

Docs of Distinction




**Optometric
Business
Innovators
2014**
PRESENTED BY REVIEW OF OPTOMETRIC BUSINESS
AND VISION MONDAY

The Fine Art of Practice Management

Successful optometrists, whether they are in private practice or are employed by a retail chain or corporation, know that the business of optometry is just as important as the clinical aspects of their profession. In fact, leading ODs agree that the business and clinical components of optometry should form a well-integrated approach in which top quality patient care is supported by smart business decisions that promote practice growth.

The 25 Optometric Business Innovators profiled here understand the need to balance the commercial

with the clinical, and each has found ways to achieve it in their own career. Although each come from different backgrounds and experiences, all of them have used their knowledge, creativity and business savvy to propel them into the front ranks of their profession.

These “Docs of Distinction” are the focus of our fourth annual Optometric Business Innovators report, a special collaborative project between *Vision Monday* and *Review of Optometric Business*.

Drawing upon input from our readers, the editorial staffs of *Review of Optometric Business* and *Vision Mon-*

day, and suggestions from our Professional Advisory panel, we once again chose some of the most outstanding talents in optometry. We got this diverse group of practitioners and executives to reveal their Rx for success in Business Management, Contact Lens Dispensing, Optical Dispensing, Digital Media and Marketing, and in creating The Patient Experience. We also identified specific Influencers who have shared insights and experience from their own practices with larger groups, organizations and projects which influence many optometrists.

We hope the profiles of our Optometric Business Innovators will inspire you to further develop and enrich your own practices with fresh ideas. ■

Read Past Editions of Optometric Business Innovators

This year marks the fourth annual Optometric Business Innovators report. Since 2011, we at *Vision Monday* and *Review of Optometric Business* have profiled nearly 120 ODs, from all parts of the country with practice specialties and business savvy all their own.

Go to **VM REPORTS** on *VisionMonday.com* and read about honorees from past editions of Optometric Business Innovators or look through the Issue Archives to read digital editions of these Special Reports. ■

—*The Editors of VM and
Review of Optometric Business:*

*Marge Axelrad, Deirdre Carroll, Mary Kane,
Andrew Karp, Roger Mummert, John Sailer,
Margery Weinstein, Catherine Wolinski*



THE PATIENT EXPERIENCE

“Our mission is to provide an eyecare experience that is like none other. Service to the patient is our highest priority. Advanced technology is our gift to their sight.”



GREG AKER, OD
OWNER

AKER EYE CENTER
TITUSVILLE, FLORIDA

WWW.AKEREYECENTER.COM

Being proactive with technology, education and outside consultants has enabled Greg Aker, OD, to improve the patient experience. Enlisting staff participation in these aspects of his practice has helped build on that success.

In addition to automated diagnostic equipment, such as the OptoMap, Optovue OCT, Visucam retinal camera, Diopsys ERG/VEP, and Marco phoropters in all exam lanes, Aker also invested in software. “My greatest technology is the Versus patient and staff tracking system,” he said. “After consulting with ODLean, I contacted Versus.” Average patient time went from one hour and 12 minutes to 52 minutes.

Outside consultants helped Aker improve patient care as well: “I learned the importance of benchmarking after attending a Management and Business Academy conference. That process was enhanced through The Edge program to mine my OfficeMate information. Essilor consultants trained the staff in AR sales, which brought our AR percentage from 25 percent to 75 percent.”

It’s focusing on staff that ultimately enables Aker to implement these improvements. All staff are

certified paraoptometrics, either CPO, CPOA, or CPOT. “I have worked hard to gather quality staff who are compassionate, friendly and knowledgeable,” said Aker. “Every new hire is told that the main successful trait of a great employee is showing up.”

“My business philosophy is straightforward: Work hard every day to provide the best care, service and products. Everything else will take care of itself.”



TIMOTHY HAUPERT, OD

PRESIDENT
ART OF OPTIKS

WAYZATA, MINNESOTA
WWW.ARTOFOPTIKS.COM

In his 25 years as an optometrist, Hauptert has practiced in many different modalities including a big box retail location, a high-end retail optical, an ophthalmology clinic, a contact lens specialty practice and two different lasik eye centers. Thirteen years ago he founded Art of Optiks, a two-doctor, 11-employee practice with a luxury dispensary located in a western suburb of Minneapolis.

From the outset, Hauptert has implemented the latest technologies at Art of Optiks, including electronic medical records and digital refractive equipment. “Since we were the beta test site, our clinic was the first in the country to integrate our digital refractive instrumentation to the EHR system—eliminating the need to manually input K readings, auto-refractor data, and subjective manifest refraction measurements,” Hauptert noted.

“We consistently adopt new technology that improves the patient experience or the care we

provide earlier than most of our counterparts. For example, we were the second practice in our state to purchase the iCare tonometer.”

Recently, Hauptert and his staff successfully implemented new software that enables them to adopt the government standards of ‘Meaningful Use’ of EHR. “Being able to achieve that level of electronic record documentation and yet make it seamless from the patient’s perspective required a tremendous amount of teamwork with the software vendor and our clinic staff,” he said.

