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M A G A Z I N E

AUTUMN 2017

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# OPTical AUTOMATION

The FUTURE of Optical has Arrived

**FEA**

A LOOK AT AN INDEPENDENT LAB

**AUTOMEYES**

ONLINE PD and SEG HEIGHT MEASUREMENTS

**HUMAN INTERACTION**

PATIENT INTERACTIONS and ONLINE

ALSO INSIDE: Frame Teleportation | Lens Designs | Human Interaction | Lasers and much more!



# LETTER from the

## EDITOR

FOR those of you that have been eagerly awaiting our next issue - you need better hobbies. We did have some projects come up, so this issue has ended up a little later than planned, but here it is, in all its OPT-goodness.

Technology isn't something you're going to be able to get away from, or use less of. It's just going to get more and more involved in your practice. Since it isn't going away, what are you going to do about it? Are you going to just sit back and hope you reach retirement before much changes? Or are you going to sit at the bleeding edge and try out these new technologies when they are available? As I'm not one of those people that deals only in absolutes - the correct answer here really depends on a lot of things about what you do, and where you see your business in five or ten years. You only have to compare it to how your business has changed over the past few years, and then keep in mind that the rate of change is also increasing.

The largest 'sore spot' many people have is online sales, and how technology is making that easier and easier. Up until recently, the mindset has always been that the measurements would be wrong, and the patient would get crappy glasses. That's changing - there's stuff out there that makes it possible for reliable measurements to be taken easily remotely.

That means the online glasses are going to get more accurate, and people are going to have fewer problems wearing them. What are you going to do in order to compete with this technology? You can't sit back forever and just say that the technology isn't good enough. It wasn't before, but it is now, and the future is here.

- Bill Heffner, IV  
Editor OPT Magazine

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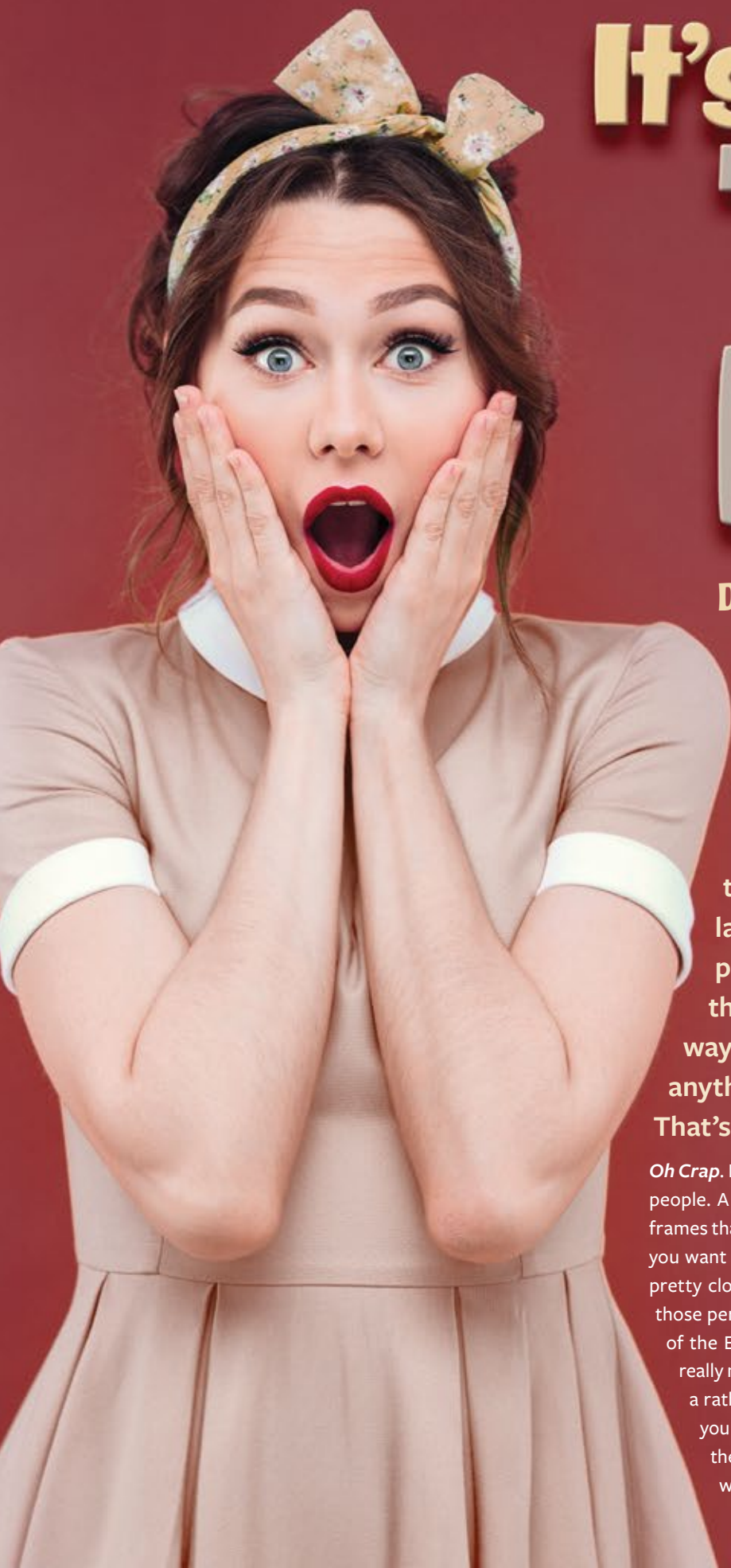
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# It's Just Too BIG!

## DOES SIZE REALLY MATTER?

— Dirk Diggle

So, imagine you have someone perusing your sunwear frames and they seem to have found something that they like. One of the higher end, larger, high wrap frames. They're pretty popular now, so it's no surprise that they've picked it. You make your way over to see if you can help them with anything, and hopefully to close the sale. That's when you get a good look at them.

**Oh Crap.** Is all you can think. You just saw it. They are one of those people. A high myope - and they are holding one of the largest frames that you carry. It also needs at least a six base lens, unless you want to have it completely splayed out. Oh, and their PD is pretty close to that of a ten-year-old. So, now you have one of those perfect storms. Where, thanks to the inexplicable nature of the English language, we use the word 'perfect' when we really mean 'crappy'. You have someone that wants to give you a rather impressive sum of money, but it's going to require you to do the impossible. You know what you should do but, then again... money. You can carefully weigh your options, which seem to boil down to making one of two choices:

**A)** Try and talk them out of it. You could try and get them into a smaller, flatter frame. This is, of course, the more sensible option in terms of your sanity. It helps you avoid issues getting the lenses made, and avoiding callbacks about lenses not being thick enough, not cutting out, or whatever else. Since life is never simple, this choice is also the most likely one to result in the customer going somewhere else. They found the perfect frame, and it's your job to 'make it work', regardless of whether or not it's actually possible.

**B)** Do it. You can smile and tell them that it'll be no problem, and take your chances with what you get back once you order it. Maybe it's easier to call them later and tell them what they ordered isn't possible, and that they need to pick a smaller frame. That way, it isn't you that is telling them 'no', it's the lab. You tried your best, but the lab just couldn't manage to break the laws of physics enough to make their prescription work in that frame. Besides, you can always have someone else make that phone call so you don't have to deal with it. So that's okay, right?

Neither of these two options usually result in everyone being completely happy. I say 'everyone', but I really mean the customer. Your happiness, unfortunately, comes a distant second. The question then becomes what, exactly, are we going to do in order to try and have some kind of a middle ground here? Some kind of an alternative option to give us at least a possibility of making this work. This is where we can use free-form surfacing techniques to try and give ourselves some more options when it comes to high prescriptions in large frames.

Our third option (option **C**) goes by a few different names. It can be "lenticularization", "edge thinning", "blending", or probably a whole host of other (probably catchier) names. Regardless of what the name is, they function in a similar way. The technique involves defining a central "viewing area", which serves as the part of the lens that the wearer is actually going to look through.

Outside of this area is where you get the blending zone. Instead of continuing the lens curve as usual, in this zone the curve will flatten out very quickly. This results in a part of the lens that the wearer can't see through, but that ends up being much thinner than it normally would be.

The first objection that I can hear is that having part of the lens you can't see through is going to cause problems. Seeing through lenses is pretty much the point of doing all of this, so I certainly understand the concern. Generally, however, this doesn't really end up being an issue. This zone is usually far enough towards the edge of the lenses that the wearer isn't going to notice it the majority of the time. This is especially true when dealing with a patient with a high prescription. They aren't accustomed to using peripheral vision very much, since most lenses have too much peripheral distortion for them to get any meaningful vision out of that area. They tend to point their head instead of moving their eyes, which makes them less likely to notice an issue with the blending.

There's a few different facets of this technique that you should be aware of - like when to use it, and when it isn't going to help. Depending on the free-form design that you are using, you may be able to employ this on single vision, progressives, or even bifocal lenses. As an example, you can use it in conjunction with these lens types when using **eagle™** LENSES. If you use a different lens design you should consult your lab for details on whether or not they have access to this kind of technology, and what they can do for you.

Before I go too much into what this blending does, I wanted to touch on the 'why'. The general problem that this is intended to solve is that of lens blanks not being thick enough. Lenses start out as blocks of material (plastic, glass, or whatever) that have a curve already cut and polished on the front, with the intent of having the back cut (called semi-finished or 'blanks'). The lab





takes these and puts the prescription you ordered on to the back of it. Unfortunately, these lens blanks only come in certain sizes, base curves, and thicknesses. If you have a prescription too high, or a frame too large, it can easily happen that the raw material that the lab has to work with just isn't big or thick enough to do the job. Sometimes they can special order (because we all love special orders) a thicker lens, though often thicker lenses simply aren't made, depending on the material and color that you want. At that point, you're usually stuck having to pick a smaller frame to make the job work. Sometimes you have an option to change material or color as well (i.e. only in clear plastic), but that's usually not terribly helpful in making sure the customer is happy.

What lenticularization can do is make it so those previously "not thick enough" lenses will work. It functions in two different ways, depending on whether the prescription is plus or minus. For a minus lens, there are two main areas it can be helpful. Firstly, it allows us to get much higher prescriptions on the back of a plano front, while trying to minimize the edge thickness. Once you get to the higher minus (around -20 or so), usually you don't have a whole lot of options, regardless of how good your frame selection might be. Sometimes this is where a bi-grind might be used (having a concave surface on both sides of the lens). The downside to this can be the cosmetics, but also the reduced availability of material and color options. When you need to surface both sides of the lens, that usually precludes any polarized or photochromic options.

In addition to giving more options for extremely high minus, this also makes it possible to get higher minus prescriptions on base curves they may normally be too steep for. My example for this was a personal pair of sunglasses, with the prescription being around a -12.00. I wanted to put it into a six-base wrap sunglass frame to see what the result would be, and it helped me see exactly how this technology can be useful. Now, you don't need a prescription that high to see a benefit, even a -6 or -8 on a six base lens isn't usually considered part of the normal Rx range for a lot of frames. What we are able to do is retain the central zone for viewing, and then blend the rest of the lens to reduce the thickness, which can make the job thinner, but also makes the impossible possible.

