

40 YEARS OPTICAL PRISM

March 2023 | Vol. 41 | No. 3



Dr. Jasjit Gandham, OD
Optometry Partner
Specsavers Coquitlam Centre

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WONDERFUL WINGS

Butterfly frames take off

Femme Fatale

Eyewear styles for unapologetic women

TRANSITIONS

A photochromic pioneer & maverick marketer

NEGATIVE REVIEWS

How to handle them

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Oscar Mamooi

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› What's next in the "green" trend



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COVER IMAGE: KLiik Denmark style K-731 in Eggplant Gradient.



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MARCH 16-19, 2023

Event: Vision Expo East
Place: New York, New York
Website: east.visionexpo.com

MARCH 26, 2023

Event: Optifair Canada 2023
Place: Vaughan, Ontario
Website: aoece.com/optifair-trade-show

APRIL 1 & 2, 2023

Event: OAO Symposium & Infomart
Place: Toronto, Ontario
Website: optom.on.ca

APRIL 12-14, 2023

Event: SILMO Singapore
Place: Singapore
Website: silmosingapore.com

SEPTEMBER 8-10, 2023

Event: 4th World Congress of Optometry
Place: Melbourne, Australia
Website: worldcouncilofoptometry.info

SEPTEMBER 27-30, 2023

Event: Vision Expo West
Place: Las Vegas, Nevada
Website: west.visionexpo.com

SEPTEMBER 29 - October 2, 2023

Event: SILMO Paris
Place: Paris, France
Website: en.silmoparis.com



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“The support team really values our knowledge and feedback. We can take optometry in the direction that we want it to go.”

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A portrait of Dr. Jasjit Gandham, OD, an optometry partner at Specsavers Coquitlam Centre. She is a woman with long, dark, wavy hair, smiling warmly at the camera. She is wearing a white button-down shirt with a small blue floral pattern and grey trousers. She is seated in a black office chair, leaning back slightly with her right arm resting on the chair's backrest. The background is a modern optometry office with a green wall and a white desk. On the desk, there is a large, white, professional-grade optometric instrument, likely a phoropter or a similar device. The overall lighting is soft and professional.

Dr Jasjit Gandham, OD
Optometry Partner
Specsavers Coquitlam Centre

Specsavers



“Do not go where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”

– RALPH WALDO EMERSON

The dictionary defines a maverick as an “unorthodox or independent-minded person; someone who thinks and acts in an independent way.” A pioneer is often thought to refer only to the first person or group to do something, but it can also mean “a person or group that helps open up a new line of thought or activity, or a new method of technical development.”

By our definition, mavericks and pioneers are adventurers, innovators and rebels, who ask questions, shake up the status quo and take risks. They aren’t afraid to ask “why” when everyone else thinks the answers are obvious. And most of all, they have the courage to go in new directions, often inspiring others to go along with them.

In this issue of *Optical Prism*, we spotlight some of the people and companies in our industry who are doing exactly that.

In our first feature article, writer Amanpreet Dhani profiles five eye care professionals who have found success with innovative niche businesses, taking new approaches in selling, targeting a specific market, going mobile, adopting a holistic approach, and creating an optical metaverse.

40
YEARS

SERVING CANADIAN
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Our second feature by Nick Krewen highlights three eyewear companies that are exploring new developments with an innovative mindset, from fully customizable kids’ glasses, to 3D eyewear made from castor beans, to lenses that prevent and combat migraines.

Speaking of lenses, our Lens Tech column by David Goldberg also features a pioneer in the optical industry – Transitions, whose name has been synonymous with light-adaptive lenses for more than 30 years. Find out what the company is doing to continually improve Transitions technology and develop what’s next in photochromic lenses.

In honour of International Women’s Day this month, we also have lots of examples of creative, feminine styles in this issue, including butterfly frames and eyewear for unapologetic women. And in our Outlook column, the CAO’s Dr. Harry Bohnsack explores how women are shaping the future of optometry.

That’s just a sampling of what’s between the covers this issue. We hope you enjoy it, and come away feeling inspired to take a maverick and/or pioneering approach of your own, in whatever small or large way feels right for you.

As Albert Einstein said, “The person who follows the crowd will usually go no further than the crowd. The person who walks alone is likely to find [themselves] in places no one has ever seen before.”

JANET LEES, Managing Editor

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BOSS EYEWEAR

BOSS Eyewear's Style & Expression line includes new sunglasses and optical frames designed with the planet in mind. These styles are crafted in Acetate Renew, an eco-friendly material, with lenses made from bio-based nylon or recycled materials. The colour palette includes sophisticated Havana shades for the bold styles, and subtle, transparent tones for the lightweight shapes. Each style is embellished with a subtle signature metal detail featuring the iconic BOSS stripes.

BOSS's Distinctive Codes line has also enriched its offering with new sunglasses and optical frames in Acetate Renew, featuring lenses made from bio-based or recycled materials.

The Light and Minimal line features sophisticated and contemporary sunglasses and optical frames in lightweight, high-density acetate or stainless steel, embellished with subtle BOSS stripe details.

For more information, contact your Safilo sales representative or visit mysafilo.com/ca

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BOSS

EYEWEAR

HAILEY BEIBER X VOGUE EYEWEAR

Hailey Bieber's third Signature Collection for Vogue Eyewear is ready to kick off the new season with six fresh shapes.

oVO5443 is a modern flat-brow cat-eye in seasonal transparent green and shimmering opal peach colour options. This acetate frame comes in three sizes (50-52-54) and features adjustable Hailey signature temples.

oVO5511 is an oversized optical frame with a larger acetate square, bevelled brow line and signature Hailey temple. Trendy see-through tones include light opal peach and transparent dark khaki, while black or dark Havana offer bolder appeal.



oVO5443
by Luxottica



oVO5511
by Luxottica



oVO5511
by Luxottica



oVO5443
by Luxottica

All Hailey Bieber x Vogue Eyewear frames feature an exclusive Hailey signature temple and come with a Hailey Bieber Signature zip-up carry pouch.

For more information, contact your Luxottica sales representative or visit luxottica.com

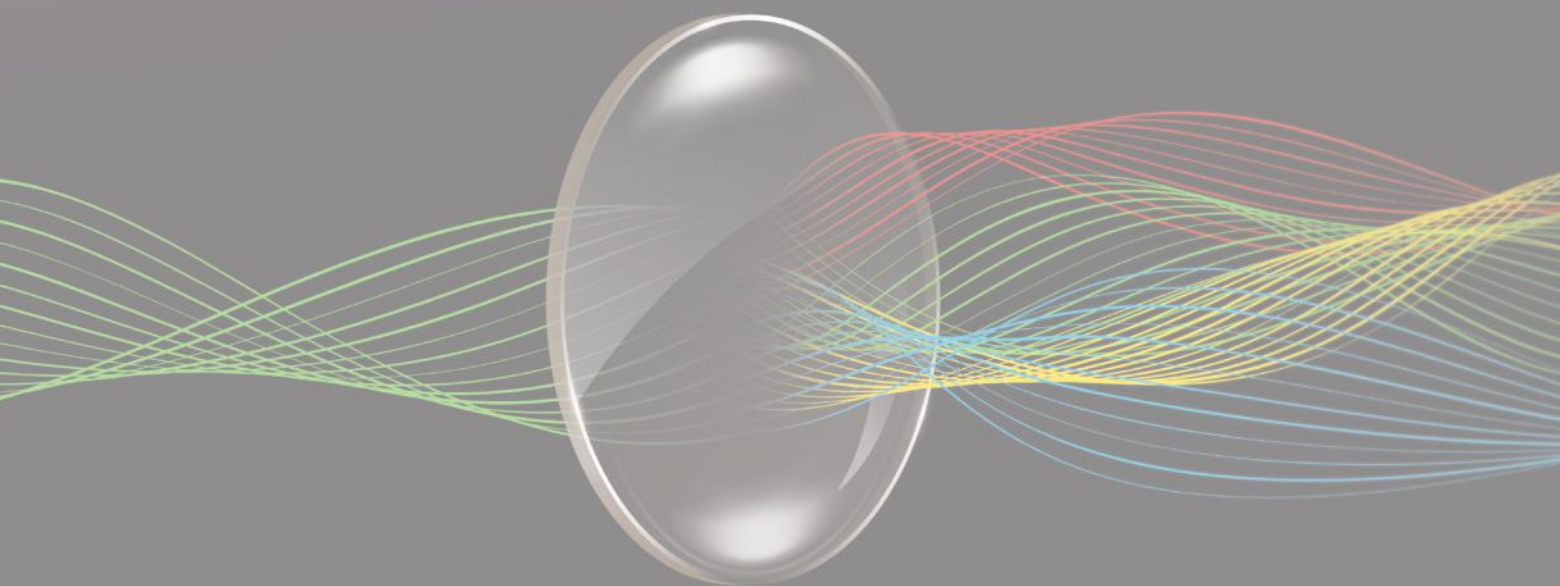


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IZUMI

These three new IZUMI styles feature trending oversized geometric, square and cat-eye shapes.

The two acetate combination models and one stainless steel design use soft, feminine colourways and floral-patterned acetate to merge Western fashion trends with Eastern design.