“Twenty years from now, you will be more disappointed by the things you didn’t do than by the ones you did, so throw off the bow lines, sail away from the safe harbor, catch the trade winds in your sails, explore, dream, discover.”



MICHAEL J. LYONS, OD, FAAO
OWNER

FOCAL POINTE EYE CARE
WWW.FOCALPOINTEEYECARE.COM
WEST CHESTER, OHIO

After seven years at Cincinnati Eye Institute, Michael J. Lyons, OD, FAAO, opened Focal Pointe Eye Care. He has a special interest in therapeutic contact lenses to treat corneal disease and is one of the leading scleral lens doctors in the region.

Lyons is also a volunteer instructor in the department of ophthalmology at the University of Cincinnati and head of the University Contact Lens Service. He also provides low vision services at the

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THE PATIENT EXPERIENCE

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Cincinnati Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

Using cutting-edge technology is also important to the practice's success. "Last year, we invested in a Visual Evoked Potential testing system, an OCT, and an in-office optical lens edger," said Lyons. "We use animated software to explain ocular conditions, and we have incorporated texting/email to notify patients."

This year, Lyons is looking at establishing a Direct communications link with a major tertiary eyecare center to securely exchange patient data.

"Our motto is 'Embrace Change.' The health care environment over the next decade will be defined by the practice's ability to adapt," Lyons predicts. "If a practice is unable or unwilling to change, then that practice will go away. My goal is to change at least one thing per week. This keeps it fresh and interesting to the team and patients alike."

"Hard work and determination are important to succeed as a business owner. My passion for my business comes from within—this is what drives me to want to succeed!"



MARIA SAMPALIS, OD
SAMPALIS EYECARE PC
WARWICK, RHODE ISLAND, AND
NORTH DARTMOUTH, MASSACHUSETTS
WWW.DRSAMPALIS.COM

Maria Sampalis, OD, has only been out of optometry school for seven years, and a practice owner for two years, but she is well on her way. The doctor, who has memberships in the AOA, National Glaucoma Association and the Rhode Island Health Department, is also an adjunct professor for

The MCPHS University School of Optometry. In addition, she is on the executive board of the Massachusetts Society of Optometry and is on the Optometry Advisory Council for Luxottica.

Sampalis said a key to her success has been her focus on the patient experience. The practice, which provides primary care optometry, including contact lens fittings and routine comprehensive eye examinations, among other services, takes time to educate patients. "Our mission is to provide quality care with a personal touch that exceeds our patients' expectations," she said. "I truly believe that customer service is what differentiates us. I take my time with patients to help them understand their conditions, whether it is macular degeneration or myopia."

Part of educating her patients is ensuring they keep all the appointments needed to care properly for their eyes. She does that with the help of a robust recall system. "Our recall system, TAB, is great for patient communication via e-mail or text," she said. "I use my recall system database to e-mail patients education newsletters about our office equipment and about their condition. This is a practice builder!"

Rather than competing by cutting prices, Sampalis focuses on the value of medical eyecare and the high-quality experience she can provide. "The changing climate in health care today is a real challenge," she said, citing health care reform and competition from online optical retailers. "I'm focusing on quality patient care through customer service and the medical model."

JERI A. SCHNEEBECK, OD, PC
PRESIDENT
HIGHLINE VISION CENTER
AURORA, COLORADO
WWW.HIGHLINEVISIONCENTER.COM

Jeri Schneebeck, OD, PC, combines technology with service to ensure a positive patient experience. Flow is optimized using a system that alerts technicians when patients arrive and allows doctors to call for assistance when needed. IPads and Eyemaginations are used throughout the office. Software improves service using benchmarks such as patient wait time, and Visioffice provides

"I have always considered my patients and my staff as family. I love helping my patients have the vision to enjoy all aspects of their lives more fully!"



accurate measurements.

Low tech personal service improves the patient experience as well. "We expect our patients to have an over-the-top experience," said Schneebeck. "We have received the AOA Award given to practices that have every staff member certified in their area of expertise."

"Patients love to see someone familiar," she continued, referring to the practice manager who started as a receptionist 24 years ago, the director of vision therapy with her since she bought the practice 32 years ago, and another team member who has been there over 25 years.

Each doctor is assigned two technicians, one in the exam room as scribe/assistant and the other with the next patient doing testing. The doctor can be face to face with the patient while the scribe enters information into the computer.

Schneebeck recently opened a new office in a growing area of Aurora. She also gives back to her community, having granted five wishes to the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

MARK L. SKOWRON, OD
OWNER
SKOWRON EYECARE
ELMHURST, ILLINOIS
WWW.SKOWRONEYECARE.COM

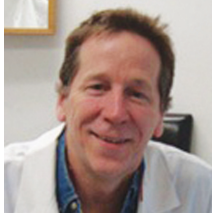
Technology permeates every aspect of Skowron Eyecare, enabling Mark L. Skowron, OD, to focus on and improve the patient experience. "Our technology has enabled us to provide better eyecare. We are able to diagnose diseases that otherwise

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“The staff needs to be compassionate but diligent at maintaining the profit and loss of our company.”