Especially when considering wrap sunwear, there are a few things that you need to consider regarding the lenses. Just because someone can make uncut lenses for the frame, doesn't then mean those lenses are going to fit in the frame and look good. If you end up with a brick of a lens, it really doesn't do you any good - you may as well not have ordered it in the first place, because you know there's no way that the patient is going to accept it. With many of these frames you can't really have any material hanging out in front, and you need to have all of the lens hanging out the back. This can quickly lead to an issue where the patient can't wear them without poking themselves in the eye, because there's too much lens hanging out. This is assuming, of course, you can get something like that into the frame to begin with. It's very possible that it just won't fit because it's beyond what the frame designers imagined would be going into the frame.

While lenticularization on minus lenses lets us manipulate both thickness and base curve, it's not quite the same with plus lenses. Here, we can still manipulate thickness, but this does not allow us to use a flatter base curve to achieve the Rx. We still need enough plus on the front to achieve our desired prescription, whereas with minus we can just add more minus to get our desired prescription. When using this for a plus lens, we are again 'blending' the outer edges of the lens. Instead of 'chopping off' the curve, however, we simply have the front curve of the lens end before the edge of the frame, and then continue outward with less material. This gives us what the professionals in the lab business call the "flying saucer" or "sunny-side up egg" look. Exactly how extreme of a 'flying saucer' look you get depends on how steep the original base curve of the lens is.

At any rate, it's still up to you to decide how you're going to handle the situation with your patient, and what you're going to do to strike that perfect balance where they are happy and you're still sane. It can be good as a business tool since it can open up the effective range of prescriptions you can do in higher wrap frames. Once you're comfortable using and explaining this, it can certainly become a good way of retaining patients and improving your bottom line. Keep in mind, of course, that using this technique isn't something you're going to do every day, but it doesn't have to be. It's good to have it in your toolbox for when you need it, as in those situations where you do need it, you're going to be glad it's there. It's always better to have an option as a backup, as opposed to having to tell someone 'no'. That way they have some options, and don't feel quite so left out of the process. ☀



# SMART•ASS

## PREMIUM SMART FRAMES

*You don't need to **BE** smart to **LOOK** smart*

### FEATURES:

- **NARCISSISM**  
WHEN YOU WANT YOUR FASHION STATEMENT TO BE "I'M BETTER THAN YOU"
- **INSTANT ONLINE SEARCH**  
RESULTS SHOWN IN YOUR DISPLAY IN MOMENTS - AMAZE YOUR FRIENDS BY SEEMING LIKE AN EXPERT ON ANY TOPIC!
- **AUTO-COLLISION FEATURE**  
SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT SOMEONE WALKING IN TO YOU WHEN YOU'RE BROWSING FACEBOOK
- **FOOD DETECTOR™**  
SOFTWARE AUTOMATICALLY SHARES YOUR MEAL AS SOON AS YOU SEE IT!



Our SMART-ASS premium line of frames are so awesome, that people will not think you are ridiculous 'at all' walking around with them. Look upon the world with the cool sense of smug self-satisfaction that you are wearing the best tech for your eyes. No need to look where you are going or to offer an apology for being so arrogant as nobody would dare hit someone wearing glasses... would they? As required: The Committee for Regulating Ads in Publications (C.R.A.P.) 'requires us' to provide a frame-ad in each issue. They were however, not specific on what type of frame needed to be used. As always, OPT is proud to be 99% frame-free!



# AUTOMEYES

## OPTICAL SOLUTIONS

— Oscar Goldman

So, online sales are the ‘big bad’ that everyone seems to be talking about. Regardless of whether you think it’s good, bad, or you don’t care about it at all, it’s definitely one of those things that’s only going to get more and more popular. That means you’re probably only ever going to see more and more people talking about it, or even asking you to help them order their glasses from a website instead of ordering them from you.

### We Have the Technology...

Up to this point, the largest problem with it has been taking PDs and seg heights. I’m sure you’ve had people ask you for this information, and you knew exactly why they were asking at the time, too. For some reason, they think you don’t know that they are going to go order online instead of ordering from you. For those of you that decided to not help them with these numbers, you can probably assume that the patient did their best to either guess or measure themselves what these numbers would be. You knew that because that’s what they would tell you when they later brought you the online purchased eyewear because it didn’t work, and they couldn’t see. The question here, of course, is what happens when we get to a point where technology gets good enough to get that PD and seg height as accurate as you can get it? In that scenario, the customer doesn’t come back. They have no reason to - the online pair worked, and it was cheap and easy. When technology gets to that point - do you know what you’re going to do to retain your customers? I’m asking you this not because of some far-flung apocalyptic fear that the sky is falling, rather from the perspective of one that has seen what technology can do, and that it’s here.

### So Easy, A Caveman Could Do It

The easier something is, and the more natural it feels, the easier and more quickly the adoption is by consumers. When they don’t have to do something complicated or silly, they are much more likely to trust it and believe in it. Thanks to the techniques used by a company like Automeyes, taking a PD and seg height is exactly that - simple. They only need a picture (like a selfie) to take measurements, and that’s it. What’s more is that this isn’t like what everyone else does. Everyone else makes the consumer humiliate themselves somehow, and Automeyes makes it natural.

I’m sure you’ve seen these other ‘humiliation devices’ before - ones that want you to hold up a credit card to your forehead, or cut out a piece of paper, or some other ridiculousness. I don’t know about you, but I don’t really feel comfortable making myself look like an idiot to order a pair of glasses online. If my seven-year-old starts laughing at me when I try and place an order for something, then yeah, I’m going to think twice about it.

So, imagine then how easy it becomes when a person can use a picture - ANY picture - and get accurate PD and seg height measurements. Not only that, you don’t need expensive equipment, or any other ‘hocus pocus’ in order to get good, reliable measurements. How does that change the game?

### Mutually Assured Destruction

For those of you that might be worried about this technology, you can breathe a sigh of relief. At least, for right now you can. It seems that the major issue here is that the whole process is too easy. It’s too easy for major companies to want to use it, because they are scared of what it can do if they unleash it. Big Optical, for instance, could certainly use something like this to bolster their online sales numbers, but even they don’t want to risk the damage it could cause. By ‘damage’, I’m referring to their relationship with eyecare professionals. If they were to use something that was this good, and this easy to use, their major source of income (i.e. you) would get so upset, that Big Optical would have all kinds of issues getting people to sell their products.

That’s not to say that it isn’t coming - it just isn’t coming right this second. We do have other companies adopting this technology to use in ways besides purely online. Early this year, for example, Harley Davidson began using Automeyes in some of their stores in order to sell Rx eyewear right there at the dealership - no optician required. That kind of application, to me, almost seems like a license to print money. Someone going to a Harley store is there because they like their Harley. Do you think they aren’t also going to want their Rx in an official Harley Davidson frame, regardless of what it costs? Especially if they can just place the order right there at the dealership with little to no hassle?



www.automeyes.com

### Professional Applications

Now, I don’t want you to think that this technology is out there to kill eyecare professionals - it’s certainly not. In fact, this technology can add valuable documentation and verification of measurements that have been taken. The way it is now, if you take a PD and seg height - you record it, and that’s that. But how do you know if those measurements were correct? How do you know if you took it from the pupil, or the bottom of the eyelid? Or somewhere else? *Because I’m a professional and I always do it the same way, so I know*, you say. Well then, what if you weren’t the one that took it? What if it was the new guy? How do you know then?

With Automeyes, you can archive the exact points used to take these measurements. It can become part of the record of the patient, and allow you to know that the measurements were correct. You can go back and make sure that the measurements were done correctly. It also makes comparing new and old measurements much easier, as you have the prior picture of the patient to use as a basis for comparison.

This type of technology also makes it easier for independent eyecare practices to go online themselves, trying to stay ahead of the curve of Big Optical and other online retailers. Many practices are looking at employing their own online outlet, that way their customers can still shop in the comfort of their own home, but retain the store and in-person service. This way the customer can be sure they get the service, and can also move the shopping to their terms (like 2a.m. in their pajamas) instead of needing to go into a store. This also helps capture the sale by giving the patient what they want (easy service) coupled with what they need (professional service).



## Now What?

So, now that you know this kind of technology not only exists, but that it's being used successfully, what do you do about it? Well, there's a few options. You can certainly keep on doing what you're doing, there's nobody stopping you. What might be a good thing to keep in the back of your mind is that this highlights the need to make yourself stand out. The more that people can get online, the less that they need you - unless you can show them why they need you. If your value stops at being able to use a PD stick - you're going to have problems. You need to plan for what happens when people don't need to ask you for their PD. Right now, that's a warning for you that they are going to go buy online. Pretty soon, you aren't going to even get that warning - they can just get their PD online. This technology should be a motivator to you to bolster your skills before they get out the door, or give them a reason to come back. You could explore things like frame adjustment plans, or other value-added services you can do if they buy their eyewear somewhere else. When the steam drill comes to take your place - are you going to let it, or are you going to stand up to the challenge?

## Does it Work?

So, the real, critical question here is whether this actually works, and how good is it, really? As with most things in life, the only real way we can know whether or not it works is by trying it out. I was able to get the opportunity to try out Automeyes for myself, and I think the results speak for themselves. Now, I wanted to try some different frames to see if I got similar measurements, and then see how those measurements compared to each other, as well as what they would be from a real person doing the measurement.

Firstly, I had to take a picture of myself wearing both frames, then upload them into the Automeyes web interface. I used two wildly different shapes here to see if that had any bearing on what our final results would look like. That's why we have more of a larger rectangular shape [Frame A], and the smaller, rounder, Harry Potter-esque frame as our choices [Frame B]. After uploading the images, I needed to enter the frame dimensions in a separate dialogue. I was told that it was possible for this to be set up to use a frame library, which would make it easy to just select the frame and auto-fill the measurements. At any rate, it was only a few mouse clicks later that I was able to get the results of the calculations. For our purposes here, I indicated that I wanted a progressive lens, but it also has options for measuring single vision and bifocals as well.

Since I needed help with my style, I used frames given to my by Scott Balestreri of Bad Ass Optical (left) and Tina Lahti of IOT America (right).



The image used to calculate PD and Seg for Frame A.



The image used to calculate PD and Seg for Frame B.

EXPIRES			
06-15-2018			
	PD	SEG HEIGHT	
OD	31.5	19.5	
OS	29	19.5	

A	B	ED	DBL
51	34	51	20

The calculated results for Frame A.

EXPIRES			
06-15-2018			
	PD	SEG HEIGHT	
OD	31	19	
OS	29	18	

A	B	ED	DBL
43	36	43	22

The calculated results for Frame B.

## 'Frame A' Results

Starting with the results of our rectangular frame, you can see that Automeyes tells me that my PD is 31.5 and 29, while the seg height is 19.5 for both eyes. Those certainly seem like reasonable numbers, but the question isn't whether or not the numbers sound correct, but whether or not they are actually correct. What I've always used for a PD, however, is 31 and 29, which is... pretty much almost exactly correct. When discussing the way the calculations work, I was told that Automeyes can actually go much more precise on the calculation, but most people don't want it to be too accurate. They're rather have a nice, round pupil distance of 31.5mm instead of 31.2673mm. Regardless of the rounding, being within 0.5mm of my PD from just a selfie is pretty impressive, if you ask me. That's also assuming, of course, that the PD I measured myself was correct, and that I'm not the one that's a little bit off. Of course, this is the kind of situation where we assume that we're never the ones wrong, and that it's the machine that must be off, right?

So, we've figured out that the PD is correct - what about the seg height? Here, it tells us it's at 19.5mm for both eyes. When we compare that with "real" measurements, we ended up with the right eye at 19.5mm, while the left was only 19mm. So that goes to show that...it works? That doesn't seem possible - there has to be something wrong, some kind of fluke, right? Maybe we need to try another frame.

