KEY CONSIDERATIONS OF INCORPORATION

INTERVIEW WITH A DYNAMO
DR. SABRINA AHMED

EMPLOYMENT LAW FILES
RIGHT OR LEFT SIDE

DO YOU NEED A MARKETING GURU?

BE YOUR OWN TENANT!

THINK LIKE AN ENTREPRENEUR BUT LEARN TO ASK FOR ADVICE

AND MUCH MORE!

A HELPFUL RESOURCE FOR YOU AND YOUR PRACTICE
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EDITOR'S PAGE</th>
<th>BANKING</th>
<th>PRACTICE MANAGEMENT</th>
<th>LEGAL</th>
<th>MARKETING</th>
<th>PRACTICE MANAGEMENT</th>
<th>REAL ESTATE</th>
<th>PATIENT COMMUNICATION</th>
<th>A PLACE TO VISIT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>First Issue Comments, Content and Contributors</td>
<td>The Entrepreneurial Optometrist</td>
<td>Career Options for Optometrist Graduates</td>
<td>Don’t Let This Happen to YOU!</td>
<td>Professional Marketing: Realize The Full Potential of Your Practice</td>
<td>Be Prepared: Another Reason for Optometry Practice Appraisals</td>
<td>The Lorax, Optometrists and Dr. Seuss</td>
<td>Fun Eye Facts to Share With Your Patients</td>
<td>Museum of Vision Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Entrepreneurial Optometrist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Feature Interview with Dr. Sabrina Ahmed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Visual Dimensions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Lorax, Optometrists and Dr. Seuss</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sight Can Make the Difference Between a Life of Poverty and a Life of Opportunity.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fun Eye Facts to Share With Your Patients</td>
<td></td>
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<td>21</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Museum of Vision Science</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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First Issue Comments, Content and Contributors

by Karen Henderson

Profitable Practice Magazine is delighted to welcome a new member to our successful and innovative magazine family – Profitable Practice, Eye Care Professional Edition.

This magazine will feature current trends, practice management issues, marketing strategies, professional organizations and interviews with leading practitioners along with students and staff.

We see this magazine as a unique and rewarding opportunity to service the largely ignored profession of eye care practitioners and their marketplaces.

We will continually research and present information that we hope will be of value to you the reader. For example, according to the February 2012 Eye Care in Canada report published by Euromonitor International, the world leader in strategy research for consumer markets:

- Canada’s aging population continues to be the main driving force behind demand for eye care products in the country. Statistics Canada demographic studies show a shift in Canada’s demographics. Over 2001–2026 the percentage of Canada’s population accounted for by senior consumers – i.e. those over the age of 65 – is expected to increase from 13% to 20%
- The percentage of Canadians aged 65 plus is projected to increase from 14% to 16% over the forecast period. As eye-related problems increase with age, changing demographics will be among the key factors supporting sales of eye care products over the forecast period. Increased use of technology (often leading to dry and tired eyes) will also be a factor boosting demand.

October is Eye Health Month World Sight Day (WSD), an annual day of awareness held on the second Thursday of October to focus global attention on blindness and vision impairment.

The international key messages around this event:

- Approximately 285 million people worldwide live with low vision and blindness
- Of these, 39 million people are blind and 246 million have moderate or severe visual impairment
- 90% of blind people live in low-income countries

Yet 80% of visual impairment is avoidable - i.e. readily treatable and/or preventable

An estimated 19 million children are visually impaired

To help celebrate the importance of eye care and the launch of this inaugural issue, we are delighted to include an interview with Dr. Sabrina Ahmed, a Mississauga optometrist who manages to successfully juggle a large, solo practice, community involvement and a busy family life. Mariana Bracic gives reasons for a preventive approach to employment contracts and concerns and why she likes to work with files from the right side of her desk. Todd C. Slater talks about the wisdom of Dr. Seuss for optometrists considering being their own tenant.

David Shilton provides valuable insight into financing a new practice; Dr. Roger Ellis and Jon Walton outline the reasons for a professional practice appraisal and Daniel Pisek presents a solid rationale for creating a practice marketing plan with a professional in the field.

Timothy A. Brown and Robert T. MacDonald provide a detailed synopsis of career options for optometrists; our second dynamic interview is with Jane Ebbern, the Country Manager for Optometry Giving Sight, the only global fundraising organization that specifically targets the prevention of blindness and impaired vision due to uncorrected refractive error. The question of practice incorporation is ably discussed by Lloyd Wright and Anita Hollands.

Lastly, we will always try to find information of use to your patients; we hope you will share the Fun Eye Facts with them.

As with all our publications, we continue to truly appreciate the creative work of Natalia Decius of Full Contact Marketing who provides visual and literal amplification of the themes presented in the magazine’s articles.

Finally and most importantly, we are here to support and serve you, the practicing eye care professionals of Ontario. We sincerely request your feedback and comments regarding this exciting new venture.

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This publication complies with the Canadian Advertising-Editorial Guidelines and is published by ROI Corporation Brokerage for educational, marketing and informational purposes only. Our contributors are seasoned professionals who have agreed to share their advice in Profitable Practice and some of them partially fund this publication designed to provide our readers with timely information about industry news, analysis and stories in support of the dental profession across Canada.

Karen Henderson
Karen Henderson is the Managing Associate Editor of Profitable Practice Magazines and can be reached at karen@profitablepracticemagazine.com
Establishing and building a successful practice is a dream for many optometrists, but it’s not for the faint of heart. Whether purchasing an existing practice or starting one from the ground up, dedication, passion, creativity, hard work and business savvy all matter. The most successful practitioners are those that think like entrepreneurs. And yet, learning how to run a business and manage money isn’t something that most optometry schools spend much time on, if any.

But running an optometry practice is a business, one that requires the expertise of a trusted team: a banker, tax accountant, lawyer, and financial planner.

**Get expert advice**

David Shilton, Senior Manager Business Segment Development, Business Banking, TD Bank, suggests starting early in your career and establishing a financial advisory team to provide financial, legal and other advice as you grow. Ideally, you look for experts with experience working with optometry practices and other healthcare professionals, such as doctors and dentists.
“The key is to find people who can anticipate your needs, who will take the time to explain things and who answer your questions so that you really understand what they are telling you,” says Mr. Shilton. “Nodding and smiling will only get you so far.”

Your financial advisors should also show you a path towards your goals, especially when paying off student loans early in your career.

“Pay down as much student debt as possible while working as an associate so that you are not carrying the burden of debt,” Shilton continues. “You should also know your long term objectives and the type of financial risk you’re willing to carry. For some, owning their own practice is the goal while others look to becoming an associate or corporate employee.”

The importance of getting professional financial advice cannot be stressed enough. The most successful healthcare professionals recognize early in their careers the importance of working with experts.

