



opt

MAGAZINE

AUTUMN 2016

optMagazine.com

WILD WILD
OPT

THE PARTS YOUR BUSINESS
NEEDS TO LOOK GOOD

Leisure Land

A ROADMAP OF IDEAS TO HELP YOU
NAVIGATE THE SLOWER SEASON

Modern Logo

HOW MODERN IS YOUR LOGO?
IS YOUR LOGO WORKING FOR YOU?

Brand Identity

WHAT'S IN YOUR BRAND? AN OVERVIEW
FOR CONSIDERING A BRAND IDENTITY

ALSO INSIDE: The Curse of Oleophobia | The Call of Transthulhu | The Haunted Practice

LETTER from the

CONTENTS

AUTUMN 2016

EDITOR

How you look

can be really, really important. Not just you as a person, but as a business as well. As you've (hopefully) noticed, here at OPT we tend to make sure the magazine looks as good as it can. We do that because we want you to actually, you know, read it. We don't want it to get thrown away immediately, which is exactly what would happen if we filled this issue up with ads and only threw in a few paragraphs of content here and there.

'Looking good' also applies to your practice. From the moment that someone walks in the door, they notice every little thing—probably more so than you or anyone that works there. Of course, they usually don't mention anything that might be 'off', because most people are geared to be polite and not complain until things get really bad. They just don't comment, then never come back. That's why we wanted to try and use this issue to address some of the 'little things' in business that can often get pushed aside for various reasons, such as they "cost too much", or "don't generate revenue". These things are all about how you present your business to everyone else, like logos, branding, patient comfort, and a whole host of other 'little things' that tend to be incidental in the business. These aspects are becoming more important to our specific field, as independent opticals need to stand out more to be able to differentiate themselves from the larger stores.

That's why we're focusing on a lot of non-optical-specific topics. As the nature of eyewear evolves, it's not just about 'selling a pair of glasses'. It's about the whole experience of a patient from the moment they enter your office, through the exam and eyewear (as appropriate), and out the door. You need to give them the type of service they aren't getting by going online or to a big-box store. That's the value of the independent optical shop - your ability to create a unique atmosphere to help give your patients the best vision possible.

- Bill Heffner IV
Editor, optMAGAZINE



On the cover this issue



24

Wild Wild OPT

A look at all of the 'little things' and parts of your business that matter and can make a huge difference and impact.



15

Curse of Oleophobia

Smudges are not so scary



32

Brand Identity

Thinking you need one?



40

The Call of Transthulu

The chilling tale of the Transthulu Cult, it's mindless worshippers, and it's continued grip on ECP's all across the world.

Page 5

Head to Head: Small Town vs Big Box

Everyone loves an underdog - can you be competitive?

John Madden

Page 6

Leisure Land

A roadmap of ideas to help you navigate the slower season.

Lewis & Clark

Page 10

The Haunted Practice

How the internet brought down a private ECP.

Amy Caudill

Page 12

The Economy of Comfort

How comfortable are your patients during an exam?

Neal Page & Del Griffith

Page 16

Are They Feeling Under-Depreciated?

Time to take a look around your office to see if you can benefit from the "Section 179 Deduction".

Del Spooner

Page 18

Modern Logo: How modern is your logo?

A look at the one of the most important and hard working components of your business.

Phil Dunphy

Page 28

Growing your Practice with Social Media

Time to embrace the digital age and get social.

Leigh Plowman

Page 38

NewEyes - Glasses for those in need

A look at a charity that allows you to recycle 'good condition' eyewear that are provided to those in need of glasses.

Maria Magnotta

Page 44

Don't Lose Your Head

How to respond to a negative facebook review.

Ichabod Crane

mmm... fraaaames



THE
WALKING FRAME
COLLECTION

If only Rick Grimes and Daryl Dixon had access to all of the frames and their respective ads found in other magazines. The zombie apocolypse would be managed a lot easier. The Committee for Regulating Ads in Publications (C.R.A.P.) 'requires us' to provide a frame-ad in each issue. They were however, not specific on what type of frame needed to be used.

OPT is proud to be 99% frame-free!

HEAD to HEAD

HOME
20

SMALL TOWN vs BIG BOX

VISITORS
17

— John Madden

If football-themed movies have taught me anything, it's that underdogs can come out on top most of the time. It doesn't matter if it's just a bunch of rag-tag kids going up against a group of hardened veterans - a lot of the time the little guy comes out on top.

Being from Philadelphia, however, means that I am certainly grounded in the fact that, while things may work out that way on the big screen, reality is a very, very different thing. It's much more frequent for the big guy to walk all over the little guy without breaking a sweat. Much is the case when it comes to dealing with 'big-box' stores, and the kind of price service they give to customers.

I've had people ask me how they deal with this type of play. When the Cheap-o-Mart down road can sell a pair of glasses for so little, what does an independent optical shop do? Does it make sense to take a play out of their book, and to get in the cheapest frames you can find? This kind of approach can be dangerous, as you have to remember that you're never going to be able to match the purchasing power and economies of scale that a big chain is going to be able to do. You don't win against the big guys by using their playbook. You need to focus on the types of things that you're good at, and the things that your patients aren't going to get elsewhere. Specifically, service and quality.

Part of being successful in these situations is that you have to realize that you don't score on every play. Sometimes you have to

admit that you aren't going to get to the end zone, and kick the ball away. Consequently, you aren't going to sell eyewear to every customer that comes in, since you don't want to end up sacrificing the quality that you offer, whether that quality is in terms of 'cheap products' (frames, lenses, contacts) or in terms of compromised service.

Part of making your team successful against the larger guys is realizing that you aren't in it alone. You need partners that are going to help you out. That can take that form of a lot of things, such as an optical lab, frame vendor, marketing company, or whatever else. All of these things play a part in making your business successful, so you need to make sure that you can rely on them. You also want to make sure you know who's side they're on. The last thing you want to do is have your optical lab owned by the same company that owns your main competition.

The only way that you're really going to win is by making sure you aren't fueling your competition when you succeed. That means having independently owned business partners is going to be one of your major plays of the game. 





A roadmap of ideas to help you navigate the slower season

— Lewis & Clark

As summer has set for another year and autumn has taken hold, there is certainly a lot ‘in the air’ these days. The weather is a bit cooler and crisp with the days getting shorter. Pumpkins are appearing on porches and in lattes. Leaves are beginning their final journey; ready to burst into spectacular colors and then plummet to the ground... only to rot and decay. A sign of things to come for your sales? Not necessarily...

Ok. I know it might seem a tad morbid to say that about the leaves but it’s what happens. It’s like those insurance commercials; ‘If you’re a leaf, you change colors and fall off trees. It’s what you do’. Plus, this issue is Halloween-based as much as it is Autumnal, so it fits. But I digress... really, what we are looking at here is change.

“Change, for lack of a better word, is good. Change is right. Change works”. I’m paraphrasing of course but as with many things, businesses included, there will always be change. An ebb & flow is simply part of the natural business cycle.

Now, this does not necessarily apply to all ECPs, but let’s be honest. Going in to the holiday season, along with the winter weather, doesn’t really bring out the shoppers in droves for getting someone the gift of new spectacles. I’m quite sure that there are some of you who may be fortunate and can keep a steady pace through the entire year including the holiday and winter seasons. Perhaps it’s your geographical location where the weather is kinder (certainly not here in the northeast) or maybe you’ve done a lot in past slow seasons to keep your customers engaged through these times. If you haven’t, then maybe this article will provide you with a few things that you can do.

Know before you go

You don’t need New Year’s to make resolutions and changes. Sure, it’s a good time to do it because it is a new year and viewed as a starting point for new opportunities... but honestly, that’s only because the year changes for everyone. The reality is, New Year’s Day is no different than tomorrow... it’s just the day after today... except taking place specifically on December 31st. My point is, you do not have to wait until then, nor should you, to start making some changes. Simply put, opportunity is always present. It is not dictated by a specific date on the calendar unless you mark it and ‘make it so’. If you are coming into your slow season, ‘that’ is the timeframe to start planning. Making a change at New Year’s is reactive; making a change now is proactive. One major key here is the planning...

Planning your time in Leisure Land

Like any road trip, vacation or adventure that you are ready to embark on, planning is a key, as I had mentioned just a moment ago. That’s not to say that spontaneity has no place here, it does. I’ve personally had more spontaneous trips than I have planned ones and they are an absolute blast. In the words of the late John Candy; “I’m just a twig on the shoulders of a mighty stream” in those moments. Great motto but not really practical for your business.

The great thing about a spontaneous trip or adventure is that there is no plan... so you do tend to meander; having a casual and stress-free time as you are out there ‘winging-it’. Sure, there is probably a final destination or goal you have in mind and the journey there is ‘half the fun’ as they say. (Not exactly sure who ‘they’ are in that context, but ‘they’ were not wrong when ‘they’ coined that phrase). If you take the spontaneous approach to planning for the slow season with your business, your execution will also meander and valuable time will be wasted. Do not dismiss the benefits of making a plan.

When it comes to planning an adventure of any sort, you certainly want to make sure that you budget ‘wiggle-room’ for things like spontaneity and for new ideas that appear from nowhere. That is no different than how you should approach your plan for your business. I am a creative problem solver. My eyes and mind are almost always on high alert. Essentially, the hamster never really gets off the wheel (poor little guy) in my head. For many of the things I design, I do a lot of planning and research before I execute anything... but I always allow for that wiggle-room and spontaneous moment (or ‘happy accident’ as Bob Ross would say) where an additional or new idea appears, and it usually happens when I least expect it.

There are, however, some pitfalls with planning. You can set tight restrictions on yourself, over planning, and micromanaging everything down to the minute. Sure, this allows you to jam a lot in there to do, but are you really enjoying anything during that time? I see that as stressful; always on the go and being more concerned about getting to the next time-slot instead of simply being in the moment, taking it in and enjoying it. Patience is certainly a virtue when making plans.

Stop and smell the decayed leaves

“Adopt the pace of nature – her secret is patience” (Ralph Waldo Emerson). Just as a leaf’s journey begins in the springtime from a bud, going through the summer as it shades and photosynthesizes, it also takes several weeks to a few months for a leaf to change its colors in autumn. Only then does it provide us the opportunity and time to enjoy them. Your approach to planning for your business should take a lesson from nature and do the same. You will have better results that can be enjoyed by you, your staff and your customers. Not just during the process, but at the end of it and beyond. You will certainly be more relaxed and open to the new ideas that pop-up along the way which become a catalyst for more changes.

To enjoy this adventure, you have to learn to let go a little bit. You have time. Could you imagine that if all the leaves change color at once with the flick of a light switch and then they all fall at once with another flick? Where was the time to savor the splendor that took so long to develop? How many would be disappointed? The same thing applies when planning for your business. I know that the tendency is to want everything right now in one swift motion but that’s not realistic.

As I understand it, the slower season for most ECPs is roughly November through January (editor’s email listed in the back of the magazine if you disagree with me on this). This is the timeframe to start planning for your business. You do, however, need to go into this with the knowledge and understanding that you will not really

be doing anything to immediately affect ‘this coming slow season’ but that you are planning for ‘this time’ next year. It will take time for ideas to become clear, to determine what will be best to do, and to execute everything.

Where to visit in Leisure Land

This article is not just about what to do for your business during the slow season, but what to do maybe for yourself. I’m not looking to give advice or guidance on how to keep yourself busy and pass the time. Just some things to do to capitalize on the opportunity at hand, that can pay dividends later on for you, your business, your staff, your current customers, and for your new customers.

Leisure Land is broken into 5 regions or areas, each with their own theme. Within each of these areas, I am providing you with some suggestions on what you can do during the slower season. There are of course, numerous ideas beyond the scope of this article. All you need to do is ‘google it’... which is in most cases, better than the good ‘ol magic 8-ball. Don’t be afraid to ask google literally either. Type-in your exact question like “what to do when I am bored” and chances are, google will finish it for you (which is a scary thought unto itself) and give you a lot of ideas.

