

## Using Social Media to Increase Eyewear Sales

An eye care provider's practice is different from many other medical practitioners in that there is a significant retail component. This retail component is becoming highly commoditized in the marketplace as companies have learned how to sell a similar product that people accept at an attractive price.

The health care component is often left out of the equation altogether.

This is the environment ECPs must compete in. You want your patients to purchase their eyewear through you, yet they take their prescriptions and leave the office to buy online or at a chain.

An eye care provider's practice is different from many other medical practice's in that there is a retail component that significantly affects everything from overhead to patient satisfaction. This retail component ( your inventory ) has become highly commoditized in the marketplace as online retailers have begun competing with brick and mortar locations.

What these retailers lack, though, is the expert care that comes with the patient-doctor relationship. ECPs have this in spades. To compete, focus on providing an inspiring purchase environment for your patients.

By identifying the sales trends of your practice and building your discounts and packages around this data, you can tailor your patients eye-care experience from the moment they walk through the door.

### **Where to Start**

Before you set up any discount program or marketing campaign, you want to know where the majority of your revenue comes from and analyze your sales information for clues to your patients' buying behavior.

Look at selling patterns to determine if there are any seasonal increases, any products that are often sold together and if you have products nobody is buying. What is your profit margin for each product? What is your current return on investment for products? For marketing?

In other words, are you making a profit over and above what you spent on inventory plus marketing? And are you making a profit on individual products?

You should be able to get this information from your practice management software and the retail software used in the dispensary. Once you have your analysis complete you should be able to identify your most and least profitable products and services.

## Create a Plan of Attack

Make a list of your bottom selling products and services. Ask:

- Can this product or service be bundled with another?
- Can demand be improved for this product or service?
- Can this product or service be changed to appeal to a different target?
- Can I discount this item or service without devaluing the rest of my practice?

### *Bundling*

If you have a product or service with a thin margin that isn't appropriate for discounting, maybe you can pair it with another product or service that *can* be discounted. You can sell the non-discounted product more quickly, even at full margin, and still make a profit on the discounted product or service sold with it.

### *Demand*

Is this a product or service your patients don't realize you offer? A little promotion could be in order. Design a simple campaign to highlight little known or low demand services. Begin by promoting it to current patients as they come in for their vision checks and eyewear adjustments then promote it on social media.

### *Change Targets*

Maybe you have a product you brought in for one age group but they aren't buying. Do a little research...maybe a different age group (or gender or other lifestyle difference) will be more inclined to buy it. Promote it to the new group.

For example, you thought a new group of Minnie Mouse frames would go over big with 10-year-old girls. But it turned out they preferred pink and black frames *a la* "Monster High". You then notice quite a few high school girls trying on the Minnie Mouse line so you change some of your marketing display to make it appeal to the slightly older demographic.

### *Discount but Not Devalued*

As long as you aren't trying to discount everything, people understand if you put a few items on clearance or offer a discount for them. They also understand having specials, so **offering a limited-time discount** is another way to bring in new patients or existing patients who have not made an appointment for awhile.

## Promoting on Social Media

By asking your patients to follow your Facebook page or Twitter account, you give them the opportunity to share a service they just experienced. When they see that service on Facebook or Twitter they are more likely to pass it on to someone else who they know could use the service or product.

By using social media to interact with your patients it makes it easier for them to become your advocates, recommending you to their family and friends. They are targeting the right people for

you; the people who need you. It also provides a store-front where these potential patients can look at your practice and your merchandise. They can see that you give good value with your promotions and discounts. And it gives them a feeling of familiarity before they ever step foot in your office.