

# VM SUMMIT 2022



VM LEADERSHIP SUMMIT 2022

**Discover & ReCALIBRATE!**

Trends, Ideas And Tactics For Confronting Radical Change

## VM Summit Examines Megatrends Shaped by the COVID-19 Pandemic

NEW YORK—Retail reinvention, fresh branding strategies, technology's impact on health and vision and expanding patients' access to care—megatrends shaped by the global pandemic—were brought into sharp focus by an array of experts at the Vision Monday Leadership Summit on March 30. The exclusive, in-person event, held at the Times Center here, featured a unique group of speakers who examined the dizzying pace of changes that are transforming retail and health care right now.

For the 2022 VM Summit, Platinum Sponsors are EssilorLuxottica, HEA + PECAA, and VSP Global Premier. Gold Sponsors are CareCredit, Ocuco, Sunbit and The Vision Council. Silver Sponsors are Alcon and Dr. Contact Lens.

The day's program, "Discover & Recalibrate! Trends, Ideas and Tactics for Confronting Radical Change," brought together senior industry executives, optical retailers, leading eyecare professionals, suppliers and key opinion leaders from the worldwide optical industry.



(L to R) Jobson's Marc Ferrara, Marge Axelrad and Andrew Karp welcomed Summit attendees to the VM Leadership Summit.

They listened as diverse voices from outside and within the business offered glimpses of the near future, where disruption remains constant, and consumers are one step ahead. Summit attendees learned about the new purpose of a store, how brands are being built, how the tech titans are targeting vision and innovators are creating new pathways to patient-centric care. ■

### The CEO Leadership Moment...21

**Vik Malhotra**, Senior Partner, McKinsey & Co.

### Retail Is the New Media Channel...22

**John Carroll III**, Head of Advisory for North America, Coresight Research

**Sydney Stinson Ferguson**, VP Marketing, Sunglass Hut North America

**Louis-Félix Boulanger**, Co-Founder and Chief Operating Officer, BonLook

### Brand-Building, Rewired...24

**Davitha Tiller**, EVP, Social & Integration, Red Havas

**Lisa Sun**, Founder & CEO, Gravitas

**Whitney Fishman Zember**, Managing Partner, Innovation & Consumer Technology Wavemaker

### Vision-Tech Convergence...26

**Ruth Reader**, Reporter, *Fast Company*

**Calvin W. Roberts, MD**, President and CEO, Lighthouse Guild

### New Access Points and Routes to Care...28

**David Reitnauer**, VP, Health & Wellness Specialized Services, Walmart

**Solomon Gould, OD**, MBA, Practice Management Consultant and Author

**Amanda Nanasy, OD**, Florida Institute of Sports Vision The Eye Center of Pembroke Pines

**Jennifer Stewart, MD**, Chief Vision Officer, Performance 20/20, Partner, Norwalk EyeCare

### Jack Be Nimble...34

**David Kepron**, Founder, NXTLVL Experience Design



## Opening Session Looks to the Role CEOs Play in a Company's Success Story

**K**icking off the Summit program was a session titled “The CEO Leadership Moment,” featuring Vikram (Vik) Malhotra, a senior partner in McKinsey’s New York office and co-author of a new book, *CEO Excellence: The Six Mindsets That Distinguish the Best Leaders from the Rest*. Malhotra posed the following question: What really makes a good CEO? What separates the best from the rest? And what are the characteristics of a truly successful CEO?

Throughout his career, Malhotra has spent extensive time counseling CEOs and boards. He is also active with major nonprofits outside of McKinsey. He said, “Being a CEO is tough. Their tenure is short and there is lots of failure.”

Malhotra elaborated about how the role of the CEOs portrayed in the book extends to all business leaders. He said, “The CEO role is a difficult one. In their first year of the job, studies show that more than half of CEOs believe they are failing. Those that do the job well, realize that the impact of the role matters.”

For the book, Malhotra interviewed 67 of the highest performing CEOs in business today, including Jamie Dimon of JPMorgan Chase and Reed Hastings of Netflix. In the book, he outlined the six responsibilities of great CEOs, which he presented to the Summit audience.