JOSEPH V. DE SPIRITO, II, OD
HOOSIER EYE DOCTOR
BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA
(TWO LOCATIONS IN BLOOMINGTON)
WWW.HOOSIEREYEDOCTOR.COM

Joseph V. De Spirito, II, OD, understands his practice brand—at both of his Bloomington, Ind., locations. “Our first location is fashion frames and contact lenses with an average age of 29,” De Spirito said. “The second is ocular disease and pediatrics with vision therapy and average demographics split at the high and low end. Staff at both locations do a fantastic job of understanding patients’ needs and scheduling them at the right location,” he noted.

De Spirito, who got his start in optical with S&H Engineering re-manufacturing optometry equipment, was then trained in surfacing and finishing spectacle lenses, working for surfacing labs and then graduating with a two-year degree in opticianry. After becoming LensCrafter’s first retail manager in Florida, De Spirito decided in 1997 it was time to go to optometry school. He opened Hoosier Eye Doctor in 2006. “With passion in optometry, I decided to pursue an optometry degree and post doctorate degree in binocular vision,” he said. “Being an entrepreneur at heart, and having a great practice name available, Hoosier Eye Doctor was born.”

Important to Hoosier Eye Doctor’s success has been its optimization of technology. “Our EHR,

OfficeMate, and Marco equipment are integrated for refraction efficiency,” said De Spirito. “Our patient education is provided by video, paper hand-out and doctor’s instructions, which allows us to retain direct contact with our patients. Professional networking, through EHR, allows us to more efficiently follow up and track our patients’ health conditions.”

“If someone walks through our door, and their condition can be treated by an OD anywhere in America, (unless it is restricted by state law) they will be treated within our walls.”



GWEN GNADT, OD, MPH, FFAO
SENIOR PARTNER
EYE VISION ASSOCIATES
LAKE RONKONKOMA, NEW YORK
WWW.EYEVISIONASSOCIATES.COM

Gwen Gnad, OD, MPH, FFAO, of Eye Vision Associates in Lake Ronkonkoma, N.Y., heads a practice of multiple specialists who provide a full range of vision and eye health services. This allows the practice to refer patients “internally,” rather than lose business to outside specialists.

“If a patient is being seen by one of our ODs who is not comfortable treating the patient’s condition, there is another OD in our office who can and will treat them for it,” Dr. Gnad explained. Her own specialties include low vision rehabilitation and medically indicated contact lens fitting.

The practice has doubled in size in recent years to include a team of six ODs and a staff of 15. Many of the ODs have part-time office hours, and this

allows for doctors to spend more time outside the office, in activities that promote referrals. “We encourage participation in organized optometry, both locally and nationally,” she said. “This promotes a great exchange of ideas on clinical and practice management issues.”

When making a hiring decision, Gnad values the varied case experience that an optometrist gains from a residency, a step she took in her own career. ODs in her practice are involved with a local VA hospital, where they work alongside young residents and recruit outstanding candidates. “The key is to find complementary skills so that we can serve all of the needs of all of our patients within our scope of practice,” Gnad said.

Another key to growth: Eye Vision Associates networks actively with local ophthalmology and neurology practices, state and local associations, and local school districts. Promotion is done through social media and the practice website, where good patient communication and candid patient feedback are emphasized. “We’ve built up a good reputation among the professional community,” Gnad said.

“Commit to doing what only you can do. Be yourself; everyone else is taken.”



AARON LECH, OD, FFAO
OWNER
CLEARVUE EYE CARE
ROSEVILLE, CALIFORNIA
WWW.CLEARVUE.ORG

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Creating a consistently high-quality patient experience is important to Aaron Lech, OD, FAAO. “We employ systems in medical care, optical and technology integration, which allow us to standardize delivery across a wide variety of personalities and to consistently outperform industry profitability metrics,” Lech said.

With 10 years in practice, Lech is proud of having turned a small practice into a thriving multi-doctor enterprise. “I built a single-doctor, one-lane, 1,100 square foot practice (open just 1.5 days per week) into a five-doctor, 4,000 square foot multi-specialty, technology-driven practice,” he said. Prior to purchasing his practice, Lech practiced for over three years at Balboa Naval Medical Center as a Lieutenant in the U.S. Navy.

A key to ensuring a standardized patient experience has been the addition of a chief operating officer to the practice’s staff. “Over two years ago, I hired a chief operating officer (with a commensurate executive salary) to oversee day-to-day operations and corporate management. This allowed me to remain focused on our vision and where we need to position ourselves for future growth and opportunity.”

Also essential to providing consistent quality, Lech pointed out, is having your staff on board with your efforts. “Staff must understand why we do what we do and be comfortable communicating that to a patient respectfully, succinctly and unapologetically,” he said. “Patients seek out our expertise, but not everyone values what we value. We know we will not be able to serve every patient, but those we do will always receive our highest care and concern.”

Supporting the efforts of the practice’s staff is topnotch technology. “EHR was implemented day one in my practice,” said Lech. In addition, the practice makes use of an OCT, digital photography and topography. The office also features networked diagnostics using FORUM. “We provide baseline digital retinal imaging on all patient exams (primarily with our OCT).”

And with all these accomplishments, Lech continues to strive: “We’re constantly testing and pioneering new technologies for patient communication—particularly in the area of health care delivery.”