Decorative detailing includes wrap-around endpieces and engraved lines.

For more information, contact your WestGroupe sales representative or visit westgroupe.com

TIFFANY & CO

Tiffany's gemstone-inspired eyewear draws inspiration from the brand's legendary diamonds and coloured gemstones, featuring lenses with faceted edges, shapes evoking cut gemstones, and a vibrant colour palette.

Style TF3089 features faceted lenses in a cushion shape, available in modern colourways like pale gold with dark-brown lenses, pale gold with light-brown lenses, silver with light-green lenses, and gold with dark-gray lenses.

The collection's TF3090 sunglasses have faceted lenses in shapes that recall brilliant-cut gemstones. Available in pale gold with dark-brown lenses, Rubedo metal with pink lenses, and gold with either dark-gray or light-yellow lenses.

The youthful TF3091 sunglasses are characterized by a round shape and faceted lenses. The on-trend colour palette includes pale gold with dark-brown or dark-violet lenses, silver with light-azure lenses, and gold with dark-gray lenses.

For more information, contact your Tiffany & Co. sales representative or visit tiffany.ca



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TF 3089 by
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SILHOUETTE

Silhouette's premium eyewear, "The Wave," is ultra-light, rimless, minimalist and sleek. There are four models with tinted lenses and a gradient look that lends character to the design. The gradient effect in the lenses is picked up by a metallic-looking multicolour finish on the temples, crowned with a titanium ring on the temple tips.

The Wave models are available in four on-trend colourways for 2023: Lightness (lavender); Trust (orange); Courage (blue); and Independence (green).

For more information, contact your Silhouette sales representative or visit [silhouette.com](https://www.silhouette.com)

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ST8668 Black
by Optika



ST8668 Royal
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ST8669 Viola
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ST8668 Turquoise
by Optika

SOHO TECH

This unisex eyewear collection has 12 new models for Spring 2023, with a focus on colour, impact and style.

For those looking to make a statement, model ST8668 is a cat eye in a unique blend of new colours developed for this season. Available in Royal and Black.

Wild colour-fading acetates are on trend in model ST8669, available in Turquoise and Viola.

For more information, contact your Optika sales representative or visit optikaeyewear.com

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STUKTUR

This French brand is known for its colourful, geometric frames in acetate, metal and titanium. All STUKTUR frames are handmade at the company's factory in Normandy, France, and come in a variety of colourways.

For more information, contact your STUKTUR eyewear sales representative or visit struktur-eyewear.fr/en



The Legend
by Struktur



The Top Gun
by Struktur



The Icon
by Struktur



The Director
by Struktur



N8183
by Marchon

NAUTICA

Nautica Eyewear's new Tenite Renew collection features styles made from 56% sustainable materials powered by Eastman, including bio-based and certified recycled content.

The collection comprises two sun and three optical styles, all designed with lightweight construction, classic shapes and energetic pops of colour.

For more information, contact your Marchon sales representative or visit marchon.com



N8181
by Marchon



N8182
by Marchon

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The Mavericks

For these eyewear companies, every pioneering development has innovation at its heart

BY NICK KREWEN

Innovation makes the world go round, and in the optical universe, a manufacturer's desire to constantly improve their product in the areas of comfort, efficacy and affordability has yielded some spectacular results.

This strive for eye care perfection requires not only persistence, passion and dedication, but a willingness to listen to consumers, optometrists and ophthalmologists. And most of

all, it requires outside-the-box thinking – using imagination and curiosity to reach for the stars, constantly researching and experimenting until the desired goal is achieved.

Optical Prism features a trio of ground breakers and decision makers in the eye care field who are mavericks paving the way for better vision, improved eyewear performance, and environmental protection through sustainability.





Photo courtesy of Butterfly Kisses

MESQUAD

VAUGHAN, ONTARIO

Katherine Giovannone, a 20-year industry veteran and MESquad founder, was an optical sales rep – and later, distributor and manufacturer – who travelled the world to attend trade shows and manufacturer conventions, until she took notice of a consumer request that she heard repeatedly.

“People from all walks of life kept mentioning that ‘the world needs a collection of supportable kids’ glasses,’” recalls Giovannone, who also manufactures the Emmeline, Metro-spec and Bendy Flex eyewear lines.

Fast-forward to 2021, and Giovannone founded MESquad, which offers “indestructible eyewear for kids.”

With the assistance of a virtual try-on tool on the MESquad website, kids can design their own pair of glasses from front to temple and try them on virtually. And if they don’t have a webcam?

“We have the download cut paper option,” explains Giovannone. “We also now have a sample frame box, which costs \$100 and is refundable. People will get all seven styles and the hinges delivered to their house to try on. We encourage people to then pass the box forward to friends and neighbours.”

The process empowers children to be creative and make their own choices.

“Something I’ve noticed, especially now that I’m a parent, is how people make all these choices for their kids

and don’t let kids make decisions,” says Giovannone, who is the mother of an eight-year-old. “I think you need to give kids the space to create, imagine and do their thing outside of play.

“The parent might really want their kid to wear tortoise [glasses], but the child wants to wear orange. Just let them wear orange! Let the kids make the decision, because, ultimately, the goal is to have them wear their glasses. When they design them, they take ownership of the design.”

Another genius aspect of the MESquad design are the silicone hinges, which not only replace screws, but enable wear-and-tear flexibility.

“They can get bent out of shape, and with just a little bit of manipulation, the hinge goes back into place,” notes Giovannone. “The hinge pin is on both sides. It’s a uniform hinge.”

MESquad eyewear is currently available in the U.S. and Ireland, and the

company plans to launch Canadian distribution by mid-2023.

“I’m still working on it,” says Giovannone. “I’ve had a chain approach me, so I’m deciding whether to put it in a chain or find a distributor to put it everywhere – it’s a business decision I’m contemplating.”

MESquad is also actively working to reduce its carbon footprint. “Our industry is full of so much waste; we’re notorious for our returns in our industry through opticians and doctors,” says Giovannone, noting that MESquad frames include a three-year warranty and a return rate of less than one percent.

“The idea is to reduce the amount of material we need to buy. Eventually, we’ll have other products where there’s minimal material required to create one frame. We would buy less, and we wouldn’t have to replace parts as often.”



MONOQOOL

ELSINORE, DENMARK

Printed glasses? Castor bean frames? Yes!

Monoqool has been working overtime to make its line of frames and glasses not only affordable, but sustainable – always with the intent of keeping a step ahead of the competition.

“To survive, we have to come up with something innovative,” says founder and CEO Allan Peterson, whose company began experimenting with 3D printing in 2008.

According to Peterson, 3D printing affords a number of advantages. Customers benefit from the light weight of the frames, along with comfort and freedom of design. For the company, 3D printing also offers the time-saving logistics of nearby production.

“We don’t produce our frames ourselves, but just a 45-minute drive away is the 3D print factory and partner that we work with,” says Peterson, adding that this proximity means “We can sort problems out very, very quickly.”

The company also has a commitment to environmental sustainabil-

ity – Monoqool has been offering frames made of castor bean biomaterial since 2019, greatly helping with waste reduction.

“When you cut a frame from an acetate sheet, you spend only 15% on raw material [to make the frame], and 85% you’d throw out,” he explains. “In our case, 98% is on raw material and only 2% is later disposed of. We only produce what we need.”

Another beneficiary of 3D printing with castor bean biomaterials is the local farming community.

“The beans are produced where you would not be able to grow other crops,” says Peterson. “There are farmers reaping benefits by growing these in fields that are difficult to utilize.”

Screwless hinges are another Monoqool innovation – once again, courtesy of 3D printing technology.

“We wanted our frames to be made without any screws that can come loose, fall off or need to be tied,” says Peterson. “We challenged ourselves to make all of our frames with a screwless hinge solution, but it’s not as easy as it sounds. Thankfully, 3D printing has opened up lots of screwless hinge possibilities.”

“

“We challenged ourselves to make all of our frames with a screwless hinge solution, but it’s not as easy as it sounds.”

Before starting down the 3D road, there were a few must-haves: Monoqool glasses had to prioritize customer comfort, and the frames had to be extremely adjustable to fit perfectly on a customer’s head.

“They also had to be easy for the optician to work with,” adds Peterson.

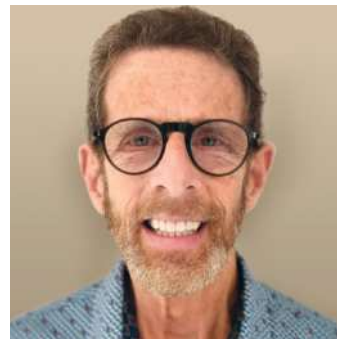
Is the day coming when opticians can produce their own glasses with 3D printers? Peterson says that possibility is still in its very preliminary stages.

“Today, the quality is far from acceptable,” he notes. “It’s quite a lengthy process: after it comes out of the 3D printing machine, we need to polish it in stone, hand-polish it, colour it and hand-polish it again.

“It’s something you have to master.”

Distributed in North America by Missouri-based Studio Optyx, Monoqool’s current focus is on combination frames that include stainless steel and titanium.

