

NOVEMBER 2018

How to Build Your  
Personal Brand

7 Qs with MyEyeDr.  
CEO Sue Downes

One O.D.'s  
Fierce Clarity

CORPORATE

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# Optometry<sup>®</sup> TODAY!

BEST PRACTICES FOR TODAY'S  
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## THE MARKETING SLAM DUNK

3 O.D.s serve up BIG tips

*[spoiler: think social + the web]*

PAGE 14



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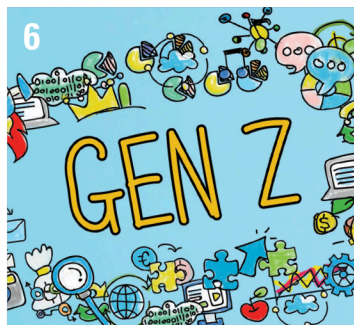
### A Marketing Slam Dunk!

Learn why marketing your practice is key, and see how 3 corporate O.D.s serve up winning marketing strategies. *(Hint: It's all about social, Google, and your website!)*

# 18

### The COT! Interview

7 questions, 7 revealing answers. First up in our COT! interview series is **Sue Downes**, co-founder and CEO of MyEyeDr.



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# Study Finds Availability of Financing May Impact Patients' Purchasing Behavior<sup>1</sup>

97% of shoppers surveyed made their purchase in-store

23% obtained financing in-store

1/3 of survey respondents who used financing for their purchase said they spent more than initially anticipated



86% of cardholders surveyed making an eyewear purchase said they are extremely likely, very likely or somewhat likely to shop the retailer more often

32% of cardholders surveyed said they would have gone to another retailer or not made the purchase if financing wasn't available



Overall, Synchrony cardholders surveyed were more satisfied than general big-ticket shoppers with both the quality of items purchased and in-store sales process.

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# Marketing 101 for Corporate Optometrists

Welcome to the second issue of *Corporate Optometry Today!*, where we dig into the highly relevant topic of marketing your practice in the unique world of corporate optometry.

For guidance on the topic, we turn to our contributing editor, Maria Sampalis, O.D., who has a passionate focus on corporate optometry. Here, in The Marketing Slam Dunk feature, Dr. Sampalis reveals why marketing is so crucial in corporate optometry, plus she checks in with three corporate O.D.s for their best tips on the topic.



**“At times I’ve had cards made up with instructions on them on how to leave a review. IT HELPS PEOPLE!”**

—Phil Nicholson, O.D., with Costco in Beltsville, MD, tells us in *The Marketing Slam Dunk*, page 14

Dr. Sampalis has been a corporate O.D. with LensCrafters plus an independent optometrist at Sears—and today she is the owner of Sampalis Eye Care in Cranston, RI, and works part-time at For Eyes by Grand Vision in the area. She is also the founder of the 24,000+-member Corporate Optometry group on Facebook and is the founder of CorporateOptometry.com + CorporateOptometryCareers.com.



MARIA SAMPALIS, O.D.

When asked about the overall state of corporate optometry today, Dr. Sampalis recently told me: “With corporate optical expansion, the rise of pri-

vate equity, and the growth of optometry schools, we will see more of the younger O.D.s enter into corporate optometry than ever before.

“Corporate optometry has multifaceted business models—and these models attract younger O.D.s with employment options that provide full-time benefits without working 40 hours a week, self-employment options via sublease and franchising for the entrepreneurial O.D. that could expand to multiple locations. Corporate optometry is a turn-key business with a low investment and high foot traffic.

“The perception of corporate optometry has changed over the years and has become a well-respected career decision for many O.D.s. Are you ready for a revolution in optometry that doesn’t separate corporate versus private but instead unites the two for the best interest of our profession?”

Well said—today holds vast potential for corporate optometry. We hope you enjoy the issue...and we invite you to join us in the six *COT!* issues to come in 2019.