Speaking of ideas, the idea behind providing these different regions is because there is no one region, area, or aspect of your life that has all of the answers and fulfillment of your wants and needs. Each region, although they can function individually, function better as a collective whole. It’s very ‘Gestalt’ when you think about it. These ideas are merely presented to you as catalysts and to simply begin something new; conversation starters if you will. These are conversations you can have with yourself, with co-workers, with spouses, and with customers to take your business to the next level. They are opportunities for change.

Enjoy your visit(s)!

I would like to think that you will visit Leisure Land more than once. The slow season fortunately, is not very long and no sooner will the holidays be over, so too will be the opportunity to really sit down, plan, and explore what you want to do. As I mentioned previously, patience will be important with planning. Having a big-picture overview is a great way to begin (thus the map). Remember that it only takes one thing, one single step, to embark on a new adventure. 🌱





WELCOME TO 'ME-TIME'

THINGS TO DO FOR YOURSELF

Take some long weekends and trips alone and with someone

Become goal-oriented by setting landmarks and milestones on a timeline

Identify 3 areas of your spending that you can cut back on

Save weekly for a big purchase

Do something creative or inspirational for yourself and others

Update your profile picture
(no selfies or duck faces allowed)

Spend time with family and friends



COMMUNITY COUNTY

GET INVOLVED WITH THE PEOPLE YOU SERVE

Host a giveaway or contest to promote your business

Start a new collaborative project for betterment of the community

Work in a food bank, community center, rehab center, youth organization, animal shelter

Sponsor a local sports team for children

Take part in neighborhood clean-ups

Donate to local charities and outreach programs

Small Business Saturday... Support and shop locally



BRAND LAND

IDEAS FOR RAISING THE IMAGE OF YOUR BUSINESS TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Establish a new brand identity

Update or revamp your website

Create a marketing planner
(weekly, monthly, seasonal, holiday)

Start a blog and plan posts/topics to discuss

Get gifts or swag with your logo on it to give to clients and co-workers

Update your logo and create new business cards and stationery

Redo/rethink your marketing materials. Create new ones with the new branding

Create an email campaign to reach-out to old, current and new customers



FOREST OF THE UNKNOWN

TAKE A STEP OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE AND TRY NEW THINGS

Go back to school and take a class

Get an actual book to learn about Social Media
(unplug and step-away from the computer)

Learn to paint, dance, write poetry, play an instrument and exhibit them locally

Get involved in local theater

Join a group that shares an interest and meets regularly

Take a road trip or vacation by yourself

OFFICES OF OPPORTUNITIES

GETTING YOUR BUSINESS IN ORDER

Clean and organize your office

Get ready for tax season

Go shopping for your business

Write an actual business plan

Clean-off your computer's desktop

Acquire testimonials... tweet or post them online

Send some handwritten postcards to old and new clients

Create free online resources (as PDFs or e-book) for customers to download

Generate some 'standard reply' emails to handle a variety of scenarios

Organize and clean-out your inbox, sent and trash folders

Go into research mode to generate new ideas



THE HAUNTED PRACTICE

HOW THE INTERNET BROUGHT DOWN A PRIVATE ECP

— Amy Caudill

An optometrist's office sits empty in the Midwest despite the early afternoon hour. If one listens closely voices can be heard whispering though no one has entered. A stack of brochures scatters along the counter as if a breeze had passed through, though there are no open windows or doors. What was once a thriving business has become an empty shell, inhabited only by the remnants of its past...

Our team was called in to investigate this office by observing and interviewing the former staff. All the witnesses have one thing in common—they all spoke of a presence that seemed to compel their customers to seek services elsewhere.

One staff member, identified only as Mary, recounted this incident from 2007, “I saw with my own eyes what happened when some of our patients discovered websites where they could purchase their glasses online. Suddenly our selection wasn’t big enough, or the price was too much, even with our customer loyalty discounts and monthly specials. Patients would ask for their prescriptions with their P.D. measurements included, and when we complied, we were lucky to see them again for another year. We lost so many sales to the Internet; our dispensary was like a graveyard.”

Mary continued, “A couple of months later the family stopped by, quite upset. It seems they had purchased glasses from an online retailer for five family members, and while three of them were happy with their glasses, the other two were not. They asked us for help. It seems the daughter could not wear her new glasses because it felt as if her eyes were being pulled in opposite directions each time she put them on, and the father could not read fine print with his new purchase.

Though the glasses had come from elsewhere, as a courtesy we inspected them, and discovered the measurements for the daughter’s P.D. were far off what we had recorded, and the father’s bifocal height was 4 millimeters below where it should be, effectively eliminating the reading zone. He had not received bifocal heights from us, naturally, so we asked where they were obtained, and he admitted he had taken them himself from directions on the website.

We advised the family of the problems with their order, and the corrections they needed to request from the website. They thanked us and left, but did not return again.”

Another employee, Sandra, added, “Soon after this family came to us for assistance, other families began bringing their Internet eyewear to us, looking for free inspections and re-measurement of their specs. Our doctors were concerned this assistance was taking up too much of our time from paying customers, and established a policy that we would no longer inspect or repair products not purchased in our office. Instead of freeing our time, though, we started losing more patients.”

The foundation of this office was built like many others—good customer care, with convenient products for in-house ordering of glasses and contact lenses. This office was not equipped to deal with forces like the Internet, and it showed in the continued decline the business experienced. Clearly some intervention was needed to purge the ghostly presences from this office.

After concluding our research we sat down with the owners, a middle-aged couple of optometrists who had built this practice from the ground up, and who were devoted to their patients. We

summarized our findings as we broke the news to them, “your office policies are rooted in the past. You are losing patients because you are being haunted by yesterday’s methodology. You need to embrace modern technology like the Internet to free your office from these apparitions.”

“How does one compete with the Internet?” asked the female optometrist, who wore a stylish pair of frames available on the display board.

Here we offered advice based on our extensive research with other failing and haunted businesses: “The key is to offset the advantages of online shopping with continued and unmatched personal service, something no website can deliver. A foundation of strong customer service can allow you to retain more patients for exams and other services to help counter the sales lost to the Internet. Instead of refusing to check lenses, or even make lenses for a frame purchased online, offer tailored services especially for Internet patients which will help to insure customer loyalty. Accept frames purchased elsewhere for lenses orders. A simple form waiver can be available for any liability concerns.

Remind patients that when they buy their contacts from you, they can be eligible for a manufacturer’s rebate that yes, in most cases, they can fill out online. They can also have their lenses come directly to the office, which is safer if they happen to go out of town. For those patients who choose to fill their orders elsewhere, remind them that certain contact lens manufacturer, offer rebates on annual contact lens fittings when they see their doctor.”

“Is there more we should be doing to become competitive again?” the husband spoke up.

“Yes, put the Internet to work for you—build your own website, offering appointment setting, copies of prescriptions and doctor contact by email, and convenient reordering of contact lenses. Try offering your loyal patients downloadable coupons to sway their repeat business. If you don’t have your own I.T. department or if this process seems too overwhelming, there are numerous companies that offer website building and hosting services, including writing posts and designing ads, keeping in mind that these services usually come with a monthly fee.

Get involved with your patients by creating a social media presence through Facebook, Twitter or Pinterest where you can welcome opinions, share stories from other patients, and post notices about upcoming specials. Above all, reach out to your patients, and meet them halfway as they continue to embrace technology.”

Equipped with the right tools, the owners began to purge their business of the lingering presence of past customers. The ideology of good service would remain, while they began to implement new technology, and rebuilt their practice with an eye toward the future.

The moral: Don’t let your office be haunted by the patients and policies of the past. Embrace technology, and attract tomorrow’s patients.

THE ECONOMY (CLASS) OF COMFORT

— Neal Page & Del Griffith

So, if you're lucky, you get to see your patients every two years. That means that you have very few opportunities to give your patients a great experience. One of the key proponents to a great experience is not in overdoing everything, but is really about making sure that nothing goes wrong, and the patients are comfortable.



Much of this can be seen when looking at the difference between 'economy' and 'first' (or 'business') classes on an airline. When you look at it objectively, first class is a chair that you don't get squished in.

If I only fly every two years and I am crammed into a tiny seat, of course I'm going to hate it. Maybe I'll push off the next trip to every three years. Or maybe I'll wait until I really have to go before I schedule another trip. Or maybe I'll start thinking that I can get a better flight by just using a different airline.

On the other hand, if I do the same trip in first class, that gives a completely different experience. After it's over, I'm not sore, had a great time, and everything went as expected. At the time, I may not realize I am 'super comfortable', but when we compare that to the neck aches and other problems of being jammed in coach, the difference becomes clear. We don't necessarily notice the comfort, but we would certainly have a problem if it wasn't there.

So, with all of that in mind, shouldn't your patient's exam experience be a first class exam, and not an economy one? I'm sure, if you've

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ever used the head and chin rest on a slit lamp, you've noticed how confining it is. This is certainly more noticeable if you have a different body type than the person who designed it - just like the seats in the back of an airplane. So why make your patients cram into something uncomfortable, when you could easily use an ADAPT head and chin rest instead?

The ADAPT is designed to be a better fit for a number of different body types - the patient no longer has to squish against the confining metal hand grips to try and get their head in place. The very last thing that you want to have happen is the patient to either be uncomfortable or embarrassed that they can't fit into a piece of your exam equipment. Avoiding that uncomfortable situation, as a care provider, is one of your main concerns. I've even heard of patients getting caught or pinched in one of the older-style chin rests. When something like that happens, you can guarantee that the patient isn't looking forward to their next exam.

Is the patient going to sit down in front of your slit lamp and say, "Wow, doc, this chin rest is so comfy!?" No, of course not. Well, probably not. There's always one. In general, however, this is something that gives your patients the better experience by virtue of mak-

ing sure they don't notice discomfort. If all seats on a plane were first class, then nobody would ever notice the difference or think twice about the seat being uncomfortable. So why not have a similar experience in the exam room?

This also makes it easier for patients with physical disabilities to be examined properly, as you can't always ask them to move around so you can get a good position. Since every patient is different and has different needs, asking them all to conform to one rigid, confining place is bound to cause, at the very least, discomfort. If you can give a better, more comfortable exam experience, why wouldn't you?

Visit www.norwoodvision.com/adapt-hcr.html to learn more about providing first-class comfort for your patients.



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THE CURSE OF OLEOPHOBIA

— Stephen King

The still of the early evening was the first thing that the traveling optician noticed. Surely, it wasn't that late. The town should still be busy, even one as remote as this. Something strange must be going on. He found his way to what seemed to be the local inn, as there were no other obvious places open that afforded him other options.

As he entered the establishment, he heard the loud crash of what sounded to be something quite heavy hitting the floor. “Excuse me!”, the traveler said, walking up to a desk. The elderly gentleman at the desk was rooting around behind it, muttering about whatever he dropped, then looked to the traveler, “Need a room, then?” he asked, obviously knowing the traveler wasn't from around here. The elderly man peered through what must have been the most ill-cleaned, grimy, greasy pair of lenses that the traveler had ever seen.

“Well, yes...” the optician started, “pardon me for asking, though, but how can you see through lenses that dirty?”

The elderly gentleman simply shook his head, “Trying to clean ‘em only makes it worse, grease gets all smeary.”

“You're in luck!” exclaimed the traveler, sensing an easy sale, “I happen to be a traveling optician, and I have some great coatings that we can put on your lenses to make them...” he stopped mid-sentence. The barrel of an ancient, but probably still functional, rifle was pointed at him. “We don't want none of your

fancy ‘coatings’ around here. Last one of you lot that came around here gave us all coatings that didn't work, cracked, or just came right off.”

