Practice Building Techniques
Multiple Pairs – The How, Why and the Benefits

Summary of a Webinar Presented by Review of Optometric Business and Sponsored by CareCredit

INTRODUCTION

With the high level of affluence in many communities, it’s surprising how few American adults use more than a single pair of eyeglasses. Most people experience many visual environments during a day and perform different tasks requiring different levels of near, intermediate and far acuity. Most people would benefit from owning multiple pairs of glasses designed for their most frequently encountered vision requirements.

In many product categories – including apparel, cookware, tools, jewelry, and TV sets among others – consumers own and use many different products in a category, each with a specialized function. People today can afford products they use only occasionally. Perhaps the best example of this is footwear.

The average adult woman owns 19 pairs of shoes, purchasing four new pairs every year, a Consumer Reports survey shows. Many women own 40 or more pairs. Women have a different pair for each outfit they own and for different occasions such as around the house, at work, for an evening out, for formal occasions, for exercise, for shopping and so on. The average American household spends more than $300 a year on footwear, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Expenditure Survey, 2011.

In today’s affluent America, ownership of multiple TV sets is common. Two-thirds of U.S. households own and use three or more TV sets, says A. C. Nielsen. Many households have several cars, each used for different needs. In the kitchen, people have many types of spoons and knives and scissors, each adapted for a particular task.

For many reasons, eyewear consumers have not yet discovered the benefits of owning more than one pair of glasses, each tailored to a specific vision environment or task. The VisionWatch survey of American consumers by the Vision Council reveals that only one-third of adult eyeglass wearers use more than a single pair. Among young adults under 35 years of age, just 27 percent use more than one pair. These ratios have changed little in recent years.

| Number of Pairs of Eyeglasses Regularly Used by Age |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
|                   | Total             | 18-34             | 35-44             | 45-54             | 55+ |
| One               | 65%               | 73%               | 68%               | 63%               | 60% |
| Two               | 29%               | 24%               | 27%               | 30%               | 32% |
| Three             | 5%                | 3%                | 4%                | 5%                | 6%  |
| Four or more      | 2%                | 1%                | 1%                | 2%                | 2%  |
| Total             | 100%              | 100%              | 100%              | 100%              | 100%|

Source: VisionWatch, year ending June 2012

ABOUT CareCredit

One way to help your patients get the products you recommend is to offer a variety of payment options. CareCredit, a part of GE Capital, is a healthcare credit card that offers special financing through 160,000 enrolled healthcare providers nationwide.

With special financing, patients can get the care and optical products they need and want including contact lenses, multiple pairs of eyeglasses, sunwear, premium frames, lens treatments, eye exams and more*. By offering CareCredit, you can help increase sell-through and provide your patients with flexible financing options to fit their budget.

Not only can CareCredit help you increase patient loyalty, it can help you attract new patients. CareCredit sends a total of 30 million marketing messages to over 7 million cardholders, and enrolled practices receive a free listing on CareCredit’s online provider locator which receives up to 560,000 searches each month by patients looking for practices that offer CareCredit.

To get started with CareCredit today, call 866.853.8432 or visit carecredit.com/optometry.

*Subject to credit approval and availability
There are nearly 153 million eyeglass wearers in the U.S. who spent nearly $19 billion last year for eyewear, says VisionWatch. That translates to a $123 annual expenditure per wearer. The average eyewear sale is higher—about $227—because wearers purchase glasses only every other year.

Compare the annual amount people spend on eyeglasses to the hundreds of dollars people spend on shoes per year. It follows that if people can afford to own dozens of pairs of shoes, they can afford more than a single pair of glasses. The truth is most patients have the money to buy multiple pairs of eyewear, but the benefits of ownership have not been communicated by ECPs.

**THE OPPORTUNITY**

A survey conducted by the Management & Business Academy among independent optometrists shows that typically just 10 percent of eyewear transactions include purchase of two or more pairs; 90 percent are single pair purchases. This ratio varies widely among practices—many practices sell second pairs to one-in-20 patients or less, others have far greater success. Among the 20 percent of practices which are most effective at selling second pairs, the multiple pair sales ratio reaches one-in-four patients, or 25 percent. That is within the capability of any practice which structures its eyewear presentation process to encourage multiple pair sales.