**Four rules for financial planning**

Smart financial planning – from obtaining credit to managing cash flow and debt – is integral to the successful foundation and management of a private practice. Once your financial advisory team is in place, your first four priorities should be the following if your goal is to purchase or start an optometry practice:

1. **Pay off your student debt first** - It’s not uncommon for optometry students to graduate with a significant debt. Some graduates have to budget for significant monthly student loan payments each month. Banks look for people that demonstrate a good history of repayment of existing debt when considering whether to provide additional financing for practice start-up. The good news is that when looking for financing to purchase an optometry practice, banks are realizing the high potential optometrists represent.

2. **Get good, professional advice** - The most successful optometrists are those who surround themselves from the start with an accountant, lawyer and banker. These industry experts are essential when making key decisions, including buying an existing practice or financing a new one, practice valuation, loan structure and industry trends that might affect future decisions.

3. **Solid planning is very important** - Opening a new optometry practice is a risky yet rewarding venture. Any business owner must complete the appropriate due diligence regarding an opportunity. A business plan must be prepared. Not only is a solid business plan integral to the success of your practice, it can play a huge role when applying for financing from a financial institution.

4. **Decide what credit product is right for you** - Whether you need start-up capital, funds to purchase equipment or to manage your cash flow, access to sufficient credit is essential to running a successful small business. Typically, optometrists require an operating line of credit to cover day-to-day expenses, a term loan to cover the costs of starting up or purchasing a practice, a business credit card to pay for and to track regular office expenses and merchant services to process debit and credit card payments.

**In conclusion**

Entrepreneurs sometimes have trouble asking for help, but the most successful small business owners surround themselves with experts to navigate through the challenges of owning a business.

A dedicated Small Business Advisor at your bank, who understands your unique needs as an optometrist, can help you to map out the financial plan and business decisions needed to take your business to the next level. If this is your dream, make it a reality today.

Our experience has shown that most health care professionals achieve success once they start practicing. However, those that achieve the greatest success are those that acknowledge the need for professional advice. This allows them to focus on what they do best – helping others to focus on their health.

**Bottom Line:** To achieve the greatest success when you start practicing, admit you can’t do it all. Ask for advice. Surround yourself with the required financial professionals who can fill in the planning gaps.

**Dave Shilton**

Dave Shilton has over 20 years of Business Banking experience with TD Bank. Currently, Dave manages the Professional Banking program.
Career Options for Optometrist Graduates

by Timothy A. Brown and Robert T. MacDonald

There are so many issues to consider in today’s business climate that some new graduates are puzzled as to what direction to take. Most students openly admit they do not receive adequate business training during school. Our informal surveys indicate that students want more career advice at this early stage, yet the curriculum is typically focused almost exclusively upon clinical skills – as it should be – but to ignore the fact that optometry is very much a business is an oversight on the part of the system.

We have studied the work of several leading economists and have concluded that the aging population will have a considerable effect on the vision economy. In addition, here are several factors contributing to emerging trends in vision manpower ratios that will significantly affect the set-up versus purchase decision for new optometrists.

It is easy to predict trends when you have the benefit of the past with which to compare. Markets are typically cyclical in nature and the supply and demand of optometrists and the need for vision treatments is not unique. The future needs of patients as they age and the pending retirement of baby boomer optometrists will have a substantial effect upon the supply and demand of vision services. New optometrists must now consider these factors in order to succeed. You should understand these trends prior to making any decision about setting up a new practice, purchasing an established office or entering into associateship and/or post-graduate/academic studies.

Setting up a new practice

There are many advantages to setting up a practice of your own after graduation or when leaving an associateship. Not only do you have the opportunity to buy the latest equipment but you can also design and decorate your practice how you would like and in a location of your own choice. As your practice grows, integration of business systems can be handled with relative ease.

Given that the baby boomer optometrists are predicted to retire at an increasing rate, the result is a decrease in the number of equivalent, full-time optometrists serving the population. Coupled with an aging population that will demand more vision treatment, this will lead to increased new patient flow and favourable, long-term revenue growth for new practices.

Though the advantages are numerous, bear in mind that setting up a new practice has its downside as well. Unless you have developed a strong patient base prior to setting out on your own, you will see very few patients in the initial stages of practice. In order to attract new patients, you will likely need to work hours that established optometrists often don’t – that is, evenings and weekends. And patient retention may be a problem if you find the need to work elsewhere to subsidize your overhead, making yourself unavailable to your own patients at those times.
There is also a good chance that you will need to rely on a line of credit for the first one or two years to afford living expenses. You may have little or no cash flow, as overhead will exceed revenue. This can be complicated by the fact that bank financing is more difficult to obtain for start-up practices.

You will likely be required to invest 250 to 500 hours of unpaid time to investigate locations and demographics, negotiate a premise lease with the landlord, consult with a lawyer, interview, select and supervise contractors, advertise and interview candidates for staff positions and create marketing material such as a logo, letterhead, signage, etc. These tasks are called the organizational components of goodwill. The time invested, also known as “sweat equity,” may be in excess of $50,000 (500 hours at $100 per hour). You will not receive any payment in return for it until the practice is sold many years into the future.

**Buying a practice**

Unlike starting up a new practice from scratch, buying a practice that has already been established has some definite benefits. For example, a patient base will already exist, allowing you to not only keep busy but also to maintain cash flow. Because of the collateral, you will have easier access to financing should you need to renovate, upgrade, etc. You will also have an experienced staff that are not only familiar with the patients, but can help integrate you into the practice and assist in the transition. This is especially helpful if the previous owner has not remained for a time to assist with these matters.

What you may run into, however, is that an established practice often has older equipment - both clinical and business-oriented - that may need to be replaced or upgraded. When compared to the benefits of immediate cash flow, this is a minor problem.

As well, the majority of new optometrists wish to be in the Toronto area where there is a limited supply of practices for sale. This could result in looking to buy a practice in a location that may not be desirable to you or your lifestyle choices.

In some instances, your clinical philosophies and your personality may differ significantly from your predecessor. This alone is a key reason why purchasers must consider far more than just the economics of a practice purchase.

**Entering an associateship**

There are three main advantages to associating with another (established) optometrist. At the top of that list is the fact that there is no financial commitment required. After years of student loans, the last thing some new optometrists want to do is go into more debt just as they are launching their career. An associateship also offers an excellent learning opportunity with an established optometrist who may develop into a cherished mentor. And thirdly if that is not the case, and you want to move on to new scenery, you have the freedom to relocate as you choose.

The downside, of course, is that as the “new kid on the block,” you will likely be required to work the hours the owner usually will not - often evening and weekends. You may see only the “simple” cases, as the owner may reserve the more complex treatments for himself or herself until trust and confidence are established.

