



Vision Source® TRUSTED COLLEAGUE

John Novak, OD & Brooke Bader, OD

avoneydesign@gmail.com

Partners Find a Sounding Board in Vision Source® Network

John Novak, OD, and Brooke Bader, OD, met in optometry school at The Ohio State University. After their 2005 graduation, they went their separate ways. Dr. Novak completed a residency at a VA medical center and worked for the Indian Health Service in Arizona before coming back to Cleveland. Dr. Bader's clinical rotations and volunteer work took her to various places around the area. When they both found themselves in the same place, they reconnected and found that they were each interested in opening an independent practice. The idea of sharing the financial burden, the risk, the muscle and the brainpower made them decide to open the practice together in 2010.

The two joined Vision Source® a few months after the practice opened. "In retrospect, it probably would have been good to have been part of Vision Source® right from the start to take advantage of the pricing with equipment vendors," he says. Because they had several months of experience under their belt, they could see how valuable the Vision Source® negotiated pricing structure was.



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The two doctors pooled their money, which allowed them to open without a loan. They each also continued working in a different setting, minimizing their immediate dependence on the practice for income. "We felt like we were in the black from day one," he says. They saved where they could by purchasing quality used equipment, and they're upgrading pieces slowly as they can. For example, they purchased an OCT this summer, shortly after having a chance to see the equipment at the vendor exhibit hall at The Exchange®. They also started with a small staff, delegating many of the duties between the two of them. "As a result, we probably handle a lot of the administrative duties ourselves – and maybe take on a little too much in the process – but the good aspect is that we have a thorough understanding of the financial picture."

Dr. Novak says that they appreciate that so many of their Vision Source® colleagues have a similar CEO-like approach to their practices. "I was talking with one friend outside of the network, and I asked him about his lab bill. He said he had no idea. That's not the answer I get with Vision Source® doctors. They either know offhand or can locate the person in their practice who can get them that answer immediately." The time at monthly regional Vision Source® meetings is made even more valuable because of the business-oriented conversations he has with his colleagues before, during and after the regular agenda. "The ability to bounce ideas around is so useful," he says. What he finds interesting is that valuable tips and ideas are just as likely to come from new practice owners as they are from established ones. The mix of like-minded ODs who want to share successful strategies provide a lot of fresh ideas.

The practice has seen impressive growth since it opened. The two doctors saw an opportunity to push that along even more last year. A doctor with a practice less than 10 miles away was trying to retire. "It was a small practice, and he wasn't putting any big effort into making it grow. So we saw it as an opportunity," Dr. Novak says. They bought the practice and, for about nine months, operated it as a satellite practice. Each doctor would work there one day a week, having a chance to meet many of the patients who called that their practice home. Just recently, they formally closed that office, having sent each of the patients a letter about the services, equipment and products that are available to them in the main Avon location. Dr. Novak says that he anticipates that many of these patients will make the short trip to the larger office now that they've met the doctors. "It's a loyal patient base, and this strategy has worked well for all of us. The doctor who retired wanted to be sure his patients were cared for, and we not only gained the patient records but had a chance to meet most of the patients in the old office," he says. Even so, he's relieved not to have to split his time between the two locations anymore. "Now we can really focus on the growth here."

Drs. Novak and Bader haven't necessarily taken a conventional approach to the practice. "In many ways, we got lucky – with the location and the decisions we made. But it pays to be a little more creative and adapt to the opportunities that present themselves," he says.

The experience of the past four years has provided the doctors with the confidence that they can have a successful practice into the future. "Early on, one of the Vision Source® doctors told me, 'You're going to see a tremendous jump in revenue in your seventh year. You'll be amazed at the change.' At the time, that seemed so far away. Now, four years into it, I'm looking forward to that threshold," Dr. Novak says.