The CEO is the Ultimate Negotiator:

1. Be bold and set the direction.
2. Engage the board, help the directors help the business.
3. Connect with stakeholders and start with “why?”
4. Manage personal effectiveness by doing what only you can do.
5. Mobilize through leaders, solve problems for the team’s psychology.
6. Align the organization and treat the soft stuff as the hard stuff.



*Vik Malhotra elaborated about how the role of the CEOs portrayed in the book *CEO Excellence*, extends to all business leaders. He outlined the six responsibilities of great CEOs, which he presented to the Summit audience.*



Malhotra observed that today’s business leaders are spending more time connecting with stakeholders and customers than ever before. “Being a CEO is more than just inheriting a company and running it—good CEOs are bold, they reframe the game, act like an outsider and make big moves early and often,” said Malhotra.

In today’s ever-changing business landscape, in order to make big changes, good CEOs need to pick one important cultural change and focus on it closely, Malhotra advised. “When it comes to speaking out about controversial and political issues, the best CEOs are clear and

they anchor the beliefs, purposes and values of their company and focus on the things the company stands for,” said Malhotra.

He advised CEOs to “mobilize through their leaders, engage their board of directors and make the team the star. “You don’t need a team of stars—you need a star team,” Malhotra said.

“Good CEOs are not afraid to make big moves and they realize that to be successful you sometimes have to treat the soft stuff as hard stuff. Only do what you can do, and do what only you can do,” said Malhotra. ■

— Mary Kane, Executive Editor

# VM SUMMIT 2022



## As a Media Channel, Retail Offers New Messaging Opportunities

NEW YORK—Amid changing consumer dynamics, supply chain disruption and all of their other challenges, retailers are now faced with figuring out the developing concept of retail as a media channel, and all of the new messaging opportunities this presents. This idea was tackled at the VM Summit in a session appropriately titled, “Retail Is the New Media Channel.”

The session featured three speakers: John Carroll, head of North America Advisory for CoreSight Research, one of the most influential retail and economic trend firms in the world; Sydney Stinson Ferguson, vice president, marketing for Sunglass Hut North America; and Louis-Félix Boulanger, co-founder and COO of Montreal-based eyewear retailer BonLook.

*Vision Monday's* SVP and editorial director Marge Axelrad set up the session, noting that optical companies “need to begin thinking about messaging in a new way.” She added, “The fast internet and the fast times in which we live are changing the ways in which retailers can become media channels.”

Carroll led off the three panelists, noting that while the U.S. e-commerce market via live streaming was only \$3 billion in 2019, Coresight forecasts this will grow to \$17 billion in 2022. “That’s a really conservative forecast,” he noted.

One of the reasons for his optimistic projections, he said, is the way live streaming has really taken off in China. Coresight estimated that the livestreaming market in China also was valued at \$3 billion back in 2017. This year, however, Coresight forecasts that livestreaming e-commerce will hit \$497 billion in China. “As you can see, things in China dramatically, dramatically, changed. This hockey stick kind of move [upward] is something that can happen here in the United States.”

He also noted that he believes there are individuals in China who are achieving over \$2 billion in a single livestreaming e-commerce chat.



(L to R) John Carroll, Sydney Stinson Ferguson and Louis-Félix Boulanger explored how retailers are figuring out the developing concept of retail as a media channel, and all of the new messaging opportunities this presents.

“They go out to millions of people and they’re just talking to people on a Zoom camera...These types of numbers are just mind-boggling.” He said one of the factors that will drive livestreaming growth in the U.S. is that “the age group of 25 to 34 is buying more things, they’re viewing more livestreams and they are actually shopping via livestreams.”

Carroll urged retailers to test live streaming on their own website, even if there’s only one individual retail location in their enterprise. “Don’t worry too much about getting all of the volume that you [might optimistically anticipate],” he said, and added, “Don’t let complexity and confusion be your barrier to grow in this livestreaming business.”

Stinson Ferguson of Sunglass Hut told the audience that when the pandemic first began in 2020, the company had “to pivot very, very quickly, and we had to come up with something that could be meaningful to consumers, but was true to our DNA.”