Bear in mind, as well, that the owner also has control over patient flow and income, and you may even have limited job security. When and if you decide to move on, you may have restrictive covenants that limit the area in which you may practise. If you have left the practice to enter into ownership of your own, you may find that you had become comfortable with little or no investment or financial responsibility in associateship. Your income may be lower in the first year or two, making it difficult if you have established a lifestyle around your associate income.

**Post-Graduate/Academics**

Many new graduates in optometry decide not to step out into the working world at all, opting instead to remain in school on a path to research or to earn a specialty certificate or degree.

If you choose a route towards a specialty, be sure to consider the economics. While the cost of post-graduate training is extensive, you put off investment in equipment and leaseholds (typically $175,000+), and a long-term premise lease committing you to substantial rents. Then, when entering into a private practice as a specialist in another one to four years, you will usually have a higher earning potential. As well, by 2012, there will be more private practices available for purchase from the baby boomer generation of optometrists retiring.

Of course, staying in school also means extra tuition and many more hours of study and research, but these are often in the newest techniques and products. An important factor to be aware of is that, if you choose to remain in academics and eventually teach, there are limited positions available at most universities, a trend that does not seem to be changing.

**Conclusion**

Whatever you decide to do with the next phase of your optometry career, no matter where you are in your career now, you need to understand that the economy of optometry is changing and the market is forever evolving. We can look forward, with some predictability, to see where the opportunities will be.

You too need to look ahead and try to maintain a global “vision economics” perspective.

**Bottom Line:** This article identifies career options for optometry students to consider and determine what is their best course of action to follow.
Like most of the doctors reading this, we have both a preventive, and a remedial, side to our practice. I much prefer the preventive work: helping doctors to implement employment-law instruments (before they get into trouble!) that save them enormous sums of money, not to mention personal stress and productive time. Those files are so satisfying! Clients are invariably thrilled. They call and email with happy reports about how much they are enjoying their practice now, how much more profitable they are, and how they sleep so much better at night. Those files I keep on the right side of my desk.

On the left side of my desk are the more challenging files: Where a significant problem has already occurred before the client called us or had any preventive work done. We offer you this peek at a very typical file on the left side of my desk with the fervent hope that it will help you to avert a similar disaster. While all names and identifying details have been changed to protect confidentiality, the facts are so tragically common that this could actually refer to any number of similar files.

Dr. Novo had practised as an associate for several years before mounting the experience, courage and financing to buy his own practice. He found a practice in a nice community that would be a wonderful place to raise his young family. The practice was well established as the vendor, Dr. Antiquities, had opened it about thirty years ago. Dr. Novo
liked how long-standing all the staff were, as it gave him confidence that there would not be any significant employment problems. Dr. Novo was a clinical guy—he just wanted to practise optometry and hoped to buy a turn-key operation that would not require that he spend a lot of time managing or exercising business skills that he did not feel he had (and frankly had no interest in developing). Dr. Antiques had, for years, been leaving the office early virtually every day to pursue his much-loved fishing hobby yet the office continued to function well without him, apparently. This seemed just what Dr. Novo was looking for.

Dr. Novo contacted “his lawyer” — that is, the only lawyer he had ever dealt with. This was the same lawyer who had prepared Dr. Novo’s wills, handled his brother’s divorce and helped their teenage nephew with a reckless driving charge. He also contacted his accountant, who was a long-standing friend of his parents.

Both his lawyer and his accountant moved the deal quickly through the due diligence process to closing. Dr. Novo asked both the lawyer and the accountant whether he should implement written contracts with the staff and they told him this was not the time to do it! His advisors did not raise any significant issues and Dr. Novo soon found himself the proud new owner of a long-established optometry practice. He moved his family into a beautiful, heritage home in the community. Everything seemed storybook perfect.

**Reality quickly set in.**

As the days and weeks passed, Dr. Novo started to see things from a different perspective, now that he was on the inside of the practice. The most obvious problem, from Dr. Novo’s perspective, was that the office was not practising a level of optometry that he felt should be expected. Yet when he tried to implement reasonable changes, the staff was extremely resistant. Dr. Antiques had stayed on as an associate for six months to help smooth the transition. Once Dr. Antiques left, it seemed to Dr. Novo that all hell broke loose. The staff increasingly took the attitude that it was “their” practice. In their view, the patients all came there because of them. The staff did not see that any changes needed to be made, as the way they always did things seemed to work perfectly well. They simply refused to learn the new computer system. Dr. Antiques had been paying them for years even though they virtually stopped being productive once he left the office early every afternoon. When Dr. Novo suggested that it was not economically feasible for him to continue doing that, they threatened him with constructive dismissal lawsuits. After all, he could not take money out of their pockets without their consent.

All of the signs that Dr. Novo had viewed pre-closing as indicating good management and strong employment situations, he now saw (belatedly) were just indicia of complacency on Dr. Antiques’s part. The staff was simply running the show. They had not had a boss in a long time and did not want one now. They saw Dr. Novo as a youngster who did not know nearly as much about optometry offices as they did. Who was he, the upstart, to come in there and start telling them what to do in “their” office?

Dr. Novo became increasingly frustrated, stressed and unhappy. He was not a confrontational person and did not like the hostility in the office. The staff sensed that he was afraid of them and they increased their bullying mercilessly. Dr. Novo was distraught that he had taken on the better part of a million dollars in debt to end up in this situation. He started to hate going in to work. He had trouble getting up in the morning.

As the weeks passed, the misery spread to his home life. His wife was concerned about him and missed his normal personality. He barely played with their baby any more. As the weeks turned into months, his wife began to get impatient. Finally, she gave him an ultimatum to call our office that day or list the practice for sale.

He called our office and we implemented a Practice Protection Package™ for him that dramatically changed his practice. We have been able to reduce his overhead significantly and dramatically improve profits. Most importantly, he really enjoys his practice and his family is happy.

But the point is: to get here cost Dr. Novo many times more money, stress and time than it should have. We could have obtained this excellent situation for him without his going through all of that grief. Here is what he could have done differently (and what you should too):

1. **If you are a purchaser, the “gold standard” is to look for a practice with its employment law issues already in order:** proper, written contracts and policies with all staff. The silver standard is to make the purchase conditional on implementing proper contracts. The bronze standard is to implement contracts yourself as soon as possible post-closing. (The process should ideally be started before closing.) The earlier you seek expert employment law advice, the more advantageous we can make your position.

2. **As a practice owner, you need expert advice in several key areas, including accounting, corporate law and employment law.** Your advisors should be specialized both in terms of the substantive area and the industry. Employment law is replete with traps that catch the unwary. We have had too many clients over the years who ended up spending tens of thousands of dollars unnecessarily because they followed employment law advice from a non-specialist.

**Don’t let this happen to you.**

**Bottom Line:** This article presents a typical case study of a professional who would have benefitted from the guidance of an employment law expert.

