

Patient Experience/New Solutions Now

Digital Tools Are Increasingly Offering Ways to Elevate Interactions Online and IRL



Photo Credit: Getty Images / baramee254

BY MARGE AXELRAD / EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

NEW YORK—The challenging business and cultural climate of the past couple of years have brought on many new definitions of what constitutes an excellent customer or patient experience. That's because the pandemic shutdown was such an initial shock to the normal interactions between patients and doctors, customers and retailers that everything underwent a reassessment and rethinking, even as the situation improved.

But in 2022, as we've entered the current phase of the pandemic's impact on the consumer and patient mindsets, it's crystal clear that their expectations have changed—even toward their tried-and-true health care providers and to retailers with whom

they've had consistent and solid relationships.

It's against this backdrop that technology and new digital tools are coming into play to help both providers and retailers gain some efficiencies—particularly at a time when staffing concerns and pressures are intensifying and they are facing patients and customers who've developed a new set of expectations and priorities about what comprises modern service, more convenient or engaging interactions for themselves and their families.

Embracing change, adjusting internal practice processes and rethinking how a practice is perceived by longtime and new-prospect customers and patients can pose what seems like overwhelming choices among practice owners and managers. But many agree it's time to take steps toward these new options.

A recent Microsoft report, "Personalizing Healthcare, Engaging Patients in a Digital Age," illuminates this. Engaging individuals, leveraging data that already is there among EHR systems, expanding the role of the website and mobile access via smartphone can point the way toward the individualized services patients are seeking now. Today, as many as 65 percent of patients use a digital device to manage their health, and they expect the experience to be as seamless as one they might find in the retail space, Microsoft pointed out.

The implications are as high for eyecare practices and optical retailers as they are for other health care specialists and general provider systems. In this special feature, VM once again examines some of the options available to ECPs today. ■

360 |  ESSILORLUXOTTICA

TURNKEY DIGITAL MARKETING TOOLS AND RESOURCES
TO ATTRACT AND ENGAGE YOUR PATIENTS

SEE INSIDE FOR MORE DETAILS >



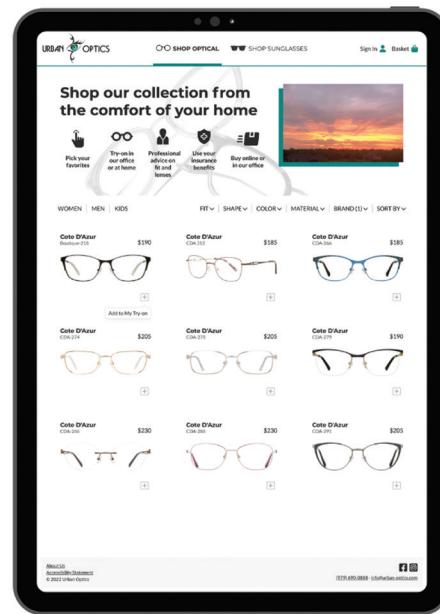
Optify Helps ECPs See the Advantages of E-Comm and Wish List Options

NEW YORK—One of the trends gaining much more adoption among independents as well as multi-location chains this year and much of last year has been the willingness to offer patients of brick-and-mortar eyecare offices and optical retail locations the ability to explore eyewear options even before they get into the practice as well as to follow up visits with the doctor or dispensing expert via online e-commerce. Optify is one of the companies facilitating that process with a range of customizable options that can expand the practice's outreach, connection and product selection.

Dave Barton, co-founder and CEO of Optify, explained, "The patient experience has always been a great conversation topic in optometry but historically more focused around the experience once a patient enters the practice. This last year, especially at the recent Vision Expo East in NYC, conversations and attention to the patient experience in a practice's digital footprint were more prevalent. It's exciting and an honor for our team here at Optify to be such a big part of supporting independent ECPs shift to exemplifying the very start of the patient journey, which is happening more and more online."

There are many ways that Optify can show up on a practice's website through all of those choices made by the doctor and the dispensing team, for glasses and contact lenses. Dr. Brianna Rhue, OD, FAAO of West Broward Eyecare and also co-founder of Techifeye, stated, "Optify has been a great addition to our practice to help engage our patients before their exam and help retain patients who want to shop online afterward, all while uplifting our online presence."

In the Chicago area, Dr. Ansel Johnson, clinical director of Vision Salon, explained the benefits from several angles. "We have recently implemented Optify in our office, keeping patients engaged with our eyewear inventory before the exam to pre-shop, to reengage walk-outs and



Urban can focus attention on the brands that it carries when people peruse their online selection.

increase second pairs. It's time for us all to be online and to keep patients buying from us."

Added Jessie Mills, lead optician with Greene County Eyecare, "We absolutely love it and we were really surprised at how quickly we started getting pre-shoppers—we have at least a couple a day. It really streamlines the process and our patients have shared great feedback—it has way overperformed our expectations."

