



Vision Source® TRUSTED COLLEAGUE

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Seize Opportunities Whatever Their Size

Scott Forester, OD, says practice improvement is an ongoing process. "The more you put into building the practice, the more you get out of it." That works whether he's adding new products or services, changing the handoff, or making a practice acquisition—which the practice did last year.

"A doctor down the street was contemplating bringing in an associate," Dr. Forester says. He and his partner, Trent Pitt, OD, realized that the doctor was looking toward an exit strategy, so they decided to offer him one that wouldn't increase their competition. "We thought, Why not offer to buy the practice and bring him on board here? It was a win all around," he says.

It worked because the doctor, Joseph Phillips, OD, FAAO, held a similar practice philosophy and most of his patients followed him. "He's staying busy, and he's happy. He used to be in a group practice, so he missed that camaraderie when he was solo. It was a good fit for him, and it's good to have him on our team."

Merging the two practices also brought a chance to look for new opportunities. "For example, in our office, we had been in the very high 80th percentile in antireflective lens sales. And we were in the high 80s/low 90s for annual contact lens supply sales." However, among the patients whom Dr. Phillips brought with him, the percentages weren't as high. "So we can maximize patient revenue at every visit just in the way we present the options," Dr. Forester says. Specifically, the doctors make a recommendation in the exam room, incorporating the reasons why a particular product will provide a benefit for that patient. "We may talk about Viso® Previncia™ because the patient has a family history of macular degeneration. We may explain the benefits of a particular multifocal lens design, or we'll recommend a second pair of prescription eyewear if the patient uses the computer or sews a lot," he says.

Office meetings every other Wednesday help keep the 23 staff members and three ODs on board with new ideas and consistent in the approach, Dr. Forester says. "It's important not to move through like you're on autopilot. We need to remember that the experience is new and fresh for every patient. There's a lot of competition in the area, so we continually need to think about how we can make our service a notch above the rest." That can be a challenge in a busy office. There are nine exam lanes and two testing areas, each equipped with a Daytona, an autorefractor, and a topographer, as well as an MPOD to measure pigment density of the macula. "As a result of bringing that equipment in, our vitamin sales have gone up tremendously. It's not just about the revenue," Dr. Forester says. "It's a good educational tool, and patients who have a family history of macular degeneration are very interested in preventing the condition, especially if the solution is as simple as taking a vitamin twice daily."

Another technique for increasing the quality of care and increasing revenue was that the practice decided to raise the comprehensive exam fee slightly but make an Optomap image a part of every exam. "It has had a huge impact. We review the images with the patient, explaining the layers of the eye and what we're looking for. We set the bar very high." In fact Dr. Forester is never surprised—but always pleased—when a patient who left the practice to visit a doctor listed on his or her insurance plan returns because the quality of the other exam just didn't compare.



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Just Listen

The doctors at Oklahoma City Vision Source® attend the monthly regional Vision Source® meetings, and they attend The Exchange, as well. "I listen carefully in these breakout sessions to hear what other successful doctors are doing. It's important to have the chance to share these good ideas," says Dr. Scott Forester. When he and his partner decide what the next focus is, they'll bring it up at a staff meeting. "It's key to get everyone on board by saying, 'Here's what we're going to do.'" You can't just tell the office manager or a staff person and expect that individual to make it happen." For example, when the practice decided to promote Transitions® lenses, everyone brainstormed how they could contribute to the conversation. Now the receptionist might ask a patient making an appointment to bring in his or her prescription sunglasses. The optician can ask to check the prescription in the sun wear. The pretesting staff can ask about discomfort due to glare. "When that patient gets to us in the exam room, it is much easier to emphasize the importance of sun wear. Now they'll be using the same approach with Viso® Previncia™, making sure that everyone on the staff is comfortable on some level talking about blue light-blocking technology.