

INVISION®

JULY-AUGUST 2025

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE AMERICAN EYECARE PROFESSIONAL

**KYLA
SKINNER**
OF SPECS
BY KYLA

WINNER

**AMERICA'S
FINEST**
OPTICAL
RETAILERS
2025

**DREAM
ON**

**BECAUSE
DREAMS CAN
COME
TRUE...** Just ask
INVISION's
2025 America's
Finest Optical
Retailers

9
**HONORABLE
MENTIONS** WHO
TURNED THEIR
OWNERSHIP
ASPIRATIONS
INTO TANGIBLE
SUCCESSES

NIKE VISION

Rabid Collection | Nike 8159



Follow Your Heart | VSP Vision

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McALLISTER

MODERN ORIGINAL EYEWEAR

© 2025 McAllister. Styles shown: MC4652, MC457, ALTAIREYEWEAR.COM | 800.505.5567



Follow Your Heart | VSP Vision



MODERN DESIGN NARROW FIT

Taking its direction from the clean, modern aesthetic of Scandinavian design, Kliik denmark eyewear is designed specifically for men and women requiring smaller eye sizes. The minimalist design is elevated through quality materials, bold coloration, custom design elements, and an array of interesting patterns and textures. Kliik denmark offers a wide repertoire of styling for the narrow PD consumer with a strong sense of style.

Style: K-793



Booth: P14063

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INSPIRATION

18 | PRODUCT FOCUS

From sculptural contrasts to hypnotic patterns, black and white specs and sunnies deliver drama.

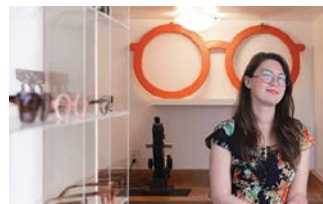
28 | BETTER VISION

Making your business comfortable and attractive isn't about adding more merchandising. Let us introduce you to five office design pros.

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45 | BEST OF THE BEST OPTING OUT, CASHING IN

A Montana practice that launched its own membership plan — and saw better care, higher revenue, and happier patients as a result.



50 | BRAND PORTFOLIO ORANGE AND ORIGINAL

This British Columbia boutique's quirky, cohesive brand draws from its founder's vibrant personal style.

54 | REAL DEAL THE CASE OF THE HARDLY WORKING

No one seems to want to work anymore! And these practice owners feel that if they're 'too hard' on employees, they will just quit.

invisionmag.com

Industry analysis, news and tips for eyecare professionals.

/bulletins

The free, essential bulletin for eyecare pros, delivered daily.



58 | SANITY FILES

A Portland, ME optician/owner who loves being 'the glasses guy' but hates cleaning them and who may just be responsible for not one, but two, America's Finest wins.



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ON THE COVER:

From top to bottom: Anne et Valentin Dante, Theo Aube, Anne et Valentin Bari, Anne et Valentin Watz, Danielle Rattray Stevie, and the Krewe Sasha, with the Nina Mür Oprah on Kyla Skinner's left pinkie. invisionmag.com/americasfinest

PLAY YOUR CARDS RIGHT IN VEGAS NO BLUFF, JUST A FREE FRAME & FRESH COLLECTIONS

This isn't a gamble, it's a sure win for independents. Book your appointment in advance, preview the OGI Eyewear collections at Vision Expo, and walk away with a free frame. No pressure, no catch, just bold designs and smart styling made for practices like yours.

We're not niche. We're not another corporate clone. We're your independent partner in making your board more original, your styling more impactful, and your sales more successful.

WHY OGI EYEWEAR IS A WINNING HAND:

- ✓ Designed for the North American market
- ✓ Premium materials & top-tier craftsmanship
- ✓ A no-overlap portfolio of 8 distinctive brands
- ✓ Virtual try-on available for every style in our collection
- ✓ Exceptional, personalized support from start to finish

SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT



Let's connect in Vegas and see how we can help you do what you do best.

Booth P18019

Book now to secure your appointment.

Sit for a full preview.

Receive a free frame.



Style: Mini Soda

5 SMART TIPS YOU'LL FIND IN THIS ISSUE

1. First came *Summerween* and now we're already talking about your holiday email schedule... Help! **MANAGER'S TO DO, PAGE 22**

2. If your optical is starting to look like a Shenanigans, then check out these Office Space designers, who will help you better express yourself. **BETTER VISION, PAGE 28**

3. What if it's not the early bird that always gets the worm? **TIP SHEET, PAGE 44**

4. The DIY and locally sourced branding of this Canadian boutique can go toe-to-toe with anything a sleek branding agency could have come up with. **BRAND PORTFOLIO, PAGE 50**

5. Chris Wheaton quite literally passed the baton to this year's America's Finest winner. Talk about going out with style! **SANITY FILES, PAGE 58**



NOTE FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

I DO NOT DREAM OF LABOR

They say, "Do what you love, and you'll never work a day in your life."

BUT WHAT IF you do what you dream? The 10 eyecare businesses included in this year's class of America's Finest Optical Retailer honorees all had big dreams ... And they all arguably love what they do ... But that doesn't mean that they don't work.

It was only through seriously hard work. Total and absolute

focus. A pathological commitment to achieving their dreams. That led them to not only the opening and success of their businesses, but to them being honored as one of 2025's America's Finest. (You can read more about them starting on page 32.)

Quite frankly, I am in awe of them. That sort of clarity of pur-

pose and path? The single-minded determination that must result from pursuing something you're truly passionate about? I am absolutely green with envy.

I chose my career because ... if I had to work every day to survive than it seemed like the least soul crushing thing to do. But like James Baldwin, "I have no dream job, I do not dream of labor" and I never have. I dream of delicious meals, giggling with my loved ones, and summer nights so perfect you never want them to end ... Not my job.

(And yes, I do recognize the folly of admitting that in the pages of the magazine which actively employs me but just because I never dreamed of working hard doesn't mean I don't.)

Nonetheless, there are many things I do enjoy about my job. One of them is how often I get to tell the stories of people who truly love what they do. Not only does this issue's America's Finest fit that bill, but so do our Best of the Best (page 45) and Brand Portfolio (page 50) businesses.

Please join me in congratulating the optical businesses featured in this, and every, issue of INVISION Magazine. Without them the industry would suffer. We, for one, wouldn't even be here.

Best wishes for your business,

@invision.mag
@invisionmag

Dee

Fashion meets function for fun in the sun

The shades of summer are here! HOYA's reimagined sun portfolio provides your patients more options for the fashionable looks they want and the innovative sun protection they need.



Summertime styles now available!

With a variety of polarized, mirror-coated, and fixed-tint lenses, there's a solution to fit every patient's style.



NEW! A unique innovation from HOYA Vision Care that improves the durability of gold or silver mirrors by embedding them within the lens, along with a polarized filter.



NEW! Polarized gradient lens options help reduce glare and unpleasant reflections in excessive sunlight, increasing comfort. Available in 4 stylish colors.



Darker lenses provide contrast-rich vision and offers 97% solar blue light protection.¹ Available in multiple fashion-forward color options.

EYE VOTE
READERS' CHOICE 2024

2024 WINNER
Favorite Spectacle
Lens Company

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FOR THE VISIONARIES



Take a look at HOYA's reimagined sun portfolio!
Learn more at https://hoyavision.pro/Q2_PRINT_INVISION

1. Polarized HEV Gray polycarbonate lens vs standard 150 polarized gray lens between 380nm-460nm.
2. Offer valid July 1 - September 30, 2025 through HOYA's Visionary Alliance. Visionary Alliance enrollment required. See Visionary Alliance terms and conditions for details. The Promotion is open only to professional eyecare practices that are not excluded, debarred, or suspended, nor owned or controlled, in whole or in part, by a person who is excluded, debarred, or suspended, from participation in any federal health care program as defined at 42 U.S.C. § 1320a-7b(b).
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► There's something energizing about the *Forward Momentum* article — it mirrors what so many of us feel right now: that urgency to evolve and define what's next. I especially appreciated the spotlight on incredible people rethinking care through innovation and inclusivity. These aren't just future concepts — they're things we can act on now. The integration of wellness, tech, and design is where I believe we're headed — and it's exciting to watch that unfold in real time. What resonated most is the reminder that we're not here to copy or compete — we're here to



create. This feature really highlights how important it is to brand yourself, brand your optical, and be intentional. **Heather Harrington, Optical Nomad, Denver, CO**

► I loved the mix of people that shared their

► Was really inspired by Timeless Identity [L.C. Atkins]! **Susan Elizondo, OD, Westlake Hills Vision Center, Austin, TX**

► Large eyewear groups/brands collaborations with big tech ... What is independent optical doing to

vision. Forward thinking and planning with creativity and uniqueness is what will fuel our future interests. **Karen Michaelson Kare Consulting/I Wear By K, Wyoming, MN**

keep up? Do we care? Will wearables ever infiltrate optical on a large scale? **Chris Wheaton, North Optical, Portland, ME**

► It's hard to plan for the future with all the uncertainty surrounding this administration. **Shannon Crouse, Terry D. Moehnke, O.D., Fort Dodge, IA**

► I think we are at the place where rubber meets the road of this business. I think with more people online, we need to be com-



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Follow us on Facebook [@invisionmag](https://www.facebook.com/invisionmag) and Instagram [@invision.mag](https://www.instagram.com/invision.mag) to share your thoughts.

paring ourselves to shoes and bags ... no one bats an eye at \$1,000 Weitzmans ... and they are on your feet getting dirty ... Let's talk a glasses wardrobe. **K Elizabeth Bouravnev, Bergh White Opticians, Springfield, IL**

► I believe retail shopping is still a frontline, one-on-one customer service sort of business for our staff and won't be replaced with AI or self-service. **Bob Hillman, Fabulous Fanny's, New York City and Burlington, MA**

AMERICAN MADE – CRAFTED WITH PRIDE

“With liberty and justice for all.”

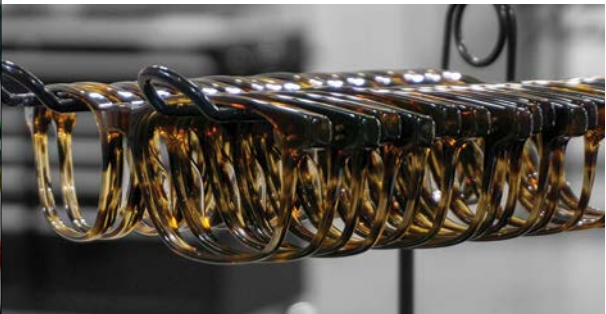
The name Forall was inspired by a phrase deeply familiar to generations of Americans: “with liberty and justice for all.” From a young age, most kids in the United States hear or recite these words as part of the Pledge of Allegiance. With the launch of Forall Frameworks, that iconic line now carries new meaning for one Texas family — becoming the foundation for a brand rooted in American values, craftsmanship, and purpose.

CRAFTSMANSHIP STILL MATTERS

Every handcrafted Forall frame is created through a 50+ stage production process at the company's manufacturing facility in Lubbock, TX. Owners Rick and Cindy Taylor, the husband-and-wife team who founded Forall, take great pride in the American Made product that their team produces.

Rick says that the design and milling of the frame fronts are the most interesting parts of the process for him. “It is really rewarding to design the 3-D model, generate tool paths and see the frame milled on one of our five-axis machines,” he said. “We are able to make quick changes and dial in the design exactly how we want it to look.”

Cindy finds the barreling stage of production incredibly interesting and



Frame fronts are shown after the barreling process.

SPONSORED CONTENT



essential to the frame's final look and feel. “Barreling is time consuming, but it's critical to the quality of the frame,” she says. “Our acetate is tumbled in a 4-stage custom mix of wood media and paste for a full five days — a slow and intentional process that transforms the material. I like to compare it to a river rock — naturally polished over time by the current. That same kind of transformation happens here.”

IT TAKES A TEAM

Delivering high-quality frames is the top priority for the Forall team. “It's not enough to be American Made, the product must be great too,” says Rick. “We are proud of our team's passion for the details and creating incredible product.”

“The opportunity to offer an American Made product means a great deal to us,” says Cindy. “We want our quality to stand as a powerful symbol of what's possible here in the United States. Our manufacturing must reflect the best of the best – because that's what American Made should represent.”

Cindy adds that she is excited to be a part of the American Made movement. “I love seeing the growth and excitement around American Made products – and knowing we're playing even a small part is incredibly rewarding.”

FAMILY OWNED-INDEPENDENT FOCUSED

Cindy and Rick also highlight the value of being a family-owned business. “One of the most meaningful parts of the journey has been connecting with so many of our customers who are family-run practices,” says Cindy. “We're all juggling work, family, and the never-ending quest for balance. It's been such a joy to partner with others walking a similar path – and to cheer each other on along the way.”

SET YOUR PRACTICE APART

“We believe our frames offer the best balance of quality and value in the market – and the American Made component makes the brand story even stronger,” says Rick. “Forall is a great option for your patients – not just for their great look and feel, but for what they represent.”



Built the old-school way: New Braunfels in sunset with a seven-barrel hinge.



Burnet in marble.



Utopia in peach tort.



Waco in carnation.



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IT WAS ALL A DREAM...

1. We've unveiled our 2025 America's Finest winner and honorable mentions ... those optical businesses that not only dared to dream big but dared to dream *fine*. Read all about them in the full winner's package online.

PODCASTS BEST PRACTICES

2. Best Practices is a new bi-monthly podcast in partnership with Steve Alexander of Anagram that delivers practical, actionable insights for ECPs seeking to build the eyecare business of their dreams. Each episode features expert insights to help elevate practice performance, patient satisfaction, and clinical outcomes.



PLANNING EVENT CALENDAR

3. Summer is winding down and we are now more than halfway through 2025. Have you planned out the remainder of your year? Let our industry calendar help! And keep your eyes on 2026, too — with VEW's final bow happening this September, who knows what new, exciting events may pop up?