Want more? **Check out our NEW Facebook page: @CorporateOptometryToday!**

**Erin Morgan**

Editor-in-Chief + Editorial Director  
*Corporate Optometry Today!* + *Eyecare Business*



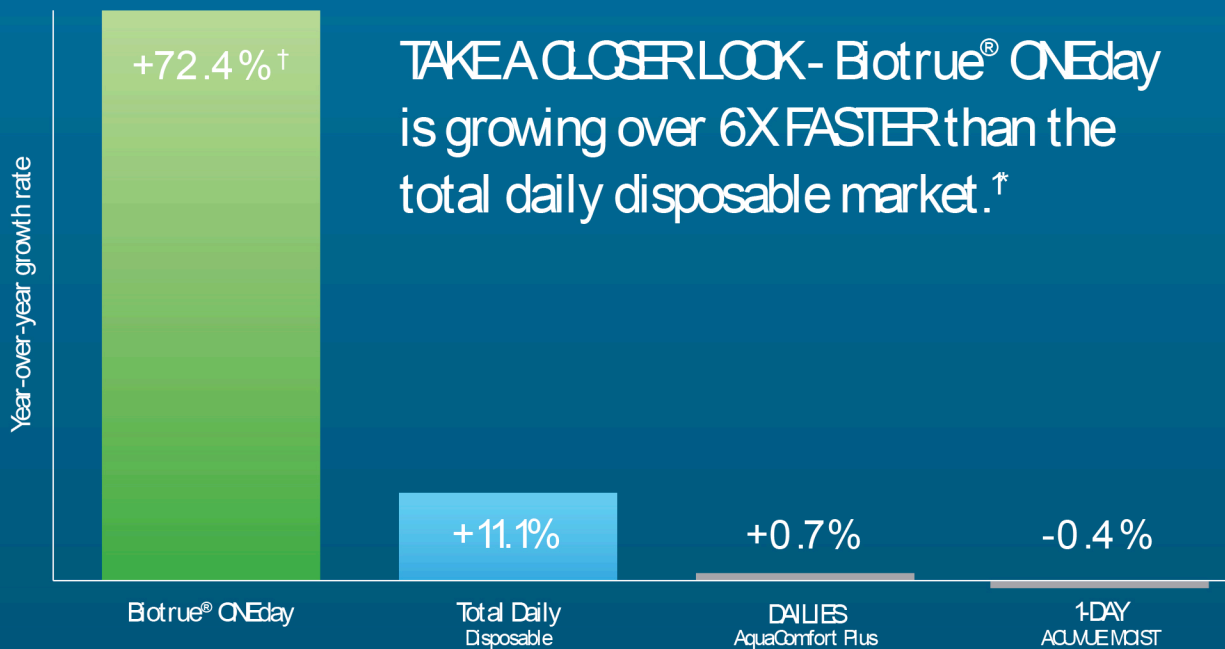
In this issue of *COT!*, we deliver the goods on how to market your practice in the unique world of corporate optometry.





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# TREND TRACKER

COT! PINPOINTS THE KEY TRENDS OF INTEREST FOR CORPORATE OPTOMETRISTS



## Here Come the Z's!

Move over, millennials, here come your kids! Gen Z already numbers nearly 60 million in the U.S. and has access to \$66 billion in buying power, according to *Stores* magazine. And they are developing a consumer personality that's a bit different from their millennial folks.

Collecting generational and consumer research from a number of agencies, *Stores* and the National Retail Federation report these unique characteristics of Gen Z:

- » Though they prefer to do most things digitally, those in Gen Z enjoy the in-store experience even more than other generations. And they seek out engagement with retail staff.
- » Gen Z is less swayed by traditional advertising or celeb endorsements and more by blogging or social posts by people of the same age. YouTube is where they go first for information.
- » 44% of Gen Z shoppers use Snapchat while shopping in-store, and 45% rely on Instagram to find cool new products. —*Susan Tarrant*

## The Good and the Not-So-Good

What do corporate optometrists like BEST about their working environment, and what could they do without? That's what we asked *COT!* readers in a recent survey. Do you feel the same? ▶



- Low Risk
- Consistent Schedule
- Equipment Provided
- No Staff Hiring/Management Expectation
- Other O.D.s to Cover Time Off

Survey respondents are:

64%

Independent O.D. working at a corporate location

+

36%

O.D. employed by a company



- Working Saturdays
- Corporate Oversight
- Patient Load
- No Control Over Hiring Staff
- Staff Management Issues

## Google Motivation

Attracting talented staff can be a challenge. In optical, retaining great staff once they are trained is also an issue. Here's how Google, consistently rated a top employer, does it (as reported by *Fast Company*), but these guidelines can easily fit into an optical setting.

**Safety:** Employees who feel they can

take risks without feeling insecure or embarrassed outperform others.

