

A woman with intricate braided hair and dramatic blue eye makeup looks directly at the camera. She wears a dark blue patterned dress with a thick white fur collar. A white Samoyed dog sits in front of her, looking towards the camera with its tongue out. The background is a soft-focus snowy landscape with falling snow.

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M A G A Z I N E

WINTER 2016

optMagazine.com

WINTER IS COMING

The 12 Ways of Business

BUDGET-BASED MARKETING IDEAS

It's A Wonderful Lab

WHY WOULD YOU EVER WANT TO OWN A LAB?

A Lens Story

PERCEIVED VALUE - WORTH THE PRICE?

ALSO INSIDE: Case Study of a Facebook AD | The Gift of Social Media | How the Grinch Stole Who-to-metry & much more

LETTER from the

EDITOR

FREE WARM
HUGS ANYONE?

WINTER. The month of silent reflection. We have more time to spend sitting indoors contemplating our existence. And more time to think about what you are going to do to be successful in the coming year. Those of you that have seen our previous issues will already have some idea of the things that you can do, but sometimes actually doing it becomes a problem. Whether it's cost, skill, time, or motivation, there's usually a reason to not do something. That's why we're here - we not only want to give you the High Quality Reading Material you're about to experience, but we want to help with your graphic design needs as well. We understand how difficult it can be getting the skilled talent you want. One of the major pitfalls to finding someone to help you with marketing needs is that you can feel trapped, even if you don't like what they produce. After spending money on them, the last thing you want to do is throw out what they did because you don't like it. Finding someone that says they can help you is one thing, but having someone produce a result that you actually like is a different thing entirely. As you've seen, we do things a little bit differently. We're non-conventional, and in this world of big-box and online competition, maybe nonconventional is just what your business needs to succeed.

As you progress through this issue, I'm sure you'll notice a bias towards social media. This is because it's not going away anytime soon. Sure, your business may have done just fine for years without doing anything new or innovative. But the market is changing and evolving. The question is whether or not you're going to evolve with it, or wait for everything to change around you. Since there's a lot to this, we wanted to try and break it down to give you a better idea of the kinds of things that you can do with it. You don't have to do everything, but even if you choose not to do something, it's good to know what the possibilities are. Our mission isn't to tell you what you have to do, we just want to make you think about things and maybe give you a different perspective. The more ways that you can look at something, the more well-rounded your solution will be. Whether that's sales, customer service, or any aspect of your business. Sometimes with new trends (like social media), the question becomes 'why not' do it, instead of 'why'. For the usually minimal cost involved, it's usually worth a try to see what it can do for your business, as even if it gets you one new customer, the cost can easily pay for itself.

- Bill HEFFNER IV
Editor - optMAGAZINE

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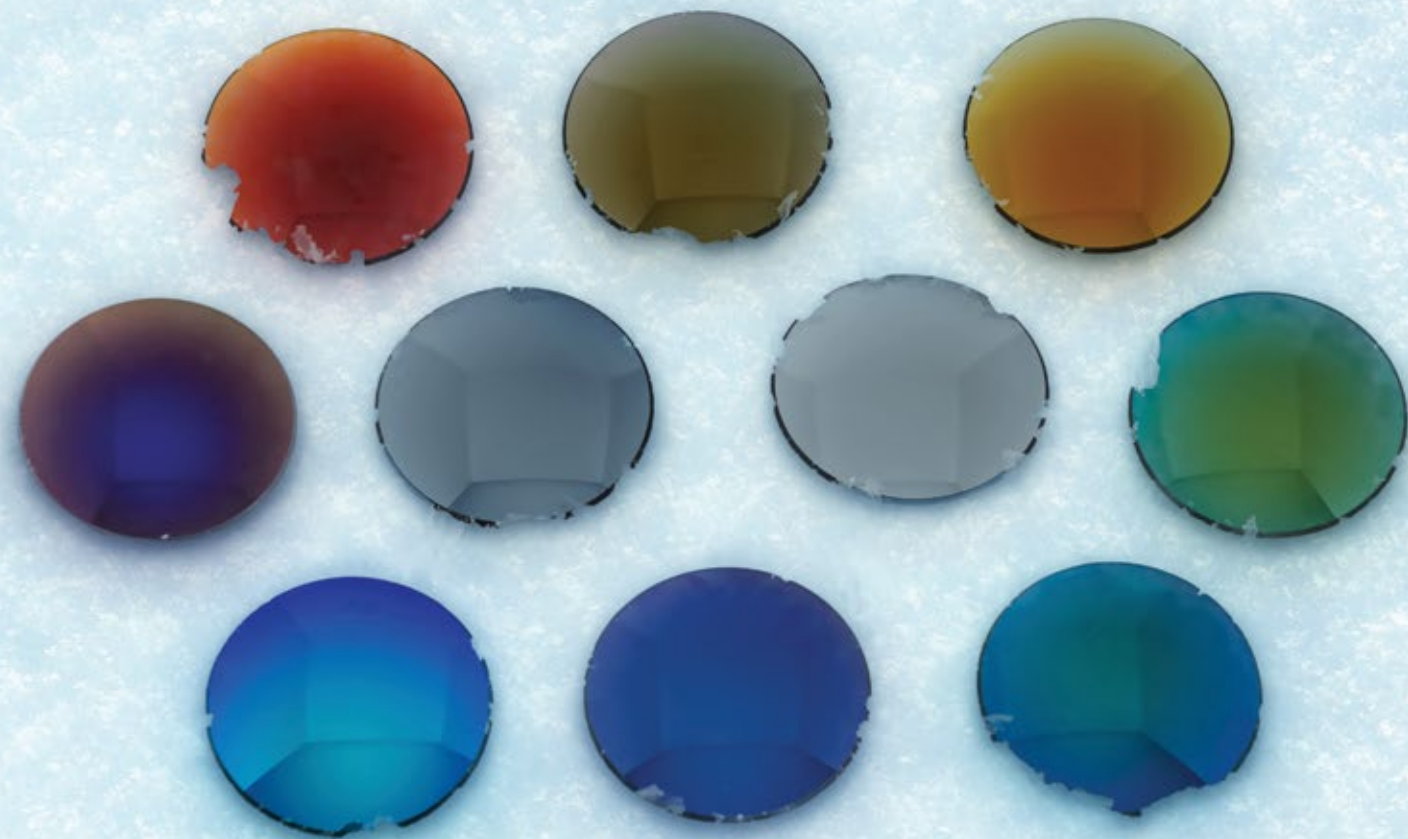


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Give your Eye Care Practice the gift of Social Media!

The Benefits of Social Media for your Eye Care Practice

— Lucia Scanlan

Technology and social media have transformed the way the eye care industry markets itself and the way practitioners are able to communicate with their patients and work colleagues alike. But, with so many available to choose from, which social media platforms are best for you? What are they good for and why should you care about them? We've narrowed down the most essential social media platforms and how they can benefit and boost your business.



The gift that keeps on giving!

— Facebook

A Facebook page is an essential and cost-effective tool for marketing your business online. It is also an excellent platform for promoting your latest products, deals, coupons or contests that you have available. A strong social media presence that includes useful content can increase your search engine rankings. This means that if a potential customer were to search for your business on Google, your social media accounts would be more likely to be included in these results. This gives customers another source of quick and useful information about your business. By referring to your Facebook page they are able to access your contact information, what your specialties are and any up to date information on your business. It gives the impression of an established and accessible business that understands the importance of staying current.

When you begin to use Facebook, it is important to keep track of what posts and content perform well and at what times you receive the most interest. This enables you to decide what is working for you. Facebook makes this simple with Facebook insights. On business pages, you can track the best performing posts, including their 'engagement' and 'reach'. With the publishing tool you are able to schedule posts at appropriate times based on your engagement data, which is especially useful if you don't have the time to post in real time.

Facebook is great for continuing your connection with your existing customers. You should make sure that they are aware of your Facebook page. A customer might leave a good review or rating, or like and share one of your posts for their followers to see, resulting in more public awareness of your business. People are more likely to trust a business that their peers approve of, so the more likes and positive reviews that you obtain, the more opportunity you have of gaining new patients/customers.

A creative and affordable way of informing your customers of your social media platforms is by creating business cards. You most likely have these, but you want to be sure that you include your social media information as well. Making sure the customer gets one, instead of just having them left on the counter, can make it more likely they think about looking you up online later.



A gift tag with your name on it!

— Instagram

Instagram is an ideal platform for obtaining a large following and for creating and joining a community of people that are passionate about your field. For Instagram, which consists of posting visual content that people will want to engage with, consistency is key. Don't just post a picture and hope for the best. Post regularly and engage with your followers. Follow other accounts and comment and like their posts too. Remember that the main purpose of social media is to be social. You are more likely to obtain followers by reaching out and leaving a brief comment that encourages people to check your Instagram page out.


Hashtags can be used on Instagram to categorize content and are a great tool for discovering new accounts for you to follow and topics of interest. You are able search hashtags on topics that are relevant to you and your audience. You can tag your images within the caption section when you post so that people can find you easily.

Be creative with your posts. Instagram gives you the opportunity to show many aspects of your business and not just the products that you sell. You can show your personality by photographing happy customers proudly wearing their new frames. Or your staff who help to make the business the success that it is, or the production of your products. Random facts and stories can also add variety to your page, keeping it unique and fresh, which helps your Instagram page stand out.

Do your staff dress up for special occasions? Do you fund-raise for different charities? Is your practice in a unique building? All of these are of interest to your followers and show the dedicated team behind the practice.

Did you see a post from someone else that could be relevant? Maybe an old photo or art work with an eye care theme? All of these things can make you unique and make people want to follow you.

You don't have to just post photographs either, Instagram allows you to make stories that appear on the top of followers feeds. These are short video clips that last for a period of time, and you can also add permanent videos or GIF's to your page. When you do post photographs, your images should be of good quality and interesting



enough to grab the attention of your followers. These don't need to be of a professional standard - the latest camera phones offer terrific quality and there are many free editing apps available to help enhance your images. Free stock photography websites are also an excellent tool to use because they enable you to edit and distribute top quality images freely.

Be sure to make use of the caption section of your photographs and not to leave it blank. Instagram is a visual platform, but it is always a good idea to start a conversation. Is there a story behind the photograph that you could tell? Or perhaps you could ask your followers a question, such as which product they prefer, or their weekend plans. These are always great conversation starters. Again, this is a prime opportunity for your current followers to tag their friends into the conversation also, drawing more interest to your page.



Share with your followers!

- Twitter

Twitter is an online news and social networking service where you are able to write 140-character messages on your page that are referred to as tweets. Twitter recently announced that images are no longer included in that number which is great news as links with pictures are more likely to grab people's attention and to be opened.

For Twitter, it is recommended that you post more often than other platforms. Of course, we all lead busy lives, but 3 times a day is optimal. Twitter is a very fast-paced platform and your tweet can easily become lost in people's feed, which is why it is vital to post at times when you are most likely to get the most visibility. For example, it is advisable that you tweet throughout a regular work day when you are certain that people will be awake. This could be during your commute, lunch break, or just after you finish work, as these are the times when many people will be checking their devices.

It is important to remember to spread your posts out throughout the day, so as not to overpopulate the feeds of your followers, as they may find this overwhelming and unfollow you, which is definitely not what you want.

Like Instagram, you can also use hashtags on Twitter to categorize your tweets. On the home page, you will find hashtags that are trending that day. You can click on these and a list of tweets from people who have included the tag will appear. If you want the most impact, and to reach the greatest audience, then including one of these trending tags when appropriate can result in higher engagement. On most weeks there are recurring tags that are universally popular, these include **#ThrowBackThursday** - where you post a photograph from the past and **#MondayMotivation** - which is used to encourage people after the weekend.

As Twitter is an online news and social networking service, it can give you more freedom of topics to post. This can include news articles on related subjects, such as interesting or heartwarming stories. Or perhaps new technological advancements in the eye care industry. You are also able to re-tweet posts from other people that you think your followers might be interested in. This can encourage people to return the favor by re-tweeting you, resulting in your products and messages being seen by a greater audience.

Remember to fill out your biography so people know who you are and what your business is about and what it can offer. Include your website, and especially your location, so people know that you are their local business. If you have a business logo then include this in your profile picture - you can even create a header photo that includes your brand identity.



What gifts did your friends receive?

- Yelp

Although Yelp is a website and app for consumers, and isn't technically social media, it is still worth considering for your business, especially those of you with an optical shop. Yelp is a platform for customers to review and find various businesses, such as hair salons, restaurants and optometrists. Millions of visitors use Yelp reviews to make decisions based on where to visit and make purchases every month. It is a great tool for potential customers in your area to find your business, and to make informed decisions on whether your practice is a good fit for them. Business owners and managers are able to sign up to Yelp for free and you can fill out your profile with helpful information, such as your hours, address and photographs. The more information that you are able to provide the better, so customers are able to identify you as the eye care practice for them. In addition to leaving and receiving reviews, Yelp also allows you to speak directly with customers, join talks and lists and to find related events in your area.

Similar to Facebook, Yelp also enables business analytics so you can learn more about your visibility and the amount of traffic that your page receives. You are also able track how users engage with your business. For example, if a customer calls your business after finding your telephone number on your Yelp page, then this will be noted in your engagement data.

Yelp is also a great tool for searching for other eye care businesses in your neighborhood and seeing what their customers have to say about them. Your business may already be listed and even have reviews, good or bad. By signing up you can 'claim' your business and take control of your page. Don't be discouraged if you receive any negative reviews, the majority of reviews on Yelp are positive and it can be an excellent tool for boosting your public image online and an opportunity to resolve any negative responses. Yelp gives you the option of privately messaging a customer who leaves a negative review so you can resolve any differences privately and possibly result in the customer editing their initial rating.

Having a branded social media presence can be a powerful tool for expanding your customer base and the awareness of your business. You don't necessarily have to be on every social media platform to make an impact. The platforms that we have discussed in this article are considered to be the most important, but it is up to you to decide which is best suited for you and your business. It is important to remember that gaining a large following can take time. Don't be disheartened if you don't see results right away, keep posting often and keep engaging with your community. Having a social media following of a small but dedicated few is far better than not having one at all.



WINTER IS COMING

— David Benioff and D. B. Weiss

FOR THOSE OF YOU unfamiliar with Game of Thrones, allow me to give a very brief summary of the plotline, as I feel it is startlingly similar to what's going on in the optical industry at present. Picture it: you have one extremely wealthy and powerful family (or company) that is seeking to rule everyone else. In their quest for that, any competing families are either bought off, assimilated into their own, or outright destroyed.

The days get shorter, and there's becoming less and less to do each day. As the chill sets in, there's fewer and fewer people still around, and it can almost seem like there's nobody left. Anyone that there was has closed up shop and moved to a warmer climate. I'm not referring to the season specifically, however. I am more referring to the optical industry as a whole. Life has been good up to this point, summer has been long and plentiful. But, as with seasons, the business climate we are in changes as well. We need to be able to see the changes that are in the wind, and see what we can do to prepare ourselves. All of the tell-tale signs are there. Big business is consolidating. Independents are drying up. The rise of technologies and online sales. Make no mistake, the seasons are changing, and winter is coming.

A STARK DIFFERENCE

Trying to make it as an independent anything can be difficult. As time moves on, the big get bigger, and it becomes more difficult for anyone new to enter into their space and actually be successful. If you're lucky, you can work your way in and eek out a living. If you're too much of a troublemaker though, and don't play nice, then they can get very nasty very quickly and do whatever they can to take your customer base away from you. In order to stop that, it's imperative to focus on what makes you special, in a business sense. Someone that walks into an independent shop should (hopefully) have a very different buying experience than if they walk into a chain store, and you want them to remember that difference. It's what sets you apart, and keeps them coming back. If your customers don't see you as a better alternative, what keeps them coming back? Being able to highlight your differences and benefits is what helps keep small independents thriving.