FIND YOUR FAVORITE EXPERTS ONLINE



**SALES
SPEX**
invisionmag.com/spexy

**PRACTICE OWNERSHIP
Brianna Rhue, OD**
invisionmag.com/briannarhue

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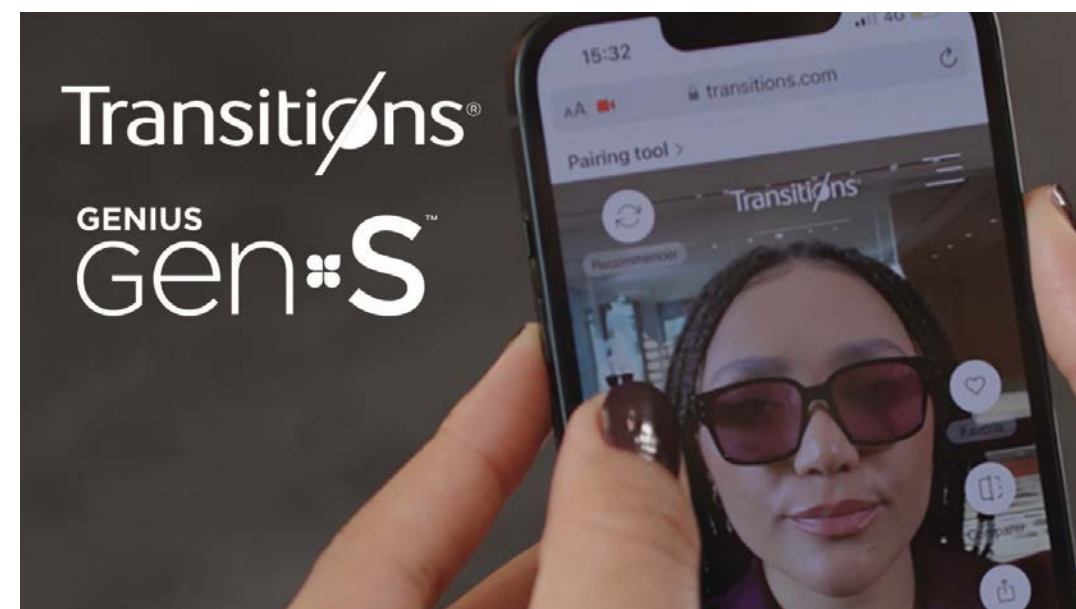
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A PERFECT MATCH

THE NEW TRANSITIONS® COLOR MATCH™ TOOL MAKES EYEWEAR SELECTION FUN — AND EASY — FOR PATIENTS.

The scene is a familiar one: A patient struggles to imagine how they'll look in their frames with *Transitions*® lenses.

The solution? *Transitions*® Color Match™. This user-friendly, interactive tool takes the mystery out of your patients' eyewear shopping experience. And it's fun for them!

Rachel Hill, registered optician and owner of Personal Optical in St. Catharines, Ontario, offers an inside look at the Color Match™ experience and shares how she incorporates it into her business.

THE PATIENT PROCESS

"First we always review the Rx," says Hill. "Then we discuss the patient's needs in their new eyewear. This opens the door to discussing possible needs they missed in their last pair. When patients try on eyewear, we incorporate the conversation on sun lenses, UV and blue light."

"People can be overwhelmed

with the choices. I always suggest *Transitions*® to incorporate all these requirements in one pair of eyewear. And this tool is an amazing visual to truly show the patient how they will look."

LENSES + FRAMES = SUCCESS

The tool goes beyond lens colors, which has helped Hill's patients — and her business. "With the color options, it's easy to demonstrate how the lenses can complement a patient's frame choice or add fun contrast to the design," she says.

"The tool helps patients view their eyewear in a photo while they wear their own glasses," Hill explains. "And the *Transitions*® lens color options in the tool heightens their interest by demonstrating how their new lenses will look indoors and out."

SAY CHEESE!

"The tool is very user friendly,"

Hill says. *Transitions*® Color Match™ has a "share" function so patients can share their favorite options with friends and family — or get a second opinion! "It's nice for patients to be able to share their photos. And the pictures are clear and accurate, which creates interest in *Transitions* lenses for others."

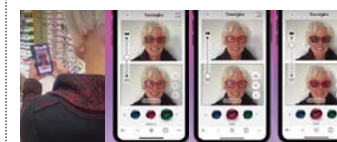
PUTTING THE TOOL INTO PRACTICE

At Personal Optical, Color Match™ has come in quite handy. "We use it to aid patients in viewing their frame choices," says Hill. "And in cases where we have not yet introduced *Transitions*® lenses, this is another opportunity to demonstrate the product. We have the signs up in the office, so patients can do it on their own. And it works great on the iPad, which helps if, say, a patient doesn't have their phone with them."

AS EASY AS 1-2-3



Hill documented her personal experience with the tool on Instagram in the *La.Eyeworks* style Ronette. Find her on Instagram at her handle at *personaloptical* or watch the video by using the QR code below.



Hill describes the user-friendly tool as a "piece of cake" to figure out. Just follow these steps:

1. SCAN

Using their smartphone, patients launch the tool by scanning a QR code that you've displayed on your frame wall or at your dispensing table.

2. TRY

Patients can take a photo of themselves wearing the frames they've selected and see how they'll look with each of *Transitions*® eight lens colors.

3. SHARE

Whether they've landed on their perfect pairing or need help with the final decision, patients love sharing photos with friends, family and followers via text and social media.

TRANSITIONS® COLOR MATCH™



For more information use your phone to scan this code.

TransitionsPRO.com

INSPIRATION



VERA WANG
HAUTE

VERA WANG 'FABI' IN BLACK / KENMARKEYEWEAR.COM



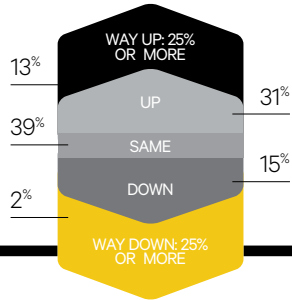
SO HAUTE THAT IT MELTED

NEW YORK CITY street style sets the scene for a striking black-and-white campaign showcasing the latest from Vera Wang Haute eyewear. Featuring none other than Vera Wang herself, the images capture an elevated blend of modern sophistication and playful flair — a signature of the brand. Recent releases including the Backcourt (shown) and Baseline are joined by Point and Fabi, each design balancing sculptural details with everyday wearability. Handmade exclusively in Italy, this eyewear collection was created as a complement to Vera Wang's highest fashion collection, Vera Wang Haute.

\$375, kenmarkeyewear.com

EYEGLASSES
GO TO PAGE 18

MONTHLY SALES SURVEY
How were your overall business revenues in June compared to the same month in 2024?



TOP-SELLING BRANDS FOR JUNE*

EYEGLASSES: Scott Harris (3), Anne et Valentin (2), Barton Perreira (2), Blackfin (2), Charmant Titanium (2), Etnia Barcelona (2), Ray-Ban (2), Veronika Wildgruber (2) / **SUNGLASSES:** Maui Jim (9), Ray-Ban (6), Oakley (3), Tom Ford (2)

**These are brands mentioned by multiple Brain Squad members when asked what sold well in June. Join at invisionmag.com/brainsquad.*

NO SHADES OF GRAY

In a world that thrives in the gray areas, pure black and pristine white stand alone in their ability to make the boldest statement of all. Eschewing color for complexity, black and white are timeless and impossibly chic. From architectural cuts to sculptural contrasts and hypnotic patterns, these styles prove duality delivers drama. It’s texture, tension, and tone ... shape, shine, and structure ... It’s monochrome, magnified. **BY SHEENA TAFF**

\$125



LIBERATED

Distinctive square lenses set in a thick, stark white, sculptural frame front layered with a glossy black outline, the Heartbreak Kid offers a juxtaposition between rounded edges and straight cut outs that create more dimension. info@liberated-inc.com

\$555



BLACKFIN

Channeling the '70s jet-set era, the oversized butterfly contour of the Luna radiates timeless glamour, merged with modern technical marvel. Sculpted from a single block of pure titanium and painted by hand, it offers a luminous interplay of tone that is anything but black and white. blackfin.eu

\$125



TC CHARTON

Jet-black fluid lines cut with precision across a white canvas amplifies the curves of the Paula's oversized cat's eye shape. What lies behind is a meticulously designed bridge fit to offer superior support for a global clientele. prologuevision.com

\$240



PANAME

An ink spill illusion in acetate; crisp white and rich black intersect without losing distinction on the Faidherbe. The shape, oversized, uncommon, softly sculpted, with a mid-set temple. A non-binary nod to vintage Parisian style. paname-eyewear.fr

PUR*



J.F. REY

Hypnotic black-and-white micro-patterned acetate is precision cut and superimposed upon a shadow of stainless metal in the JF3089, forging an architectural round silhouette that feels intellectual and rebellious simultaneously. jfrey.fr/en

\$130



ETNIA BARCELONA

Statement stripes in stark contrast create a collectable creation in the Ibiza. In a nod to the rhythm of the island, the repetitive black and white stripes entirely encase the sculpted, rounded frame, creating a hypnotic visual you can't take your eyes off. etniabarcelona.com

\$620



THIERRY LASRY

The Captivi sunglasses fuse black and white in a masterclass of visual sleight of hand. The black and white pieces are carved and composed in a way that shifts the entire appearance. Whether you see it in black and white, or white and black, these deserve a second look. thierrylasry.com

PUR*



NICOLE MILLER

Black and white collide on the Solana creating a sharp contrast that softens into a marbled interplay of monochromatic magic. The angular cat eye's narrow profile feels both deliberate and organic. lamyamerica.com

\$495



DASHARI

The rectangular revival taps into a minimalist profile that's popular in eyewear archives in the Nozomi, a glossy black acetate wrapped in a crisp white outline that is balanced with mid-temple placement that anchor its architecture. danshariusa.com

PUR*



NIRVAN JAVAN

Bold and unapologetically simple in structure, the Marrakesh 01 channels masculine strength through clean architectural lines and generous proportions. Refined balance and bold confidence showcase the rich depth of premium acetate and precision craftsmanship. nirvanjavan.com

\$242



RAY-BAN

Conceptualized by A\$AP Rocky, quilted contours and inflated lines bring that signature puffer streetwear style to a legendary frame silhouette in the Wayfarer Puffer. The iconic style gets a modern makeover, making it less about nostalgia and more about the shape of things to come. myessilorluxottica.com

\$163

CANADA GOOSE

Built for real-world wear of a global clientele, the CG25622LB offers modern utility, clean lines and signature double-stripe detailing. A substantial, thick black acetate silhouette with adjustable nose pads, it remains true to the brand's DNA: functionality combined with luxury. marchon.com



\$405



GIGI STUDIOS

Bathed in a milky opalescent white, the Abyss is a reimagined micro frame with pure lines and soft bevels that glow and catch the light. A sculpted double bridge tops the horizontal teardrop shape, a fresh, luminously modern statement. gigistudios.com

\$210



ALL SAINTS

Balancing a narrow, rounded silhouette with crisp geometry that feels freshly modern, while simultaneously rooted in retro influence, the fresh white finish of the Carolyn wraps warm, tea-tinted lenses creating an effortlessly chic micro sun style. westgroupe.com

\$235-\$355



MAX MARA

Max Mara introduces Jean, a refined yet bold new staple in both sun and optical. Inspired by Eileen Gray — pioneering architect and designer — the frame fuses metal and acetate into sculptural, linear silhouettes. marcolin.com

\$635-\$695



CUTLER & GROSS

Channeling the spirit of the Superocean Heritage diving watch in eyewear form, the Biarritz is as classic as it's timepiece influence, a combo silhouette of polished black acetate and Milanese-engraved metalwork, paying homage to a vintage watch strap. cutlerandgross.com

\$395



AM EYEWEAR

'80s attitude with a shape that's part power dressing, part streetwise swagger, the Brower is angular with exaggerated edges that recall an era when eyewear meant business and bravado, bringing back a bold style with a fresh, urban sensibility. ameyewear.com

PUR*



STACY ADAMS

Thick, tailored, a presence of a black frame with a bulky front perfectly balanced by bold, broad temples, the SA 1142 singlehandedly could revive the swagger inspired by underground jazz clubs, eyewear that speaks volumes about identity and edge. itdeyewear.com

HOUSE *of* MODO

INDEPENDENT EYEWEAR SINCE 1990



HOUSE of MODO has a curated collection of independent brands.
Explore the full portfolio at modo.com/pages/houseofmodo or
get in touch at clientrelations@modo.com.

MODO



modo.com

eco[®]



eco-eyewear.com

ITALIA INDEPENDENT



italiaindependent.com

LOWERCASE



lowercasenyc.com

MANAGER'S
TO-DO LIST



WEEK 1

AUG. 3-9

TRAINING Consumer spending has become bifurcated with high-income earners continuing to spend freely while the rest of the population feels the pinch. Staff shouldn't assume no one can afford expensive items, but do need to be sensitive to how they discuss costs. Call a training session!

WEEK 2

AUG. 10-16

MANAGEMENT Color code your keys. Some businesses have dozens of identical-looking keys on a ring, each of which opens one thing. The result? A long wait for the customer while staff fiddle around trying to find the right key.

THE BOTTOM LINE

DESIGNING
YOUR PATIENT/
CUSTOMER
EXPERIENCE

Delivering exceptional eyecare and retail services in an optometry office (or optical) begins with creating a patient-first culture that blends clinical excellence with genuine hospitality. Clinically,

adroitness comes from thorough exams, clear patient education, and a proactive approach to care — explaining options like myopia management, dry eye treatments, or eyewear solutions tailored to lifestyle needs. On the optical side, curated frame selections, knowledgeable opticians, and

a no-pressure sales approach foster a boutique retail feel. Taking time to understand a patient's style, budget, and visual needs allows staff to make thoughtful, customized recommendations. Follow-up calls, easy online scheduling, and patient communication platforms round out a wonderful office experience.

Ultimately, the key lies in aligning the clinical and retail sides of the practice into one cohesive, high-touch service model — where patients feel cared for, understood, and confident they received both outstanding medical attention as well as stylish, functional eyewear. **Christopher Lopez, OD**



THE BOTTOM LINE is a collaboration between *INVISION* and the ODs on *Finance* (practice.odsonfinance.com) team — *Dat Bui, OD; Aaron Neufeld, OD; Julie Phan, OD; and Chris Lopez, OD* — and will appear in each issue with the goal of sharing action items to improve ECPs' financial health. For more visit: invisionmag.com/bottomline

AUG-SEP

WEEK 3

AUG. 17-23

BUYING Vision Expo West (Sep. 17-20) is nearing. Time for in-depth research. Split duties between team members. Start with the trends report in *INVISION*'s February edition, then look at other publications, vendor catalogs, Pinterest boards and fashion blogs. Your goal: a shortlist of products you'll check out at VEW.

WEEK 4

AUG. 24-30

ONLINE In the era of local search it's crucial you settle on one name for your business. Is it "Jeff and Jane Optical LLC" or is it "J&J Optical" or some other variant that has arisen over your practice's life? Search engines get confused and your ranking suffers.

WEEK 5

AUG. 31-SEP. 6

MARKETING Develop a holiday season email bulletin schedule with an aim to ease your customers into it, rather than trying to force them to get in the spirit.

WEEK 6

SEP. 7-13

MANAGEMENT Develop a standardized gripe response formula. Be

sure everyone on the team knows how to execute it perfectly.

WEEK 7

SEP. 14-20

OPERATIONS Have you ever had a student extern? If not, give it some thought and reach out to any local colleges to see what's involved (paperwork, required on-site equipment, expected didactic role, etc.). It's a great learning experience for you and the student and can help provide an improved experience for your patients.

WEEK 8

SEP. 21-27

MARKETING Start working through your customer data to identify your best customers for a special Christmas promo such as \$50, \$75 or \$100 gift cards. As for the regular Joes and Janes who make up 80% of your practice? Your usual kindness and professionalism, of course.

WEEK 9

SEP. 28-OCT. 4

BUYING Back home from Vegas? Draft a product launch plan and schedule training sessions to ensure successful sell-through of the new lines you've just ordered.