“We’re always working on new concepts, new hinges, new ideas,” says Peterson. “With 3D printing, we can experiment quickly. Although, for every 50 ideas we get, we will launch one.” The best one, no doubt.



AVULUX

MIAMI, FLORIDA

Migraine sufferers are undoubtedly thrilled about Avulux and its nanotechnology-created, patented, precision optical filter lenses that play a preventative role in combating those painful headaches.

And although Dr. Charles Posternack, the company’s president and CEO, has financed and taken Avulux to market, he gives credit to the University of Utah for the initial research behind this migraine management breakthrough.

“I’m a physician – nothing to do with neurology or ophthalmology – but I have two daughters who were suffering with migraines,” he explains. “I was introduced to researchers at the University of Utah Research Foundation, at the Moran Eye Center, and they were doing a lot of pioneering work to try and figure this out.

“Once they had developed a very early-generation Avulux-type lens, I got so excited that I approached them and offered to take over all of the expenses to develop the product, take over the intellectual property and try to bring a lens to market that would actually work.”

The result: Avulux lenses help block light sensitivity – one of the primary causes of migraines – by bringing in soothing green light to counter the disturbing blue, amber and red spectrums.

“Ninety percent of people who suffer from migraines actually have light sensitivity,” says Posternack. “Also, 30% to 60% of all migraine attacks are precipitated by light. If you’re exposed to light in the middle of an attack, it’s going to make it worse and [make it] last longer.”

In 2017, Posternack conducted a Phase Two scientific trial, giving Avulux to known migraine sufferers who were instructed to wear the glasses during the earliest indication of their symptoms: “an aura or a tingling of pain.”

The results were impressive: for 36% of trial participants, the lenses stopped their migraine before it

began, while 38% found relief within 30 minutes – to the point where they could decrease or eliminate their medications.

“

“I’m a physician – nothing to do with neurology or ophthalmology – but I have two daughters who were suffering with migraines.”

“Another 18% still had their headache, but were able to continue on with their daily living activities – which, for a migraine sufferer, is the most important thing,” Posternack says, adding there were no negative side effects from wearing the glasses.

After further experimentation, Avulux glasses are now available in 36 countries, with Canada, Australia and New Zealand added just this year. In the U.S., the FDA approved the device last year.

But Posternack isn’t satisfied; he’s expanding Avulux’s research into other areas.

“We’re testing another syndrome – the Sharp-Edge Eye Syndrome, also known as visual snow,” he explains. “We’re conducting another clinical study, and we’re also developing other iterations of our lens that are strictly for outdoor use, and a lighter lens for indoor use that’s in addition to the indoor and outdoor mild tint lens we have now. We don’t ever intend to end research because we’re positive we’re going to find other applications.”

And that positive attitude is the essence of innovation. **OP**



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“We want to be known for our warmth, our hospitality and our commitment to helping Canadian eyecare professionals succeed in a very challenging environment”

- CHRIS LONGSTAFF, FOUNDER AND CEO, EREDITÀ EYEWEAR GROUP



Roberto Cavalli is coming back to Canada under Eredità's banner.

Established in 2021, the Eredità Eyewear Group is a Canadian independent, family-run business focused on quality, customer care, diversity and innovation. Firmly grounded in values passed down from several generations of eye care professionals, the young company is already making a mark in the industry with its fresh approach to sustainability – not only with its products, but also in its relationships with independent ECPs across the country.

“Relationships are very important in this industry, but the focus of late seems to be trending towards the transactional,” says founder and CEO Chris Longstaff. “We want to be known for our warmth, our hospitality, and our commitment to helping Canadian eye care professionals succeed in a very challenging environment.”



Nick (left) and Chris Longstaff

Representing major global brands manufactured with quality and care by family-owned Italian company De Rigo SPA, Eredità Eyewear champions its ‘factory to face’ supply chain with fully Canadian operations, from customer service to logistics and shipping.

The goal of becoming the independent distributor of choice in the Canadian eyewear market is a lofty one, especially in an increasingly competitive market fraught with constantly changing external factors and forces. “We have a strong vision and mission, and we never stop learning and growing through customer and team feedback,” says Longstaff. The flexibility shown to its customers allows the company to stay ahead of the curve, allowing for quick decision-making opportunities that entirely focus on the end user customer. “Coupled with a world-class design team and the production expertise at De Rigo, we’re really a win-win for the market,” says Longstaff.

Another maverick in his own right, designer Roberto Cavalli is coming back to Canada under Eredità’s banner. “We’re excited

to launch both Roberto Cavalli Eyewear and Just Cavalli Eyewear this spring – two lines that bring style, innovation and design to Canada in a big way. “For those in the know, it’s a return to larger-than-life style that was synonymous with the Cavalli name of the past,” says Nick Longstaff, Business Development Lead for Eredità.

Cavalli, known for his signature exotic prints and the industry-first leather printing patent that gained him popularity in Italian and French fashion circles in the 1970s, is considered by many to be the pioneer of the modern runway collection. The market can expect to see a lot of innovation in the frames, from multi-layered acetates to the unique application of alloys in the shape of the signature snakes and tiger teeth on the frames.

From the valued partnerships with independent eye care professionals, to its focus on quality, sustainability and end-user care, Eredità Eyewear is a true optical maverick in the industry, dedicated to preserving its heritage while championing independent, family-run businesses in the Canadian market. **OP**



roberto cavalli
EYEWEAR



the Butterfly

Butterflies are a symbol of transformation, and butterfly-shaped glasses can transform your client's look in an instant. Here are some fun and unique butterfly options for anyone who thinks outside the traditional frame shapes.

BY SUZANNE LACORTE



1.

Style TIP

THE BUTTERFLY SHAPE CAN HELP
TO MAKE WIDER FACES LOOK
NARROWER. BUTTERFLY FRAMES
ARE ALSO GREAT FOR OVAL AND
HEART-SHAPED FACES.



2.



3.



4.

1. Paradisia by Oscar Mamooi 2. Icon by Caron
Eyewear 3. Blue Block Butterfly FT5841-B by
Tom Ford 4. Izumi OS-9345 by WestGroupe
5. Marella by Catherine de'Medici 6. Missoni 0141
by Safilo 7. Call Me by Caron Eyewear



5.

Effect



7.



6.

doing things differently

Five eye care professionals who have found success with innovative niche businesses

BY AMANPREET DHAMI

When it comes to the optical industry, there are many ways to go about running your business, and at the heart of every business is the idea or concept that gave birth to it. To industry outsiders, the business of eyecare might seem one-dimensional, but those who work within it know that running an eyecare business takes dedication, and in some cases, it also means doing things very differently.

We spoke to five eye care professionals who have gone against the grain and found success with a unique idea or a specific niche, to learn about their journey, inspirations, and how-to tips for other ECPs.



STYLING TO SELL

An eyewear image expert, image consultant and founder of the Be Spectacular training system and Perceptions Eyewear, Wendy Buchanan is a true example of an entrepreneur who followed a path beyond expectations and eventually found success.

Buchanan originally left the optical industry in order to become an image consultant with the intent to leave for

good, but instead ended up bringing her image theories back to the optical world by specializing as an eyewear stylist.

Today, Buchanan connects and collaborates with eye care professionals to help improve their sales processes through styling techniques and sales language: "What I teach comes from the sales system that I developed for my retail mobile eyewear boutique 26 years ago to help me stay alive, stand out and differentiate," she explains.

For Buchanan, the key to success has always been an openness to learning from her experiences, combined with a willingness to pivot as needed. "I had no one to mentor me in 1997, but I had a strong desire and street smarts. I learned to run my business by making tons of mistakes. Each time this happened, I course-corrected, adjusted and moved forward," she says.

As her business grew, Buchanan studied her clients intently and came to observe

distinct groups with similarities in facial features, clothing styles and personality traits. As she styled her clients based on these factors, Buchanan recognized that she had in fact styled each group in similar eyewear styles.

This aha moment led to the creation of Buchanan's hands-on styling experience based on five spec style personalities and a three-step sales styling process. The system led to multiple-pair sales for her ECP clients and eventually evolved into the Be Spectacular Methodology she teaches in workshops and presentations today.

"I became successful by staying true to my passion and focusing on creating a fun styling consultation for each client," says Buchanan. "I bring my natural state of curiosity to every spec style conversation, to keep each appointment fresh and interesting, not just for my clients, but also for me."



CATERING TO MILLENNIALS

Dr. Michael Kreuzer, optometrist and owner of Edmonton-based Glasses Half Full, caters his optical practice to the millennial market, ensuring that it is interactive, convenient and personalized for each of his patients at every touchpoint.

This includes a warm check-in complete with locally roasted coffee or a cold brew; an informative and interactive eye exam; an optical boutique with a simple and easy-to-understand layout of products with all-inclusive pricing; and a website that features unique photography for each product launch, with a personalized web gallery that showcases the practice's exclusive product catalogue.

Kreuzer's mission to redefine optometry for Edmonton's millennial market is coupled with his commitment to working with independent brands and small businesses, as well as leveraging technology to make the eye exam process as simple and comfortable as possible.

"My personal mantra is to take care of my community as best I can," says Dr. Kreuzer. His reason for focusing on the millennial market is simple: As a millennial himself, building an optical business that serves this market rings true to who he is. Staying true to himself fuels him forward, and has allowed him to remain committed and successful.

