

CORPORATE

PentaVision

# Optometry TODAY!

JULY  
2019

BEST PRACTICES FOR TODAY'S  
CORPORATE EYECARE PROFESSIONAL

## THE FUTURE IS FEMALE.

The #s confirm the  
**rise of women in  
optometry** + 4 O.D.s  
share SMART  
ideas about  
the corporate  
choice.

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New Grad? Think  
About Employer  
Branding + Rep

— + —

6 Qs with National  
Vision's VP of O.D.  
Development

— + —

How to Kick Plastic  
One Demo Lens  
at a Time





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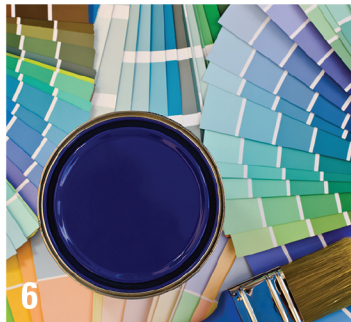
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# The Women's Movement.

I was fortunate enough to spend some time chatting with Howard Purcell, O.D., the new president and CEO of New England College of Optometry (NECO), at The Vision Council Summit Series Optical Innovation Summit in Boulder, CO, recently. One of the biggest takeaways from our discussion—there is a tsunami wave of female optometrists poised to enter the workforce.

At NECO, Dr. Purcell noted that the student population is hovering at about 80% female optometry students (and 20% male). That is a huge sea change from just a few decades ago when these percentages were just about flipped.

**“I joined corporate optometry because my husband was active-duty Navy, and moving every three years is not conducive to owning a private practice.”**

—Melanie Ruoff, O.D., *America's Best in St. Louis*, tells us in this issue's **The Future is Female** feature

According to the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO), nearly 70% of the students enrolled last year as full-time optometry students in the U.S. were women. ASCO numbers also show that female optometry students have outnumbered male students throughout the last decade.

In this issue of *Corporate Optometry Today!* we dig even deeper into this key topic in our **The Future**



**is Female** cover feature (page 10) with must-read insights from 4 female O.D.s. Written by *COT!*'s contributing editor, Maria Sampalis, O.D., the article reveals why corporate optometry can be an excellent choice for women in optometry. Flexibility.

Trust. Balance. Perks. All key considerations that make corporate optometry attractive.

There's also much more in this content-packed issue of *COT!*, so keep on turning the pages. On page 14, check out our exclusive interview with Alex Smith, O.D., National Vision's VP of professional service, O.D. development, who answers *COT!*'s **6 big questions**—revealing how his company supports the optometrist network. Our **New Grad** column, on page 8, reveals why it's critical to think about employer branding and reputation before taking the first opportunity laid out before you.

Want more? **Check out our Facebook page: @CorporateOptometryToday!** We hope you enjoy the issue!

**Erinn Morgan**

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



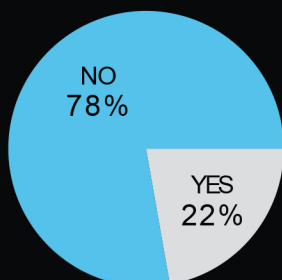
In this issue of *COT!*, we connect with 4 women O.D.s to learn why corporate optometry is an excellent fit for the influx of female optometrists coming into the workforce.



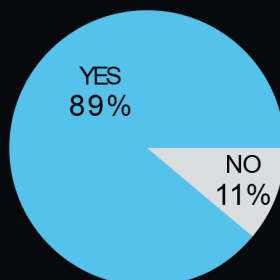


# A RECENT STUDY OF 265 LARGE RETAILER PATIENTS SHOWS:

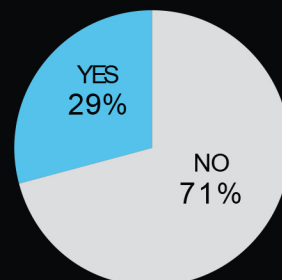
Do you like the "Puff Test"?



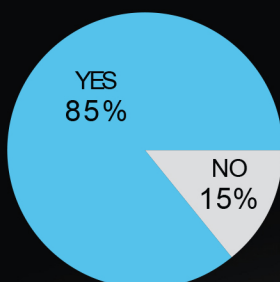
Is the new test more comfortable than the "Puff Test"?