**Mariana Bracic**

Mariana Bracic, BA (Hon.) JD, is the founder of MBCLegal.ca. Mariana is proud of the dramatic benefits of her completely unique, niche specialization (employment law + doctors) that enhance her clients’ wealth and happiness. She can be reached at 905-825-2268 or mbracic@mbclegal.ca.
As a concept, creating a marketing action plan for your practice is pretty big. In reality, though, it’s a combination of steps that are relatively easy to execute as long as you’re willing to apply some dollars and sense.

If you haven’t created a formal marketing action plan before, you may be wondering where to begin. My recommendation: the beginning.

**What’s your vision?**

Or, to quote The Dave Matthews Band, “Where are you going?” Successful marketing begins with having a vision of the type of practice you would like to have. From there marketing action plans are created on measurable objectives to support this vision. An objective could be to increase revenue by 15% or to acquire a minimum of 10 new clients per month. Of course, why limit yourself to one when you can pursue both or still other business goals! It really doesn’t matter how many goals you set or how aggressive they are. Simply set them and march forward with a winning game plan to begin realizing the success that you desire.

**The almighty dollar**

Budgeting is one of the more difficult and underestimated tasks in managing any small business. While most health care practices acknowledge the need to invest in staff, computer equipment and diagnostic technology, many fail to set aside dollars for marketing, and this oversight costs them.

Like any wisely allocated investment, strategic marketing can reap immediate and long-term benefits. Consider this: an investment of $2,500 can buy you a professional mailer-campaign targeting 5,000 homes. That mail-drop could potentially deliver 20 new clients who could remain with you for years, refer you to friends and family, and bring you thousands of dollars in revenue over time.

How much should you set aside for marketing? There’s no golden rule, but 2 to 4% of gross revenue is the magic number I tend to recommend to my clients. Ultimately, anything is better than nothing so determine your budget and keep on moving.
Let’s talk sense

Now that we’ve talked dollars, let’s talk sense — common sense. That’s right. Marketing isn’t rocket science. Let’s begin with your brand identity. Is your business name and logo professional, modern and inviting? Is your signage in good shape? Remember, you only have one chance to make a first impression. Make it great.

How’s your online presence? Let’s face it. People aren’t flipping through the yellow pages anymore. They’re using the Internet to shop for products and services as well as research their options by way of health care providers.

Your website is the first and most important extension of your brand. It’s a window into your practice and it’s open 24/7. You need a website that’s professional, informative and concise, and you need to promote your website on every piece of marketing that’s associated with your practice.

Now, step away from the computer and let’s take a look outside. Your local community is your best opportunity to attract new clients. Is your local community aware of your practice and the services you provide? I will say with great confidence: If you haven’t introduced yourself yet, your competitor probably has. And when new to the neighborhood, residents are likely looking for new and convenient health care providers for themselves and their children. Don’t miss this golden opportunity.

Finally, let’s talk about your existing clients — the lifeblood of your practice. As much as these individuals represent the financial stability of your operation, they represent a great opportunity to grow your business to another level. They believe in you and, when encouraged to do so, they’ll refer you to friends and family. They’re also your best prospects when it comes to selling new services. You invest in training and technology. Maximize your return by effectively communicating all of the great things about your practice.

What’s the plan?

Once you’ve assessed your current marketing situation in the manner described above, you should have a better sense of where to focus your efforts. You’re now ready to create your own six-month marketing action plan.

Creating a plan involves allocating your marketing budget. Based on what we’ve covered so far, here are some tactical considerations:

Brand assurance: Take an honest look at your brand identity. As well as making the right first impression among new prospects, you want your existing clients to feel they’re in the capable hands of a professional who provides modern and progressive eye care. If you’re not confident that your business name and logo project a progressive and professional image, invest in a new image or at the very least a brand refresh.

Internet marketing: Earlier, we talked about the value of having a website you can be proud to promote. It’s a must for any business these days. As you embark on development, focus on creating a site that’s visually appealing with crisp, persuasive copy. This is a sales tool, after all.

Local community marketing: There are many ways to promote your practice throughout your community. Mailer campaigns, including oversized postcards and magnets are effective ways to get noticed. A word about expectations: Be realistic, especially when it comes to projecting immediate results. Remember, you’re in this for the long-term. While there might not be a need for eye care services in a given household in the week or month your mailer hits, when the need does arise, you want to be top of mind.

Proactive customer communication: Your existing clients represent an audience that is loyal and open to hearing what you have to say — so speak up. Newsletters, print or electronic, are just one way you can keep in touch between appointments. Inside your clinic, you can implement a formal client referral program and some poster prints to make your clients aware that you are welcoming new clients.

Rules of engagement

If the above sounds like more than you’re able to bite off and chew, remember, marketing is a team sport. Whether you’re outsourcing tasks to professionals or handling it all in-house, hold regular staff meetings, delegate whatever you can, and inform team members about any programs that you’re running so that they can get involved and help maximize results.

Set your eyes on the prize

Good practice marketing is no small undertaking. It takes dollars, sense and time, but if you manage it well you can look forward to great returns.

In the short-term, the reward for your investment could be as simple as 12 new clients resulting from one community mailer you deployed last month. In the long-term, however, you’re looking at an increase in revenue, and subsequently an increase in the overall value of your practice by the time you decide to sell.

Chances are you’re not quite ready to hang up your hat, so for now I suggest you focus on the 12 months ahead. Set the right course and a year from now you’ll have plenty to smile about.

Bottom Line: This article suggests professional marketing strategies for an optometry practice that can produce results within a six month period.

Daniel Pisek

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PRACTICE MANAGEMENT

“Be Prepared”

Another Reason For Optometry Practice Appraisals

by Dr. Roger L. Ellis, Jon J. Walton, M.Sc

The phrase, “Be Prepared”, a distant memory of most childhoods and engrained in our minds as the motto of the boy scouts/girl guides, should not be forgotten as we mature. While your boy scout/girl guide years have long since passed, the motto of being prepared seems to encompass many aspects of adult business and personal life in today’s world more than ever before.

In a world full of uncertainties, the ability to plan is one of the greatest assets an individual can have to achieve one’s desired lifestyle. Financial planners tell us to plan for retirement as soon as we graduate. Lawyers advise us to draw up a will as soon as we marry or even sooner. Governments recommend we consider a power of attorney for property and financial affairs as soon as we have assets of some value. And doctors recommend a power of attorney for personal health care very early in life. All these recommendation exist for a reason, to keep you as stable as possible in an ever changing world.

What then of our optometry practice, which can be one of the largest single investments that we will make relating to our optometry career?

Should someone not recommend that we consider an optometry practice appraisal soon after we have built up a substantial client base and own a large amount of optometry and business equipment?
Based on countless experiences dealing with optometrists who have left the matter of obtaining an appraisal until the “last minute” (that is, immediately prior to retirement, due to ill health or even death, selling to an associate, etc.), it would appear that both vendor and purchaser would have been better served had an earlier practice appraisal been available for review. Even with a dated appraisal, much will remain constant, and a simple update could be performed if it was felt major changes had occurred since the appraisal was carried out.

