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Developing Your Business Accent: Tips & Tools for  
Offering Accent Modification Services  
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- [Amy] Once again, welcome to our webinar today, Developing Your Business Accent: Tips and Tools for Offering Accent Modification Services. Our presenter today is Sonia Sethi-Kohli. She is a multilingual speech language pathologist and professional communication coach who has served in a variety of settings and roles with extensive clinical and corporate SLP experience of approximately 20 years. Sonia currently owns and operates a private practice in the greater Chicago area which has two distinct divisions, one offering clinical SLP services and the other offering corporate and professional communication training services. In her clinical division, Global Speech and Swallow, LLC, Sonia provides a variety of diagnostic and therapeutic interventions to culturally and linguistically diverse patient population, ranging in age from infancy through geriatrics. In her corporate SLP division, The Global Speech Suite, LLC, she specializes in providing individuals and organizations with customized training programs focusing on accent modification, presentation skills, leadership communication, cross-cultural communication, and much more. Sonia also currently serves as President of the Corporate Speech Pathology Network, or CORSPAN, a nonprofit professional organization for corporate speech trainers that share their background and training in SLP. So Sonia, I'm so excited to have you here with us today. I'd like to welcome you, and I will turn over the floor to you.

- [Sonia] Great, thank you so much, Amy, for that warm welcome, and thank you for this opportunity to use this great platform of [speechpathology.com](http://speechpathology.com) to share this important information with my SLP colleagues. Thank you to Kathleen and the rest of the [speechpathology.com](http://speechpathology.com) team. Throughout this whole process, you guys have been excellent to work with. To all of you listening, either today or on a recorded version later, welcome. I'm excited that you are here, and I am excited to be here. There is a lot of good information, hopefully good information, that I want to share with you, and hopefully we will have a lot of good thought developed during this next hour that we are together. Let me forward my slide here, excuse me. So your learning outcomes are this. We want to talk about the key components of accent modification and our role in

service delivery, describe various models of accent modification practice, some key business elements when offering these services, and really open you up to some resources and tools that are available to you to establish and or grow an accent modification business. I want to also spend some time identifying some mindsets, some mindset shifts that we may need when transitioning into this area of our field, and some myths for the SLP to consider when offering accent modification services as part of a business.

Now, we have an hour together, and that's not nearly enough time to share everything that I want to share, but what I want to do is hopefully provide you with a framework for those of you thinking about delving into this area of our field. You know, accent modification has been a part of our field for several years, but I think, more and more, in the more recent years, there's more research being done, in our field specifically, related to this area of service delivery and there's more awareness and more and more, also, I think our SLPs are branching out into more entrepreneur roles, whether it's in private practice or developing products and tools and those types of things. So what I hope to illustrate during this time is that accent modification is a very worthwhile and valuable service for individuals, organizations, and communities.

It can be a profitable means of income for SLPs using your expertise that you already have and with some extra self-study. It's not easy. It's not an easy way to just make a lot of money, being an SLP. It will take effort and time and energy to do so, and you will fail, especially with these business practices. You will fail and you will learn from those failures, and you will hopefully come out even stronger and more successful in your business. There's not really one right way to offer accent modification services. There are a multitude of resources and tools that I am going to help make you aware of, but there's a whole slew more that I will not have time to even talk about during this lecture and also, you know, there's multiple different markets for this type of service. So I hope to illustrate that there's no one right answer for doing this, and also, that idea that, as

speech language pathologist professionals, we are not the only ones that offer this type of service, but we really are a very premier choice of professional to choose when hiring somebody to do this. So I hope to illustrate that a little bit for you, and really just serve as a springboard, to inspire you, to make, take a risk and delve into this area a little bit deeper. For those of you that have already started giving accent modification services and you're wanting to grow your business, I hope that much of what we talk about, you can take at least some pieces, some nuggets of it, and review and revise some things that you're doing in your business, or not yet tapped into that will help you grow your business, or some of those, some of you that may be in private practice that want to add this into your service delivery model. This is just an outline for you to follow along. We'll go through some basics of accent modification and some related terminology. We are not going to spend a lot of time today talking about the technical aspects of accent modification.

There's different courses on [speechpathology.com](http://speechpathology.com), outside workshops, outside textbooks, for you to be able to do that. The purpose really of this course is to provide you with some key elements related to a business framework or business structure of how to do that, and really just give you the surface of some resources for you to do some further investigation and self-study on your own. For the purposes of our talk today, we will be referring to only the accent modification piece of corporate SLP service delivery.