HOT DATES

AUGUST

15 On **Men's Grooming Day**, print up gift cards for a local men's spa, upscale hairdresser or clothing shop to hand out offering a discount on a selection of your men's frames.

23 It's not like they need acknowledging, but even so, on **Baby Boomers Recognition Day**, ask yourself if your advertising budget is showing America's most moneyed generation the proper respect. Boomers still control two-thirds of the country's wealth yet nationally, less than 30% percent of ad dollars are directed at them. And let's not forget just about all of them have clinically measurable presbyopia or some other vision condition. OK Boomer!!

26 If you don't normally allow dogs in the store make an exception today on **National Dog Day**. Invite owners to bring in their best friends, hold a dog fashion show, and raise money for the local no-kill shelter.

SEPTEMBER

1 September is **Paraoptometric Appreciation Month**. Recognize your staff's critical contributions (that's what social media is for!) — and consider the gift of AOA associate membership to encourage their professional development ... not to mention staff retention.



MOREL

LUNETIER FRANÇAIS DEPUIS 1880



JOIN THE BRAIN SQUAD! To see all the responses from the survey every month, join the Brain Squad: invisionmag.com/brainsquad

BRAND RESULTS ON PAGE 17

► **Theo** glasses, **Garrett Leight** sunglasses, and **Anne et Valentin** and **Ahlem** in both. **Chris Whea-**
ton, North Optical, Portland, ME

► We have done well with **Pepe**
Jeans glasses. We had an event on
National Sunglass Day and kicked
butt! **Julie Uram, Optical Oasis,**
Jupiter, FL

► We are killing it with **Krewe**,
especially the Howard. The shape
is fantastic, and the colors are
banging. **Colleen Galanti, Pas-**
carella Eye Care & Contact Lenses,
Newtown, PA

► **Nicole Miller** optical styles did
well. Great color options and sizes
that fit a variety of faces. In suns,
the **Oakley** Holbrook and Split-
shot are accommodating well at
the start of the summer. **William**
Chancellor, Eye Can See Eyewear
and Best Chance Optical, McDon-
ough, GA

► The **Trina Turk** Estella in Ivory
and **Vera Bradley** Erika in Para-
dise Coral. Pastels and light-color-
ed enamels are taking the spot-
light this summer and are flatter-
ing on a variety of skin tones. In
suns, the **Vera Bradley** Monique
in Garden Flamingo. Its bold clas-
sic shape is cool and confident,
and the pop of tropical color along
the brow is just enough fun for
conservative wearers without
being gaudy. Patients always love
that the **Vera Bradley** cases match
their new frames! **Kari Keene,**
Keene Vision, Rock Hill, SC

► **Akoni** and **Masunaga** glasses.
Jason Klepfisz, OD, Urban Eye
Care, Phoenix, AZ

► In glasses, **American Optical,**
Tura, and **Viceroy. BJ Chambers,**
Carrera Optical, McQueeney, TX

► **Lindberg** is always at the top,
followed this month by **Salt. Salt**
and **Dita** continue to be our top sel-
lers in sun. **Joni Schrup, Discerning**
Eye, Iowa City, IA

► **Reykjavik Ryes** and **Blackfin.**
Lots of titanium glasses sold this
month. In sun, **Tom Davies. Jor-**
dan Flitter, Paris West Optical,
Baltimore, MD

► My budget stuff from **New York**
Eye always does well. In sun, **Tom**
Ford takes the cake on style. **Aar-**
on Baker, Mckinney Eyeworks,
Mckinney, TX

► One of our locations was mov-
ing budget frames pretty solidly,
particularly anything by **SD Eyes.**
Our other location saw a slight
uptick in **Rain City** sales. We love
their lightweight metals, bright
colors, Seattle vibe, and independ-
ent know-how. Evidently our cus-
tomers were loving them too! **Jen**
Heller, Pend Oreille Vision Care,
Sandpoint, ID

► **Scott Harris** glasses for men
and women and **OVVO** in both sun
and optical. Once they try them
they can't help but to buy. **Chris**
A. Clark, Oskaloosa Vision Center,
Oskaloosa, IA

The Didessa from Eco
is a biobased classic
pantos with a keyhole
bridge and flat brow,
and is compatible with
the brand's Didessa
Clip-on. Available in
four colors, brown, tor-
toise gradient, black,
and tortoise/crystal
fade (shown). \$209



► **Illa** and **Etnia Barcelona** glass-
es. The people wanted color in
June! **Bajio** suns, a new collection
and it's going well. **Kristina Jor-**
dan, The Eye Site, Mishawaka, IN

► **Moscot** in general. Suns seem
flat this year. We're seeing more
re-lenses. **Jennifer Yerden, Sights**
and Shades, Canandaigua, NY

► **Coco Song** gold fleck optical
styles with peacock feathers com-
bination. **Scott Keating, OD, Vision**
Trends, Dover, OH

► Our opticians Brianna and Julie
say the **Ray-Ban** Elliot has been
popular. Patients have seen our
staff wearing it and love it! And the
Maui Jim Twin Falls in sun.
People love that it is lightweight.
Scott Mann, OD, Invision 2020,
Christiansburg and Salem, VA

► **Enhance:** reasonably priced and
great selection. **Shannon Crouse,**
Terry D. Moehnke, O.D., Fort
Dodge, IA

► **Vivid Eyewear** glasses, and
Gucci in both sun and optical. **Ben**
Thayil, OD, Lifetime Vision and
Eye Care, Miami, FL

► **McAllister** for fun optical styles
and **Lenton & Rusby** for stream-
lined basic designs and a good
price point. In suns, **Lacoste. Am-**
ber Simmons, Douglas & Leisner
Optometry, Chester, VA

► **Eco** Kasai and Didessa, the **Bar-**
ton Perreira Norton and Cassidy

(they are classics and always best
sellers), and the **Lafont** Heritiere
and Folio. **Betsy Brockett, Zions-**
ville Eyecare, Zionsville, IN

► **Draper James** in optical is a hot
seller for us lately. **Cynthia Sayers,**
OD, EyeShop Optical Center, Lew-
is Center, OH

► **Veronika Wildgruber** was our
top selling line, our favorite frame
in their collection is the Lane. **Res/**
Rei suns have been doing really
well, my personal favorite is the
Vesper in 979. **Kelsey Bredice, A**
Proper View, Winston Salem, NC

► **Dita Lancier** opticals. All shapes
and colors. **Ron Catterson, Clear**
View Optix, The Villages, FL

► One of the best lines that I sell
most frequently is **Charmant.**
Economical, clean and light-
weight. Our sales rep is awesome
and always comes through for us.
Chris Clark, Advanced Eye Care
Optical Shoppe, Panama City, FL

► The **Marchon** M-9010; it's af-
fordable, sturdy, and the adjust-
able Unifit bridge makes them
comfortable for anyone, including
higher Rx's. **Angel Miller, Cynthia-**
na Vision Center, Cynthia, KY

Each issue, INVISION surveys ECPs around
the country about which vision products are
selling best in their stores/practices. Then we
calculate the results and share them with
you to give you a gauge of front-line sales
activity across the United States. To take
part, go to invisionmag.com/brainsquad.



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THE FUTURE

DEFINING
Independent



“COL truly supports innovation, and we're empowered to set goals to better ourselves, not just the company. They listen, motivate, and inspire us to help us achieve our personal and professional objectives, ensuring continuous growth to provide the best products to our customers.

Being part of a progressive company that understands the value of happy, fulfilled employees is incredible. **Our future is bright, and it comes from within.**”

Nondie



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JULY-AUGUST'S LOOK AT
THE NEWEST PRODUCTS

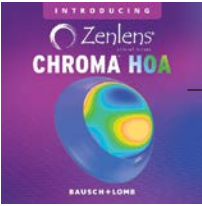


1
MYKITA
Incheon is a bold new statement style with futuristic overtones. Despite its big volume design, these Mylon sunglasses remain lightweight. Cut-out elements on the sides and temples form an edgy, architectural silhouette.
mykita.com
PRICE UPON REQUEST



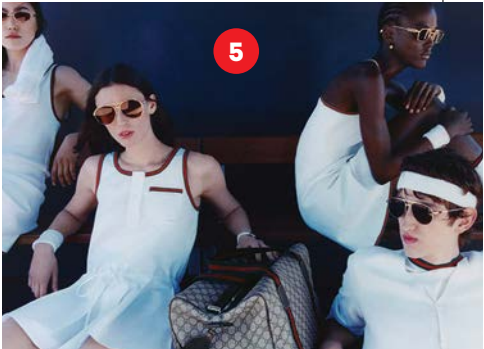
2
OAKLEY META
EssilorLuxottica and Meta debut Oakley Meta, a new era of Performance AI glasses for athletes and active lifestyles. Integrating Meta's advanced AI and spatial computing with Oakley's sport-focused design and PRIZM lens technology, the frames offer ultra-HD 3K video, open-ear speakers and 40% longer battery life for up to eight hours of use.
my.essilorluxottica.com
\$499

TRYPTYR
Alcon has received FDA-approval for TRYP-TYR, a first-in-class prescription TRPM8 receptor agonist for Dry Eye Disease. The drop stimulates natural tear production by activating corneal nerves, delivering rapid relief as early as Day 1. Available in single-use vials, TRYP-TYR offers a new, patient-friendly solution to improve comfort, adherence, and outcomes.
tryptyr.myalcon.com
PRICE UPON REQUEST



4
BAUSCH + LOMB
Bausch + Lomb introduces Zenlens CHROMA HOA, a custom wavefront-guided scleral lens for complex corneal irregularities and higher-order aberrations. Ideal for those experiencing glare, halos, or distortion, SmartCurve and Bi-Elevation technologies ensure stability, while advanced customization delivers unmatched precision.
bausch.com
PRICE UPON REQUEST

GUCCI
Gucci Eyewear captures the spirit of the brand's new Tennis collection campaign. Set against a sunlit court, the collection of metal frames offers narrow profiles, reinterpretations of classic pilot styles with 3D Gucci logos, and lenses patterned in the signature Gucci print.
keringeyewear.com
PRICE UPON REQUEST



6
AMERICAN OPTICAL
American Optical marks 90 years of its iconic aviator, first crafted for U.S. military pilots in 1935. Two new styles — Racer and Margot — honor this legacy of performance and timeless design. Handcrafted in Chicago, each frame reflects AO's enduring commitment to quality, style, and aviation-inspired heritage.
europaeeye.com
PRICE UPON REQUEST



7
MINAMOTO
Original Japanese Eyewear unveils its latest collection, blending traditional craftsmanship with modern minimalism. Inspired by Japanese Zen, the new designs explore material and structural contrasts through beta titanium and bio acetate, reflecting harmony through simplicity.
charmant-usa.com
PRICE UPON REQUEST



8
SUPERFLEX
WestGroupe unveils the latest Superflex Kids collection — 10 new styles bursting with color, personality, and pattern. With bold acetates and sleek stainless steel, each frame features flexible spring hinges and a kid-approved fit.
westgroupe.com
PRICE UPON REQUEST



THE LEADER IN BACK TO SCHOOL STYLES!



Adjustable temple tips



360° hinge



Indii Fit adjustable bridge



Full & half strap included



Industry leading warranty

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customerservice@alternativeeyes.com



SMART WAYS TO CHOOSE

OFFICE DESIGNERS

Steve T. Bussa, OD
PREMIER EYE CENTER
PLANTATION, BOCA RATON,
AND WEST PALM BEACH, FL

 When it came time to start this project, one of the strongest endorsements came from my father-in-law, who had recently redesigned his 6,000-sq.-ft office in Illinois. One of the biggest decisions was selecting the architect. I chose Optometric Architects, an Iowa firm that partners with Eye Designs. Their collaboration was seamless. The tipping point in deciding to work with Eye Designs came when they flew me to their warehouse. I toured their production line, saw how everything is built, and sat with one of their designers to refine the final touches.

Kathy Knox, ABOC
FAMILY EYECARE OF
SCOTTSDALE
SCOTTSDALE, AZ

 Our experience with Frame Displays was excellent. We FaceTimed, shared ideas about the space, and did all the measurements together. The designs were a collaboration between our team and their team. The shipping was coordinated to meet our contractors' schedule. After renovating our office and displaying our frames on the new shelves with the LED lights, many patients have commented that the frames look so much more colorful and interesting. The additional mirrors attached to the shelves have been a very welcome addition to our optical area. Our patients love the new look and that has translated into more growth for our practice.

OFFICE SPACE

These companies help optical practices and their retail spaces express themselves.

Making your business comfortable, welcoming, and attractive *isn't* about adding more pieces of branded merchandising flair. From innovative counter displays to lighting designs conceptualized as part of the in-office experience, the latest office design options make eyewear shopping fun and exciting. No case of the Mondays here! Here are five go-to office design pros that give plenty of atmosphere and attitude.



EYE DESIGNS

↑ Eye Designs Group elevates the patient experience with enhanced optical and clinical environments that focus on interaction, engagement, and productivity. With a focus on seating, lighting, branding, signage, and merchandising needs, their products are engineered and manufactured in a state-of-the art U.S.-based design center and manufacturing facility. **(800) 346-8890, eyedesigns.com**

Render



Completed Space



ENNCO DISPLAY SYSTEMS

↑ Since the early 1980s, Ennco has provided merchandising services and solutions designed to satisfy the diverse needs of ECPs. Ennco works with lighting specialists and offers clients a 3D rendered "what you see is what you get" experience with the help of design software and manufacturing equipment. **(425) 883-1650, ennco.com**



FRAME DISPLAYS

↑ In addition to eyewear display solutions, Frame Displays also provides custom design services tailored to the needs of individual practices. Display options include wall-mounted, free-standing, countertop, and window displays. **framedisplays.com**



OMG! PRACTICE DESIGN

↑ Based in Southern California, OMG! includes interior designers, architects, UX and graphic designers, marketers, and production, installation and support specialists. These teams collaborate to create compelling medical and retail experiences for ECPs and their clients. **omghome.net/optical-practice-design**



EYEEVOLVE DESIGN

↑ A specialized interior design firm dedicated to transforming optometry clinics into modern, patient-focused environments, EyeEvolve Design creates spaces that enhance workflow, elevate the patient experience, and reflect each clinic's brand identity. They create functional, brand-aligned spaces for today's competitive market. **eyeevolvedesign.com**

SPONSORED CONTENT

CHOOSE YOUR PATH TO SUCCESS

GET TO KNOW PEARLE VISION'S FRANCHISE SYSTEM AND HOW IT CAN PUT – OR KEEP – YOUR BUSINESS ON THE MAP.

Maybe you're considering launching a new practice from scratch. Or perhaps you've been thinking about breathing new life into an already-existing practice. Either way, becoming a Pearle Vision franchisee and having the words "Nobody cares for eyes more than Pearle" represent your business is a true opportunity.

Entrepreneur Lori Edwards has come full circle in her career and journey with Pearle Vision. As a young adult in the 1980s, her optical career started with a part-time job at a Pearle Vision in Florida, before becoming part owner of a Pearle Vision location in the same area. Two academic degrees and a

few decades later, she and her husband, Brady Edwards, have three Pearle Vision EyeCare Centers, all in Colorado.