**Purpose of an appraisal**

In addition to planning well before an actual, established retirement year or the possibility of ill health occurs without advance warning, an appraisal can be used to:

- Assist in obtaining bank financing, loans or leases
- Determine tax allocations and classifications for taxation purposes
- Assist the courts in legal disputes for awarding values
- Obtain accountants’ opinions for financial planning purposes
- Permit registration and documentation of instruments for collateral for loans, leases and mortgages
- Determine fair market value of your optometry practice and to assist in determining an asking price, if and when required
- Provide qualified parties with the required financial and necessary legal information

**Benefits of a professional appraisal**

While optometry practice sales are limited under the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act to qualified and registered individuals (or a lawyer acting on your behalf), optometry practice appraisals can be done by anyone, including you, based on even a minimal amount of information pertaining to the practice.

However, since an appraisal document can be the foundation of a factual presentation for numerous financial and legal issues, a professional appraisal must be considered crucial for a number of reasons:

- Many hours are required to identify, document and value the various goodwill factors and to accurately record the details (that is; manufacturer, values, serial numbers, age and condition) of all major assets
- Appraisal fees are tax deductible; therefore, if you estimate a loss of income due to hours spent by you trying to obtain information and compare this to the after-tax costs of having a professional appraiser provide a report, you are further ahead in engaging a professional appraiser
- The valuation of an optometry practice is an extremely intricate process requiring specialized training and specific experience. Without this skill and knowledge, it would be a very frustrating exercise (not to mention the likelihood of an inappropriate result)

- A professional appraiser’s accreditation and standards, with absolutely no conflict of interest, will assure the optometrist of quality work, complete confidentiality, and a respected break down of his/her practice that will hold weight with banks, lawyers, potential buyers etc.

**Contents of an appraisal**

An optometry practice appraisal report usually consists of approximately 60-100 pages, including appendices and photos. The contents include:

- A complete detailed description of the practice, types of treatment, patients, fees, systems and personnel
- Location of facility, plans, premise lease options, renewals, restrictions and area demographics
- The optometry practice and management company’s financial statements, expenses, analysis and cash flow
- A recording of all assets, leasehold improvements, clinical equipment and administrative furniture, instruments and materials, liabilities and accounts receivable
- Details of all major assets including approximate age, condition, manufacturer and serial number with both market and replacement costs
- Goodwill calculations and market comparisons with supporting rationale

An optometry practice appraisal is an opinion of fair market value done for the purpose of, and having the contents of, the aforementioned items. The key to an opinion of fair market value should be based upon actual arm’s-length sales used for comparative analysis and with supportive rationale.

**Bottom Line:** The concept of having an optometry practice appraisal has joined the ranks of having a will and powers of attorney well before the need for these becomes evident. As with many aspects of business and personal life, “Be Prepared” stands as an excellent motto to embrace.

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**Dr. Roger Ellis**  
Dr. Roger Ellis is a senior consultant with ROI Corporation Brokerage and can be reached at roger@roicorp.com
Incorporating a professional practice has been around for more than 10 years, but we are always amazed at how few are incorporated. There are some significant financial advantages to incorporation that many of you might be missing out on.

Let’s start at the beginning; when should you incorporate? There is no one easy answer but we feel there are four independent reasons to incorporate. Let’s discuss each of them:

**More money than you need to live on!**

“What are you talking about, I need everything I make?”

This of course is a typical reaction, but what we are talking about is personal life style needs and the money you need to buy groceries, make mortgage payments, pay for vacations and other daily living expenses. What we see is many professionals who are not incorporated saving money in TFSA’s, investment accounts, insurance policies etc., and paying personal tax (at the top rate) on the funds to make these investments. Why pay tax before you make these investments and lose 30%? These funds are much better off left in the corporation and invested there after paying the corporate taxes. To step back a bit, the corporate tax rate in Ontario is 15.5% on professional net income up to $500,000.
For an individual the rates range from 0% to 46%. The difference is about 30% at the top rate. If you make a profit of $150,000 and you need $60,000 to live on, the tax that is deferred is about $27,000 ($90,000 times 30%). This is a big difference. Many believe that you will pay the deferred tax someday and that may be right, but at what rate and when? How long can you put these tax savings to use? If you have 10 years to work and you can save or defer $27,000 a year, you realize a savings of $270,000.

You have significant business debt!
In most cases you start your practice with significant business debt; you renovate, upgrade equipment or buy a practice. When this happens it makes sense to incorporate for the same reasons as above. With the lower tax rate on income earned in a corporation, you have more after tax funds to repay debt. The difference can be significant.

You have other sources of income!
This is an area of tax savings and investment strategy that many professionals don’t recognize. Many of you have saved and have investments that earn dividends, interest, or other income. What we often see is a doctor who has investments outside of their corporation earning dividend income, and this is usually just reinvested. You pay tax on this income regardless, and the rate can vary from 23% to 46%. So instead of reinvesting this, use it to live, reduce your salary or dividend from your corporation and buy investments through your corporation. You pay less tax overall (as much as 30% less) and probably own more investments at the end of the day.

Sale or purchase!
In all situations you need to consider setting up a professional corporation when you are about to sell your practice. In the vast majority of cases, the tax savings by selling the shares of your corporation are significant. The reason for this is that you get to take advantage of the $750,000 tax-free capital gains deduction. There are many conditions that must be met in order to use this deduction, so you will need to give yourself some time to plan and get organized, but the savings can be huge.

How do you incorporate?
There are many places you can get information about how to incorporate. The College has very clear rules they ask that you follow. The following are some key points that should be considered:

- Get your accountant to help you prepare a feasibility study to make sure incorporation makes sense given your own circumstances.
- Contact a lawyer that is familiar with the incorporation of optometrists. Not your real estate lawyer or friend, but someone who has experience with optometrists.
- You need to transfer the assets of your practice into your professional corporation so you will need to assign reasonable values to equipment, goodwill, leaseholds, inventory and any other assets that will be transferred. Your accountant or a valuator can help you with this step. This is an area that you need to consider carefully because at this step low tax dollars can sometimes be withdrawn to repay personal loans.
- Consider all the administrative items like getting a new HST number, payroll account, bank accounts, visa accounts, notifying insurance, updating signage, updating employment contracts, etc. These are one-time tasks and your accountant should be able to provide you with a list. Take the time to make sure all the steps get done – be proactive.
- You will have estimated your personal income needs in your feasibility study; now you need to determine the right mix of salary, dividends or a combination of both. There is no right answer on how you should be remunerated and there are many other considerations that need to be looked at to determine what is best for you. Consider what you need, then sources of income outside of the practice, then what you and your family need to take. Each one of these items is a topic onto itself. There is no “one size fits all” and each of you has to do your own homework. But in our experience we see a lot of opportunities that are being missed and not discussed. Incorporation is not a function of age or income level; it is when it makes sense for each individual. Take the time to talk to your accountant and ask the question each year; “Is incorporation right for me?”