“What we did was to tap into those things that people enjoy and that make them happy,” she said. “How do we make lemonade out of lemons?” So, Sunglass Hut began to use its social media channels to showcase things that “bring joy to consumers during a time that was really, really tough for people.” The retailer also ramped up its support of get-togethers and events such as live yoga sessions and meditation classes, and even supported roller-skating events in Los Angeles and New York.

Stinson Ferguson also noted that for her, as for many people she knows, sunglasses can be almost “magical” in their effect on one’s outlook and sense of well-being. “They have an intrinsic value and an extrinsic value. So you could be having the crappiest day ever and you put on those glasses and you think that you are the ‘flyest’ thing in the world. And because you feel that way, it gives you a sense of confidence.”

She added that “the amazing thing about

**Continued on page 30**

# VM SUMMIT 2022



## Speakers Highlight the Need for Brands to Explore New Outreach Mediums

NEW YORK—Brand communication with customers was at the forefront of the Vision Monday Leadership Summit held prior to Vision Expo East. With the emergence of countless new social media tools and the increasing diversity in the way customers receive marketing messages, speakers at this year's Summit pressed the need for brands to explore new outreach mediums.

Leading off the session titled "Brand-Building Rewired," Davitha Tiller, EVP of social and integration at Red Havas, noted that there are many macro trends in communications that are forcing brands to create custom messages for various audiences. Red Havas is one of the country's largest PR firms, specializing in the merged media model of creating content focusing on storytelling that is earned, social and experiential.

"There needs to be consistent branding in content," said Tiller, adding that 48 percent of content being put out by brands is not having a meaningful impact on audiences. She noted brands are experiencing a retail renaissance where customers are wanting more than a simple click-and-buy scenario. She believes customers are interested in the "collective benefits" of brands including functional and personal.

Tiller explained that brands need to be able to convey this message in ways that target specific audiences whether it is TikTok videos or other social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram. She said the growing trend of live streams is forcing businesses to put a face to the name in ways they never had before. "This is a powerful new way to sell brands and products and it's something to tap into from a marketing perspective," she said.

She added that brands also need to examine how they can use their own teams and the power of influencers to increase their impact. "You need to think about how you are going to leverage employees and influencers," she said, pointing out that content is now a commodity that needs to be treated with the same care and attention as the products themselves.



*Davitha Tiller at Red Havas noted that there are many macro trends in communications that are forcing brands to create custom messages for various audiences.*



*Gravitas' Lisa Sun said her company used the challenges of COVID-19 to strengthen and grow the business, noting events like the pandemic are when people discover their superpowers.*



*Wavemaker's Whitney Fishman Zember said the pandemic uncovered a lot about the health care system and today's customers are now more aware of the control they have over the platforms from which they receive care.*

This is something Lisa Sun, founder and CEO of Gravitas, experienced firsthand during the COVID-19 pandemic when her company was forced to pivot from selling women's work shapewear to personal protection equipment. Sun said her company used the challenges of COVID-19 to strengthen and grow the business, noting events like the pandemic are when people discover their superpowers. "This is when you discover your unique and distinctive capabilities and know your superpowers can be deployed to business," she said.

During the pandemic, Sun relied heavily on her team to ensure the company could survive a sudden shift to work from home and a significant drop in orders. She also worked to ensure that her manufacturing team was also kept employed by diversifying her offerings to include handbags and other accessories.

Admitting that she was the product of a "tiger mom," she said this only served to give her the confidence to pursue her dreams. It also taught her that you have to let the people who work with you have a voice and an active role in your success.

"You have to let people own their ideas. That makes them much more committed when you launch," she said, adding having your team on board in all facets of business makes it easier to pivot during hard times.

This message was reiterated by Whitney Fishman Zember, group client director, media innovation and consumer technology at Wavemaker. She highlighted how the pandemic led many businesses to pivot their messaging and branding, particularly in the areas of health care. Limited access to all levels of health care meant patients had to turn to virtual and online care options.

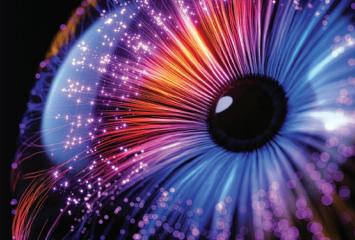
She said the pandemic created many challenges for businesses who suddenly found they couldn't deliver their products through traditional channels, pointing to the bigger question of "How do you challenge and become a disrupter when the world is a challenge?"