So there are many different services, and we'll briefly touch on them in terms of what you can offer as a corporate SLP, but for today we're just talking about accent modification, and that too, we're talking about the practice of accent modification service delivery in the U.S. of A. There are, I'm sure, lots of international overlap in terms of our colleagues in Canada and other areas of the world that are offering this type of service, but there are probably nuances that I'm not aware of. So for our purposes, we're sticking to how, whatever information that we have based here in the

U.S. So let's talk about, and really quick, sorry, really quick housekeeping, you should, as Amy mentioned, you have a link to the references and to the slides, but then there's also a supplement. It's a resource planning guide, a resource and planning guide that I wanted to create for you to help guide you along, especially when we're going through the business elements of this accent modification business, but also, I'm really hoping that you get inspired or something I say triggers a thought, or you have a thought, or write down some goals in terms of something that you want to do in terms of offering this service or researching more about this service.

So hopefully, you find that useful, and there's a lot more resources actually listed on that resource guide. This format, as Amy said, we'll probably hold questions 'til the end, just because I wanna get through a lot of this information, but having said that, I'm used to talking to people in person, or if it's virtual, at least I can see your face and we can have a dialogue. So I, please, I welcome you, and I encourage you to, if there's anything that you want more information about or my perspective about, I'm happy to continue this dialogue offline afterwards, so please free to email me at any time afterwards. What is accent modification?

So if we, if you go to the ASHA website, they have a great practice portal with an overview of accent modification and listing different elements of it and different resources. They also have something for the public, describing what accent modification is and how speech language pathologists can help with that accent modification. Remember, it is an elective service sought by individuals who want to change or modify their speech patterns. Now there's a little bit of difference in terms of what an accent is, but right now, the, multiple authors will state that we all have an accent. So to use a term like accent elimination or accent reduction, that kind of is suggesting that one accent is more superior than the other, or there is more of a standardized accent, and I think that concept is changing a little bit. So it's evolving. So while we don't wanna say that one is superior to the other, we will say that it varies

from what that mainstream of where you are is using, the pronunciation patterns that they are using. What is accent modification? The modification piece, Robert McKinney in his textbook, suggests that it's, "Making changes "to increase communicative effectiveness." That is our goal. We want to be clear and natural speaking, effective communicators. So as, and McKinney talks about this a lot, that we, as speech pathologists, we are programmed to look for intelligibility. Yes, that is super important. But we also need to make sure that, overall, it's the clear and more natural speech that we are promoting so that it is not a distraction.

When we go and talk about related terminology a little bit, I'm sorry, I paused there for a second, we just got done saying that accent reduction, accent elimination are not the preferred terminology, right. We want to promote diversity and we want to, and with the perspective that we all have an accent, you're not going to want to eliminate an accent. This is a, this will take some change and some counseling when talking to your clients as well, because some of them will come in, and we'll talk about this a little bit later, some of them will come in and say, "I wanna get rid of my accent," you know, or, "I wanna completely get rid of my accent." So we don't wanna use those terminologies. Really, the more preferred term is accent modification. It's more of a neutral term.

You know, for our purposes, accent training for this course, we're going to refer to that as being the act of providing services to teach an accent or dialect in, for a role in entertainment industry. There's a difference between a regional versus a native accent, and then when I speak to clinical versus corporate speech services, I'm referring to our traditional clinical services that we provide either in education or health care with adults or kids, pediatrics, versus this corporate SLP world which includes accent modification and may include presentation skills, executive presence training, voice projection training, voice aesthetics, those types of things. You may also hear corporate speech language pathologists referring to themselves as a corporate speech trainer or an executive communication coach or professional communication trainer or coach. So

those are all within our industry. What is the need and the value of accent modification services? So we just got done saying we want clear communication. So if I were to say to you, if we had two accented speakers, and one said, "We went to the Pizza Hut "and we had a Wedgie Lover pizza," versus, "We vent to the Pizza Hut, "and we had the Veggie Lover pizza." So, if you just wanna chat, type in the chat box, which one was clearer to you? The first one or the second one, or neither? Just put in number one or, right. So most of you are saying the second, right, and both of those are examples of accented English pronunciation of the same sentence, right, that are different from my, whatever my native accent is.

So I would say, "We went to Pizza Hut "and had a Veggie Lover pizza. "We order a big Veggie Lover pizza," I don't even remember what I said. So the idea is we want clear communication. How is this relevant to us? We want to make sure that, we as professionals, we know the value of clear communication, right, in all entities of our life and our world and workplaces. But think about the effectiveness of communication in a workplace where, if you are missing out on a lot of talent if you aren't able to understand a lot of what they're saying, and that also works to impact them in a psychosocial manner, too, because many of those employees feel devalued, feel that nobody understands them, and so then, they have less confidence. So in the health care setting, we talk about safety, it's a big deal.