ALWAYS PAY YOUR DEBTS

Knowing your stuff is one thing when it comes to eyes and eyewear, but when it comes to being successful you need to consider your business as well. Part of the problem you can run into is that you don't necessarily have 'business skills' - and that's not your fault. Everyone has their own strengths, and just because you're a great doctor or great optician doesn't mean you are great at running a business. The unfortunate part of being an entrepreneur, whether it's in this field or others, is that you usually end up having to do everything. To be more successful, you need to be able to identify what you are good at and what you need help with. That way you can focus on adding the most value possible to your business. Part of this is also building relationships with your vendors, especially independent ones. If you can establish a good track record with them, then they will start to trust you. They trust you because you do what you say you will (like paying on time). This makes it easier to negotiate with them if you need special terms - maybe you got a big deal or contract, or want to do a trunk show or sale. Independent companies that you've built a relationship with are far more likely to work with you than large corporations that have strict rules to which they must adhere.



WHEN YOU PLAY THE GAME OF LABS... YOU WIN OR YOU DIE

The sheer number of independent labs that have been gobbled up or closed in the last few months alone seems almost ridiculous. Earlier this year, another magazine ran their yearly “Top 20 Independent Labs”. This year, however, they couldn’t even come up with that many, as it only had 18, one of which was already corporate owned, so that left us with 17 left. By the time you’re reading this, it could be even fewer than that. You may not generally care about labs, of course, and that’s fine. But it’s going to affect you sooner or later. As labs disappear, so do your options and choice. When you only have one company running a majority of labs, don’t be surprised when you have to settle for a level of service that you’d never put up with before. Part of this isn’t just independents ‘going out of business’, but is more often the larger corporations buying up labs they think are going to ‘expand their territory’. Some of the warning signs you, as the customer of an independent, should look out for is the products they sell. If they suddenly add a big name lens, maybe they’re looking to sell out?

A LENS HAS NO NAME

Does your patient really care what lens they get? Their main concern is being able to get a lens that works well, and is affordable - and not even necessarily in that order. Most of them (especially if they haven’t worn a progressive before) don’t have the slightest clue about brands, and really only learn about them if you tell them. There’s really three different options here - someone else’s brand, your own brand, or no brand. There are pros and cons for each of these, which are addressed in depth elsewhere in this issue. Sufficed to say, even with no name, the job can still get done very effectively. Not only that, the usual cost-savings for these lenses can make it so that you might be able to make a second-pair sale when otherwise the customer didn’t have the budget to buy two.

THE INSURERS SEND THEIR REGARDS

“I really love working with vision insurance companies”, said no one ever. I have yet to hear from anyone - whether it is consumer or eye care professional - about how much easier insurance makes things for them. Yet plenty of places still accept multiple different vision insurance plans. I’ve heard of places ditching insurances and still doing well; I have yet to hear about a place ditching them and then later regretting it.

Keep in mind, these are the same vision insurance companies that are actively trying to cut you out of the picture. You are literally doing business with someone that wants to take your customers. And many people still do it happily. These companies actively market to their subscribers that their insurance ‘does more’ or ‘goes further’ if they order eyewear online through the insurers own site. Yet they are still gladly helped by countless optical shops across the country. Obviously, a lot of how useful insurance is to you, as a business, depends quite a bit on the types of customers that you see, and how likely they are to come in if you don’t handle their insurance. Are they going to go somewhere else? Maybe you can show them how they can still save money and get great value, without even needing to have their vision insurance. This is, of course, keeping the idea of their ‘vision plan’ and their ‘medical insurance’ separate, which I’m sure is a daily battle you still have with customers that the two are, indeed, separate.

YOU KNOW NOTHING


When you’re out manning the wall (or optical shop, whichever) by yourself, you aren’t really focused on all of the politics that are going on behind you. You have more important thing to do, like taking care of your customers, billing, covering shifts, and a whole plethora of other things. Even dealing with most of those things, there are plenty of topics that you may not know enough (or anything) about. When you’re a smaller independent business, it can be hard to keep up with employment law, records requirements, and everything else.

This can also happen with the vendors that you deal with. One day you could be supporting an independent that you buy from, then suddenly you find out they were acquired by a Big Optical company. The same Big Optical that is actively trying to steal your customers. And then you find out they were actually acquired six months ago, and you just now found out about it. So you’ve been supporting your competition without even knowing it.

THE WINDS OF WINTER


So, as we’ve seen, independents in this industry are in for some dark times ahead. Newer technology and ways of competing mean we need to adapt how we do business and take it to the ‘next level’. Gone are the carefree days of sitting back and waiting for the customers to come to us. Now eyewear sales are so pervasive, they don’t have to leave their house, or they can just stop in to the optical department after doing their grocery shopping. This rise in convenience for the average consumer has to be countered by you somehow. Do they have a reason to come to you, instead of getting their eyewear somewhere that’s more convenient? Do you give a better service? Better products? While you may know that, how does your customer know that? They don’t spend all day working with eyewear, or even know enough to be able to compare what is good and what is junk. This isn’t your traditional battle, you have to outsmart and outplay them. Only then can you win the game.





HOW THE GRINCH STOLE WHO-TOMETRY

— Dr. Seuss



In his cave, just north of Who-ville, the Big Optical Grinch sat, with his newly-acquired lapdog, Max. Now, the Grinch hated all of the Whos down in Who-ville. But there was one thing that he did love, which was all of their lovely Who-money. He wasn't sure what it was about it, but he wanted to get more of it. He knew that the biggest shopping day of the year was approaching, but he just couldn't think of a way to get all that lovely Who-cash to end up in his Big Optical cash-stash. With a sneer and a scowl, he shouted at Max, "All those Who-tometrists down in Who-ville will sell tons of glasses. They sell more and more for each year that passes!". He glared down the hill, to the now-quiet town. "We must find a way to control what they buy! We need to increase margin, to get a good R.O.I.!". Max sighed, and he shrugged, he didn't really get much say. Whatever Big Optical Grinch wanted, he always got his way.

Just then, a big grinchy smile spread across his face. He had an idea. An awful, terrible idea. "I have it!" he proclaimed. "I know just what we'll do. We'll sneak down there and leave online advertisements for each Who. We'll sell them all glasses - buy one for two!" He rubbed his gnarled old hands and stroked the whiskers on his chin. He knew this would work, this is how he would win. He grabbed Max by his collar, and put him to work. He had no choice but to help, even though the Grinch was a jerk. They loaded up with pamphlets, brochures and fliers. The people would never notice that they were just liars. They headed down to the sleepy little village, ready to market and pillage.

They drove around, putting stuffers in all the mailboxes. They advertised their online site, their insurance plans, and their stores! They wanted to get everyone to part with their Who-cash, they were cunning as foxes! "But, this may not be enough!" The Grinch stopped and he thought. Max knew that look. And like it, he did not. "We need to sneak inside, and slip these deals into their houses. That way, they all buy from us, even the little myopic mice!" So in, they did slip, to each little house. Leaving behind promises of "Cheaper Online" and "Get More - Go Direct with your Insurance."

The Grinch loved this plan, as they went to each house with a menacing creep. Spreading their propaganda while the whole town was asleep. They went through each house with nary a hitch, until in one house, they heard the 'click' of a switch. From behind in the doorway, they heard a sweet little sound. It was little See Elle Who, an Optometrist in the town. She looked at this scene, unsure in her mind - it was the Big Optical Grinch, but pushing her patients online? No, this could not be right, for that would be mean, there had to be something else than what could be seen. So she asked him, as she got her drink of water, "Mister Grinch," she began, with her sweet little voice sounding a bit tight, "Why are you trying to lure my patients to your website?"

Now the Grinch, in his twisted little brain, knew exactly what to say, and said it quite plain. "Why, don't you worry, not one bit," smiling crookedly as he began his bull. "As you see, this is really very good for you, as I have to do this, or else your business is through!". He walked a bit closer to poor See Elle, "As you see, there are all kinds of people that can online sell. And you don't want them to take your customers, no way in heck." She sipped her water, and scratched her neck. "So you see, I have to take your customers to my online shop, or else some other big company that doesn't care about you will. So I can fix your customers up there, then send them back here. You have absolutely nothing to fear. Since you know they are going to go online, it should be with me, as I am your friend,

honestly!" See Elle said, with a smile and nod, "I'm not sure, it sounds a bit odd. But people do like to shop online, and go to big stores. I don't know what else to do, so I think I'll trust you." Max tried to speak, but the Grinch gave him such a look, that he just kept quiet, and picked up a book, "There's a good Who-tometrist," said the Grinch, while Max turned slightly red, "Now off you go, back to bed!"

As the sun came up, they left the town with a wave, they were heading back to the Big Optical Grinch's cave. The Grinch was done with the task, soon every consumer would be his, what more could he ask? And all that lovely Who-cash would be his, he just couldn't wait. Even the Who-tometrists thought the Grinch was their mate! That was really the best part, he thought, that just makes it easier to take all they've got. As the sun rose, he did not hear the village sing, but from his computer he heard a "ca-ching". The sound of a sale, completed online, was music to his ears, and a rather chilling sign.

Max asked the Grinch, taking a sip from his flask, "How do you return the customers, once they come to us? To support the independent stores, is what I meant, to ask. You said you wanted to bring them to us, with our online shops and insurances, to keep them away from the other big guys, you gave them assurances!" Max seemed upset, but the Grinch waved his hand. "Now Max," the Grinch said, looking quite beat, "don't worry about them anymore. It's time to rub my feet."



CASE STUDY

of a facebook AD

— Maria Magnotta

Facebook can be difficult to navigate when initially creating a company “page”. With over 1 billion Facebook users worldwide, finding followers interested in your business should be easy, right? Wrong. While you can easily request for your friends to follow your page, it is much more difficult to find new, eager patients willing to follow your business.

The question becomes: how do you acquire new patients, quickly and efficiently, without wasting hours on Facebook searching for leads? Luckily, Facebook makes it easy! Creating an ad allows you to pinpoint the exact demographic you are looking to target and makes them notice your page.

To demonstrate exactly how a Facebook ad can help expand your business page we created our own, here’s how it went.

The Business

The business, in this case, is Norwood Device & Diagnostics. You may remember them from such OPT Magazine issues as “Autumn”, with their Adapt Head & Chin rest. Basically, they are an equipment supplier (chairs, stands, slit lamps, etc.), with a slightly different target audience (you) than that of a typical optical shop (consumers). This should, however, still give you some insights on how, exactly advertising on Facebook works, and how you can segment it to fit your specific goals.

With less than 20 followers to start with, we had a lot of growth potential. We developed small achievable goals with a small budget and got to work creating our ad.

The Goals:

- ▶ Gain **100** followers
- ▶ Get **100** website clicks
- ▶ Spend **100** dollars
- ▶ **DOUBLE** the page’s engagement rate

The Set Up

STEP 1: Choosing your objective

Facebook offers a variety of options for what type of ad you can run from “increasing post reach” to “raise attendance at your event”, each serving a specific purpose which helps identify your marketing objectives. For the purpose of Norwood’s ad, we decided to choose “Send people to your website”. We chose this for two reasons: first, having a new Facebook page, with a smaller breadth of product information, it was important that we steer consumers to company’s website. Second, this still allows the opportunity for new followers to like your page, helping to build Norwood’s social media presence.

However, each ad and business has different objectives, so choose what fits your business best.

STEP 2: Choosing your audience

As mentioned before, Facebook has over 1 billion users. In order to narrow that down to better suit your needs, Facebook offers you the ability to customize your audience. You can narrow down your search from all Facebook users to customers in a specific location, in a specific age group, and with specific interests, careers, or education.

Unlike many eye care professionals, Norwood’s ad was not targeting a specific location, but rather the entirety of the United States. This helped lower our potential audience down to 206 million users. However, this audience was still much too broad, so we set our age range to users who were between 25 and 65+ years old including both males and females, narrowing our audience further to 166 million. The most important tool in narrowing our search was choosing the right interest, career, or education of our ideal consumer.

Being that Norwood sells equipment for ophthalmologists, optometrists, and opticians, those were the interests we chose to highlight, including anyone with a job title or education listed as something in the optical industry. This narrowed my audience down to 18,000 potential customers. While reaching a very broad audience may put your ad in front of more people, it will be much less likely that your ad will be presented to viable customers, in turn wasting your advertising budget.

A similar strategy can be used for an optical practice. For example, if you want to advertise a sale on sunglasses at your office, chose for your ad to reach potential customers in your surrounding area, who are within an age group of your choosing, that list their interests as “eyewear” and/or “sunglasses”. These consumers are likely within driving distance of your office and have an expressed interest in eyewear. You can also focus on people with specific interests in say, motorcycles, which may be a good target for the new wrap frame line you just got in.



Drilldown to reach the target audience



STEP 3: Choosing a budget & Schedule

Now, you didn't think this was all free, did you? The point of this article is to prove that you do not have to spend a fortune to have a successful advertising campaign. For our ad we spent \$100 in total over four days. We chose to run the ad from Friday to Monday, based on analytics from our various Facebook pages showing that these are our high traffic days, but every business will be different, so adjust your campaigns accordingly.

For the sake of our ad, we decided four days was the appropriate amount of time to reach our target audience, however, some practices may find it beneficial to have a smaller daily budget over a longer period of time. These types of decisions depend largely on your objective. Are you trying to promote a sale or an event? Then a short term campaign is for you. Are you hoping to gain patients for your new practice? Then consider running a long term campaign that reaches more customers over a longer period of time.

After we chose our demographics and budget the potential reach for our ad was slightly under 5,500 Facebook users.

STEP 4: Create graphic and copy

The final piece to the puzzle, when creating your Facebook Ad, is adding the visuals. We suggest hiring a graphic designer to make the ad look professional and help guarantee you fulfill all of Facebook's specifications. The rules are as follows: the image you chose, if it contains any lettering may not have more than a 1.91:1 ratio of image to text, this often eliminates the ability to use your practice's name or logo as the main image, a graphic designer can help you get creative with this ratio. Additionally, in order to optimize your ad they advise you use less than 90 characters of texts in your description and less than 25 characters as a headline. While Facebook will not stop you from breaking any of these rules, not adhering to them can affect the performance of your ad. This step could be tricky - don't be afraid to ask for help!

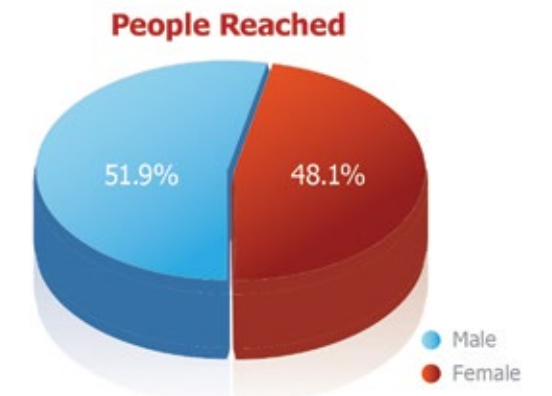
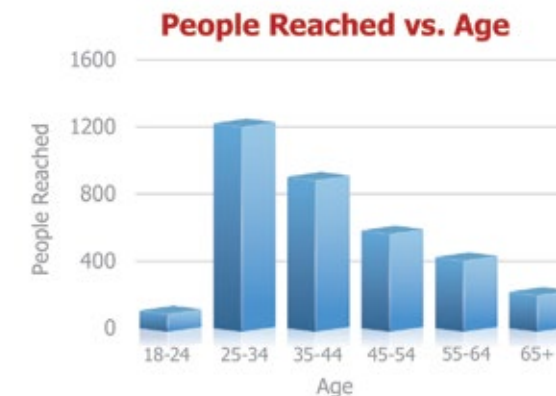
Now that you've set up your ad, it's time to "place order" or, in other words, start running your Facebook ad. Once the ad is running, your work is done and it's time to sit back, relax, and eagerly wait for your results.

The Results

After four days, with a \$100 budget our results were in!

The first metric we looked at was "people reached". This means how many people saw the ad during our selected time frame. Out of a possible 5,500 users we were able to reach 3,500. We were pleased with this result, but it also leaves us room for improvement. In the future, we may use a different graphic or extend the timeframe of the ad to aid in expanding our reach

Next, we looked to our "clicks to website". This is the number of people that responded to our call to action by clicking on Norwood's link to their website. We were able to acquire 149 unique clicks to their page, that's 149 potential new customers who are interested in their products.



Finally, we looked at the number of new followers gained during this time frame, and we were able to hit our mark of 100 followers. While this number is not groundbreaking, it is growing everyday! It is more important to us to grow a community of engaged customers, than it is to have a large number of uninterested followers.