“I strive to maintain a friendly and comfortable practice for both my customers and my staff, one that also remains innovative and up-to-date with the advances in the profession.”



ANDREW J. NEUKIRCH, OD

OWNER

CARILLON VISION CARE
GLENVIEW, ILLINOIS

WWW.CARILLONVISIONCARE.COM

Andrew J. Neukirch, OD, knows about business efficiency—and getting up to speed in a hurry. Neukirch, who purchased his 56-year-old practice in 2011, said there was an immediate need to update the office’s technology. “When I bought the practice, the retiring doctor and staff members had systems in place that certainly worked well, but technology was not utilized to a significant extent,” he said. “Within the first year, we implemented EHR, purchased a SD-OCT, added 50-inch displays in the exam lanes for patient education and displaying testing results, and implemented online appointment scheduling with Demandforce.”

Complementing the practice’s new and improved technology was participation in the IDOC optometric alliance. “I took the first two years researching all of the major optometry groups before discovering that IDOC was the best match for my practice,” Neukirch said. “At this early point in my career, IDOC has allowed me to network with experienced and successful practitioners who openly share ideas and strategies that have proven useful to integrate.”

With such an emphasis on technology and business efficiency, it’s no surprise the practice prides itself on its accessibility online. “Our practice’s online presence is unmatched in the area, and over

50 percent of our new patients find us on the internet. Prior to 2011, our online presence was a simple website. I now have a blog that has over 500 views per month, active Facebook and Google+ pages, an interactive online ‘walkthrough’ tour of the office, and the practice shows up number one on all search engines in the area,” said Neukirch. “Through our marketing efforts, most new patients have already read about our office before walking in the door, and we tend to attract high quality, compliant, health conscious patients who are not looking for an optometrist who simply ‘takes their vision plan.’”

“Always start with ‘Why?’ Why do you do what you do? Not what you do or how you do it. If you don’t know why, nothing else matters.”



THUY-LAN NGUYEN, OD

OWNER

THE EYE CENTER
PEMBROKE PINES, FLORIDA
WWW.EYECENTER.COM

The Eye Center is a multi-doctor practice specializing in contact lenses and sports vision. Home to the Florida Institute for Sports Vision and the eyecare providers for the Miami Dolphins for over 30 years, The Eye Center has five ODs, an MD, two interns from Nova Southeastern University (NSU) and a staff of 30.

Thuy-Lan Nguyen, OD, a graduate of NSU, has been with The Eye Center since 2004 and bought into the business in 2011. Since then she has been managing the business and seeing patients, as well as being a part-time clinical and adjunct faculty member at NSU.

“The Eye Center builds relationships,” Nguyen said, “At the Eye Center, we work hard at building and maintaining relationships with our patients through outstanding service. We’re also the first to

incorporate something new. If there is new technology or equipment or service, we are the first to use it.

“Change is very difficult for some people, especially those who have been doing things a certain way for a long time,” she added. “If something is working well, I won’t change it completely, but I believe that even if it’s good, I might be able to make it better.

“While The Eye Center uses the newest technology for all aspects of our practice, I train my staff to remember that patients are people. We focus on the health and vision benefits of our products not just the technical features. We will do anything and everything possible to give the patient the best possible experience every single time they call or come in,” she concluded.

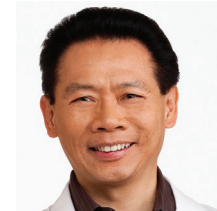
DANIEL E. QUON, OD
PRESIDENT
SOUTH COAST OPTOMETRY
COSTA MESA, CALIFORNIA
WWW.SOUTHCOASTOPTOMETRY.COM

Daniel Quon, OD, graduated Southern California College of Optometry in 1974 and purchased South Coast Optometry in September 1979. Today, South Coast Optometry is known for providing the latest in high-tech eye examinations, cutting edge instrumentation, preventive eye-care, advanced contact lenses, color and dyslexic vision diagnosis and correction, quality eyewear and premium quality spectacle lenses. In addition to therapeutic excellence, his practice exudes a “concierge-like” feel, with attention toward medical and preventive care, ocular wellness and eye health.

Quon observes, monitors and evaluates the constant changes in the field of optometry. He has also been known to have the uncanny ability to “think out of the box” to resolve challenging problems. Additionally, he also incorporates a “whole body” approach to eyecare as he educates his patients on the importance of proper diet and nutrition to total ocular and body health.

“I believe that people have a natural tendency to resist change especially in an office setting,” added

“Dedicated and passionate in the pursuit of independent optometric excellence!”



Quon. “Persistence is my only recommendation to overcome this obstacle. Persistence with an end goal in mind is the best way to implement change within a practice.”

To that end, Quon holds weekly staff meetings that incorporate staff education from a vendor or office review of the week’s occurrences. “The meetings serve to keep everyone on the same page and foster an environment of camaraderie,” he concluded.

THE PATIENT EXPERIENCE (cont'd)

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would have had to be referred,” said Skowron.

“Our technology and its presentation are powerful tools for in-office marketing. Photographing patients’ eyes helps us explain their particular conditions, which increases patient compliance on our recommendations. We also show the patient all the different conditions that can be diagnosed in the eye. All these help to retain the patient and increase word-of-mouth referrals.”