**Structure:** By creating a culture that values structure and clarity, employees understand their goals, roles, and plans of execution.

**Impact:** Leaders should foster a common purpose that motivates staffers, and staff want to work on something that has an impact on their organization or community at large. —*S.T.*



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### WORK IN A PRACTICE

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\* 5.7% weighted average Vision Source member practice growth for 2017 vs Industry growth of 0.5% per Vision Watch's vision care



# Building Brand You

A first-person,  
inside look at the  
importance of **building  
a personal brand**  
on social media in  
corporate optometry

---

**SMALL BUSINESS GURU** Marla Tabaka says it best: "If you don't brand yourself, someone else will." The good news is that building your personal brand in corporate optometry has never been easier...or more important. Plus, with social media platforms that have active users, your potential reach is broader than ever.

## WHAT IS IT?

Your personal brand is how others perceive you. One challenge with corporate optometry is that your personal brand can be perceived as that of the corporate optical entity. You should make sure your personal brand is differentiated from the corporate optical. For example, I don't want to be known as the Doctor at For Eyes, but as Sampalis Eye Care.

Here are some key points to help create that personal brand.

- » **BASICS.** Patients review a doctor's profile before they come to the office. Make sure you have the information they are looking for and an image you want!
- » **FACEBOOK.** A Facebook page can build your personal brand. It should include the practice name or, if employed, your name with the title "Dr.," along with a professional headshot.
- » **CONTENT.** It's a great way to illustrate your accomplishments, knowledge, and patient experience. Content should engage and create an experience for your audience. You want community "fans" who see you beyond the exam room. Content can help by creating loyalty to your





brand as your audience is exposed to information you share—whether that be about their eyes or how you provide a service like no other. You can also partner with the corporate optical to co-brand and increase exposure on Facebook.

» **WEBSITE + BLOGS.** In the age of digital, everyone should have a website and blog. Writing about eye care can be an easy way to promote yourself as well as to target potential patients. In addition, positioning yourself as an industry expert will also help build your personal brand.

When writing blogs, use “keywords” that patients would search. In my case, that could be “best eye doctor in Cranston, RI” or “quality eye exam in Rhode Island.” Those keywords should also reflect your personal brand.

» **REPURPOSING.** Content that you create for your blog can be repurposed and put on your Facebook page. You can also create a short video to put on your website and then promote on your Facebook page.

However you go about it, the point is to invest in yourself by building your personal brand through digital media. **COT!** —*Maria Sampalis, O.D.*





# Credit Scores Big

2 ECPs share how **introducing financing with credit cards** can play a huge role in growing business. Part 2 of the *COT!* series on financing options.

ALIX KREIL / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

## TIMES HAVE CHANGED.

"Providing the option to pay with a credit card is becoming less a courtesy and more an expectation," says Anita Campbell of Small Business Trends.

## ECP TAKE

How important are they? "We'd be dead in the water if we didn't take credit cards," says Sterling franchisee Gary Kaschak, whose mall location is in North Wales, PA. "Credit cards account for over 90% of our business. And the CareCredit credit card has a special place, almost like a niche market unto itself. Our CareCredit sales have mostly been over \$500 per sale—well worth taking, for sure."

## CORPORATE TAKE

That's one franchisee's take. But, what do executives at the corpo-

rate level have to say? "Financing has been used so successfully by so many other retailers, and it has worked for us," explains Katy Hanson, director of marketing strategy and planning at Eyemart Express. "Eyewear is something consumers will use every day, so they should get the style, upgrades, and quality they want. Financing through CareCredit (subject to credit approval) helps make that happen."

## IN-STORE MESSAGING

At most corporate locations, credit card messaging is presented to patients at multiple touch points—almost always at both the front door and register.

Is placement that important? "Yes," says Kaschak. "For CareCredit, we have a tabletop display near our busiest frame board."

**COT!** —*Stephanie K. De Long*

## FINANCING FACTS

According to Synchrony's just-released Annual Major Consumer Study about big-ticket purchases in optical, the availability of financing dramatically impacts eyeglass shoppers' buying behavior.

1/3

1/3 of survey participants who used financing for their purchase report spending more than anticipated.