## 'Frame B' Results

So this time, using our round frame, we start again with the PD. We should hopefully end up with a similar result as last time, since the frame shouldn't have any bearing on the PD. Looking at the results, it seems that is pretty much true. This time we ended up with exactly my "real" PD, which seems to indicate that errant 0.5mm difference could just be down to rounding, but regardless is well within tolerance.

Similarly, looking at the seg height, Automeyes give me a seg height of 19mm and 18mm for the right and left, respectively. The "real" seg height on this pair ended up as 18.5mm and 18mm. Similar to our results with the first pair - a very small difference that seems to indicate that this does, indeed work.

Now, you should keep in mind that this is by no means a scientific sample size, but it does show that there's a lot of potential here. When a patient can get good, accurate frame measurements from nothing more than a selfie - that's a big game changer for online eyewear. Technologies like this are going to continually be improved and become more common. As with everything - don't take my word for it, look for yourself at what's out there, and figure out how you can use it to make your business even better.

Special thanks to Automeyes for their help with this article.  
[www.automeyes.com](http://www.automeyes.com)



Want to try it yourself? Go to [www.automeyes.com/demo](http://www.automeyes.com/demo) to see how.





Quality and Precision you can see...

# give your eyes some STRESS RELIEF

Students today have a lot going on in their lives. From social media, to social interactions, classroom to dorm rooms, the demands on their eyes are as much as the demands on them. With over **20** designs, **eagle™** LENSES provide a solution for all of your visual needs. The **eagle™ SCHOLAR SV** can help alleviate some of that stress by allowing them to see better.

This compensated single vision lens is designed for the technology present in today's education. Students are constantly changing their focal distance throughout the day. They go from blackboard to notes to computer to tablet to phone. With all of these near vision demands, their eyes are having to do a lot of work, which can lead to headaches and tiredness.

**Any frame. Any color. Any material.**  
**eagle™** LENSES let you customize  
your entire eyewear experience.



Authorized Distributor  
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Focused on Technology

For more information, please visit [eagleLenses.com](http://eagleLenses.com)

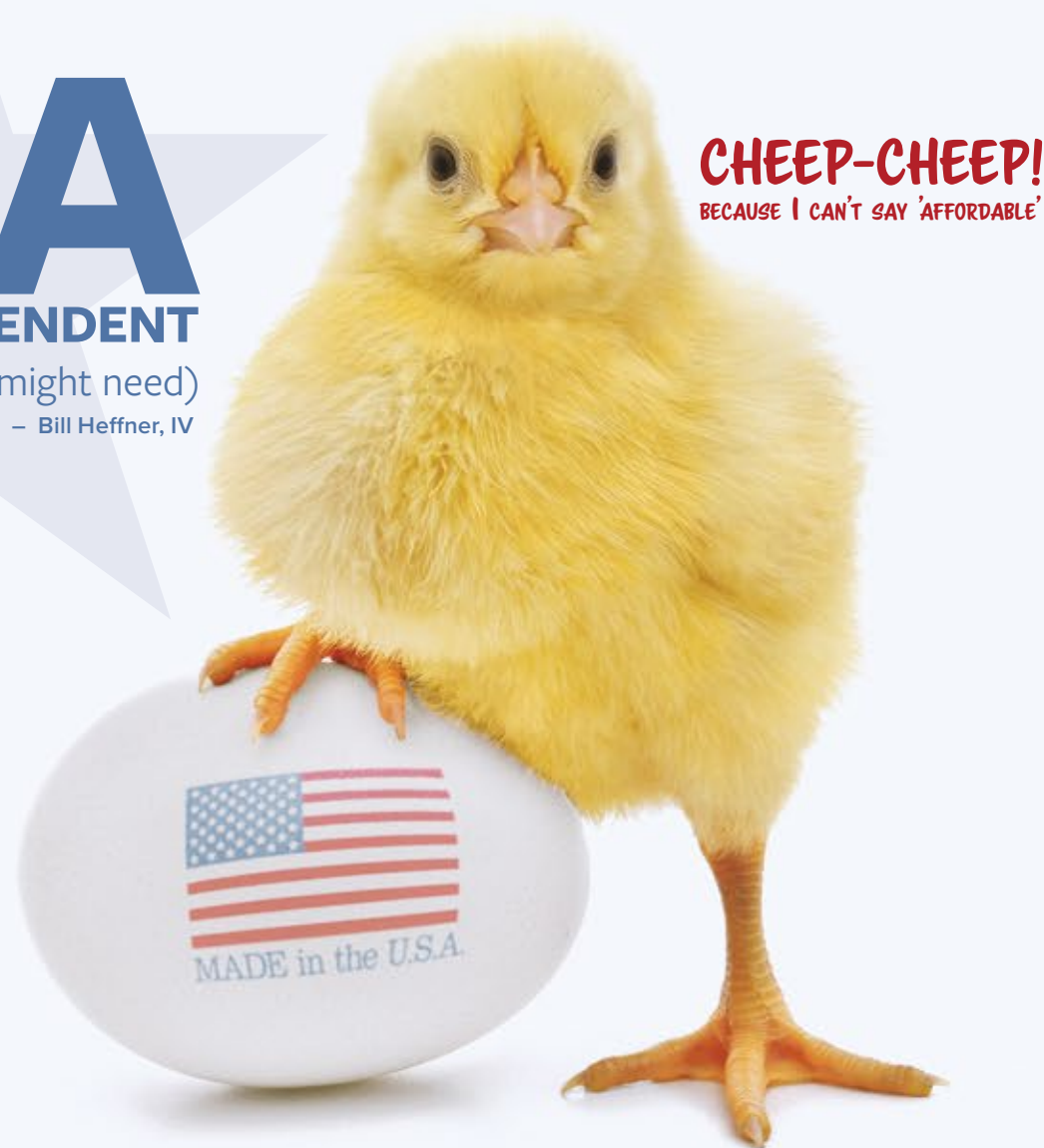


# FEA

## A TRUE INDEPENDENT

(Eggs-actly what you might need)

— Bill Heffner, IV



It really seems that when you look around at different optical laboratories, they end up looking a lot like supermarkets - especially when you get to larger labs. Usually the problem with them is that they all tend to have similar products, carry most of the name brands, and there generally isn't a whole lot that sets them apart from each other, except perhaps their physical location and whether or not they outsource your jobs to Mexico (or wherever else).

We wanted to have a look at an optical lab, but wanted to make sure that it was one that was 'different', and not just an order-taker, or one focused on outsourcing jobs. When looking at larger labs, it seems that **FEA INDUSTRIES** was the one that was most in line with the OPT way of thinking - about focusing on working for yourself instead of just pushing whatever Big Optical product happens to be popular at the moment.

For a brief look at exactly how independent they are, let's consider this:

**NO Insurances ★ NO Big Optical  
NO Frills ★ NO Outsourcing**

### Non-Participation Trophy

One of the major problems with being a lab that participates with insurance companies as a 'contract lab' is that they can become heavily focused on producing insurance jobs. While there is nothing specifically wrong with that, there can certainly be problems if that percentage of work becomes too skewed in the direction of a particular carrier. What was that saying about putting all your eggs in one basket? Of course, this may be a bad thing for you as an eyecare professional if you are on the lookout for a lab that can do specific insurance jobs, but there's nothing to say that you have to have all your lenses in one lab, either. The fact that a lab is able to operate at such a large scale without needing to deal with insurances is refreshing in today's business climate.

### Fresh as a Daisy without B.O.

Similar to not putting all of their eggs in one basket with insurance carriers, **FEA** doesn't offer any of the major lens and coating brands that labs of comparable size offer. Of all of their free-form sales, over 95% of it is their own brand of lens, and not one of the 'big three' big optical brands that you typically hear about. The fact that they can be one of the top ten largest independent labs in the United States without carrying any of the major products is astounding. That's like saying a company is one of the top distributors of carbonated beverages in the country, but they don't deal with any Coke or Pepsi products.

This is important because it means they are successful and have grown by the sweat of their own brow. In order to be able to grow to the size that they have, **FEA** has needed to be better than the competition. This statement isn't even an opinion, it's a completely objective fact. Let's say for a moment that you had a familiar name brand product and a brand that you hadn't really heard of before. If they are both basically the same - what are you going to use? Obviously, you go with the name that you've heard of. That's what people do - the familiar name comforts us and adds value to otherwise similar products. So, what's going to get you to use that 'other' product you haven't heard of before? Let's say that it costs less - so you try it out. Once can't hurt, right? So, you try an **eagle™** lens... and it doesn't suck. It's actually pretty good. That's when you get thinking about exactly how much you need a lens brand. Whether or not the person you're selling a lens to knows, or even cares, what specific design they are wearing, so long as they can see.

### Brandaholics Anonymous

The advent of digital processing and free-form lenses has made it possible for **FEA** to break free of the traditional model of having to sell big-brand progressive lenses. Traditionally, you needed expensive manufacturing equipment and inventory levels to make even a single lens design in a progressive. Today, however, machinery has made it so that a lab can become the one in charge of making the progressive design, meaning they don't need a massive inventory to make progressives. I'm sure you know most of that already, as you've probably already read a bajillion articles about free-form. The point here, however, is that most people that produce free-form don't leverage the technology to their full advantage. With over a dozen different progressive lens designs in the **eagle™** family, **FEA** is doing just that. Making it so you still have a choice to get the best lens design for a given pair of eyewear, while avoiding the need for the 'big optical' products. The brand name products aren't needed because their own offering is so wide-ranging that they don't need other products to fill in any gaps.

This is in stark contrast to what most labs do with free-form. Most of them offer the name brand products, and then their own, cheaper, 'house brand' lens. Usually the 'house lens' is one or two progressive designs, and is put there to fill the gap of 'cheap'. Most other labs have no reason to explore the full features of it - they have the branded lenses already sitting at the top of their price lists, so why risk upsetting the sales of those products?

YOU'RE NOT FROM  
AROUND HERE,  
ARE YOU?





## No Frills

One of the areas where people can have problems is the 'no frills' nature of FEA. Their focus is on cutting costs as much as possible - which, by no means should be confused with 'cheap'. For example, they don't really have sales representatives making calls on customers. Everyone else does that, FEA doesn't. Why? Well, that's easy: sales representatives are expensive. When you don't have sales reps, it becomes a lot easier to offer more competitive pricing on lenses than other labs. This approach doesn't work for everyone. Some people prefer to pay more for their lenses and have the personal contact of someone coming to visit them every few months - someone that could possibly bring bagels, which is the most important part. There's certainly nothing wrong if that's the kind of sales approach that works for you. Other people prefer just to order lenses, get a low price, and be done with it. This is your personal preference, of course, but something to keep in mind if what you want is a lower lab bill.

## Work Smart, Not Hard

The idea of working smart links directly in with making it possible to make things cost less without compromising on quality. As an example, let's say that you need a hole dug. You have one guy with a shovel, saying that it'll cost you \$500 and take him three days. Your second option is a guy with a front-end loader that says it'll take him about an hour and cost you \$100. If we use the logic applied to most optical labs - the first guy is going to dig me a hole that's five times better than the second guy, right? Well, no, of course not. The second guy is using technology to make it cheaper and easier for him to get more done at a lower cost. Since it doesn't take him anywhere near as much time to get the job done, he's able to make it more affordable for you, without compromising quality.

