNC**

Juanita is president of Eisan Consulting Inc., an Occupational Health (OH) and Disability Management service. She owns and operates an OH Clinic in downtown Calgary, Alberta.

Juanita has been approved by CARNA to work as an Independent Practitioner in Occupational Health Nursing (OHN) and as a Legal Nurse Consulting (LNC).

Juanita and her staff of RN-OHN's assist clients to develop Disability Management and Occupational Health programs based on identified workplace exposures and health risks.

Juanita is also a Certified LNC and provides expert opinion and case reviews for lawyers and employers in OH and DM practice.

In the past year, Juanita has been busy developing core curriculum courses for the University of New Brunswick's (UNB) first distance Occupational Health Nursing Certification program. She is currently an Instructor in that program. She is also a preceptor for students in of University of Calgary Nursing program and the Grant MacEwan University OHN program.

Passionate about worker health, Juanita is currently pursuing a Masters in Health Promotion with a focus on the worker population. Contact at: [www.eisanconsulting.com](http://www.eisanconsulting.com)

### **Eric Stein, RN, MEd, COHN(C), CRSP**

Eric has been an occupational health nurse for 18 years, having worked in a variety of industries including health care, petrochemical, and the public sector. Presently, Eric works as a consultant, training and educating workers and organizations on the topics of industrial hygiene, health and safety, health promotion, and infection control.

As well as holding a post degree certificate in occupational health nursing, he is nationally certified in Canada and the USA as a specialist in Occupational Health Nursing. Additionally, Eric holds a CRSP designation, a bachelor of science in nursing, and a master of education specializing in workplace education and training. Contact at: [cdnrn@planet.eon.net](mailto:cdnrn@planet.eon.net)

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