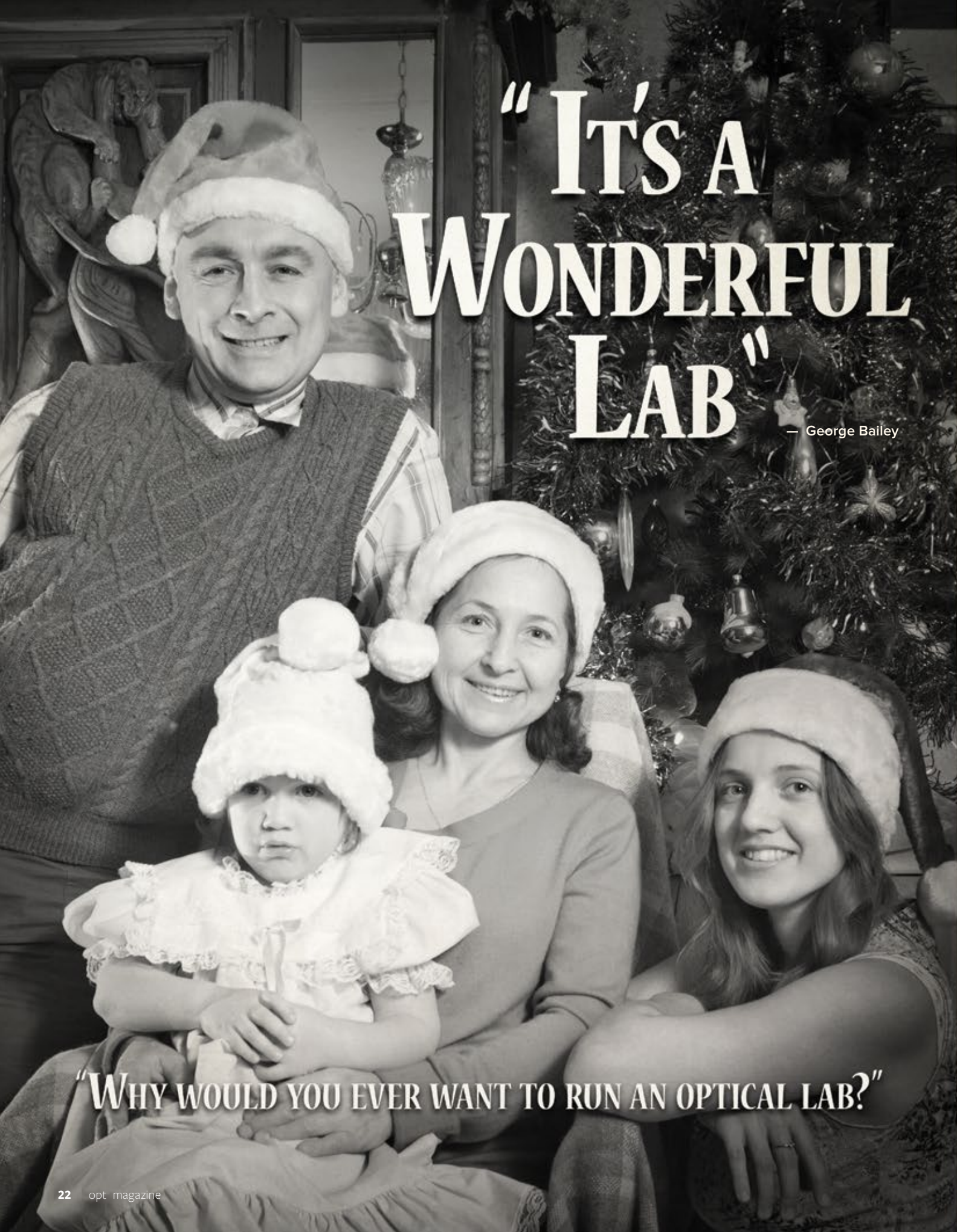
Pro-Tip

When running an ad to entice new and potential patients/customers to like your page, also do something on your page to get them excited to be a part of your community! For example, while we ran Norwood's ad they simultaneously promoted a product giveaway on their page.

Long Term Effects

Since the Facebook ad ended, Norwood has seen a 14% increase in overall post reach and an 800% increase in post engagement. These factors will greatly help in the success of future Facebook ads, and in organically spreading brand awareness.

While Social Media marketing may seem daunting to those with little experience, it is a very powerful and affordable tool to help expand your practice, and more importantly allows you to interact and build relationships with existing patients.



"IT'S A WONDERFUL LAB"

— George Bailey

"WHY WOULD YOU EVER WANT TO RUN AN OPTICAL LAB?"

EDITORIAL NEWS TOP HEADLINES SPORTS WEATHER CLASSIFIEDS

SENECA FALLS NEWSPAPER

TWO CENTS
2¢ EACH
DAILY

NO. 11

MONDAY, DECEMBER 24TH, 1945

TWO CENT EDITION

The words bounced around in his brain. "Nobody makes money in a lab," he could still hear what they had told him years ago. They might not have been wrong. George sat, staring down at the contract in front of him. He was tired. So tired. He'd spent so many hours behind this desk, sitting in this chair - checking work, filling out order forms, and for what? What did it matter? Any good he ever did seemed like it was quickly forgotten the next day, with demands, complaints, or some other new crisis. Maybe continuing....maybe it just wasn't worth it? He'd seen many other people do it, some of them even friends. They just couldn't take it anymore and decided to put an end to it all. George sat back in his chair, running his hands over his face with a long, drawn out sigh. He steeled himself for a moment before focusing his attention back to what was on his desk, contemplating the thing before shaking his head. "If I'm going to end it, I'm going to have a drink first," George reached down to the lower drawer of his desk, pulling out a bottle and glass. After pouring for himself, he sat back and emptied the glass in one swift motion. As he sat forwards again, he hoped he had just imparted himself with enough courage to get this deed done. He picked up the implement of his destruction from the table, and held it aloft for just a moment. "Now for the final stroke," he said to himself, the rest of the office having been empty for quite a few hours now. "Well..." he mused to himself, "More like seventeen across multiple pages in triplicate. These damn contracts of sale go on forever." As George went to sign the purchase agreement from Big Optical Corp. that sat on his desk, there was a knock at his door.

George sighed and tossed the pen back onto the desk. "Yes?" he asked as he opened the door. The man at the door smiled at him, "Hope I'm not too late!" he exclaimed, inviting himself inside. "Too late for what?" asked George, "and who are you?"

"I'm Clarence," he said, extending a hand in greeting, "and I'm your guardian angel!"

George very slowly extended a hand, eyeing the bottle on the table. "I'm sorry, you what?"

Clarence chuckled, "Your guardian angel. Here to make sure you don't make a terrible mistake." He glanced over at the paperwork on the desk, then wagged his eyebrows, "seems I'm just in time." He seemed very proud of himself.

The pair walked down the main street, people oblivious to them as they bustled by. George looked at the shops as they passed by, then paused as he didn't find what he had expected. "Wait a minute," he began, "Where's Bob's Optical shop? It should be right here!". He exclaimed, pondering at the run-down storefront in front of him, a "For Sale" sign hanging in the window. "Well, you see..." Clarence began, putting a comforting hand on George's shoulder, "Without an independent lab to support

him, Bob went out of business. The Big Optical company just kept raising his prices, and luring his customers to 'shop online'. Bob just couldn't compete anymore." George sighed, "And where is he now?" Clarence sighed, "You don't want to know." George gasped, "He's dead? How." Clarence shook his head. "Worse. He ended up working at the Big Optical store the next town over. They were selling the same things he had, just cheaper, so he already knew all of the products. So now he works there, selling whatever he's told to sell." George gave one last, long look at the storefront before they continued down the street.

They ended up back at George's office. But it was...different. Different in the sense that it was a burned out shell of a building with a 'Condemned' sign on the front. "What happened here?!" George demanded of Clarence. Puzzled, Clarence asked, "There was never an optical lab in this building. Since it was for sale, a group of teenagers snuck in one night and *whumpf*. No more building." George ran a hand across the charred exterior, "But what about all of the people that worked here?" Clarence shrugged, "They either found a job somewhere else, or never found one. The town's been having a hard time lately, with not enough jobs to go around, so many of them may have moved elsewhere. Most of the manufacturing jobs like this are being moved offshore, anyway. That's how a lot of those Big Optical companies compete, you know? Send it to a country with cheap labor, then send it back. Having something to do that work here isn't 'cost-effective'".

George shook his head, "No, it can't be that bad. I'm only a small independent optical lab - how can me selling out cause all of this?" he gestured to the remains of the building. Clarence tried to comfort him, "But it wasn't just you, George. It was all independent optical labs. There's no choice left. No real competition. Everything has been commoditized - eyewear isn't unique anymore. It's all about saving a buck, not offering a good product."

George turned abruptly, and the building was back the way that he remembered it. They were back. After a few, long seconds standing before the office door, George broke the silence. "Thank you," he began, "I really was ready to end all of this," he gestured to the whole building as they entered his office. "From what you showed me, I can't do that. The world needs independent labs. Without them, the choice in the industry is almost non-existent." George reached down and picked up the contract of sale from his desk, swiftly ripping it in half. As he tossed it into the garbage can, he looked up at Clarence, who had a rather curious smile on his face. "Why are you smiling like that?" George asked. "Oh, don't you know?" said Clarence, "Every time someone rejects a buyout offer from Big Optical, an angel gets his wings." 🌀



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Social Networking or Social ‘Not-working’?

Make a few simple adjustments so that you can spread some holiday cheer this year!

— Bill Heffner, IV

One of the major themes of this time of year is ‘spreading cheer’ which, in my opinion, is much more difficult today than it was years ago. Technology has made many of us, strangely, both more social and antisocial at the same time. It’s much easier to sit and chat online and text than it is to have a normal conversation with someone that’s standing right in front of us. For instance, one of the major sources of business can be word-of-mouth, which I’m sure you already knew. In order to get that word of mouth, you need to make sure the word is coming from the right place.

Your professional networking isn’t just limited to others within this industry, but also in the community. You want people to think of you first when the need an eye exam or eyewear.

If you’re an optician: How many ODs or OMDs are there within ten miles of you that don’t dispense eyewear? If you don’t know the answer to that question - you probably should. They are going to be some of the easiest referrals you can get. Whether it’s from a hospital or private practice, these are the people that just got a brand new prescription and have nowhere to fill it. If they leave without being directed anywhere, then many of their first reactions are going to be that “Well, I’ll just go look online for someone.” That’s when they inevitably find that they can buy eyewear online, so figure they’ll try that first. Then they never even set foot in a shop. By establishing a relationship with these offices, you can help yourself, and them. A gift basket for the staff at some of these places can go a long way in getting your foot in the door in terms of referrals.

If you’re an optometrist: How many primary care doctors are in your area? How many of them do you network with? The more of them you can get to know, the more likely they are to be able to refer to you when they have someone with an eye problem. Part of the selling point here is that you can help their patients save money by avoiding urgent care and/or the ER. With the way healthcare costs seem to be going, this can be a big selling point. You need to teach both your patients, as well as other

professionals who may refer to you, about all the services you can offer. The key here is to get them to think of you first before they decide that they’re just going to the ER.

Let’s take, for example, a local pediatrician. Do they refer all of their patients to get routine vision screening from you? Why not? Have some of their patients ever even been to see an Optometrist? It’s up to you to help convince the General Practitioner that it’s in their patients’ best interest to have them seen, at least to get a baseline established. They may not even be that familiar with the costs involved to get a vision exam. I mean, they usually make sure that kids get a dental exam, right? So why shouldn’t they be referring everyone get vision screening? Even if they do their basic exam and say that a child should see an Optometrist, do they make it easy for the parents to find you? It’s probably worth an afternoon of your time to help train the doctor and their staff about why it’s good for their patients to come see you. Also, you want to make sure they have plenty of your business cards on hand. If it’s just part of their routine, it makes it easy for you to get referrals. If every time they do a vision screening and someone doesn’t pass, they get a piece of paper with your card stapled to it - how great would that be?

While this is obviously good to do all year round, it’s usually a good time now because you have time to think about it. ⚙️



The 12 Ways of Business

Budget-based marketing ideas for your small business

— Frederic Austin

’Tis the season for reflection and contemplation about many things in life... which could/should also include the life of your small business. This time of year can certainly be challenging for a number of reasons, as it pertains to sales and growth. The majority of shoppers are in other retail and merchant outlets searching for gifts and all you can really do is see the ‘hustle and bustle’ outside of your store window. Let’s face it. Eyeglasses are just not going to make it onto someone’s holiday wish list. What’s an optical business to do during this time of year?

Well, perhaps you had a chance to look at our Autumn Issue and were able to gather some ideas about how to prepare for the ‘slow season’. You developed a game plan (or are in the process of developing one), and maybe you have begun executing that game plan. Or, perhaps you didn’t, and that’s ok. You can still implement a strategy with a quick turnaround that will yield positive results for you moving forward. Just keep in mind that this will lean a tad more to the reactive-side instead of the proactive-side BUT, it is a step forward which, at the end of the day, is always favorable for growing your business.

Time is free and also priceless

It has been said that time is our most precious commodity or resource. The nice thing about these ideas to help grow your small business is that they are very budget friendly. In some instances, the only thing they really cost is time. Sure, you can argue semantics with me that to do some of these things will cost money (membership fees, computers, electricity, internet service, gas etc...) but in my opinion, they are simply incidental business expenses and minimal when compared to your time. If you put in the time and effort, the results you yield can certainly offset or eliminate these little expenses.

Pricing Key (< ballpark for approximation)

\$ (< Free or a few bucks)

\$\$\$\$\$ (on average, several hundred to over 1k+ *)
* too many variables involved to accurately base a price range.

1. Website

(cost) \$\$\$\$\$

On the First Way of Business, my true love gave to me... a web-site with response-a-tivity. Ok, I know that’s not a word but it rhymed and worked with it enough to make the song work. I promise I won’t do that moving forward with the remaining 11 ideas. The main point here, and probably the most expensive in this list, is a new website... or a website at all, if you have yet to have one created.

I’m not gonna get into the ins and outs of web design here, but if you have a website from the late 90’s or early 2000’s containing any elements that feel like they belonged on MySpace, you seriously need an update and need to get with the times. Web sites these days need to be responsive and adaptable for desktops, laptops, tablets and smartphones (thus the response-a-tivity). Websites need to load and communicate quickly because, let’s face it, mobile devices, broadband and a millennial-mentality of “I want it all now”, has given many of us these days an ‘immediate, on-demand’ mindset with little to no patience for waiting.

A web site is your ‘silent salesperson’ and is always there for you, providing customers and potential customers information about your business 24/7. Outside of your ‘brick and mortar’, it is the only thing that is constant and available outside of business hours. Gone are the days of the ‘Yellow Pages’. So how can people find your business? The internet... but that only really works if you also do the next thing...

2. Submit your Website’s URL to Search Engines

(cost) \$

When you have your website created, make sure that it is submitted to online directories. These online directories have become the modern day Yellow Pages. They are where potential clients and customers turn to find goods and services and, ultimately, you.

Keep in mind that computers and the internet are stupid. Unless they are told something specifically (via commands, programming, instructions etc...), they just sit there doing nothing. When you add your website to online directories, you are basically providing an instruction to the search engine so when someone ‘googles you’ or a related search, you actually have a chance of being found. This will help your website’s SEO (Search Engine Optimization).

When you do submit your website, make sure to include important details like your location and business category so that your website will appear in sub-categories in the search results. This is also where new and prospective customers can find you in a related, but not direct, search for your business. Since you will only be registering your website the one time with several sources, it will help to gather all information in a document so you can be consistent with the information first, and then submit it everywhere.

Many of us look to Google for our searches but there’s a few others you will want to make sure your register your business with like Yahoo*, Bing*, Yellow Pages, Yelp and the BBB (Better Business Bureau) to name a few of the ‘big hitters’. Don’t forget to register your business with Google* and Google Business* (google.com/business). Registering your website is free although there are paid options to get better search results.

*** Note:** You may need to create emails specifically with some sites like google (@gmail.com), yahoo (@yahoo.com) and bing (@outlook.com). It’s not that much of a ‘biggie’. I have over a dozen email accounts but only use 2 as my primary (work and personal).

