

## **Mobile Domes in Business Best Practices**

**One way an itinerant planetarium is frequently used is by having a Planetarium Specialist travel with the planetarium to variety of venues and make presentations. An increasing number of people have bought their own mobile planetarium and have started their own businesses.**

Evidence from current business owners dictates that you can be most successful by following this protocol:

1. Do your research; learn what planetariums are already operating in the territory you are interested in. This research can provide you with critical information about your competition as well as valuable resources and avenues for possible collaboration. It is unprofessional and can be financially unsound to ignore them. You also need to assess the number of venues, and their locations, for your presentations. Regional, national and even international planetarium organizations can help you in this kind of research.
2. If you determine that you can begin a viable business, develop a business plan and then research which model of planetarium will be best for you. Check references on: <http://www.ips-planetarium.org/or/comms/portablecom.html> that can help with this research.
3. Introduce yourself to the staff of existing planetariums and science centers and discuss possible collaborations with them. Take advantage of resources they are willing to provide and find out about events and venues where you can coordinate advertising and presentations that are mutually beneficial.
4. Market your business and schedule bookings.
5. Keep detailed records of everything.
6. Send thank you notes.
7. Plan further collaborations that take advantage of relationships with your newfound colleagues and institutions.
8. Do not operate in a vacuum nor reinvent the wheel! How can the International Planetarium Society (IPS), national and regional organizations support your responsibility to be a professional? These

organizations can be a vital resource for you and provide the means of ongoing networking and collaborating. They are very good at linking institutions that are successful with those in need of support. They can also provide the time and place, at conferences, for modeling programs that work and provide education about how to develop measurable outcomes and effective evaluative tools. They can also develop, support, and run in-service programs and give participants a document certifying completion of a workshop or class. Members of these organizations can share ideas about the "hooks" they use to bring the customer back to the planetarium for repeat visits.

Basically it still all comes down to the individual's responsibility to BE a professional, to take advantage of every opportunity to be professional in dealing with your clients, colleagues and community. Your reputation and long-term success depend on it!