This is why the automation of labs is so important. The more they can employ automation and technology, the easier it is for them to turn out high quality products without charging a ridiculous amount of money for them. Using cost as an indicator of quality only goes so far - eventually you need to evaluate exactly why you're paying what you are for a product. It's very easy to overpay when it's hard to judge comparative quality, which is why it can be very difficult to tell a cheaper lens from a pricier lens based on performance alone.

**DON'T LET THIS HAPPEN TO YOU.**

To learn more about **FEA INDUSTRIES, INC.**, watch the video feature from **Manufacturing Marvels®** (part of the **Fox Business Network**).

[www.feaind.com/technology](http://www.feaind.com/technology)

## Inexpensive, not 'Cheep'

Often, we assume that there is a direct correlation between how much we pay and how good something is. When looking at lenses, there's no difference. It seems like people assume that a more expensive lens is going to always be the better option for all cases, which really isn't true. The easy thing, of course, is for the 'more expensive' option to prey on that little fact that tickles your brain. That the choice that isn't as expensive has 'something wrong' with it, or that it's otherwise not as good. This also goes for labs. There are labs that have higher costs and overhead than others, and so charge more for their products. That doesn't mean that the products are any better, just that they need to make more to cover higher costs. When a lab like FEA lowers their costs, and is able to pass that savings on to customers - does that make them cheap? Or does that make them the more business savvy choice?

Maybe, maybe not. Like all things I talk about - don't take my word for it, try it out. Maybe using your name brand lens isn't helping your bottom line at all. What does that brand name give you that you couldn't easily use something else that's more affordable with similar performance?

Regardless of what lens products you use, or what insurances you take, being able to see someone out there that can do their own thing and be successful is a great thing. It gives hope to everyone that wants to be able to do a similar thing. It shows us that we don't have to be afraid of trying new products, or saying 'no' to insurances. That there are options out there where we can go against the grain and be successful.



# Do you have trouble dispensing? You might be suffering from **ESSILUX**

## Symptoms of **ESSILUX** may include:

- Difficulty dispensing
- Stagnant frame boards
- Bloating of your frame and lens prices

May also cause minimized reimbursements, cheaper-on-amazon-itis, big-box competition syndrome, shrinking and shriveling of your customer base, and depression.

## **ESSILUX** is a powerful, yet treatable issue that can constipate your business.

Fortunately, you do not have to suffer with **ESSILUX** anymore. Now there's new, **contract free**, non-prescription **Phukemol**.

**Phukemol** works fast and is gentle on your business. **Phukemol** provides you with maximum relief & comfort.

Consult your independent lab to see how you can prevent your profits from being flushed down the toilet with **Phukemol** today!

**Phukemol and regain your independence!**





# MIB

## MACROCHOSM IN BUSINESS

— Jack Jeebs

### Small Lab

It's in the small towns that you can really get that feel of what it means to be America. Not "American", but the feel of the country itself. Each little town is decidedly unique, but they all have these tiny little threads of commonality that run through them. It ties everything together, and gives it form across the great expanse that is the country.

When we look at things like small-town local businesses, it's here that you get that refreshing feel that you typically don't find in larger cities. When everyone knows everyone else, you lose the caution and apprehension that often comes with buying things or trusting if someone is going to do a 'good job' or not.

This is where the small businesses thrive, with their personal attention and local clients that support it. Such was the case of Jim Brewer's tiny optical lab. He didn't do thousands of jobs, or have big, expensive machinery, but he damn sure knew how to make a lens. Any of his customers he could drive to in under an hour. Though, customer wasn't really a word that he used. They were all friends of some level - when you can name their spouses, children, and pets, they become more than just customers. And so Jim went - making lenses, and slowly growing his operation to the point where he needed to hire a few local people to keep up with everything. It was never going to make Jim a millionaire, but it was enough that Jim was comfortable. He could provide for himself, his family, and his employees.

### TELL-OFF BO

Eventually, someone paid Jim a visit. Or, more accurately, they wanted to speak with "Mr. Brewer", which automatically marked them as 'not local'. Everyone called him Jim. The suit the man was wearing also wasn't exactly something people tended to wear around here apart from weddings or funerals, so the visitor was firmly 'out of place' at best. When he spoke, the lingering's of a European accent helped to dispel any doubts that he was at all "not from around here". Since Jim wasn't the kind of man to ever blow off or turn away a visitor, he sat down with the gentleman to hear what he had to say. Of course, Jim had a pretty good idea of where the conversation was going to go once the visitor said he represented "Big Optical" and that his name was "Pee-air" or something similar. Jim thought briefly it was a medical condition, but shrugged it off.

It seems that Big Optical was going around and offering to buy out little local labs. Their idea being that it was easier (which in the case of Big Optical means "most cost-effective") to do that than it would be to get "market penetration" the old-fashioned way. What was strange, however, is that they didn't want to buy the whole business. They only wanted to buy part of it - granted, it was a large part, but it wasn't the whole thing. It seemed the idea was that they buy most of it now, and Jim is supposed to stick around and run it on behalf of Big Optical. Apparently, they had a number of bad cases in the past of owners selling out, and the customer base dropping off pretty quickly as the lab went to hell once Big Optical was in charge.

So the idea was to get Jim to stick around to make sure that all of his friends and customers that trusted him got nice and cozy with the idea that the lab was owned by Big Optical. He'd have to calm them down, tell them everything was going to be alright, and that nothing was going to change. Right. What could possibly

go wrong here? He'd known most of his customers for decades, and they trusted him. He wasn't about to just throw that away for whatever "value" Big Optical placed on his lab business. His business had a value greater than a few numbers that get put into a spreadsheet formula to spit out its value.

Now Jim, since he was raised right, let the man finish his little rehearsed speech about what a great thing this whole "sell your lab" business would be for Jim. He also, through a show of great personal restraint, didn't even hit the man. He certainly thought about it, since the guy had that kind of a sly smile and smug air of superiority that seemed to be asking for a smack. But no. Jim had to behave. So instead, he (politely) suggested to "Pee-air" (Jim made sure to stress each syllable into its own word) precisely what he could do with this extremely kind offer from Big Optical. He also proceeded to suggest what might happen should he ever decide to return to Jim's lab. The gentleman, slightly shaken but trying not to show it, decided that was a brilliant opportunity for him to take his leave and be on his way.



Watching him get back into his rental car, Jim heard a voice from behind him. "So what'd the guy in the suit want? Did someone die?" It was Felicia, his lab supervisor. "Oh, nothin' much," Jim said, shaking his head slightly, "Seems that Big Optical thinks they can buy out the lab and just take over the area. Pity for them that





I'm not in any mood to sell, and they are going to have a devil of a time getting any of our customers to use their products without our help."

So, the Big Optical man left town, off to who knows where to make some other little lab 'disappear'. Some time passed, and the lab continued to do pretty well. About a year or so later, however, Jim noticed that his business was starting to drop off. Some of his regular customers that he could always count on for business had not only slowed down, but stopped completely. On top of that, Jim couldn't even get them on the phone to see what the problem is. They were always "with a patient" and never seemed to remember to call back. In such a situation the only choice was for Jim to go pay a visit in person to these places to try and find out what, exactly, the problem is. After a brief car journey, he arrived at one of the errant offices. Jim had half a thought that maybe they were out of business or burned down, but no, that would be much too simple of an explanation.

"Hi there, Mable," Jim said to the woman behind the desk as he walked in, "How's the family? How's Johnny doing in school?" She looked at him for a moment longer than he expected before she responded, "Oh, Jim. Hi. The family's doing fine. Johnny's doing okay, but you know how teenagers are. I...I suppose you're here to see Bill?" Jim nodded, "Is he around? Just thought that I'd stop by and make sure everything was going okay. Seems like things have been a little off lately." She nodded to a chair in the waiting area, "I'll just let him know you're here. Have a seat." She stood and quickly disappeared into the back of the shop.

As Jim sat in the waiting room, he took a look around and noticed that the office seemed a little different than the last time he was there. It was the same, but there was something that just seemed off. He kept looking around, until it finally clicked. All the little handouts and pamphlets sitting around under the copies of Field and Stream and Big Gun Monthly were for products that Jim didn't sell. They were for products from Big Optical, whether it was their lenses, coatings, or whatever else.

Jim picked up one of the brochures to look through while waiting. "Craze-all," he muttered to himself, what a great name to use for an anti-reflective coating. At least, that's what he always called it.

He sat there for what seemed like a long time. It was almost like whoever was supposed to come out was trying to avoid it in the hopes that Jim would give up and leave. Jim was absent-mindedly trying to make the brochure into an amusing animal shape when Mable finally returned to lead Jim into a small office in the back.

Jim sat down across from Bill, and the look that Bill was giving him was not one that Jim wanted to see. "You look like someone ran over your dog, Bill, what's wrong?" Jim asked, getting himself adjusted on the hard wooden chair he was perched on. "Well, there ain't no good way to say this," Bill started, reaching up to stroke his chin with one hand. "I reckon you're here because we stopped sending you work. Well, the long and short of it is that we started sending it to them Big Optical fellers - they were in here and made me an offer I couldn't refuse." Bill breathed a sigh of relief. Apparently he'd been in here rehearsing that while Jim was out in the waiting room. It seemed like he had, at least, and now was exhausted after the performance. "What if I were to...", Jim began, but was quickly interrupted. "No, we have a contract with them now. I have to send all my jobs to Big Optical. They gave me a nice six-figure check up front, and now I can only buy their stuff."

Jim took a minute to process this. How in the hell was he supposed to be able to compete with a company that was large enough to just buy their business like that? There was no way he could touch that. All of his years of service and loyalty was gone in an instant. Big Optical just came in and bought one of his best customers. This had nothing to do with price, quality, and service - none of it. No possible way that Jim could stop them. They had enough money to buy all his customers - or at least enough of them to make life difficult for Jim.

Jim tried to get more out of his long-time customer, but there was nothing else that Bill was interested in doing. The agreement was done, and that meant that there was no way to get around it - unless Jim wanted to buy it out. Not that he could afford something like that. That was the whole point. Come in, dangle a huge check in front of an unsuspecting owner, then lock up their business. Sure, they'd be paying more for the lenses over time, and end up making less money in the long run, but nobody looks at the long term when that much money is dancing in front of them. A dirty business tactic that Jim could never afford.

And so it went - more and more of Jim's long-time accounts started fading away, then stopping completely. None of them cared that they were paying more over time - cash was tight, and they wanted that big payoff to help them out right now. At that rate, cash was quickly becoming tight for Jim, too. Too many people working with him and not enough work to keep them all busy.

Everyone that worked for him was like family. Having to tell one of them that they needed to find another job was one thing Jim never thought he'd have to do. He knew it was necessary - there just wasn't the work anymore - but that didn't make it easy. He knew what was going to happen when he told them. A few of them would probably start to cry. There wasn't any way around it, though. There just weren't any more customers left nearby that hadn't already sold out. Jim thought his way through it, but came up with nothing. Until he did come up with something. But that something was so distasteful, he would have preferred to continue coming up with nothing. Now that he'd thought of it, however, it wouldn't go away, and no other thought was going to be able to make its way into his brain so long as this one was sitting there, taunting him. Jim sighed to himself as he picked up the phone.