19%

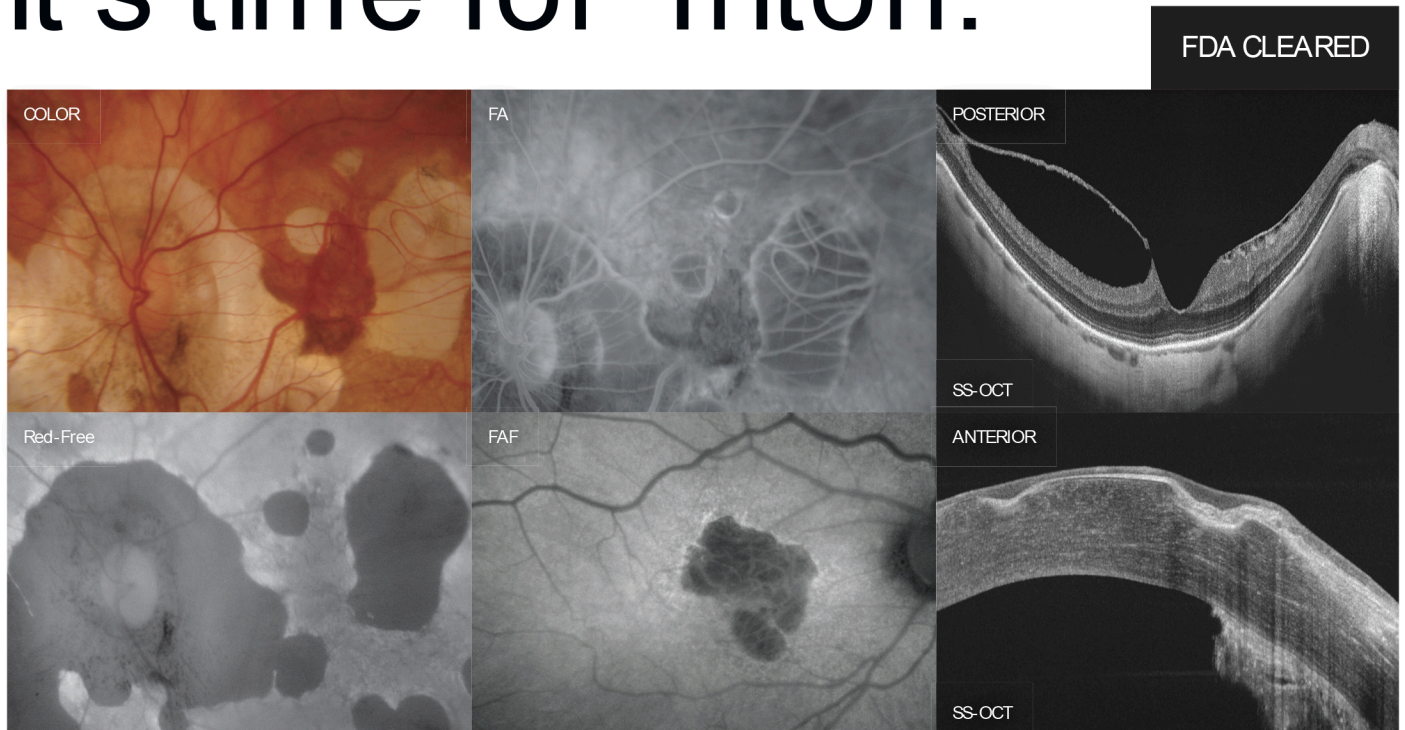
In fact, Synchrony cardholders report spending over 19% more on a big-ticket optical purchase than other respondents (\$766 vs. \$644).

32%

32% of Synchrony cardholders said they'd have gone to another location or not made a purchase if financing hadn't been an option.