There's a big difference between 30 milligrams of something and 13 milligrams of something, right. The Freysteinson, I don't know if I'm pronouncing that last name correctly, they did a study, and they did a study and they provided, in a large medical center in Texas, they provided nursing and nursing students with accent modification from a licensed speech language pathologist, and what they found was that they had increased confidence afterwards, they had increased self-perceived communication competence, and these are really important things for people's performance, but then also, if you look at the larger organization, the health care system, safety is one thing,

but then also, a patient's satisfaction, those of you that work in health care know how important patient satisfaction is for reimbursement, for all sorts of things, and one of the indicators, one of the largest indicators was the communicative effectiveness of a nurse and how well they were able to communicate with their nurse. So it has great impact. Grogger et al. just came out with a, there's a working paper of, that there's wage bias. So this exists, wage bias based off of a regional accent. So they did it with our National Economic Bureau here, but it was done in Germany, and they found about a 20% wage penalty because of a regional accent with some of these workers.

So you know, there are definitely, there is definite impact of speaking with, being an accented English speaker, and how that can impact your psychosocial status and your personal and professional relationships and interactions. You know, McKinney, Robert McKinney has done a lot of talks at ASHA, and then we were lucky enough to have him talk to us in CORSPAN about the social impact of having an accent or being perceived as having an accent. So there's a lot of research being done in this area and it, a motivation for a client to seek out accent modification services is a desire to be understood. We have a lot of professionals with a lot of a great talent and a lot of great value that they can add to organizations, but if they're unable to be effective communicators, then that's a problem, because they're missing out, and they're organization is not getting the value of what they want, wanted by hiring them.

Okay, sorry. So the SLP role and the needed expertise: you have to do some sort of self-study and specialized training in this area. There are many certifications and training programs and well-published materials that are available for assessment and training, but they're not necessary. You don't have to have a specialized certification to do this type of work, but I will, will, will, say that you have to have some sort of self-study and specialized training. You need to have at least, I have on here, three to five years minimum of clinical expertise. Now, the reason I say that is you need to get your feet wet, first of all, of being on your own as a clinician. You need to have a solid,

solid ground of how to assess an individual, how to set goals, plan for whatever your desired outcomes are, training, that cuing hierarchy, modifying, determining if we met those goals or not and then going back. That all happens within that clinical expertise, and also, just other workplace expertise of dealing with different colleagues and being an employee and those types of skillsets that you get when you work as an employee, and you are giving clinical expertise. The reason you need to have that is because you will use your clinical expertise, but in a different, nonclinical setting when you are giving accent modification services. But at least three to five, and you have to have some sort of extra self-study with that.

You have to be able to know when to refer is necessary, if there is the slightest chance that there is something more clinical going on with them, refer them for clinical evaluation. You need to be able to counsel and advocate. So for our purposes, any accent modification program that you are delivering, you will have to have counseling and advocacy as a key component of those, of that business model, of that service. In the McKinney text, he talks about how we really need to manage expectations for some of our clients, and we talked about that a little bit, but there's a critical period in terms of when you develop your accent, and so it might not be that feasible to completely rid somebody of an accent, but why do we want to do that?

So these are some of the conversations that we need to have with our clientele, but then also advocating for them, right. Many times, I'll have clients that say, "Nobody understands me at work," or, "This, my colleague never understands what I'm saying," when they're really not that severely accented, or you know, I am able to understand them fairly, fairly relatively well, and some education on our part that it may not be you. There is some sort of bias and discrimination. We have the literature to support that, even this Chakraborty, just last, at the end of last year, came out with this pilot study where, within our field, there was, I think 286 speech language pathologists that they had fill out a survey, and there were these, their own biases in terms of accented

speakers and things like that. So look into that a little bit more. You need to be more culturally sensitive and culturally aware. So, not to jump around too much, but going back to the counseling piece and the advocacy piece, I really want to charge you with advocating to organizations about better workplace communication. We know communication is not just a one-way street, so we can arm our clients with the tools to be the most effective communicators possible, but we also have to work on promoting good listening skills in our workplace. So we really need to advocate for that. We also need to advocate for the corporate SLP as being a premier professional to do this type of work, and I will talk more about that in a little bit.

You also need to be able to market your services, to sell them, to manage a business, and we hopefully will give you some tools here in a little bit to help you do that, or feel more comfortable doing that as well. We are not the only professionals that offer this type of service. So teacher of English to speakers of other languages, or TESOL teachers, and voice and speech trainers also provide this service. So you very well might be, if you're going to offer, say online services, you might be competing with an ESL teacher that's in a different part of the world, different part of the country, and may or may not be charging them more or less. But why do I think that SLPs are uniquely positioned to do this?