The next day, the guy in the suit was back. This time, it was at Jim's request. This was the only way he was going to be able to survive. To make sure that everyone could keep working. He had to get them to buy him out so he could sell to their customers. He didn't like it - hell, he hated it. But what other choice did he have? Pride was one thing, but it wasn't going to pay the bills. The man in the suit pushed some paperwork across the desk, and Jim read over it. "This is less than half of what it was last time you were in here," Jim cried in dismay as he read it again, just to make sure he hadn't missed something. "Unfortunately, Mr. Brewer," the smug bastard in the suit began, "your business has declined recently, and that negatively impacts the value we can place on it. If you would prefer not to do this, I understand. We can always revisit it in the future. Perhaps your business will improve by then." The little grin he had should have been all the justification that

Jim needed to reach across the table and throttle him, but Jim restrained himself. He knew that business wasn't going to get any better. There wasn't anything else he was going to do to fix it. It was over. He needed to save what he could before it all fell apart. He didn't have enough money to just buy business. He didn't have that before, never mind now.

So, Jim picked up his pen and signed on the dotted line. And that was it. Big Optical won - they owned him now. Sure, he could rebuild and get his customers back now that he was part of their collective, but Jim wasn't sure if it was going to be worth it. He put the pen down and slid the contract back across the table, addressing the other man "See you around". The man took the paperwork and slid it into a folder. "No," said the main in the suit, "you won't."





# why wait for change?

Your lenses can get lighter in about half the time.

That's a serious advantage, as walking back inside to be  
blinded by the darkness is not exactly what you want.

When you go back inside, you want to see what you're doing. It's about time you had a lens that lets  
you do what you want and works around your schedule. nuanceRT™ was designed around the way  
you want them to work, not the way you're told they work.

**Don't wait for change.**



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# LENS DESIGNS

How Do You Find ‘The One’?

— Mr. Anderson

When we, as eyecare professionals, want to fight the big machine, we first need to understand the world that we’re in. We aren’t in a world of level playing fields, where everything is just ‘perfect’ and fair. No. We’re in the harsh world where reality is what is created by everyone following the mold of Big Optical, and everyone falling into place behind that mandate.

Don’t get me wrong, there’s nothing inherently ‘wrong’ with that. If you want to live in that world, by all means, don’t let me stop you. I’m not here to force you to do anything, I am only here to offer you a choice. I’m trying to free your mind, but I can only show you the door. You’re the one that has to walk through it.

Far too often I’ve seen professionals ask what the “best” lens design is, or the “go to” lens. This mentality is what leads us down the path of apathy. When we get to the point of being able to have a ‘go to’ option without considering any other criteria, what good are we, as a professional? At that point, are we just replaceable batteries in the machine of eyewear? If we don’t want to go down the rabbit hole of lens options, what is the point? Even worse is when the question is “What is your go-to Big Optical lens?”.

This world is becoming more about personal service, and proving that you’re worth something. You aren’t just selling a thing - your know-how is the thing now. If they want cheap glasses, they don’t need you to get that. But the places that have these cheap glasses aren’t going to give people the option of the exact right lens design for them. They get whatever lens design is the cheapest, and that’s it. They’ll get used to it. What kind of professional pride is in there? Not a whole lot. As a professional, you have a choice. You can choose the blue pill, and keep selling the one-size-fits-all options. Or you can take the red pill. The red pill is going to take us down the path of countless lens designs for all possible options - letting you pick the best option for your patient and exactly what they do.

## The Red Pill

I’m going to assume that if you’re still reading that you actually want to go down into the depths with me. Either that, or you really, really like the Matrix. Either way, the whole idea behind this is that free-form technology has made possible all kinds of things that were never feasible before, because they would just cost too darn much. Now you can think out of the box, and really get a customized lens experience for your patients. This isn’t the normal ‘second pair sale’ type approach, it’s about being able to really improve how people view your service, as we aren’t focused on the eyewear as much as we are on how we get there.

## Part of the Machine

You know how easy it is for someone to order a pair of progressive lenses online. If you’ve read some of the other things in this issue, then you know that our normal defenses aren’t going to hold out much longer. They can get an online refraction and they can get their PD and seg height from a selfie. The machines are learning and getting smarter, so we need to be able to stay one step ahead of them. We need to grow and evolve faster than they do, otherwise we mark ourselves as obsolete. Right now, we can do this with lens recommendations. Most online places offer a generic progressive lens option, and hope that the PD and seg are correct. This isn’t going to always be the case, of course, but for now we need to take advantage of it. We need to delve into what people are doing with their eyewear, and make better recommendations. We need to do what Big Optical doesn’t.

By this point, I know what you’re thinking. Why, oh why didn’t I take the BLUE pill?

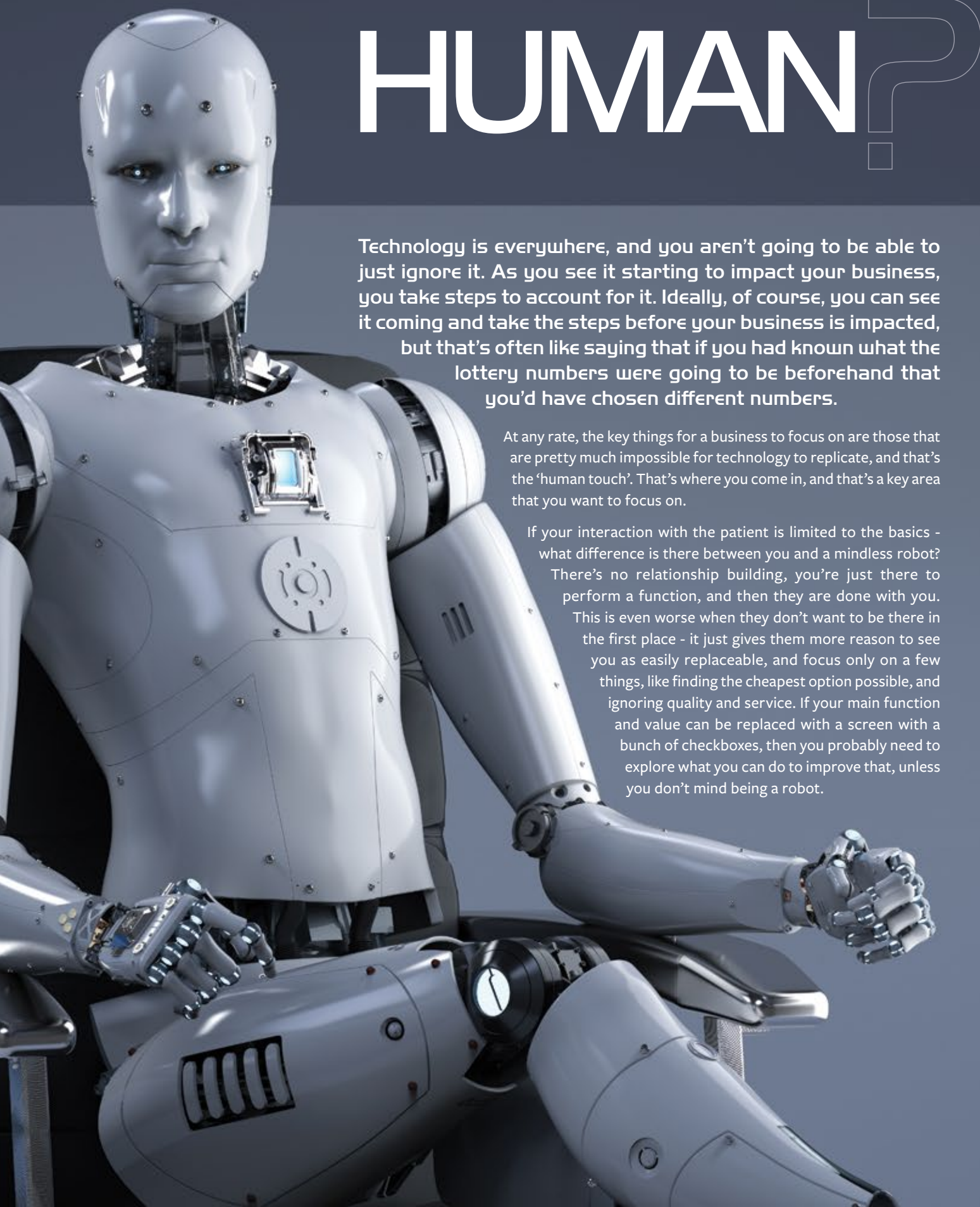
I could certainly go into the many different uses of progressive lenses, and the pros and cons of different ones, but that’s not really useful for you. I don’t know who you are, what lab you use, or what lenses you even have access to. Instead, you need to think about what you’re doing, and how your current lab can help you. If you look at their offering of freeform lenses, and they only have a few options, that’s a pretty good indication that they don’t really have what you need. What use is it to have a “good”, “better”, and “best” option, when they are all “general use”, “all around”, or some other generic term that means they’re “okay but not great” at everything. If you don’t have a lab that can help you look at the lens options and really give you some variation, then maybe you need to look harder. Your job is to use your mind - your experience - to give your patient the best possible experience.

One such case I saw was someone looking for a lens for a concert pianist. They needed the main focus on the near/intermediate for playing, obviously. But they also needed some distance to be able to see the audience. Not much distance, mind you, but some. So this meant your standard computer lens wasn’t going to have enough distance, and a normal progressive was going to have too much. By using a modified computer-style lens, they were able to give the patient what they wanted - just the tiniest distance viewing area at the top of the lens, but with the rest of it focused on what was needed. Being able to go down this far is necessary to be able to go above and beyond, because that’s what is needed in order to be successful.

I’m not telling you that you need to fight against Big Optical. I’m telling you that when you’re ready, you won’t have to.







# HUMAN? INTERACTION

— Alan Tudyk

**Technology is everywhere, and you aren't going to be able to just ignore it. As you see it starting to impact your business, you take steps to account for it. Ideally, of course, you can see it coming and take the steps before your business is impacted, but that's often like saying that if you had known what the lottery numbers were going to be beforehand that you'd have chosen different numbers.**

At any rate, the key things for a business to focus on are those that are pretty much impossible for technology to replicate, and that's the 'human touch'. That's where you come in, and that's a key area that you want to focus on.

If your interaction with the patient is limited to the basics - what difference is there between you and a mindless robot? There's no relationship building, you're just there to perform a function, and then they are done with you. This is even worse when they don't want to be there in the first place - it just gives them more reason to see you as easily replaceable, and focus only on a few things, like finding the cheapest option possible, and ignoring quality and service. If your main function and value can be replaced with a screen with a bunch of checkboxes, then you probably need to explore what you can do to improve that, unless you don't mind being a robot.

## Above and Beyond

One of the major advantages you have is your physical store. I say this not because I enjoy stating the obvious (though I do enjoy that), but because it's easy to overlook. Your customers don't come in that often. A lot of them only show up because they have to - either they need an exam because they need a form filled out, or they just discovered their arms aren't quite long enough to get their book into focus. Whatever the reason, this industry doesn't have frequent interactions with patients, because usually it's really, really easy for people to blow off getting an eye exam for years at a time. What that means is that when they do show up, you need to make a lasting impression on them, especially if you are at a place that is a hybrid medical office / retail store. You need all of the aspects of the office space to be comfortable for the patients - whether it's a waiting room, optical area, or exam room. Unlike other medical fields, your patient is getting bombarded by all kinds of information that is telling them that they can get a refraction and eyewear online. That means it's a lot more likely for them to try out an online option if they have a negative (or even mediocre) experience in your office. This is unique because it's not like you can just go online and get a filling if your dentist upsets you. People are going to keep going back to places they don't like when they have little choice. Especially when our business is being seen as more of a commodity, you need to step up the presentation of the services.

