

VM's Trends to Watch in 2020

Trends, Tech and Events in a Momentous Year for Vision



VM STAFF

NEW YORK—Let the vision symbolism begin! The year 2020 holds promise and opportunity for those in the eyecare and optical world to share information and ideas to raise the profile of vision care. There is much of the upside to inform patients, caretakers, other health care providers and consumers about the role of comprehensive eye exams and the eye as the window to a range of concerning health care conditions.

At the same time, the year ahead promises the dynamic of a new business atmosphere—brought on by such cultural influences as the U.S. Presidential election, continued tariff discussions and super-fast changing technology

and social media's impact. Climate challenges like fires, floods, storms, and drought are creating interruptions to life and business in many places. Indeed, an interest in sustainability and the need to act and communicate about recycling, repurposing and reducing waste is on a crescendo, as a priority for consumers and businesses, worldwide.

In the business and financial realms, the U.S. stock market had a very strong year in 2019 and general unemployment is low, even though a large swath of consumers are still challenged with daily living costs and the costs of their health care.

The emergence of new forms of competition and continued consolidation continue

their pace as big get bigger in many fields and independents are feeling challenged. While there is some trepidation about companies getting larger and more complicated, there is fascination and growing support for independent business and smaller creative brands and studios.

Creating positive experiences—for the customer and the patient—remains a paramount goal for all businesses and professions, regardless of size.

VM's editorial team pooled our ideas about which #Perspectives2020 we should all watch for in the new year. Do you have your own choices? Please email us and let us know! ■

Sustainability

Awareness of climate change, the impact of waste and the importance of corporate social responsibility are pushing notions of the “circular economy.” More retailers, large national players and small independents, suppliers of all types, from fashion and technology will escalate ways to improve the supply chain, recycle, reuse and minimize waste.



Generation Z

From pop culture musicians like Billie Eilish and Lil Nas X to the emergence of streaming, the advent of voice and video (YouTube, TikTok), there's a new sensibility among today's younger population who are following aging Millennials as upending traditional notions of business, buying, brands and service. Gen Z are influencers in fashion, buying and renting products/services and the culture overall. Accompanied by a global awareness of climate and social issues, Gen Z and their social activism is writing a whole new set of rules



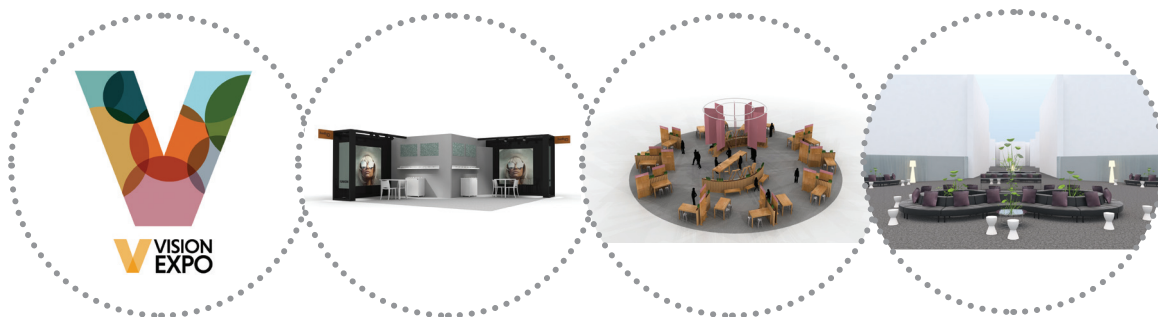
Women's Influence in Optometry

+70%

More women than ever are graduating from optometry school (70% of graduates), making the field of optometry more female-centric than ever. What are the implications for the profession? For corporate optometry and private practice?

The Reinvention of Vision Expo

Starting in March 2020, show organizers will debut The River, The Union, the Springs and a whole new CE track, with an eye toward more changes to revitalize engagement and commitment for attendees and exhibitors.



The Proliferation of Wearables

Wearable technology is one of the most exciting areas of health care. Patients and practitioners are increasingly using wearables to remotely monitor heart rate, glucose levels and many other biometric indicators. With the cost of the technology coming down, the miniaturization of components and the advent of 5G networks, wearables will soon be ubiquitous.



Consolidation, PE-Backed and Non-PE-Backed



The availability of new investment dollars, consolidating to reduce costs and invest in new tech, the ability to increase marketing budgets, will all continue to fuel change in the delivery landscape.