3. Create an Elevator Pitch

(cost) \$

I’m not a fan of corporate lingo but this is a good statement and concept and worthwhile to have ready to go for those brief moments of opportunity that can appear out of nowhere. Think about it for a moment. Do you have a short and concise description/explanation about what you do for a living? I’m not talking about just saying “I’m an optometrist” or something like that. I’m talking about a brief description that encompasses the spirit and essence of what you and your business does. You do want to make sure that you have an interesting, fun, and, most importantly, a memorable pitch that is ready to go at all times

Do you also have a business card ready to go? If not, you’ll want to make sure you establish #4 at the same time you have the website done.

4. Business Cards

(cost) \$\$

Out on the streets, your business card is really the first impression and interaction someone will have with your business... provided you were nice, open, friendly, and without a piece of spinach stuck in your teeth.

How your business card looks and feels will speak volumes to the quality of your business. It should include a professional logo and basic contact information. Again, it is really the first impression they will have about your business and the kind of service you provide.

Your business card can also act as a silent sales person. If you made a memorable impression on someone and they have your card, chances are they will hold onto it or, perhaps, pass it along (along with the story of their experience with you) to someone else.

Having business cards can be used in a variety of situations and circumstances and really should be on you at all times. These can also be used with #3, #5, #6 and #10. The bulk of your cost here is going towards a designer (if you choose to hire one) and places like Vistaprint can handle the printing for a small amount, too.

5. Collaborative Efforts

(cost) \$\$

Get together, put together or be part of a group of non-competitive small businesses in your community to cross promote with each other. You are not actively engaged in the general population of the community here, but rather with members of the business community.

With this idea, you can join forces, share ideas and provide support for one another. Meet-up at a local coffee shop or eatery maybe on a monthly basis (ideally, they are part of this group). You can share in costs for things like coupons and fliers; website and social media links; create bundled promotions. Not only does this help your business grow but also helps the other small business in your



community grow. Win-win for the local economy.

One thing to be mindful of here is that if something like this does not exist, don't wait for someone else to come up with the idea. Take the initiative and engage your fellow business owners and create one. A unified front made-up of several individuals will be a lot stronger and more successful than just one rogue effort. Support each other.

6. Leverage Your Community (cost) \$\$

Think local. Buy local. Support local. It's a wonderful circle to be engaged in. This is a great idea on so many levels, as it does a lot for personal growth as well as the reputation of your business. Anytime you can get out from behind the 'business counter' (where you already have people that found you there) and into the public eye, it can do wonders for increasing the profile of your business.

Sponsoring events like local sports teams for kids and community efforts allows you to have a brand presence. You will likely not see an immediate monetary return in these instances, but that's ok because that's not what this is about. It's about being engaged with the community you serve. Even something as simple as having bookmarks printed to sponsor the local library can have a big impact. After all, how many readers do you know that wear glasses?

7. Online Networking Yourself (cost) \$ to \$\$\$*

Your website is not the only thing that should have an online presence. You should also be a part of it and, more specifically, your business should be a part of it. Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are firmly cemented in the social media landscape of being a means to reach a lot of people in a very short amount of time.

Being part of certain social media groups will allow you to gather support, additional insight and ideas that can also be helpful and beneficial for your business. If you post something online, there should be a way to tag related people to encourage engagement. Additionally, you can create contests or challenges that require social sharing which will further extend your reach.

\$\$\$* This however, should you chose to do it alone, can be very time consuming. If you know you should do this, but don't have the time or the patience to learn, you can hire a social media team to help with the heavy lifting. They analyze data and can target specific audiences and regions for you... right down to the zip code.

8. Email Marketing (cost) \$\$\$

If you've been fortunate to have accumulated a digital rolodex of your customers' emails, then you have a good start to being able to put together an email marketing campaign. What's nice about email campaigns is that you can set-up more professional looking campaigns and maintain consistency in doing so.

Keeping in touch with current and past clients is important. Especially if they are only coming in once every year or two. Sending out promotional offers, tip sheets, new products, and targeted technology like Blue Light Blocking lenses, Photochromics, etc... can trigger responses by offering them something they may not have thought of. Even going after that 'second pair' is a great way to get your customers engaged.

Of course, to do an email marketing campaign does cost a little bit more but just one extra sale from this is usually more than enough to cover it. MailChimp offers both a free campaign and a paid version. Constant Contact offers a free trial before rates kick in. Keep in mind that you get what you pay for. MailChimp's 'Forever Free' version has limitations, but free is free. Worth taking a look at and maybe starting with.

9. Business Emails (cost) \$

For a good do-it-yourself email campaign or just routine correspondence, you can use your businesses own email. This, again, does not cost you anything except some time. Begin by making sure you have your logo (make sure it's a professional logo and appropriately sized no bigger than 300 pixels wide) and website link in your email signature. This should be done anyway and it should reflect your brand.

Most reputable email services (Gmail and MS Outlook which are free online) allow you to create address books that you can choose to send an email to all those recipients. Create a mailing list and send them yourself to keep in-touch with past clients and reach out to new and potential customers.

The drawback to this approach is you are very, very limited in terms of formatting and design in your emails. Really, about the best you can do is format the text to look good and maybe an image that is appropriately sized (no bigger than 600 pixels by 600 pixels). Another drawback to using these emails is that the way that it is rendered and converted on other devices and emails. That's why using a service (as mentioned above in #8) is a better way to go.

10. Coupons (cost) \$\$\$

Attract new customers. Isn't that what this is all about? Coupons are great in both print and digital versions. You can have coupons printed and if you are participating in #5 (Collaborative Efforts) you can have your coupons available in their businesses.

Coupons are great for generating return visits, too. Having a coupon to hand out to a customer (who's already in your business) with a discount or promo for their next visit is another way to keep your business in their mind. Maybe they won't have a need to come back anytime soon, so let them know they can pass the coupon along to someone else who could use it. Customer referrals are wonderful to have.

Places online like coupons.com andgroupon.com are also great outlets for providing promotional pieces and offers for your business. Something to keep in mind here is that whether you do print or digital coupons, these should also make their way into things like your businesses Facebook or Twitter accounts (#7), into your email campaigns (#8), possibly on your website (#1) and even posted in your newsletter or blog (#12). It's all about the cross-pollination and consistency of delivering your message.

11. Meetings of Professional Groups (cost) \$

This is old-school networking. The way it used to be done. Fortunately for us in this day-and-age of 'digital everything', not everyone has forgotten the value of human contact and social interactions.

These professional groups do not need to necessarily be in the field of optics. Consider participating in your local Chamber of Commerce or Rotary Club, for example. One of the things here that will certainly be a benefit to you is when speaking to them, have your elevator pitch ready to go and, above all else, if possible, begin with asking them what they do first. Showing interest in others creates value.

Most professional groups will have websites and will publish a list of members. Here is a great place to not only have your name, but your businesses name and website mentioned. This is another element of SEO. The more your business and website address appears on places online, the better the chances of it being found.

If there is a pitfall to avoid here, it is to not become overzealous and over commit yourself. Make sure you join a group you are actually interested in and one that does not take all of your time. If you just go from group to group to 'pimp' your business, people will see right through that. Make sure you are there to make meaningful contributions. Don't try to be a pushy salesperson.

12. Setup a Blog (cost) \$

The wonders of Wordpress. Although there are other avenues out there online to create a blog or even a newsletter, Wordpress is still really the best option. And it's free. Sure, blogs can be places online for complaining or just random musings but they can also be valuable resources for people and provide you with a lot of additional information to share on Facebook or Tweet about.

With great power comes great responsibility. Blogs are exactly that. They can stand for and provide good or bad content. Blogs are

another way to engage people online. Whether it's peers or potential customers or information seekers, blogs are very diverse and useful. You can provide press releases about news, events, new products, new technologies. Grow your customer base and keep in contact. Are you seeing a bit of a pattern here?

Although you can set up a blog for free and even run it for free, this is one the most time-consuming things you can do. Successful blogs are like Tamagotchi; living, breathing digital entities that require constant care and attention. They can be very needy and codependent on you to constantly feed them new content.

Final Thoughts

This is not meant to be an all-encompassing list, but rather a top 12 list of the 'low hanging fruit' you can go after immediately with a very short turnaround time. There will never be a one-size-fits-all solution for you and your small business. Every small business is unique; every small business is different; and not everything is going to work... but it doesn't mean you don't make the effort.

In the words of Yoda, "Do or do not. There is no try". These are not one-and-done events, either. They are endeavors which will take some time to gain some traction and momentum... provided of course that you are disciplined and persist with whichever ideas you choose.

Understand, too, that marketing is not advertising. Advertising is a component of marketing. There are countless ways to be able to market your small business and some of them will use advertising and some of them won't. The bottom line is that you need to embrace the internet and mix in some old school tactics to grow your business. Begin with a simple game plan and goals. Understand your target audience. Diversify your approach and focus on relationship-building with those in the community you serve. Remember, it doesn't cost you anything to begin by saying 'hello'... just a little bit of your time



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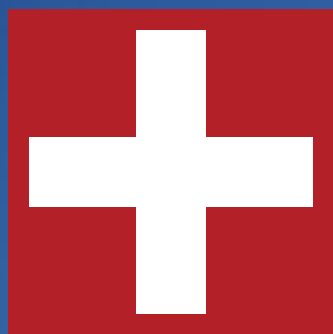
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RESCUE MISSION

— opt Oompa Loompa

So you've seen all of the stuff we've been talking about in this issue, as well as some of our previous issues of OPT Magazine. After (hopefully) reading all of the things we've talked about, like logo redesign, branding, and all that other good stuff, the question in your mind is, hopefully, "Now what?" – Giving you all of these great ideas and suggestions, but not having a way of executing them, is a little mean of us. That's why we actually want to deliver on what we suggest, by offering OPT Media services to anyone that wants them.

I know how difficult it can be to find someone to do things like graphic design. Wait. No. I know that it can be easy to find just anyone to do graphic design. Finding someone that is actually good at it is another question entirely. A lot of the things that we suggest can be done with little cost, but a lot of the return that you get on it is going to depend on how much you put into it. For example, you can certainly get a family member, nephew, cousin, or other close relation to make a logo for you. Question is - what if it's terrible? Not just, "I don't really like it", but straight up bad? Can you tell them it's terrible? Or is that going to cause family drama that you really don't need?

The worst part about hiring someone to do design for you can often be that you have no idea about what kind of designer they are. They may have a portfolio, sure, but does it include what you want it to include? Does it give you enough of an idea of who they are, or what their 'style' is? At the very least, with OPT, you can see our 'style' throughout this issue, as well as all of the others we've done. You know what you're getting into. Whether that's good or bad (it's good) is up to you, of course, but my point is that you know the level of detail that we take in the things that we do. It doesn't do anyone any good for you to get something you're not happy with.

Logo design, of course, is only the beginning of it. There's always other incidentals for the office, whether it's business cards, brochures, mats, reading cards, or whatever else. Sure, a lot of this stuff you can get with brand-specific logos, but then it's not really 'yours' so much as 'theirs'. Especially in this age of free-form, many practices are doing their own branding of progressive lenses. They work with their lab to get custom engravings on the lens, then design their own marketing pieces. This can make it more difficult for patients to 'comparison shop', as they are only ever going to be able to find the product being offered from you. This kind of self-branding can help you integrate private label offerings from labs into your own offerings, making for a unified marketing approach, making it more appealing to customers. Everybody wins.



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'Twas the Sight Before Nuance...

— Clement Clarke Moore

“You really expect to get all this packed by yourself?” Martha asked, glancing briefly at the pile of presents in the hallway before looking back at the jolly old man in front of her. “Don’t worry about me, this isn’t the first time that I’ve done this, you know?” Chris smiled at her, adjusting the wire-rimmed glasses that sat upon his nose. His wife simply shook her head, “No, that’s terrible,” she said, beckoning him over to her, “there’s no way you’re going anywhere with glasses that crooked. Get over here.”

Chris smiled slightly, he knew how much she hated when he played with them. Martha sighed, straightening the eyewear as she spoke, “Just be careful you take it slow, it’s cold out there, and you aren’t exactly in the best of shape, you know?” she placed the glasses back onto his face, giving him a look that said she knew he wasn’t going to listen to her. “You have my word,” he said with a slight chuckle, which made his round little belly shake like....a thing....that shakes a lot.

Chris worked slowly, taking box after box from the house to pack the car. Unlike other years, he didn’t have his little helpers this time, so he was forced to pack it all himself.

As Martha sat with her eggnog in the kitchen, there arose from the front door such a clatter that she jumped up to see what the heck was the matter. Sprawled out on the floor was her husband, with visions of an emergency room visit dancing in his head. “Are you okay?” she asked, lowering herself to the floor to see to Chris. “I think so,” he rubbed his head, “my glasses were so dark when I came back inside, that I guess I couldn’t see that box over there,” Chris motioned to a somewhat battered-looking present, its green wrapping ripped in several places to reveal the packaging underneath. “Well, what did I tell you when you bought them?” she began, relaxing a little since it seemed Chris was fine, “Those things take forever to get clear. I told you that if you got them,

you'd walk back inside, trip on something, and break your neck!" Chris sat up slowly, sighing at the slight dent he put in the drywall with his head. "Ah," he began, "But I didn't break my neck!" She scowled at him, "No, but what about your glasses?"

The broken and battered remains of a frame sat underneath of one of Chris' black boots. A sad, grinding crunch arose when he tried to move his foot, the lenses still dark and blacker than soot. "Did you get that backup pair?" His wife asked, looking down at the completely destroyed pair on the floor. "Well, about that..." Chris began, getting back to his feet. He sort of trailed off, not continuing his sentence. "So you didn't. Great. You know, with how bad your eyes are, a second pair is...." She began, but stopped. There was no use. She just sighed, "Go sit down in the living room, I'll be there in a moment. And try not to fall over anything else on the way." She guided him into the next room, "I'll just grab you an ice pack, do you need anything else?" she asked, heading towards the door to the kitchen. "Cookies and milk?" he asked, hopefully. She stopped and turned to face him, "Just because you hit your head doesn't mean you don't have to stick to your diet, you remember what your cardiologist said," she disappeared into the kitchen for a moment, then reappeared with the ice pack and a plate of celery. He took the ice pack for the growing bump on his head, but left the celery on the side table. "Now, just sit here a few minutes, I'll be right back." She disappeared out of the room for a few minutes while Chris was left sitting there wondering if he could still make it out to the store to get a new pair of eyeglasses that day. It was only three o'clock, and Christmas wasn't until tomorrow, so he should have plenty of time to get them made, he figured.



Martha reappeared with a small, wrapped box. "Looks like I got you something that you're actually going to use, this year." She walked over to Chris, holding out the red-and-gold wrapped package. Chris lowered the ice pack to look up at her, "What's this?" he said, placing the ice pack down and taking the package. "Well," she began, sitting in the chair beside her husband, "I wanted to give you something better than what you already were wearing, so I had to find you something that was actually better, so I did a little homework." Chris had unwrapped the box to reveal a sleek, black frame case. He popped it open to reveal a pair of glasses identical to the ones he was wearing just a few minutes ago. Prior to being horrible mangled, that is. "Different? But, they look the same?" Chris asked quizzically.

"You may very well think that," Martha began, "but these get clearer much, much faster. That's the one problem you've always had with your lenses before, but now, you won't have that problem anywhere near as much." Chris picked up the glasses and inspected them carefully, "Even though they look the same? How's that work?" She shrugged, "I don't know, magic lens elves? Do I look like your optician? All I know is that it's faster, which you'll find out when you get back up and finish loading the car." She smiled at him. He sighed, then put the eyeglasses on. He couldn't see anything. These were terrible. "Just let me adjust...." his wife began. "I can't see a thing!" he exclaimed. "That's because they're crooked! As I was saying, just let me adjust them before you tell me how terrible they are." She made her adjustments, then sat back, "And now?"

Chris looked around, then picked up a newspaper to see if he could read. "Much better!" he exclaimed, "Now let's see if they work as well as you said they do!" he stood, ready to finish packing the car for their road trip in the morning. He set about the rest of the packing with no incident, managing to fit everything into their vehicle while still leaving enough room for the two of them to fit. Online shopping has made this too easy, how did we end up with this many presents? He thought to himself as he crammed the last of them in.

