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STARTUP DENTALSPA

A foot massage with your filling?

Author: -Ethan Bartanen

Section: SMALL BIZ

Type of business: general dentistry in spa atmosphere

Address: 5252 E. 82nd St., Suite 203

Phone: 578-9666 E-mail: info@dentalspaindy.com

Web site: www.dentalspaindy.com

Founded: November 2004

Owner: Amy Hampton

Owner's background: Amy Hampton received her doctor of dental surgery degree from Indiana University School of Dentistry in 2000. She spent the next four years as an associate dentist in Lafayette and Logansport.

Why started business: Despite her love for dentistry, Hampton remained troubled by her patients' reactions. "I would go to work every day and hear people say 'I don't want to be here' or 'I hate the dentist,'" she said. "I wanted to turn that negative into a positive." So she began planning a business where people would leave the dentist's office not only with a white smile, but also with a relaxed mind-set.

Competitive advantage: DentalSpa offers customers general dentistry-everything from Zoom! Whitening to cosmetics. However, it's spa-like atmosphere sets the business apart. Throughout the visit, customers are offered a masseuse, a flat-screen television, headphones, support pillows, aromatherapy and a paraffin wax treatment for hands. At the end of the treatment, patients are given a milkshake in the flavor of their choice. All of these services are complimentary, and the prices at DentalSpa are comparable to what other local dentists charge, Hampton said. Because these additions are free, insurance covers the visit. "If you have to sit in a dentist's chair, why not have your head resting on a neck pillow while your feet get massaged and you watch your favorite TV show," Hampton said.

Startup cost: \$600,000

Funding source: HPSC, a Boston-based firm that provides capital to health care professionals, and Patterson Financial Services, a Minnesota-based company that offers complete equipment financing and lease plans to dentists

Projected first-year revenue: \$250,000

Potential problem and contingency plan: DentalSpa remains hindered by a lack of public awareness. Additionally, those who do know what the business offers often assume they can't afford the services.

"I tell customers 'If you can afford to go to the dentist down the street, you can afford to go to us,'" Hampton said.

To overcome these obstacles, DentalSpa routinely hands out brochures and wants to do some advertising.

First-year goal: Hampton is looking to create a larger clientele in Indianapolis and surrounding areas by educating them on what the business is about.

Five-year vision: Hampton hopes to expand the business within its own walls and bring on a partner.

Caption:

Dr. Amy Hampton has come up with innovative ways to take the pain out of dental visits.

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