Social Shopping

Social media and retail will be even more intertwined, as will “direct-to-consumer” approaches for brands. From Instagram to Facebook to Pinterest and newer platforms, “see it, buy it,” enabled by pinpointed marketing, will crescendo. The boundaries between traditional brick-and-mortar and online, one-click ordering will continue to blur.



Next Generation Smart Glasses



Several companies are bowing next generation smart glasses that are sleeker and more user-friendly than prior attempts. Combining AR and VR, new features blend info and communication options in new ways. Will consumers embrace them? The jury is still out.

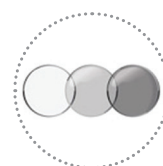
Subscriptions and Convenience

As a way to build customer loyalty, use algorithms that target preferences and reshape notions of convenience, more retailers and direct-to-consumer brands will explore subscription services. According to McKinsey, subscriptions have grown 100 percent in five years, making them a viable way to add an additional revenue stream and provide a convenient avenue to inspire consumer loyalty. One of the best examples is clothing company Stitch Fix, widely credited with popularizing the subscription model. They’ve grown their client base 30 percent to more than 2.7 million active customers



Enhanced Contact Lenses

2019 saw the introduction of Acuvue Transitions, the first photochromic contact lens. Other contact lenses are being outfitted with glucose sensors and power sources that would facilitate Augmented Reality, expanding the capabilities of contact lenses in new ways.



Lab 4.0

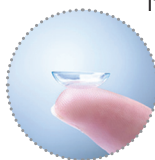


field. Myopia Management, too, is gaining ground as new education for doctors, new practice models and more research support ways to combat the rising epidemic in myopia. From sports vision (fueled by the Summer 2020 Tokyo Olympics) to vision therapy (children + learning), to aesthetics, specialization will continue to gain converts among ECPs as well as patients.

Prescription labs are more technologically advanced than ever, as more labs implement smart systems that track all activity and monitor production in real time. The result: faster service, more accurate lenses, fewer remakes and more profits.

VM's Most Read Feature Stories of 2019

How to Dispose of Your Contacts and Still Stay Friendly to the Environment



I've been a contact lens wearer for over 40 years. I started out wearing contacts that lasted several months and eventually graduated to daily disposable lenses, attracted by their comfort and no fuss maintenance. But looking back, I cringe to think of how many lenses and blister packs I've thrown away over the years. Every morning, after inserting my contacts, I put the blister packs in recycling and at night I throw my lenses in the garbage (NOT down the sink or toilet). According to the American Optometric Association, I am one of 45 million people in the U.S. who wear contact lenses. But after researching this feature, I have to ask myself—is there something more I could be doing when it comes to disposing of those used contact lenses. In a word, the answer is yes.

Meet the Achievers VM's Most Influential Women in Optical

NEW YORK—We hear the term “influencer” a lot these days. It's frequently used to describe celebrities, media personalities or the latest YouTube stars whose words and actions are magnified through the lens of social media. They connect with millions of people, but their impact is often fleeting, as our attention shifts to the next big thing. But there's another type of influencer, those who are outstanding in their field, and who touch us in ways that are profound and lasting. They are the people VM honors each year as “The Most Influential Women in Optical.”



It's Party Time at Vision Expo West 2019

LAS VEGAS—From parties featuring astronauts to product launch celebrations and awards for lab industry greats, Las Vegas was the place to be



for Vision Expo West's nighttime festivities. Here's a slideshow of some of the major parties that took place around town last week.

Dashboard Data: Using Metrics to Discover the Patients' Path to Purchase

From health care to retail, data has become an invaluable resource for businesses and practitioners. It's what many see as the key ingredient to better meeting, and exceeding, consumer or patient expectations, and it provides a critical yardstick for measuring success across a variety of metrics. In eyecare and optical retailing, the growing interest in data also has led to an increase in the number of options partner companies are developing that collect, track and analyze the data for ECPs to draw upon to manage their practice. From software and tech companies to alliances and large retail groups, a dashboard or other analytical tools have become part of the de facto offering to member ECPs.

Screen Time for Kids—How Much Is Too Much?