A, it's within our scope of practice to do, correct, but then we also, we have a great knowledge base of all of the speech, the systems, subsystems of speech production. We know how to train someone for more articulatory precision, or we know the basis of voice and resonance, those types of things, right. We're also good teachers and trainers. We not only have the science behind it, but we also know how to train and teach. That is what we do day in and day out with our patients, with our clients, right. We know how to give more cuing when needed or pull it back a little bit. We know how to assess and review and come back to our goals if they need to be modified, right. We all have some sort of experience in counseling and advocacy within our clinical

practice. So one thing that many experts in our field will say is that we do need to, as SLPs, maybe have a little bit more practice in training suprasegmentals, so the intonation of phrasing, linking, those types of things, that is something that maybe some of the other industry professionals, like the ESL world, they might be better versed in that, but that will come with your self-study and more specialized training to do that. Really quick, I want to go through these myths, and I'm calling them myths, but they're more fallacies or misconceptions about accent modification business, and these are coming from frequent conversations with SLPs that are newly transitioning into the corporate speech world, or just experiences that we have had, even with some of my clients.

So the first one I wanna touch on is that it is therapy. It is not therapy. There is no clinical diagnosis, there is nothing, there is no speech disorder, so this is not therapy. It is not treatment. So you need to really make that shift of that verbiage. You are training, you are coaching, but you are not providing therapy. So having said that, here in the U.S., insurance will not cover services. So I think there's a little nuance in talking with some of my CORSPAN colleagues that are in Canada. They, some of them suggest that some insurances will cover a portion of accent modification services in Canada, and I don't know how it is in other parts of the world, but here in the U.S., insurance is not going to cover this.

I have had clients ask me, especially when they know that I'm a speech language pathologist, they'll ask me, "Hey, my kids went to speech "and we used our insurance, "can I not," excuse me, "can I not do that?" Or a client will say, "Oh, I told my friends "I'm going to my speech therapist." So we really need to educate them too, of the fact that there's nothing wrong with them, and that comes into that counseling piece. There's nothing medically wrong with them, or there's no disorder. It's just a difference, and we are trying to work towards clear communication, so it's training. I need to have adult therapy experience to work with them. No you don't, and those of you that work

with pediatrics and work on articulation therapy, you might be in a better spot in terms of doing some of the training versus somebody that's been working with adults that has been working primarily in head and neck cancer. So that individual might actually take a little bit more of self-study and retraining to work with this population. Having said that, you have to keep in mind, this is an adult population, most of them are highly successful professionals that you will be seeing. They're motivated individuals, they're cognitively, communicatively intact individuals. So that is a different subset than what we are typically used to working with in terms of working with our patients or clients in the more clinical area. We must be bilingual.

This is something that has come up. Do I need to speak that language in order to be a bridge and a gap? No, absolutely not. Having said, being bilingual, I think that you can use that to your advantage in terms of marketing and counseling and relating, building that rapport with your client that you know, I know what it's like to learn different language and getting the nuances of that accent, but I know that I want to be an effective communicator in that other language. So, but you most definitely do not need to be bilingual. It's more lucrative with less effort. We touched on this a little bit earlier. Absolutely not. Yes, it can be lucrative and it can be a good source of income, and people can do only accent modification as their only source of income.

However, that will take time and effort and money and investment and years to build up your client base. It's not something that's gonna happen right off the bat. So that last one, a new, brand new accent modification business will be sustainable in isolation. Absolutely not. The difference between an accent modification business and, you know, even setting up a private practice where you're offering clinical skills is that with clinical skills or clinical service delivery, you have the networks of, if you're an insurance, in network with insurance, you have that working for you as a network to gain referrals. You have physicians offices, you have school districts that will call you, right. So you have more networks in that sense. In this realm, you really have to go out

there and build your client base, and that takes a lot of different pieces and effort and time to build that up. But once it, once you do have it, it should, you should be able to find successes, hopefully. One of the biggest mindset shifts that you're going to have to make is that if you embark on this journey, you are running a business now, so you will have to think as a business owner, as a business manager. You're gonna have to think as a business owner. So when we are talking about things such as the policies and procedures that you establish for your business, you're going to have to know how lenient you will be, because if you are too lenient, because we come from a place of health care and education, we come from a very service-oriented, very people-oriented business, and so, or, sorry, industry, so then when we have to shift in thinking about dollars and cents and time and effort and energy to do all of this, to provide a service that we know holds value, but you have to think about it in terms of that, it's very uncomfortable.

I will be the first one to say that was probably the biggest shift that, you know, if, oh, you know, my client canceled, "That's okay, you can come again next week," or, "That's okay." You know, you have to recognize that if this professional is signing up for this training with you and they keep canceling, that's money that you are losing, right. That is time that you're losing that you could be offering to somebody else or using to market your services more or build your business more.