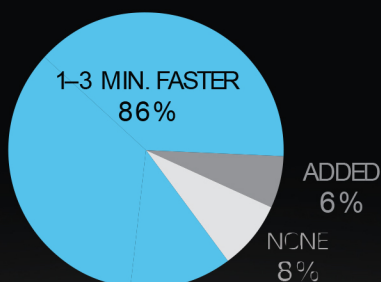
Would you visit the eye doctor sooner if you did not have the "Puff Test"?



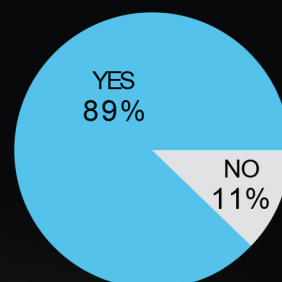
Would you return/recommend this retailer to your friends or family because of the new "NO PUFF" test?



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# TREND TRACKER

COT! PINPOINTS THE KEY TRENDS OF INTEREST FOR CORPORATE OPTOMETRISTS



## Keep Calm and....

**Paint your space navy blue?** According to a recent study conducted by British paper company G.F Smith and the University of Sussex, navy blue is the world's most relaxing color.

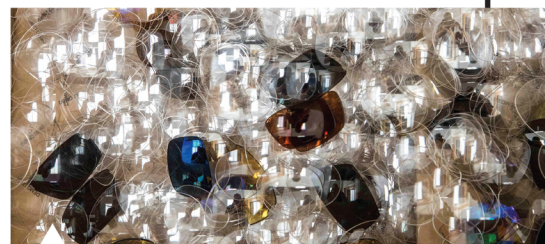
The finding follows the study's main undertaking, called The World's Favourite Colour project—which concluded in 2017 that the most beloved hue is a bright teal, named Marrs Green. So, if you're looking to relax your customers or co-workers (or, hey, yourself), keep calm and navy blue.

—*Kerri Ann Raimo*

## Are You Retail Ready?

In a highly competitive landscape, every advantage counts. Here, we serve up **five key strategies for retail success** from The Robin Report based on trends heading into 2020. —*K.A.R.*

- 1. Preemptive Distribution:** Retailers must preemptively pinpoint when, where, and how consumers want their products in order to beat the competition.
- 2. Mobile Proliferation:** Defining a mobile strategy is key, as mobile commerce is expected to increase 30% in 2019.
- 3. Price and Product Personalization:** Utilizing analytics on past shopping behaviors gives retailers the upper hand in understanding their consumers' wants.
- 4. Retailer Collaborations With Technology Companies:** To successfully execute a beneficial technology strategy, fuse modern tech capabilities into the retail landscape by partnering with companies that offer innovative tools.
- 5. Associate Empowerment & Virtual Assistance:** It may seem like common sense but, to succeed, retailers must have a better understanding of their products and services than their shoppers do.



## Recycle Those Lenses

Costa has started a program to keep the estimated 120 million plastic demo lenses (and redos) from entering our waste stream each year.

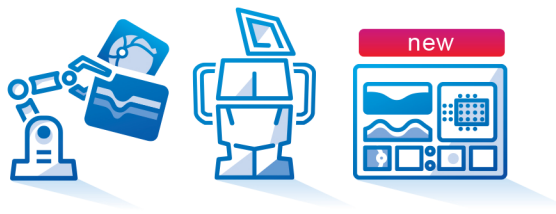
The **Kick Plastic Lens Recycling Program** makes it easy for ECPs and labs to collect, recycle, and repurpose plastic lenses (optical and sun).

Program partner Piedmont Plastics repurposes the lenses into scuba masks, safety glasses, and motorcycle helmet shields.

Corporate practices interested in participating need only contact Costa for a free collection container. Selling Costa is not a requirement; but Costa customers enrolled in the program do get a special designation on Costa's dealer locator site. Info: [lensrecycle@costadelmar.com](mailto:lensrecycle@costadelmar.com). —*Susan Tarrant*



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# 4 Career Considerations

Solid advice about making those important first career moves

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**AS GRADUATION APPROACHES**, it can be easy for new graduates to be attracted to the highest-paid opportunity that's laid out before them. But, it's important to take the time to make sure your first steps will lead you where you want to go.

Think beyond the salary, location, or schedule to consider how your affiliation with various corporate opticals can help your career path. Think long term.

Here, four critical considerations:

## #1

### **EMPLOYER BRANDING.**

Corporate O.D.s need to understand that the companies they work with can make a lasting impression on their career. The way the corporate optical portrays itself to the optical community will reflect upon you, as well.

Understand what your future employer stands for and how patients view it in the community. You will be a reflection of its brand and vice versa.