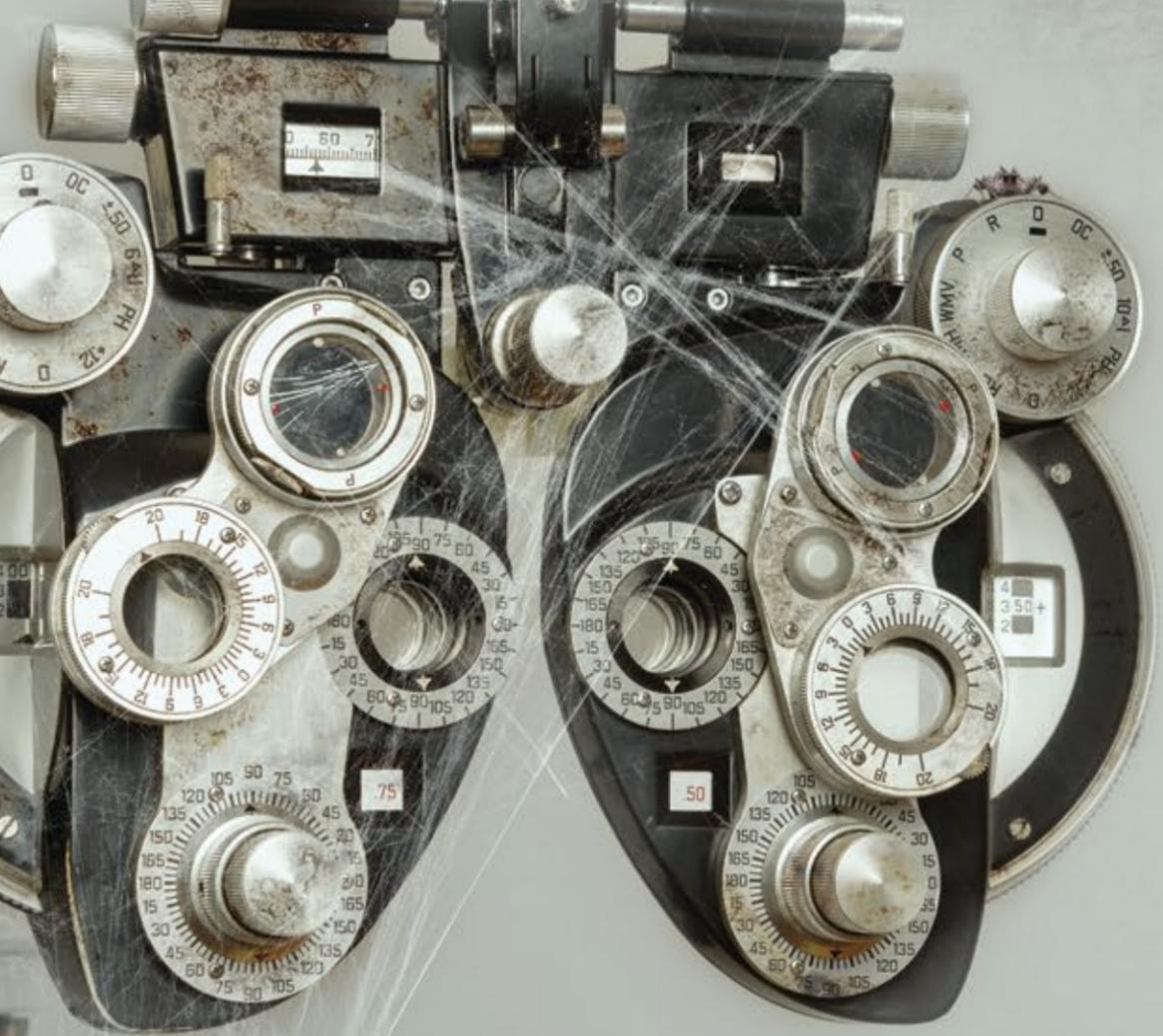
The optician chuckled nervously. He was used to difficult patients. This, however, was a new experience. “My good sir,” he began calmly, making sure not to make any sudden moves, “I can assure you that I only deal with the best products, and stand behind them with a lifetime warranty.”

The gentleman behind the desk lowered the barrel slightly.

“Furthermore,” said the optician, growing bolder, “not only will it prevent all those smudges, but scratching, dust, and glare as well!”

The man behind the desk put his antique away, then leaned across the desk, “Who sent you here, anyway?”

“Fate, my good man,” said the optician, like he had been waiting all day to use that line, “I am here to give you Independence® from the curse of oleophobia and poor coatings!”



ARE THEY FEELING UNDER-DEPRECIATED?

— Del Spooner

So, I'm sure you know that piece of equipment you have in the shop that you just can't wait to upgrade. Don't get me wrong - it's done well so far, but at a point, that 20-some-year-old piece of equipment just don't cut it any more. Whether it's an edger that's on it's last legs, or an exam chair with a few pieces of duct tape on it, there's usually something that could use a replacement.

Of course, it's not always that easy. "It still works fine!" says the manager that doesn't actually use it on a daily basis. Or, "I can't afford to replace it this year," is another oft-used reason. Thanks to the federal government, however, it's easier than ever to make equipment purchases. What if you could get the new edger (or exam equipment, dispensary furniture, or whatever else) with a 35% discount, courtesy of the IRS? That can certainly make it more affordable, and it's very easy to do, thanks to the rules in place this year for depreciation.

The "**Section 179 Deduction**" is a wonderful thing for anyone that has a small to medium business and buys equipment (which includes office furniture) for their operation. What this does, essentially, is allow you to deduct the full value of the piece of equipment immediately, as opposed to depreciating it over the course of its lifespan.

What does that mean? Well, it means that you can improve the bottom line by reducing how much you owe in taxes in a given year.

Some of the things that qualify would be:

- Edgers
- Exam Equipment (Like the ADAPT seen on pg 12)
- Display Boards
- Dispensary Furniture
- Computers
- Some Software

Basically, a very large number of things that you are likely to buy are going to qualify for this, so why would you not use it? It's not every day that the government gives out free money, so I think when they do, taking it is probably a good idea.

Let's try a few examples:

So, we buy some exam equipment for the practice, and it ends up costing a completely arbitrary amount of \$100,000. Since we're allowed to depreciate this whole amount, we effectively reduce our reported profits for the year by \$100,000. If we assume a 35% tax bracket, that means we just saved \$35,000, since we were able to take the full expense at once. Our equipment ends up effectively costing \$65,000 instead of the original \$100,000. I don't know about you, but a 35% discount is something that I don't mind one bit.

For most small shops that don't need large amounts of expensive equipment, this still applies to smaller equipment purchases as well. Say, for example, you noticed that a new, ergonomic, patient-approved head and chin rest was available. That's also something that would qualify, effectively giving you a discount courtesy of the government.

There are special rules once you get above \$500,000, up to \$2 million. This includes things like bonus depreciation, but that's slightly separate from the Section 179 deduction, and given that I'm not a tax professional, I'm not going to address that part. I'm assuming that if you're spending that much on equipment alone in one year, then you have a pretty good accountant. If you spend that much and your accountant hasn't mentioned this, then, you probably need to have a conversation with them.

One of the most important parts of this, especially for smaller businesses, is that you don't have to buy the equipment outright. You can lease or finance the equipment and still have it qualify. So, not only do you have the option of not paying all up front, but you are still able to get the depreciation for it. That means you can actually profit off of the deduction in the first year.

Since, if you lease the equipment for, let's say, twelve months starting in November, then you only have two months of payments made this year. You still get to deduct the full amount on your 2016 taxes, even though you have only made two of the payments for it in that tax year. This is a great tool to use if you want to be able to leverage the tax deduction without the full expense of equipment all at once.

The other important part is that you use it or lose it for this tax year. That means if you want to do it, the equipment has to be put into service **by December 31st**. You can't just place the order then, you need to think ahead now about what you might want by the end of the year, otherwise it will likely be too late if you wait until mid-December to start placing orders.

This specific tax incentive has had a tendency to fluctuate, with respect to Section 179 itself as well as the 'bonus depreciation' aspect. Some years was more, some was less, some it wasn't even known if it was going to be passed until December of that year. The current version seems to be stable for this year and next year, however, so it's a good time to use it while you can. ⚙️

***Note: We are not tax professionals, please direct any specific questions to a qualified professional that can discuss the specific needs of your business.**



modern logo

how modern is your logo?



— Phil Dunphy

If there is one thing that symbolizes and represents something for your business and your brand identity for that business, it is your logo. Simply put, it is the one thing that can speak volumes (good and bad) without saying a single word. It works 24/7 as a silent salesperson. It never sleeps. It never rests. It is there for you and your customers every single day without ever complaining. But does it need to retire and make way for a younger, fresher logo? You be the judge...

What is a logo?

A logo is simply a graphical mark that represents something. This 'something' can be an organization or an individual. Not only can it represent something but it can also identify something... providing immediate recognition and instilling confidence within a consumer. The idea of a logo is nothing more than a simple identification. This identification is the essence and purpose of why a logo exists. The goal of a logo is to successfully identify an organization and the goods and/or services provided by that organization or individual while conveying the spirit of that organization or individual.

Logos are designed with an almost infinite number of varieties of shapes and, in fact, do have personalities. These personalities are the 'face' of the organization or individual it represents. They are the workhorse for your business. What a logo is not: it is not a brand. A brand is a perception that someone has towards a good or service provided by a business. A brand however, can be represented by a logo, as the logo is a visual indicator of that brand.

A logo is the cornerstone in the visual identity of a business and a component of a brand identity. The difference between a visual iden-

tity and a brand identity is simply this. A visual identity is the application of your logo as a defined, unified business image. A brand identity is the management of perception of your business, goods, services, and experiences of your customers. I will go more into brand identity in another article.

Diff'rent strokes for diff'rent folks

♪♪ "Now, the world don't move to the beat of just one drum..." ♪♪ and that is the case for logos. Especially in today's era where virtually, 'anything goes'. There is an overabundance of logos available, sometimes assaulting and overstimulating our visual senses at times. With so many logos out there, it can be difficult to not only have an original logo, but a logo that accurately communicates your business and what your business represents.

There are many different types of logos that can be created and I keep them in 4 major categories. The reason why I categorize them into 4 major groups is for several reasons. The first reason is simply organizational, as I believe this blankets the field of logos. The second reason is my education and experience. Any logo I've designed has invariably fallen under one of these categories... thus reason number

one. The final reason is a hybrid of the first two with the inclusion of the 'work' component within my process. When I am tasked with creating a logo, I never just do what is asked of me with the initial idea. I always do more. Sounds a little insubordinate, you might think, but in my minds-eye and my process, it isn't.

My rationale behind 'not just doing the initial idea' is because the opportunities to properly develop a logo can be hidden in other logo types. If they are not explored, they are overlooked and never discovered. It is as simple as that.

There is a process to designing logos. Yes, a designer is given a task, the idea, and the desires that accompany that idea. This idea and desire however is typically what is 'stuck' in the minds-eye of the individual with that idea. Until that idea gets down on paper, that individual will be blinded to any other ideas as their minds-eye can only see that one idea. I will always do the initial idea but I will also explore alternatives as well. It is instilled in my process and is not something I will deviate from. These alternatives I will explore reside within the other categories of logo types.

The categories are as follows:

WORD MARKS

A freestanding word (or words)

LETTER MARKS

A uniquely designed letterform(s)

SYMBOL MARKS

An abstract visual

COMBINATION MARKS

A combination of a word mark and letter mark; or a word mark and symbol mark; or a letter mark and symbol mark.

No matter which type of logo is chosen, at the end of the day, it needs to be professional, communicate clearly, identify easily, embody the spirit it represents, and be championed by not only the designer, but by everyone within the business. There should be an inherent level of pride when the logo is looked upon by yourself and your co-workers. There should be a level of trust and comfort and positive associations when viewed by your customers and, above all else, it needs to be consistent in its distribution. Consistency can elevate the perception of your business... as long as you buy into, follow, and adhere to the rules of the logo. If you do, the logo will stand by you and your company.

"There's no crying in baseball"

Nor is there crying involved when it comes to logo design. This isn't about having egos bruised or hurt feelings either. This applies to the designer; it applies to the individual who hired the designer. You are all professionals. There does need to be a synergy and an understanding of the end goal here by both parties and a drive to achieve that goal. A logo is not to be taken lightly because of what all it does and what all it represents. The goal is to have a successful logo...