All of Skowron Eyecare’s six exam lanes are networked together, and the office is fully automated with electronic health records. Other technology

“We use the 3 Ps—personality + presentation = profits. Patient perception is reality. The patients’ best interests always come first. The patient is always right.”



includes autorefractor/keratometer, Cirrus 5000 OCT, Humphrey VF, retinal camera, in-house finishing lab, autolensometers, Optikam, Ocutouch patient education videos, and slit lamp photography/videography.

Skowron, in practice for 33 years, understands the need to invest in the right people as well as the appropriate technology. “We hire people who smile. You can teach people how to dispense, how to work the instrumentation, and what to say when you answer a phone, but you cannot teach a person how to smile while they answer the phone,” he said.



CONTACT LENS DISPENSING

“It can always be better.” For me this has two meanings. First, we can and should strive to improve and never be satisfied with where we are. Second, no matter how bad the situation seems, we can survive it, and things will be better.”



PETER J. CASS, OD

OWNER

BEAUMONT FAMILY EYE CARE
BEAUMONT, TEXAS

WWW.VISIONSOURCE-BEAUMONT-
FAMILYEYECARE.COM

Technology and the most up-to-date practice systems are a priority at this single doctor practice in Beaumont, Texas. Owner Peter Cass, OD, practices full scope optometry, specializing in difficult to fit contact lenses and is a speaker for Bausch + Lomb as well as a clinical researcher for Alcon.

“We are a completely paperless practice and are focused on the efficiency that comes with technology. All of our patient history and demographic forms are available online for patients to fill out prior to coming to our office. Any form requiring patient signatures are captured electronically at check-in and all insurance cards and photo IDs are scanned in to our EHR.

“All patient exam data is recorded in the EHR and we have achieved meaningful use since the first year of the incentive program.” In fact, Beaumont Family Eye Care was the first eyecare office to connect to the Greater Houston Health Connect, a Houston-based Health Information Exchange provider covering about 25 percent of Texas.

All contact lens and frame orders are handled electronically through the practice’s EHR and patients are notified when their eyewear is ready through

the patient engagement system, Solutionreach. Patients also electronically receive surveys about their visit, and Cass personally replies to all survey responses.

“We are a very efficient practice and fully utilize a highly trained and certified staff, and require them to have AOA, ABO or JCAHPO certification. I personally see 45 to 50 patients per day and have lectured extensively on the subject.”

“There are no shortcuts to success. Consistent, quality effort with the highest attention to detail will always set you apart from the competition.”



BRADLEY S. GIEDD, OD, MS, FAO

EYE ASSOCIATES OF WINTER PARK
WINTER PARK, FLORIDA
WWW.EYEASSOCIATESWP.COM

As part of a four-doctor group optometric practice located in a busy suburb of Orlando, Bradley Giedd, OD, is an integral part of a team offering specialty services ranging from pediatrics to geriatrics, as well as specialty contact lens fitting. Eye Associates of Winter Park also manages a significant amount of ocular disease and refractive surgery.

“Our practice takes great pride in being as technologically advanced as possible. We were early to convert to EHR during the year 2011 and have continued to integrate technology into our practice and into our EHR itself with more recent additions of Heidelberg Spectralis OCT and the Oculus Keratograph topographer adding to our ability to provide state-of-the-art care to our patients,” Giedd said.

Although the suburban area is highly saturated with eyecare, “we continue to thrive where many others have not by providing a wide range of quality services and products that are backed up by fair and comprehensive warranties and 100 percent satisfaction guarantees. Our philosophy has always been patient-centered, and our doctors and staff are all involved members of our local communities where we have established personal relationships with many local businesses and individuals.”

The practice has been able to take advantage of opportunities to utilize industry partners that provide loyal practices with professional grade programs and training. “These programs have proven quite beneficial to our practice with minimal to no impact on the practice bottom line. Thus, our brilliance in these cases has been merely to take advantage of opportunities that most would consider “no-brainers.”

“Our practice is distinctive in that we serve specialized patient needs. We are a practice built on optometric contact lens specialties.”



CARY HERZBERG, OD FIAO

OWNER

HERZBERG OPTICAL
AURORA, ILLINOIS

WWW.HERZBERGOPTICAL.COM

Cary Herzberg, OD, FIAO, of Herzberg Optical in Aurora, Ill., offers a complete and thorough eye examination that allows the doctor and patient to work together in order to give the best possible eyecare required. He clearly has the basics down, but

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“As independent ODs, we need to show patients our greater value.”



BRIAN CHOU, OD, FAAO
OWNER/PARTNER
EYELUX OPTOMETRY
RANCHO BERNARDO, CALIFORNIA
WWW.EYELUXOPTOMETRY.COM

Brian Chou, OD, FAAO, explains that EyeLux Optometry, located in the San Diego neighborhood of Rancho Bernardo, was designed for optimal patient flow and efficiency. At every step of the patient journey, from reception through exam, then through the optical dispensary, a myriad of details reflect a meticulous approach. You name it, Dr. Chou and his partner Kelvin Nguyen, OD, have thought it through.