"We've capitalized on national brand recognition and the backing of the franchisor to set our business up for success."

LORI EDWARDS
Pearle Vision
Franchise Co-owner.

they have a shared vision of growing their businesses alongside each other.

"We've capitalized on national



brand recognition and the backing of the franchisor to set our business up for success," she adds. Edwards notes that the combination of that brand recognition and great, personalized customer service from her staff helps her EyeCare Centers retain customers and welcome new ones.

GETTING STARTED

If you're interested in becoming a franchisee, you have several paths to choose from, including the following:

- Set up a new practice.
- Convert your existing practice with the help of Pearle Vision's Ignite conversion program.
- Purchase an existing practice.
- Explore a partnership through Pearle Vision's OptiPartner program.
- Learn more at: ownapearlevision.com/get-started.

KEY BENEFITS

A partnership with Pearle Vision comes with all the following, and more:

- Flexible business models
- Opportunities to connect with investors
- Operational support for doctors
- Capital support for doctors
- Proven business strategies
- Cutting-edge technology
- Independence for your practice
- Training for you and your staff

SIGHTS AND SOUNDS

As a Pearle Vision franchisee, you'll have the opportunity to carry a new, potentially life-changing eyewear line: Nuance Audio Glasses. Available in three sizes and two designs, Nuance Audio combines sound engineering with the wonders of smart eyewear. Your patients will benefit from directional amplification, which enhances speech clarity in noisy environments. Practices including Edwards' look forward to the sales this new product will bring as it makes a significant difference in their patients' everyday lives.

PEARLE VISION

4000 Luxottica Place
Mason, OH 45040

CONTACT:

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Sherry Merriman
E: smerrima@luxotticaretail.com
P: (630) 849-6119

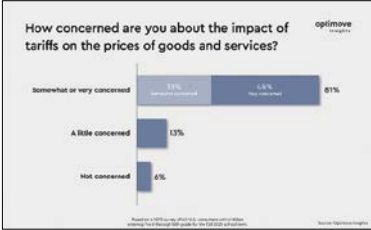


Scan the QR code for more information.

www.ownapearlevision.com/get-started



NOW SEE THIS



Back To School by the Numbers
→ A new report from **Optimove** highlights that for the 2025 back-to-school season, inflation, tariffs, and tighter budgets are re-shaping how parents shop — and examines what they expect from retailers. Key findings from a national survey of K–12 parents found that 81% are concerned about tariffs and 79% about inflation; 46% cite budget pressure as their top concern, while 89% actively seek discounts. Additionally, 64% split their purchases between online and in-store and 85% unsubscribe from overwhelming marketing emails. optimove.com

“Myopia’s” Meanings
→ The **International Myopia Institute (IMI)** has published “Myopia Correction, Myopia Control, and Myopia Management: Definitions and Recommended Usage” for free in *Investigative Ophthalmology & Visual Science (IOVS)*. With myopia’s increasing prevalence worldwide, consistency in terminology is critical. Confusion between “correction,” “control,” or “management” can complicate communication. To resolve ambiguity, IMI offers clear, distinct definitions for each term. IMI calls on ECPs, researchers, educators, regulators, and industry partners to adopt these definitions in their work. myopiainstitute.org

Why Consumers Go Online for CL Info
→ **Contact Lens Institute (CLI)** has published *Digital Discovery: Consumer Searches Reveal Contact Lens Realities*, to explore how and why people seek more CL info online. It examines multiple aspects of search behaviors, culled from public data sources, primarily from the U.S. and Canada. These include diving into the most common contact lenses searches via Google auto-complete results, 65% of which are purchase driven. A companion review of related topics illustrates that frequent brand and retailer searches indicate comparison shopping — reasons for practices to actively speak with patients about buying decisions. CLI data also reveals that wearers may benefit from increased focus on health and safety, cost, wear and care, and how brands differ. Some questions posed to internet-connected ‘smart speakers’ uncover a different opportunity: the importance of optimizing a practice’s website for location-based search. The report is available for free. contactlensinstitute.org



EYESTHETICS

So much of this issue is focused on design, but good design is in the details. Like these **Folkulture** Beaded Coasters. These handcrafted 4” beaded boho coasters feature an evil eye motif at the center bordered by shiny gold toned beads to add a little panache to your customers’ refreshment experience. **\$19.99, invisionmag.com/072503**



WHAT BIG EYES YOU HAVE

There is *always* a use for a decorative jar — think rubber bands, paper clips, alcohol swabs, eye drop samples. The Big Eye Aromatherapy Candle Jar from **Beccalame** is decorative and on brand. **\$24.99, invisionmag.com/072502**



FUN FOR ALL AGES

Chances are pretty good you’re seeing an uptick in children’s visits this time of year. Keep them busy with these downloadable Pediatric Optometry Coloring Pages from the **Optician** on Etsy. Enjoy a ZIP file of 25 high-quality digital PDF activity pages that can be printed over and over or laminated for use with dry erase markers. **\$5, etsy.com/shop/Optician**



UPDATE YOUR SWAG

Transitions offers easy to use online ordering for their in-office marketing materials and demonstration tools to help ECPs leverage the impact of the brand’s national advertising campaign. Showing the vibrant Transitions lens colors has never been easier. Opticians can activate Transitions lenses at the dispensing table with a complimentary UV lamp. **Free for accounts, transitionspro.com**



ROSE COLORED EYE DROPS

Bausch + Lomb has launched Blink Nourish Lubricating eye drops, the first and only vitamin-enriched preservative-free eye drop to replenish and rebalance the tear film. Enriched with vitamin B12, which gives it its rosy color, vitamin C, magnesium and amino acids, Blink Nourish delivers essential nutrients directly to the surface of the eye in a pH-balanced composition. **\$15.99, shop.justblink.com**



NEW

Varilux®
Physio® extensee™

Available Now!

Varilux®
#1 progressive lens brand
worldwide*

High vision intensity
in any light!
Extra visual sharpness and contrast²

*Source: Euromonitor International, 2024 data; Retail value amongst spectacle lenses category, brands representing progressive lenses.
1. Varilux® Physio® extensee™ – in-real life consumer study - Eurosyn – 2024 – France (n=79 progressive lens wearers [75/79])
2. Varilux® Physio® extensee™ – in-real life consumer study - Eurosyn – 2024 – France (n=79 progressive lens wearers [69/79])
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Dream On

IT WAS ALL A DREAM...

BUT THIS YEAR'S
CROP OF AMERICA'S
FINEST HONOREES
MADE THOSE DREAMS
THEIR REALITY.

BY INVISION STAFF

Many dream of owning their own business, but only a fraction of those folks ever take that leap of faith. Of that number, even fewer find entrepreneurial success. And in that group, the number of businesses that truly excel ... the ones that genuinely make a mark on their communities, their profession, or their industries ... those that can claim to be the best ... is smaller still.

We say all of that to really emphasize what this year's America's Finest Optical Retailer winner and nine Honorable Mentions truly accomplished. They turned their vision of owning an optical business and turned it into their real lives. They harnessed all those hopes and aspirations and made their realities even better than what they had imagined ... despite some significant challenges, and even personal tragedy, for some.

We hope reading their stories over the next year inspires you to dream big — or dream *bigger* — and then jump in with 10 toes down and pursue them. After all, “dreams don't work unless you do.”

What could you accomplish if you finally shook off the doubt and put in the work to make all your daydreams real? Let this year's winner — Specs by Kyla in Atascadero, CA — give you a glimpse into what's possible if you seize the opportunity ...

AMERICA'S FINEST OPTICAL RETAILERS 2025

JUDGES' BIOS

DAVE BARTON

CO-FOUNDER & CEO, OPTIFY
SAN DIEGO, CA



Dave Barton is the founder and CEO of Optify, where he's blending two decades of eyewear expertise with sharp digital tools to help independent

ECPs sell more glasses — online and in-store. His journey started on the product side, shaping frames at Oliver Peoples and launching the luxury brand David Kind. Over time, he saw a gap and Optify is his answer — a tech-forward platform, now the largest in its category, that's powering online eyewear browsing and shopping for hundreds of independent practices. Email him at dave@optifyonline.com.

DAVID DURALDE

CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER
OGI EYEWEAR, MINNEAPOLIS, MN



Inspired by good design and the pursuit of it, David has been a creative in the eyewear community for a while. His career started in 1985 at I.a. Eyeworks

after completing his B.A. at UCLA. He went on to design collections for Signature Eyewear, Kenmark, Safilo USA, and currently as the Chief Creative Officer at OGI Eyewear — a division of The Optical Foundry. His breadth of experience has given David a unique point of view that has been expressed in his designs, which have graced over 65 million faces for more than 50 brands. Email him at david.duralde@ogieyewear.com.

PAIGE KRAEMER

ABOC, SALES CONSULTANT
- MINNESOTA, CHERRY OPTICAL
LAB, GREEN BAY, WI



Paige Kraemer has been in the optical industry for over 18 years; she has worked for large retail chains, managed an independent optical shop, and has been an independent frame rep. In April 2023, along with three close friends and industry colleagues, Paige founded the 10,000 Frames Midwest Eyewear Show, an independent eyewear show in Minneapolis, MN. Paige is proud to be Cherry Optical Lab's Minnesota Sales Consultant, loves representing a company that she's had outstanding firsthand experience with, and is excited to offer that same experience to other ECPs across Minnesota. Email her at pkraemer@cherryopticallab.com.

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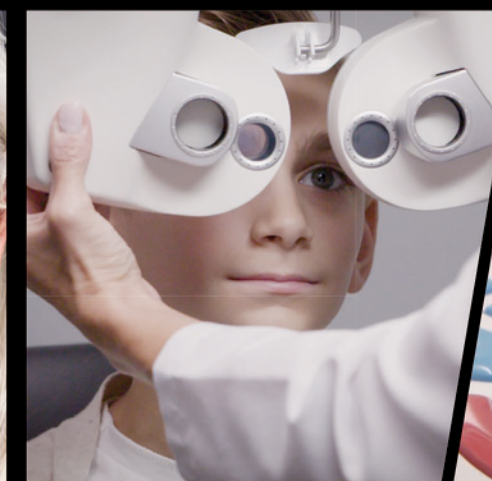
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OWNER: Kyla Skinner
URL: specsbykyla.com
FACEBOOK: facebook.com/specsbykyla
INSTAGRAM: instagram.com/specsbykyla
YEAR FOUNDED: 2021
YEAR OPENED FEATURED LOCATION: 2021
EMPLOYEES: 3 part-time
TOP BRANDS: Anne et Valentin, Theo, Krewe, Masunaga, Raen, Nina Mur, Ahlem, Danielle Rattray, Lool, Rose & Co., Gotti
AREA: 1,400 sq. ft.
BUILD OUT COST: \$10,000
ARCHITECT AND DESIGN: Jeff and Kyla Skinner

AMERICA'S FINEST OPTICAL RETAILERS 2025 WINNER

A NEW FRAME OF MIND

America's Finest Optical Retailer for 2025 was born when a California optician took a bold leap of faith to create a business that has grown into a soulful, stylish hub for community and connection. **BY HEATH BURSLEM**

KYLA SKINNER spent more than two decades working as an optician before making the leap to business ownership — though the idea had been quietly taking shape for much of her career. “I had the dream of opening my own optical shop for at least half of that time,” she says, “but I’ve learned so much from every optometrist and office I’ve worked for, and I think every experience led me to success today.” That dream became Specs by Kyla, a business that combines indie flair with operational savvy and community connection. It’s a combination that won over our judges and led to it being named the winner of INVISION’s 2025-26 America’s Finest Optical Retailers competition.

In 2020, Skinner’s dream of owning a business took shape in the wake of both personal loss and the pandemic. After the death of her biological mother, she received an unexpected inheritance. “Risking my birth mom’s inheritance seemed scary and emotional,” she recalls, but, realizing that her own life “was not

aligned with who I wanted to be,” it was time to make her plans a reality.

She found her ideal location in downtown Atascadero, a small town on California’s Central Coast. “I saw an indie uprising with a record store, a custom hat shop, a new energy emerging through the COVID shutdown, that I wanted to be a part of.” She also saw a need for unique eyewear. “All we had was the typical doctor’s office optical selection.” One Sunday morning, she spotted a for-lease sign in a courtyard storefront. Peeking in the window, she saw “tall ceilings, a loft, a cracked concrete floor, and fell in love.”

Specs by Kyla opened its doors on July 5, 2021 — Skinner’s 41st birthday. “It felt fitting to honor a day that was connected to my mother and my dream becoming a reality. It was a proud moment full of all the emotions.”

The space needed work: new electrical, flooring, paint. Skinner sourced much of the furniture from



Continued on page 38



Facebook Marketplace. She seized on the space's existing features, adapting them to fit her vision — from the large windows that flood the space with natural light (and nourish her thriving plant collection), to the whimsical loft “treehouse” area for kids’ frames, complete with pillows, silly glasses, and an antique trunk-turned-treasure chest, embellished by a local artist, from which kids fetch their new glasses. One room in the back was left intentionally flexible. It has since become home to a Santinelli edger.

From the start, Skinner made two bold choices: to carry only independent frame lines, and to opt out of insurance. The second one was the scarier, but it has paid off. “It has saved me so much time and headaches.” Skinner happily helps with out-of-network paperwork.

Supportive vendor relationships have played a big role in Skinner’s success. Reps from Theo and Anne et Valentin offered support as she weighed whether

their “funky and vibrant” lines would resonate in her small-town market. Raen and Krewe have also emerged as top sellers.

That focus on relationships extends to area eye doctors. “I realized how important good relationships with local optometrists are: communication between my shop and their office is crucial to my clients loving their eyewear, since I do not have a doctor in-house.” She sent letters to every nearby OD and has developed a form to communicate to them, when needed, what she has done to troubleshoot a troublesome Rx, and what materials and lens styles she used.

Specs by Kyla encourages appointments for most services. The personal and attentive fitting sessions have “become a form of therapy,” ending with a signature touch: a black leather tray holding the client’s new eyewear, a handwritten thank you card designed by a local artist, and a chocolate.

OUR JUDGES SAY

DAVID DURALDE: Kyla is the champion of Independence, with an authentic back story of overcoming personal hardships to succeed as a resourceful entrepreneur. The client rapport she builds with her personal touches and her masterful curation of collections is the foundation for exceptionally genuine care that builds trust and loyalty. Specs by Kyla delivers a rare fusion of independent artistry, optical precision, and boutique elegance. This is a true optician-owned jewel with style, substance and soul.

PAIGE KRAEMER: My immediate reaction is how welcoming everything about this store, and its online presence, seems. Her story is so personal, real and refreshing; I love that I can read her passion and personality in her entry. The magazine column is also such a cool, out of the box way to approach advertising while letting customers get to know the business. And wow, the passport idea is genius! And their approach to referrals is also such a great idea!