"By finding your niche and tailoring it to the needs of your practice, you will not only stand out and grow your own business, but it will fundamentally bolster and support your community. Building community is one of the most important and rewarding aspects of being an optometrist."

A HOLISTIC APPROACH

Dr. Laurie Capogna, owner of Eye Wellness, offers a holistic and 360-degree approach to her optical services, pairing the standard eye exam, glasses and contact lens services with nutritional advice to support the ocular health of her patients, both from a preventative and treatment standpoint.

Everything Eye Wellness does is focused on the future of the patient's vision, and eye exams look at prevention based on the patient's lifestyle.

"Each consult starts with a questionnaire where we ask about nutrition, how many fruits and vegetables they eat per day, how many servings of fish they consume per week, etc. Then this is taken into account within the eye exam."

Diet is important to consider in retina imaging, for example, as foods with lutein deposit in the retina, explains Dr. Capogna. "We link nutrition with education and how to prevent eye disease. We also do a big counselling session on nutrition and talk about vitamins, too."

With the goal of providing a one-stop holistic eyecare shop, Dr. Capogna also retails supplements in her practice to help support the nutritional advice given during consults. Each patient goes home with a personalized eye wellness plan covering what glasses, contacts and sunglasses they need as well as the nutrition they need to put into practice, and in some cases a referral to a naturopath or dietician to help them on their holistic eye health journey.

Capogna's passion for nutrition in eye care comes from her childhood, where her Italian mother made a conscious effort to change her traditional Italian cooking to make nutritious meals that helped support her own personal breast cancer journey as well as Capogna's father's blood pressure and family history of heart disease.

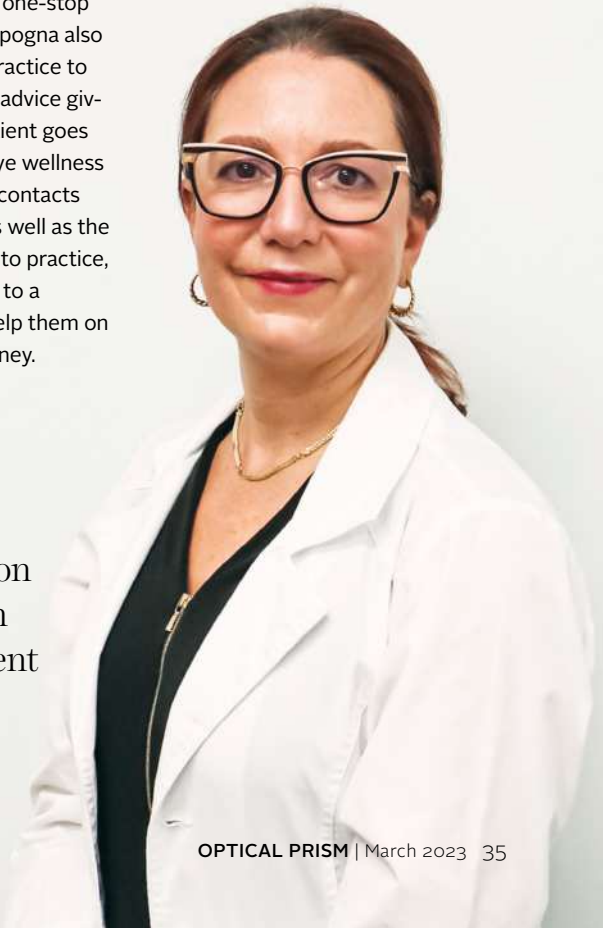
After becoming an optician, Capogna attended a conference on ocular nutrition, and a light bulb went on – she knew she had to deliver this service to her patients. Eye Wellness was born in 2015, and she has also written two books on ocular nutrition.

"Now it's not work to me. It's how I live," she says.

Her love for her work and her patients is what keeps her going. In her experience, the key driver to making a niche practice successful is: "Always make the patient your focus, and make sure you love doing it, not just because it's a good opportunity. If you aren't going to love your niche business, it's hard to be successful at it."

“

“We link nutrition with education and how to prevent eye disease.”





MOBILE OPTOMETRY

Jean-Pierre Côté is an optician, businessman and owner of Raymond and Côté with his wife Natalie Raymond. He's also a trailblazer in the Québec market, offering mobile optometry services to the elderly population living in retirement and long-term-care homes.

Côté has a small home office and exam room in his residence, but for Raymond and Côté's mobile business, the office is wherever the client is – a distinct difference from most optical practices. Consequently, Côté and his team had to develop the appropriate optical equipment (eye exam testing and repair tools) and the means to transport them – including boxes for the optical equipment, computers to record all results, and a truck to house it all in – to be able to offer fully mobile service to seniors.

Côté established his business in 1992 at age 23. The company's success is a result of his unique approach to working with older seniors, which has been unmatched by competitors. Although there have been competitors throughout Côté's 30-year journey, he says they haven't stuck around. His and his wife's endurance in the business comes down to their dedication to building strong relationships with their patients and ensuring a high-quality eye consultation that goes beyond simply offering sound optical services.

"We have to understand first what an elderly person needs," he notes. "We don't speak fast with them, and sometimes we have to repeat ourselves or ask the family member or person with power of attorney to be there when we test so that once the test is done, they can get glasses. We also need to understand their limits. That is the biggest challenge: Learning who the person is and how they think. This is important to establish, because then one ensures that the consultation is well understood. The elderly are people, but they have special needs."

“

"I wanted to be different. If you want to be different in your business, you have to invest in yourself and believe in yourself as well as hear the answers."

Côté's commitment to making a difference in the lives of the elderly continues to motivate him today as he plans to train others to run the business after he retires, to meet the growing demand of Canada's aging population that is expected to continue for at least the next decade.

"It's important to follow our dreams," says Côté. "I wanted to be different. If you want to be different in your business, you have to invest in yourself and believe in yourself as well as hear the answers. We heard answers and confirmation about five years after beginning, and then we knew we were on the right track."

His best advice: listen for the confirmation and keep going.



INTO THE METAVERSE

Charlene Nichols, founder and CEO of Sell Smart Not Hard, has always taken the road less travelled, because for her, that's where the lessons are.

With this mindset, she created the My Vision Show and The Optical Metaverse, a virtual trade show and network marketing platform within the metaverse where opticians and optical brands can market themselves with the goals of building real world connections and selling their products and services.

This almost fantastical digital environment is widely accessible (no headsets or AI glasses needed), and intentionally leverages the innovation and creativity of AI technology to offer up a layered digital experience that offers innovative selling and networking solutions.

Nichols' career began to blossom in 2015 when she launched Sell Smart Not Hard, a marketing business to help opticians and optical brands develop a stronger e-commerce and digital marketing presence. In 2018, she pivoted her business and created the first virtual trade show for the optical industry, including everything from independent eyewear to acetates and hand-sculpted frames.

This road eventually led her towards the metaverse, and in 2022, The Optical Metaverse hosted a three-day virtual event complete with live 3D booths, networking lounges, and endless opportunities for members of the industry to learn and connect.

Those entering The Optical Metaverse create their personalized avatar, which can explore virtual booths in a virtual trade show environment, experiment with virtual product try-ons, and enter lounges to make real-world connections.

One of the most recent features includes a metaverse of New York City that gives opticians the opportunity to sell frames in an upscale boutique in “Manhattan,” with a simulation that even allows the user to try on glasses with different lenses.

It's an opportunity for opticians to communicate with a larger audience. Soon to come is a newly upgraded metaverse layer where each participant can retain their own avatar identity and actually purchase products.

“

“Your idea is a gift; not everyone has them. You were given that idea for a reason, and sometimes that idea can fulfill your purpose. Listen to your instincts and trust yourself. The only way to fail is to give up.”

Nichols's mantra is, “We have the team to build your dream,” and she attributes her success to collaborating with like-minded individuals. She encourages eye care professionals with innovative ideas for the market to always listen to their inner voice.

“Your idea is a gift; not everyone has them. You were given that idea for a reason, and sometimes that idea can fulfill your purpose. Listen to your instincts and trust yourself. The only way to fail is to give up.”

For Nichols, every successful pivot in her optical career of 26 years came just beyond the point when she was ready to give up. “That's usually a sign that you're about to make it.”

However quirky or ‘out there’ your idea seems, don't shoo it away by fitting in. The stories of these five innovators demonstrate the endless possibilities available to eye care professionals to change the course of their lives, their patients' lives, and the industry as a whole. **OP**



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3.

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BY SUZANNE LACORTE



4.



5.



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7.



8.