"The pandemic uncovered a lot about the health care system," she said, adding customers are now more aware of the control they have over the platforms from which they receive care. "It's never been more important to experiment with telehealth."

Zember pointed out that companies that want to go up against entities like Amazon and Walmart in health care need to understand that the point of sale is just one step in the health care journey. "It's not just the point of sale. You need to be there through every step and touch the eerie part of the customer journey. You need to understand the lessons of the users and bring that back to your brand." ■

— Sarah McGoldrick, Contributing Editor

# VM SUMMIT 2022



## Talking Tech: Two Takes on Health and Vision Trends

NEW YORK—Big Tech companies are increasingly intersecting with the optical industry. Prescription-ready, wearable tech such as Amazon's Echo Frames, which offer high quality audio and is Alexa-controllable, and Ray-Ban Stories—a collaboration between Meta and EssilorLuxottica that features audio and video capabilities—are gaining popularity with consumers. Apple is developing its own eyeglass wearable which, according to patents, may have augmented reality (AR) capabilities. Google, which acquired smart glass maker North several years ago, may field its own version of AR technology.

To better understand how these tech giants are using consumer wearables as a component of their broader health care strategies, VM invited Ruth Reader, a *Fast Company* reporter specializing in health and tech, to share her insights with Summit attendees. In a wide-ranging conversation with VM's Andrew Karp that was part of a session titled, "Talking Tech... Two Takes on Health & Vision Trends," Reader offered her thoughts on Big Tech's approach to health and vision.

"All the companies are making interesting moves," she said. She cited Amazon Care, a hybrid program that offers virtual and in-person consumer health services and Amazon Web Services, which delivers cloud computing services to many health care business, as being indicative of the multi-pronged approach being taken by Amazon and other Big Tech players.

Consumer wearables for health and wellness offering everything from digital heart monitoring to insulin monitoring continue to grow in popularity, Reader said. However, the accuracy of these tools is still not 100 percent in the eyes of the medical industry. Innovation and research continues to ensure that these products provide the best and most accurate information for medical professionals. This is something Reader believes could take time.

"It's too early to talk about success because they are all long-term players," she said. "We are going to have to see what is helpful to the patient and the doctor and what will change consumer health behavior."



*"It's not the eyes that see, but your brain that sees and the same technology that is being used on self-driving cars can be applied to vision aid tools," said Calvin Roberts, MD, Lighthouse Guild.*



*Paralleling the growth in consumer wearables is medical technology that allows health care providers to remotely monitor patients. Fast Company's Ruth Reader told VM's Andrew Karp that she believes the line between the two is blurring.*

Paralleling the growth in consumer wearables is medical technology that allows health care providers to remotely monitor patients. Reader believes the line between the two is blurring, particularly as consumers acquire devices that let them accurately take certain biometric measurements that can then be shared with providers during a tele-health exam.

However, she cautioned that more needs to be done to ensure that the technology doesn't "interfere with doctors doing their job." With countless projects in the works from tech companies across the globe, she said one of the most important issues that needs to be considered is accessibility.

One of the biggest changes she is seeing in the industry is "apps as medicine" and the role they are playing in therapeutics and health care monitoring. She said it is easy for companies to develop apps that tackle smaller issues and make them free, creating a significant difference in access to care.

"Many of the early projects are trying to improve access and look at how tech can increase access to health care," she said. "The blending of biology and technology is such a cool territory that has the profound ability to change lives."

The role of technology in health care was explored further with Calvin Roberts, MD, CEO of Lighthouse Guild, one of the leading organizations that provides services to blind or vision-impaired

people. The prevalence of vision loss in society today is one of the driving factors behind his research and commitment to finding solutions for people suffering from vision impairment. "For every person who is legally blind there are seven who are visually impaired," said Dr. Roberts.