"Well, how are they?" Martha asked as Chris entered the house a final time. "I'm impressed," he began, "with how bright it is outside, and how dark that front hall is, I thought for sure that I'd have trouble again." He sat down in a chair, "It's amazing though, they started to go clear almost right away, making me feel a whole lot safer about going in and out again." She smiled, "So I guess that means you like your present, then?" He stood up and walked over to her, giving her a hug, "Of course I do, these are probably the best pair of glasses I've ever had. What are they called?" She returned the hug, "They're called NuanceRT."



*Clear vision to all,
and to all clear sight*



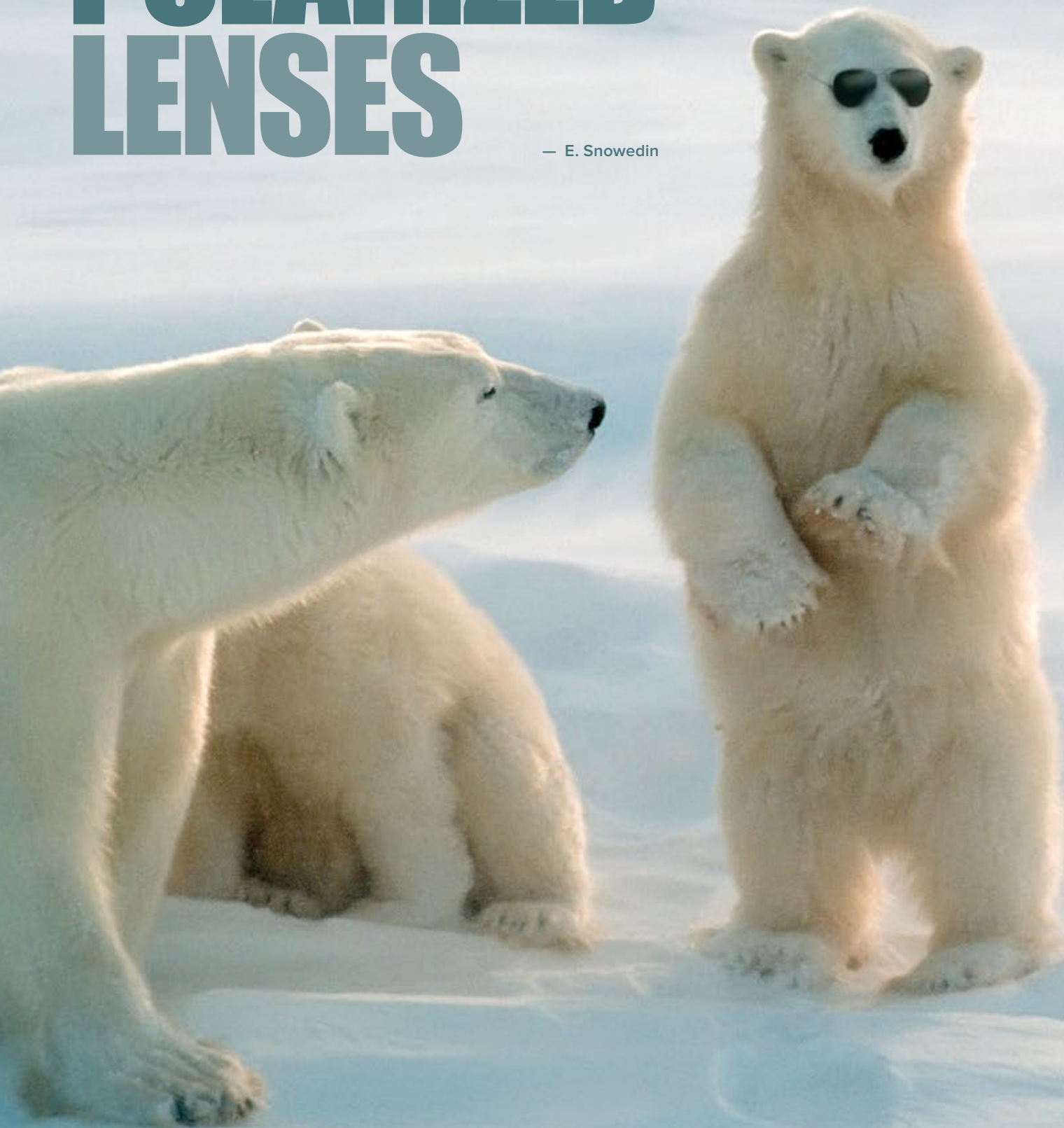
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See the Truth with POLARIZED LENSES

— E. Snowedin



I’ve heard that, often times, people assume that winter isn’t a “good time” to sell sunwear. I can only assume that these people have never experienced what winter is like, as I find myself using sunwear more and more in the winter months than I do in summer. While summer is, of course, the ‘traditional’ sunwear season, it doesn’t mean that it’s the only place that you’re going to find it. There’s plenty of places where it makes a whole lot of sense in the colder months, and your job is to offer the products that make sense for your customers. As far as I’m concerned, everyone should have a pair of polarized lenses. And no, photochromic lenses don’t count for this.

PROTECT YOUR DRIVE

Winter months are also when the sun decides to sit lower in the horizon and say a nice ‘hello’ to your eyeballs. If you happen to have a commute at the right time of the morning or evening, you’ll know what I’m talking about. The sun sits just at the right angle so it’s in your window, sliding in behind your eyewear and making it almost impossible to see. Unless you happen to have a pair of wrap sunwear, of course. Sure, you could try and wrangle the visor of your car to try and get it in that exact right position so that the sun isn’t searing your retinas, and that might work. Until the road curves, or you make a turn. Then you have to fix it again. And again. Polarized sunwear is especially good in the car, as photochromic lenses don’t really work so much, thanks to the windshields blocking the UV they need to activate. We all know that already, of course (so I’m not a whistleblower), but your patients may not be aware of it, so it’s good to keep them informed.

SNOWBLIND

In those places where you get snow, whether it’s the Northeast, Middle America, or even Russia, snow makes seeing really difficult. The glare coming from the sun is nothing when compared to the light bouncing off of a smooth coat of freshly-fallen snow. This is especially noticeable when you combine this with driving, as stated above. When the sun is so low in the sky, and ALSO bouncing off of snow, driving can be very difficult. Having to squint when you’re going 60 miles per hour isn’t exactly safe, but plenty of people do it.

It’s also a scientific fact that on those crisp winter days after a snowfall, the sun tends to be at its strongest at the exact moment you decide it’s time to go shovel. For those of you that have experienced this phenomenon, you know what I’m talking about. This also applies to other outdoor winter activities, like sledding, snowboarding, and skiing.

NEW SALES APPROACH (NSA)

A popular option to help with moving sunwear in the winter months is the “buy one get one half off” sales. The idea here is to help you move inventory from your board to get the sunwear out of the way, to make room for the next year’s styles. Always a good plan, which can help not only to move the sunwear, but the regular frames as well. Another option is to “buy polarized, get the clear pair free”. The idea being to couple the two together and make it easier for

the patients to be able to justify buying two pairs. The other thing to keep in mind here is that just because you might see your patient in winter, it doesn’t mean that they will come back in the summer to buy sunglasses. Since they may only come in every year or two, you want to take the opportunity to make the sales now. It might be the dead of winter, but if you find out that they love to go fishing in late spring, you need to make your move while they are there. “Oh, you enjoy fishing? Well these are great for when you go, and we even have a sale going on RIGHT NOW! How great is that?” It’s not like eyewear is going to go bad in a few months.

CONNECTING THE DOTS

Since you, obviously, want your patients to buy more, this is how you can get them to do that. By relating some of these real-world problems they’ve almost undoubtedly experienced, you can get that buy-in that you need in order for them to want to make the purchase. You need to elicit the “Oh yeah, that does make sense!” response. Usually that requires you to need to point out things they currently just accept, and make it obvious that you’re able to fix this problem. That’s why having the above examples of very specific situations can help quite a bit. One of the continual battles that you fight with selling eyewear is that people always think you’re trying to sell them something that they don’t need. Being able to draw on specific problems that they’re likely to have is a great way to get over that hurdle. Once they understand that the sunwear actually can help them, that’s when you can start talking about some options to allow them to personalize these a little more, such as mirror coatings. This is especially popular for those that do winter sports, and being able to have a number of colors to choose from makes it an even more attractive proposition, as you’ve given them a reason to buy more than one pair of sunwear. The more they can personalize something, the better. The whole sales process means you have to find out what they want without seeming too pushy or scaring them off, and giving them choice while addressing the problems they have is the best way to get a customer involved.

One last thing, to those of you that might happen to be in places that don’t have to deal with snow, or the other problems I listed here - why would you bother reading this? Shouldn’t you be out enjoying your perpetually-nice weather? It’s not like you’re stuck inside an embassy somewhere.

ARE YOUR SALES FROZEN?

— W. Disney

Sometimes your world changes. Things happen that you don't account for. Whether it's a change in the business landscape, or your parents dying horrifically in an ill-fated sea voyage - things can go from 'ok' to 'oh no' quickly. Being able to adapt to new situations is necessary in both business and everyday life. As many have no doubt seen, the eyewear industry has changed drastically over the past few years. Between big-box stores, insurance, and online sales, there are more ways than ever for people to get their eyewear.

Part of being able to be successful is seeing that the landscape is changing, and doing something about it to fix it. If you continue about your day-to-day trying to ignore it, you're just going to end up with your potential customers going elsewhere. The solution to taking on these new business challenges isn't running away. If you run off and isolate yourself (in an ice castle, or wherever), then all you do is compound your problems.

Independents Are Better Than Corporate

And I'm sure that a lot of you agree, as that's one of the things that you hope your patients are going to do every time you give them a copy of their prescription. You'd really, really love it if they decided to support their local independent optical shop (you) instead of going somewhere else (online, big box, or really anywhere else). Which only makes sense, really. So if we want them to support independents - why is it okay for you to support large companies (frames, labs, lenses, etc.) and not independents? Isn't it basically the same thing? I mean, we already know most of these giants are online and actively selling against you.... so why would you want to sell their products in your store? Doesn't that just make it all the easier for your customer to internet shop while they use your store to 'try things on'?

Don't get me wrong, I'm sure there's plenty of products that you do well with that come from large companies - they're large for a reason, after all. My point is that

isn't it in your self-interest to not have part of your sales fund someone that is basically your competition? I've heard countless times from people that have customers search for frames in their shop, and find the same frame online lower than wholesale cost. That doesn't really sound like a company that has the best interest of their customers at heart.

Do You Want to Bill Insurance?

It doesn't have to be insurance. I have trouble wrapping my head around the concept of vision insurance. It seems that very few subscribers know what their plan actually covers. It's good for them that you know every single detail of their plan, what it covers, and what their responsibility is. Oh, you don't know that? Can't you just look it up? What do you mean I need to know who my insurance company is?and that's just the start. But I'm also sure that's a conversation you've had many times, and would gladly never have again if you can avoid it. You also know that anything that isn't covered is going to be your fault. Sometimes you can even end up owing money to the insurance company for a given job, which I just find baffling. You go through all of that pain and suffering, and they get the privilege of paying for it?

The double-edged sword here is that a lot of people think you NEED the insurances to get patients in the door. I think the truth of that depends on what kind of customer that you're looking for. If you enjoy the customers that are the "I just want what is covered by the insurance AND NOTHING MORE," then yes, insurances are probably great. But you don't really make money doing that. I assume that you'd like to do that every once in a while. Accepting insurances means that people with those insurances are more likely to come in for an exam. It also means that they are more likely to want to stay within whatever budget they need to so they don't have to pay anything. They assume that the insurance is going to cover 'what they need', and that any more than that

isn't really necessary. If the customers don't come in with the expectation of using insurance, you get more leeway in discussing frame and lens options for them.

I haven't see anyone regret discontinuing their relationship with an insurance carrier. I may be wrong, of course, and maybe I don't hear about them because they went out of business so aren't around to lament their poor choice of judgement? We may never know, but what I do know is that "I really love working with vision insurance plans" is a sentence that nobody's ever before said in a serious manner.

This, of course, hasn't even addressed that the insurance companies actively solicit their subscribers for their optical frame business online. Some go so far as to email them as soon as they see the subscriber had an eye exam. Usually with an offer to "get more from their benefits" by buying their eyewear from the insurance companies online store. How are you supposed to do anything about that? And what real benefit do you get out of supporting a company that is actively enticing their customers to NOT buy things from you, and to buy from them instead?

Let Them Go (Online)

Online sales. You know you aren't going to stop it. No matter how much you educate, inform, or help, you're going to have patients that are going to be taking their Rx and walking out the door. Today's world has given most of us a very unhealthy obsession with the click-buy lifestyle, assuming it's a 'better deal', regardless of whether or not it actually is. You know as well as I do that the online eyewear doesn't come with the services that an optical shop can provide. Unfortunately, you can't always tell that to a customer as they're about to walk out the door. If you try to stop them, they are just going to assume that you're like a used-car salesman trying to keep them from walking off the lot. They've already decided that they're going to buy online, and there's usually not much you can do to stop them at that point. Even the ones that aren't internet savvy have a child, cousin, or someone else that can 'get them on the computer' for them. So it's probably about time we stopped pretending that it doesn't exist. What we need to focus on is service, as that's the value that an optical shop provides. And remember, your time is worth something - it shouldn't be free.

What I'm referring to here is the inevitable after-the-fact visits you get from patients that bought online. Either they can't see, don't fit right, or something else. Regardless of the problem, it's you that has to deal with it. The last thing you want to do is feel obligated to 'help them out' because they have a problem. Help them, by all means, but remember it's your time and skill that they are coming for, so it needs to be compensated. One way of dealing with this is that you can offer a 'membership' or 'service plan'

for eyewear that people buy elsewhere. You can spell out flat fees for some things - such as adjustment, PDs, nose pad replacements, or whatever else. Then give them an option for a yearly plan that entitles them to everything they need to buy eyewear online - PD, adjustments, Rx check of the new lenses that came in.

I'm not saying that everyone is going to go online, or that you should encourage it - we just all know that it's going to happen with some people. Even if they do it just once to 'try it', many people will go that way. This is simply a way of managing it without causing a problem later down the line. Often times people will assume that because they got their prescription from you that when someone else makes a pair of glasses, it becomes your responsibility. For some reason. By letting the patient know ahead of time, "If you choose to go online to get glasses, here's some service plans we offer in case you have any issues," you set the expectation ahead of time that if they come back with a problem, they're going to be expected to pay for it. This is usually better than having them standing in your office with their \$7 special pair of lenses they can't see out of demanding that you fix it.

An Open Door

The point of this - if I can say something crazy - is that, ultimately, nobody has your best interests at heart except you. Your best bet is finding partners that aren't also your direct competition. Those partners actually have an interest in your business succeeding, so why would you not want a relationship with someone that wants you to do well? The market is changing, and is a much different world than it was five or ten years ago. Another few years and it will invariably change again. The question is whether you are going to walk through the open door of change, or if you're content sitting still when other business around you improve. I don't know about you, but competition never bothered me, anyway.



WHY DO I NEED SOCIAL MEDIA?

PRACTICAL SOCIAL MEDIA

— Mikayla Matz

There are two big mistakes medical practices make in regards to social media. The first one is that they believe they are not a ‘business’ and therefore do not need one. Or, they realize they are a business, but flat out just don’t believe they need one. It’s one in the same, really, but don’t be mistaken: practices are business, and you do need social media. Yes, I’m sure you know that from countless people saying ‘do it’. But, the question is “What’s the practical benefit?”

PATIENT OUTREACH

Most social media allows personal messaging, allowing for a unique way to stay in touch with your patients. In this age of technology, many people prefer to ask questions about the practice, or even request an appointment, via the internet. Whether that is due to people being anti-social, lazy, or just plain busy is irrelevant - it’s a thing that people want. My office, for example, receives a number of patients who ask to make an appointment via social media every week. The benefit here is that you cater to them. After they tell you their availability, your scheduler can open up the appointment book, find a few timeslots that would work, and then can call them, or just book it via an online conversation. Hook, line, sinker. If they use the messaging system, a new form of communication is established. I once had a patient contact us about a fundraiser they were having and if we would like to contribute. We were able to really get into detail and have a record of everything we needed to make sure everything went off without a hitch. That second part is important - it makes it easy to go back and review the details, and not rely on trying to remember.