1. Carolina Herrera HER0146 by Safilo 2. Thierry Lasry Vanity by Kore Brands 3. KO-3978 by Karl Optical
4. Miket by Rye & Lye 5. Prague in Metallic Pacific Ocean by Laibach & York 6. Tom Ford FT5882 by Marcolin
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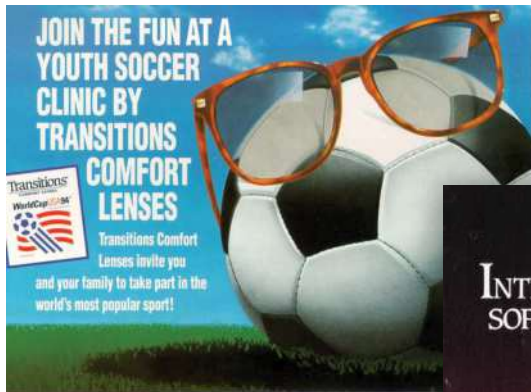
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Transforming the Market



Transitions is not only a pioneer in photochromic lenses, but a maverick marketer as well

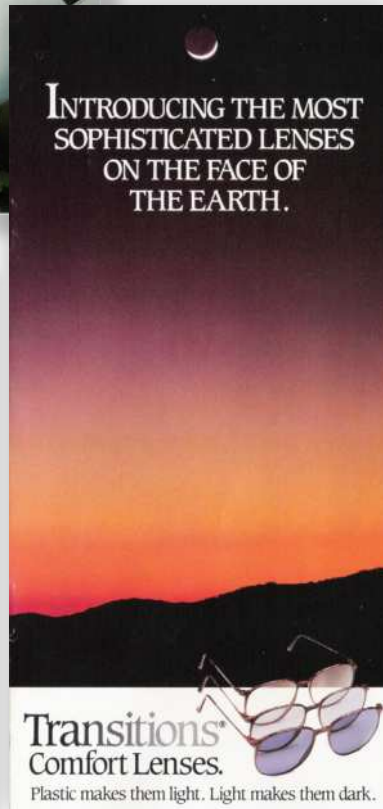
BY DAVID GOLDBERG

When it comes to mavericks and pioneers in the optical industry, it's imperative to include Transitions in the conversation. The name has been synonymous with light-adaptive lenses since the company's founding in 1990 and the launch of its first photochromic lens shortly thereafter.

"The introduction of Transitions lenses was groundbreaking, and highlighted the possibilities that eyewear solutions can provide to patients beyond just vision correction," says Isabelle Tremblay, director of sales and marketing for Transitions, Essilor Group Canada.

"My favourite part of Transitions' creation story is that it all began with partnership, as a joint venture company between PPG Industries and Essilor International. We started with partnership, and still place a huge focus on our partners and what we are able to accomplish together."

Industry experts put Transitions in a first-place position in sales today because of its aggressive investment in plastic lens innovation and manufacturing. Many also point out that Transitions' dominant market position was achieved not just because of *what* they were selling, but *how* they were selling it.



Neil Handley, museum curator at the The College of Optometrists in London, England, recalls Transitions' innovative marketing strategies aimed at eye care professionals throughout the 1990s. The company mailed out informational cassette tapes, offered factory tours, and provided attractive point of sale displays for clinics. Then Transitions started wooing the ECPs' patients as well.

"I think they were very clever with their use of words," says Handley. "By 2008, they had an international campaign called 'Your Sight is Precious.' The face of that campaign was a woman doing wildlife photography, taking pictures of endangered elephants. So they were comparing the preciousness of your eyesight with the preciousness of preserving endangered species and tapping into that environmentalist mood. That was quite clever.

"They're also, I believe, the first optical company to sponsor a professional cycling team. In 2009, they sponsored Garmin Slipstream and the British rider, Tour de France winner Bradley Wiggins, who was the key rider on that team. So they were associated directly with sports at a time when sports vision eyewear was becoming more important."

But of course, the best marketing in the world is pointless if you don't have an exemplary product to back it up.

"Over the years, [Transitions] has just become such a juggernaut in the industry that competitors have basically been swept aside," says University of Waterloo Professor Ralph Chou, an optometrist for more than 40 years.

"Some of it is just on the strength of their marketing, but you know, they've had very good products," says Chou, pointing to Transitions' penchant for plastic at a time when photochromics were dominated by

glass lenses made by Zeiss, Rodenstock and Corning.

"These plastic lenses becoming available were much lighter and easier to deal with because of plastic lens manufacturing technology," says Chou. "So we witnessed the rise of plastics, and [since then], we've seen how Transitions has developed all sorts of lenses.



"Transitions can't claim to be the originators of the early technologies, but thanks to clever marketing as well as product innovation over an historically brief but sustained period, they have established themselves into a position whereby they can claim to be market leaders."

"Suddenly, people didn't have to keep juggling two pairs of glasses. You've also got different colours for fashion considerations. With enhancements like polarization, you have a very versatile product that can be used for patients' and customers' convenience and vision enhancement, and that counts a lot in a highly competitive marketplace."

There has always been an "arms race" when it comes to better photochromics. Since the first patent was filed for photochromic glasses in the 1960s, the chemistry to achieve faster fadeback has been improved.

Back in 1974 when 22% of American eyeglasses wearers had switched to photochromic lenses, it took several minutes for those lenses to change from dark to light, notes The College of Optometrists' Handley. Today, most Transitions wearers see the full transformation before their eyes in less than 60 seconds.

The other challenge to overcome was developing a photochromic lens that could activate for drivers.

"These lenses were not available for use in automobiles," says Handley. "But transitions developed one that is the XTRActive lens, which they said you could use inside a car behind the windshield.

"Transitions can't claim to be the originators of the early technologies, but thanks to clever marketing as well as product innovation over an historically brief but sustained period, they have established themselves into a position whereby they can claim to be market leaders."

And while the bright minds on the Transitions leadership team can't divulge any laboratory secrets about what's to come in the next decade, Brian O'Neill, the company's global vice-president of innovation, technology and operations, teases major news in the pipeline.

"At Transitions, we are pioneers, and improving our technology is in our DNA. We are driven to outperform what *was* and become what's *next*," says O'Neill.

"Loyal Transitions partners and wearers can look forward to a continued commitment to providing revolutionary photochromic lens technology. Breakthroughs like behind-the-windshield activation or adaptive polarization are just the beginning, and we see no bounds to where photochromic lens technology can go." **OP**



Bringing the Eyes Into Alignment

Neurolens fights multiple symptoms with patented contoured prism technology

Modern lifestyles and persistent near vision utilization cause most patients to experience the reduced visual acuity and painful symptoms of eye misalignment.

Symptoms like headaches, eye strain, neck and shoulder pain, motion sickness and dry eye sensation can be traced back to a proprioceptive mismatch between misaligned eyes and the vestibular and muscular systems. This leads to an overstimulation of the trigeminal nerve,

and this overstimulation leads to a painful stimulation of several parts of the face and neck.

Neurolens addresses this with a simple, three-step process that includes a mobile-friendly way to assess patient symptomatology, followed by a measurement on the Neurolens Measurement Device, or NMD2. Finally, Neurolenses with patented contoured prism technology bring the eyes into alignment, relieving symptoms like headaches and eye strain for 93% of wearers.

Recently, Neurolens conducted a roundtable discussion on the future of eye care. Dr. Paul Karpecki leads this distinguished panel – which includes Dr. Brenda Montecalvo, Dr. Ray Corbin-Simon, Dr. Amanda Nanasy and Dr. Carol Nelson – in an in-depth discussion on binocularity, the future of vision care, standard-of-care, and more.

“

“I’m having better conversations with my patients. It’s like I’ve found this magic wand, and when a patient puts on a new pair of these glasses, they feel amazing.”

- DR. RAY CORBIN-SMITH

“I’m having better conversations with my patients,” says Dr. Corbin-Simon. “It’s like I’ve found this magic wand, and when a patient puts on a new pair of these glasses, they feel amazing.” Adds Dr. Nanasy: “We all push the idea of medical optometry. This is the perfect way for us to step over that line and say that we’re not just doing a vision exam; we can impact your day-to-day life with this product, and that’s something that I want to be a part of.” **OP**

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A selection of important, innovative or unique eyewear and eyecare products we're loving this month.



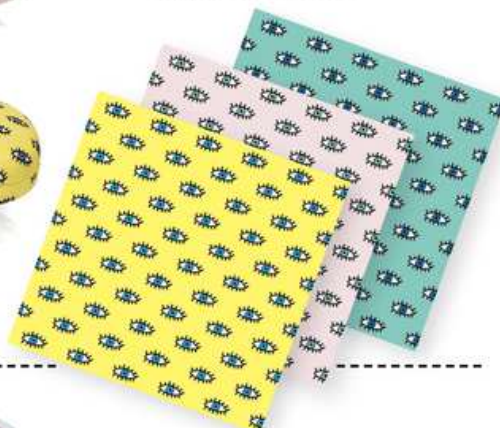
- 1 CRAZE GUARD**
Cascade Optics has developed an innovative new tool called Craze Guard. Invented and patented by an optician/lab technician, Craze Guard is made from proprietary heat-resistant materials to ward off lens crazing while keeping the bridge and temples exposed for heating. Crazing occurs from over-exposing an AR lens to the heat of a hot air frame warmer during adjustments, leading to preventable loss. With Craze Guard, there is no need to remove the lens for adjustments, so no more straining to remove high-RX lenses or having to risk breaking an old, brittle frame in front of a patient.
cascadeoptics.com



2

EYZ CASES & CLOTHS

EYZ cases and ultra microfibre cloths are available in three colours, and can also be custom branded. The EYZ cases fit a wide variety of frames and the ultra microfibre cloths are designed to be used with or without a spray cleaner. 2020as.com



3

CUMFYLIDS

The Cumfylids heated eye mask is designed specifically to help alleviate symptoms caused by Dry Eyes and Blepharitis. The inside cotton liner is made with infrared technology creating constant heat and distributing it evenly on and around the eyes to help unclog oil glands. cumfylids.com/products/heated-eye-mask



4

EYE WALL ART

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DR. CLARK TARDIFF, OD
Optometry Partner,
Specsavers Chinook Centre

Having grown up with a grandparent with a severe visual impairment, Dr. Clark Tardiff had an interest in the world of optometry from an early age. After carrying out his studies in Nova Scotia and Wales, he began his career working for Specsavers in England, before heading home to Canada to practice in Alberta.