## #2

### **NAME RECOGNITION.**

Being a new graduate, corporate optometry can provide you with name recognition throughout the country, which can be a great

way to jump-start your career.

The employer name and brand can provide a strong foundation for networking with other companies and making your next career move. It may also have a strong brand presence in the community that can help you grow your own personal brand.



“Think beyond salary, location, or schedule to consider how your affiliation with various corporate opticals can help your career path.”

## #3

### **REPUTATION.**

A company's reputation by association is important to evaluate. Take a look at the online opinions about the optical that you want to work with. Evaluate the longevity and turnover rates of the associates and optometrists who work within the brand. Does it have a good reputation as an eyecare provider *and* as an employer?







## #4

### **GROWTH OPPORTUNITY.**

Many corporate opticals use technology that can help you grow clinically *and* expand your business experience. The more experience you have, the more value that you can provide to that company and other potential employers.

Corporate optometry can provide an opportunity to see a lot of patients and various cases at the very beginning of your career, and can help

you sharpen your clinical, communication, and business skills.

Linking yourself with corporate opticals that have a positive image can boost your personal name as an O.D. Being an affiliated corporate optometrist can be prestigious and have more value than one might imagine.

It is up to you as the O.D. to see—and capitalize on—this potential. **COT!** —*Maria Sampalis, O.D.*



# THE FUTURE IS FEMALE.

BY MARIA SAMPALIS, O.D.



**The rise of women in corporate optometry is undeniable. Here, 4 women O.D.s share why corporate optometry is a perfect fit.**



**T**hough there are still more male optometrists practicing today in the U.S. than female O.D.s, things are about to change.

According to the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO), nearly 70% of the students enrolled last year as full-time optometry students in the U.S. were women. ASCO numbers also show that female optometry students have outnumbered male students throughout the last decade.

As they graduate, female optometrists will be faced with the same career choices as their male colleagues. One of those choices: whether to enter corporate optometry. And, the reasons why corporate optometry is an attractive choice—for women, particularly—are varied. →





“I can focus on eye care **without the high pressure** of eyewear and contact lens sales.

I like to spend an adequate amount of time with each patient.”

— MARCIE LERNER, O.D.,  
FOR EYES







“I joined corporate optometry because my husband was active-duty Navy, and moving every three years is not conducive to owning a private practice.”

— MELANIE RUOFF, O.D., AMERICA'S BEST



Partnering with a corporate optical allows O.D.s to be successful without the financial outlay of opening cold or buying a practice. Or, owning a clinic adjacent to a corporate optical is a way to practice without the extensive work, product maintenance, and staffing responsibilities that go into running a full practice. For some women, other benefits such as flexibility, mobility, and life-work balance carry equal importance.

Here, we check in with four female optometrists on why they chose to work in corporate optometry—and how it became a perfect fit for them and their lifestyle.

## BECAUSE I WANT FLEXIBILITY.

**MELANIE RUOFF, O.D.**

America's Best, St. Louis, MO



### Why Corporate Optometry Works for Me.

“I joined corporate optometry because my husband was active-duty Navy, and moving every three years is not conducive to owning a private practice.”

Corporate optometry, often with locations throughout



the country, does offer the flexibility to work in different locations and move around as needed. Many young O.D.s like to be able to relocate easily and travel to other opportunities for themselves or their partner. Corporate optometry provides that flexibility to move within the company across the country and not have to worry about getting another job and starting over.

## BECAUSE I VALUE A RESPECTED NAME.



**MARCIE LERNER, O.D.**

Subleases at For Eyes, Bethesda, MD

### ♦ Why Corporate Optometry Works for Me.

“I like working in partnership with For Eyes because I can focus on eye care without the high pressure of eyewear and contact lens sales. I like to spend an adequate amount of time with each patient. I have seen patients for over 20 years in Bethesda. Ten of those years were with For Eyes, a corporate name with a more community and personal vibe.”

Many O.D.s, like Dr. Lerner, enjoy simply doing what they do best and what they went to school for—taking care of patients. Employment in corporate optometry allows not only the flexibility to transfer from one state to another within the company, it also allows O.D.s to focus only on their exam rooms.

Corporate opticals also come with instant name recognition and, often, a longtime membership in the community.

## BECAUSE I WANT A BALANCE.



**REBECCA LOERZEL, O.D.**

Walmart, independent contractor  
Maple Grove, MN

### ♦ Why Corporate Optometry Works for Me.

“I have zero interest in running an optical and managing employees, so I never wanted my own private practice. I found an opportunity working for another Walmart O.D. after I graduated, took over another store a couple years later, and have never looked for another job since.”