Most of this is really basic stuff - comfortable chairs, clean, presentable. It's not hard to do it. I'm not saying you need to redecorate your store to resemble some retro-hipster coffee bar, though that could certainly work if you have the right location. At the end of the day, they are coming for an eye exam or shopping for eyewear. It's not like they are going to have so much fun that they are going to want to come back every day. While that'd be great, it would also be really, really weird. The goal here is to make sure there are no negative, difficult, or embarrassing experiences, especially in the exam room. This was one concept we covered a few issues ago, with devices such as the ADAPT head and chin rest. This is for making the slit lamp experience more comfortable for patients with larger body types, or those that have difficulties sitting in a normal position in an exam chair. Small attention to details like this can help improve the patient experience, and be well worth the investment.

## Show Room

You've probably seen this already. Someone walks around looking at frames, glancing over their shoulder every so often. Of course, you notice that they are acting a little odd, but you don't say anything. You just keep an eye on them, assuming that they might be up to no good. That's when you catch them doing it. You can see them trying to google the frame they are holding, seeing where they can get it at a lower price. Depending on the frames you carry, they may or may not find something online. If you regularly find that this is a problem, it could be time to evaluate the frames that you carry. Are the frames really doing you a service if people are constantly looking (and getting) a better price online? Does it make sense to move to a brand that doesn't sell online, or a private label frame? There is no right answer here, as it can very much depend on your specific business circumstance - location, your target demographics, and so on.

This is one area where evaluating your frame lines can have a massive effect on what happens when a patient tries to online shop you. If you find it a frequent problem, then it may be worth looking into carrying brands that they aren't going to find online. This can either be by use of independent brands that don't sell online, or by using a company that can help you private label your own frames. Many of them can offer styles similar to what other large brands are, but the most important thing they offer is no results when someone types the frame name into Google. Not only does that prevent them from price shopping it, but it also makes it seem like what you have to offer is more special, as it's something they aren't going to be able to get elsewhere.

The quest for the perfect frame, however, is something that you should be involved in. You want to be a part of the frame selection process as much as possible. This should not be a ground-breaking concept to most of you, but I've still heard of plenty of places where they simply tell their customers that Men's frames are on the left wall, and Women's frames are on the right wall, and then leave the customer to wander around looking for themselves. How is that any different than them browsing a web page for frames to pick out? Where are you adding value to the shopping experience by just sitting back and passively hoping that the customer is going to make a good frame choice? This is the key area to add personal service here - your opinion on what makes a good eyewear choice is going to add immense value.



Here is where you are honest with your customers about what does and doesn't work for them - whether something is too big, small, round, square, or whatever else. I've heard about this more than once, where there is little to no interaction during the frame selection process, then they wonder why patients only pick one frame, or why they pick something that isn't appropriate for their look or prescription. As professionals, this is part of our job - sitting at a desk and just letting them look around needs to be done deliberately, not as routine.

## Retain the Sale

No matter what you do, or how well you do it, you are going to have people take their prescription and walk out to go buy their eyewear online. It doesn't matter if you're better, cheaper, easier, or all of those things. People are people, and some of them have it ingrained in their mind that they get a 'better deal' by buying online. It doesn't matter if you explicitly show them that they are paying more online, they simply refuse to listen. As an addendum to that, there are plenty of people that are going to (or already have) ask you for their PD and seg height information. The question here is, what do you do about it? Is there a good way to deal with this kind of situation, or are you going to lose regardless of what you do?

Probably the easiest way to diffuse this situation is to help them out, but by using your own rules. If they are determined to buy online, then you not giving them a PD isn't going to suddenly change their minds. It isn't as if you will say *I'm sorry, we only take that measurement when we make the eyewear ourselves* and the patient will have an epiphany and forget all about that silly online nonsense. Not even a little bit. They are going to get pissed off. At you. In the realm of customer service, this is usually considered a negative outcome, and can easily lead to said customer not coming back. So, if we aren't telling them 'no', then what do we do?

Now, I've seen a number of people have trouble with the following concept, but you should charge them for the PD. You're performing a service, and you should be compensated for it. This way you are still able to make something off a purchase that they make somewhere else, and you aren't telling your customer 'no'. Obviously, the customer isn't necessarily going to enjoy paying for it, but it does give them an option other than getting upset. It also gives you the opportunity to place value on your service, as well as giving yourself a way to entice the customer back to your store even after they make a purchase somewhere else. Maybe that \$50 you charge for a PD isn't just for the measurement? You could have it cover adjustments for when they get their eyewear somewhere else as well. That way the patient has a reason to come back and see you, even if they made a purchase somewhere else. This also makes it a heck of a lot easier for them to want to buy from you if they have a problem with their online purchase. Maybe that \$50 they paid before is good towards a purchase from you, once they realize they should have done that in the first

place. This kind of a mechanism allows you to keep on the good side of the customer, while still making sure that you get paid for what you do. Too often I've seen professionals say that they are 'so sick' of taking a PD and getting nothing for it. For some reason, they feel that they need to offer these services for free, which only serves to devalue the service that they offer. People will assume it isn't worth anything, reducing the perceived value of an actual optical shop.

## Above and Beyond II

Since we tend to have a low rate of patients returning (2-3 years per visit), finding other reasons to increase patient contact is definitely in your best interest. The popular event to have, as you probably know, is a trunk show. This is a great way to have an extra 'event' that people may want to attend, but the thing to remember is exactly how lazy people are, and that the more regular and predictable that an event is, the easier it is for people to plan to attend. When you are looking to boost your sales retention for eyewear, it's about your relationship with the patients, and being able to build that in one 30 minute space every few years can be hard to manage. The more 'events' you can come up with, the more interesting you seem and the larger portion of your customer base you can appeal to. If you have a good core of higher-end customers, you can always arrange for a private showing of new frames. It makes them feel special, and can help you build a relationship with your best customers.

Really, it doesn't matter what you do, as whatever it is will vary greatly depending on the time of year, the products you sell, and the area in which you are located. The point is to do *something*. Anything that makes your customers remember who you are, and what you do. You are trying to give them as many reasons as possible to not just decide to go online, or somewhere else locally, just because they see something a few dollars cheaper. The better relationship you can build, the more loyal your customers will be, and the easier it is for your business to compete against the encroachment of technology and computers.

The specific things that are going to work for you in your eyecare practice are obviously going to be different from someone else. You know your business better than anyone - at least, you certainly should. With that in mind, you need to figure out how you are going to fit into the future world of eyecare, and what things you need to do in order to stay relevant. You may already have a great niche worked out. Alternatively, you may be feeling the pinch of some of these things worse than other people. Regardless of your position, the interaction that you have with your customers is the greatest part of your business that you can leverage into more success. Improving that relationship easily leads to the best thing you can ask for - word of mouth referrals. When you take time to build that personal relationship, and focus on small details, the good patients notice.







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# One Site to Rule them All

— Isildur



Let's take a look at why Responsive Web Design (RWD) is such a critical feature and necessity for mobile friendliness and successfully reaching your audience in today's technologically driven world. Plus, the millennials kinda forced the issue...

## What Is RWD?

RWD or Responsive Web Design is a website that is designed with responsiveness in mind, it is a website that allows its layout to change based on the screen size and/or device that it is being viewed on. These different devices would be (listed here at a high-level) desktops, laptops, tablets, phablets, smartphones and likely very soon, smartwatches. The rate at which technology is advancing is amazing and you need to make sure that your website can keep pace and adapt.

## Why should I care?

We live in a world where websites are being visited by a variety of different devices and screen sizes. In many cases, the same customers return to these websites at different times using different devices. I'm guilty of doing this. I'll use my phone for a quick check of something that popped into my head and follow-up on it later either on my tablet or desktop. Why do I (we) do that? Convenience. Gone are the days of making mental notes and trying to remember something for later. Now we just pull out our phones for instant gratification.

What this means for your website is that it needs to be able to support the customers' (and potential customers too) viewing experience, no matter what device they are viewing it on. The information available on a mobile website should be the same information available on the desktop version, while still being legible. It will just be presented a little differently in terms of the layout.

## Seriously, why?

My website shows on a smartphone so why is that not good enough? Fair question. Here's why. A responsive website is not to be confused with a website that gets scaled-down. If you have a website that was built back in the day when MySpace reigned supreme, your website is being scaled (shrunk, squished, stuffed, crammed, etc.) down to 'fit' in the device's browser making everything microscopic and forcing the user to 'pinch to zoom-in' to actually read part of it.

Not to mention, any of those obnoxious animations you have will likely not function correctly and really only serve to annoy people these days. Your website was never intended to be viewed on these devices so you need something that is intended for mobile.

## Give me a break

A responsive website is 'fluid' and will change the flow and layout while maintaining consistency, maneuverability and most importantly, maintaining the readability of your content. It does this by a technique that utilizes breakpoints within the coding. These breakpoints are based on average/common screen sizes of devices and are something a good web designer will manage for you.

You will typically have 4 breakpoint targets for a responsive website. One breakpoint for a desktop, laptop, tablet and smartphone. These breakpoints are 'averaged' to handle the wide range of devices and their equally wide range of display sizes, providing a level of control over the website's layout and when it will change.

DESKTOPS are 1440 to 1920 pixels wide

LAPTOPS are 1280 to 1440 pixels wide

TABLETS are 1024 to 1280 pixels wide (horizontal)

TABLETS are also 600 to 800 pixels wide (vertical)

SMARTPHONES are 320 to 480 pixels wide (vertical)

SMARTPHONES are also 640 to 720 pixels wide (horizontal)

(these are approximate averages)

You can clearly see from the above breakdown that there are a number of widths for websites to be viewed on. I don't know about you, but I really don't want to try and read a website that was designed for a nice big desktop, on a smartphone. It will be squished, hard to read, and I'll leave the site.

As a web designer, I certainly do not want to build individual websites for each of these sizes and devices. A responsive website allows for easier site management, greater control of the site, and the ability to future-proof the website to accommodate any new device that rolls out onto the market.

## Damn Whippersnappers (Pictured Below)

You know all those 'youngsters' walking around with their faces buried in their phones? Blame them. They are a huge part of the reason why your website needs to not only be responsive, but more importantly, mobile friendly. Like it or not, they are the next generation and the future for your business.

They might not need progressive-style lenses now (though they could certainly benefit from something with UV or Blue Light protection), but they are the ones who are doing a lot of research and shopping while on-the-go. Plus, with their faces buried in their phones, they'll be needing corrective lenses soon anyway so win-win :P

Seriously though, while you may not particularly like how they go about things and conduct themselves with their multitasking, they are the ones really driving the technology and using the hell out of it. As I mentioned before, they are also the future of your business. Not only will they check your website impulsively, but they will be quick to jump online and either rave or rant about their experience.

Your website is an extension of the customer service provided by your business... a silent salesperson, if you will, and it does the job 24/7 without a single complaint. Just don't let your site be the thing people complain about. Don't you want to make sure that it stands-up to the "on-demand" mindset of today's generation?

### 'Whippersnappers' in their Natural Habitat

Apparently, any place is cool as long as you're loitering with a smartphone in hand because it's totally random and you look freakin' awesome doing it. So awesome, in fact, that marketing and advertising companies (yes, opt media group included), have adopted this trend. They show actions of random cool things done by people who claim to be 'not cool'. Also, the opposite approach where they are doing something 'not cool', to show off how they can be cool while doing something not cool. So, say hello to your target audience for the future of your business and make sure that your website is responsive and mobile friendly, lest you get a negative review on Yelp.





