



So, you want to be an associate. Now what?

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The path of becoming a chiropractic associate is a common one, and it can go one of multiple different ways. It can be a great experience where you stay long term, or it's a short-term situation to learn and move on. It can also leave you in a place where you learn nothing or pick up really bad habits. The common thread through each example is your need to know what steps you need to take in order to evaluate the presenting opportunity.

The first and most important thing to becoming an associate is considering how you are going to get paid and then what the contract provisions are.

When negotiating pay, yes, it is true a contract is worth only what someone is willing to pay. But, the negotiating points in your favor are not just doing exams or adjusting patients when the main doctor is gone. Your value increases when you're willing to drive new business to the office. If this is a situation where you don't plan to stay long term, this is a great chance to hone your public speaking or community outreach skills.

The next part is how you get paid. Here, the real question is whether you should be an employee or an independent contractor. My suggestion is you read the IRS rules on the difference between the two to see which one you qualify as. An employee has half their taxes paid by the employer and a contractor pays 100% of their own employment taxes. Once again, your employment designation is based upon your situation and contract provisions, not based on the preference of your employer. The best reference to get a full understanding is by simply performing a web search for "IRS rules for independent contractors".

These types of conversations with your employer over pay and contracts do not usually lead to comfortable interactions for a new doctor. The lesson to learn here is to always be willing to take two steps to protect yourself. Primarily, always have contracts reviewed by an attorney. In my experience, I've ended up spending less money on an attorney than what I would've lost in a bad business deal. Secondly, always be willing to ask questions during negotiations in order to set expectations or to understand why something you don't understand is taking place.

If you take these steps, you can set up your time as an associate to be successful for both you and the office you'll be working at.



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