

Do We Stand A Chance Against Online Optical?

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Working together, optometrists, opticians and technicians play a vital role in patient care. We utilize our professional relationship to strengthen our patient's confidence while displaying the trust we have in each other.

Challenges

The onslaught of online opticals and their seemingly limitless advertising capabilities, make an increased challenge to optometric professionals. Competing with "cheap" prices can seem impossible, but we have a clear advantage over the impersonal online services, it is our ability to provide face-to-face patient care. Never underestimate the power of personal service. Online optical will always be faceless. Our individual hands-on approach provides a feeling of being significant, and a reminder to each patient that they are essential to our practice. Enabling our patient's to experience the knowledge that their vision and eye care needs are our most important objective.

Communication

When a patient makes the first contact, they communicate with office personnel. Answering three vital questions for our patients will allow each professional the confidence to know they have provided the best initial contact with a prospective patient.

Arrival

Welcoming a patient when they arrive at our practice for the first time is imperative. Introductions can be made, (if appropriate) to the staff and doctors. We want to make sure that every staff member acknowledges the patient's arrival, providing a sense of belonging.

Comprehensive Examination

Immediately following their comprehensive eye examination, our patient will observe camaraderie between the prescribing doctor and the staff. Our interactions should always be portrayed as positive, a team atmosphere.

The moment a patient is handed over to the optician, it is imperative that the doctor displays confidence in the staff, and verbalizes it to our patient; the patient's response will be returning *their* confidence to us.

The relationship between the doctor and staff then begins as separate, yet joined strength in patient care.

Understanding the comprehensive eye examination is imperative. Observe each doctor's procedures, taking notes and asking questions about diagnostic tests that may have been performed. This is a way to understand the doctor's practices. It will enable us to provide answers to patients, should they have procedural questions about their eye examinations.

Having first hand knowledge of the doctor's comprehensive eye examinations may also be useful when describing the benefits our eye examination provides, versus an advertised "free eye examination."

Steps toward purchasing:

1. Perceiving a need. When our patients understand the need for eyewear. Their very lives depend upon their vision. So the value of eyewear should never be understated.
2. Our patients communicate their experiences whether positive or negative, to their friends and families. According to Conversationxl.com, "Peer reviews account for fifty nine percent of consumers purchasing decisions." Responses will influence purchasing decisions. Use the negative responses to help make continual improvements in our practice.
3. Once a patient has made the decision to purchase their eyewear, assisting them to understand lenses and lens availability will mean defining the benefits of a particular lens or lens style. Allowing us to illustrate our expertise, and meticulousness care for their eye health.

Explaining the difference between a lens worn for a specific job or sport, versus another style of lens. Identifying the correct lenses, the lenses that will be both comfortable and functional for that individual will add to our patients' confidence in us.

4. Post purchase. We have established the need for corrective eyewear, now helping our patients' recognize the purchase has been in their best interest, and has been an economical, and valued acquisition.

Lens Education

There are many venues available for staff education, our local laboratories are a wealth of knowledge, and can provide lens availabilities, and some will offer tours, allowing staff members to see firsthand the lens fabricating process. Other venues include, conferences (like this one), weekly or monthly publications, and of course the Internet.

When we arm ourselves with knowledge it can inspire us with confidence to recommend the best lens and lens products to our patients.

Price Matters

When price dictates the tone of a visit, providing a collection of less expensive frames will be helpful. Most Laboratories will be able to offer a package pricing, lenses and frames at a specific lower cost. It is important when offering package pricing; that our patient is assured that the quality is not or ever will be compromised. Our practice will only be identified for their quality eyewear. The same is true when providing less costly frames. If a patient expresses a limitation of expenditures, we must be able to provide them with both the value they request and the quality we require, in other words we must find a way to let our patient know we are empathetic to their monetary limitations. As we continue to strive to provide them with the very best products.

Quality is essential. Every patient that is happy with his or her new prescription eyewear, and they have been provided the very best quality products become a potential referral. Knowing that most patients' discuss to friends and family about their experience (with us), it is more common for a patient to discuss negative experiences, insuring positive experiences will eliminate the wrong perception by potential patients.

Some patients will remark that they want "cheep frames." The correct term should be inexpensive frames. It's always a good idea to differentiate this to the patient. It is wise to keep those patients...remember, word of mouth can be powerful. So having a diverse frame room another great way to maintain patients, and attract referrals

Purchase

Following their decision to purchase lenses and frames from us, customizing their products is crucial. Measuring a precise Pupillary Distances is a necessity, as we strive to provide the most exact prescribed prescription lenses for the most optimum visual acuity for our patients.

Frames

Frame proficiency is a complex part of frame styling. The frames we display should be fashionable, comfortable and dependable. Experienced opticians will know the styles that have a reputation of doing both.

Providing a few high-end frames is as important as providing a value selection. It is always a good idea to provide a few higher end frames. Showing our patient's exclusivity to our practice, and allow for optimal frame selection.

Patients want the latest trends, or sometimes, a particular style. It is important to be accommodating to our patients' by displaying the frames they request. Also encourage them to try something completely different. Giving them a chance to be outside their comfort zone, and the opportunity to try something unique.

When asked for our opinion, be honest, it is ok to be truthful...if the frame does not fit, tell them. Allow them to compare the fit and comfort of another frame, one that fits them properly, promoting an understanding between the two styles.

Patients will invariably appreciate our experience with frame proficiency when providing the most comfortable as well as the most fashion forward frames.

Team Work

Working together the entire optical staff will play a pivotal roll in the care of our patients. There can never be a doubt, it will start before our patients get to the doctors examination. The first contact is when our patients make their initial appointment. It can be made in person or by a telephone call. This is perhaps the most important time for us to shine as a professional office. Our patients need to feel that they are very important. Each staff member should have with the necessary information to help our new patient in whatever capacity that is required. Speaking clearly and with a smile, our patient needs to feel that he/she is welcomed.

Referrals

Another huge resource will come from patient referrals. When a patient is happy with the service, telling family and friends will be a pleasure. Patients' realize the importance of quality eye care. A patient that is happy and contented will continue to tell many friends, and the referrals we receive can be countless.

Advertising

Websites created for us can be a cost effective way to advertise. Social media is also a great venue for consumers to see our practice, while it permits us to list our services, phone numbers, hours, and photos of the staff and doctors. It is also a convenient way for patients to communicate with our staff. If they have discussed their concerns before their scheduled appointment, it can add to their feeling of comfort when they arrive.

Acknowledgements

foundrygroup.com
intellegince.com
simonsinek.com
apple.com