So you need to start thinking in those terms as well. Not to lose sight of what your mission and purpose is, but you need to also keep in mind those business aspects of it. Really, you are, and we've touched on this, but you are really using your clinical expertise to drive practical and functional outcomes. So you're using that clinical lens in a nonclinical setting. You're taking off that white coat, you're taking off those scrubs. You are using what you know and what you know how to do very well, and you have gained this new audience, this new clientele, and you are applying those principles to this new audience. But this different set of audiences, we've touched on this, that they

are not, you know, they are very high-functioning. They are motivated. They are coming to you, and they are paying you to help them, versus sometimes dealing with the patient that doesn't have that motivation, or it's a struggle to have somebody continuously show up for services when they are not paying for it themselves. Focus on what the customer wants and what is the most functional outcome for the customer. So from a technical aspect, in the McKinney text, they talk about functional load. So again, going back to the intelligibility piece, we could spend weeks and weeks and weeks training every single sound production that is a difference from what we are considering to be standard or neutral or mainstream. However, if that's not going to have as much weight on their communicative effectiveness, then let's not waste time, and your clients not gonna be that engaged. They're paying you to make them have some functional outcomes.

They want change in their day to day personal and professional relationships, and they want to be understood. So let's focus on what's most functional. That is something, though, that is not too far off in terms of those of you that plan and make goals for either adults or children. You want to, at the end goal is to be functional in whatever setting that is that you decide. Hold on to this second piece here, the client benefit.

In the Westfall book, and I'm gonna have you do a little exercise in this next slide here in a little bit, but in the Westfall book, he talks about how really, you need to think about what your strengths are, and how you're gonna deliver that to your client, but then really, what matters most to your client is how does your client benefit? So this is more of that business aspect that you're gonna need to take thought of, right. You can say that, "Oh, you've made 68% change." Okay, great, but if your client can't functionally observe or feel the difference in his presentations at work, then maybe your client's not gonna see as much value in your service or what you've done up until that point, right. So really, you need to be able to take your strengths or your service offerings. How are you delivering it to your client, but then also, how does your client benefit from it, how

are you, and what I would like to add to that, is how do you communicate and demonstrate that to your client, and we'll talk a little bit more about that in a minute. All right, so the nitty gritty, and these are some of the key elements of a business, and this can be applied again towards most businesses, but for the purposes of today, we're really focusing on this accent modification business, and the reason I developed this illustration as a house is because I really want you to think about it, that if I have a leak in my roof, there's gonna, that's gonna trickle down to other places in my house, right. If I have a crack in my foundation, that's gonna hurt the stability of other things.

If I have a hole in my wall in any of the rooms of my house, right, that is going to impact other areas. So as we go through these seven elements, feel free to refer to your resource guide, jot things down, and you know, if you have a thought that's inspiring you to think about something else, research or resource or dive deeper into it, jot it down as we go along, because this is, this framework is really yours. It's your personal thing. There's no one way to, you know, set all of these pieces of your house. It is your home, it is your house, but you will have to give enough effort and energy into each piece to make sure that it is a strong, solidified unit. The first piece is your mission and value proposition.

So what is your goal? What is it that you want to achieve? I think I put in your resource guide that this is something that is extremely personal. So before you even talk to a family member, a significant other, a colleague, a business advisor, anybody, I want you to sit down and write down, what is it that you want to achieve? What is it that you want to, what service do you want to bring, and who is your client? Who is your ideal target audience, right. That might change. You come back to it, it might change. But you have to have a solid vision of what it is that you want to achieve, and then all of those other pieces will have to feed in to that mission and that value proposition. Value proposition, it's a promise of value to be delivered and communicated and acknowledged, right. It's also belief from the customer about how they benefit, so a

little bit more of what we were just talking about, what I was just explaining. You really need to develop your business strategy, your business model, and establish your niche. So establishing your niche, speech language pathologists, not a lot of, there's not a lot of awareness of all of the things that we can do as a speech language pathologist, but having said that, there's even less knowledge about what a corporate SLP does. So really, really promoting that and finding what your niche is or what your specialty service is, right. In terms of target audiences, the sky is the limit. So academics, not only professors, but international students that are coming here to, for further study, researchers and scientists, IT, or in business executives, health care we just talked about a while ago, and the entertainment industry, doing that accent training. So what I want you to do, if you look at your resource guide, we all know what SMART goals are.

We do those on a regular basis for our patients and our clients, and what I want you to do, either today or soon after this talk, when you're feeling inspired, I want you to jot down a couple things and email it to yourself. Schedule it for, in advance. Then come back to it and see, have you made that step, whether it's a small step or a big step towards that mission and value of, value proposition of what you want to deliver, right. As a holistic mission for your business, you will have to come back and revisit it. So a SMART goal becomes smarter when you evaluate and revise and review it, right, which we do all of the time.