Bottom Line: This article explains how to decide whether or not you should incorporate your optometry practice.
Dr. Sabrina Ahmed’s youthful appearance and energetic nature belies the fact that she has practiced optometry for over twenty years. She graduated with a Doctorate in Optometry from the University of Waterloo in 1989. She owns a large solo, full scope practice in Mississauga, Ontario. Her enthusiasm for her profession and what she does bubbles out when she speaks. She is highly committed to her patients and her staff. She related that with practice ownership comes a responsibility to create a business model that provides top care for her patients.

She is active both in her profession and her local community. She and her husband do much to promote and raise funds for charitable organizations. Dr. Sabrina Ahmed is active politically both on the provincial and federal levels of government.

Dr Sabrina Ahmed answered the following questions:

1. **What motivated you to become an optometrist?**

I saw optometry as an honorable and highly respected profession. With it comes a lot of responsibility to your young patients and your staff. I have practiced for over twenty years and it is pleasure to watch people grow up in front of you and later bring their children to you for care. I have a variety of patients from athletes to people who are virtually blind. My patients come from all walks of life and income brackets. As such, the expectations of each patient vary and we must accommodate those needs.

Optometrists today have a lot of options. They can have solo, full scope practice like mine, in a group practice, in conjunction with other health care professionals, within clinics and hospitals or even organizations such as the OAO or CAO. The appeal of optometry is that it really is so versatile.
2. How would you describe your university training and program in preparing you to become an optometrist?

I attended the University of Waterloo, which has a world-renowned program. The education both clinical and classroom was excellent. Of course, nothing replaces gaining experience. While in university, the only thing I regret was the limited exposure to children and seniors, which was simply a result of the patient population in Waterloo. However, I am sure that with the changing demographic in Waterloo that the patient population is also changing.

3. What changes (if any) would you recommend universities adopt in their optometry programs?

The only thing I would like to see happen would be a closer collaboration between the optometry program and medical schools to ensure better understanding of perspective roles within healthcare.

4. What advice would you give to recent optometry graduates about the following:

a) Buying a practice as soon as possible OR working as a locum long term before buying a practice (if at all)

De-regulation and the increased number of graduates both Canadian and American have dramatically changed the cost of buying a practice. It has also changed when and how one buys a practice. Most graduates have debts to pay making it impossible to buy a practice right away. If I had to buy a practice at this point, I might buy outside of the GTA where the market is smaller but not as saturated.

When I bought the practice, I had only been practicing a few months; I was criticized by both friends and colleagues for buying my practice too soon for too much. In hindsight, this was the best decision I ever made!

b) The importance of professional development

There will always be change and change within our industry and you have to change with it and keep up … so professional development is very necessary. Patients are very educated now, and can surprise us with what they know.

c) The most important factor in being a successful and highly competent optometrist

Learn from everything and everybody … your colleagues, your referrals, your patients, even if it’s a social skill from a conversation about politics.

d) Two things to avoid as a recent graduate of optometry

Setting impractical goals that are too high or not setting goals at all.

5. What do you do to reduce the stress of the day-to-day problem solving decisions that have to be made when running your practice?

You should love what you do and I have a positive outlook. I know that it requires work and effort to figure out the difficult tasks yet they should not be viewed as particularly stressful. The way we look at things is a product of our personality and it determines how much stress we feel. Saying all that, I have always been blessed and benefitted from having strong family support and great friends.

6. What future directions and developments do you envision for optometry in Canada?

It is exciting because there will be closer interaction for optometrists with other professionals such as opticians, ophthalmologists, physicians and those working in clinics and hospitals. There are so many options available.

7. What is your impression about how the general public regards optometrists and what they do?

I am not sure that the public fully understands what optometrists do and the full scope of what they do. We, as individual optometrists, have to do more to educate people about all that we do and the services we provide. As well, we have to build links with other health care professionals.

8. What final thoughts would you like to make to our professional optometrist reading audience?

I recently read an article that suggested that optometry will be one of the best professions of the future. I am always excited when one of my patients is able to see clearly for the first time ever. I am thrilled when a client puts in contact lenses and there is an immediate and positive change in that person’s confidence. For me, these are daily occurrences and are highly rewarding. Also, new government legislation is recognizing the important role optometrists play and I see more and more patients who are appreciative of the role we play in society. The future is bright!

Dr. Sabrina Ahmed
Dr. Sabrina Ahmed owns a full scope, state of the art, optometry practice in Mississauga, Ontario and can be reached sabrinaahmed@rogers.com or at (905) 821 3576.

Bottom Line: This interview features a dynamic, successful Mississauga based optometrist who has much to say about her profession and how it will be regarded in the near future.
Patients with Alzheimer’s or Parkinson’s disease may present with visual processing complaints that predate significant cerebral neuro degeneration

www.optometricmanagement.com/articleviewer.aspx?articleID=107151
by Mark E. Wilkinson, O.D., Iowa City, Iowa
From Optometric Management, Volume: 47, Issue: June 2012, page(s): 52 - 57

When I was struggling to care for my father who suffered from mixed dementia – vascular dementia and probable Alzheimer’s disease – and trying to understand the complexities of this disease, it never occurred to me that his yearly eye examinations could have revealed a neuro degenerative disease long before there were any physical symptoms (See My Dad and My Dog, Profitable Practice Veterinary Edition Summer 2012).

Why is this important?

Canada is facing a dementia epidemic and needs to take action now.

The incidence of Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias in Canada:

- In 2008 – 103,700 new cases per year (1 every 5 minutes)
- By 2038 – 257,800 new cases per year (1 every 2 minutes)

About half a million Canadians are affected today. Based on a study made public in 2010, the Alzheimer Society of Canada predicts that within 25 years, the number of cases of Alzheimer’s or a related dementia will more than double, ranging between one million and 1.3 million people. This worry some trend exists in both the developed and developing worlds.

The report also states that of the half-million Canadians affected by various forms of dementia, about 71,000 – or almost 15 per cent – are under 65. Of those, 50,000 are 59 or younger. Women account for 72 per cent of Canadians with Alzheimer’s disease.
A case study

Dr. Wilkinson’s article begins with a 56-year-old male who presents with difficulty in both clarity and tracking when reading. His eye health exam is normal, yet he states that he still cannot read. The article continues with an overview of Alzheimer’s disease and then describes the Alzheimer’s visual variant, something I never knew existed.