REVIEWS & REFERRALS

Also, do not underestimate the power of Yelp and sites like it. Many offices don’t even realize they have a Yelp page, and that’s no good-- especially if people are leaving reviews and a lot of your traffic is coming from there. Check Yelp. Just because you haven’t made a page there doesn’t mean it hasn’t been set up. If it’s there, ‘claim’ it and maintain it. If you don’t have a Facebook page, people are going to find other ways to see what people are saying about you. Then, as appropriate, reach out to any reviewers. The key thing about social media is communication and outreach. Which leads me to my next point: referrals. There have been dozens of patients who have filled out the “Where did you hear about us?” section with the answer of “Facebook” or “Yelp”. Do you ask patients that? If not, you should. So, other than direct interactions and reading reviews, what’s attracting them? Personalization.



GETTING PERSONAL

Posting on social media with fun facts about animal eyes, costume contacts, and celebrity involvement in eyecare is all well and good, but it’s the personal stories about your office that are key. I had the largest outreach to my office after we started posting pictures of our entering kindergarteners having their mandatory eye exams. The kids get super into it and thus the parents do too. That’s when they share the post of their kid wearing large red frames and a big happy smile, linking from your social media page to their own. Then their friends, with kids of their own, see that post and you get a chain reaction. Other fun stories unique to the office are great too. One time, a patient found some sunglasses out in the parking lot. Figuring they had to belong to someone at our office, they brought them in. Our office manager looked up the stock number, and a little detective work later returned the frames to their owner, who thought them lost forever. They were ecstatic, and our followers loved knowing the lengths at which we would (and do) go for them. Another time, we loaned out a pair of display frames to a patient for their child’s school event. They dressed as Steve Jobs for a ‘wax museum’. After which, they posted pictures of their child, featuring our frame, to their facebook and to ours: their friends and followers loved it. It is one of our most liked and shared posts. The lesson here: chronicle your experiences with your patients, if they don’t do it first-- and if they do, make sure you share that too. By doing this, you’re establishing great relationships and subtly beginning new ones.

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Networking might seem like it’s about you, but it’s not. When it comes to social media, it all goes back to the patients. Networking is key, though, because it provides you with advice, tons of content, and, frankly, stamina. So why does social media seem so intimidating? Well, a lot of practices know their patients, but they don’t know their audience. This harkens back to posting the personal experiences: many of our patients and potential patients are children and their parents. Whoever your target audience is, personal experiences are key. Likewise, you have to decide, is the social media outlet for your patients or networking? You aren’t going to post a live procedure of a cataract surgery for your patients, right? To solve this problem, I targeted different audiences based on the social media platform. I found success amidst my patients via Facebook, other offices on Twitter, and aspiring optometrists and ophthalmologists on Tumblr. And yeah, having all three is definitely beneficial and OK. One fuels the other and keeps things fresh and exciting, so I definitely don’t recommend having just one. At the same time, get your footing and see what works for you and your office. That’s sort of the best part about social media, it’s you doing you-- and that’s exactly what your followers want.

A LENS STORY

— Ralphie Parker



Let's say you want to give someone a gift that you want them to remember. What you don't do is give them a gift card, socks, or a fruit cake. Those gifts are overdone to the point of nausea. Not that there's anything wrong with fruit cake, mind you. It can be quite delicious, but that's not the point. The point is that it's common, expected, and not exactly the kind of thing that people are likely to remember for very long afterwards. Being able to come up with that perfect gift idea is really, really difficult. Ideally, you need to think of something that the intended giftee really wants, but doesn't know they want.

What you sell in your optical shop is a lot like this. If all you sell is the basic and mundane, then you aren't special. There becomes no difference in what you have in your store as compared to an endless choice of online outlets. What kind of things can you carry in your shop that people aren't going to find as readily online? Well, it seems like a lot of brand name frames are already available all over the Internet - often below your cost - so they're out. Most lenses are in the same boat. Plastic, polycarbonate, polarized, photochromic - they can all be had pretty much anywhere online. One thing that can set you apart, however, is glass.

The Old Man

The last thing that you want is a gift that makes you look like you haven't updated your fashion sense since the 1940's. Glass can often conjure that image of massive frames, large lenses, and exceedingly dated looks. While that was obviously true back when glass was the only option, that's nowhere near the case any more. Glass has moved on and matured, and isn't your old man's lens material anymore. Ideal for things like high-end sunwear, glass can be a great addition to setting yourself apart from everyone else. It's even kept up with the times, so you can get all manner of digital and free-form designs in glass as well, making it available in many of the same lens designs found in plastic-based materials.

Frah-gee-lay

One of the major reasons people don't seem to like glass lenses is because they think they can break easily. Certainly, if you drop them onto concrete, or step on them, then yes, you're going to have a bad time. Overall, however, I don't see how this is really a major concern for people. Let's take a look at coffee mugs. They're somewhat more breakable than glass lenses, but we'll go with this example for a bit. A mug is something that people often use a few times a day (or more, depending on your coffee addiction). For how frequently I use a mug, rarely do I break them. Since I know dropping it is a bad idea, I avoid doing it. So why is this a difficulty for eyeglass lenses? I'm fairly certain I'd be a lot more careful with handling my eyewear, as well, since I'd rather break an \$8 mug than a pair of glasses that were several hundred.

The point here is that they aren't some fragile little flower that are going break if you look at them the wrong way. Regardless of the lens material, if you do something careless with your eyewear and they break, it's probably at least a little bit your fault, and not the fault of the eyewear.

You'll Shoot Your Eye Out

There also seems to be an assumption in a lot of places that glass is somehow 'more dangerous' than other materials. I've heard people assume that they can't sell glass because they'll get sued, or that the patients will go blind if a lens breaks, or both. I'm sure much of this came about from the rise of plastic lenses in the beginning. There had to be something for them to tout, and that was it.

A given glass lens tends to be more well-tested than any given plastic lens. This is because every standard glass lens is drop-ball tested. So that means you know that the lens is up to impact resistance, and that it's safe. Plastic, on the other hand, doesn't require every single lens to be tested, just a 'representative sample'. So the first time that most of them get tested is when they're sitting on the patient's face and deflecting away a BB from that brand new Red Rider gun they got for Christmas.

Perceived value - worth the price

You can feel when something is cheap. Sometimes it's easy to explain - maybe it's flimsy, fragile, or otherwise not up to par. Other times, there's a combination of things that just give you the vibe that something isn't quite right. That what you've received is probably the cheapest thing that's ever been made. One of the qualities that we tend to attribute to how 'cheap' something feels is weight. When it's really, really light, we can get a little cautious. There's often an assumption that if it's light, then someone must obviously have 'cheaped out' on the materials to make it. That's why one of the often-negative aspects of glass lenses can actually be a positive. The additional weight helps people justify the cost of higher-end eyewear because it feels like it's worth more. The main part of your job in selling eyewear is making sure that your customer is happy with what you're giving them. That means being able to help them overcome any mental obstacles that they may have when it comes to their purchase.

The other thing to keep in mind with the 'weight' of glass is that, for a large percentage of prescriptions, there's a very minor difference. The lower the prescription, the closer the weight is to other materials.

How Many Shoes are in Your Closet?

— Dr. Arian Fartash O.D.

It's the age old dilemma: so many things in the closet, but nothing to wear! Why is this the case? Why are we not satisfied with that single pair of jeans?

Instead, we have a closet full of jeans in different washes, distresses, lengths, and fits. One particular day you may want to wear skinny jeans, or on a moody day you may want to wear a frayed pair. Whatever the case is, one pair of jeans in the closet is simply not enough. Do not get me started on the shoe collection! Really, how many pairs of sandals or sneakers does one need? Infinite in most minds. With this being said, it boggles my mind that people only own one pair of glasses.

Sure, glasses help you see, but they also sit on your face for the world to see you. If we are constantly changing what we wear, based on events, moods, and trends, why not start building a collection of eyewear to match? In order to change the mentality that one pair of glasses fits the entire needs of a patient, we should be educating them that it can complete a person's whole look. For example, when I am

running errands, I always grab for my round Rayban sunglass frame. However, when I am out to lunch with my girlfriends, I would choose my glamorous Chanel's. The Raybans are comfortable, stylish, but not overstated, while, like a pair of stilettos. The Chanel is worn for looks, rather than comfort. The point is, with so many different occasions and events, just like owning one pair of shoes will not suffice, having one pair of glasses will not either. You'll need to get to know your patients hobbies and lifestyle in order to suggest different pairs that will shine during their various activities.

Glasses are not just for vision, they are also used to make a statement and complete a look. No matter what a person's style is, there are great frames to match. As an eye care professional, allow your patients to choose what is best for their personality by carrying frames outside of black and brown. Also, try to place some frames outside their comfort zone to try on, as a single frame cannot suffice for every occasion and frame of mind (no pun intended). You will be surprised what some of them may choose. ⚙️



A Hand-off is not just a Hand-off but a Transfer of Care

— Thomas Cervantes

After many fumbled hand-offs between my optometrist and I, we decided to analyze how we perform our hand-offs and what it means to the patient. After much review, we found that a hand-off is not simply pawing the patient off from optometrist to optical (or check out), but a chance to transfer the care and expertise.

We found that patients don't want to have a first-class eye exam, then be dumped off into the optical. They want to know that the person taking over their treatment can continue the same level of care that the optometrist has already started. By continuing a high level of care, the patient will trust the optician more, which will lead to higher capture rates and a better revenue per patient. The things you say and do as the transfer of care takes place will show the patient that the optician taking over care is the right person for the job.

One way to help build the patients trust in the optician is for the optometrist to show that he or she trusts the opinions and recommendations of the optician. You can do this by saying things like "our optician Thomas is a frame and lenses expert, I know he will find the perfect pair for you Mrs. Jones." Also, using technical terms during the transfer of care helps the patient know that the person taking over is a true professional and will know what lenses will work the best for them.

Another thing to consider during the transfer of care is where it takes place. If possible, try to perform the transfer of care in the exam lane so that it feels more clinical. Having a more clinical feeling will help the patient understand that glasses are a medical device and the recommendations are customized to their needs. The last change

we made to our transfer of care was the time it took to execute the transfer. Keeping it short and sweet keeps the patient engaged and their mind on getting glasses and, not to mention, helps the flow of the office.

Key points to touch on during a transfer of care

- ▶ Reinforcing why we are recommending the products and services that we are
- ▶ Going over recall policy with the patient (e.g. when you want them to come back for their next eye exam)
- ▶ Don't forget to refer to the patient by name
- ▶ Perfect time to ask the patient if any family members or friends need eye exams

What comes out of performing a great transfer of care instead of a lack luster hand-off, or just simply dumping the patient off to the front office staff? As I mentioned before, having a higher level of care throughout the process will make the patient have more trust in the products and services that you are offering them, completing a great patient experience that they can appreciate. ⚙️

A Few Thoughts on Seeking Advice

— Scott Balestreri

Forward -

Sometimes when we need help, we turn to those around us, even if they aren't any more qualified than us to answer a question. These people may be colleagues, 'consultants' with no real qualifications to consult, or whoever will listen. One wonders, are these help-seekers creating more problems for themselves when they do this? Or should they simply go find a professional in the first place? While those around us might have no problem trying to help, that doesn't make them any better than our own desperate efforts. Furthermore, it seems common for people to ask of us things they expect for free, when really, they should be paying a professional. Given the time demands on today's business executives, asking for these simple requests can really pile up. One 'lab guy' shares his experiences on this subject in a humble rant only he could write.

- Bill Heffner

I'd like to share a little business consulting...

or rather, some shared experiences. I'm not qualified to be a business consultant. In fact, my degree from the University of California at Berkeley qualifies me for just about nothing. Really.

I currently have a lot of hard work in front of me. More than I think I have ever had in 26 years of doing this thing I do. Yet, I often ponder how much of this workload is imagined, invented, and placed upon me by idiots? I'm not talking about my staff - they are trained and know their jobs. Usually when they are perceived as deficient, it's someone else trying to get them to do something they aren't trained to do. How often does someone ask you to do something you aren't qualified to do? Things like answering a simple question on something you know nothing about? How often do you contact them in the middle of the day, needing help 'right now', as if they don't need some help themselves?

It reminds me of this guy I know. An extremely talented lab management software (LMS) programmer. He owned a massive lab in another country before throwing in the towel and taking on a programming support position for this LMS company. When I asked him why he left the lab side, there was no hesitation in the answer: "I got tired of babysitting adults."

As I head to work at 6am to put a dent in a paper pile on my desk and consider finding a (very very part time) personal assistant to help me push paper, I'm questioning myself. Do I really need help? Am I really so unqualified? LOTS of the paper I push and calls I make all day is babysitting adults who can't push their own paper. They "NEED" me to do it for them. If you haven't caught on yet, the paper on my desk is seldom my own. Is that because I'm so talented and sought after? Or is it because others are disillusioned, unqualified, or just plain lazy? Let's be clear: I'm not talking about delegating. Delegating tasks involves giving tasks to those who are qualified to do them, so you have more time to do what you are uniquely qualified to do.

Truth be told, if people only knew how inept I am at some forms of paper pushing, they would be horrified that they asked me to do it. Yes, I can edge and mount your -24.00 lens into a frame better than anyone, but you want WHAT?! I think it was in a B-movie starring Steven Segal, I forget the name; the villain says, "Assumption is the mother of all F-ups." (That's the censored cable version). It was a movie about terrorists taking over a train that was wrecked. No wonder I just thought of it writing this.

What on Earth did I ever do to make some of my oldest customers assume I have certain talents? Or my newest customers, for that matter, who don't really know me? Why is it you think it's my job to do certain things that you as a small business owner are obligated or responsible to do yourself? Do you not have time? Have you come to the conclusion that I somehow do because.... I want your business?!?! Ok fair enough, but wanting your business and being qualified to screw it up with my lack of skills are 2 very different things.

I can see why people gravitate to a lab owner who has dispensed for decades, managed large practices, manufactured frames, grew up around optometry, and knows a lot of people for advice.

It must beat the heck out of gravitating to a corporate lens rep whose last job was at Best Buy selling dishwashers. Unlike them, I've had to make payroll for 17 years. What I have in common with a lot of business owners is that, despite that CV, most of which I didn't include, I usually am not the right person to help you for nothing.

Incidentally the percentage of your lab bill that goes into my lab-owning pocket is literally peanuts. 6% is a good month. Also keep in mind that 6% I get is to run my business, not yours. Giving you consulting advice in addition to lab work makes my 6% go to somewhere around 1%... Really. How valuable is the advice and knowledge I am willing to part with is at 1% of your \$15,000 lab bill?

I think perhaps the only thing worse than taking the advice of a frame rep whose last job was at Starbucks, is possibly hiring me for nothing but lab work as an incentive, on which my margin is less than a restaurant makes. For real. Let's look at some examples.

Cost Analysis

One thing I am often asked is to run a lowest-cost scenario across 5 labs in your buying group, and then building a price list to offer you to match it. And yes, doing that is exactly as much fun as you imagine it to be. Not only am I terrible at plugging 9 million numbers into a spreadsheet, anyone who knows anything about this business is that you don't just "make on the buy." In fact, the lower you pay for your lenses, the more you are likely losing in profits. Chew on that one a minute. Any "consultant" who tells you differently is a hack. I can prove it any day of the week. Cheaper lenses for the sake of being cheaper aren't as good, and come from labs that aren't as good. The more kickbacks, gimmicks, and other fancy programs you participate in, the more of a gimmick your dispensing caliber will be. Note: most lenses sold today from companies offering gimmicks and discounts are the most expensive. They have to be able to pay for the free redos, gimmicks, discounts, and 'kickback points'.

Ever heard of an accountant? Hey, don't get me wrong, I'm happy to do it. Just remember when you get a messed-up price on some lens, I don't have a CPA after my name. In fact, math isn't a strong suit. Huge companies have people solely dedicated to making thousands of different customized price lists for you. They can drill down and give you exactly the price you want on specific items. Then they make sure that prices on slightly less common items, which they know you'll still use, are high enough to 'offset the cost' and 'maintain margin' or whatever other corporate-speak they use for it. The end result being you don't get a deal, you just feel like you did. When you ask for lower prices, this is exactly what is happening.