DAVID BARTON: Specs by Kyla is a charming, personality-filled boutique with a strong, cohesive brand. The space is beautifully curated, and Kyla's creative energy and storytelling shine across marketing, online, and in-store. Polished, warm, and deeply personal — it's a standout in both style and substance.



FINE STORY

WORD-OF-MOUTH is Skinner’s best form of advertising — clients looking fabulous in their frames and getting stopped by strangers in stores and restaurants. “I wracked my brain to figure out how to encourage this and build on it,” she says. The result? A clever referral card system. Each client receives five business-card-sized handouts (they’re free to take more) with their name and space for the complimenting party’s. When someone brings in a card, both parties receive a \$25 credit. “The cards cost me under \$200 to print and are a way to reward the people... referring to me!” says Skinner. “Win-win!”



A pre-existing loft space was turned into a whimsical “treehouse” area for kids’ frames, complete with pillows, silly glasses, and an antique trunk-turned-treasure chest.

Kyla and Jeff Skinner with their family.



Behind the scenes, Skinner uses EyeCloud Pro to keep orders organized, and she credits her bookkeeper and CPA with helping her navigate the business side. Her husband Jeff Skinner — a licensed contractor — works part-time to assist with bookkeeping and edging, while team member Mattea Austin is on hand three days a week. “She reads my mind as to what tasks need to be completed and takes a weight off my shoulders.” Part-time employee Savannah Perez recently became the newest addition to the crew. Learning to rely on others isn’t something that came naturally to Skinner, but she realized that doing it all herself was a “fast track to burnout.”

She also worked with other businesses to create a “downtown passport” stamp card, illustrated by a local artist, to encourage small business shopping, and writes a monthly column in a local magazine mixing community news and optical tips. And from every art show or trunk show she holds, a portion of proceeds goes to local nonprofits, often those serving foster and adoptive families. “With my business heart being tied to adoption, I’ve made a goal of giving back.”

Skinner often posts about her adoptee journey on social media. “I probably share too much,” she says, “but it has been a way to feel understood and find community ... People feel like they know and trust me before they walk in the door.”

In a business where every detail tells a personal story, that connection is what keeps people coming back. “The plants, the lighting, my logo, the artwork on the walls and the frames on our shelves, each has a personal connection and people walk in the door expecting that from us. It is an honor.”

- **1. EMBLEM OF GROWTH.** Specs by Kyla's logo reflects a personal transformation “born through hard times, with bravery and nature reminding us that life will continue.”
- **2. GUIDING LIGHT.** The colors chosen for the custom light fixture above the shop table were chosen for their symbolism: Teal, orange,

- and gray represent the ocean, California poppies, and nearby Morro Rock — touchstones that helped Skinner get through 2020.
- **3. CHECKING IN.** Two weeks after dispensing, the team sends a follow-up text to make sure, Skinner says, “our clients are wearing and loving their glasses.”
- **4. STAYING ROOTED.** A gift from a former colleague, the Bonsai Ficus on the shop table is over 15 years old — a quiet daily reminder of Skinner’s journey.
- **5. LOCAL LOVE.** Skinner was named Atascadero’s “Woman of Influence” in 2023 — an honor that left her “absolutely flabbergasted” and deeply grateful.



HONORABLE MENTIONS



LOOK NEW CANAAN NEW CANAAN, CT

Look New Canaan opened in February 2024 as a cold start, but owner Dr. Jennifer Stewart was definitely not new to the business. She joined a small, single doctor location right after graduation from optometry school, became a partner a year later, and over the 15 years she was there grew it into a large, multi-doctor private practice. She sold it in 2022 to focus on consulting and speaking. But thanks to those travels and conversations with practitioners around the country, she started wondering, "If I were to do it all over again, what type of amazing practice could I create?" And just like that, Look New Canaan began to take shape into the stunner of a business it is today.



MCCULLEY OPTIX GALLERY WEST FARGO, ND

Dr. Melissa McCulley opened Optix Gallery in 2006 because she wanted to bring a boutique optical experience to her hometown. Previously practicing in nearby "big city" Minneapolis, Fargo friends and family would ask her where to get cool frames in Minneapolis due to Fargo's limited selection. That sparked the idea to move back home and open Fargo's first boutique optical and it was a hit! After 16 years of practicing in 1,450 sq. ft., she was finally able to make her next dream come true in 2022 when she moved into a 6,400 sq. ft. state of the art facility with six exam rooms and an optical bigger than their entire previous location.



LONGVIEW EYE ASSOCIATES LONGVIEW, TX

Drs. Sarah and Justin Ward bought Longview Eye Associates in 2014 but in just five years they had outgrown their original location. In June 2020, Longview Eye Associates moved into their new facility with expanded capacity for three full-time optometrists offering full-scope medical and optical care in a setting that offers an elevated central Texas Hill Country aesthetic. In their 11 years as business owners, Justin and Sarah have focused on building a best-in-class culture, which has allowed them to not only grow Longview Eye Associates into the premier eyecare destination for Longview residents, but to open two additional locations in the East Texas region.

BEATTY EYES MISSOULA, MT

First came marriage, then came entrepreneurship. Beatty Eyes was first conceived while Dr. Rachael Beatty, a newlywed with ownership dreams, was still in optometry school at Illinois College of Optometry. But life happens and it took her nearly a decade ... and a pandemic ... to finally see the dream become a reality. Beatty Eyes' focus is on patient experience, individualized care, and the ability to spend quality time with each patient using state-of-the-art technology and top-tier medical care, all delivered in an office that could double as a set for a *FRIENDS* reboot.



WESTLAKE HILLS VISION CENTER AUSTIN, TX

Owning a practice had been Dr. Susan Elizondo's dream since graduating from optometry school. After nine years in the field and a failed attempt to buy her first practice, she thought the timing might never be right. Then, another opportunity came along, so she forged ahead. Then personal tragedy struck. In 2021, they embraced a new vision: dropping insurance for a boutique optical experience focused on independent eyewear and personalized service. They remodeled the practice — redesigning the optical with curated shelving, sit-down styling consultations, a stunning 13-foot live edge dispensing table and unique, independent frame lines.



SEA EYE CARE NORFOLK, VA

Sea Eye Care was founded in 2019 by Dr. James Komornik. A native of Virginia Beach, he came back to Norfolk after optometry school to practice and started Sea Eye Care to fill a gap in local eyecare — offering services that go beyond the basics. Their focus is on comprehensive care, using the latest technology, and making every patient experience comfortable and efficient. He started as the only employee and with just one exam lane, but by 2024, he had outgrown his old space and moved a few blocks to a new location that leans into the local influences of Norfolk and the surrounding beach town area in vibe and design.



OPT EYEWEAR BOUTIQUE PROVIDENCE, RI

Jed and Jessica Leach had no optical background when they opened Opt Eyewear Boutique in 2010 ... just a supportive network, a serendipitous location, and not a whole lot left to lose. But they learned and grew and in 2022 moved to a larger space, doubling down on the minimalist design that served them well in their original location. Their open-concept layout means everything is done right in front of the customer. By sticking to their core values and believing in what they're selling, they've educated both themselves and their community about the optical world.



VISION CARE ASSOCIATES STORM LAKE, IA

Is this heaven? No, it's Iowa. Just like the *Field Of Dreams*, Vision Care Associates is a dream venue in the middle of a cornfield. Over the years, Vision Care has built its business on its reputation of customer service, modern technology and hometown feel. It is not uncommon to hear "I've been coming to Vision Care Associates for 40 years." Current owners Dr. Derrick Randall and Dr. Megan Sullivan built this new clinic with a sleek, modern exterior designed to stand out and the interior is bright, open, and carefully crafted to enhance the customer experience at every step.



CARYTOWN OPTICAL SHOPPE RICHMOND, VA

A staple in its original historic shopping district since 1983, and bought by current owner Cynthia Allen in 1993, Carytown Optical Shoppe has evolved through the decades under Allen's transformative touch into the business it is today. Voted Richmond's "Best Eyewear Store" for many years in a row, they are also known throughout Virginia for their unique, warm atmosphere, large selection of artisan eyewear, and Class A customer service, but a fire in 2010 and the redevelopment of their original location in 2017 meant they could have lost it all. But like a phoenix they keep rising, stronger than before.



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INTELLIGENCE



COLUMNS PAGE 49

Kayla Ashlee with 3 merchandising red flags that are losing you sales.



REAL DEAL PAGE 54

The Case of the Hardly Working



SANITY FILES
PAGE 58



THINK OF YOUR JOB AS A **VERB**

AS THE BOUNDARIES between work and personal life continue to blur, it can be helpful to think of your job as a verb rather than a noun, as in “I fit and sell eyewear” rather than “I am an optician.” It’s not something you’d actually say at a party, but the mental shift can help disentangle who you are as a person from what you do for a living, says Art Markman, professor of psychology and marketing at the University of Texas at Austin. “Work life, generally speaking, is like riding a roller coaster,” says Markman, the author of *Bring Your Brain To Work*. “Not every day is a good day. There are projects you work on that don’t always go well, and if you’re doing anything interesting that has to be the case.” This compartmentalization not only prevents lows in one area of life spilling over into another, but also enhances overall performance. Having some space — mentally and physically — allows your brain the downtime it needs, Markman notes. “The brain needs a little rest,” he says. “Even if your main goal is maximum productivity, you need some time away to make that possible.”

ONE QUICK QUESTION
SUMMERTIME, AND THE LIVING IS ...

48%

Breezy. Lighter traffic than normal ... but we’re busy enough.

30%

Squeezy. We’re packed ... Next, please!

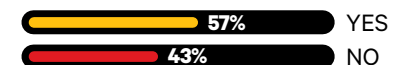
11%

Queezy. Traffic is way down and we’re sick of each other’s faces.

11%

Wheezy. It’s hot. It’s dusty. I have allergies.

DO YOU OR DON'T YOU
DOES YOUR BUSINESS
SERVE A SPECIFIC PATIENT
OR CUSTOMER NICHE?





When it comes to taking on projects, taking on a little more than you can comfortably handle can pay dividends, argues OpenAI chief Sam Altman on his personal blog. “I think it’s good to overcommit a little bit. I find that I generally get done what I take on, and if I have a little bit too much to do it makes me more efficient at everything, which is a way to train to avoid distractions ... a great habit to build!” Altman does end with a caution not to overdo it: “Overcommitting a lot is disastrous.”

SELF-IMPROVEMENT

Better Tried, Than Perfect

A side of perfectionism you may not have considered: Pressuring yourself to be the best in the world at your job pretty much guarantees you’ll never stretch yourself professionally. “Instead of thinking small and safe, take on challenging projects and big new roles,” writes Sarah Goff-Dupont on the Atlassian productivity blog. “If you start hearing the (self-doubting) mean girl in your head, it’s nothing more than a sign that you’re pushing yourself.”

TECHNOLOGY

Cut Gobbledygook

When sharing a link with staff or even customers, delete everything in the URL after the “?” It’s just tracking gobbledygook and isn’t needed. The recipient will thank you.

MANAGEMENT

Walk the Talk

When done on a consistent basis, one-on-one meetings with employees create a foundation of under-

standing that increases effectiveness and supports the professional growth of your staff. But having them in the same place you all work can give them the feeling of just one more work-related procedure to get through. An option: take your one-on-one on the road, or at least the sidewalk. Get out of the office for a power walk and talk. Stick to good practices; be candid, do less than half the talking, note the issues that require follow-up ... and look both ways before you cross the road.

MANAGEMENT

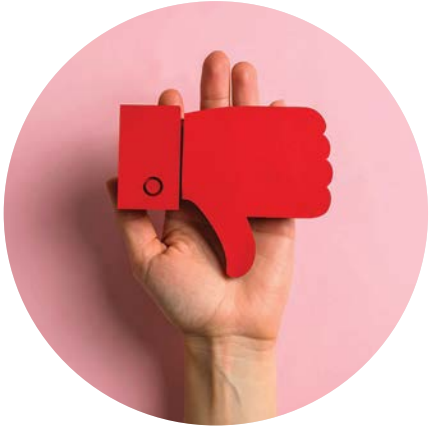
Time for Renewal

Summer may provide a natural slowdown, which also offers a chance to step back, reassess, and clarify your objectives. To paraphrase the self-help phenomenon Tony Robbins, quieter times allow you to reset, refocus, and set powerful intentions, turning seasonal lulls “into opportunities for growth and renewal.”

MANAGEMENT

Get Anti-Fragile

To state the obvious, the world has become a more uncertain place. That doesn’t mean you can’t take some preparatory action, notes Nicholas Nassim Taleb, statistician and author of *The Black Swan*. “Not seeing a tsunami or an economic event coming is excusable; building something fragile to them is not.” If you have yet to do some scenario planning (expected case, best case, worst case), get busy!



COMMUNICATION

A Place for Negative Feedback

Don’t buy into the argument that there is no place for negative feedback in the workplace, says social psychologist Heidi Grant Halvorson. Yes, be effusive with praise when someone is learning a new skill but don’t shy from offering “informative” criticism to a seasoned hand. “Negative feedback (e.g., Here’s where you went wrong....), tells you where you need to spend your effort,” she writes on her blog HeidiGrantHalvorson.com.

CREATIVITY

Early Birds Could Miss the Worm

The conventional wisdom has always been that if you’re an early bird, you should tackle your most important tasks in the morning, and if you’re a night owl, late in the day. But a study by Mareike Wieth of Albion College and Rose Sacks of Michigan State University says that if the task is of a creative nature you’re more likely to have an “aha!” moment at the “wrong” end of your day. The reason is that a key aspect of solving “insight” problems is being able to overcome an impasse in your head, which often requires approaching the issue from a different perspective. During our non-optimal times of day, we’re more influenced by distracting information and less likely to blindly stick to one approach we are convinced is correct. Conversely, if it is a task that requires single-minded focus, do that during your optimal time.

OPTING OUT, CASHING IN

Tired of third-party limitations, this MT practice launched a membership plan, boosting revenue and patient satisfaction. BY HEATH BURSLEM

LIKE MANY PRIVATE practices, Beatty Eyes found itself caught between what insurance allowed and what patients needed. Rather than continuing to fill their schedule to bursting while compromising on quality, they went their own way and introduced an in-house membership plan that’s helped them reclaim time, boost revenue, and deliver better care.

THE IDEA

Fed up with the way many managed-care plans restricted the types of diagnostic testing she could perform, Beatty Eyes owner Dr. Rachael Beatty decided it was time to move away from accepting them. According to lead optician Whitney Head-Potter, another reason was the abysmal reimbursement rates. “To remain solvent our doctors had to be booked solid and that created massive wait-times,” she says. To solve both problems, Beatty Eyes came up with an in-house membership plan. The results have been impressive. Now, says Head-Potter, “We book three to four weeks out,

see fewer patients per day, are free to offer any of our diagnostic testing and are reimbursed at a much higher rate per patient.”

THE EXECUTION

Dr. Beatty and chief financial officer Dan Beatty’s aim was to create a plan that was a legitimate replacement for third party plans, and that patients would feel comfortable paying on a monthly basis. First, the practice partnered with DirectOD.com to implement and administer the membership plans. “Dan and Dr. Beatty came to each member of the staff asking what each of us thought would be the

most beneficial for our patients and what benefits would be the most attractive to patients considering switching,” says Head-Potter. “Through multiple meetings and conversations, we crafted two plans, Elite

and Basic, which give patients the option to choose benefits and cost which work best for their needs and budget.”