The practice has an inviting “reception area,” not a “waiting room.” Pre-exam rooms and exam lanes are outfitted identically for consistency and efficiency and electronically connected to make patient time with the doctor meaningful. Digital retinal imaging and external photography are performed on all patients with no additional charge to the patient. The contact

lens area is clean and free from the common clutter of diagnostic lens sets, yet a full range of spherical, multifocal and specialty contacts are housed behind handsome cabinetry. Finally, the patient reaches the dispensary, a large and airy space with artwork alongside unique frame collections. There, each optician guides the patient from frame and lens selection to checkout right at their own styling table. “It’s all personal and patient-oriented,” Dr. Chou emphasized.

The dispensary features collections of frames that suit particular face size and anatomies. These include wider frames for people with large PDs, as well as a collection of adult eyewear for people with small PDs and petite faces. The selection also accommodates a large Asian demographic where a flat nose-bridge causes the many frames to slip and impact the cheeks.

ERIC M. WHITE, OD
OWNER
COMPLETE FAMILY VISION CARE
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA
WWW.DRERICWHITE.COM

Eric M. White, OD, has been in practice for 28 years and is a firm believer in treating his patients like family. He even goes so far as to give out his cell phone number and personally emails his patients urging them to get a comprehensive eye exam and seeking referrals via Yelp and Google. “Simple concepts have helped my practice explode—plain and simple,” he said.

The practice, located in a high tech area of San Diego proper, is as high tech as its surroundings.

“I absolutely love what I do, and I want to share my excitement with others. I am blessed to be an optometrist!”



Systems include Daytona retinal imaging, Zeiss OCT, Magellan corneal topography, Zeiss Matrix and ClearPath Diabetic screening system. “I have tremendously embraced the social marketing part of my practice and have truly taken this to a new level with the help of EyeCarePro and Websystem 3,” he said.

As a specialist in contact lenses along with his general optometric practice, White has participated in more than 375 clinical investigations with many companies.

In addition to lecturing, White shares his “pearls,” sits on several boards and consults for various companies. “I believe if we all share our pearls of practice this will raise the level of optometry and all patients will benefit.”

The secret to his success? “I prescribe from the exam chair. Dr. Peter Kehoe taught me about Doctor Driven Dispensing (DDD) and everything changed. DDD is a very easy concept that took my practice to a whole new level. Last year as a solo practitioner, I grossed over \$2 million using DDD, embracing social media and treating my patients as family.”



CONTACT LENS DISPENSING_(cont'd)

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Herzberg has made a name for himself by offering specialized contact lens services—specifically corneal reshaping via Ortho K.

Ninety percent of his patients are in contact lenses, and 80 percent of those contact lens wearers are Ortho K patients. “Patient education is the key to our success,” he said. “We let prospective patients know what we do using all the tools available to us—social media, pamphlets, DVDs and handouts.”

Herzberg said the power of word-of-mouth marketing also plays an important role: “Sometimes the patient who opts for Ortho K isn’t even the one you gave the hand-out to but a friend or acquaintance of that person.” The 90-year-old practice, in which Herzberg represents the third generation of optometrists, also serves patients with conditions such as keratoconus and those in need of specialty lenses such as multifocals.

Herzberg has taken his knowledge of contact

lenses to a whole new level. As president of the International Academy of Orthokeratology (IAO) he is now training other eyecare practitioners overseas in countries such as China, where he is on the staff at Tianjin Medical University, specializing in providing training on Ortho K.

“Our Asia section(IAOA) of IAO has trained over 5,000 ophthalmologists and optometrists in China alone,” he said about the international outreach of his organization.





“Leap and the net will appear.”



MARIA HIGGINS, OD
OWNER
UNIQUE OPTIQUE
WWW.UNIQUE-OPTIQUE.COM
FREDERICK, MARYLAND

Maria Higgins, OD, completed her doctorate at the Pennsylvania College of Optometry (now Salus University). She’s been a Fellow in the American Academy of Optometry since 1999 and was voted Young Optometrist of the Year for Western Pennsylvania (2003) and for Pennsylvania (2004). After 10 years owning a medical model practice in Pittsburgh, she opened what is now Unique Optique in Frederick.

“The inspiration for Unique Optique is the rose curve, a math equation that when graphed, becomes a flower,” said Higgins. “In this sense, Unique Optique encompasses science, nature and art.”

“We carry only independently owned frame lines. We’re a small business and believe in supporting only small businesses,” she added. “We have a photo booth in the optical, so patients can compare their options and go home with a souvenir. Before each patients leaves, they get a UV sensor so they know when they should wear sunglasses.”

Unique Optique also uses digital media in all forms, from a cloud-based EHR, to using HootSuite for social media postings and Facebook to educate, entertain and communicate with patients. They use MailChimp for email communications and Survey Monkey to learn about patients’ wants and needs. “One of our surveys suggested that patients wanted to be texted for appointment reminders, so we employed Demandforce,” said Higgins.

The company’s customer service is based on “How to Win Friends and Influence People” by Dale Carnegie and each staff member receives a copy when hired.

“Eat well, live well and see well.”