So you might ask, what is a successful logo? Is it that the logo increases your business 10% immediately? No... that's not realistic. Being a brand champion will do that for your business and even that won't be immediate. When we talk about a successful logo, we are looking more specifically at the characteristics of the logo.

I'm hoping that a few things I've spoken of in this article already have begun a conversation with you in your mind as it pertains to your logo. If they haven't, then the following breakdowns of what makes a successful logo may get you thinking a little more about your logo.

Less is More

Simplistic design = High Impact. The heart of a successful logo is the result of a complex process that has taken the proper time to be worked and matured. The end result, however, appears simple. One might think that it does not take that long to design something simple but it is one of the hardest things to do. The natural tendency is to 'toss-in' as much 'cool stuff' as possible when you want a logo but ultimately, less is more... particularly for the next reason.

RECOGNIZABLE

Your logo must be immediately recognized at a glance. The meaning of your logo needs to be clearly communicated immediately to anyone viewing it. If somebody has to think about what your logo is, what it represents, or question something that feels 'off' in the logo because something doesn't make sense, it is not a successful logo.

RELEVANT

Your logo not only needs to communicate quickly, convey the spirit of the business, but it also needs to make sense and appropriately

represent what it is supposed to stand for. Does it make sense in the context of your industry? Does it make sense in the context of what it is supposed to represent?

ADAPTABLE

Your logo will not reside on one specific medium. It can be as small as 1" x 1" in black and white on a fax machine, in print in CMYK color, on the web in RGB color, and in various forms of multimedia and video. So the logo needs a few well-tailored 'outfits' to fit various occasions.

SCALABLE

This is kind of an addendum to the logo needing to be adaptable. Your logo could end-up on a billboard that is 10' high by 30' wide. Your logo can be as small as 16 pixels by 16 pixels as a favicon for your website. And it also needs to look good and function correctly in all sizes in-between.

CUSTOMER FOCUSED

Does your logo appeal to both current and future customers? You need to keep in mind that you are not the customer here regarding this point. Does the logo speak to their needs or interests? Yes, you have a vested interest in the logo but that interest differs from those interests of your paying customers.

DISTINCT

Does your logo create a strong and unique impression in a sea of competition? Just because you are in the optical industry, does not mean your logo needs to be cliché and 'has to have' an eye or a pair of glasses in it. At the same time, it does not need to be so abstract that it would be better viewed in the Guggenheim. A successful logo will stand-out in a crowd without being obnoxious.

CREDIBLE

Does your logo convey a sense of quality, trust, and expertise? Your logo is usually the first introduction to your business. You want to make sure that it is putting its 'best foot forward' as it pertains to your business at all times.

TIMELESS

Your logo needs to 'have legs' and go the distance. Your logo needs to be able to survive trends and be memorable... feeling like it belongs. This is, of course, not to be confused with clutching onto your logo for years, that was designed in 1998 when everyone added a bevel & emboss and drop shadow because Photoshop made it easy to do that.

What has your logo done for you lately?

Sure, you can disagree and say you've been successful with your old logo. It has obviously done its job and served its purpose and that's absolutely fine. But ask this of your logo. Is it helping you get new and younger customers to build future business? Or is your logo simply being complacent and just sustaining an older customer base?

'Ask not what you can do for your logo, but what your logo can do for you'

On a slight side-note here, the same thing applies to any pictures you may be using in tandem with your logo and any marketing materials or advertisements. Make sure your photos are current. Really, no more than 2 years old. This is also an attribute of providing trust with your branding and with your customers. Don't hang onto the past and look like you're in the past. If you do, how can you possibly move forward?

Professional Grade

Does your logo have high standards? It should. If you looked at the aforementioned list and put your logo up against it, how well did it do? If you had even a single 'no', then perhaps it is time to look into giving your logo a refresh or putting it out to pasture.

I need you to understand this though... I'm not saying your logo is bad nor am I implying it. I am simply asking you to take an honest look at your logo and evaluate it. I will never profess to have the 'best solution or even the right solution for you... just my 'best creative solution'. The field of design is highly subjective. It's like antiques... trash to one and treasures to another. It is all in the eyes of the beholder.

With that being said, there are logos out there that look like children designed it yet they are tremendously successful (*cough-cough Google *). But that's what great about design. Nobody knows. Sure, there are methods, techniques, and processes to achieve the best result and I'm pretty sure Google's logo went through these rigors but ultimately, you just want to make sure your logo is the best representation and embodiment of the spirit of your business.

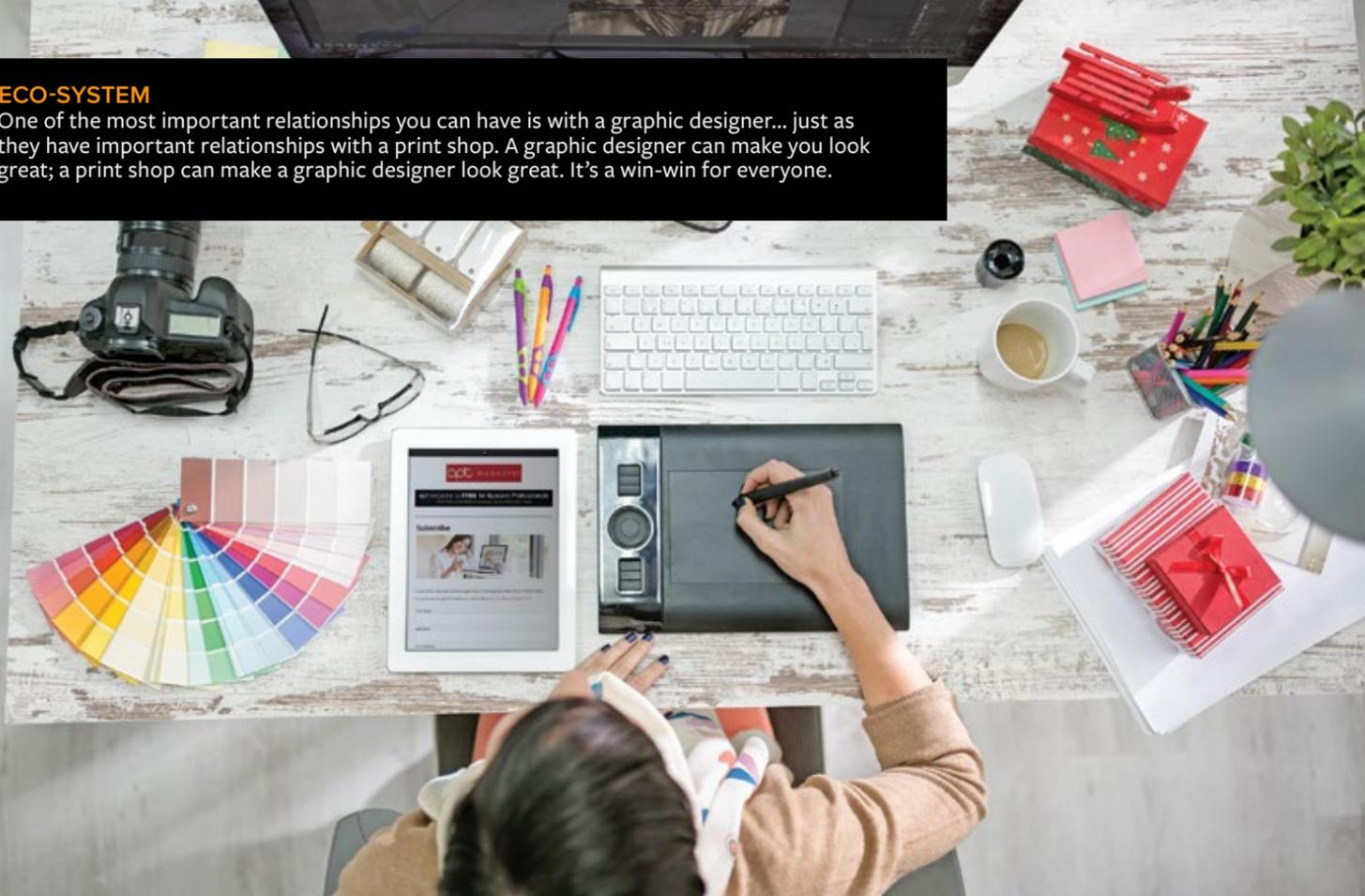


BRAND IDENTITY SYSTEM
 Here is an example layout of a logo applied in a brand identity system. You can see that there are a variety of things that require the branding and logo application. It's not just for your website and business cards. Think about other things you can have your branding applied to that can be given-out to customers.



ECO-SYSTEM

One of the most important relationships you can have is with a graphic designer... just as they have important relationships with a print shop. A graphic designer can make you look great; a print shop can make a graphic designer look great. It's a win-win for everyone.



Start Getting Started

Another thing to consider (which is not lost on me) with regards to your logo is your opinion. It is, after all, your logo for your business, but there are two types of opinions to consider: personal opinion and professional opinion. When you have something that is so close to you, near and dear to your heart, you cannot help but be protective of it, as well you should.

But there comes a time to 'let go' and trust in another professional. A personal opinion about a logo is usually accompanied with "because I like it" and "because I'm the boss" without any supporting substance. These are not good reasons for a logo to exist or represent your business. A professional opinion will offer constructive criticism (aka critique), supportive descriptions along with quality analysis and feedback, much like the list above for what's in a successful logo.

Remember, egos and feelings need to be checked at the door. A professional designer will turn off their emotions and immerse themselves into the project at hand while taking on a sense of ownership, pride, and a 'do whatever it takes' mentality to make you happy with the final result. If you are a professional, your customers come to your business and immediately put trust in you as the expert. This needs to be reciprocated with the designer you are working with. They are just as much the professional and expert that you are, just in different fields.

So if you are now closer to a decision to giving your logo (and business) a facelift or going for a full-blown extreme makeover, you now have to take the next steps. Begin with an honest assessment of your logo. Use the points in this article to assess your logo. You can get a simple game plan in motion before bringing in a designer.

Research the competition. They say that competition breeds good business... and it does. You do not, however, want to look like your competition. If you look like everyone else, how can you possibly stand out? When I am doing a logo design, I research the same industry to see what everyone is doing or has done. Not so I can get ideas of 'what to do', but rather, to get a sense of 'what not to do'. What good am I as a designer if I create a logo that looks like everyone else's and essentially becomes camouflaged with the others? So make sure you take note of trends and clichés. It is ok to like an aspect or element of another logo that you would want incorporated into your own. This is important information for the designer to know prior to designing.

Seek and derive inspiration from a business outside of your industry. Maybe there's a new restaurant that opened up near you. You love their food, the way they look, and the 'feel' of the atmosphere inside. This is brand identity at work and their logo is a part of it. When you pull-up and see the sign with the logo, you immediately associate 'good things' with it and your senses start arising... anticipating with excitement, what awaits you inside. Try to evaluate the elements that stir these sensations and see what could transfer over for your

business. Just because it's not in the optical field, doesn't mean elements of that business can't work for yours.

Look at typefaces too for inspiration. Since the majority of logos will have text in it, the look and feel of that text will be very important. Much as I 'busted-on' Google earlier, I love it as a resource and here's my approach with using it as a tool. Simply go to google and type in a word that describes a style you like; perhaps 'modern', and then add the word 'typeface' after it for your search. When you hit search, choose images when the results show. This lets you cut-through the junk and drill-down to more specifics. And since they'll be pictures, you'll have a better sense of the style more immediately. You can quickly get a 'feel' for the way the typeface presents itself. Just make sure you make a little scrap-book of sorts to save/secure your research.

Same applies with color too. Your logo will need a color or two. Inspiration is all around so make sure you 'look differently' at what's around you. Just because the vast majority of logos in the optical industry have blue in them, doesn't mean yours has to as well. Yes. Blue is an appropriate color for anything in the medical field. Blue is a 'safe' color. The color psychology and meanings of blue do make sense in this context and it provides a good case to use it... but it's not the only color option you have.