During his career, he has taken several volunteer optometric trips to countries like Moldova and Fiji, where eye care isn't always as accessible. Seeing the difference in other countries made Dr. Tardiff realize how fortunate Canadians are to have access to quality healthcare. However, with 39% of Canadians without vision or health benefits, he is a firm believer that patients shouldn't have to have a hefty bank balance to receive quality eye care and eyewear.*



Dr. Tardiff and his team at Specsavers Chinook Centre in Calgary, AB

It was this belief that brought his career back to Specsavers, where he's now an Optometry Partner and independent clinic owner in Calgary, Alberta.

"Around the world, Specsavers has opened the door for many people who haven't traditionally had accessible, quality eye care and trendy eyewear. I've looked forward to Specsavers bringing their model to Canada," says Dr. Tardiff.

"When I heard that Specsavers was entering the Canadian market, I immediately knew that I was ready for the opportunity to become a clinic owner. And after speaking to several team members from the support office and discussing the partnership model with the company, I knew that it was a good fit for me and how I envisioned my career."

One of the challenges for optometrists starting their own clinic is the tasks that get in the way of providing patients with the best care possible. A partnership with Specsavers is designed to remove those barriers, providing comprehensive business support for areas like technology, marketing and accounting, and allowing optometrists to focus on running their clinic in the way they think is best.

Specsavers was founded with a vision to change lives through better sight, whether that's providing quality eye care, affordable eyewear, or improving eye health education. A recent study showed that 16% of Canadians were over age 31 when they had their first eye exam, with non-glasses wearers arguing that they put off getting an eye exam because of cost (29%), no eyesight issues or symptoms (28%) and inconvenience (10%).*

With this new partnership, Dr. Tardiff is keen to help change these stats for Canadians: "I would like to see more and more people coming in for routine eye exams. Educating the public on how many eye conditions do not always have symptoms but can be picked up during a routine eye exam is key to this. At my clinic, we include OCT scans as a standard part of the examination to see the back of the eye of our patients and support early detection of eye conditions," he explains.

"Specsavers' commitment to invest in advanced eyecare technology shows their dedication to patient care, which matters to me as an optometrist and a partner." **OP**

* Based on an online survey of 1544 Canadians completed between November 4-6, 2022, using Leger's online panel. No margin of error can be associated with a non-probability sample. (For comparative purposes, a probability sample of 1544 respondents would have a margin of error of $\pm 2.5\%$, 19 times out of 20). Specsavers Canadian Eye Exam Survey. Leger. November 2022.



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taken care of, owning
a business can be so
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Specsavers



The Power of WOMEN

Shaping the future of optometry

BY DR. HARRY BOHNSACK

President, Canadian Association of Optometrists

In March, we celebrate International Women's Day, recognizing the contributions and achievements of women in our communities and around the world. Women have long been drawn to the caring professions, but have faced barriers in accessing the profession of optometry. However, over the past couple of decades, we have seen a shift in this trend, with women now in the majority attending optometry schools, entering the profession, and becoming practising optometrists and practice owners.

I believe that my optometry year at Waterloo (class of '87) was the first to have equal numbers of men and women in the class. Today, every school is reporting more full-time female students than male students in class.

We see the same shift in our membership, with 60% of CAO members being women (as of December 31, 2021). The number of women in the workforce in optometry continues to rise, and more women are taking on leadership roles in provincial or national organizations. Women are also key voices in championing vision care and advocating for a national eye care strategy.

We see a new generation of women with exceptional clinical, entrepreneurial and leadership skills, reflected in their patient care. This has a positive effect on the advancement of our profession.

There is still work to be done to eliminate bias and gender gaps. Empowerment should matter to everyone, as it benefits us all. We can effect change by advocating for the advancement and recognition of women in optometry – when teaching at schools, interacting in our daily practice, doing research, or providing continuing education among colleagues. Shaping a more inclusive and equitable future in optometry will not only benefit our profession, it will also better reflect the community we serve.

Unfortunately, when it comes to our patients, the news is not as positive. According to a Leger survey conducted in 2022 on behalf of the Canadian Association of Optometrists and the Canadian Ophthalmological Society, we see a paradox in women's eye care. In Canada, women are more likely to report being concerned about their eye health compared with men, but they report

seeking out care within the past two years less than men. This is an important issue that deserves attention and greater awareness.

We see a new generation of women with exceptional clinical, entrepreneurial and leadership skills, reflected in their patient care.

A greater number of women live with vision loss and eye disease compared to men. Although women's greater life expectancy plays a role, more research is needed to understand why there is a difference.

During pregnancy, women experience a myriad of physical changes, but few know about how pregnancy can affect vision. The hormonal and physical changes experienced by

expectant mothers might include dry eye, blurred vision, or severe changes to vision. These may also be the first sign of a more serious condition like gestational diabetes.

For those who have diabetes, retinopathy often advances more quickly during pregnancy. Therefore, it is essential that we remind patients that regular, comprehensive eye exams are crucial for maintaining good eye health and catching any potential issues early on.

It can't be said often enough that many vision problems have no external signs, and many serious eye con-

ditions have no obvious symptoms.

So, as March includes both International Women's Day (March 8) and World Optometry Day (March 23), let's celebrate the achievements of women in the profession, and focus on providing our female patients with the excellent information and care that optometry is known for. **OP**

THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF OPTOMETRISTS (CAO) is the national voice of optometry, providing leadership and support to more than 5,400 members to enhance the delivery of healthy eyes and clear vision for all Canadians.



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The ABCs *from* YXE

How Saskatchewan's YXE Vision Group has grown through innovation, a drive to improve and a love for people

BY AMANPREET DHAMI

Created in 2019 and owned today by a team of four doctors – Aaron Walters, Warren Toews, Skylar Feltis and Laura Prestupa – Saskatoon-based YXE Vision Group is enjoying continued growth due to a commitment to the company's vision and core values.

Today, YXE has 14 doctors and a staff of 52 across six practices in the Saskatoon area, with a seventh opening in 2023. The current practices include Pinehouse Eyecare and Stonebridge Eyecare (opened in 2009), Warman Eyecare (2011), Broadway Eyecare (2019), Brighton Eyecare (2020) and InVision Eyecare (2022).

This spring, Northern Lights Eyecare in Prince Albert will join the fold.

We spoke with partners Dr. Warren Toews and Dr. Skylar Feltis about the vision group's journey as well as their successes, challenges and tips for other ECPs.

Focus on Patient Care

YXE's six practices all operate under the same umbrella group and run efficiently through a dedicated administrative office they call Mission Control.

This joint operation centre acts as the brains of the operation. It's the

main point of patient communication, through which all examinations are booked. Mission Control also houses each of the medical centre's files interlinking each of the YXE practices, allowing patients to book appointments with their doctor at the location most convenient for them.

In other words, sharing one patient database means that each patient's health history is easily accessible no matter which practice they visit.

“

“We make sure that whoever we partner with is aligned with the vision so there is less friction. When everyone has the same goals and passions, we can also have fun doing what we are doing.”

- DR. FELTIS

“We do everything from booking exams to recalls, inventory and supplies management,” says Dr. Toews in reference to the administrative office, which was created in 2019 with the intention of making it the centre of all patient communication, enabling the remaining medical practices to laser-focus on creating the best patient-doctor experience.

This same level of organizational innovation is seen in YXE's decision to partner exclusively with one general contractor to help manage all construction.

“It's basically a construction company within our group, [which] is responsible for all of the building and managing of our locations, making growth a lot easier,” explains Dr. Toews.



This streamlining of processes enables the YXE medical team to remain focused on providing services to patients while leaning on experts to take care of other aspects of the operation.

Know Who You Are

Organizational decisions such as these have been possible due to YXE's core values, which help everyone in the company truly understand their role as part of the vision group. The internal core values are:

WE ARE PEOPLE OBSESSED

In order to serve people with a good attitude, one has to be a person who loves people;

HUMBLE EXCELLENCE

No organization is perfect, but YXE works towards constant improvement with the people within it;

IMAGINIVITY

This word coined by the team drives everyone to continuously look for opportunities to do something new and unique.

"We came up with our core values over the course of the pandemic and shared them with our staff in different documents," says Dr. Feltis. "We make sure that whoever we partner with is aligned with the vision so there is less friction. When everyone has the same goals and passions, we can also have fun doing what we are doing."

The values serve as a litmus test for all major decisions made by upper management, and provide a guide to help employees to feel empowered when making autonomous decisions in their day-to-day duties.