# It's time for Triton.



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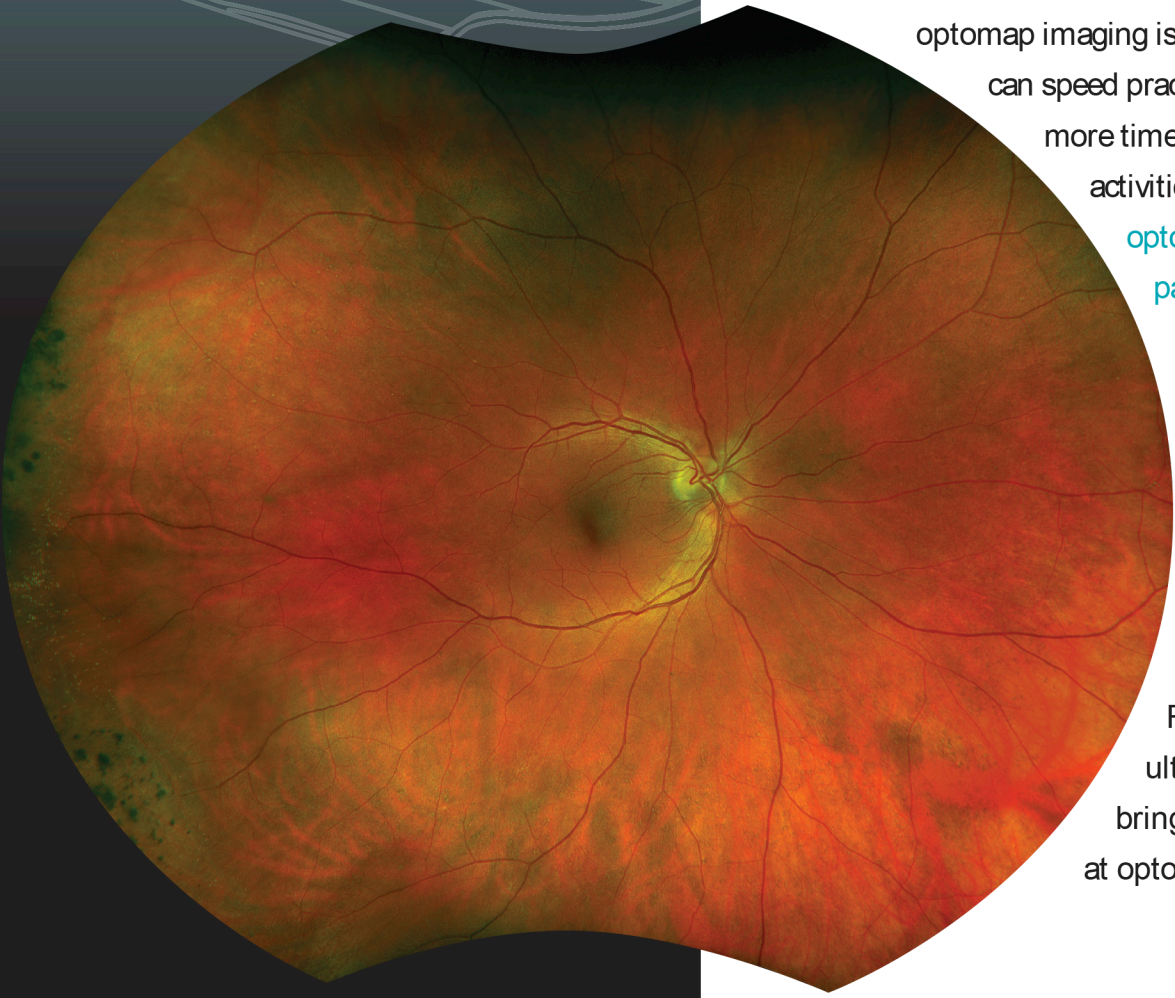
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“At times I’ve had cards made up with instructions on them on how to leave a review. IT HELPS PEOPLE!”

—Phil Nicholson, O.D., Costco, Beltsville, MD



# The Marketing Slam Dunk

BY MARIA SAMPALIS, O.D.

Get your game on with our roundup of supersmart marketing tips from 3 corporate O.D.s



**B**eing affiliated with a corporate optical has many advantages. One of those advantages is a large marketing budget that promotes the optical.

While national brand recognition is great for foot traffic for corporate O.D.s, what many O.D.s don't realize is that they must market themselves as well. As discussed in our New Grad column on page 8, it's important to market your personal brand in corporate optometry as well

as your medical services.

Key to that is creating online content that will help patients understand the value of your service versus "disruptive" technologies and distribution channels.

### 3 MARKETING STRATEGIES

Some of the important ways to promote and differentiate yourself in corporate optometry are through content marketing blogs, channels like Facebook and Instagram, and patient reviews.

✓ **LEVERAGE.** Corporate optometrists can leverage the brand name of the optical to help grow their own marketing campaign.

✓ **CONTENT.** Use corporate content marketing for your website. You don't need to reinvent the wheel, however, as that same content can then be repurposed on your Facebook and Instagram pages.

✓ **REVIEWS.** Positive patient reviews can be promoted on Facebook and Instagram to enhance the corporate O.D.'s personal brand. ↔



# 3 Corporate Optometrists

Here are three great examples of how some supersavvy corporate O.D.s market their practices and gain an edge on the competition in the process.