As they moved into the implementation phase, Beatty Eyes’ social media coordinator created fun

Owner Dr. Rachael Beatty (seated, center), lead optician Whitney Head-Potter (standing, far right) and other members of the Beatty Eyes team.



videos introducing the plans and flooded the business’s social media platform feeds. Staff were also trained to have conversations with cash pay and third-party insured patients regarding the plan when booking appointments, communicating clearly the value of the plan and how much the patient stands to save. “‘Billing’ the plan has been easy, and every staff member has been trained on updating patient benefits on the Direct OD site so that they accurately reflect the benefits used,” says Head-Potter. “The sign-up process is straightforward for patients, and they can often sign up via their phone in the dispensary to utilize their benefits same-day.”

THE REWARDS

Head-Potter says the response has been “enthusiastic.” Aesthetics appointments have increased due to the generous discounts offered under the Elite plan, and second-pair sales have grown from 9% to 24%. Dan Beatty is now working with local businesses to replace third party vision insurance offerings with the practice’s plan “to help keep the business local and our patients happy,” says Head-Potter. “Word of mouth has also been impactful in bringing in new patients and those wanting better benefits for purchasing glasses and contact lenses.”

DO IT YOURSELF

CREATE AN IN-HOUSE MEMBERSHIP PLAN.

CUSTOMIZE. What do your patients value most? At Beatty Eyes it’s a generous glasses allowance, and discounts on multi-pairs and aesthetic services.

SPREAD THE WORD. Advertise your plan by posting on your social media and distributing QR code cards.

TEAM UP. Partner with a service like DirectOD.com “to legitimize your membership plan and more easily keep track of benefits used.”

COMMUNICATE. Have staff break down the savings for patients to highlight the plan’s value.

BE PATIENT. It’s taken some time to gain momentum, but Beatty Eyes now signs up two to three new patients per week, “which is great for a clinic our size.”



KERI MOMBOURQUETTE ON MARKETING

USE EMAIL AUTOMATION

And stay connected with your patients.

OPTOMETRY PRACTICES are busier than ever. Between patient appointments, eyewear sales, and managing your team, keeping up with every single patient’s unique needs can feel impossible. But patient retention is non-negotiable if you want to grow your business and build trust in your practice.

“Email automation helps practices stay connected with patients without having to manually manage every touch point,” says Sara Bracho from the marketing automation team at Marketing4ECPs. “From appointment reminders to educational content or post-visit follow-ups, it keeps communication consistent and timely.”

What is email automation? Simply put, it’s a tool that sends pre-written emails to the right people at the right time, without needing your constant attention.

Picture this: Your patient ordered a three-month supply of contact lenses on June 1. On August 20, an automatic email gently nudges them, “Time to stock up on contacts!” Your patient smiles, clicks the link, and orders. Voilà! A convenient experience for them, more revenue for your practice.

Email automation can do more than send reminders. Think eye health content, exclusive promotions for subscribers, or post-appointment check-ins to boost patient satisfaction. Here’s why it’s a no-brainer for optometrists:

➔ It saves time by automating recurring patient communication, which gives you and your staff more time to focus on patients.

- ➔ You retain patients with personal, timely emails to keep them coming back to you when it’s time to order or renew prescriptions.
- ➔ It builds trust by sharing expert advice, tips, and updates to position your practice as a leader in eye care.
- ➔ It grows revenue with timely reminders for supplies or promotions to ensure patients buy directly from *your* practice instead of online retailers.

So, how do you make email automation happen without causing you or your staff a tech-induced headache?

1. Choose the right platform. Each practice has unique needs, and what works well for one might not be the perfect fit for another. It’s essential to assess your specific requirements, such as the size of your patient base, the level of customization your emails need, and how well a platform integrates with your existing patient management system. If

this decision feels overwhelming or outside of your team’s expertise, consider partnering with a digital marketing agency that specializes in healthcare.

2. Integrate with patient information software. Your current patient information system should be your best friend. By syncing it with your email automation tool, you can segment patients into groups based on their needs, like: Patients due for CL reorders, patients due (or overdue) for annual eye exams, glasses-wearers to promote new frame styles. Automation platforms with integrations make syncing data simpler than separating two stuck-together contact lenses. “Building email lists of potential patients lets practices send exclusive promotions or updates to the right audience,” says Bracho. “When you segment the database between patients and prospects, you can personalize messages and drive stronger engagement.”

PRO TIP: Patients expect personalization. Segmenting boosts email open rates and makes your patients feel cared for.

3. Automate, monitor, and optimize. Numbers don’t lie. Keep an eye on performance metrics like: Open rates, click-through

“**Retain patients with personal, timely emails to keep them coming back to you when it’s time to order.**”

rates, conversion rates (did your emails lead to more purchases or bookings?). Use this data to refine your strategy. For example, if your “restock reminder” emails aren’t performing, test

new subject lines like, “Hey [First Name], don’t forget your lenses!”

4. Build your patient community. Email automation is about creating a sense of belonging. Use your emails to nurture a community of loyal patients by sharing patient success stories (with permission, of course!), highlighting your team’s expertise with small profiles on staff members, or generally making your practice feel personal, approachable, and professional.

Email automation is a patient retention powerhouse that meets your practice’s needs without overwhelming your staff. From ensuring your patients never run out of contact lenses to sending personalized appointment reminders, your automation system works 24/7 so you don’t have to.

KERI MOMBOURQUETTE is the manager of editing and content strategy at Marketing4ECPs. As a content and communications specialist, Keri has been writing and editing academic and professional articles for publications across North America for more than 15 years. She can be reached at marketing4ecps.com.

TRUE TALES



RIGHT THEN...

I DISPENSED LENSES to a middle-aged patient and showed them the contact lens case marked with an R. They stared at it momentarily and said, “How do I know which one is the left?” The silence that followed stretched like an eternity as their face seemed to say, “We’re not going to talk about what I just said.” It was a humorous moment. **Kevin Count, Corner Optical, Glenview, IL**



BRIANNA RHUE, OD, ON PRACTICE OWNERSHIP

A TECH-FORWARD GLOW-UP

Invest in the systems that power your business, not just the equipment that powers your care.

WE LOVE A gorgeous office. This month’s INVISION showcases stunning office designs that elevate patient experiences and inspire us all. I’ll admit, I’ve got some serious office envy. But while we often invest in curb appeal and cozy interiors, there’s one type of “design” we’re not talking about enough: our *technology design*.

In other words, what does your tech stack look like? Because in 2025, we are not just running medical practices but a tech-enabled business that delivers eyecare. The sooner we adopt this mindset, the more successful we will be right now and in the future.

It’s time we invest *just as heavily* in the systems that power our business as we do in the equipment that powers our care. Here’s a short list of tech upgrades that can future-proof your office and boost your patient experience:

- ➔ LIVE online scheduling
- ➔ Automated appointment reminders
- ➔ Digital forms
- ➔ One-click contact lens reordering (with benefits + rebates!)
- ➔ Missed call text-back to let patients self-book or reorder
- ➔ Digital eyewear try-ons or measurement tools
- ➔ Modern checkout systems and tap-to-pay
- ➔ Easy review requests and glasses-ready notifications
- ➔ A door hook in the restroom (Yes, trust me, they notice.)

Our EMR isn’t boring. It’s a little goldmine! Most of us barely

scratch the surface of what they can do. When was the last time you explored new integrations or recent updates? Carve out time to do a refresher or delegate it. Implement one small thing, then repeat. And if a team member says, “But that’s the way we’ve always done it...” that’s your cue to look for a better solution. Friction often lives in tradition.

Patients notice and remember the little things the most. One of the most complimented tools in my practice? A digital near chart! Invented by an OD. It’s simple, modern, and shows patients we’re paying attention to the details.

Want to check your visibility? Ask ChatGPT or Claude: “Find me an eye doctor near me that takes [insurance], is open Mondays and sees kids.” See where you land. Yes, AI is everywhere right now and such a buzz word, it makes me want to scream, but when done right, it’s invisible. Just like electricity. It powers everything behind the scenes and makes life easier. That’s what your tech stack should do.

Slow down to speed up. Empower your team to explore new tools. Ask AI how to go from a \$1-million to a \$2-million practice. And start implementing, one step at a time. Now that you have that beautiful office, it’s time to create the beautiful experience to match.

BRIANNA RHUE, OD, FFAO, FSLC, is the co-founder and CEO of Dr. Contact Lens (drcontactlens.com) and owner of West Broward Eyecare in South Florida. She is passionate about healthcare technology, myopia management, specialty contact lens fits and practice management.



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ASK INVISION

Is there any point doing performance reviews when it’s very unlikely we will be handing out pay raises this year?

➤ A review should be a discussion about performance, not compensation. And while you have no carrot to wave, it’s still important to let your staff know how well they are doing at their jobs, what plans you have for their development, what areas they could improve (and ideally targets for them to shoot for), plus a reminder that the payoff will come when times improve. As for you, a review gives your staff a chance to provide feedback. Try to take some action based on what is discussed in the review. Otherwise, it really does become a bit of a pointless exercise, from the viewpoint of your staff.

I know there are issues my staff are unhappy about, but I worry inviting them to vent will just descend into a bitch and moan session. How can I design a meeting that will result in a constructive outcome?

➤ You’re right to want to bring these issues into the open so that you can deal with them. Venting can have many benefits — from reducing stress and uncovering hidden problems to fostering a culture of transparency and strengthening relationships. A study by Integrify

(now Nutrient) found that employees who feel heard are 4.6 times more likely to feel empowered to perform their best. But as you rightly fear, not handled well, such a session can quickly dissolve into a mire of moaning and finger-pointing that undermines store morale and productivity. The answer is a structured approach that promotes psychological safety, encourages open communication and creates a pathway toward effective solutions. One technique developed by organizational software company Atlassian, called *The Dirty Laundry Play* (invisionmag.com/072501), effectively accomplishes this. It involves creating a safe, neutral space where team members can anonymously share their frustrations. A facilitator — either you or your manager — guides the process by asking participants to submit written “laundry” notes anonymously over about 10 minutes. The meeting leader then categorizes these issues and promotes discussion on the underlying causes and potential remedies. The key is to focus on constructive solutions rather than blame. According to the Atlassian Playbook, over time, this process encourages a culture of openness and continuous improvement, turning “negative venting into a catalyst for positive change.” Given what’s at stake, all you can do is give it a try.



JOHN D. MARVIN ON MANAGEMENT

THE POWER OF SIMPLICITY

An argument for ‘less is more’ in optometry.

“Simple can be harder than complex. You have to work hard to get your thinking clean to make it simple.” - Steve Jobs

SOME YEARS AGO, I stepped into a beautifully designed private optometry practice in Austin. The waiting room had designer furniture, touch-screen kiosks, and a barista-quality espresso machine humming in the corner. Impressive? Absolutely. But while waiting for the doctor, I watched a receptionist struggle to navigate a six-tabbed appointment screen, patients wandering aimlessly trying to understand the digital check-in process, and an elderly woman nearly burst into tears trying to find the restroom. The ambiance was stunning, but the experience? Overwhelming.

That day, I was reminded of

what Steve Jobs said above. And nowhere is that truth more relevant than in the daily operations of a private optometry practice. Let me be clear: simplicity doesn't mean cutting corners, reducing options, or running a practice with bare-bones resources. Simplicity means clarity. It means removing confusion for your team, minimizing friction for your patients, and designing processes that feel intuitive and human — not corporate or complicated. Here's a quick test: Walk through your practice as if you were a brand-new patient. From the moment you pull into the parking lot, is every step of the experience clear, convenient, and comfortable? Too often, I find practices trying to do too much — too many appointment types, too many

technologies, too many vendors, too many exceptions to rules. Several years ago, I worked with two practices located just 10 miles apart. Both served similar demographics, had experienced doctors, and invested in technology. But their outcomes could not have been more different. At one, new patients were sent a seven-page intake form (PDF only), told to arrive 20 minutes early, and were greeted by a front desk juggling phones, insurance verifications, and two software systems. Every process had a workaround. Every team member had a different “hack” to get things done. At the second, intake forms were digital, mobile-friendly, and pre-filled with any repeat patient info. They had a one-minute greetings policy — someone always acknowledged a patient within 60 seconds of their entering. They used a single, integrated system. And they had a laminated “first visit guide” that walked patients through what to expect. Guess which practice had higher reviews, more referrals, and less staff turnover? Simplicity wins. And simplicity isn't just for patients — it is the secret to unlocking your team's potential. When I visit struggling practices, I often find talented staff mem-

bers drowning in inconsistent processes. They're constantly troubleshooting, double-checking, or apologizing for system errors. Morale sinks and accountability disappears. Contrast that with teams who have clear workflows, empowered cross-training, and documented standard operating procedures. These teams don't just survive — they thrive. Here's the irony: the more a practice grows, the more tempted we are to complicate things. We layer on new policies, new people, new software and new areas of specialty. None of this is wrong in itself, but often it's done without stepping back and asking, “Does this make things better or just busier?” When I think about my favorite practices — the ones where patients become lifelong fans and team members stick around for decades — they have one thing in common: They feel simple. Not sterile. Not chaotic. But ordered. When you remove the clutter, what remains is the essence of great care: Trust, clarity, and connection. **JOHN D. MARVIN** has more than 35 years of experience in the optometric industry. President and CEO of TSO, Inc. for more than 25 years, he now writes and speaks on leadership, personal growth and mindset. Email him at john@themarvingroup.net.



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KAYLA ASHLEE ON SALES

WATCH THOSE RED FLAGS

3 signs that your optical merchandising is losing you sales.

“IF YOU DISPLAY your sunglasses like this in your optical,” I said, showing before and after photos of what this would look like, “It will make the display much more inviting and allow for the sunglass purchase to remain top of mind while they are picking out glasses.” “That makes sense,” Brittany nodded. “I never thought of displaying suns like that.” I continued, “Now if you move this dispense table it will allow your patient to shop...” “Oh no!” Brittany interrupted. “There is no way we can move those dispense tables. We looked at it in the remodel and we can't match the flooring,” Brittany continued on with a list of all the reasons why this was not an option. I asked Brittany to hear me out, showing her different mer-

chandising possibilities to make it more welcoming to shop while moving brands into more ideal locations. Her hands must have been aching from the frantic note taking. She gathered her thoughts and reflected, “Exciting! All of this makes complete sense. Now I feel like we completely missed out on something we could have been doing all along.” I repeated a line I say multiple times a week: “You don't know what you don't know, but now that you know the opportunities, you can make the changes.” We get stuck doing things one way because that's how it has always been done. This is keeping you from massive opportunities. Here are three different red flags that signal your optical merchandising is stuck.