Growing up in the '60s, I watched a LOT of television with friends and family. We were riveted by shows like “That Girl,” “Rat Patrol” and “Dark Shadows” and we spent countless hours lolling on the living room floor in front of the TV. My Mom used to refer to it as the “Boob Tube” and she was constantly yelling at us to “go outside and play.” Well, as usual, it seems like my Mom was on to something. Today's electronic babysitter of choice is the iPhone and iPad. But the audience has changed a bit—it's not just teens and tweens glued to the screens but toddlers and babies, some less than a year-old.

Getting a Flu Vaccine—The Facts, the Myths and What This Year's Season Might Look Like Halloween is only a few weeks away but there's

another season just around the corner that can be just as scary—the start of the flu season, which officially begins at the end of October. In addition to causing kids to miss school and adults to call out sick from work, there is no denying that the flu can be deadly for thousands, and in some years, tens of thousands of Americans. The importance of getting a flu shot is something ECPs should advocate for themselves, their associates/staff and their patients as practice waiting rooms can be breeding grounds for spreading the flu.

Dr. Joseph Allen's 'Dr. Eye Health' Focuses on Teaching the Sciences of Eyecare

Doctor Eye Health is a 6-month-old educational



YouTube Channel geared toward anyone who is interested in knowing more about the eyes, disease and vision products. Its creator, Joseph Allen, OD, is a graduate of the Rosenberg School of Optometry

who did his residency in ocular disease and vision rehabilitation at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center. Though he has been working on Doctor Eye Health since January of last year, his first video didn't launch until July 2018 due to the amount of research he wanted to conduct prior.

Seeking Solutions: ODs Explore New Options for Practice Ownership and Transition

In the world of optical retailing and eyecare, the arrival of the year 2020 might be seen as the best of times for the profession. Demographics, especially an aging population, higher incidence of diseases that may impact eye health (such as diabetes), and new areas of practice focus—namely myopia and blue light protection—are opening up avenues of opportunity for eyecare professionals. At the same time, advances in telehealth, industry consolidation, the digital revolution and broad changes across retail in



general are creating tough challenges for independent practitioners who are battling to maintain success in the face of this adversity.

Take a Virtual Lab Tour

As *Vision Monday's* lenses and technology editor, I visit a lot of optical laboratories. Viewed from outside, most labs are unremarkable. Often located in industrial parks or on side streets, their drab exteriors give little indication of what goes on inside. Step onto the production floor, though, and you'll see a scene humming with activity. Technicians are loading generators, edgers and coating machines, job trays are moving along conveyors, quality inspectors are checking lenses for flaws and Rx orders are being packed for shipment to customers. It's an optical ballet in which every movement is carefully choreographed, and it requires skill, energy and careful attention to detail to execute.

Independent Optical Opens From the Ground Up

MOUNT PLEASANT, South Carolina—For Jake Sunkin, OD, independence has always been the way. In fact, Dr. Sunkin told *Vision Monday*, "I'm not sure I even knew optometry existed outside of private practice until I was maybe in high school." Dr. Sunkin grew up surrounded by independent practices, namely the one his aunt and uncle owned near Akron, Ohio, where he worked as a tech in high school and during college breaks. After getting his degree from Nova Southeastern University College of Optometry in Fort Lauderdale, Dr. Sunkin started working on his dream of opening his own independent practice. To achieve that dream, Dr. Sunkin worked in a small practice, and then spent a few years in corporate optometry. Then, he said, "I had my feet under me financially, had the clinical experience I needed, and with my 30th birthday looming, I knew it was time to start building my dream practice." ■



VM's Most Read News Stories of 2019

1. VSP Global to Expand Retail Strategy, Open Eyeconic Stores, Launch VSP Ventures
2. EssilorLuxottica Reveals Plans for Growth and Integration
3. VSP Global Enters Definitive Agreement to Acquire Visionworks
4. EssilorLuxottica to Acquire HAL's Controlling Interest in GrandVision
5. Imperial Capital-Backed Total ECP Merges With Visionary Eye Partner to Form Keplr Vision
6. Versant Health Is New Brand for Superior and Davis Vision Businesses
7. Stacking Up the Top 50 Optical Retailers
8. EyeCare Partners Acquires Nationwide Vision
9. Goldman Sachs Division to Acquire Capital Vision Services, Manager of MyEyeDr. Group, from Altas Partners
10. New Look Vision Group Enters U.S. Optical Retail With Acquisition of Edward Beiner Company in Florida