## 1. CONTENT MARKETING.

This is a great way to promote eye health awareness in your practice. It also creates “trust” among your readers in the community.

Writing educational articles for your website is a great way to move up in search engines locally. Many corporate opticals will have a national marketing strategy, and corporate O.D.s can certainly capitalize on that. However, savvy corporate O.D.s also see an opportunity to capture the local market by embedding keywords in their blogs.

**The goal?** To attract new patients and retain old ones as well. Content marketing is a great way to become known as an expert in the local community and also to elevate the perception of the optometric office.

▶ **TIP:** “One marketing avenue corporate O.D.s can really capitalize on is publishing SEO-friendly blog posts



RYAN CORTE, O.D.

on their website. Personally, I like to create articles on medical topics and insurance that patients frequently ask me about during their exam. In doing so, you’re providing new and current patients with valuable content they can learn from. This helps you build trust within your community and on search engines like Google.”

—RYAN CORTE, O.D.,  
LensCrafters, Charlotte, NC

**“One marketing avenue corporate O.D.s can really capitalize on is publishing SEO-friendly blog posts on their website.”**

Ryan Corte, O.D.,  
LensCrafters, Charlotte, NC

## 2. SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING.

Another powerful marketing tool is social networking vehicles like Facebook and Instagram. Creating and posting pleasant images of your office—especially ones promoting eye health and underscoring the technology in your office—can help educate new and established patients.

**The point?** To direct patients to your practice...and away from disruptive technologies like purchasing eyewear online.

The image of your office on social media is vital to the future growth of your practice. Many corporate opticals will utilize social media to promote eyeglass sales or frames, focusing on value pricing. Corporate O.D.s can utilize social media platforms to target potential new patients who are focused on eye health, technology, and education, as opposed to products only.





LESEK CZECHOWKA / STOCK.ADOBE.COM



RACHEL WRUBLE, O.D.

▶ **TIP:** “Social media can bring an online presence and interactions that can be powerful tools to help a practice grow. Our expenses last year for marketing and advertising were \$0, and we saw incredible growth in our practice. We have patients tell us they saw a post on Instagram and they made an appointment. Pictures of patients, reviews, and health tips can be impactful when posted on Facebook and Instagram.”

—RACHEL WRUBLE, O.D.,  
LensCrafters, Charlotte, NC

### 3. REVIEWS.

The new word-of-mouth referral is online reviews. Patients will search a practice website, Facebook reviews, Google reviews, and health grades before they decide to choose

**MORE ONLINE**  
Join the “Corporate Optometry on Facebook” group ([facebook.com/groups/corporateoptometry](https://www.facebook.com/groups/corporateoptometry)).

your office. These reviews will also help move corporate O.D.s up the search engines and promote an image of quality eye care for patients who are looking for services besides value eyewear and convenience.



PHIL NICHOLSON, O.D.

Online reviews will continue to influence potential patients. However, you can’t take advantage of them without having a practice website and social media page.

**The key?** It is critical to encourage patients to leave reviews, whether that includes an incentive from the corporate optical or simply instructions for the patients on how to create and post a review.

▶ **TIP:** “At times I’ve had cards made up with instructions on them on how to leave a review. IT HELPS PEOPLE! At least a few times each week, a new patient will comment that’s how they found us...based on

good reviews. We used to spend as much just mailing patient recall post-cards, but Solutionreach takes care of that, plus they facilitate getting those reviews.”

—PHIL NICHOLSON, O.D.,  
Costco, Beltsville, MD

.....

Taking advantage of these three ways to grow your marketing strategy in corporate optometry will create a positive practice image, ignite your personal brand, and differentiate your office from others in the area. Digital marketing is critical to practice success, so don’t miss the opportunity to use resources that many corporate opticals provide leaseholders. **COT!**



MARIA SAMPALIS, O.D.,

has been a corporate optometrist at LensCrafters, and an independent optometrist at Sears. She is the founder of the Corporate Optometry group on Facebook and [corporateoptometry.com](https://www.corporateoptometry.com). Currently, she is owner of Sampalis Eye Care in Cranston, RI, and works part-time at For Eyes by Grand Vision in the area.