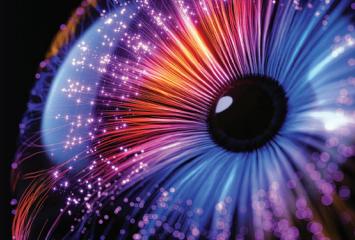
Technology innovators have begun to take note, creating new and more advanced products that make navigating the world easier for people with vision health issues.

"What's happened in the last two years is the marrying between AI and technology," Dr. Roberts observed. He believes this will be the way people with vision loss navigate the world in the future. OrCam technology, which uses AI to read road signs and help the visually impaired get from point A to point B has already been adopted by major cities in the U.S. The technology also helps people read documents and recognize faces. Roberts strongly believes AI is a step in the right direction for giving people with vision loss the ability to see the world again.

"It's not the eyes that see, but your brain that sees," he said, noting that the same technology that is being used on self-driving cars can be applied to vision aid tools. "All the effort being put into autonomous driving could be repositioned to help people who are blind or visually impaired." ■

— Sarah McGoldrick, Contributing Editor

# VM SUMMIT 2022



## Walmart Sees an Opportunity to Provide 'Affordable Health Care'

NEW YORK—While the significant role Walmart has played in American retail over the past 50 years is readily apparent, the company's effort to provide health care services, especially to underserved individuals and rural markets, has often gone unnoticed, in spite of the major effort Walmart is making in the health care sector. This was one of the underlying themes in the VM Summit presentation of David Reitnauer, vice president for health and wellness, and specialized services at Walmart Inc.

Addressing the landscape in retail health, Reitnauer told attendees that Walmart has been in the pharmacy business for over 40 years and in the optical retail sector for over 30 years, "but we've really started to accelerate in the last decade."

He noted that when Walmart launched its affordable generic drug program in 2006 (\$4 to fill any generic drug prescription) the company believed this unique offering would be an incredible way to drive store traffic and sales. But what the company also discovered was that in addition to "taking share from the competition and things of that nature," there were many Walmart customers who weren't getting the care they needed because they couldn't afford the medication. This led to escalating health issues for this group.

This idea is what forms the company's thinking around "affordable access to care," he noted. "We want to make sure that we're providing affordable access to care, and there has been tremendous learning around the \$4 prescription program."

Reitnauer also noted that Walmart works diligently to "get the base model right," particularly as it relates to the company's new Health Centers. Reitnauer leads Walmart's optical and audiology businesses, including retail sales, lab manufacturing and doctor of optometry relationships.

"The number one reason people want to come to work at Walmart is scale," he told the audience. "And so what we have to do is make sure that when we scale something, we do it right." Reitnauer noted that during the pandemic Walmart took time to reevaluate its Health Center model



*David Reitnauer noted that during the pandemic Walmart took time to reevaluate its Health Center model and worked to "put the customer in the center of everything we want to do."*

and worked to "put the customer in the center of everything we want to do."

With its nationwide store base, Walmart has grown to a position in which 90 percent of the U.S. population lives within 10 miles of one of its stores, and 70 percent of the population lives within 5 miles of a Walmart store. Reitnauer noted that the company has achieved an NPS (net promoter score) of 80 with its health care offerings, and that the retailer is set up to provide telehealth services across all 50 states via its 2021 acquisition of MeMD, a multi-specialty telehealth provider.

"Four thousand of our stores are in medically underserved communities," Reitnauer said. "Those are the things that give us the right to say that we can play in health care, and also to say we can provide care in those medically underserved communities, and medically underserved doesn't just mean rural today. A lot of inner cities are medically underserved."

He added, "We want to make sure that the customer feels like whether [he or she] is going to the optometrist, or the dentist or the doctor, that everyone knows what's going on with [their] case. 'Everyone knows what's going on with me and I

don't have to repeat it time and time again,'" he said, echoing the typical patient. Walmart had approximately 20 of its new Health Centers at the beginning of the year, with plans to add more in 2022.

A few days after Reitnauer's presentation at the VM Summit, Walmart announced that it would expand the Health Center format with the opening of five new Walmart Health centers across North and Central Florida. This marks the company's expansion of this new format in Florida, beginning with Jacksonville. Four additional locations in Florida will open this month in the Jacksonville, Orlando and Tampa areas, the company said.