Achieving a 25 percent multiple pair sales ratio produces a large revenue gain. A practice performing 2,000 exams annually, which is near the national median, typically has gross annual revenue of about $600,000. A practice of this size, with a 10 percent multiple pair sales ratio, typically sells 1,220 pairs of prescription eyewear per year, generating $276,940 in revenue. When the multiple pair sales ratio increases to 25 percent, the revenue gain exceeds $40,000, assuming the second pairs are not discounted. That’s equivalent to a 7 percent total practice revenue increase and a 15 percent increase in eyewear revenue.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Median practice performing 2,000 exams annually with 10 percent multiple pair buyers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$600,000 gross revenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,220 eyewear pairs sold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$276,940 eyewear revenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice performing 2,000 exams annually with 25 percent multiple pair buyers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$641,428 gross revenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,403 eyewear pairs sold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$318,368 eyewear revenue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Revenue gain = $41,428

Source: Management & Business Academy

**OBSTACLES TO SECOND PAIR SALES**

There are several obstacles to selling second pairs to patients, all of which can be overcome.

- **Inadequate needs profiling**
  Effective presentation of second pairs must start with a thorough understanding of the daily visual environments and tasks that patients face. It’s a waste of time to present solutions that do not relate to problems or needs people actually encounter. In many offices there is no systematically replicated process to uncover patient requirements. In these offices, staff members lack a standard set of probes to quickly identify unmet needs and there is often no defined process during the office visit to convey what is learned about patient needs to the doctor or optician.

- **Insurance allowance limits**
  Vision insurance usually doesn’t cover second pairs. That’s a show stopper for many opticians, who assume that patients will want to limit their outlay to what’s covered. So, if a patient has insurance, purchasing a second pair never comes up.

- **Stereotyping**
  Staff often stereotype a patients’ ability to afford eyewear, perhaps projecting a staff member’s own limited budget situation onto patients. As a result staff members assume a patient can postpone buying a second pair of glasses because it’s a non-essential luxury.

- **Inadequate patient education**
  Another obstacle is that patients don’t know the options available to improve their vision and wearing comfort in different situations and will never ask about what they don’t know. Unless the doctor and staff explain what’s possible, patients will continue to tolerate the visual compromises inherent in a single pair of glasses used throughout the day in many different vision situations.

- **Patient budgets**
  Many patients will resist any discussion about second pairs, because they worry about what the first pair will cost. Many people are on a tight budget and want to keep their current month spending within a certain limit. Many patients don’t know about financing options that spread payment for eyewear over several months, like that offered by CareCredit.

**BEST PRACTICES TO PRESENT SECOND PAIRS**

Effective multiple-pair presentation begins by creating a mindset among the optical staff that patients benefit from having different pairs of glasses for the different visual
environments and the different vision tasks they encounter at work or during leisure. When staff consistently convey this idea to patients, an expectation is created that having more than one pair is normal and beneficial.

Eyecare practices that do well with multiple-pair sales create a mindset among patients that second pairs are valuable and necessary. They make a habit of always referring to special use lenses as computer glasses, TV glasses, golfing glasses, tennis glasses, driving glasses, safety glasses and other combinations of special use descriptor and the word “glasses.” This gives added credibility to the device and makes its specialized design and use clear.

The mandatory first requirement to increase second pair sales is to gain an understanding of the circumstances of eyewear use of each patient. People engage in a great variety of workday and leisure pursuits and it’s impossible to guess what would best suit any individual. The needs profiling process does not need to be time consuming – just five questions will usually suffice.

1. **Daily work environment**
   Most people select their primary pair of glasses based on their occupation – where and how they spend the normal workday. A simple probe such as: “Tell me about where you work and what activities you engage in during normal workdays” will reveal a patient’s visual environment and tasks.

2. **Daily hours of computer use**
   Since computers have become universal in the workplace and in homes, the visual tasks people engage in have changed. Many people stare at a computer screen for hours a day and experience eye strain because their eyewear isn’t designed for maximum comfort and acuity in front of the computer. Asking patients how many hours a day they spend looking at a computer screen will identify the candidates for computer eyewear.

3. **Outdoor and driving activity**
   Many people spend a significant part of their day outdoors or driving in a car or truck, and their vision can be enhanced with lenses that reduce glare. A question such as, “How many hours each day are you outdoors or in a vehicle?” can reveal needed information.

4. **Hobbies**
   The hobbies or avocations of people often are enhanced by specialized eyewear. Asking people about how they spend their leisure time will reveal special needs.

5. **Daily hours of television use**
   Finally, many people, particularly retired people spend a lot of time watching television each day. Having a pair of glasses to make TV watching more comfortable can be a plus, so knowing the amount of time people spend watching can guide recommendations.

### A PAIR FOR INDOORS, A PAIR FOR OUTDOORS

Optical industry data show that the most common combination of prescription glasses used by multiple pair owners is one pair for indoors and a second pair for outdoor use. But just 18 percent of eyeglass wearers currently own a pair of prescription sunwear.

Many people spend a great deal of time outside, but they compromise their outdoor vision by relying on a pair of eyeglasses designed for their indoor vision tasks. These patients would benefit from polarized lenses.