Dr. Wilkinson goes on to discuss an issue of growing concern – senior drivers. Since eye care professionals are providing care to an increasing number of elderly drivers, he cautions that that many may have early undiagnosed (or already diagnosed) neurodegenerative disorders. He provides a series of basic driving questions to help assess the safety of older drivers followed by comments on ocular motility problems and tests for related defects.

The benefits of early diagnosis and treatment

Earlier diagnosis has the potential to change the way societies view and approach Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias. Unfortunately, the main barriers to access to care – the stigma of dementia that prevents open discussion, the false belief that memory problems are a normal part of aging, and the false belief that nothing can be done for people with dementia and their families – are too prevalent even in well-resourced, well-informed, high income countries.

Earlier diagnosis can:
- Enable people with dementia to plan ahead while they still have the capacity to make important decisions about their future care
- Provide families with timely practical information, advice and support
- Afford access to available drug and non-drug therapies that may improve a patient’s cognition and enhance their quality of life. And, they can, if they choose, participate in research for the benefit of future generations.

How else can I help?

You may wish to provide dementia awareness training for staff working with older patients with sight loss; provision of information about dementia and its effects is helpful to family caregivers and friends.

What can individual Canadians do immediately to protect themselves?

- Stay active physically!! Physical activity seems to help the brain not only by keeping your blood flowing, but it also increases chemicals that protect the brain and tends to counter some of the natural reduction in brain connections that occurs with aging
- Eat healthy and nutritious food – pass the fish please - and avoid common hazards in the typical modern diet
- Control blood pressure and cholesterol
- Avoid harmful toxicants and pollutants
- Be socially engaged with family, friends and community
- Use your brain; surf the web, do puzzles, play a musical instrument, brush your teeth with your non-dominant hand (yes, something this simple helps work the brain!)

Karen’s comments

I agree wholeheartedly with Dr. Wilkinson’s closing words: “Remember that neurodegenerative diseases may present with visual problems…if you suspect a neurodegenerative disorder, refer the patient to his primary care provider, gerontologist or a neuro-psychologist. Remember: With prompt diagnosis and proper treatment, the patient’s quality of life may be greatly enhanced.”

The threat of dementia may never disappear. It is up to all of us to be proactive and take the necessary steps to help and protect patients, loved ones and ourselves.

My 14-year dementia care journey with my father changed me forever. It was the toughest thing I ever experienced. But I would do it all over again because it enabled my father and I to journey from rage, hopelessness and despair to understanding, acceptance and forgiveness – from darkness to light. It allowed me to make a truly profound difference in the life of another. It taught me what love really is.

Sources/Resources
- The Alzheimer Society of Canada www.alzheimer.ca
- The Long Term Care Planning Network www.ltcplanningnetwork.com

Bottom Line: When you are examining your senior patients, keep Alzheimer’s in mind - the eye is part of the brain. If optometrists could identify early Alzheimer’s disease in just 1% of their patients, 3000 people could be helped.

Karen Henderson

Karen Henderson is the Managing Associate Editor for Profitable Practice magazines; she is an accomplished writer and researcher and brings a wealth of experience, particularly in the area of long term health care. She can be reached at karen@profitablepracticemagazine.com.
I would like to welcome you to this edition of Profitable Practice Magazine Optometry Edition.

For those of you who know me or have read previous articles, you know that I try to give you the true facts on real estate and how you can benefit from it both now and in the future. In this article I would like to share a story, actually a movie that I recently watched with my 3-year-old daughter. If you have young children or grandchildren, chances are you have seen it as well. Written by a famous doctor (yes… Dr. Seuss), it is the story of The Lorax. You may wonder by now why I am going on about a Dr. Seuss movie, but bear with me as there are some interesting lessons to be learned even for us grown-ups.

The story revolves around a character called the Once-ler. He starts off innocent as an eager inventor wanting to make his mark in the world. He finds success in the trees (literally), and instead of cultivating this resource to use both now and preserve for the future, he ignores everyone’s advice and is soon left with nothing. He had an incredible opportunity to build something for years to come, but took the quick and easy way out.

So what exactly does this have to do with you? The way I see it, as a professional, you have the ability to build something and let it grow for the future. It does not matter if you are at the beginning, in the middle of or approaching the end of your career. You can always plant the seed and let it grow. The other day, I met with a doctor because she had called me for advice regarding her practice. She was wondering if she should buy the building in which her practice is located. The landlord has decided to sell, and this particular doctor has been there for 10 years and intends to remain there for at least another 10 years before she sells her practice. As a working professional for over 25 years, she had always rented, and is now nervous about taking that leap from tenant to landlord. My advice was, and always will be, BE YOUR OWN TENANT. I understand many of you may not want to manage a property, but that is what management companies are for.

When it comes down to investment real estate, TIME is always the greatest asset, and it does not matter when you start the clock. Just like in The Lorax, a young go-getter was able to create riches, but he did not plant the seeds for the future. For many professionals like you, investment real estate can be the seed that gets planted for generations to come.

If you have any questions regarding investment real estate, I would be happy to answer them in my next article. Thanks for reading and I will talk to you soon!

Bottom Line: The wisdom of Dr. Seuss is revealed for optometrists considering being their own tenant.

Todd C. Slater
Todd C. Slater is the President The Simple Investor Real Estate Group Inc. Todd has been one of Canada’s top realtors as well as host of Realty TV for 4 seasons. With his innovative approach to managed real estate investment properties, Todd educates and provides investors with solutions and opportunities for investment Real Estate. He can be reached at todd@thesimpleinvestor.com or visit www.thesimpleinvestor.com
How did your organization Optometry Giving Sight get started?

Optometry Giving Sight is the only global fundraising organization that specifically targets the prevention of blindness and impaired vision due to uncorrected refractive error - (URE).

670 million people are blind or vision impaired simply because they cannot get the glasses they need. Optometry Giving Sight funds the solution - an eye exam and a pair of glasses.

In 2003, the World Council of Optometry (WCO), the International Centre for Eyecare Education (ICCE) and the IAPB signed an agreement to create Optometry Giving Sight as a means of mobilizing resources from the global optometric community to help eliminate refractive error blindness and low vision.

The organization was launched in the UK in 2003, followed by Australia and the Netherlands in 2004, the United States and Canada in 2005, Italy in 2006 and Norway, Ireland and Singapore in 2009.

Optometry Giving Sight plays a major role in VISION 2020: The Right to Sight, an initiative of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB). VISION 2020 aims to eliminate avoidable blindness by the year 2020, in order to give all people in the world the right to sight.

Please give us some specific examples of how Optometry Giving Sight transforms lives around the world.

To date, more than $US5.5 million has been disbursed or allocated to projects in Africa, India, South East Asia, Eastern Europe, South America, Australia and China.

Kristian – A Life Transformed by the Gift of Vision

Six-year-old Kristian and her family were some of the lucky ones to benefit from the recent visit to their homeland of Sumba, West Timor, by a team of Australian optometrists, supported by Optometry Giving Sight. Team member and optometrist Peter Lewis from Victoria, Australia, tells the story of this visit.