Speaking of deals: how about that 50% second pair deal you are so intent on getting matched? Word to the wise: 50% second pairs are a smokescreen. If you don't know why, you've probably never done a cost-benefit analysis. Finding the lowest price of something also requires finding the highest external cost in 90% of lab cases.

Do you know what an external cost is? Sorry. That was one thing I did pick up when I went to the University of California at Berkeley. It's not even on Google, at least, not correctly explained or in an applicable fashion. That's where the money making magic is (real knowledge), and if you want that it costs real money, just like an education in finance.

For the vast majority of offices, the free redo, is also a complete waste. Just let your imagination wander to figure that one out. Do you need to pay for it on every pair, using it only rarely, or because you can't refract? Or maybe you hire loser McOpticians and have no value for training them? If so, then maybe the free redo is right for you. That's not me being a jerk about it, but something worth thinking about with your business hat on. If you have someone that's causing you to have redos due to bad fits, refractions, frame styles, or whatever - it doesn't matter that they are free. Where else is this person costing you money? Secondary sales? Referrals? Loss of patient loyalty? If you want your business to be better, this is how you figure it out. If you're good at refracting, and you have a competent staff, then why do you need to pay more for 'free redos' if you barely ever need them? Answer: Because that's what everyone else does.

Have you ever considered negotiating for the "no free redo" price, instead of a "lower than the other guy" price to save yourself a buck? Someone needs to say it; for some of you, the other guy is getting a really bad price to begin with. Hint: If they belong to a buying group, they likely qualify. If someone pays money to belong to a buying group, 100% chance they are paying too much for lab work.

I just gave you an example of an unintended loss. Unintended loss, in business, are monies you weren't supposed to lose. Maybe you didn't train your McOptician the right way, or they just don't get it. Or maybe you aren't the greatest order taker (or order maker) yourself. Stuff happens, and the one running the business want to make it better. Figuring out where the bad parts are is how we know where the hard work needs to be done.

Instead of focusing on the pennies difference between two lens prices, wouldn't it be easier to do a cost benefit on your redo rate, cost of goods, second pair sales, and "50% off of what" (discount and list price). I probably can't do that for you very well with the time I have, nor would you want me to. This is about your business, not mine, which is why I recommend you to help yourself. Also, do you really want to give me all those deals, prices, costs, and everything else? Remember, I'm a lab guy, not an accountant. Do you see where this is going yet?

Will It Work?

It's the question every poorly run, poorly trained office asks about a spectacle Rx they don't understand. Short answer: 'No'. It's far too common that I get asked to do insane lens calculations, even though it happens to be my job. An insane prescription in the wrong frame for the Rx, usually because the patient wants it, or because you stand to make a few hundred off the sale. "Will this pair work?" Sure, I'm qualified after 9 million frame selects to

dispense. However, I'm not doing your frame selection, you are. Or maybe an under-trained "optician" is.

Is this arrogant assumption on my part? 95% of trays on my desk, are on my desk for that very reason. I'm here for you when you picked the wrong frame for the wrong job. I tell you (assuming it's even possible) what it's going to look like when it's done. That your patient may not be happy because it's a brick. Then, when it comes out looking wrong, I get blamed. Just an added bonus I get to perpetuate your own denial. I've learned from experience to just be brutally honest with dispensers now, and some don't appreciate it. They would rather have a month-long, drawn out drama with their patient, rather than hearing "Hell no, are you crazy?" from me on day one. It's much easier to call me unprofessional, after all.

Yes, as your patient is sitting in the dispensary I can make suggestions over the phone. I can give you a checklist. I can walk you through what I might do, given I am not looking at this patient's face or chart. I can also be completely wrong since I'm not in the room. These choices ultimately come down to managing the patient's expectations, and being able to tell them 'no'. If you can't tell them their prescription won't work in a frame, maybe it's time for remedial training. Am I qualified? You betcha. Is it worth my hours and days needed to train a staff for lab work as a reward? Not a chance.

Other Than Optical Advice

You have an employee who is suing you for unpaid overtime. You call me for advice (as if I'm some employment lawyer?). I ask you: "Did you ask for or allow overtime? Did you pay 1.5 time? No?" In the State of California, you need to just pay the bill. You messed up. Get over it.

Yes, you need to know basic employment law if you are an employer. It's different in every state. Incidentally- why are you calling me for advice? I could be wrong. You may not need to pay the bill. Is the OT documented? Are there 19 other eventualities I'm not considering when answering your question? No. Likely 59 eventualities. Let's start with you maybe asking me the wrong question and, I'm no lawyer, so I don't know the right ones to ask you in return. That goes for the BFF colleague you were going to ask, too.

Have I dealt with employee issues? After 17 years, what do you think? Am I qualified to handle your particular issue? Get a grip. Although I get asked for employment regulation advice on a monthly basis in California and, even more of a shock, from people in other states where the rules I work by don't apply, I have no training. Experience? Yes, TONS of it. Training in HR? Are you frigging kidding me?

How's this for legal advice? I'm not a lawyer, and not licensed to practice law... anywhere. Why did it occur to you to call me? I'm wondering if I'm qualified to write any of this! How can you fix this ongoing problem? Incidentally, it's a radical problem. It's so freaky, I have yet to find a name for it other than 'gross incompetence', but I'm trying to be nice.

Consider the following radical problem:

You are selling a medical device or service to someone you don't understand, where their health could be at risk. You are charging them a large percentage of their monthly salary. You are representing yourself as knowledgeable, professional, and LIABLE. This is behavior of an extremely risk-loving person. Maybe it's not your fault. Optometry school doesn't teach you to run a business, it teaches you to be an Optometrist. However, you decided to run a business, so now you need to figure out how to do that the right way.

Consider this radical solution:

Seek out qualified professionals to learn from. Check them and their advice against other qualified professionals, not your friends, and not people you "think you may know might know." Pay them.

Big hint: If they are helping you for free or peanuts, you aren't paying a professional. Shouldn't your business be built on a professional skill-level, and not just people pretending to be one?



— Scott Balestreri



— Actor portrayal of a qualified professional pictured above.
Your results may vary. Please consult with a qualified professional first.



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Running three shifts, we deal with customers from across the country. With late shipping options, it becomes possible to get work back into your hands sooner than ever. You know the kind of competition that you're up against, whether it's an online shop or a large chain store. You need a lab partner that's going to help you to stay competitive and retain customers. Not one that is going to send your job to a lab in another country to have it made. Finding a lab partner that is both cost-effective and consistent is a major cornerstone to the success of your business.

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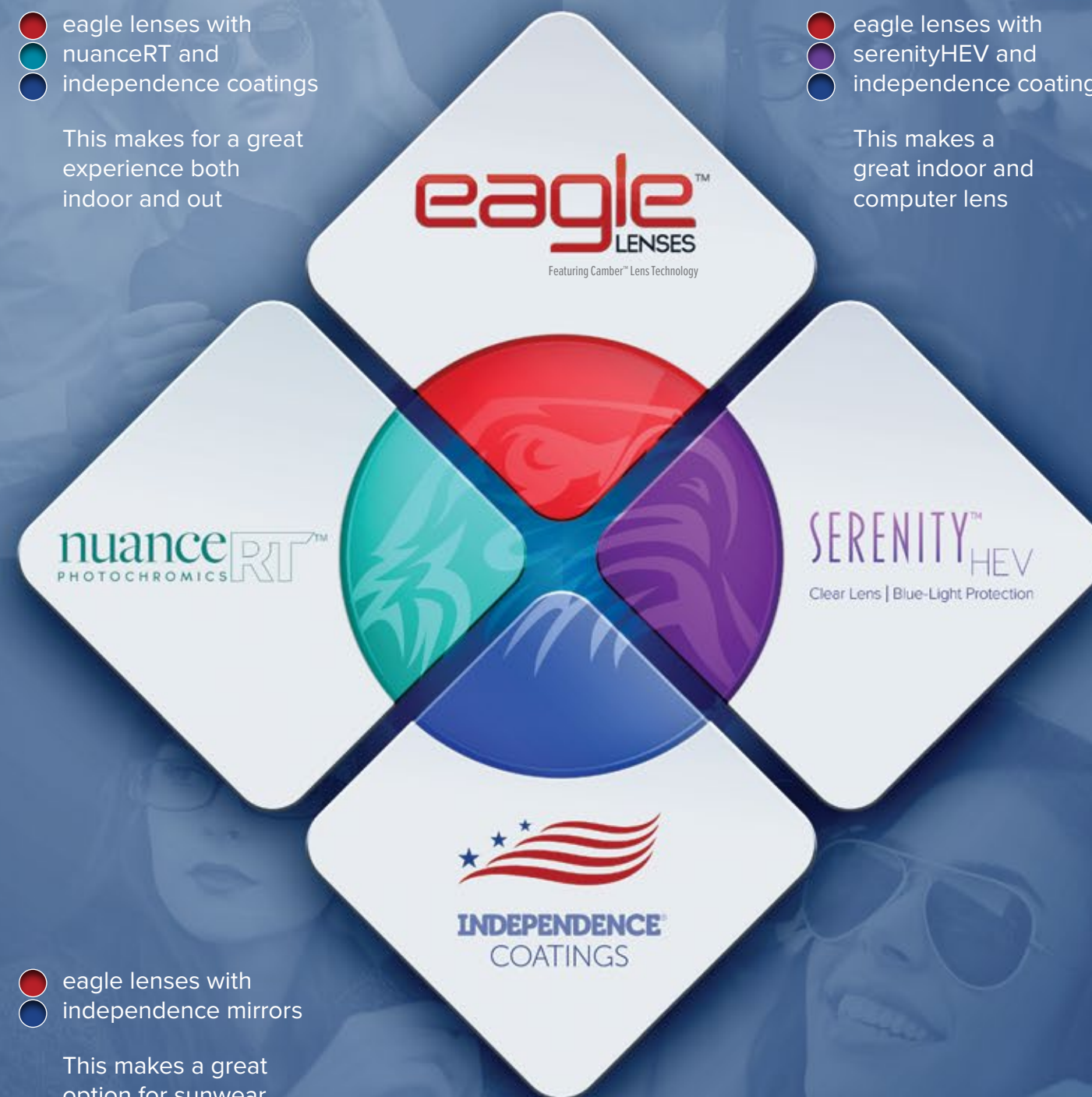
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CYBER SECURITY

AND RECENT INCIDENTS

— Dr. Jason Smith, O.D., M.S.

Many optometrists and optometry students have reported receiving Chase Bank Amazon credit cards in the mail, even though they never applied for new credit cards from the bank or from Amazon. Many of these same people have received credit alerts on their accounts when they were contacted by credit reference agencies to alert them that there had been a failed attempt to open up other credit accounts in their names. The large numbers of these reports suggests that a serious data breach had occurred, although at the current time it is still unclear as to which organization had been under attack. It could be one or even multiple eye care/optometry organizations.

Reports of the credit card frauds and other fraudulent activity began on August 2, 2016. The American Optometric Association contacted the FBI and the Federal Trade Commission for further information. The AOA also conducted an investigation to determine whether these cyber-attacks had succeeded in compromising its data base network. As of this time, there has been no definitive answer as to why or how this had occurred.

Unfortunately (or, fortunately, since it's given me some experience with this), I was a victim of credit card fraud several years prior to this. Someone had attempted to charge a tuition bill of \$5000 at a San Diego Arts College that I had never authorized. When Citibank called me to ask if I had authorized this tuition bill, I stated "NO". They credited my account and then issued me a new credit card. I thought that would be the end of this issue, but it was not.

Soon afterwards, I was receiving new credit card authorizations for Chase Bank, Sears, J.C. Penny's, Comenity Bank, Dress Barn, and other companies that I had never heard of and certainly had never applied for credit from them. I then began to realize that I had a major problem that was now unfolding. At the time, I did not have any credit protection as I do now.

CREDIT ACCORDING TO WHO?

Credit bureau agencies, also referred to as consumer reporting agencies (CRAs), are companies that collect financial information in order to establish a personal credit history. The four major CRA's in the United States are Equifax, Experian, Transunion, and Lifelock. People and companies who loan money use these companies in order to obtain credit scores and to receive previous

financial information in order to approve loans for a new house, a car, or when taking out a personal loan. Charges for access to this information varies from company to company. On average, for a fee of \$219 per year, a CRA will provide you with monthly access to your FICO score, monthly access to your credit report, monitoring of your credit report, lost wallet protection, full identity restoration, and identity theft insurance.

Your FICO score is the most widely used credit score, which was created by the Fair Isaac Corporation. 90% of major lenders use these scores in order to make credit-related decisions on behalf of companies and consumers. They enable a lender to determine an estimated future risk - how likely someone is to repay a debt. FICO scores have a range of 300-850. The higher the score, the lower the risk and the more your credit looks "better". It's important to keep in mind that a good FICO score does not indicate whether a company or a consumer will be a good or a bad customer.

SO, WHAT HAPPENED?

I contacted Experian, Equifax, and Trans Union in order to have a professional deal with a crisis that was now unfolding. My main concern was that this may get worse. Of course, I was extremely upset that any personal and financial information had been compromised. How did someone get this very personal information and how can I get out of this financial problem so that it does not affect my credit rating?

These and numerous other questions began to start racing through my mind. I was lucky that I only received about 20 new credit applications in the mail which were never processed. I was also fortunate that my credit rating was not affected and that my name was not used in some other credit fraud, such as that found in health care or insurance fraud.

The credit protection companies had me on the phone on several occasions in order to speak to these unauthorized companies in order to delete any non-processed applications and to remove my name from any further credit applications. This ordeal took several months to be resolved. It was a huge nuisance and a huge waste of my time.

I was contacted by Experian and Protect My Id where I received a reference/case number. My case was referred to their fraud resolution department where a 90 day initial fraud alert made sure

that any creditor contacted me first before approving any credit application. I was also informed that the 90 days can be extended to 7 years by faxing a copy of a police report (if initiated) to their Fraud Resolution Department. If a police report was not filed and a 7 year alert is still something that I wanted done, I was also advised that I can also fill out a fraud affidavit with the Federal Trade Commission. More information about this can be viewed on the FTC's website (<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/microsites/idtheft/>).

And again, 2 months ago, I was alerted that Chase Bank was attempting to view my credit information which I had never authorized. When I spoke to someone at Chase Bank, I was told that someone again was trying to open up an Amazon credit card in my name. I immediately got on the Amazon credit card website, notified Chase Bank, Experian, Equifax, and TransUnion and nothing negative occurred to affect my credit status. When I spoke to someone at Chase Bank and I identified myself as an optometrist, the credit person stated, "Oh, another optometrist calling; your application looked suspicious". I realized then that the profession of optometry was under financial attack and that optometrists were in the middle of a huge problem. I had also seen a few posts on several different professional Facebook groups, where optometrists were also posting that they had been victimized by a data breach from some unknown optometry database. There's even a specific group for optometrists having suffered from identity theft. This data breach apparently not only affected optometrists, but it was affecting optometry students, as well.

To try and stem the tide of problems, I have a credit card alert program with Citibank. If there are ever any large or questionable charges, Citibank will alert me by e-mail or by a text message. Balance notifications alert me when my balance is approaching the credit limit or if my balance exceeds a certain amount. Over credit limit notifications informs me when my balance is equal to or above my total credit limit.

OFFICIAL STANCE

If there seems to be a lot of optical professionals that have been compromised, the first question might be "What is the AOA doing about it?". According to their website, they have conducted their own internal investigation to be sure that they are not the source of the potential data breach (1). According to them, they employ stringent cyber security measures to protect personal information.

They also don't store social security numbers, which is usually a key element in identity theft.