So do that for yourself, too. Maybe your mission, initially, is too lofty of a plan, or it's too big of a plan. Come back to it and you will learn from the processes, the experiences that you have as you go along and your business grows. Registration and regulatory, we're not gonna spend a lot of time on this, because it is so, it varies between states, between countries, and those types of things. So you need to find out from your regulatory board what all it entails to register a business, right. When thinking about this, think about your name, your business name, and those types of things, but

then also, in terms of your professional certification and licensure. So follow your code of ethics and stay within your scope of practice, and of course, if there is something that you feel like is not within that scope of practice, either get the training to make it ethical for you to be providing that service, or refer them to somebody else that could better serve them. State and local licensure laws, pay attention to those. There is a big area of gray in terms of, I'm sure within the U.S. you guys have heard that there's maybe talk of a compact licensure or reciprocity for Telepractice professionals. Then, so that may be coming in our future, but then also, SLPs are not the only professionals that provide this service.

So then, if a true certification or licensure is not needed, are we able to promote ourselves as an accent modification specialist, not the speech language pathologist, and offer services across state lines? I don't know. I don't have the answer to that and, but those are just some things to think about. Just don't do anything that you think is ethically wrong, all right. That's easy. There is various, also, local and state or international rules that you want to do some research and find out that, is it okay if I'm just providing communication training, some states have rules against even any type of communication training.

So that would, accent modification would fall under that. Then professional liability, your insurance. As ASHA members, we do get a discount with Mercer and Proliability, but then think about, too, if you are offering services in a brick and mortar physical location, will you need other types of liability, general liability and those types of things? We've talked about this a little bit, but accent modification is your service that is offered. So number three, your service that you're offering is accent modification, and that includes that counseling and advocacy piece of it. What you need to decide is how many of these other entities you wish to offer, either off the bat, right when you start, or as things progress and your business grows and expands, maybe you can add those in slowly. You know, some of these things may naturally and organically come

along with your accent modification services, like the cross-cultural communication a little bit, and maybe some more advanced grammar and advanced vocabulary. Now, if you do choose to do ESL or that type of service, be very cautious, because then you might be focused more on the English language teaching versus true pronunciation training or accent modification, and you also will have competitors, because there's many, many organizations that offer ESL classes for free, right. So if you're working to have that ESL component as more income, be wary that you're not competing too much with other organizations that offer that type of service for free. Then it takes you away, too, from truly the process of accent modification. Presentation skills, voice projection, those types of things, those things you might introduce at the tail end of your service training program of accent modification, but then, that is a good indicator, at that time, do we refer for additional services?

Not to be unethical again, but if you think that, hey, you know, we worked for 12, 13 weeks together, and you've done a great job in training, getting a more natural and clear speech pronunciation platform, but now let's work on some of these presentation skills, these nuances. So maybe that is a time where you can refer them and build into their program or create a new program for some more existing services within your business. The actual accent modification training, again, there are several different programs and certifications and trainings that are available, and they're listed in your resource guide as well.

But you know, it is all what we're used to: doing a screening, doing an assessment, making those goals, doing the training, modification, practice activities, and then revisiting if we've made our goals, if we need to modify our goals. One thing you need to think about, and we'll talk about this when we talk about economics is, is your screening and initial consultation for free? Are you going to offer an evaluation for free or will you offer just an assessment? Some people just want the assessment of tell me what I'm doing wrong, or in their mind, what they're doing, quote, wrong. Service

delivery, so this is where there's multiple combinations that could work. But you need to think about physical location versus virtual sessions. Are you going to be giving services via Telepractice? It doesn't necessarily have to be someone that's farther away from you or in a different country. You know, I have many clients that are in the same city as I am, but they just, for ease of scheduling, they prefer to do online sessions, which is fine. We've had pretty similar outcomes to in person sessions in terms of accent training or accent modification in that realm. Physical location, is it going to be your office or is it going to be their office or place of, a designated place that they want. If it is your office, if you are a private practitioner that's a, that works with peds, and you have lots of toys and those types of things, you have to think about those things as well, too, right.

What, this is a different clientele, so make sure that your office and those types of things really speak to who your clientele is, right. Individual versus group sessions, and self pay versus sponsored, so is someone paying it out of pocket versus is their employer paying? You know, many employers, they cannot mandate that they get accent modification training, but they can suggest that they do, and then use some of that training and professional budget that they have to seek out services from you.