Your brands have remained in the same general location since you got them. Have you identified the hotspots in your optical? Moving struggling brands to a better hotspot can increase their sell through rate. Don't let a brand's original landing place be the reason for its demise. **Your optical planning map begins and ends with: Men's. Women's. Kids'.** The most successful opticals retail by brand. Think about it: If you have a frame brand that has great men's styles and fabulous women's styles but also has a great assortment of unisex frames, where are you putting those unisex styles? Place them on the women's display and most men won't go over to them. Place them on the men's side and you are losing the women. Merchandising as an entire collection with the masculine on one side, the strong feminine on the other, and unisex as the blend in between allows for the entire collection to be shopped. Spexy members have proven that higher sales are achieved by intentionally

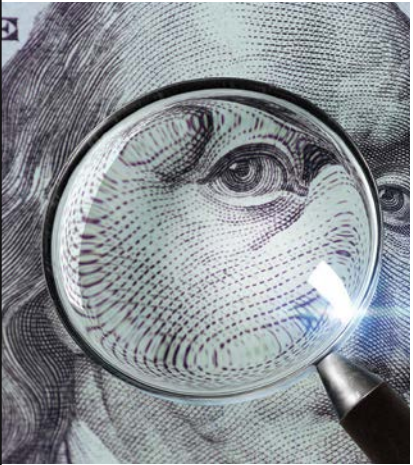
mapping their optical for optimizing brand performance. **Your office layout has remained the same for as long as you can remember.** Yes, a remodel in the optical is always nice with a healthy budget. In merchandising meetings with opticals, I've shared impactful, low-cost adaptations that can be made to almost any optical. Changing frame angles, adding a rug, moving a display, rethinking the waiting room have brought an impactful and welcoming nature back to opticals that have been overlooked for years.



Brittany was able to recognize how merchandising “the way it's always been done”, versus merchandising intentionally, was costing the business. Scan the QR code for more resources available to independent opticals. If these flags sounded familiar, I encourage you to look beyond how you have always done things. Be intentional about merchandising to create a welcoming, exciting shopping experience! **KAYLA ASHLEE** is the co-founder of Spexy (bespexy.com), an international optometric speaker, a certified optician, and an optometric renegade. Her direct and relatable approach to training has set her apart in the industry.



DATA IN FOCUS
INDEPENDENTS ACROSS THE GENERATIONS
INDEPENDENT PROVIDERS are popular with **65%** of Gen X and **82%** of Baby Boomers choosing them over corporate locations for their recent eye exams. Meanwhile, Gen Z (**53%**) and Millennials (**51%**) are nearly evenly split between independent and corporate locations, signaling both stability and opportunity for growth across generations.
SOURCE: CONSUMER INSIGHTS Q2 2025 REPORT. The Vision Council's inSights Research Program provides comprehensive analysis on the state of the optical industry through consumer surveys, market estimates and in-depth special reports. For more info visit thevisioncouncil.org/research.



MONEY MATTERS
A financial literacy primer for ECPs.
BY NATHAN TAYLOR & WADE WEISZ, OD, OF ForEyesBookkeeping.com
YOU ASKED: How do you value a private practice?
WE ANSWER: Knowing how to value a private optometry practice is more important than ever. While the old “two to three times net income” rule of thumb still floats around, today's valuations are far more nuanced — and

customized to the industry. → Start with net cash flow. The most common method is based on Seller's Discretionary Earnings (SDE) — your net income plus add-backs like owner compensation (owner's W-2 and professional fees paid by the business), interest, depreciation, and personal expenses run through the business. This reveals how much cash the practice generates for an owner-operator. Accurate bookkeeping is key. To get a meaningful valuation, your financials need to be clean, complete, and industry specific. Having your

books done by a firm that specializes in eyecare can make a big difference. We understand how to categorize income and expenses properly, and how to present the numbers in a way that valuation experts (and lenders) trust. → Apply a market multiple. Once SDE is calculated, it's multiplied by a valuation multiple, usually between 2x and 4x. What influences that multiple? Things like profitability and cash flow stability, payer mix (private pay vs. insurance), location and local competition, owner involvement, growth potential, optical sales and product margins. → Consider tangible and intangible assets. Equipment, technology, and inventory add value — but don't overlook goodwill, which includes your brand, patient loyalty, staff culture, and referral sources. In many cases, goodwill is the most valuable piece of the practice. Get a professional appraisal. While rough estimates are helpful, serious decisions call for a professional valuation. **VISIT [INVISIONMAG.COM/MONEYMATTERS](https://invisionmag.com/moneymatters) FOR MORE FINANCIAL LITERACY FOR ECPs.**

Eyefinery Optical Studio / Victoria, BC

ORANGE AND ORIGINAL

This British Columbia boutique’s quirky, cohesive brand draws from its founder’s vibrant personal style. **BY HEATH BURSLEM**

EYEFINERY OPTICAL STUDIO, Rebecca Knezacek’s charming, cheerful, and refreshingly original one-woman show of an optical in Victoria, BC, is a magnet for folks looking for eyewear that helps them feel confident and authentic. “I definitely target the funky, quirky clients looking for their own individual spectacle style,” says Knezacek. “I help customers of all ages and backgrounds. I love suggesting colorful frames.” The boutique’s offerings emphasize “the unique, handmade quality, small batch side of the industry”

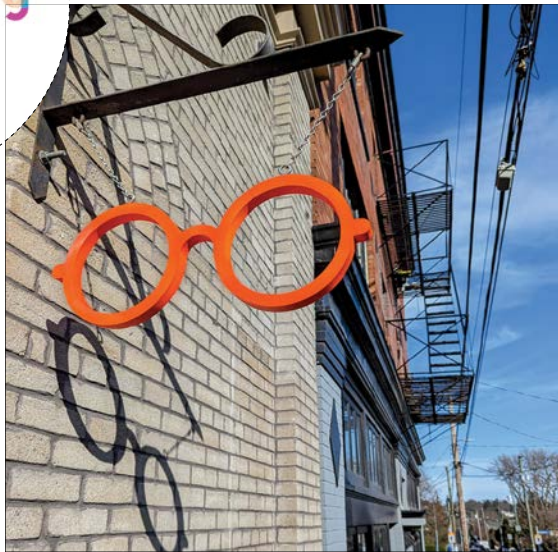
— and the breezy, colorful brand she’s developed matches this ethos perfectly. The two most dominant brand elements are the color orange and a pair of orange glasses. These appear across the board — from Eyefinery’s logo to business cards, branded cleaning cloths and cleaner, social media, website, custom stickers, exterior signage, and a window decal. A custom tote, featuring a design by a local artist, is in the works. Knezacek calls the look “bright, playful, welcoming with a bit of whimsicality” and says the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. “I get a lot of... Woah, you really like color! And this is from everyone — customers,



REBECCA KNEZACEK
→ “I help customers of all ages and backgrounds. I love suggesting colorful frames.”



STANDING OUT
→ Choosing a color for her wall-mounted glasses, Knezacek “wanted one that stood out against a blue sky ... so orange it was!”.



reps, and industry professionals.” She designed the logo herself. “I wanted it to pop and have a retro feel. I’m a bit of an old soul and love the ’70s, so I took inspiration for the lines in the font from vinyl records.” That font repeats in most of the Canva-made social posts. Knezacek also coined the #tinyoptical hashtag and Eyefinery’s slogan — “The Right Eyewear Makes You Feel Like Yourself.” The idea for the large orange glasses mounted on the store’s front exterior wall arose when she realized the logo wasn’t legible from afar. “I chose a universal optical symbol. I wanted one that stood out against a blue sky ... so orange it was!” she laughs. To bring the logo and website to life, she worked with Marizen Designs, while Vancouver’s 20/20 Accessories handle the custom printed eyeglass cases and cleaner/cloth kits, and Victoria’s Better Print supply the stickers. “Social media has been 100% myself — something I don’t have big (love) feelings for but continue to experiment and fumble my way through.” Knezacek stresses the importance of continuity to any branding effort and advises, “Be unique, don’t be afraid to be creative and have fun experimenting ... It feels most natural and personal when it starts with you.”



POP ART
→ Knezacek wanted the branding at Eyefinery “to pop and have a retro feel.”



IN FINE STYLE
→ “I definitely target the funky, quirky clients looking for their own individual spectacle style,” says Knezacek.

QUESTION

Have you found a killer idea, tool, marketing strategy, etc. from a non-vision industry that you've implemented in your business with success? Tell us about it.



Local radio. I write funny and informative commercials, and they record me doing them. I get a ton of feedback! One time I had a friend sound like Forrest Gump record one with me (My name is Jenni) and I must have had 100 locals tell me they heard it! **Jennifer Leuzzi, Mill Creek Optical, Dansville, NY**

- Read *Unreasonable Hospitality* by Will Guidara. **Blake Hutto, OD, Family Vision Care, Alma, GA**
- Social marketing. **Bob Hillman, Fabulous Fanny's, New York, NY**
- Rebranding with a non-vision industry specialist. They just do cool brands. **Scott Brase, OD, Island Family Eyecare, Bainbridge Island, WA**
- Dollar Tree ... for displays and seasonal décor. **Chris Clark, Advanced Eye Care Optical Shoppe, Panama City, FL**

- We really want to implement an online "glasses tracker" for patients like Domino's pizza tracker. **Rialeigh Yoder, Sea Eye Care, Norfolk, VA**
- Ritz Carlton customer service strategies. **Dave Schultz, OD, Urban Optics, San Luis Obispo, CA**
- We are a startup dispensary with no doctor. We implemented Noterro as our records management system, which is typically used for chiropractic and physical therapy offices. We can schedule online, attach V-codes, insurance

- information, save files to each patient, create digital forms, and do everything we need as a small family-owned business without the big price tag of most traditional optical software where we wouldn't be using half the features. **Kari Keene, Keene Vision, Rock Hill, SC**
- I spent three years going to dental seminars with my brother (a dentist). My biggest takeaway was seeing how efficient dentists are at chairside selling and then accepting the fact that I'm a doctor and a salesperson. Selling is about caring for the patient and helping them understand how an insurance company has never looked at their eyes and really has no clue what's going on with their health. Once a patient understands this, treatment plan acceptance rates increase and the 'I just want what my insurance covers' mentality decreases. **Ben Thayil, OD, Lifetime Vision and Eye Care, Miami, FL**
 - They say that you can take a man out of the Army, but you can't take the Army out of a man. I constantly use TTPs (Techniques, Tactics and Practices) I learned during my Army time, tailored to what I do. It works very well for me. **Pablo E Mercado, Project Optical, Woodstock, GA**

- Simon Sinek's *Start With Why*. You must define 'why' someone should be interested in your product. What is your product really? Is it the glasses, the experience around buying the glasses, or possibly having a pair of glasses that says you're a member of a group of people? The *why* is the central reason you need to focus on for success. Secondly, I learned about ERBN, LRBN, and DRAB from Tony Robbins. I sat through audiobooks for hours to come away with one nugget of information. Emotional Reason to Buy Now: People make purchases based on an emotional response. Logical Reason to Buy Now: The ability to rationalize with 'logic' why you should buy a product. Dominant Reason to Avoid Buying: Why you don't want to buy the product now. **Kevin Count, Corner Optical, Glenview, IL**
- We have started doing Lunch and Learns, and now we are about to do our second one. We'll see how it goes. **Susan Elizondo, OD, Westlake Hills Vision Center, Austin, TX**
- We've embraced the Disney model of customer service. Smiles, happiness, always go above and beyond, and make it magical every time. **Cynthia Sayers, OD, Eyeshop Optical Center, Lewis Center, OH**

DEEP READING

THE FISH THAT ATE THE WHALE: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF AMERICA'S BANANA KING
BY RICH COHEN



➤ Crazy story from a different time but good read. **Jennifer Leuzzi, Mill Creek Optical, Dansville, NY**



What did the dad say when his son asked him to explain the solar eclipse to him?
NO SUN.
Shared from Facebook



YES 57%

- While we see "everyone," we've evolved into a largely medical-model practice, which reset our patient demographic. Our average patient age is right around 59. Our insurance contract choices, and the fact we build lots of time into our exams, filtered our clientele to where it is today. Our schedule is full of people who want a doctor who can explain what's going on with their eyes. We also practice in a retirement area, so our local average age is about 10 years higher than the national average. **Jen Heller, Pend Oreille Vision Care, Sandpoint, ID**
- Neurovision rehab patients. **Kathryn Collins, OD, Kissel Eye Care, Lititz, PA**
- We accidentally became the largest provider for pediatric eyewear in our area. Don't discount moms on social media who are trying to find the right thing for their kid. We're a higher end

- boutique, but we also have a huge following for children's eyewear. **Nikki Griffin, Eyestyles Optical and Boutique, Oakdale, MN**
- We don't do managed vision care and only carry smaller independent lines, so we aren't for everyone. Sometimes people don't see our value, and that's okay! The people that do, really appreciate us. We are definitely an "acquired taste." **Kelsey Bredice, A Proper View, Winston Salem, NC**
 - We're ophthalmology, so we see all the hard things ... Low vision, specialty contact lenses, pediatric ophthalmology, retina. We have something for everyone. It's not easy, but I've never shied away from a challenge. **Jami Kulpinski, Eye Clinic of Wisconsin, Wausau, WI**
 - Difficult patients/Rxs. We have decades of experience, tons of patience, and often think outside the box to make things a win-win. **Marcia Emerson, Kenneth D. Boltz, O.D., Dublin, OH**

- We are very lucky to have one of the few neuro-optometrists in North Dakota on staff. She wanted to help those with brain injury or trauma, stroke or concussion. She is NORA certified and the difference she makes in lives is remarkable. **Deb Jaeger, Eye Center of the Dakotas, Bismarck, ND**
- Drill mounts. **Buddy Vidrine, Acadian Optical, Baton Rouge, LA**

NO 43%

- After moving a year ago, I've noticed an increase in foot and vehicular traffic. My customer base is now a more ethnic demo that shops for high end brands. **Mitchell Kaufman, Marine Park Family Vision, Brooklyn, NY**
- Rural eyecare requires we serve everyone and that is what we enjoy doing! **Zachary Dirks, OD, St. Peter and Belle Plaine Eyecare Centers, Saint Peter, MN**

- Our practice serves multiple rural counties. We provide excellent medical eyecare to patients 0 to 100+ so they don't have to travel long distances for quality. We also carry current and stylish eyewear and contacts and specialty lenses for complete care. **Misty Arrowood, Aldridge Eye Institute, Burnsville, NC**
- We tend to attract people looking for the most interesting eyeglasses they've ever had but we definitely have their conservative cousins as well. Our approach to our funky customers is to always show them what's new and keep the store stocked with outrageous frames to keep them coming back! **Harris Decker, Eye Designs of Westchester, Westchester, NY**
- We see patients from 4 to 100 and carry something for everyone although we don't have a robust kid's collection. **Marc Ullman, OD, Academy Vision, Pine Beach, NJ**

KISS MARRY KILL
Brain Squad members tell us which of these three things they would ... Kiss, Marry, or Kill

PAINS

- 👁 Paper cut
- 🔪 Splinter
- 👄 Bite your tongue

BREAKFAST

- 🥞 Pancakes
- 🍷 Waffles
- 🍞 French toast

POP QUIZ



30% One first class trip the year	70% Unlimited economy flights for a year
90% Every day is a great mental health day	10% Every day is a great hair day
20% Double date with your ex	80% Double date with your in-laws
89% Eat the same meal for dinner for a month	11% Have an eyelash stuck in your eye for a week

OR

72% Be a famous scientist who cures a disease 	28% Be a professional athlete
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THE CASE OF THE
HARDLY
WORKING

No one seems to want to work any-more! And these practice owners feel that if they’re ‘too hard’ on employees, they will just quit. **BY CARISSA DUNPHY**

AS THE EXHAUSTING day of clinic came to an end, Dr. Lambeau was looking forward to attending this evening’s Chamber of Commerce meeting. They weren’t something he went to often, but tonight’s topic was around small business staffing — something he needed help with.