ALEKSANDRA WIANECKA, OD
OWNER
VISION FOR LIFE
BABYLON, NEW YORK
WWW.VISIONFORLIFEOD.COM

Aleksandra Wianecka, OD, has transformed a traditional practice in Babylon, N.Y., into a holistic eyecare practice with a mission of providing “Vision for Life.” She promotes healthy living to her patients by discussing diet and nutritional supplements, and she networks with various practitioners (chiropractors, acupuncturists and nutritional counselors) in helping her patients to live healthy lifestyles. Her efforts pay off as patients live healthier lives and make enthusiastic referrals.

“If I help to make patients feel better, they recommend our practice to entire families,” Dr. Wianecka explained. She cited a recent referral: “A young mother mentioned to the nutritionist at the health food store across the street that she was concerned about her eye health and that of her children. The nutritionist referred the patient to our practice, where we got the children started early on with regular eye exams.”

Aside from word of mouth, social media and the internet drive in new patients. Dr. Wianecka signed on with a firm that does SEO and pushes Vision for Life to the top of local OD listings. Facebook likes also drive new patients.

Wianecka soon will break ground on an expansion to double the size of her practice and make room for a new associate OD whom she plans to hire. “We want our new office to really deliver a wow factor,” she said.

“When you love what you do, it’s not work, it’s fun.”



JOSIAH YOUNG, OD, MS
PARTNER/OWNER
OPTICARE VISION CENTERS
NEWPORT, KENTUCKY
WWW.OPTICAREVISION.COM

Josiah Young, OD, joined Opticare Vision Centers with three locations in the Greater Cincinnati area in 2009.

In 2012, Young also became director of marketing for the ECP Network, a national group practice organization that helps independent eyecare providers grow their business. “My involvement with the ECP Network began after getting noticed for building up our ‘virtual practice,’” said Young.

“I redesigned our site, optimizing search engine optimization and adding online contact lens ordering, virtual try-on and a blog,” he said. “I also began a push with social media. This led to our practice improving in local search rankings. Now we are consistently on the first page in Google searches for eyecare in the Cincinnati area on almost all eyecare related keywords.”

Through the ECP Network, he developed a “Digital Practice Assessment” to help grade other ECPs on their online presence and show them where to improve. “Most ECPs don’t know how to improve their online presence. They use companies that claim to build websites and improve search engine ranking and pay a hefty fee for nothing more than a website. But it doesn’t matter what your website looks like if nobody can find it. Most don’t have big advertising budgets, so finding a way to promote themselves online without breaking the bank is critical to competing in the digital landscape.”



“As an optometrist from the developed world, I see a need and an obligation to support the growth of our profession in emerging countries, and to contribute, in a sustainable way, to the reduction in refractive error induced functional blindness. This is what I am passionate about and why I donate much of my personal time to this cause.”



JUAN CARLOS ARAGON, OD
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT
GLOBAL PROFESSIONAL
& CLINICAL AFFAIRS
COOPERVISION
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA
WWW.COOPERVISION.COM

CHAIR, GLOBAL BOARD
OPTOMETRY GIVING SIGHT GLOBAL CHAIR
GOLDEN, COLORADO
WWW.GIVINGSIGHT.ORG

Juan Carlos Aragon studied optometry at the Superior School of Medicine of the National Polytechnic Institute in Mexico City, graduating with honors in 1984. The Costa Rican native then joined the eyecare industry and over the past 29 years has occupied several international professional, clinical and business executive positions with Bausch+ Lomb, CIBA VISION, Ocular Sciences and CooperVision.

With CooperVision since 2005, he has been president of the company's business in Latin America, Asia Pacific, Europe, the Middle East and Africa. He is now senior vice president of global professional and clinical affairs for CooperVision.

Aragon has been involved with eyecare and contact lens education for many years. He helped estab-

lish the Asia Pacific Contact Lens Education Program, secured funding for the 1st World Congress on Optometric Education and has been instrumental in developing strategies for the International Association of Contact Lens Educators.

Aragon is chairman of Optometry Giving Sight's Global Board of Directors and its Global Development Board. He sits on the advisory board of the American Optometric Foundation and is a board member of the Contact Lens Institute. He has lectured on eyecare and contact lens related topics in over 50 countries worldwide and belongs to several professional organizations.

“Tell the truth and you don't have to remember what you said the next time you meet that person.”



BOBBY CHRISTENSEN, OD, FAAO
VISION SOURCE MIDWEST CITY
MIDWEST CITY, OKLAHOMA
WWW.VISIONSOURCE-MIDWESTCITY.COM

Bobby Christensen, OD, has had a profound positive impact on optometry. He has built a successful, full scope group optometry practice, is an active lecturer in clinical care and practice management, and continues to be instrumental in the growth of Vision Source as a successful and dynamic national network of independent optometry offices.

In 1995, Christensen became one of the first optometrists to join Vision Source, which had been founded four years earlier by Glenn Ellisor, OD. Since then, he has helped Vision Source grow into the largest membership alliance of eyecare professionals in the country. He currently serves as senior vice president, overseeing a team of network repre-

sentatives that services the 2,035 Vision Source practices in the U.S. and 60 practices in Canada that are part of the Vision Source Network.

A graduate of the University of Houston College of Optometry, Christensen began his career in 1974 when he joined the practice of Dr. Bob Baldwin. “He was forward thinking and was a good tutor. I learned entrepreneurial and business skills from him,” Christensen recalled.