So that then brings up other ideas that, you know, scheduling-wise, it's very different if someone is not, is coming to you on their own, you guys can finagle and finesse your schedule, but then, if it's being sponsored by somebody, that person is probably someone they're investing in because they have a lot of role and responsibility, right. So you're going to have to find time within their day or their work commitment to be able to provide them that service. Having said that, too, and we'll talk about this when we talk about processes, if they're canceling on you all of the time, they're not gonna make the gains that you would like for them, or that you anticipate for them. So having those types of conversations at the get go are going to be important. Marketing and networking, in your resource guide this, I didn't give you much space to write, I'm

sorry, because there's so much to be said about this. You can do it in person. If you are going to do a free presentation or a free class or a few free sessions of classes, I would highly recommend doing some sort of screening or assessment beforehand just so you get an idea of some of the targeted sounds that you would want to promote or talk about during that lecture, because you want something tangible for them to take away and then say, "Hm, that person really made a lot of sense," and, "Oh, I see the difference, "and I'm gonna seek her out or him out "for additional services," right. Remember, you're thinking from a business standpoint. You can go and promote the service of accent modification for free if you want to, and many university clinics will offer accent modification services for free, but if you're doing something like this, you have to remember that this is for your business, and so you want to give them something tangible that they can come back to.

Cold calling and unsolicited calling, it's hard but it's doable. Look for human resources professionals that you can talk to and within the human resource group, look specifically for their training and professional development. Use social media to connect with those people and make some of those calls like that. Network, network, network. Always, always, always know what your, go back to that mission and value statement.

What is your role, what do you do for people? Remember, talk about it in language in terms of who your client is, who your customer is, or who your potential customer is, right. So network, there are several groups within various areas that are specifically catered to small businesses so that you can get each other leads or get some more referrals of clients. But then also, always be ready, because you never know who you're gonna run into, so be ready with your elevator pitch of what you do and how you can help businesses and individuals, because you never know that someone might be talking to you, say, "Hey, what is it that you do," and then they have an idea in their mind of a different use of your skills and services and expertise that you never even

considered or thought of, right. So always network. Within the networking framework, I would also, also encourage you to network within your SLP community. So I think I've listed a couple Facebook groups. Many of you probably already belong to those: the SLPs in Accent Modifications, or the SLP Private Practice Beginners. Even if you're not in private practice or a clinical private practice, there's a lot of good discussion about different resources and tools and practices in terms of establishing a business that go on within that, and in the accent modification group as well. Then CORSPAN is, you know, we offer lots of networking opportunities, and it's really beneficial and something I really want you guys to think about is that you really want to collaborate with other corporate SLPs or people thinking about offering this service, because we really, there is a vast market for our services, but we are going to be more successful individually if we collaborate as a community and not just see everybody else as our competition.

So I would really encourage you to network outwardly, to gain more clients, but then within your own community as well so that we can really put out to the general public that corporate SLPs are really premier professionals to offer this type of service. Website, social, and digital media, wow, we know, the literature states that small business entrepreneurs are using social and digital media in a different way than they were previously, or they're using it more frequently I should say, I'm sorry.

But you know, most of it is for marketing, but I also want you to use your social media platforms and your digital media platforms to advocate about some of those things we talked about before, and then to educate the general public, and then also for networking, right. So not just for your marketing, but for your networking as well. Know your SEO factors when you're developing your website, your search engine optimization. There are people that have full careers doing just that, so I'm not gonna get too much into that, but know what content your targeted audiences are looking for. You have to know, and I'm not even going to say what the demographics and stats are as of now, but if you refer to that Sprout Social article by Chen, you'll see that it's

important to know who your demographics are, and align them to your target audience, and then also different statistics. Who, what is the typical age range of who's using Facebook? What is the typical age range and income level of people using LinkedIn? You know, I will say that Facebook, if you are a private practitioner offering pediatric services, if you're part of a Moms group and they're looking for a speech therapist, sure, put your name in there and say that, "I offer these services." If you are looking for organizations and professionals for this type of service, you really want to focus on things like LinkedIn, you want to focus on putting out original content as well. Timing and scheduling-wise, take a day and put together social media posts that you want to do, and schedule them out so that you're not constantly having to do this.

Because this can be very, very time-consuming and energy-consuming. It can be free, you can create your own content, or it can get very expensive if you hire professionals outside to do this. Get reviews and testimonials from your clients. That is going to help with your ranking and build your brand awareness. Really, really focus on what your brand is, who your target audience is, and do some research about, before just posting things on your website or social media platforms. But use it, not just for marketing, but for advocacy and education and networking as well.