According to the website, "anecdotal reports suggest a possible second wave of malicious credit-line openings related to the ongoing situation that are impacting students and doctors of optometry. These affected parties, like the initial group report receiving unsolicited, fraudulent applications for Chase Amazon.com Visa cards submitted in their name. In some cases, these cards are approved. Out of an abundance of concerns for members, The AOA (the American Optometric Association) contacted the FBI and the Federal Trade Commission amid the initial reports circulating on August 2, 2016 to apprise investigators of the situation. In turn, the AOA conducted its own immediate internal investigation of its databases and remains certain that it is not the source of this potential breach. Barbara Horn, O.D., AOA security-treasurer, say that members should feel assured that the AOA employs stringent

cybersecurity measures to protect personal information, and additionally, the AOA neither gathers nor stores social security numbers."

The source of the data breach is still unknown, the American Optometric Association (AOA), American Academy of Optometry (AAO), the Association for Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO) and National Board of Examiners in Optometry (NBEO) all assured members that their databases have not been hacked (2). The executive director of ASCO stated that "we received confirmation from our three vendors for our OAT (Optometry Admission Test), OR Match (Optometry Residency Match) and Optom CAS (Optometry Centralized Application Service) programs, and none were able to find any evidence of activity that would have led to a breach of data security or the release of personal information that could fraudulently be used to open the multitudes of credit card accounts that have come to light over the last few days."

Even in 2014 Time Magazine was talking about "a Russian crime ring is suspected of obtaining access to a record 1.2 billion username and password combinations" (3). As we approach 2017, it's more and more obvious that this type of cybercrime is becoming a larger and larger global business. This business is estimated to cost the world economy \$400 billion a year.

IT WON'T HAPPEN TO ME

But it might. Earlier this year, Forbes magazine has said that "91% of health care organizations have had at least 1 data breach in the last 2 years, and 59% of their business associates experienced the same." (4) It may not be inevitable, but that doesn't mean it can't happen. For example, how likely is it that someone drives their car through the front of your business? Probably not very likely. However, it's happened before. So, what do you do about it?

Fortunately, there are numerous ways that you and your company can protect yourself against the ever-present dangers of cyber-criminal activity. Copies of medical records should be reviewed regularly for accuracy. Health care bills should be reviewed in detail for accuracy. We all have received medical documents in the mail that says "this is not a bill". Review the document for the accuracies of services and the dates the services were performed. Social security numbers should only be provided when absolutely necessary. As eye care providers, some insurance plans require social security numbers. These numbers should only be given to the provider in person, safely, and privately in the office. Credit ratings should be reviewed regularly by an appropriate credit agency. And when needed, use a medical identity monitoring service. Health care fraud continues to be a continuing problem everywhere.

Do not forget HIPAA. Eye care providers and optical businesses must have a designated "security" person who ensures that the business is 100% safe concerning patient's

privacy and protecting private medical information. Cybercrime, identity theft, and credit card fraud, are thriving criminal enterprises that are economically beneficial to criminals worldwide. For those that have been victimized, what can happen to your life economically, professionally, and personally can take years to clear up. A specific crime can also cost large amounts of time and money if a lawyer is needed to undo the damage. Someone who has been victimized, resulting in a lowering of their FICO score, may not be able to get a credit card and may be unable to receive a car, home, or personal loan.

This has been, and is now the world that we live in. We are globally interconnected by laptops, desktops, and smartphones. The hope is that both technology companies, major banking institutions, and major internet companies of the world will create newer and better barriers to protect us. The problem is that the criminals always seem to be one step ahead.



SOURCES

- (1) <http://www.aoa.org/news/practice-management/credit-breach-continues-grip-on-optometrists-students>
- (2) <http://www.visionmonday.com/latest-news/article/optometrists-and-optometric-students-are-target-of-far-reaching-data-breach-1-1/>
- (3) <http://time.com/3087768/the-worlds-5-cybercrime-hotspots/>
- (4) <http://www.forbes.com/sites/laurashin/2015/05/29/why-medical-identity-theft-is-rising-and-how-to-protect-yourself>





Can your customers see what they are doing this winter?

INDEPENDENCE® MIRRORS

Nothing is more attention-grabbing than mirrored sunglasses. These are something that everyone notices immediately, and is a great addition to any fashion statement. But you don't just want to make a statement - you want something that works, & works well.

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Independence® Mirrors are available only on polarized lenses, ensuring the superior quality & standards of the coating that you are receiving.

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- BLUE | NAVY | PURPLE | SILVER | SILVER FLASH

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Who put ‘this’ together?

Editor/Publisher

Bill Heffner, IV editor@optmagazine.com

Layout/Design

Ken Rementer ken@optmagazine.com

Contributors

- Dr. Arian Fartash *How many shoes are in your closet?*
Dr. Jason Smith *Cyber Security*
Mikayla Matz *Practical Social Media*
Thomas Cervantes *A hand-off is not just a hand-off*
Lucia Scanlan *The Gift of Social Media*
Maria Magnotta *Case Study of a Facebook AD*
Scott Balasteri *A Few Thoughts on Working Hard*
FEA Industries *Focused on Technology*
Ken Rementer *The 12 Ways of Business*
Bill Heffner, IV *The remaining wintery/holiday-based stuff*

OPT Magazine

Published whenever we get around to it.

Content/Accuracy

Everything in the magazine should be accurate, but there’s always the possibility we got something wrong. If you find something that’s not right, please let us know. That being said - I’m a magazine, not a doctor. Nothing here should be construed as medical advice, or assumed to be completely, 100%, definitely correct.

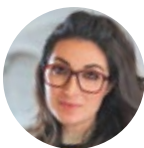
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OPT Contact Info

contact@optmagazine.com | 855.838.2002

Writer Bio’s



Dr. Arian Fartash

Dr. Arian Fartash is a second generation optometrist who lives and practices in California. She practices Optometry in a corporate setting, private practice, and in nursing home facilities, which gives her a wide range of experience in the field. When Dr. Fartash is not busy examining eyes, she enjoys time with her husband traveling and taking pictures along the way for her Instagram, @glamoptometrist.



Dr. Jason Smith

Dr. Jason Smith is a 2nd generation optometrist and has been in public practice for 23 years. He is a graduate of the New England College of Optometry and was the first optometrist to receive a Master’s degree in Health Care Administration from King’s College in Wilkes-Barre, PA where he is a member of the faculty advisory committee for health care.



Maria Magnotta

Maria Magnotta is a Social Media Specialist for FEA Industries. She graduated from Temple University in 2014 with her B.B.A. in Marketing. After graduation, Maria worked for various companies in the Food & Beverage industry, primarily in marketing and sales. In March of 2016, she accepted her current position with FEA Industries.



Thomas Cervantes

ABO certified optician with 10 years in the optometry industry. Being in private optometry for the last seven years, Thomas understands how important of a rule that private optometry plays with-in the industry. Thomas would like nothing more than helping his colleagues and peers improve and grow private optometry.



Lucia Scanlan

Lucia Scanlan is the Social Media Manager for opt Magazine. She graduated in 2014 with a B.A. (hons) in Photography for Fashion and Advertising. She has created digital content for fashion & beauty brands, charitable organizations and music publications. Lucia joined the opt team in March 2016 after relocating from The United Kingdom.



Scott Balestreri

Scott Balestreri owns Bad Ass Optical Lab LLC, and has dispensed fine eyewear for 26 years. Internationally he enjoys spectacle frame design, engineering and manufacturing. He volunteers at Project Homeless Connect-Vision San Francisco, and he often trolls his own Facebook page “Ask The Lab Guy,” which facilitates irreverent ophthalmic learning.



Mikayla Matz

Mikayla has been a professional freelance writer since 2013, and has worked in optics as of 2015. In her free time she maintains the YouTube gaming channel, Time2. Mikayla lives in a suburb of Chicago with her two fantastic cats and equally astounding golden retriever.

OPT - The Spectacles



OPT - Cryptogram

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
							25					

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

H													
10	14	17	25	14	4	1		20	21	7		5	
12	8	5	11	8	6	7	23		5	4	26		
H													
3	21	20	21	7	17		25	21	23	14	26	5	20

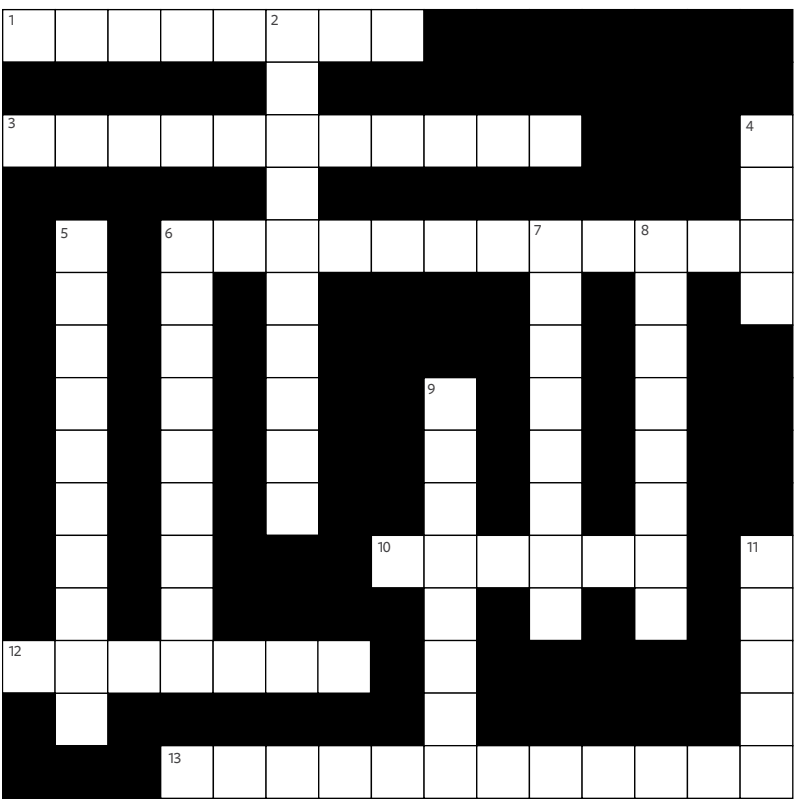
Hint: Just for the season
Last Issue Cryptogram: Everyday is Halloween, isn't it?

OPT - Fun Facts

- Researchers have successfully used the game TETRIS to treat “lazy eye” in adults.
- It is estimated that only 2% of all humans have green eyes, making it the rarest eye colour.
- About half of Americans born at the turn of the 20th century had blue eyes. Today, only about 1 in 6 Americans has them.

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

OPT - Crossword



DOWN

- 2 An important way to get more business referrals ⁽¹⁰⁾
- 4 Popular ‘review’ website ⁽⁴⁾
- 5 The _____ Grinch that stole Who-tometry ^(3,7)
- 6 A type of eyewear everyone should have ⁽⁹⁾
- 7 Type of theft ⁽⁸⁾
- 8 Faster Photochromic Lenses ⁽⁸⁾
- 9 The target of your advertising ⁽⁸⁾
- 11 A type of lens product that isn’t as popular with online sellers ⁽⁵⁾

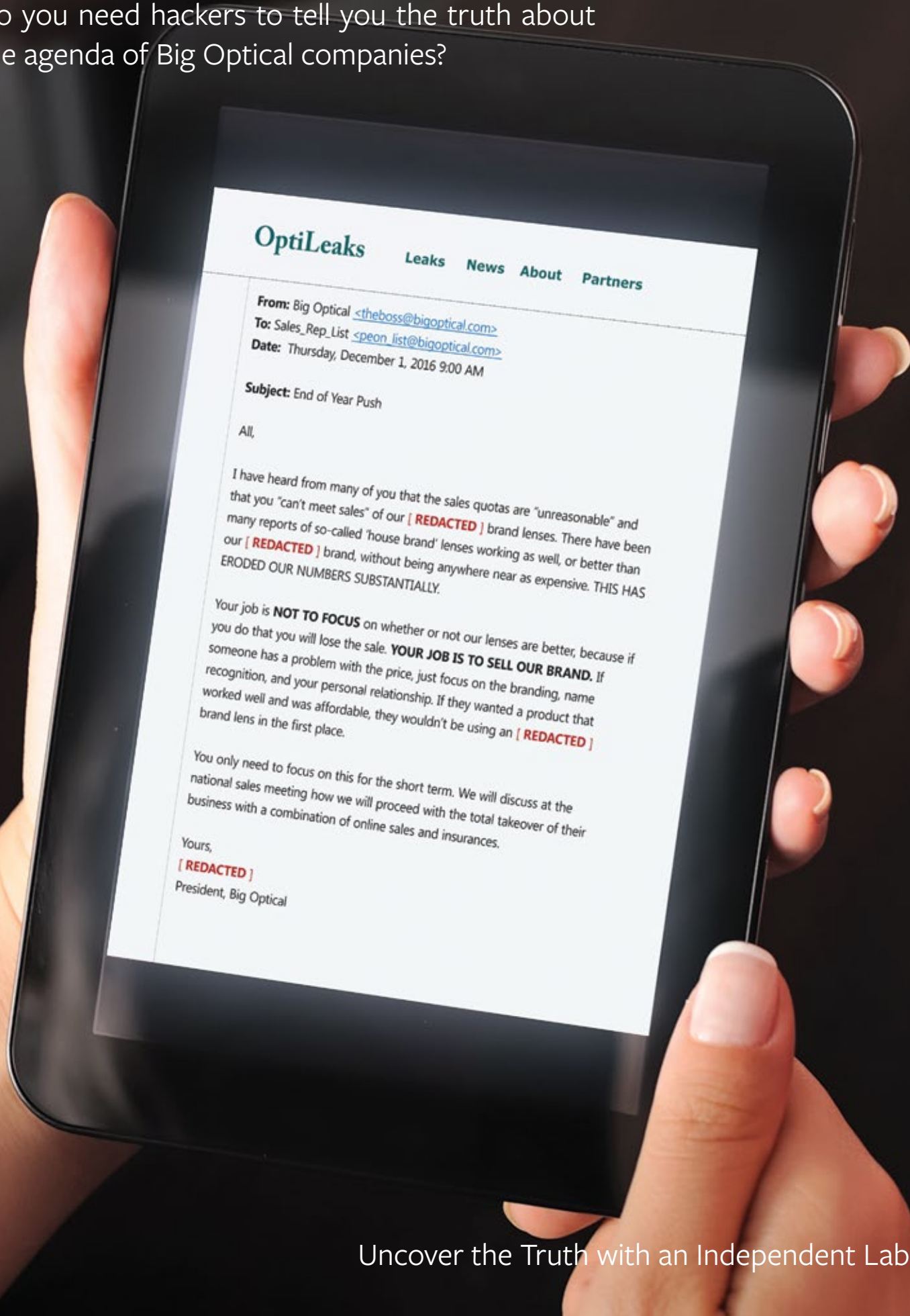
ACROSS

- 1 These types of stories are key to post on social media ⁽⁸⁾
- 3 _____ never bothered me, anyway ⁽¹¹⁾
- 6 The type of business advice that is worth paying for ⁽¹²⁾
- 10 _____ is coming ⁽⁶⁾
- 12 Optometrist-to-Optician ‘transfer of care’ ⁽⁷⁾
- 13 Non-corporate owned businesses ⁽¹²⁾

Time for a long winters' nap.
See you in the spring!
- the opt peeps



Do you need hackers to tell you the truth about the agenda of Big Optical companies?



OptiLeaks

Leaks News About Partners

From: Big Optical <theboss@bigoptical.com>
To: Sales_Rep_List <peon_list@bigoptical.com>
Date: Thursday, December 1, 2016 9:00 AM

Subject: End of Year Push

All,

I have heard from many of you that the sales quotas are "unreasonable" and that you "can't meet sales" of our [REDACTED] brand lenses. There have been many reports of so-called 'house brand' lenses working as well, or better than our [REDACTED] brand, without being anywhere near as expensive. THIS HAS ERODED OUR NUMBERS SUBSTANTIALLY.

Your job is **NOT TO FOCUS** on whether or not our lenses are better, because if you do that you will lose the sale. **YOUR JOB IS TO SELL OUR BRAND.** If someone has a problem with the price, just focus on the branding, name recognition, and your personal relationship. If they wanted a product that worked well and was affordable, they wouldn't be using an [REDACTED] brand lens in the first place.

You only need to focus on this for the short term. We will discuss at the national sales meeting how we will proceed with the total takeover of their business with a combination of online sales and insurances.

Yours,
[REDACTED]
President, Big Optical

Uncover the Truth with an Independent Lab