Take a look back at our summer issue regarding color to get a little more into it. In particular, take a look at the 'The Feeling of Colors' article. At the end of the article, I list positive associations of colors.

Find a word with a positive association in that list that you believe is an important aspect of your business and see what color it falls under. For example, if 'confidence' is a word you want associated with your business, as it's something you instill in your customers, then orange is a good color to go with. In a sea of blue logos, how well will a logo with orange stand out? Just because orange isn't your favorite color, doesn't mean it couldn't be your logo's favorite color.

PHIL'S-OSOPHIES -

designer-inspirations

"There are three responses to a piece of design – yes, no, and WOW! Wow is the one to aim for."

- Milton Glaser

"The public is more familiar with bad design than good design. It is, in effect, conditioned to prefer bad design, because that is what it lives with. The new becomes threatening, the old reassuring."

- Paul Rand

"It's through mistakes that you actually can grow. You have to get bad in order to get good."

- Paula Scher

"If you do good work for good clients, it will lead to other good work for other good clients. If you do bad work for bad clients, it will lead to other bad work for other bad clients."

- Michael Bierut

"Socrates said, 'Know thyself.' I say, 'Know thy users.' And guess what? They don't think like you do."

- Joshua Brewer

"I want to make beautiful things, even if nobody cares, as opposed to ugly things. That's my intent."

- Saul Bass

CLEARLY-VISIBLE

It is important to be mindful of the visual merchandising in the front window of your business (if you have one). Make sure your logo is highly visible as well as the sight-line into your store. Avoid visual clutter. Less is more.





WILD WILD OPT

The parts your business needs to look good

— Dr. Arliss Loveless

It's amazing the time, money, and effort that some people will put into a costume. I'm not talking about the "I went to the store and bought this costume". Oh no. I'm talking about the "I spent 40 hours just doing the filigree work on this necklace" type of costume.

Most people, upon hearing the kind of effort people will put into a costume, will be at least slightly taken aback, since it can be a ridiculous amount of time. Of course, it's hard to deny the results. You can tell without even asking them that they put a lot of effort into it, and that they really care about what they are doing. They don't seem to have skimmed on anything, which is very important in conveying their whole image.

For example, if you only put effort into one piece (like our poser-in-goggles down there in the corner), it just looks wrong. You tried, which is great, but ultimately the message didn't really get through, and what did get through was not what you wanted to convey. Every piece is separate, but they all work together to produce a result. The worst part about this is that people may not even notice if you do something right, but they will definitely notice if you do it poorly, or don't do it at all. You need all of the pieces in place to convey the right message, whether that message happens to be "I have way too much free time on my hands", or if the message is (somewhat more appropriately) "this is the best optical shop in town".

Before we get into the nuts and bolts - or, even, cogs and more cogs - I should probably note that, obviously, this isn't always a 'requirement'. There are plenty of people that have never and will never do most of the things that we talk about. That's fine. Even the kid that spent five minutes making a costume is going to get candy when he goes trick-or-treating. If you want people to remember you, and to be impressed, then going that extra step in presenting yourself really makes a difference. The other impos-

ing thing is thinking that you need to do all of it at once. As with anything, the more you can do the better, but it can also be broken down into smaller chunks that makes getting things done a little easier. One piece at a time, and we can help build the perfect costume.

The whole idea behind branding is to be able to convey one unified message. It's about keeping everything consistent, so that way people don't get confused about who you are or what, exactly, it is that you do. The unfortunate thing about this is that it can take some effort to set up, as it's like a bunch of cogs in a machine that work together. Just doing one or two things can make you seem incomplete, and everything feeds together and builds on each other.



What Does That Thing Do?

So, sometimes in marketing yourself out, you need something a little...odd? Something that's going to grab people and draw them in. Sort of like putting someone in a steam-punk costume on the front of an optical magazine. It's not something you expect, so it at the very least got you to pick up that magazine. The best part about me stating that, of course, is that you had to have picked up the magazine, otherwise you wouldn't be reading this right now.

At any rate, the point is that sometimes gentle, corporate, and safe isn't what's going to work. All of that comes down to how you want to present yourself in your particular market. Since we at opt tend to go against the grain, we're weird. But it's also something that people take notice of, and it seems to be working out okay. That's the main reason you need to consider all of this, since we're living proof that 'branding' doesn't have to be boring.

That Cost HOW MUCH?

So when you look at the cost of some things, they can seem expensive. Sometimes they aren't so expensive, but you really do need to be careful when considering how you spend when it comes to things such as logo designs, marketing, and similar things. You often times get what you pay for. Much like a costume, people can just tell when it was done on the cheap. That's not to say you should overpay for anything, but you really need to weigh the long term effects on the appearance of your business if you want to cheap out and get your nephew to make your logo.

To equate this to the optical world, it's much like when a patient picks out a pair of glasses, then proceeds to tell you that at FloorMart they only cost \$X. After a small, internal sigh, you then explain to them that you aren't a large chain store, and that you don't compete at that level because you need to be able to give your patients the service and personal attention that they deserve. This holds true in both costumes and branding as well - you can always find a quality level commensurate to what you want to pay for.

Buckle Up

By this point, I'm sure it's been beaten to death that 'social media good'. Trying to understand why it's good is something completely different, of course. This outlet truly is unique, especially in an industry like ours where we can have very large gaps of times in between patient encounters. Social media is an opportunity to keep a dialogue open with the patient in between seeing them, so that way they don't forget about you. Not only that, it can be a very gentle way to remind them of new products and services that you have in a gradual manner. When they are physically in your office, part of the problem can be finding the right product for the patient without sounding like you're trying to sell them a used car. There are, for good or bad, quite a lot of options when it comes to eyeglasses, both in terms of frames and lens technology. Social media makes it possible for you to plant seeds of interest in your patient's mind about a product that they might not even know you offered. This can be especially true for task-specific eyewear, or anti-fatigue lenses. Just imagine it: as the patient is sitting on facebook, they happen to notice your business mention something about how they can get lenses to help with eye strain and neck ache. They quickly realize they are suffering from that right now and should probably see what they can do to help relieve it.



Where did you get that?

When you see some awesome costume accessory that someone is sporting, you (naturally) just have to know where they got it. The answer, to your inevitable disappointment, is that 'I made it myself'. The fact that the item was a custom handmade one-of-a-kind makes it even more awesome. It's not just something that was an off-the-shelf bargain special in any old supermarket. People like having things that are 'better' and 'different'. Now, don't get me wrong - getting them to pay for it can be another issue entirely. That doesn't mean they don't want it. Similarly with eyewear, the same thing holds true when it comes to the products that you offer to your patients. If you can give them the new, the unique, or the thing they didn't know they needed, that puts you one up on the 'other guy'.

Being able to offer a better range of products than that other guy is a major edge that independent shops have - the ability to more quickly adopt new and unique products for their customers. When it comes to eyewear, the most obvious place to start is frames. Are the frames you offer any better or different than what they can get anywhere else? With how subjective and fickle fashions can be, trying to have frames that 'look better' can be difficult. You also need to be able to focus on the quality of them as well. There's also your choice of lenses and the different options you offer there. Are your progressive lenses any better than other ones? Do you offer photochromic lenses that are faster than other lenses? Can you put your patient in something that will help them more easily see when they are doing their hobby? Maybe make their high Rx look great? These are all posed as questions as, unlike seeing a costume, they aren't obvious to the patient. They don't know what you can do, or what the dif-

ferences between all of these are. That's why it comes down to you to be able to have the conversation with them to illustrate all of the products that you have so that they stand out against the drab offerings of other places to really make your practice 'pop'.

These are some of your main components of the optical market in the years to come. Much as happened with pharmacies, optical shops are facing more and more competition from the chain and online sectors. There's no reason that you can't compete with them when it comes to showing your good side to your customers. You have more of a reason to make yourself successful than the guy working in the big-box optical up the road. It's up to you to take pride in how you present yourself, your image, and everything else.



GROWING YOUR PRACTICE WITH SOCIAL MEDIA

— Leigh Plowman

Picture your practice thriving. You feel powerful, valuable and fulfilled in your community. Your team is energised. Your patients delighted. This is why you went into optometry. If you're not there already, how do you make it happen... how can you make your practice grow and thrive? Social media is one way to help you get there.



Patients have more choices than ever before when it comes to choosing an eye care practitioner. Often they turn to the Internet to research practices online or to social media pages like Facebook to ask their friends for a recommendation

Taking a proactive approach to your Internet presence can make all the difference between a new customer's fleeting visit to your website or Facebook page and loyal engagement... to getting a prospect to explore the site... sign up to the newsletter... 'like' a comment... follow you and make an appointment. The key is to build trust.

Having an online presence allows you to grow trust within your local community beyond the consultation room. You know the questions that your patients want answers to. You are the local eye expert. It's time to communicate regularly and with authority about eye health issues that matter. Your community needs you.

A Growing Opportunity

Your patients and customers use the Internet and social media every day. According to the Sensis 2015 Social Media Report, the average Australian spends 8.5 hours per week on Facebook alone. Additionally, there's time spent on Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, Youtube, Pinterest and Instagram.

To build your practice with efficiency, you need to tap into this stream of Internet and social media users. And to do this effectively, you need to create a website and social media pages that are relevant, engaging and measurable.

In 2015, the social media examiner surveyed over 3,700 international marketers. Of these, only 42 per cent of marketers said they could measure the effectiveness of their social media efforts. Maybe a few others had a feeling that social media helped but weren't sure to what degree. Yet measurement is vital to refining and driving your online performance.

What is Success?

Business success is measured by your ability to engage the right audience, drive business impact and achieve your financial goals.

In optometric practice, this means increasing new and return consultations and growing sales. This may be through the purchase of glasses, contact lenses, vision therapy, low vision aids or the delivery of specialised eye treatments. Each of these activities will help you achieve the financial goals you have set for your own practice... but first you need to invest in identifying and attracting your ideal patients.

While optometry is about offering top eye care to everyone, inevitably some patients will trust your recommendations and become more loyal than others. To identify them, analyse your current practice statistics on your Practice Management System. This information allows you to identify your ideal patient's age, gender, suburb, refraction, health fund status or purchase month. For example, you may wish to attract more 30-year-old female spectacle wearers for ortho-K, or more 45-year-old males for prescription safety glasses. Social media is a great way to do it.

The two best free tools to measure your social media efforts are via Google Analytics and Facebook Insights.

Google Analytics

The most popular way to look at your efforts on your website is through Google Analytics. In aggregate, you can follow patients and see what pages they clicked on your website. Google Analytics records things like:

- ✓ Who is visiting your site
- ✓ How they are getting to your site (e.g. from Facebook)
- ✓ What they are doing on your site (e.g. viewed pages)
- ✓ What actions they are completing (making a phone call, online purchase or other action)

After you tell Google Analytics your goals, you can start tracking goal conversions.

Facebook Insights

If you have more than 30 'likes' on your page, you can view Facebook Insights. This allows you to measure the proportion of people who are active with your page (i.e. engagement percentage) and how it's increasing. You can measure how many people click through to your website from Facebook. You can track how your customer service is going through questions on Facebook. You can even track how many people make a phone call to your practice, via your website or Facebook page.

When we look at Goggleman, Australia's prescription sports glasses website, it's easy to see the return on investment. Here are some of the results that I've observed.

Referred sales: 1.1 per cent of online sales are attributed to Facebook. Actually, the real percentage is likely higher. Customers who find out about Goggleman from Facebook and make a phone call are additional to this.



Lower cost of marketing: Facebook promotions are low cost and trackable. However, they are used as part of a wider marketing effort.

Traffic to website: Facebook traffic consists of 96.5 per cent new visitors. Arriving at the website, we can see the most popular pages that people visit (for example Snow and Cycling Products.)

Mentions by friends: Visitors to the Facebook page often tag their friends who wear glasses. This is similar to a word-of-mouth recommendation, which builds trust before patients visit the Goggleman website.