Economics, the cost. Think about all of the different things that we have, and I'm sorry that we're going over a few minutes. Think of all of the things, your overhead costs, your startup costs, right, your register and licensure, professional memberships, but then, think about your website, your social media marketing, your networking groups that you belong to, all of those things, continuing education, profession development. Also, also, also keep in mind that, and this goes more with the pricing, keep in mind that as a, whatever, a business owner, whatever you make, you're going to have to pay some of that in taxes, a percentage of that in taxes. So if you're, if we're talking about pricing, if you are pricing low, then yes, you might get more clients that wanna come in, but, but if you have put in so much time, energy, and effort, are you really bringing

anything home, or are you actually losing money, right. Then you also want to remember your value. What is it that you are providing? Going back to that Westfall exercise, your client is not just the person sitting in front of you. Your client is also the organization they work for, is also, in some respects, your family and loved ones and significant others, people you're responsible for, because, you know, you can deliver these services, and I want you to really think about this. You can deliver these services, but if you're not putting money into it, then you're doing time and energy and effort, which is taking you away from your family. So make sure that it's at least profitable in one of those realms, right, to make it worthwhile. I would suggest pricing and packaging versus per session, so that individuals can see some change before saying, "Uh, I don't really think this is for me," or, "Yes, I definitely wanna continue "with the rest of the program." If you do session by session, they're really not gonna be able to get that value, and then they may not end up coming back for more sessions.

Do your market research. Many accent modification professionals will put what they charge right on their website. Secret shop if you need to, or send someone to do a secret shopper, but really, you shouldn't have to. Talk to your SLP client or community and see, what is it that they're charging? I'm not saying to price fix and to do things that are illegal and set prices that nobody can go above or below, but what I am saying is, get an idea and utilize each other.

Your business is going to be different than your neighbor's business, I promise you that, because you will make it as unique to you and your customer service or your business policies are going to be different than your neighbors. Speaking of business processes and contracting, make sure you have all of these things in place, because if you don't, your business will have holes in it and it will hurt the stability of it, right. So in a contract, and I'm happy to send you a sample one if you email me and you want one, service promised, make it as detailed as possible, service delivery details: where are we doing it, how are we doing it, Telepractice, in person, how often, what does a

session entail, are assignments and practice activities, are they customized, are they not, payment schedule and method, a practice agreement, which is vital. If your client does not practice, they will not see change. If they don't see change, they're not gonna see value in your service. Their employer that may be paying for it will not see value in your service. Cancellation policy we talked about. Then have everyone sign this, yourself as well as other individuals so that you have a record that you can refer back to. I just really wanna end by showing you a slide, just, and this is just based off of some of our SLP colleagues in the North Carolina market. For whatever reason, we have the highest concentration of corporate SLPs in North Carolina, and this is not even all of them. These are just some of our CORSPAN members.

But each of them have different business models, and they have different levels of experience and they, some are still clinically practicing, some are just doing accent modification, some are doing more holistic corporate SLP services, but really, what I want you to see is that there is a market that exists for this potential clientele, and different clientele.

You can take a deeper look into that. This is, there is value in this type of service, different business models can exist within the same area and be equally as successful, and corporate SLPs really need to have solid experience before delving into this, and you will need to do some self-study and some self-learning about business practices. We really need to network and collaborate together as a corporate SLP community to really strengthen the value of a corporate SLP in the eyes of the general public and business community, and then also the value of accent modification services and those that they can bring to individuals and the wider community. Thank you very much for your patience, I'm sorry we ran over. Please feel free to put questions up in the Q&A box.

- [Amy] Thank you so much, Sonia. I know you said at the beginning that, oh, I see. Someone was asking for your email address, and I do see it in the handouts. It is pretty much on the second slide under Introduction and Background, to the person who asked for that. So Sonia's email is on the handouts.

- And I just,

- I wanted.

- put it, sorry.

- Oh, perfect.

- I just put in. I'm putting it

- That's great. in the chatbox, too.

- [Amy] That will work.

- [Sonia] Sorry.

- [Amy] I wanted to let our audience know, if you need to go, go ahead. We have maybe like one minute if anybody has any other questions, but otherwise, we will go ahead and wrap it up. Sonia, thanks so much. This is, it's an idea I've toyed with too over the years, and it's so nice to have sort of an overview of some of these things that we would need to think about if we're looking at going into this area of the field. So I think this was a super helpful introduction and some nice resources provided for what the possibilities are, and it certainly is a bit of a shift in mindset I would say, from our normal, clinical treatment duties.

- [Sonia] Absolutely. But it's an exciting

- Thank you very.

- [Sonia] area of our field.

- [Amy] Yeah, and lots of ways to go with it, it seems like, so.

- [Sonia] Absolutely, absolutely.

- [Amy] Excellent, well I'm not seeing any questions pop up. I'm gonna go ahead and wrap it up here, but thanks to our audience for being here with us today. Thank you so much, Sonia, for coming in to talk to us about this topic. We loved having you here.

- [Sonia] Thank you all for your attention, and I hope you guys are inspired to delve into this area, and feel free to email me at any point.

- [Amy] Perfect, all right guys, I'm gonna close up the Classroom. I hope you have a great day and that we see you back at another webinar before too long, bye bye.

- [Sonia] Thank you.