Learning to run an optometric business and expanding

one’s clinical skills is a great reason why many young female O.D.s choose corporate optometry as a career path (or at least a career starter). It offers optometrists the ability to focus on eye care and build a patient base, while at the same time providing the space they want to grow at a personal level and have a family.

## BECAUSE LIFE MOVES FAST.



**WYNTER RICE, O.D.**

Associate at Walmart, Kansas City, MO

### ♦ Why Corporate Optometry Works for Me.

“My first job out of school was corporate. It’s nice to just show up and do exams, and I don’t have to worry about the staff. Benefits like paid time off and a 401(k) match are all perks as well. In the future, I will keep my options open as I plan to expand my family one day.”

Many corporate opticals will provide health benefits at 30 hours a week or four days a week. Some corporate opticals will allow an employed O.D. to convert to sublease after the location has been built up. This allows O.D.s to “have it all” when raising a family and then switching to a sublease situation as family financial obligations change over the years.

Upon graduating from optometry school, many young women will find that corporate optometry aligns with their desires to practice optometry in a way that is flexible and convenient, balances what they want in life with employment or a sublease situation, and allows them to adjust their focus as they get older and their life or career desires change.

Corporate optometry often presents a unique opportunity to feel like you have your own business—without the additional hassles of running your own business. It allows O.D.s to focus on the things that O.D.s want to focus on—and that is patient care. **COT!**

**MARIA SAMPALIS, O.D.,**

is the founder of the Corporate Optometry group on Facebook and corporateoptometry.com. Currently, she is owner of Sampalis Eye Care in Cranston, RI, and has a sublease at For Eyes by Grand Vision in Rhode Island.



### MORE ONLINE

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





“As an O.D. myself, I understand what it’s like to be in our corporate O.D.s’ shoes. I try to use that clinical perspective each day to advocate on their behalf.”

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THE  
INSIDE LINE...  
WITH

# Alexander Smith, O.D.

*COT!* checks in with National Vision's vice president of professional service, O.D. development, on supporting the optometrist network BY STEPHANIE K. DE LONG

**A**s one of the country's largest optical retailers, National Vision has more than 1,100 U.S. locations, and its retail brands are America's Best Contacts & Eyeglasses, Eyeglass World, Vista Optical inside select Fred Meyers and on select military bases, and Vision Centers inside select Walmarts.

Alexander Smith, O.D., vice president of professional service, O.D. development, explains that his primary function "is to support and advocate on behalf of the doctors that are part of or affiliated with National Vision's Doctor of Optometry Network."

"As an O.D. myself," adds Dr. Smith, "I understand what it's like to be in our corporate O.D.s' shoes. I try to use that clinical perspective each day to advocate on their behalf, ensuring they have what they need to take care of the patients that need them so much."

## THE GENES

**Q: What drew you to optometry?**

**A.** "Optometry is in my blood; my father is an optometrist. In fact, he was one of the very first advocates of corporate optometry. I grew up hearing stories about corporate optometry around the dinner table, which helped

me recognize and understand that there is such an incredible need for affordable, accessible eye care. I'm proud to work for an organization that focuses on providing eye care to those most in need."

## THE STEP

**Q. What attracted you to National Vision?**

**A.** "Its culture is focused on patients and doctors. It supports flexibility in working in a variety of practice modalities, from employment to lease opportunities, depending on the level of business involvement an optometrist is looking for. Additionally, National Vision's Doctor of Optometry Network provides doctors the ability to focus on patients while maintaining a flexible schedule and balance with their other life priorities."

## THE PATIENT

**Q. Describe National Vision's patient base.**

**A.** "We focus on the underserved. Doctors in our network are often the only healthcare provider these patients see. The amount and types of pathology seen varies every day, allowing doctors to stretch their clinical skills. And as a company, we are giving back through various philanthropic partnerships."

## THE CAREER

**Q. How do you retain doctors?**

**A.** "We offer sophisticated onboarding and training opportunities, as well as consistent support and mentorship throughout their time practicing in our locations. We believe our network has one of the best retention rates in the industry."

## THE OPPORTUNITY

**Q. Describe an O.D.'s practice at National Vision.**

**A.** "Optometrists in our network practice full-scope optometry and are able to practice to their own comfort level. O.D.s in our network are often handling acute ocular diseases and identifying life-threatening conditions that may not otherwise have been diagnosed. Doctors practicing in our locations are literally saving lives."