## All hail the mighty Google. HAIL!

Did you know that in 2015, Google rolled-out a change to their search engine algorithms? Did you know that your website can be Google approved for mobile? Go ahead and google it. This change basically looks to see if a website has been rated for mobile. They even have a webpage for you to test your website (<https://search.google.com/test/mobile-friendly>). It will give you a breakdown of any issues and a preview of what your website looks like on a mobile device. Go ahead. Give your website a test. I dare you.

Google knows a few things about marketing online, SEO (Search Engine Optimization), and a scary amount of other things. They get over 3 billion online searches on a daily basis so, when they place importance on something, you should pay attention to it. Google has gone so far as to penalize websites and how they show in search results if they are not mobile friendly.

## “Don’t hate the player, hate the game”.

Like it or not, Google is here to stay and we must kneel before them (for some things). Would the world collapse if Google all of a sudden just disappeared? Quite likely. I like to think of Google as the beginnings of Skynet. Need proof? Google Maps, Google Glass, Google Self-Driving Cars. Should I go on? Nothing is out of the realm of possibility anymore. Anyway, I digress...

## Fine. I’ll do it

You know, there are worse things in life than making a decision to make sure that your website is responsive and mobile friendly. Things like acquiring an alien parasite like John Hurt, singing on stage and having a bird crap in your mouth (you were a trooper though Cyndi), or being forced to listen to anything from Justin Bieber. The bottom line is, it is a necessity in this day and age and for the ‘future’ day and age. If your business is important to you, your family, your staff and your customers, the decision is an easy one to make and the benefits are tremendous in the short term and the long run.

A responsive website can increase the reach of your business for those that are ‘on the go’ and using their mobile devices for everything. It can provide a consistent experience that can keep current customers and secure future customers. It ensures that your message, products and services are all but guaranteed to be viewed properly on any device and be done so, consistently.

*One website to rule them all.*

*One website to find you.*

*One website to bring them all,  
and in the store you’ll find them.*

## Kudos

Wilfred Brimley sat there and scolded us on those TV commercials into believing that Quaker Oats - Oatmeal was “the right thing to do” (dammit). So I will do similarly, but give you a less abrasive form of kudos and a touch of snark; congrats for getting with the times and taking your website into the 21st century.

Your decision is not without peril though, as you now need to find a means of building the website. Fortunately you have options:

- hire a designer or design group like your friendly neighborhood **opt Media Group** who can also handle other marketing material for you ( see ad ->>> )
- build your own using frameworks like **Bootstrap, Foundation-Zurb**, or **960gs** if you are tech savvy and have the time
- use an online platform like **Wix, Weebly**, or **Squarespace** for a small monthly fee

There are pros and cons for each choice and they will all cost you some form of money. The only one that would be ‘free-ish’ would be if you were to build it yourself, but it will cost you time... and if you’re running your business, time is money (thus the -ish).

The best place to start is, wait for it... wait for it... Google. Do a little research. Better yet, do a little research from your smartphone and keep track of your experiences as you are wading through the internet. It’ll be mixed with good, bad and meh. Factor those into your mental notes and see what your own ‘user experience’ is.

Keep in mind that you are not building a better website for you per se, you are building a better website and customer service experience for your current and future customers. The benefit will come back in the form of happy customers because they got their instant gratification. ⚙️



# MAYBE IT IS ABOUT TIME FOR AN UPDATE...

# ...LIKE TOTALLY

If you feel that your website is not up to par with today’s standards and technology, then by all means, give us a call at 867.5509 855.838.2002 or send us an email at [contact@optmagazine.com](mailto:contact@optmagazine.com)

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# LASERS

— Richard Hatch (RIP)

There aren't a whole lot of things cooler than lasers. Granted, they'd be even cooler if we could somehow figure out how to attach them to the head of a shark, but that specific configuration doesn't really have any practical applications in the field of eyewear. Not yet, at least. We will keep you posted if we find one. Lasers themselves, however, do play a part in today's lens technology, and can often be one of the more prevalent issues that you face when using free-form lenses.

## Invisible-ish

When going to mark up a lens, the thing that you want most in the world is to be able to easily find the progressive engravings so you can orient the lens correctly. You want this to be quick, painless, and easy. That seems like a perfectly reasonable request, but the problem is that outside of that minute or two that you are orienting the lens, you never want to see those engravings again. From that point on, you never want to see them, and you certainly don't want the patient to notice them. It's this strange balance of wanting to be seen and also invisible that makes it such a difficult thing to balance.

## The Goldilocks Conundrum

So, when lens markings have a problem, they end up in one of two categories. Either they are "too light", or "too dark". We are, of course, aiming for "just right", but sometimes defining exactly what counts as "just right" can vary from person to person. Just like how everyone will have slightly different preferences on what temperature they like their porridge, each person will have a preference for how dark is "too dark" and how light is "too light". When we come to an optical lab needing to engrave progressive reference marks onto a lens, this can be something that they need to overcome in order to get things just right. Some of them have the capability to tailor to your specific tastes for the depth of these marks, and this can be something that's worth discussing with them. You should, however, be aware of all of the factors that can affect what a marking looks like, as it's nowhere near as simple a recipe as "add hot water and stir".

The first thing that we need to look at is what machinery is involved in the engraving process. Generally, there are two different 'types' of laser that are in use for marking optical lenses. Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) lasers, and Ultraviolet (UV) lasers. Of these two, the most prevalent are the CO<sub>2</sub> lasers, due to their lower cost. Most major optical equipment manufacturers offer a CO<sub>2</sub> laser option, as it's a necessary part of the process in making free-form lenses. The CO<sub>2</sub> laser

can often be distinguished by the marks it makes appearing as a series of dots, as opposed to straight lines. UV lasers, on the other hand, use a shorter wavelength of energy that is more easily absorbed by most lens materials, which means it has much less heat buildup and is able to create images with straight lines and curves. These lasers are not as common in the optical industry, as they tend to be more costly than the CO<sub>2</sub> lasers, and require more care to use.

The reason we end up with 'dots' on CO<sub>2</sub> laser markings is because the laser makes a series of small movements and pulses instead of a continuous line. One of the reasons for this is that the CO<sub>2</sub> lasers produce a large amount of energy as heat, relative to the amount of energy that's used to actually make a mark in the surface of the lens material. The 'dots' help to space it out, and prevent the material from melting too much. The 'dots' can be also thought of as little craters, where they have micro-ridges that go across that top, as the laser basically bores a hole into the lens, forcing the material to move up or melt. What this means is that if you make a mark that is too dark or deep, you can end up with a correspondingly tall peak. While this won't be visible to the eye, it can lead to problems later on down the line, such as causing coating issues on the lens. These peaks can very easily cause coating to pool or streak, leading to an uneven surface. Since UV lasers do not generate anywhere near the heat of a CO<sub>2</sub> laser, they do not tend to have issues with creating rough edges that can cause these types of coating issues.

One of the constant problems with engravings is consistency on both sides of the lens on higher prescriptions. When we deal with lasers, they all have a very specific distance at which their power is optimal, and the further that you get from this 'sweet spot', the less power you end up with, as the beam is out of focus. With a CO<sub>2</sub> laser, this spot is relatively narrow, so that if you have a lens with a large thickness disparity between nasal and temporal (like a high minus), then you may end up with the temporal side much closer to the laser source than the

nasal side. This usually results in the nasal side engraving being normal, while the temporal side ends up invisible. The benefit of a UV laser is that the 'working area' is much larger than that of a CO<sub>2</sub> laser, which means that labs that utilize this kind of a laser can reduce problems with this type of engraving issue.

Perhaps the most difficult part about engraving a lens, however, isn't simply making the mark and checking it. The problem to consider is what is going to happen to the lens between when it is engraved, and when it's actually inserted into a frame. It still has a number of steps to go through, all of which could affect the visibility of the marks we just made. For example, hard coating is going to fill in the engravings, so we need to make sure that the marks are still visible after putting the hard coat on the lens. This also goes for antireflective coating, tinting, or whatever other processes the lens might go through. The marks that are put on the lens are not very deep to begin with, and now we are doing things that are going to fill those tiny marks back in. We need to make sure that they are still visible, of course, but not TOO visible.

Lens material is going to play a part in all of these steps. As I'm sure anyone that ever edged a lens knows, not all materials behave the same way. This goes doubly so for trying to mark the lenses. What would be 'too much' power for one material can be 'not enough' for another material. Some materials are more sensitive to the heat of a CO<sub>2</sub> laser, like 1.74 high index. This material tends to melt more easily, resulting in the marks looking pretty much the same, regardless of how much power you use. Other materials, like Trivex, will blacken if you put too much heat into it.

Even after all this, 'too dark' and 'too light' are subjective. Some people like them lighter. Some like them darker. I've had someone once ask to make a lens with no marks at all, because the patient was extremely picky and demanded it. In order to account for this, a good lab should be able to adopt 'settings' for your account. Such as adjusting your 'default setting' to be 10% darker or lighter, depending on your personal preferences.

The main take-away here is that hard coating and Rx variability play a large part in how free-form lens markings look. It only takes a few microns of coating to go from 'too dark' to 'too light'. ⚙️

Special thanks to **AZOT, LLC** in their help with this article. To learn more about their laser systems, visit <http://www.azotllc.com/>



# WHAT IS OPT?

## The Philosophy of OPT

— Curious George

I've contemplated what the point of OPT Magazine is more than once. It's struck me that this is mostly a magazine about nothing, but I don't know that we have enough *Seinfeld* for that to be completely true.

Many of the things that we discuss are topics that can range from "that's common sense" to "what the hell did I just read?", and not everything is terribly useful. It seems like when it blends together, however, that we end up with a somewhat successful recipe. Much like a happy accident in the kitchen when you're trying to find something to eat, but don't have enough of the right things to make a 'real' recipe. So you throw together what parts you do have, while hoping that expiration dates are more 'suggestions' than 'rules', and hope for the best. When it's all together, you try it and are pleasantly surprised that not only did it not make you sick, that actually it's pretty damn good, even if you don't quite know how it came together. That's OPT.

There's things that we need to do in order to prevent the homogenization of this industry, which is what we (the royal OPT 'we') are trying to promote. That's why we are trying to make sure that we keep what shows up in the magazine interesting. We need to make sure that you actually want to read it, and that every piece isn't aimed at getting you to buy something so we can make advertisers happy. Our success comes from the propagation of new ideas across the industry - the better that independents as a whole are able to do, the better we do. If this industry gets to the point where there are few or no independents left, then there's no point in us still doing what we do. That's why we're trying to give perspective on different issues, while advocating that there are always other sources to get the 'big brand' specific products.

Part of our unique positioning is that we don't really have to worry about upsetting big sponsors about what we do. For example, we often take aim at other publications that seem to consist of mostly advertisements for frames - usually so many that you can often forget that it's a magazine and not a frame catalog. There's a reason we only have one "frame ad" in the magazine - because we thought it was funny, and we aren't worried about keeping advertisers happy. That's not to say there's anything wrong with people advertising their products, but there's a time and a place for things, and at some point they can become too much.

When you take up this mantle of being 'different', you cause waves. You are no longer going slowly with the current, but rowing against it. This causes a few things to happen that you need to be able to deal with in terms of how people will perceive both you and your business. This is because I am, naturally, assuming that you are someone that wants to be 'different'. Unless, of course, you just happened to pick this up to read because your phone battery died and you're desperate. Regardless, you need to know that you will never make everyone happy. I'm not just talking about your competition or anything like that. Rather, I'm referring to the market in general. Once you start to go one way or another, you stray from that comfortable 'neutral' in the center, which means that people start to have opinions about what it is you are doing. Sometimes those opinions aren't exactly kind ones. For example, we've had some responses about a few things we've done that people don't care for - which is fine. They didn't like it, or thought what we were doing wasn't "appropriate" for a professional environment. That's okay, they are allowed to not like what we do.