Testimonials: Some people leave positive testimonials straight away, and others are prompted later by a friend tagging them.

Messages: Visitors ask questions via private messages using Facebook Messenger. These people are more likely to make a purchase.

ROI Offline Too

Facebook wants to help advertisers measure their return for offline sales. Take your end-of-year private health campaign for instance – you might use a combination of magazine, newspaper, radio and mail ads to send your message to the community.

If you use an ad on Facebook, you can track who saw the ad. When the advertisement ends, you can collect the list of people who saw your ad and then made a purchase.

Facebook can temporarily match patients who are on Facebook using their mobile phone or email address. After this match is complete, you can compare patients on Facebook who saw your ad, versus those who didn't see your ad. From this, you can easily calculate the Return on Investment of your campaign.

The progressive release of Facebook Conversion Lift will enable practices to measure their efforts from Facebook ads.

Working the Funnel

I like to describe this process as a funnel. The area above the funnel represents people in your community who don't yet know about you. Just inside the widest part of the funnel are people who have heard about you, or may have walked past your practice. A little further down are people who have heard good things about you from their friends. Further down are people who have visited your practice, but haven't made an appointment. Next are those who have completed an appointment, but not ordered lenses. At the narrowest end of the funnel are people who have made a consultation or dispensing purchase and become your loyal customers – these are the ideal customers who will help you achieve success.

Social media, together with print, radio or other marketing, allows you to attract more 'ideal' patients.

Software associated with social media and website hosting lets you track all online interactions with your practice, enabling you to finesse your communication so that more patients flow through the funnel toward the narrowest end.

Social Media with Intent

Social media allows you to grow awareness and build trust in the community. The more your patients know, like and trust you, the more your practice will grow. Social media should be part of your overall marketing strategy that includes print and radio advertising. Together, these efforts will help you reach thousands of patients.

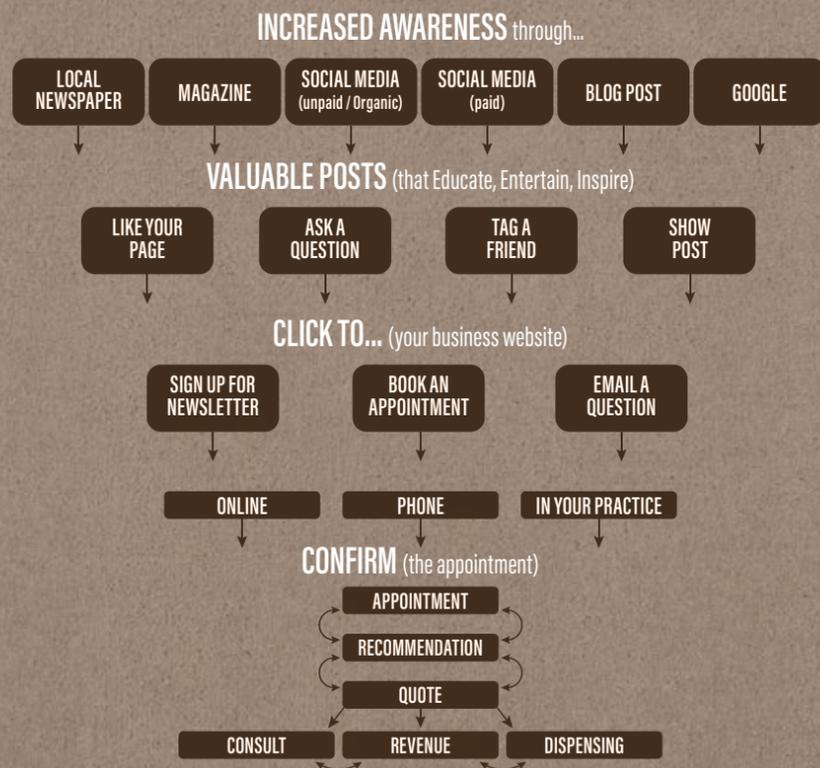
Importantly, you need to describe your ideal patient, and identify the clicks or actions that you want patients to take. This may be making a phone call on a smartphone, visiting your practice, signing up for a practice newsletter. Using software, you can track and improve these, as well as other Insights in Facebook.

Through being intentional on social media, you can grow your ideal practice, improve goodwill in your community and achieve your financial and lifestyle goals. 

Benefits of Social Media

Some of the benefits of social media are the ability to:

- Educate, inform and build trust with patients
- Reach more people in your community
- Improve your practice reputation
- Show patients your clinical interests, practice services and products
- Improve customer service and reach patients where they are
- Optimise your practice marketing
- Grow your list of potential patients for future marketing



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★ BRAND ★ IDENTITY

What's in your brand?

AN OVERVIEW FOR CONSIDERING A BRAND IDENTITY FOR YOUR BUSINESS

— Woody Guthrie

“This brand is your brand. This brand is my brand. From California to the New York island;

From the redwood forest to the Gulf Stream waters. This brand was made for you and me.”

WHAT THIS IS: This article is more about beginning a conversation about evaluating your brand and whether you need to think about and consider a brand identity. My goal with this article is simply to define what a brand identity is, what the core components are, and perhaps hit a few touchpoints along the way to get a conversation started with yourself and your business.

WHAT THIS ISN'T: This article is not a step-by-step on how to build a brand identity. The actual act of building a brand identity is custom to each individual's business needs and is a whole different 'animal'. There is however, enough here to provide you with plenty of information and some guidance to get started on establishing a brand identity for your business.

WHAT IS BRANDING?

Branding creates an awareness of a company's goods and services. Branding is all about the identity. Branding is a set of expectations by the consumer which is managed by the business. Branding is both a visual and emotional response to goods or services provided by a business. Branding looks to establish long-lasting relationships with those who have made an emotional connection with a brand.

If you've ever said something like “I love Doritos”, then you are a success of their brand identity. Typically, when you see the Doritos logo, you immediately associate things with having eaten Doritos (regret might be a part of it but we won't go there) at some previous point in time. You can almost taste them with just a mere thought of them. This is what a successful brand identity can do.

Note: I feel it is important here to point out that a product is not a brand. You may need a product but you will want a brand. For example, I need coffee but I want it from Starbucks. In short, products equal functions (needs) and brands equal emotions (wants).

Branding is all about relationships. Branding builds trust and loyalty. Branding is what distinguishes one company's goods and services from another company's. Think for a moment about when you go to the grocery store. Are there specific 'name brand' products that you buy? If so, why do you buy them? What is it about those products that have you going back for more?

Branding is kinda finicky though. You could have the best designed logo and a beautiful branding system but if you do not get customers to buy into your brand, the brand identity has failed. Conversely, you can have a horrible looking logo and everybody 'eats it up' and thinks that your brand is the greatest thing ever.

So how do you determine whether you need a brand identity? Your sales will tell you. If your business steadily grows, then what you have is working for you and there's no need to fix-it at this time. You know the old adage, “if it ain't broke, don't fix it”. If you've tried everything else except a brand identity and sales are still soft, then perhaps it's time to create a brand identity.

COMPONENTS OF BRANDING

Your logo is only a small piece of the puzzle when it comes to branding although it is a very integral component. Your logo is the catalyst here for much of what needs to follow in the brand identity. Your logo also helps with the brand experience by bridging the gap between the emotional responses (intangibles) it looks to create with the actual consumption or usage (tangibles) of that product. This is achieved through the brand identity system with the careful construction of associations, relationships and synergies between every component.

Your logo has elements (or should have) within it that will help push a brand into a full brand experience for the consumer. Not all brands however, can have all of these elements. Let's take a closer look at what these elements are.

NAME

Without a name, who knows what it is? The name is usually what the product and logo is built around. The name is typically a unique word or words to simply identify what that product is. Even though the name is what a logo is built around, a properly designed logo will have some of the other components (listed below) incorporated into the logo, carrying some of the other essences of the good or service.

COLOR

A visual indicator that becomes immediately recognizable. Many companies will have their colors trademarked. Tiffany and Co. has a very distinct blue. The orange of Home Depot is another example. Even before you can read the name, there is recognition and association with the colors.

SMELL

There is no mistaking the intoxicating aroma of Chanel No.5™, which is trademarked. Nor is there any mistaking of the 'interesting aroma' produced by Aqua Velva, yet both of these and many more, can trigger things like emotional responses. Not just a stimulation of sense but also flashbacks to earlier times in our lives. I can for example, think about Drakkar Noir and I am immediately 'mentally tossed' back into 80's.

TASTE

Like them or not, if you've ever had a Dorito®, 3 things almost inevitably happen; 1- You say something to the effect of 'blech' and make a 'face' when you eat it. 2- You then proceed to reach for another... and another... and another... 3- Next time you see them in the store or in a bowl at a friend's house for a party and immediately remember what your experience was the last time you ate them. So you go back to number 1. Don't feel bad. It happens to almost everyone.

TOUCH

How something feels in our hands is also an association we can have with a brand. There is a tactile quality to the build or construction that is unmistakable. Perhaps it's the ergonomics of the design or even how it 'feels' in use. It even extends to the act of opening a product you just purchased. I haven't checked the trademark on this but I wouldn't be surprised if Apple trademarked the actual 'act of peeling the plastic off the screen' for its iPhone. Odd as it may seem, it is a sensation that is 'tapped' and part of their packaging and branding for their iPhones.

SOUND

Fire-up that DVD or Blu-ray player and listen for that awesome THX Surround-Sound 'sound' to come on at the beginning of the movie. This is a trademarked sound that does a pretty good job about getting you a little more excited to see the movie you are about to watch. Even if you've watched it dozens of times. The little jingle that accompanies T-Mobile commercials and their phones is a trademarked sound. Even sounds like the deep growl of a Harley; the note by a Porsche as it shifts; the symphonic-cord that plays when you start-up a Mac. All these sounds are part of the brand experience.

MOVEMENT

Some products move. Cars, for example are something that an auto manufacturer will use to convey the feeling or essence of driving in their branding. Aside from beauty shots and intricate camera movements and angles showing you the car from its 'best sides', they will employ taglines or slogans. Mazda for example, used Zoom Zoom for its RX-7 model. BMW states 'The Ultimate Driving Machine' to convey a sense of quality, power and ability of their cars while driving them.

THESE AREN'T THE COMPONENTS YOU'RE LOOKING FOR...

So you might be saying to yourself at this moment, I deal with eye care. None of this has any bearing on my business. Oh contrariwise. As with many things, they are transferable. You just need to think a little 'outside the box'... and not pressed right-up against it either. True, eye-glasses do not really possess things like smell, taste or sound (if used in a manner approved by the manufacturer) but they do have elements like color and touch, in terms of how they fit and feel. So how can you tap into all of these 'goodies' for your brand? Simple. Your business.

OFFICE SPACE

Do not dismiss the power of having a Red Swingline Stapler on your desk for customers to see. It's a little touch and detail like that which allows for a comfortable and casual conversation... provided of course you've both seen the movie.

As an ECP, you do have tangible products that your customers walk away with. However, unless they are your own private label, they are not actually part of your brand. Your business is a major component of your brand. So with a little thinking outside of the box, here is how the aforementioned elements of a brand, can translate to your business.

NAME

Obviously here, you have a logo and signage for your business. You also will likely have business cards, some print collateral and a website that have your name and logo on it. But what else do you have? Do you have personalized cleaning cloths with your logo?

COLOR

Does your office have a color scheme that matches your brand identity from your logo? Is it unified and feeling like a whole or do things feel out of place, lacking in synergy? Does it feel like hodge-podge, pieced-together and not working in unison? It's amazing what a simple coat of paint and 'pops' of brand colors can do for your space.

SMELL

Nothing worse than walking into a place of business that smells a little musty or has 'other odors' that smack your customers in the face. Customers will remember this. If you have electrical outlets, you can get one of those plug-in air fresheners. They last a little over a month and have seasonal scents available. Just don't go overboard with the smells though as you want to be sensitive to those with allergies.