"It's more than just a mantra you put on a wall; it's how we make small decisions as well as large decisions – everything from who we work with

to how we hire, and also how we deal with patient interaction," explains Dr. Toews.

When it comes to growth, both Toews and Feltis agree that there's no secret sauce. Rather, successful

growth comes down to the people in your organization and whether they have a growth-oriented mindset – in all aspects of life, not just business. **OP**

Dos and Don'ts

Doctors Toews and Feltis share advice and tips learned through YXE's challenges, growth and organizational successes.

Focus on Organizational Health

"As a doctor, your priority is always the patient in front of you, but as a business, you have to be aware of the health of your team," says Dr. Toews.

"If your team doesn't know that you have their best interests at heart and put them first, they are not able to properly turn and put the patients first. Being smart is important, but being healthy is critical because health is what is going to get you through the tough times of growth – and there will be tough times."

This same balance of health applies to you as a business owner, he adds: "Make sure your work is making the rest of your life better and not the other way around."

Gain Clarity on Your End Game

"Be crystal clear on your end game – what you're heading towards, your why for doing it, your reason for growth, and the values that are going to get you there," advises Dr. Toews.

Build a Cohesive Leadership Team

This is really important," says Dr. Toews. "It doesn't mean that you always have to agree, but you do need to be singing from the same song sheet. It's important to trust your co-leads and to have the ability to come together at the end of the day."

On the importance of focusing on long-term relationships and cultivat-

ing leadership with senior-level staff, Dr. Feltis adds: "If we have a squeaky wheel, we try not to give it too much grease." Your energy goes where your attention goes.

Communicate, Communicate

"You can never over-communicate [as a business owner]," explains Dr. Toews. "You also cannot show too much appreciation for your team. No one has ever left a company saying, 'They appreciate me too much.'"

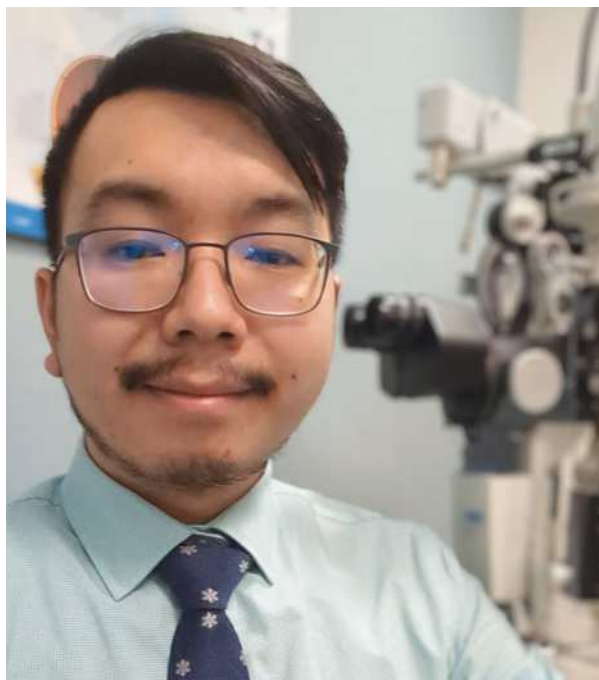
Stay Focused on Your Path

Don't worry too much about the industry around you and your competition. Instead, focus on your group and your strengths.

"There are always good opportunities for growth out there, but if you focus on what other people are doing, you will miss them," warns Dr. Toews. "There is a lot of negativity out there, but the industry is what you make it. You can go against the prevailing mindset and sometimes do really well."

Partner with the Like Minded

"Don't partner with people you don't like, simply because they are good at what they do or because they are really smart or ambitious," says Dr. Feltis. "If you don't like them or want to hang out with them, it's just going to cause more stress than anything else."



Helping Patients Regain Autonomy

BY NICK KREWEN

When it comes to eye care, Abraham Yuen has a single goal for his patients.

“The focus for me is getting you back to where you were before,” says Dr. Yuen, who owns a practice in Toronto’s financial district and also practices once a week at FYidocors in Markham, ON.

“I want to help people regain their autonomy. That’s where it’s the most rewarding for me, because if I can impact them to the point where I get them back to their normal lives – whether it’s reading a book or watching television – their quality of life is most gratifying.”

He specializes in the areas of low vision, specialty contacts and ocular surface disease, and recalls one par-

ticularly satisfying moment when he fitted a patient in his mid-50s – whose vision was so bad that he shouldn’t have been driving – with scleral lenses to combat keratoconus, a progressive degeneration of the cornea.

“The moment he tried on scleral lenses, he cried real tears of joy, and said to me, ‘I’ve never had vision so clear before.’ He was just so grateful to be able to see with a clarity that he hadn’t previously experienced.”

Dr. Yuen provides service in English, Cantonese and Mandarin, and is well-known for his humanitarianism: he has volunteered for such initiatives as the annual Homeless Connect event at Toronto’s Maple Leaf Gardens to provide eye care and glasses to the vulnerable. In fact, he chose his career after noticing a lack of eye care services in parts of East Asia while travelling on humanitarian aid missions.

“It was really just seeing how people around the world don’t have access to eye care,” he says. “I’d go to Asia and [eye care] would be alien to people who don’t have access to the system. Going to remote areas where there’s no access to water, electricity or general medical care opened my eyes to the fact that there’s a pandemic of myopia.

“In those areas, people are struggling to see, but they don’t have the proper access to eye care, glasses and optometrists. It definitely inspired me to pursue this professionally.”

A Doctor of Optometry and Dean’s Honours graduate of the University of Waterloo, Dr. Yuen founded the Low Vision Interest Group at the university, and has also served as vice president of the Canadian Association of Optometry Students.

In 2020 when he was an associate, he founded the Canadian New Optometrists website (newods.ca) at the time when pandemic restrictions were rampant. What started as a group of 30 has now built a membership of 1,000-plus across Canada.

“I felt there needed to be a platform where new grads could connect and help each other during a time of uncertainty,” he explains. “It’s a great way for us to exchange clinical tips and learn from each other. Once you graduate from school, you don’t have a supervisor looking over your shoulder. This way we can navigate the changes in our profession together.”

When he’s not busy, Dr. Yuen likes to spend his time exploring nature trails. “Hiking is very therapeutic,” he says. “It gives me time to think and reflect, enjoy nature, and escape from the city.” **OP**

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EVENTS WITH WINGS

Thinking outside the box to get exposure for your business

BY NANCY DEWALD



The theme for this month's issue of *Optical Prism* encompasses thinking outside the box, but most can agree that our business is complicated, so if we can even keep up with the stuff inside the box, we are happy. But there are ways to think – and act – outside the box while also having fun and engaging your employees, customers and community.

In the ongoing task of increasing exposure for your business, most have embraced online and social media, and these are certainly important. But we can do better. One way is to pick up on the increased popularity of community and/or charitable events that combine shopping local, small business and philanthropy. This concept itself is

not new, but accomplishing the objectives for a return on investment of your efforts involves some outside-the-box thinking.

With the permission of Dr. Michael Kreuzer at Glasses Half Full, here is a well-executed example of this concept.

Glasses Half Full (GHF) is in a trendy arts district of Edmonton that hosts an annual 'light up the street' event called the All is Bright Festival. During this event, many of the retailers run exclusive offers and are open for business.

GHF partnered with Dogs with Wings Assistance Dog Society – an organization that raises and trains service animals – to plan an in-office event as part of the All is Bright Festival. Both

GHF and Dogs with Wings promoted the event prior to the date, and did a photoshoot with the dogs in the GHF office to add visuals and context to the event. Anyone following the charity is now aware of Glasses Half Full, and anyone following GHF is now aware of Dogs with Wings.

The night of the event, everyone was invited into Glasses Half Full to meet the dogs, get a picture, and purchase items such as hot chocolate, homemade dog treats and dog bandanas to support the charity. (No eyewear was for sale that night.) Signage was placed out front to make those attending the All is Bright Festival aware of the event at GHF. As people waited in line to meet the dogs, I heard comments such as:

“I REALLY FEEL THAT A MAGICAL ELEMENT TO A SUCCESSFUL CHARITY EVENT IS CHOOSING A CHARITY THAT’S AROUND THE SAME SCALE AS YOUR BUSINESS.”

- “I did not know this optical shop was here.”
- “This is a cool place.”
- “I love those frames.”

The last critical step was a card given to all attendees with an offer – if they came in for an eye exam in the next couple of months, GHF would donate \$25 from the fee to Dogs with Wings.

GHF has run this event every year since 2018 (except during COVID lockdowns), and Dr. Kreuzer says each one has attracted about 500 people. The event always achieves the objective of increasing exposure and growing the business.

GUIDELINES FOR A SUCCESSFUL EVENT:

1. Look for community or charitable opportunities that align with your business personality:

- ✓ Be selective – Ensure that it is something you and your team genuinely care about.
- ✓ Ensure that it aligns with your values.
- ✓ Ensure the group or event has good press/reputation.
- ✓ Ensure that the group and its team are motivated.

2. Look for an opportunity to mutually benefit:

- ✓ In addition to supporting the community or group, we also want to ensure that our business gets exposure. Make this clear to the group up-front.