In its vision centers, Reitnauer noted that the company has a new prototype format, which it will have rolled out to 40 percent of its store base by the end of the year. The overall plan is to roll out the new vision center prototype to "in excess of 400 stores a year" and to provide this updated look and feel as a way to make sure customers have this more modern environment for their care. Walmart operates more than 2,800 vision centers nationwide.

Reitnauer also commented on the success of the recent Walmart partnership in eyewear with Elton John.

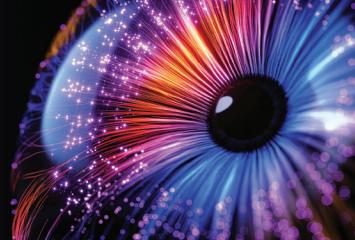
"It isn't just a partnership with Elton John eyewear [with the idea] 'Hey, here are some frames.' It is really a partnership with who he is and this is an incredible story...And if you think of an iconic eyewear individual, that's Elton John."

Then three prominent optometrists—Solomon Gould, OD, Jennifer Stewart, OD and Amanda Nanasy, OD, held a three-way conversation which focused on how they are expanding their scope of practice to include new methods of primary care that open new access points for patients, while also differentiating their practices.

Dr. Solomon Gould is a professional speaker, practice management consultant, author and practice owner of two private practices in the Twin Cities. The 4th generation optometrist with over 14

**Continued on page 30**

# VM SUMMIT 2022



## As a Media Channel, Retail Offers New Messaging Opportunities

**Continued from page 22**

Sunglass Hut" is that the stores can make the experience even more magical by bringing the consumer "that touch of luxury without all of the costs associated with it. ... You may not be able to afford that Chanel bag, but you can buy those [Chanel] glasses and put them on and you can get that same incredible experience."

She added, "But this was not the moment for us to think that way. This was the moment for us to think about how can we make people feel better about the situation going on in the world. It was less about that commercial moment, and more about how can we bring emotional wellness and well-being to consumers," she noted, which is what led to the effort to tap into the

DNA of the brand.

The final speaker, Boulanger, is co-founder of omnichannel retailer BonLook. He said one of the reasons for starting the BonLook business was because he wasn't "super happy about the experience he had purchasing eyewear in traditional optical stores."

He added, "We felt there was a way with e-commerce and other technologies to really create a much different experience and to cater to a consumer who looks like us (in the middle of the Gen X and Gen Y age groups)." The company debuted online in 2012 and has now expanded to 36 physical stores across Canada, and it was acquired by FYidoctors in November 2021.

"From the beginning, we have really viewed

retail and e-commerce as one thing melding to offer [a unique] experience to consumers, and not separate channels," he added.

Looking ahead, Boulanger said he expects the omnichannel to become even more important to retailers, especially as the Millennial population ages and adds to their disposable income. "By 2028, they will have control of more than half of the disposable income in America, which is around \$7.1 trillion in disposable income. That's why you are hearing a lot about livestreaming and being omnichannel and about the shifts that are taking place—it's really about the rise of this generation into adulthood and making purchasing decisions." ■

— Mark Tosh, Senior Editor

## ODs Embrace New Tech to Expand Access to Primary Care

**Continued from page 28**

years of consulting experience for both the private and public sectors said, "The field of optometry has stepped up over the past year." Dr. Gould pointed to three prominent trends in optometry: the rise of preventive holistic care, new technologies, such as telehealth, and a serious movement to take eyecare to the next level.

Dr. Gould started the conversation by quizzing the audience about what is the most common sports injury today—and the collective audience response was concussion.

Dr. Nanasy specializes in performance vision enhancement and vision rehabilitation after concussion and she practices at two locations—the Florida Institute of Sports Vision and The Eye Center of Pembroke Pines. Dr. Nanasy said, "I give my patients above what they expect—comprehensive care and education about concussion." She stressed that all optometrists and athletes, especially children, need to be educated about

the dangers and treatment of concussion.

She also talked about how eye tracking technology, such as RightEye, could be used as part of a sports vision evaluation. "Technology like RightEye allows me to show patients exactly what's happening with their vision. It has also allowed me to learn how to use prism to correct the misalignment of patients' eyes."