“Co-branding allows us to utilize the former business name as we connect with the patients of that community. Our overall objective is to rebrand the practice as MyEyeDr., but there is not one set formula for doing so.”



# THE INSIDE LINE... WITH Sue Downes

The CEO + co-founder of MyEyeDr. answers  
*COT!*'s 7 questions BY STEPHANIE K. DE LONG

**M**yEyeDr. was founded in 2001 “as a response to growing patient concern surrounding eye and healthcare complexity and the seeming loss of focus on patient needs,” says CEO Sue Downes in her exclusive interview with *Corporate Optometry Today!*

“We are a group of independent practitioners, supported and mentored by doctors, brought together by a management group,” explains Downes.

## THE MODEL

### Q. Explain your business model.

A. “In lieu of typical private-equity models, we have partnered with long-term investors who believe in supporting the management team and our vision for MyEyeDr. and patient care, rather than simply preparing the business for the next transaction. The benefit to the management team is that we are empowered to make decisions based on what we see as best for patients and our associates.”

## THE CAPITAL

### Q. Is private equity the model of the future?

A. “We believe some form of private equity is the right model for the future; however, it needs to be aligned with the purpose and primacy of patient care.

Private-equity capital fills a void for buying large, successful private practices. By aligning with a partner like MyEyeDr., which is backed by a long-term investor, doctors can monetize their practice while staying involved in patient care.”

## THE REBRANDING

### Q. How do you change an entity over to a MyEyeDr. location?

A. “Co-branding allows us to utilize the former business name as we connect with the patients of that community. Our overall objective is to rebrand the practice as MyEyeDr., but there is not one set formula for doing so.”

## THE MIX

### Q. What do you look for when buying practices?

A. “We buy all types of practices. The common themes are: a strong clinical reputation; ongoing doctor coverage (i.e., folks who are looking for support running their practice, but not looking to immediately retire from patient care); above-average revenue per location, ideally \$1 million or more for a single location; and a location within our existing or planned geographic footprint.”

## THE BALANCE

### Q. Is there an optimal balance

### between retaining key employees and bringing in your own team?

A. “Our goal is to partner with practice owners and their teams. While there are certain business-related functions that are best handled centrally, the existing staff at the office level is essential to providing the best in patient care.”

## THE SIZE

### Q. Where will MyEyeDr. be by the end of 2018?

A. “We will be in 20 states and the District of Columbia [with] more than 400 locations and nearly 700 doctors.”

## THE FOCUS

### Q. What about plans for working with other specialties?

A. “So far, our team has made the decision to focus on optometry and what we can deliver to the patient care experience, but we have also worked to create strong relationships with ophthalmology in order to provide patients specialized care when they need it.

“We plan to continue our growth by partnering with doctors and practices that share our vision. Sometimes the search for the right partnerships takes us to new places, and we will continue to look for the right opportunities in 2019 and beyond.” **COT!**

4 NEW-GRAD BENEFITS OF CORPORATE OPTOMETRY

# Danielle Richardson, O.D.



Danielle Richardson, O.D.

**Danielle Richardson, O.D.**, is an employee at Downtown Houston Texas State Optical. She works in her off-hours with Fierce Clarity, a holistic health and wellness company she founded. Corporate optometry, she says, allows her to do both.

## 1

### WELCOME TO...

“I’ve been in practice for three years. Because I’m not from Houston, **having an instant network of doctors** who are co-workers has been great.”

## 2

### THE BASICS

“We’re downtown, with super street access. I work four weekdays and a half day on Saturday. Our demographic prefers appointments, so we’re only 10% walk-ins.”

## 3

### SUPER SUPPORT

“I really like the corporate support in marketing, staff training, and improving overall business operations.”

## 4

### LEARN + EARN

“Corporate optometry offers the flexibility to learn as much or as little about business as you want. I’m very interested in the nuts and bolts. It provides a great learning opportunity for a new grad.” **COT!** —*Stephanie K. De Long*