After arriving, the host asked attendees experiencing staffing issues to raise their hand — nearly everybody did. How incredible, he thought to himself, that this many local business owners were having the same kind of problem — he felt comforted in some weird way. As he scanned the room looking to see who all of the hands belonged to, he saw Dr. Maguire — an OD who practiced across town.

Once the presentation concluded, Dr. Lambeau made a beeline to Dr. Maguire, “Hey Sara, good to see you here!”

“I wish we were here for better reasons, but it’s good to see you too,” Dr. Maguire replied.

Without making much small talk, Dr. Lambeau got straight to the topic at hand. “I knew staffing was a common issue, but I was surprised at how few people are having the issues that I am — I have employees, but they just don’t want to work!”

Dr. Maguire nodded, “Yeah, it seems the majority of folks are unable to find people to hire — qualified or not. Tell me more about what you’ve been experiencing.”

“I have great employees — they know their jobs inside and out, rarely call in sick and patients love them,” Dr. Lambeau began.

“So, where’s the problem?” Dr. Maguire interrupted.

Dr. Lambeau continued, “It is like pulling teeth to get them to do the simplest tasks in a timely manner — like keeping trial contacts maintained, checking in and notifying patients as soon as their glasses arrive...”

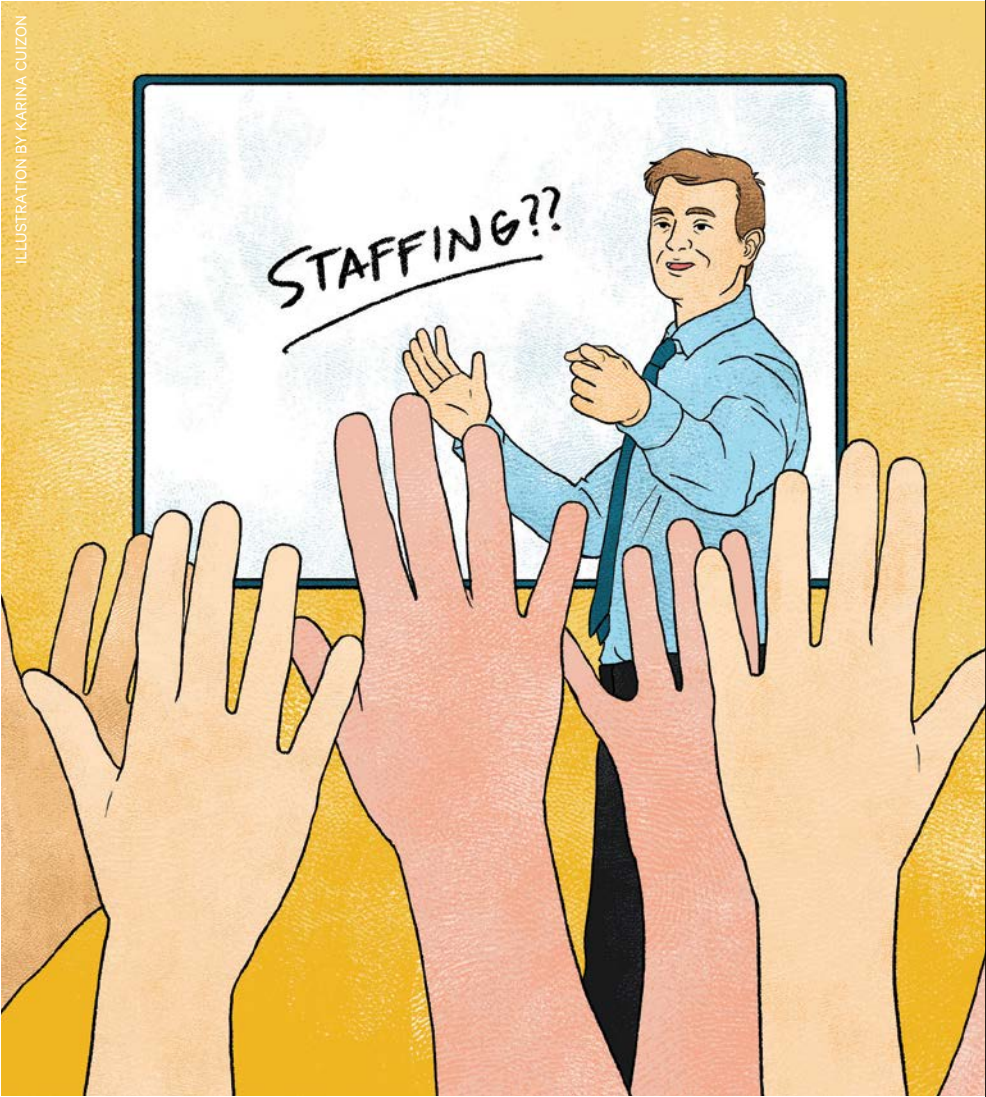
Dr. Maguire excitedly interrupted again, “Keeping artificial tear samples in rooms!”

“Yes...” Dr. Lambeau said hesitantly. “Are you okay, Sara?”

“I am floored that we are literally experiencing the same thing.”

CREATED BY CARISSA DUNPHY. ABOC. Carissa has been working in the eyecare industry since 2008. She is the founder of Optician Now (opticiannow.com), a multi-channel resource for opticians, and a Digital Marketing Associate at PECAA. Connect with Carissa on LinkedIn, or Instagram @opticiannow.

REAL DEAL SCENARIOS are inspired by true stories but are changed to sharpen the dilemmas involved and should not be confused with real people or places. Responses are peer-sourced opinions and are not a substitute for professional legal advice. Please contact your attorney if you have any questions about an employee or customer situation in your own business.



Dr. Maguire continued wide-eyed, “It’s like our employees are all talking and creating an alliance against us!”

“I don’t think that’s the case”, Dr. Lambeau chuckled. “The one that kills me is when insurance benefits aren’t checked until an hour before the appointment, instead of days before. Sometimes the findings create a hole in the schedule — if we knew these things sooner, that hole could have been filled.”

“They are mastering the art of procrastination,” Dr. Maguire said, adding, “Mine do busy work instead of these necessary tasks

— I could care less if the pens at the front desk are sanitized and the magazines in the lobby are organized.”

Both doctors sighed. “I legitimately worry that if I push my employees at all they’ll quit and I’ll be stuck in the same boat as everyone else in this room — not having enough workers,” Dr. Lambeau said.

Dr. Maguire’s eyes got big, “I agree completely. So, what do we do? All these years we worked hard to own a practice; we finally get here, and we have to accept lackluster work just to keep the doors open?”

ONLINE EXTRA! Check out other Real Deals and comment on this one at invisionmag.com/realdeal

THE BIG QUESTIONS: ❶ Are these ODs overreacting? Should they take a step back and appreciate that they even have competent employees? ❷ Should the ODs buckle down on their staff? If so, what would the best approach be? ❸ Is work ethic as a whole on the decline? Is this a cultural shift that employers will need to work around?

JUDY SCHEUERELL
FOX VALLEY FAMILY EYE CARE
LITTLE CHUTE, WI

I thought that having an employee in her early 50s would be great! I thought that like me, she would have a similar work ethic. However, this is not the case. During and after COVID, she was working from home. This means wearing jeans and tennis shoes and doing only what she had to. I feel like this has destroyed many people’s work ethic and basic sense of “give a crap.” Like other doctors, ours is afraid to admonish her too much, afraid she will quit. These things need to be addressed because it affects the *whole* office!

MARYANNA PANNY
EYECARE FOR YOU
BOYNTON BEACH, FL

I’m a general manager and agree 100%. I’ve worked at various offices and it’s the same situation. Employees on their phone, patients not confirmed for appointments until the end of the day, turning patients away even though they have an opening because they don’t want to pull the authorization. It is becoming a serious problem and difficult to find a solution without losing staff.

AMBER SIMMONS
DOUGLAS & LEISNER
OPTOMETRY, CHESTER, VA

I do think work ethic overall is in decline. Some of this is healthy; I am glad to have a better work/life balance than my parents’ generation did. However, many employees just want to do the bare minimum these days and don’t seem invested in the practice. I think the

ODs in this situation should have an open conversation with the employees. What are their reasons for only doing the menial tasks? Have the ODs made their priorities clear? Make sure everyone is on board with the big picture. Delegate tasks so everyone has something they’re responsible for... so there are no excuses.

JILL COREY
PACIFIC EYECARE OF PORT ORCHARD, PORT ORCHARD, WA

I have been in the industry for 30 years, starting out as a tech, progressing to tech supervisor, office manager and administrator. The scenario depicted is not only very real, but one of the most frustrating components of trying to manage a practice. New hire candidates show up to interviews in unprofessional attire and lack a track history but demand salaries beyond what they are qualified to do. Once hired, they lack dependability, a good work ethic, or investment in the practice. Overwhelmingly, I have experienced a sense of entitlement: not what the employee can bring to the practice, but what the practice can provide to them. We have had no option but to lower our standards. Turnover has never been higher.

MICHAEL MURPHY, OD
VISION CARE ASSOCIATES
SWANSEA, IL

I often find that employees who slow-walk everything are poorly trained or undercompensated. I have two employees who do the work of four (or more) people because they don’t want to have to work with incompetent coworkers. I pay them well, and treat

them like family, because without them I am nothing, and they have become so well trained that they often have a problem sussing out before I even see the patient, and this means medical problems as well as optical solutions. Some of my colleagues bemoan the fact that they can’t find or keep good people, but the management practices they describe often leave me with my jaw hanging! You can’t expect good employees when you’re a lousy employer: paying minimum wage and treating employees like a necessary evil is no way to build trust or cooperation.

BEN THAYIL, OD
LIFETIME VISION & EYE CARE
MIAMI, FL

They are not overreacting; a step back wouldn’t hurt. A little coaching needs to be done on some of the details. Setting expectations and accountability will fix this.

No buckling down, get the team engaged. Engagement happens when people are clear on what they have to accomplish and have a part in creating the system and process.

Work ethic and cultural shifts happen non-stop. As long as the leadership is ahead of the curve, these doctors will shift from being reactive to proactive.

TREVOR MOWER
TEEM
SALT LAKE CITY, UT

Virtual assistants can really help out here. Specifically for things like insurance verification — this can be a task for a VA to do. We have found out that when offices hire VAs there is less burnout of in-person staff.

BETH PICHON
BIRMINGHAM OPTICAL
SLIDELL, LA

It seems impossible to find employees who want to come to work to work. It seems their mindset is to fill a seat and do only what will get things by for the day! We have experienced the same issues for years and it is only getting worse. As a practice administrator, I need to be confident employees are putting patients’ needs first. Just last week we had a staff meeting and I reiterated that it is up to every staff member to assist in doing everything possible to bring in revenue, otherwise they are a liability. The doctor and I have come to terms with having to constantly remind staff of minor things, recirculate memos and SOPs, continue auditing closely. And yes — for heaven’s sake don’t ask them to clean or straighten up! Having to micro-manage is not my preference; it takes time away from my main responsibilities.

WHITNEY HEAD-POTTER
BEATTY EYES OPTOMETRY
MISSOULA, MT

The doctors are not overreacting. It is not unreasonable to want their employees to complete tasks integral to keeping the clinic open. While I understand they may be reticent to put boundaries in place for fear of losing staff, boundaries are exactly what are needed. Sometimes, a simple conversation regarding why certain tasks are more important than others; sanitized pens is nice, but if there are holes in the schedule then the clinic is losing money. That affects everyone’s bottom line. If that proves ineffectual, having daily checklists to complete before closing every day could also help. I don’t think that work ethic is necessarily on the decline, but the cultural shift does ask employers to change the way they manage in order to get business done.

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SANITY FILES

How eye professionals keep their cool in a crazy world

**Chris Wheaton,
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NORTH OPTICAL, PORTLAND, ME

IN 2018 Chris Wheaton took a shipping container and turned it into what would become 2024's America's Finest Optical Retailer. In that time, he's sussed out what he loves about his business: Using his shop as a creative outlet — "I had no idea that furniture design was something that I could do as part of my job!" — the opportunity to bring his team to New York and Paris/Antwerp, and becoming his local "glasses guy." Of course, you can't take the good without the bad and that's where he firmly places working Saturdays, taxes, and cleaning! But the announcement of a new America's Finest winner means we must say goodbye to Chris. Fortunately, he has quite literally passed the baton, since it was his encouragement that got this year's winner to even enter the contest in the first place. So, put the Swiffer away Chris, and enjoy this full circle moment ... maybe sitting on the couch watching mindless TV with your wife and a glass of "something fun."



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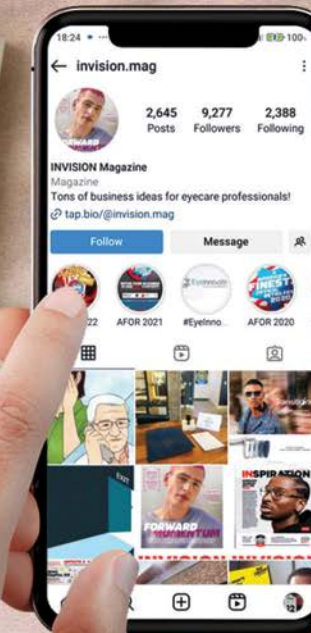
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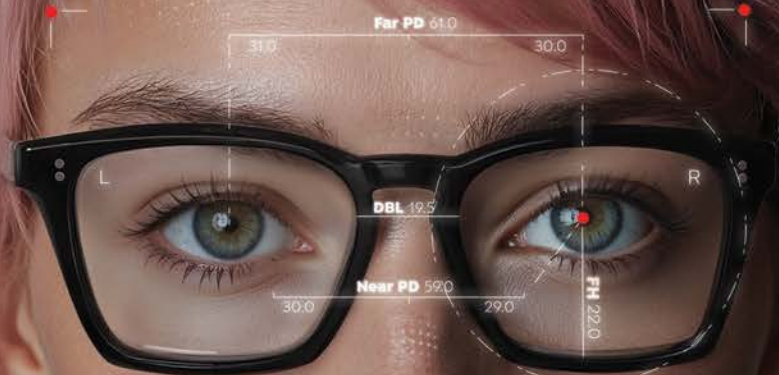
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