Dr. Stewart is a nationally recognized speaker, with a passion for helping optometrists and organizations with operations, optical success, contact lens sales and practice management through her company OD Perspectives and she is a partner at Norwalk EyeCare in Connecticut.

"I am passionate about sports vision and my goal is that all ODs should have an idea about what sports vision is. Eyecare protection has come a long way—it's no longer about massive goggles. The paradigm is shifting on what we are wearing for sports protection, which is good because the stats on injuries are concerning."



(L to R) Three prominent optometrists—Jennifer Stewart, OD, panel moderator Solomon Gould, OD, and Amanda Nanasy, OD, discussed how they are expanding their scope of practice to include new methods of primary care that open new access points for patients.

"Today's ODs need to be compliant with the standards associated with lenses and UV protection. But it's just as important for them to be up-to-date on the latest technologies for patients' vision protection," she said. ■

— Mark Tosh, Senior Editor

# VM SUMMIT 2022

## Scenes at the VM Summit



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1. (L to R) The VSP contingent included Wendy Hauteman, Emily Mancini, Sean Cooley, Michelle Skinner and Michael Guyette.

2. Darryl Glover, OD, MyEyeDr. (l) with Justin Bazan, OD, Young ODs of America.

3. (L to R) Adam Ramsey, OD, Socialite Vision, with Brad Oatney, OD, Delaware Vision Care and Amanda Lee, Vision Source.

4. (L to R) MyEyeDr.'s Scott Allison, OD, Sue Downes, Artis Beatty, OD, and Angela McCoy.

5. Caitlin Pringle (l) and Liz McBurney, CVS Health.

6. (L to R) Ocuco's Shannon Olsson and Leo Mac Canna with Kaiser Permanente's Susy Yu, OD, and Elizabeth Kramer.

7. New England College of Optometry's Gary Chu, OD, with SUNY College of Optometry's David Heath, OD.

8. American Academy of Optometry's Peter Scott (l) and Mandy Taylor (r) flank Harry Bohnsack, OD, and Francois Couillard, Canadian Association of Optometrists.

9. Monokul's Masoud Nafey, OD, (l) with PECAA's Jim McGrann and Shamir's Raanan Naftalovich in the background.

10. Safilo Group's Angelo Trocchia (l) with Safilo North America's Steve Wright.



**11.** (L to R) New England College of Optometry's Howard Purcell, OD, with EssilorLuxottica's Rick Gadd, EyeMed's John Lahr, OD, and Essilor Instrument's Anne Marie Lahr, OD.

**12.** (L to R) Camille Cohen, OD, Pearle Vision, with Dr. Essence Johnson, Black EyeCare Perspective and SUNY Optometry's Judith St. Louis.

**13.** (L to R) David Schwirtz, Iris The Visual Group, Nicolas Barbier, EssilorLuxottica and Brad Oatney OD, Delaware Vision Care.

**14.** Saysha Blazier, OD, South Shore Eye Associates with Shalu Pal, OD, FAAO, Dr. Shalu Pal and Associates.

**15.** (L to R) Bard Optical's Mick Hall, Metro Optics' Brett Schumacher and John Bonizio, with GPN's Ed Buffington.

**16.** (L to R) Dr. Contact Lens' Brianna Rhue and Robin Rhodes with Frames Data's Tom Lamond.

**17.** PECAA's Justin Manning, OD, with Harbir Sian, OD.

**18.** Santinelli International's Gerard Santinelli with Kristen Tischler, Advancing Eyecare.

**19.** (L to R) Edward Beiner, Leigh and Todd Rogers Berberian, Todd Rogers Eyewear and Europtics' Ken Melies.

**20.** (L to R) The Vision Council's Nathan Troxell, OcuDoc Mobile's Grady Lenski, The Vision Council's Ashley Mills, OMG's Bill Gerber and Ocuco's Leo Mac Canna.