TASTE

Do you offer-out coffee or little pastries' of some sort for your customers? Consider partnering with a local coffee shop on this. A Keurig machine and some condiments can go a long way and provide a personal touch for your customers. Being a coffee snob myself, I make this recommendation for a Keurig (or other similar machine) simply because it's 'on-demand' for your customers and always fresh. The last thing you want is that nasty-old, burnt coffee from a neglected pot that tastes wretched and creates one of the aforementioned 'other odors' in your business.

TOUCH

How comfortable are the chairs or seats in the waiting area? How about in the exam room or at the fitting table? Don't you be the judge... you're not the customer here. Make sure you solicit feedback and input from customers and co-workers on their level of comfort. Even a couple of inexpensive throw pillows (color coordinated with your branding of course), can add a nice little touch of style and comfort for your customers.

SOUND

What kind of music do you have playing in your office? Is it neutral for as many as possible to enjoy and not be annoyed by? Yes. I understand that you are there all day and I also understand you have your favorite artists or genres of music which can motivate you and put you in a good mood but make sure it's appropriate. And that goes for volume too.

MOVEMENT

So aside from your examination chair, what moves? How can this one be a component in your business? I would look at the 'ergonomics' of your business for the customer. Is your business arranged in such a way that it provides a smooth, comfortable and natural 'flow' for the customer. From a customer's point of view, how does it feel when they first walk in? Is it open, warm, inviting? Are displays and racks easy to identify quickly and easy to navigate around? Is it handicap accessible and easy to maneuver a wheelchair or scooter? Is there a lot of 'visual clutter', causing confusion and indecision on where they should go first?

All of these elements directly relate to your brand because they are part of the brand experience the moment a customer comes upon your business and enters it. Your customers are guests; patrons, who made it a point to come to your business. You want them to tell friends and to come back, right? Be honest with yourself and evaluate these elements as it pertains to your business and the brand you wish to convey. Do they provide an enjoyable customer experience?

WHY WORRY ABOUT BRANDING?

An excellent question. If I were to sum it up in one word, it would be perception. It is all about what the customer thinks of you and your business and it goes above and beyond providing great customer service... although that is also an important aspect of your brand identity. Your brand as an ECP is your livelihood. It serves people and the community around you. It has a positive impact on people's lives and the opportunity to have a positive impact on more lives.

It's about pride too. The ability to speak with confidence and being a brand champion for what your business has to offer. Who wouldn't want to have that feeling and ability and opportunity to share it with others? How your business is perceived is really paramount in the scope of a brand identity.

When you are looking to consider elevating your business by establishing, executing and enforcing a brand identity, there are three approaches you can take. These three approaches are based on the needs of the business:

A BRAND REFRESH

This is the most simplistic form of brand identity and is typically reserved for a business that is well established, has a good track record with customers and steady growth. This usually only requires a few tweaks which begin with a freshening-up of the logo, new business cards, signage, print collateral and a web design refresh.

A COMPLETE OVERHAUL

This is generally reserved for those that have come to 'face the facts' and realize that growth is stagnant, customers are not returning and there is too much down-time resulting in a reduction in staff and operating hours. This is what I refer to as the 'crumpled paper approach' whereby you accept that nothing is working as it should, call-in reinforcements and alternative viewpoints (possibly consultants) and start over. This is not however, a reflection of doing business poorly... although that could be a factor. It is more rooted in not keeping-up with the times and evolving to stay competitive.

BRAND REVIVAL

Your business has steady growth and you are wanting to keep-up with the times, stay fresh, be modern and progressive. This is typically done with new brands, goods, or services but can also be an evolution of sorts and can work for your business. There is a possible downside here, though. If you do a brand revival because you added something new to your business, or you just like to change it up frequently, you may cause some confusion with your currently accepted branding.

A brand revival could also stem from the previous scenario of a complete overhaul due to a poor public image. This is more akin to 'Under New Management' and unless that's the case, your primary choices are doing a refresh or overhaul.

WHY IS BRANDING IMPORTANT?

Remember that branding is all about the experience that the customer has and that the brand identity is the managing of that brand. A good brand identity is like a marathon, not a sprint and is not something that can be developed quickly or executed quickly.

A good brand identity will build recognition. Your logo will take on more power when it is viewed by consumers. There will be an association of quality, care, and trust (provided you provide that) with current customers and will generate intrigue and inspire new customers to buy-into your brand.

A good brand identity can inspire your staff to be brand champions for you. If quality and service are part of your branding, surely it makes the statement that you have a great place to work. You have coworkers that take pride in what they do and are more likely to do whatever it takes for the sake of the business and the care of the customer.

A good brand identity will pay dividends. Remember it's a marathon, not a sprint. Patience is important here as it will take time to develop and roll-out the brand identity. Not only is the goal of a brand identity to keep current customers happy with your goods and services, but to also gain new customers. Simple math states that current customers + new customers = increased profitability. Who doesn't want that? Do you really make too much money?

SOME FINAL THINGS TO CONSIDER

As with everything, there pros and cons and do's and don'ts to consider when deciding on doing a brand identity. Make sure that you define your values. Your values are the foundation of who you are and what your business is about. These values need to time-less and have a long shelf life. Never deviate from your values either. Include those you work with on this, as their perception of the businesses values matters too.

Make sure that there is passion behind the creation of a brand identity. This is not a chore. This is 'your baby' and you want to make sure you take care of it and give it all of the attention it deserves. Note: Not to be confused with your actual children or family. They matter too so make sure you allow for a good work/life balance.

Do not ignore your brand or do it halfway. Creating a good brand identity takes commitment. 110% goes into it. Your brand identity is a 'big deal' and should always be considered as such. For as difficult as it can be in today's world and competitive marketplace to stand-out and gain brand loyalty, you must remember that it is the complete opposite when it comes to losing customers. It takes time and repeated efforts to gain a new customer and only a small misstep to lose them. Give your customers multiple reasons to come back to your business instead of them going to one of those 'big box' retailers. The personal, small touches and details make a huge difference and they will be willing to spend a little more for what you have to offer.

Always keep in mind that you are creating a brand identity for your customers and potential customers... not for yourself. You will be taken care of after your customers have as a byproduct of a good brand identity.

WHERE TO GO FROM HERE?

You will need a partner or partners when embarking on a brand identity. I understand that for small businesses, there may not really be enough budget allowed for this. So how can you begin? The logo... and more specifically, a graphic designer is a good place. You will also want to spend some time yourself researching online for outlines and structures of Brand Identities.

Why a graphic designer is a good starting place to begin this process is because they are the ones that will work with you on establishing the base of your brand identity with a new or refreshed logo. Graphic designers by nature are creative problem solvers and are always seeking creative solutions. The creative solutions they can offer don't have to be specifically in the design-realm. They are good sounding-boards because they are analytical and critical thinkers (for the most part). Make sure you do your 'homework' when looking for a graphic designer.

A graphic designer is also someone who will bring consistency across the board as it pertains to your brand identity. Each designer is unique though and each one has their own processes and methodologies as well as a certain 'signature look' to their work so make sure you like what you see before beginning with them. A good graphic designer with a good education and experience, will embrace the opportunity to be a part of a brand identity. They will be immersive and relentless in their quest to provide you with the best they can offer and will be a partner for the long-haul.

The next step you will want to take, is to grab yourself a pumpkin spice coffee or latte, find some nice, quiet place to sit down and begin to think a little more about your branding and what the next iteration can look like as well as what it can do for your business. Make sure you take some notes too. Of course, keep your eyes posted on optMAGAZINE... as I'm sure there will be an additional article as a follow-up.





NEW EYES

glasses for those in need



“The more we do, the more we can do”, said by English writer and philosopher Will Hazlitt, exemplifies the spirit of New Eyes for the Needy. Since its conception the organization has gone above and beyond to “do more” not only in its community but globally.

— Maria Magnotta

While working as a volunteer for a Red Cross food depot during the Great Depression, Julia Lawrence Terry recognized that many people were in need of corrective eyewear. In 1932, she began collecting eyeglasses from friends and family to distribute to those in need. As New Eyes for the Needy grew she began to advertise her new charity in newspapers and on the radio, and soon she was receiving donations from all over the country.

From that point forward New Eyes for the Needy flourished. In 1947, Julia passed away, but today her legacy continues and is helping more people than ever. Since its Depression Era beginnings, New Eyes has expanded both nationally and globally, it now boasts more than 250 volunteers, runs the Fabulous Finds Jewelry & Giftware Boutique and sells vintage eyewear on its online shop. Their boutique and online store, along with donations from people like you has allowed New Eyes to help more than 8.5 million people improve their vision since 1932.

Want to get involved? Donate!

New Eyes for the Needy offers a variety of unique donation opportunities and they accept much more than just eyeglasses!

Send your used eyeglasses in good condition to the New Eyes headquarters and they will send them abroad to help those in developing countries improve their vision. Countries that benefit from these donations include Bolivia, China, Ghana, Honduras, Jamaica, Panama, Philippines, Thailand, and Kenya.

You can donate money online that will be used to purchase new eyeglasses, just \$60 affords New Eyes to buy a pair of eyeglasses for those in need.

If you have sunglasses, hearing aids, watches, jewelry, silverware or giftware you are looking to get rid of New Eyes will gladly take them off your hands. These types of donations will be used as merchandise in its Fabulous Finds Jewelry & Giftware Boutique or on their online vintage eyewear store. The profits from these goods are used to purchase new eyeglasses for children and adults in the United States.

20/20 for 2020 Campaign

New Eyes's goal is to raise one million dollars and collect one million pair of gently used glasses by 2020. This program kicks off this fall, with all donations being matched up to \$100,000. You can learn more about recycling old eyewear by visiting www.new-eyes.org



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THE CALL OF TRANSTHULHU

— H. P. Lovecraft

It was a curious thing, this old journal that I now held in front of me. It came to my by way of the passing of my great uncle, George Angle, a researcher in optical technologies at a small university just south of Boston. Now, Professor Angle was a widely-known authority on photochromic lens technology, and his sudden demise had caused quite a stir in the community. Even stranger was the fact that this journal reached me approximately two days before his passing, indicating that he had sent it to me himself, rather than it being an artifact of his passing.

The unexpectedness of the arrival of the journal, joined with the notice of his passing, did not sit well with me, but I could not adequately describe why. This, coupled with my great uncle leaving me as his sole heir, made for a rather unsettling train ride as I made my way to Arkham to settle his estate.

I perused the journal on the train from Boston, but I had great difficulty making sense of any of it. It was filled with newspaper clippings and handwritten notes. Many of the notes were mostly incomprehensible, using strange words and symbols I had not before encountered. Towards the beginning of the jour-

nal was a heading in large, carefully crafted letters that read “TRANSTHULHU CULT”. The painstaking way in which it was written indicated that this odd word was, indeed, meant to be spelled in such an odd fashion. As I slowly meandered through the disjointed notes in the journal, I often encountered a strange sigil - a series of swirls in an almost concentric pattern. Surely it was important, but at that time I could not fathom what such a symbol actually represented.

I eventually came to section of the journal that seemed to go into detail on what had only been hinted at up until then. It was

a tale about cultists - those so blindly following the ideology of this “Transthulhu cult” that they would accept nothing else and were, shall we say, hostile to anyone that didn’t follow their way of thinking. The journal did not, however, go into any detail on what those beliefs actually were, leaving me more confused and bewildered than before I began reading. The only hint that it gave was strange verse couplet that created more questions than it answered.

**That is not dark which can eternal brighten,
And with strange aeons, even these may lighten.**

This was obviously important, but I cannot comprehend why it would be something my great uncle would have such detailed notes on. After all, he was involved with the latest research in photochromic lenses, whereas the things in this journal seem almost... ancient? As I delved deeper into this work, I felt a very strange mix of both excitement and terror. I could not help think that I should stop, that some things are best left forgotten to the yawning chasm of time. It seems, however, that this cult, with their strange obsession with ancient photochromic lenses, is still extremely popular.

