



SPOTLIGHT

ISSUE 5



FACING THE COMPETITION

Independent optometry continues to face challenges that have been seen in similar businesses such as pharmacies, hardware suppliers, consumer electronics and book and music retailers. Online eyewear purchases have gained popularity due to improved ease of website navigation, increased product selection, free shipping and no hassle returns. The consumer is demanding a more efficient shopping experience with transparent pricing which the Internet aptly provides. In addition, smartphone apps are now available that allow the consumer to take their own PD and seg height measurements.

With all of this increased market pressure, how can the private practice respond? To develop a strategy to meet the needs of the modern consumer, it is important to know who they are. Research surveys¹ show that the US consumer can be defined as one of the following:

Independent Loyalist - These are consumers that receive their eye exams, eyeglasses, and contacts from an independent optometrist.

Hybrid Spenders – These patients value their optometrist for their eye exams but choose to purchase their eyewear needs either from a large retailer or an online provider.

Chain Loyalist – These consumers receive their eye exams and also purchase their eyeglasses and contacts from a chain retail location.

The independent loyalists have been a very stable segment but they are in jeopardy of becoming a hybrid purchaser or even a chain loyalist. The good news is that the consumers prefer their local optometrist for their comprehensive eye exam. It is important not to take this for granted but to build on this solid foundation. Also, there is opportunity to recapture the eyewear purchases from the hybrid spender. This can be accomplished by strengthening the products that are offered. For example, review the current frame selections to ensure that it corresponds with the patient demographics. By adjusting the board selection, you can combat purchases that are being made through the Internet or the chain retailers.

Another opportunity is to provide a lifestyle questionnaire that will assist in uncovering daily vision challenges that the patient may not know there is a solution. Educate your patient so that they understand the reason for the problem and then follow up with an answer that will address the issue.

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This process allows your patients to see you as a trusted advisor, which cannot be found when purchasing online.

Review the pricing schedules with the “eyes” of the consumer. Prices should be easy to understand and transparent. Internet sites such as Amazon have empowered the consumer to price compare and demand up-front pricing. They prefer not to be surprised by add-on price adjustments.

Increasing your presence on the Internet will also help to strengthen your visibility to your current patients and also attract new ones. Allow your patients to schedule appointments online and in turn communicate with them through email or text messaging when their eyewear is ready. Consider developing an online store through your website to retain contact lens purchases.

Consumers will continue to purchase through the Internet so it is important to educate your patients of the potential issues that may result when not purchasing from an eye care professional. A study conducted by the Pacific University College of Optometry in conjunction with the AOA found that of 308 lenses ordered from ten of the most visited Internet providers, 44.8% failed at least one parameter optical or impact testing.¹¹ This warning should alarm patients and in turn increase the value of purchasing from their optometrist.

While the market challenges are continuing to exert pressure on the private practice, the independent optometrist can build on the personalized service that gained their patients’ loyalty. Modifications to meet the demands of the modern consumer will provide the independent OD continued longevity.

¹ Do you see what we see? The future of independent optometry. Bain & Company, Elizabeth Spaulding, 3-19-12

¹¹ How Important is Internet Eyewear Sales to the Independent Optometrist? Ver. 2017 Kremer Eye Center



WORTH A LOOK

CLEAR CHOICES

The Vision Council has updated the Clear Choices brochure which is designed especially for the consumer. The pamphlet features a "Lifestyle Questionnaire" and presents information about lens design, materials, and treatment options in easy to understand terminology. It discusses the need for more than one pair of glasses to fit all of their needs. It now also includes timely information on blue light and the potential harm that may come from exposure. If you would like to order a complementary packet for your waiting room, please request through your Midwest Labs’ location.

WHAT’S NEW?

BluArmor React is now available in FT 28!

We are excited to announce that BluArmor React is now available in polycarbonate FT28 in both gray and brown. Similarly to the other BluArmor React lenses, the bifocal product darkens quickly and also fades back up to 2X faster than other photochromic lenses. In addition to blocking 100% of UVA and UVB light, all BluArmor React lenses provide approximately 80% blue light protection in their un-activated state and 93% when activated. Now your FT photochromic wearers can benefit from blue light protection and experience the comfort of the increased fade back.

Uncut	\$73.00 / \$97.33
Complete	\$80.00 / \$106.67