- ✓ Does the group have a target audience that would be interested in your services?
- ✓ Does the group have a good online presence and following?

3. Be creative and spread the word:

- ✓ Both parties need to advertise and promote the event.
- ✓ Think of ways to get people onsite or bounce back coupons to have them visit later.

4. Set a goal, devise a plan, execute and debrief:

- ✓ Agree on action steps, owners and timelines.
- ✓ Always debrief the event so you can identify what you will repeat and what you will not do going forward.

DR. KREUZER'S ADVICE:

“I really feel that a magical element to a successful charity event is choosing a charity that’s around the same scale as your business. I have found over the years that when I try to engage with major national or international charity organizations, I lack the scale

and therefore the ‘oomph’ for them to mutually participate in an event at the same level that we try to.

“The things I look for in a charity are its size, its overall business model, and most importantly, the eagerness of the charity contacts to work and communicate with you during the charity events. And it’s always the events that are co-promoted that are the most successful.”

Another magical thing I observed the night of Dr. Kreuzer’s event: the staff was bursting with pride knowing they work for an organization that genuinely cares, and that they are making a difference – #employeeengagement, #employee loyalty, #funtimes.

This does require some extra effort, but I think we can agree that this is certainly offset by the return on investment. **OP**

Nancy Dewald is a business development professional, workshop facilitator and optical industry veteran. She is CEO and founder of Lead Up Training and Consulting, which specializes in identifying business gaps, implementing solutions and developing leaders. To find out more, visit: leaduptrainingandconsulting.com or email: leadupforsuccess@outlook.com



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HOW TO HANDLE NEGATIVE REVIEWS

BY JESSICA COAD,
Marketing4ECPs



Nobody likes a negative review.

In an ideal world, your practice receives five-star reviews every day, and every patient you see is thrilled with your service. But as with any business that deals with people, the reality is that not every experience can be a positive one.

How you respond to negative reviews can make all the difference to how your patients perceive your practice, and could even turn bad experiences into great ones.

SHOULD I RESPOND TO NEGATIVE REVIEWS?

Yes! You should respond to negative reviews whenever one comes up. By responding to negative reviews in the right way, you can show your patients that you care, you listen, and you're willing to do what it takes to make a bad situation right.

When replying to negative reviews, always:

- ☐ Answer quickly, thoughtfully and honestly;
- ☐ Be kind & professional (don't get personal);
- ☐ Make sure your response is custom (no auto-responders);
- ☐ Be appreciative;
- ☐ Take an extra step;
- ☐ Show that you've heard them & made the necessary change.

Let's dig into this a bit more.

DOS & DON'TS OF REVIEW RESPONSES

When a negative review comes in, don't respond until you can write calmly.

If you're like most people, receiving

criticism may put you on the defensive at first. This is normal, but it shouldn't fuel your reply. You don't want your response to be emotional, because it could translate poorly online.

First, carefully consider the nature of the complaint. Ask yourself, "Does this person have a valid point?" And be honest with yourself. Mistakes happen, and if you did something wrong, all you can do is your best to make amends. Apologize, and if appropriate, offer some compensation.

On the other hand, if you think the patient or customer doesn't have a valid point, respond in a calm and polite manner. Apologize for their poor experience, and if you feel inclined, ask them to reach out directly to look at the issue further. Oftentimes, people who write negative reviews just want to be heard. Giving them space to vent, even if they're out of line, may be all you need to turn their bad experience into a good one.

Now, if the issue in the review is complex, you should deal with it privately. Respond to the review politely, but keep it short. If you have their contact information, reach out to them offline. Or give the reviewer a way to contact you directly so you can help them with their issue and take the conversation offline.

Finally, if you believe you've received a fake review, report it right away. In this situation, you can politely reply to the review and explain that you don't know what interaction or situation they're referring to, but that you would be happy to address it with them further offline.

When dealing with negative reviews, never:

- ☐ **Ignore them** – Disregarding reviews, especially negative ones,

could suggest to potential & current patients that you don't care.

- ❑ **Get angry or defensive** – Even if you're in the right, you could come across as unprofessional and deter future patients from booking with you.
- ❑ **Deny them** – Perception is truth, so even if a review is completely out of line, denying it won't do any good for your practice.

HOW TO ATTRACT POSITIVE REVIEWS

We know reviews are out of your control to a certain extent, but there are things you can do to encourage positive reviews.

The most important way to attract positive reviews is to provide outstanding customer service. When your patients have a great experience, they'll want to share it with

others. By going above and beyond for your patients, you can increase your chances of receiving an organic, positive review.

But don't stop there. Listen to your patients, too. Any feedback from patients is valuable feedback: positive, negative or neutral. If you're seeing feedback on the same thing over and over, it's something to be addressed.

You can also encourage patients to leave feedback. You can ask patients in-store or online to leave a review following their visit to your practice. However, it's important to make sure you aren't violating the terms and conditions of any sites, such as Yelp. You can post signs or stickers with information or a QR code to leave a review, or share this information through your social media channels.

But you should never directly request a positive review or offer an incentive in exchange for a positive review.

MOST OF ALL, DON'T PANIC

You can't control the actions or reactions of your patients. You can only control your actions and reactions.

If a negative review comes in, don't panic. Yes, other patients might see it, but they can also see how you respond to criticism. If you follow the tips above, you'll set yourself – and your practice – up for success in the long run.

Approach all reviews with kindness and empathy, and you'll come out on top. Every time. **OP**

Jessica Coad is a copywriter for Marketing4ECPs. She writes unique and compelling content for eye care practices across North America. Find out more at marketing4ecps.com

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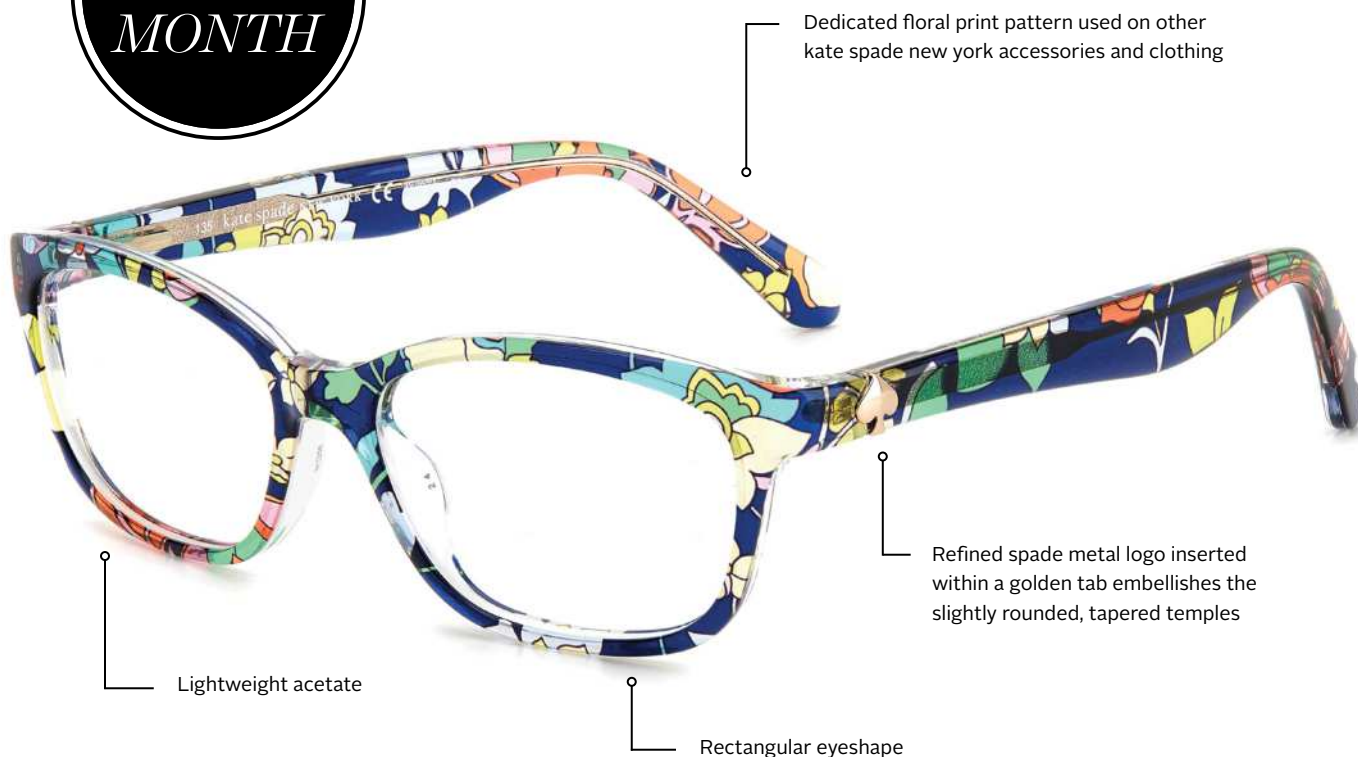


Optimistic FEMININITY

BY JANET LEES

The kate spade new york Spring/Summer 2023 collection exudes lightness and joy through beautiful crystal colourways accented with rich jewel tones. Styles like the Brylie (pictured) feature fun shapes, pops of floral, and stripe accents.

*STYLE
OF THE
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