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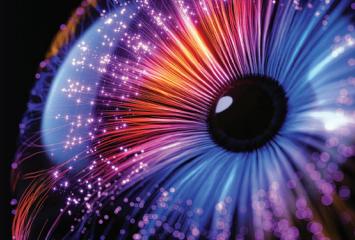


19



20

# VM SUMMIT 2022



## David Kepron Speaks About Culture Shifts and Adapting to the Unknown

NEW YORK—The pace of change is literally dizzying. In fact, it's impossible for any human to "keep up" to manage the speed of it, certainly as digital technology moves ahead so rapidly. Those observations were part of the closing session of VM's Summit, as offered by David Kepron, founder of the NXTVL Experience Design podcast, former head of global design for Marriott International, an experienced retail design expert, author and architect.

Following the day's speakers who all pointed to so much existing and pending change, he titled his closing talk, "Jack Be Nimble." Kepron underscored the radical shifts escalated by technology as well as the global pandemic and urged the Summit audience to realize they are not alone in attempting to cope with it and make decisions through it.

Kepron said, "The flow of this expanded change



*Architect, designer, podcast host and author, David Kepron closed the VM Summit with a session titled "Jack Be Nimble" during which he addressed the often overwhelming human challenge of coping with and processing today's tech, culture shifts and adapting to the unknown.*

makes it hard to take a moment to breathe and catch our breath. We'll just be continually moving on to the next thing. And I think this poses particular challenges for all of us who are in business."

He observed, "Some 40 percent of businesses will die in the next 10 years, if they don't get it together and figure out how to shift their whole way of thinking and doing things to stay on pace, if they can, with the change that technology is offering us these days. This, of course, suggests that we're going to have to become more nimble. So 'Jack be nimble' means that we have to look at a couple of things that are happening culturally now to begin understand that nimble is the name of the game."

Kepron pointed out there is, "Caution ahead. We're now exposed to a younger generation of woke kids who are coming into the marketplace

**Continued on page 36**

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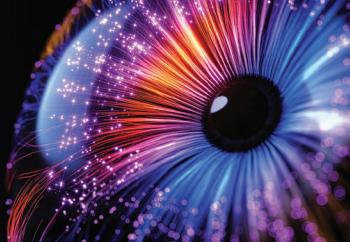
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# VM SUMMIT 2022



## Adapting to Uncertainty Can Help Us Embrace Change, Be Nimble and Accept New Possibilities

**Continued from page 34**

as experienced-seeking consumers who are very different. Gen Z is a very different animal than any generation before because they have literally never known anything other than the technology world that they're living in.

"We also know that they're very conscious about the ecology, they're very conscious about well-being. The Global Wellness Institute projects trillions of dollars in this market in the next few years. They're very woke about sexuality and issues about identity. And they're very, very tapped into the world of racial equity, social justice, and all of those things that we all are now discovering are part of the way we need to think about our businesses."

Kepron further observed that this new type of thinking is driving a range of changes in the way brands need to communicate their stories and

legacy brands. "When brands are out of sync with their customers, they run a particularly difficult path. And that is increasingly true if brands even have strong legacy stories, which are particularly vulnerable to these cultural shifts, because they base everything that they are on tradition. The problem with this in trying to attract the new young customer is that they are asking "how does a brand allow me to reconnect to a larger story?" There's a reversal of dynamics now."

Kepron continued, "If we're really interested in innovation and fresh thinking and discovery, we'd take a moment to hit the pause button. Now, we were gifted that opportunity in the past couple of years. But we have to remain curious in that ambiguity and uncertainty. Adapting to this uncertainty is about your mindset. Are you fixed? Or are you rigid? Or are you willing to change? Because people don't generally resist change, they resist

being changed."

Among Kepron's final acknowledgements of the way so many are feeling right now, he noted, "I'm telling you being lost isn't so tragic. Loss is tragic. And we conflate those two. So, I want to try to invite you into this world where you can rethink being 'lost.' And think of it this way. Think of it as an acronym for Leaving Old Scripts Temporarily. Confronting these old scripts that we've built around ourselves is really important because in that we find the opportunity to reinvent them, to recreate and to reimagine each moment."

Restating the nursery rhyme, "Jack, be nimble, Jack be quick, Jack jump over that candlestick," Kepron also concluded, "Sometimes in business we have to take leaps of faith. This is how change is made." ■

— Marge Axelrad, Senior VP, Editorial Director



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