This can be a hard concept to be okay with - when you're doing things differently, you need to be prepared to let people go that aren't suited for what you're doing. You want every single person to come in to your business and buy from you - that's normal. You're the best [insert your profession here] in the area, so why would they go anywhere else? That's never going to happen, of course, but we like to think that. Inevitably, you're only going to get a segment of people that will do business with you, and it's up to you to control what that segment will be. This could be based on price, style, or some other combination of demographics. Regardless of where you are located, there are going to be

plenty of other 'middle of the road' options. I am not referring to quality here when I say that, rather to their marketing appeal - a bland, non-offensive marketing approach that doesn't really inspire anyone, but also doesn't really upset anyone, either. This could be in the form of chain stores, online sources, or whatever else. That means your potential market already has plenty of 'blah' options to choose from. The question then becomes what options do they have that appeal to a specific niche that they care about? This is where your business has growth potential - reaching out into the community and filling specific niches that aren't being met.

This is what we've done, and we're certainly enjoying what we get to do. It becomes especially rewarding when we hear from readers that agree with points that we make, and that they are trying to do what they can to differentiate their business from everyone else. Having that kind of feedback from your audience is great - it lets you know that what you're doing has an effect on people, and that it's doing some good. One of the areas we hear about is how 'professional' the magazine looks - which was exactly what we were going for. We wanted to demonstrate exactly how you can be different but still retain that air of quality that is a vital part of the perception of your business. You can do whatever you want, but if it looks cheap, then people are going to instantly make that association with your product - regardless of how good it (or you) really are. Like assuming something is poor quality because it isn't overpriced, we make instant judgements that will color how

we assign value to something, regardless of how justified that association is. That's why it's important for small business to keep in mind that a professional look is worth the investment. Whether it's a logo, brochures, website, or whatever else, it needs to have the look that you want to convey. You have plenty of options - if you can't find a local designer that can make you a logo, you can always reach out to us at OPT and we can help you through that process. Your logo is the first thing that people are going to see, and needs to be something that you're proud of.





# Customer Relations

Does your Customer Service establish a good relationship?

— Dwight Schrute



In its simplest form, Customer Relations is about gaining and retaining customers. But let's be honest, the last thing we really want is SIMPLE. This is especially true when we are talking about a partner lab, frame company, or vision service provider. As an Eye Care Professional, I have a daily working relationship with these fellow industry professionals.

RELATIONSHIPS can take many forms, and each one has its ups and downs. Let's take a closer look at the areas of our industry that impact these relationships and, how as ECP's, we interact, develop, encourage, and maintain growth within that relationship. If you're scared because this sounds a lot like marriage, don't be. Relationships can be as simple or complex as we like them to be.

How many times has your patient told you they have vision benefits, after they have signed their credit card slip? Do you take the easy way out and offer them an itemized receipt that they can send

in to their provider for reimbursement, or do you go the extra mile and ask for details? We all know that if they didn't initially present it, it is because they have no idea who their vision service provider is, and now you get to spend the next 10 minutes playing Insurance Investigator. The highlight of this event is calling a Vision Service Provider for additional information, waiting (on average) six minutes; hopefully, there is only another four minutes before you get to the correct representative. If in fact you are lucky enough to actually speak to an honest-to-goodness human being, it certainly will not be someone you have spoken to before, nor will you ever

speak to them again. Despite how unpleasant and time consuming this experience is, it generally results in resolution and satisfaction for your client.

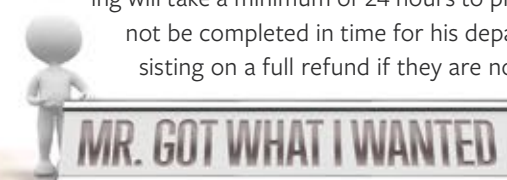
Waiting for that elusive "representative" from the Vision Service Provider can be frustrating, but if you maintained a level of professionalism and kept your congenial composure, you succeeded in providing excellent customer service to your client, despite the poor customer service you received from the Vision Service Provider. You also just became a hero to your client, hopefully resulting in additional sales or referrals. You suffer at the hands of managed care but your client wins. Co-dependent? Not my favorite type of relationship...

Gone are the days where I'm telephoning or faxing in daily frame orders; that spiral bound book used years ago to write down frames to be ordered has thankfully been sent to the recycling bin. All I have to do now is click a box on my computer screen. But we also get a personal "brand ambassador," who will gladly take care of my needs and provide me with all the customer service support I could ask for, so long as his commission checks aren't looking as fabulous as he is accustomed to, or his numbers are low. This person will also bestow small gifts upon me in order to retain my business. I like him, and I look forward to that dapper Don Draper with his Colgate smile every time he pops in to say hello. I'm secretly waiting for him to come back and sell me something else I don't need, but will probably buy anyway. He's like the 2AM booty call I receive and then proceed to curiously answer. Dysfunctional? Not exactly a winning relationship either...

## So where does that leave the relationship with our Independent lens manufacturing lab?

I know when I call my lab, the automated system immediately intercepts my call and directly transfers me to a human being. Time elapsed from picking up the telephone to dial the number and being connected to a live person was 33 seconds. Nice. A cheerful voice greets me and asks me for my account number. My account number? I don't know what my account number is, why would I? Can't you just look it up for me? (Sound familiar?) Fortunately, the customer service representative that just answered their 56th phone call of the day has a Positive Mental Attitude, I just hope that their PMA will be enough for the both of us.

I'm fairly stressed out because my customer, Mr. Needitnow, is on my case about his new prescription sunglasses. I received notification via online job tracking that one of his lenses did not pass quality control and had to be restarted. Normally this isn't a big deal, but Mr. Needitnow is leaving for vacation in two days and needs his brown polarized Trivex lens with a backside AR coat ASAP. I know that my lab does not regularly stock this lens, and that the AR coating will take a minimum of 24 hours to process. His job will not be completed in time for his departure and he is insisting on a full refund if they are not available for dis-



pense. What should I do? Should I demand that my customer service representative go to the lab and find out why they didn't pass inspection? Should I berate her because I'm going to have to refund my client and possibly lose future business? Do I immediately insist on speaking with a manager?

These are all things I have done in the past, but today I take a different approach. I've only been doing business with my new Independent lab for about 3 months and, after a deep breath, I explain the situation. Guess what happened? My customer service representative apologized and without hesitation offered me a temporary solution. She suggested to me that they do have brown polarized poly in stock, and that they would be more than happy to edge those lenses to the frame. I will not have a backside AR coat, but my client will have his sunglasses while he is away and, upon his return, I can just insert the correct lenses that they will edge from the trace.

My customer service representative was able to immediately diffuse a situation that could have escalated (due to circumstances completely out of my control), and offer me a reasonable solution. I did not lose a client and I gained a much greater respect for my partner lab. In the end, everyone wins, a wonderful example of give and take. As far as I'm concerned, that's the best type of relationship there is.

Relationships take work & cultivation; what shines bright today may be your nightmare tomorrow. If we can effectively manage the way we interact, develop, & respond to situations, we can predict the outcome & hopefully steer ourselves into the winner's circle. ⚙️







# FRAME TELEPORTATION?

*HELP YOUR BUSINESS LIVE LONG AND PROSPER*

— Leonard Nimoy (RIP)

Moving something instantly from point A to point B is really, really useful. Now, imagine if we could do that with frames. We can't - sorry if I got your hopes up - but if we could, it would be pretty cool. We can, however, do the next best thing - send a digital copy of the frame around. That makes it possible to make the whole process of getting a complete pair of eyewear more cost efficient and quicker.

Plenty of offices don't have an edger, and are happy to leave edging up to their lab of choice. This can, of course, lead to some problems. Usually, getting the lenses into the frame is the most problematic part. The edging part, specifically. When you want to use one of your own frames, there's a number of steps in the process that can easily turn out to add additional cost and delay to a job. Thankfully, there are ways that technology is making it possible to eliminate this problem, improve turn around, and reduce cost. Remote tracing has been around for a long time, but as technology gets better, the process becomes more reliable and more cost-effective.

## WHAT IS IT?

So, if you aren't familiar with what 'remote tracing' is, I'll address that briefly. You have a small machine in your office that will trace the shape of the frame. It saves this information into a file on your computer, which you can then send to your lab electronically, instead of needing to mail them the physical frame. The lab can then cut the lenses to the right shape, send them to you, and you simply insert them into the frame. Simple.

## RULES OF ACQUISITION

So before trying something, you need to know both what it's going to cost, as well as what it's going to save you. We can have a look at the savings first, because it's a heck of a lot more enjoyable to talk about savings than about costs. The most obvious saving is that you don't have to mail the frame to the lab, or have them send it back. This means you don't incur the additional cost of mailing the frames, which is at least \$5 per shipment. Unless you need it there fast and the lab is on the other side of the country, then it's going to cost quite a bit more. The other major benefit to this, aside from the direct cost of shipping, is that there's no risk of a frame getting lost or damaged in transit. That risk is reduced if you pay for extra insurance on the shipment, but then you're paying more again. Even if you do insure it, that's not necessarily going to help you replace the frame. Invariably, the frame that gets lost in transit is a discontinued or irreplaceable patient's-own-frame. Being able to avoid having to explain to someone

how their frame has 'gone missing' in transit can be worth a lot of patient goodwill.

Apart from the direct cost of having to ship the frame, there's the question of timeliness. If you are sending a frame to the lab, it's adding at least a day or more, depending on how far away the lab is and how much you are willing to pay to get it there. This will usually mean that it takes longer before you get the completed job back, as the lab can't very well cut the lenses before the frame arrives.

On top of this, some labs will offer a discount on their edging prices if you supply the electronic trace file, instead of sending in the physical frame. This is possible because you are helping to reduce the amount of handling involved, since there's no frame to be handled, traced, and assembled. Since the lab can reduce the amount of effort the job requires, they should certainly be giving you a discount, don't you think?

## IS THAT A RED SHIRT?

Don't worry, there's nothing here waiting to get you. The only 'catch' is that you need a tracer, which was probably pretty obvious by now. The problem here is that you can't really just 'cheap out' on it, as you can run into problems later on down the road. Getting a cheap tracer off of EBay means that you have no support, and no idea if the tracer is working correctly, or if the sizing is completely off. They are one piece of equipment that people love to ship improperly, which usually means the trace stylus bounces all over the place. This makes the tracer sad.

Luckily, brand new tracers aren't too expensive (like the one on the opposite page- *wink wink, nudge nudge*), and they will pay for themselves pretty quickly. If you figure you can save a few dollars per job, then there's no reason not to not give remote tracing a try - save money, save time. It's the only logical choice.



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## Who put 'this' together?

### Editor/Publisher

Bill Heffner, IV ..... editor@optmagazine.com

### Layout/Design

Ken Rementer ..... ken@optmagazine.com

### Contributors

Ken Rementer ..... One Site to Rule Them All

Sherry Berry ..... Customer Relations

Bill Heffner, IV ..... Everything else

### OPT Magazine

Published whenever we get around to it.

### OPT Contact Info

contact@optmagazine.com | 855.838.2002

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