The train arrived into the station around midday, giving me enough time to stop by my great uncle’s office at Miskatonic University before heading to his residence. As I entered his office, I could not help the feeling that I was being watched. Apart from the helpful gentleman that allowed me access, I was alone in the cramped office, but it did not feel like it. The majority of his papers had already been boxed up, save for a small lens dis-

play. At first glance, it seemed like nothing out of the ordinary - like something that could be sitting in any optical shop. As I went to pack it up, however, I was able to look at it in greater detail. This particular display seemed to have room for a pair of lenses, most likely for some sort of comparison. At the bottom of one of the lenses was a label that read “NuanceRT” - probably one of the cutting-edge photochromic lenses my great uncle was working on. The other label, however...this one was beyond recognition. It seemed to have been almost scratched off, with deep gouges in the plastic base where a label should be. As I pondered why such a thing may have been removed, my hand was unconsciously drawn to pick up the small flashlight at the base of the display. I found myself turning on the photo-activation light before I even realized what I was doing, as if it was simply a natural thing that I had to do. As expected, both lenses got dark under the influence of the light. It was nothing strange or unexpected. As I turned the light off, however, I found the darkness of this mysterious lens inescapable. It was not that it was darker than the other lens, rather that the darkness from this lens seemed to linger, to envelop. I kept waiting for it to go clear, but the infinite blackness of this lens persisted, drawing me in completely to the depths of terror that one cannot adequately describe. The feelings of hopelessness and despair that this enduring darkness wrought on my very soul still haunts me. I do not know how much time I spent staring into the abyssal chasm of darkness that lens had created. Seconds? Minutes? Perhaps longer. All I am able to recall is being jarred back to reality by the same gentleman that had shown me into the office in the first place. He wanted to know if I was about finished, as it was getting quite late in the evening and he was quite eager to head home. As I turned back to collect the dis-



play, I noticed that the NuanceRT lens was perfectly clear by this point, but that other....thing....it was nowhere near clear. I could feel the tenebrous reaches of its grasping darkness attempting to invade the very core of my being. I quickly tossed a cover over the display before I was once again suffocated by the unending blackness exuded by this monstrosity of a lens.

That evening was when the dreams began. I do not know why, or how, but that was decidedly their origin. I would not suggest, of course, that some simple lens display could be the cause of such discomfort, but even the most learned of scholars would have trouble completely ignoring the convergence of the two events.

They were always the same dream - I am walking down the streets of some large, desolate city. Gargantuan, strangely constructed buildings line crooked avenues, with an eerie, bright light cascading down upon everything. I cannot see the sun, only a diffuse light that seems to bathe the avenues in what I can only describe as an 'unsettling illumination'. Thankfully, I am wearing some kind of lens that reacts to the light, darkening to make seeing outside manageable. I tire of wandering the desolate streets, and slowly approach one of these massive structures. It seems almost as if the diffuse lighting that is ever-present in the streets is almost afraid to enter these cyclopean buildings, as a yawning chasm of darkness is all that greets me in the doorway. Surely, my eyes will adjust, is what I tell myself before venturing forth into the strange building. After several seconds inside, I can feel the beginnings of a nameless dread beginning to take hold in the far reaches of my psyche. That type of primalistic fear that becomes impossible to fight. I still cannot see anything. Aren't these lenses going to change back?

I take several cautious steps and stumble in the darkness - the same darkness that I felt that day in my great uncle's office. Only this time, there is nothing to pull me back from the brink of madness. There is only the darkness. I shuffle aimlessly around the room, blinded by the enduring darkness of my lenses, tripping over something...squishy? Whatever it was, it moves as I trip over it, and I can feel it grabbing me. A snake? It must be, but I...can't get free. If only my lenses didn't take so long to get clear. Then I would have been able to see when I came inside. Maybe then I could have avoided it. It gets hard to breathe, as if a great weight is crushing down upon my chest. I can feel myself being lifted up, suspended in the air. A dull, distant chanting seems to be getting louder by the moment. The words are a string of incomprehensible syllables, but are the only thing I have left to focus on, apart from gasping for breath in the stygian darkness provided by whatever it is still covering my eyes. Before losing consciousness, I am able to pick out a few words from the cacophony of voices chanting around me now. *la! la! Transthulhu!*

It was always then that I wake from the dream, alone in my room, drenched in a cold sweat. It was an unnameable dread that always gripped my very heart, almost as if some netherworld creature held the beating thing tightly in its claws. After a moment or two, I would regain my senses as the sense of dread lifted, and I could once again breathe normally. I find solace in the fact that it was, indeed, only a dream. I am thankful that I am able to get the latest in photochromic lenses with NuanceRT, and not stuck as a mindless follower worshipping the cult of Transthulhu.

Disclaimer: The preceding is a work of fiction, and is not intended to be a comparison of specific products or their properties. Any resemblance to actual photochromic lenses, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

CULT OF THE TRANSTHULHU



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HOW TO RESPOND TO A NEGATIVE FACEBOOK REVIEW

Facebook can be an eerie place. Like ghosts hiding in the night waiting for a good scare, social media sites can be filled with late night lurkers and hundreds of trolls. You hope to never awaken them... but all it takes is one bad day and BOO! You get a negative Facebook review. Here is an optometrist's guide to properly handling a negative review.

TAKE A DEEP BREATH

A negative review is not the end of the world or a reflection of your practice, but rather the opinion of one customer. However, with the prevalence of social media in today's society, one bad review can have lasting effects on your practice. When responding to your customer's negative review, be kind, be polite, and be thankful. It is important to recognize that each negative review is an opportunity for you to better your practice.

ALWAYS ANSWER

Ignoring a negative review will only further your customer's dissatisfaction. Take this time to interact with your customers. First and foremost apologize for the situation, then ask how you can resolve the issue and have them private message you. Private messaging with your customers allows you to learn more about the incident outside of the public eye. However, Facebook does not allow a business page to message a person directly, therefore the customer must initiate the conversation. When customers know you respond positively to criticism they are less likely to leave a negative review, and more likely to contact you directly for help. The last thing you want is to have negative reviews or comments with no response at all. This sends the message that either you don't want to or don't know how to resolve issues. By effectively 'owning' the negative, you can spin it in to a positive.

It is important to note that not all responses are created equal. Keep in mind that your response is public, being argumentative or defensive will have a heavier effect on your business than one bad review. This type of response will only elicit more negative reviews.

HUMANIZE YOURSELF

Social media has desensitized consumers to the fact that behind every small business's Facebook page is a person. Use your page as an interactive photo album of your practice; post pictures of your staff, your community involvement, and your successes - these act as daily reminders that there is more behind your brand than medicine, there are people.

WHEN ADDRESSING A NEGATIVE REVIEW:

1. Start each reply with the reviewer's name
2. Cite the reviewer's specific complaint
3. Sign the response with your name

Tailoring your response to each review will further involve your customer in your community and let them know they are a valued member. While each response will have the same general outline, it is important to not be generic.

RESEARCH THE INCIDENT

It's not only important to hear the customer's side of the story but also your staff's. Although the problem may have been out of your office's control and there is no one to blame it is important to understand the problem completely in order to assess how to handle it. Once you know the full story, contact the reviewer and let them know how you corrected the problem and offer them an incentive to come back to your practice.

Social media is a cheap and easy way to converse with customers outside of your office, take advantage. Ask your followers questions about improving your business. From letting them vote on your new waiting room artwork to asking for help choosing a new logo, creating an online community for your customers can lessen the likelihood of a negative review. Your followers are people that support your business and want to be part of it, encourage them.

So, before you answer any negative review relax, take a deep breath and most importantly...don't lose your head! 🧠

— Ichabod Crane



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OPT Magazine

Published whenever we get around to it.

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Unlike most magazines, we definitely endorse everything we run. All of the products you find in this magazine are awesome, and you should definitely buy and/or use them. If we don't agree with something, we don't print it.

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OPT - The Spectacles



OPT - Cryptogram

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
9												

N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z

3 20 3 25 2 22 9 2 26 10
 A
 19 9 7 7 11 15 3 3 18
 ?
 26 10 18 4 26 4

Hint: Tim Burton
 Last Issue Cryptogram: We believed we'd catch the rainbow

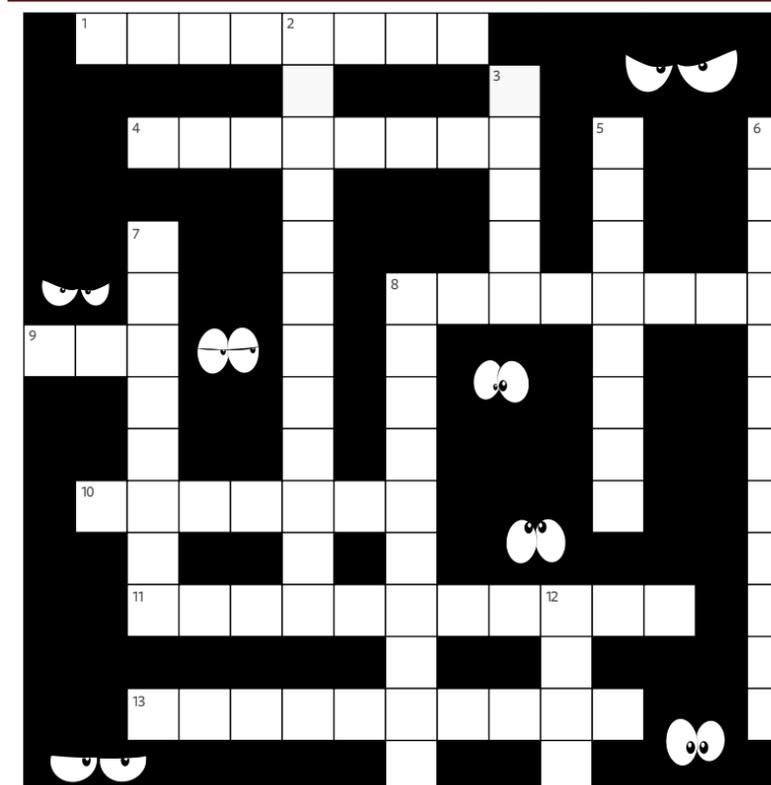
OPT - Fun Facts

- In 2014, a student in Taiwan went blind after keeping her contact lenses in for 6 months. A microscopic bug ate her eyeballs.
- Ommatophobia is the fear of eyes.
- Some lizards squirt blood out of their eyes as protection against predators.

Source: <http://www.factslides.com/s-Eyes>

OPT - Crossword

Theme- "It's in the mag"



ACROSS

- Creates awareness of a company (8)
- Exam equipment for patient comfort (8)
- Most important part of planning (8)
- Independent Optical Lab (3)
- Advantage you have over online opticals (7)
- Cult of mindless photochromic followers (11)
- Embrace this, or risk your practice getting ghosts (10)

DOWN

- Helps save money on equipment purchases (12)
- The key to social media engagement (5)
- Make sure you do this for negative reviews (8)
- Premium AR Coating, cures Oleophobia (12)
- A faster photochromic lens choice (8)
- One word to describe why we do branding (10)
- This is not a brand (4)

Looking for Writers*

We're always on the lookout for people that are good at writing about optical things. If you'd like to be a part of the magazine, send us an email and we can get you signed up!

editor@optmagazine.com

*Since opt MAGAZINE is free, so is the payment for writing. Sorry. _(ツ)_/

optoberfest

THE CELEBRATION OF 'GETTING MORE'

Check this out bro. *Whats that bro-heim?* I switched to OPT and got more. *More value on content?* Yeah bro-fessor, and more. Like frame-free ads and more meaningful content. *Nice bro-tato chip.* That's not all bro-tein shake. OPT has quality articles that are educational and entertaining too. *Oh, that's a lot more.* Oh yeah. Were all about more Teddy Bro-sevelt.

OPT Magazine. Expect great content & a whole lot more

independent optical labs?
quoth the raven, “nevermore”.



darkness there, and nothing more.
sad it is, and nothing more.