Paediatric Optometrist Norm Russo was examining a six year old girl named Kristian and found her to refract to around -12.

At the same time, Peter Stewart was examining the little girl’s father, Lukas Deta, and he refracted to around -18.00D! ...If not rewarding enough, the next day two young men, the uncles of this little girl arrived and they refracted to around -18.00 D as well! ...These people had NEVER had spectacles before and the joy in their face and smiles was overwhelming to us all.
What are the major challenges your organization faces today and in the future?

A major challenge is how to cost effectively reach out to optometrists and through them to their patients, to raise funds for this great cause. We find that once we get an optometric practice on board, and help them integrate their support for Optometry Giving Sight into their marketing plan, we have a strong ongoing donor base.

Another challenge is finding ways to reach out to optometric companies and their employees. Once a company does the World Sight Day Challenge once, it tends to become an annual event and an important employee motivator.

What led you to your present status as country manager for Canada?

I left the corporate world after 22 years of marketing and retail operations, looking for more job satisfaction and better work life balance and I found both with Optometry Giving Sight. I also am totally aligned with Optometry Giving Sight’s emphasis on funding long term sustainable eye care. We concentrate on providing the tools and training so that people in the developing country can build eye care systems in their countries- the classic “we teach them how to fish”.

What has been the most rewarding aspect of your work?

Working with this motivated and highly talented Optometry Giving Sight global team and with Canadian optometrists and their staff has been a real highlight. Plus seeing the stories and numbers of people whose lives have been transformed through the gift of vision is very moving.

What do you do to unwind and alleviate some of the pressure you experience in your job?

I enjoy hiking and back country powder skiing. In addition I am a director of a fine wine society and am active in my church and in local politics.

Why is philanthropy good for an optometry practice?

These days we are all approached by many charities to provide support. Instead of just writing a cheque and getting a tax receipt, why not pick your charities strategically and integrate your philanthropy into your practice-marketing plan?

You may have thought that cause related marketing (CRM) was something only large corporations could do but our fundraising programs provide optometry practices with the opportunity to jump onto this very popular bandwagon.

How does this increase your bottom line?

1. Supporting a cause related to eye care can help a practice’s image and has the potential to generate significant free publicity.

2. CRM can help to build loyalty to your practice and provides a reason to ignore sales and promotions of similar organizations and to keep returning to you.

3. CRM is also a great staff retention device. Employees often cite their employer’s charitable giving as one of the reason’s they are proud to work there.

Bottom Line: This article offers Canadian optometrists the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of millions of people around the world.

What and when is World Sight Day?

World Sight Day is a global event that focuses on bringing attention on blindness and vision impairment. It is observed on the second Thursday of October each year and will be on October 11, 2012.

The World Sight Day Challenge, WSDC, is a major fundraising campaign in October coordinated by Optometry Giving Sight which is designed to raise funds for projects that provide vision care, local training and infrastructure support for people who are blind or vision impaired due to uncorrected refractive error – simply the need for an eye exam and a pair of glasses.

How can optometrists get involved in both World Sight Day and your organization?

There are many ways to get involved. Participating optometrists may donate a day of eye exam fees (on World Sight Day or any day in October), or a small amount from each pair of glasses sold throughout the month of October. You may also hold staff-led fundraising events, or invite patient donations throughout October. Optometry Giving Sight provides all the materials needed to make it a great practice and community event. Eighty-five percent of donations from optometrists and their patients and optometric employees go directly towards projects. See contact information at the end of the article.

Jane Ebbern

Jane Ebbern is originally from Winnipeg. She received science and business degrees from the University of Toronto and Harvard. She has worked in international marketing for Procter & Gamble in Europe, Australia and Asia and in retail operations for Loblaws and consumer marketing for Direct Energy here in Canada. Jane left the corporate world to begin a non-profit career and became Country Manager for Optometry Giving Sight in Canada in June 2006. She can be contacted at her Calgary office at 1-800-585-8265 ext. 4 or at jane.ebbern@givingsight.org.
Fun Eye Facts
to Share With Your Patients*

- Your eyes are composed of more than 2 million working parts.
- We all have microscopic creatures lurking in our eyelashes.
- The average person blinks 12 times per minute – about 10,000 blinks on an average day.
- Color blindness is more common in males, about 1 in 10 have some form.
- In the most common type of color blindness, individuals have trouble telling the difference between red and green.
- Only 1/6 of your eye is exposed to the outside world. It is 2.5 cm in length and weighs about 7 grams.
- The muscles that move the eye are the strongest relative to their size in the body.

* Courtesy of Doctors Vision Center

The Museum of Vision Science
by Karen Henderson

The Museum of Vision Science, housed in the School of Optometry and Vision Science at the University of Waterloo, is Canada's only museum dedicated to preserving the history of vision science and educating visitors of all ages on the importance of vision.

The founding curator was Dr. Edward J. Fisher without whom the unique collection would not exist. He was intimately associated with nearly all of the advances made in optometric education in Canada. Dr. Fisher was one of the pioneers in Canadian contact lens practice, both as a wearer and as a consultant, and as a result of his interest, experience, and knowledge in this field he became one of the leading contact lens experts in Canada and the world; he was also involved in writing a history of Optometry in Canada.

The museum holds a unique collection of original equipment, furniture and eye glasses/cases including the following:

Border Scope
In addition to being a haploscope – an optical device for presenting one image to one eye and another image to the other eye – it contains sophisticated optical components that will enable it to measure border enhancement and other border effects. The electronic accessories are an integral part of the instrument. The optical components would be very difficult to replace.

Specialist’s Chair c. 1915
This chair made of metal and leather belonged to E. Hucklard of New Hamburg, ON.

When was the first pair of spectacles invented?

Nobody really knows when the first pair of spectacles was invented. The first documented reference on the use of lenses for optical purposes was made by England’s Roger Bacon in 1268. However, evidence has shown that the Chinese were using magnifying glasses as early as the 10th century. Eyeglasses first appeared in Italy in around 1280. In about 1760, Benjamin Franklin invented the first pair of bifocal glasses. The museum contains several pair of Chinese eye glasses from 1780 and earlier.

One of the main attractions in the museum is the Hall of Frame, an eclectic collection of glasses from many famous people such as Brian Mulroney, Jimmy Carter, Johnny Cash, Desmon Tutu, Hugh Hefner, Sir Anthony Hopkins, Isabelle Adjani and Gloria Steinem.

Whether you are a practicing professional or student, the Museum of Vision Science will provide you with a fascinating glimpse of vision history in Ontario and around the world.

The museum welcomes artifacts and is open Monday to Friday from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm. There is no admission fee to visit the collection, but donations are always welcome.
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