To stimulate discussion about outdoor eyewear, these techniques can be used.

- As exam appointments are confirmed, ask patients to bring in their sunglasses with a statement such as: “The doctor asks that you bring in your sunglasses so we can take a look at them and adjust them for you, if necessary.” This creates the expectation of a conversation about sun wear.

- Patients’ outdoor activities should be probed and for any patient spending many hours outside, the optometric assistant might say: “I see you spend a lot of time outside. For patients like you, we recommend one pair of eyeglasses for inside and another for outside, to reduce glare and block UV rays. The doctor will discuss this with you.”

- As the exam concludes, after the doctor recommends a lens for indoor use, the doctor might say: “I recommend that patients who are in the car or who are out-of-doors a lot during the day have corrective lenses that reduce glare and block UV rays that can cause vision problems later in life. The sunglasses you buy in a drugstore don’t do this adequately and, of course don’t correct your vision. With a good pair of polarized lenses you’ll see comfortably even in bright sunlight with greater clarity and less color distortion.”

### COMPUTER GLASSES

A recent VisionWatch survey showed that 34 percent of adults work in an occupation requiring prolonged daily use of a computer. Other people spend long hours in front of a computer after work. The same survey indicated that 59 percent of adults suffer some adverse symptoms from prolonged computer use, including neck and shoulder pain, eye strain, dry eyes, blurred vision or headaches. Only about 8 percent of adults currently have a specialized pair of eyeglasses to address these symptoms.
Anyone who uses a computer for four hours or more daily is a good candidate for computer eyewear to both reduce glare and eliminate neck and shoulder pain.

**OTHER SECOND PAIR OPPORTUNITIES**

Needs profiling will reveal many other ways that a second pair of glasses can benefit patients.

Many fashion conscious women desire different frames for different wearing occasions – perhaps a conservative style for work in the office, a bolder designer style for casual wear and an elegant, high end frame for formal evenings out. Such women may also be interested in frequently updating the look of their eyewear. An individual’s personal appearance can be a good indicator of their interest in fashion.

Some occupations require safety glasses with lenses that resist impact and frames that are highly durable. These individuals likely will want another more stylish pair of glasses for non-working hours.

Participants in active sports can see their performance improve with glasses specialized for the vision requirements of the sport.

It’s clear most patients benefit from owning more than one pair of glasses. The doctor must have a major role in recommending second pairs. That can add a medical rationale for purchase which is highly persuasive.

A final presentation tip as a second pair recommendation is made is to always use the exact words a patient articulates about their problems or needs as the rationale for the recommendation. That tells a patient that the office has listened, understands and puts the patient’s interests first.

**PAYMENT OPTION**

Without a doubt the biggest barrier to gaining patient acceptance of second pair recommendations is the large cash outlay that may be required. Most optometric offices currently offer discounts on second pair sales, usually between 20 and 50%.

Another technique is to show how payment for eyewear can be extended over time to fit into household budgets.

CareCredit, operated by GE Capital, is one company that offers a variety of options to healthcare consumers. Practices that accept CareCredit as a payment option pay a small transaction fee and receive payment in two business days. CareCredit does all the work to collect the balance due and the practice has no responsibility of the patient delays payment or defaults.*

*Subject to terms, representations and warranties of provider agreement.

To stay within their budget limits, many patients, not knowing they can extend payment for eyewear over many months, end up choosing lower value products or resist buying multiple pairs. A best practice, that will increase multiple pair sales and revenue from premium eyewear, is to make patients aware of their payment options at the start of their visit — right at the reception desk. The receptionist might say: “We accept the CareCredit healthcare credit card which allows cardholders to pay for eye care over a six to twelve month period. I can help you apply for the program right now. It takes just a couple of minutes. Would you like me to help you check it out?”

At patient reception, say:

“We accept the CareCredit healthcare credit card which allows cardholders to pay for eye care over a six to twelve month period. I can help you apply for the program right now. There’s no cost to enroll. It takes just a couple of minutes. Would you like me to help?”

Once a patient has enrolled and has been approved by CareCredit, the receptionist can tell a patient that he or she has been approved for purchase up to the amount CareCredit indicates.

Telling patients upfront about financing options, changes conversations about eyewear options. It makes it more likely that patients will consider the important, life-changing benefits of higher performance products and eyewear for specialized uses, and less likely that patients fixate on price and today’s outlay.

It is much more effective to proactively present financing options to every patient than to wait for patients already enrolled in such programs to step forward and ask to use this type of plan.

To learn more about CareCredit’s special financing options for patients...

Phone: 866.853.8432
Go to: www.carecredit.com