## THE FUTURE

**Q. What's ahead for the profession?**

**A.** "The future is bright, as long as we align together toward a common goal of taking care of patients. There are so many patients that need to be seen, and I truly believe there is room for all types of practitioners and practices." **COT!**

GETTING INVOLVED

# Amy Boyer, O.D.



Amy Boyer, O.D.

Amy Boyer, O.D., is an independent optometrist with Walmart and has been a leaseholder at the Reynoldsburg, OH, location for over 10 years. “I have always been in corporate optometry,” says Dr. Boyer, “since graduating from the New England College of Optometry.”

► Learn more about Dr. Boyer at [energeyesassociation.org](http://energeyesassociation.org)

**1 FAMILY.**  
“When my kids were small, I enjoyed the flexibility multiple corporate venues had to offer! **I think all eye doc moms are actually SuperMoms** with invisible capes.”

**2 STAFF.**  
“Ohio is a one-door, licensed state, so I work with a dedicated, knowledgeable optical staff. We always accommodate walk-ins, same-day services, and take time to educate.”

**3 ADVOCACY.**  
“I am on the Energeyes (American Association of Corporate Optometrists) Board and Walmart’s Optometric Advisory Board. Walmart is deeply invested in both its optometrists and vision advocacy. I tell everyone, ‘Get involved!’”

**4 YOUTH.**  
“For high school and college kids choosing a career path, I ask, ‘What about optometry?’ I encourage them to come shadow me for a day and show them the ways we improve lives with better vision.” **COT!**

—Stephanie K. De Long





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It all starts at [VisionSourceNEXT.com](http://VisionSourceNEXT.com)

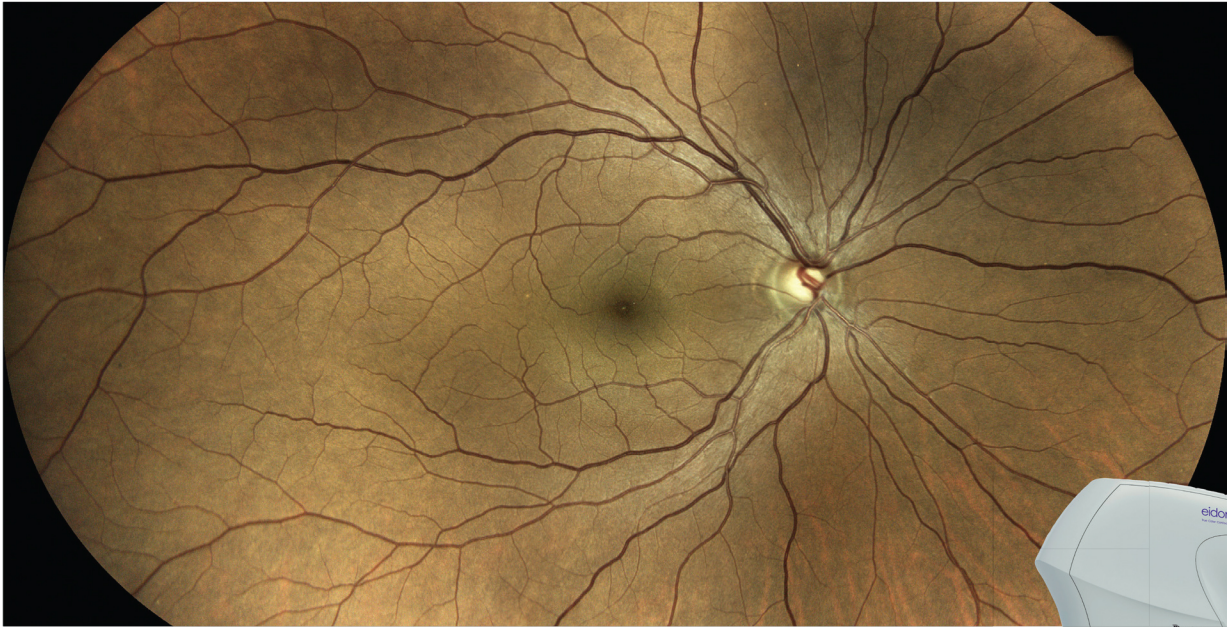


\* 5.7% weighted average Vision Source member practice growth for 2017 vs Industry growth of 0.5% per Vision Watch's vision care



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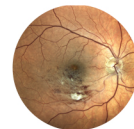
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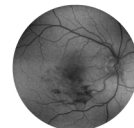
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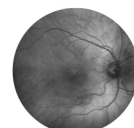
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