Christensen has held numerous offices in professional organizations and has received many professional honors. He is well known as an author and lecturer in the areas of pathology, primary care optometry, contact lens care and practice management. He is a fellow in the American Academy of Optometrists and has earned diplomate status in the Cornea and Contact Lens Section.

“Support those who support you, whether they are your patients, your suppliers, or others with whom you do business, and constantly innovate to meet the ever-changing business landscape.”



RONALD F. COOKE, OD
PRESIDENT AND CEO
DIVERSIFIED OPHTHALMICS
CINCINNATI, OHIO
WWW.DIVOPT.COM

PRINCIPAL AND CONSULTANT
OPTICARE VISION CENTERS
GREATER CINCINNATI AREA
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After graduating from The Ohio State University College of Optometry in 1969, Ronald F. Cooke, OD, entered private practice and quickly recognized the importance of professional judgment in business decisions as the foundation for effective, successful vision care delivery. He became one of the primary innovators in the development of Opticare Vision Centers, a group of affiliated optometric practices in the Cincinnati area.

Realizing that private practitioners needed the same volume pricing advantages as chain retailers, Cooke co-founded Diversified Ophthalmics in 1977. Diversified implemented the concept of single sourcing so that ECPs could quickly and efficiently find the services and products they need with a single call, including ophthalmic lab services, frames, office supplies, ophthalmic equipment, diagnostic equipment and contact lens distribution.

After several years of testing the concept of affiliating independent ECPs by establishing and operating the IOE (Independent Ophthalmic Exchange), Cooke guided the development of the ECP Network, which is now among the top Group Practice Organizations in the country. Cooke felt that starting The ECP Network was important to help independents continue to compete by offering additional services such as affordable certified EHR technology, online digital practice assessments, and "Practice Booster" in-office practice consultation and business guidance.

In his 40 years of eyecare experience, Cooke has stayed ahead of the curve through innovation directed at helping independents be more successful in practice.

**NEIL GAILMARD, OD,
MBA, FAAO**
CO-FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT
PRIMA EYE GROUP
ATLANTA, GEORGIA
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CEO
GAILMARD EYE CENTER
MUNSTER, INDIANA
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"I'm passionate about practice management and helping optometrists succeed in independent practice."



Neil Gailmard, OD, MBA, FAAO, is founder of one of the country's most successful optometric practices, located in his hometown of Munster, Ind. Gailmard and his wife and partner, Susan Gailmard, OD, built the practice by "looking at everything we do, from the patient's point of view." The practice employs three full-time associate optometrists and a staff of 28 in a 10,000 square-foot eye center.

Despite having reached a pinnacle in terms of practice success, Gailmard continues to test out new ideas, and share his vast knowledge with other ODs.

"Gailmard Eye Center continues to serve as a laboratory of sorts for me to develop practice management strategies," he said. "It gives me a platform to test new concepts, and it keeps me up to date with new challenges, and I integrate those findings into my consulting work with other optometrists." Since earning his MBA degree in 1998, Gailmard has been actively advising optometric practice owners on how to increase their productivity and profitability.

Most recently, that consulting work is exclusively available through his new company, Prima Eye Group, which he started in 2011 in partnership with Jerry Hayes, OD. Prima is a fast-growing doctors' alliance, which provides numerous practice management services in addition to vendor discount programs. "Prima offers independent optometrists an opportunity to work one-on-one with top national consultants. We help optometrists with the practical aspects of operating and growing a practice, and we also have consultants who specialize in marketing, human resources and practice finance. Prima is a great value in practice management consulting."

"Professionalism is that virtue emanating from within ourselves, and is not predicated on where we choose to practice."



MARK J. UHLER, OD
UHLER VISION CARE
CARNEGIE, PENNSYLVANIA
WWW.DRUHLEROPTOMETRIST.COM
WWW.ENERGEYESASSOCIATION.COM

Mark J. Uhler, OD, has distinguished himself by creating a thriving 17-year-old practice located in two Walmart locations, specializing in contact lenses and medical eyecare. However, along with serving his patients, Uhler has become an "influencer" in the optometric profession thanks to the Energyeyes Association, of which he is co-founder and president. The organization focuses on elevating the perception of ODs practicing in a corporate-affiliated setting.

"Service and quality of care are both a unique function of the practitioner, not the location. Corporately based optometrists provide the same level, and at times, a better level of professional attention, expertise and service than private practitioners, regardless of landlord," Uhler said. Uhler, who graduated from the Pennsylvania College of Optometry, Salus University, in 1992 with a Clinical Excellence Citation from The Eye Institute, was named a 2005 Walmart Doctor of the Year Awardee. He also has served on the Walmart Advisory Panel for the past six years. As an AOA member the past 26 years, he has served on the Pennsylvania Optometric Association for the past four years.

He said his work with Energyeyes creates a community for corporate-affiliated ODs, as participating doctors work together to change how their place in the profession is viewed: "I encourage young ODs and new graduates to fully explore the fantastic opportunities of practicing within a corporate environment," he said. "Don't buy into the myth. Find out for yourself." ■