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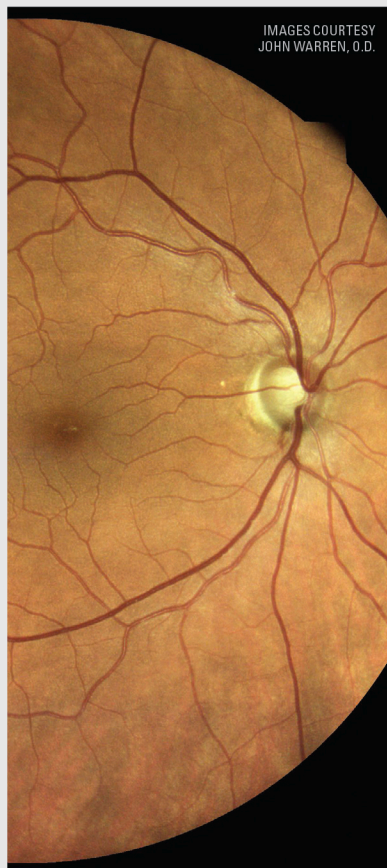
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Compass is the first Fundus Automated Perimeter on the market that combines Visual Field measurement with TrueColor Confocal Imaging of the optic disc and RNFL. **John Warren, O.D.**, of Warren Eye Care in Racine, WI, updated the visual field in his clinic earlier this year. Here, he describes the impact it has had on his patient care:

“The Compass is a remarkable instrument. In a footprint that resembles an autorefractor more than a visual field instrument, CenterVue has combined two technologies—threshold visual field testing and confocal imaging. The results can be easily exported to your EHR as well as being fully viewable via a web browser in your office.”

## EFFICIENT TESTING

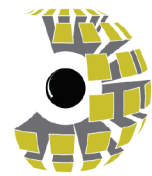
“How is it remarkable? The Compass performs automated visual field testing but has a unique way of ensuring that patient fixation doesn’t cloud the test results. Older technology uses blind spot testing or pupil following, but requires staff monitoring and makes assumptions—assuming where the blind spot is, and assuming that blind spot testing is adequate.

“With the Compass, fundus registration ensures that the same point is stimulated not only during threshold testing, but also follow-up assessment. Follow-up tests register subsequent test points to points tested, ensuring that you’re comparing the sensitivity at the same point on the fundus and in the visual field at every visit.

“Beyond providing superior visual field testing, the Compass provides the testing in a single device. My staff doesn’t have to move patients from the visual field to the fundus camera. And it allows me to bill for both procedures when testing and evaluation are complete. My staff loves that they don’t have to put trial lenses in front of the patient for testing either, as the Compass auto-focuses.”

## ACCURACY, DELIVERED

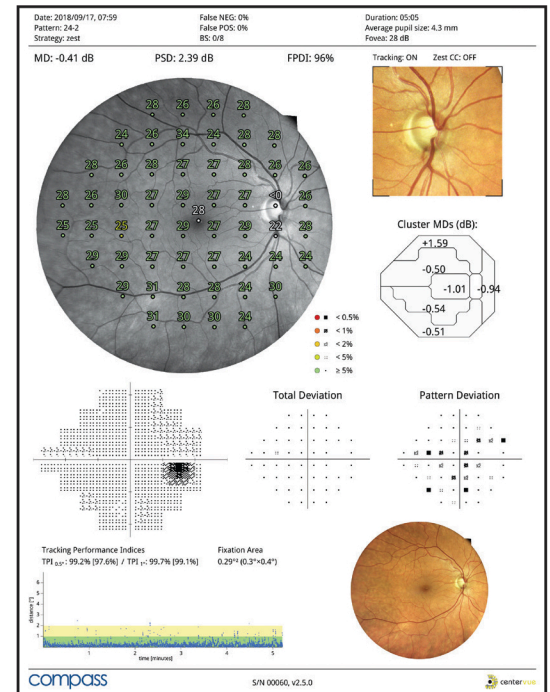
“So, what does this device do for me? It provides accurate threshold visual field



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testing as well as easy-to-evaluate optic nerve and fundus images. I can quickly evaluate my patients’ optic nerve function and anatomy. I see the intraocular structures better than I can with traditional imaging techniques such as condensing lenses and the slit lamp. The images are also minimally impacted by cataract due to the Compass being confocal.

“When reporting testing, I usually use one of these two CPT codes: 92083 for



Easy-to-review Compass results page

threshold visual field testing and 92250 when I perform optic nerve stereo imaging or fundus imaging. Both of these codes are accepted by payors with minimal limitations on the frequency of use and they can be billed together on the same date of service. It is necessary to use an ICD-10 code that justifies the procedure.

“There are many of your patients who will not only benefit from your evaluating them and documenting their condition(s) with the Compass, and you’ll find that the device easily produces a positive cash flow for your practice.” ●