Steve Green, operations manager of Urban Optics made the point that Optify options on their website have reinforced the brands and collections that Urban has on offer. "Optify has provided a great opportunity to select frames from our inventory which has helped close a lot more sales because the turnaround time is much faster. We see that Optify enables us to make sure patients keep buying from us." ■

Contact us via call or text at (708) 385-0013, or email us at info@visionsalon.com

powered by Optify

Vision Salon utilizes in-store takeaways and also mailers that enable someone to snap the QR Code to learn more.

ECPs can work with Optify to control the frames and brands patients see before or after their visits to create wish lists or add to their total purchase.

More →

Patient Experience/New Solutions Now



Sunbit's BNPL Approach Is a Fast Credit Check to Create New Flex Pay Options

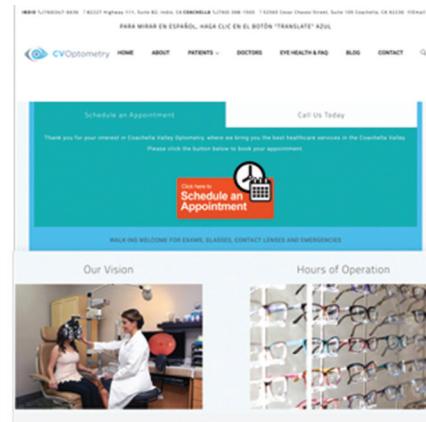
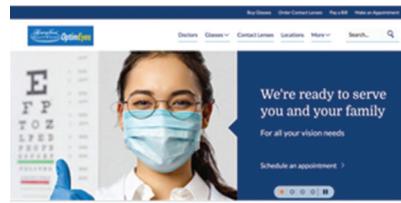
LOS ANGELES—Part of the modern patient experience in health care and at retail is to help patients and consumers better understand the value of their services and purchases and also to minimize friction in the payment process. Sunbit's buy now, pay later technology (BNPL), reflecting a broad trend in flexible payment options for consumers, has been widening its involvement with both independent eyecare practices and optical retailers along with multi-location clients,

As Sunbit's Tai Riesenfeld, co-founder and head of sales pointed out to VM earlier this year, the company specifically set out to strategically focus on certain types of business (auto service centers) and, then, specialty health care (vision/eyewear/optometry providers) along with dentists, where purchases considered to be a necessity also required pay-over-time choices.

Sunbit's BNPL fast-check credit solution approves 90 percent of people who apply and provides them with a three-months, no-interest financing option. To ensure flexibility and accessibility for all, six-month and 12-month BNPL options with interest are also available. Sunbit's BNPL technology gives customers more purchasing power, introducing a smart way to pay over time for what they need, the company said.

Sunbit's been expanding with various partnerships in optical. In addition to working with such multi-location regional players as Eyemart Express, Dr. Tavel Eye Care, Henry Ford Optimeyes, Eye Doctor's Optical Outlets, Standard Optical and others, more recently Now Optics, which operates MyEye-Lab and Stanton Optical locations, announced its own partnership with the company for all its locations across the country.

"We're always thinking about new and innovative ways we can deliver simple, affordable eyecare at My Eyelab and Stanton Optical, and our latest partnership with Sunbit takes that commitment a step further," said Daniel Stanton, CEO of Now Optics. "Eyecare is a right, not a privilege, so we feel obligated to provide as much flexibility as possible



National, regional and independent practices are capturing more in-store eyewear purchases with the Sunbit platform.

with payment options for each and every person that comes to our stores. Clear vision is a vital part of healthy eyes and something we want to ensure everyone can afford regardless of their budget or current situation," said Stanton.

To reach more independents, Sunbit will be showing at PECAA's upcoming national meeting this month. Previously the company also announced it was selected by Acquios Alliance as its preferred BNPL provider for their membership of 330 independent optometry practices.

Sunbit is also one of the companies involved in Techifeye, a group of 12 technology businesses which are showing how new technologies can generate revenue and help modernize practices. (See story, page 28). Recently, fast-growing Sunbit was named to the 2021 CB Insights Fintech 250 List of Top Fintech Startups. The company was also named Best Point of Sale Company in the 2022 FinTech Breakthrough Awards.

Sunbit's own research of eyecare professionals supports the importance of a "more frictionless checkout experience." The survey finds that with competition from online retailers growing, more than half of ECPs feel business metrics directly related to revenue such as capture rate, average transaction value, gross-revenue-per-exam, and sales by employee, are the most critical indicators of success. A copy of the survey results is available for download at <https://optical.sunbit.com/captureratesmatter>. ■



In addition to involving the dispensing staff in how Sunbit works, there are decals and messages at point-of-sale, frame boards and tables to let patients know that BNPL is an option.

More →

@VisionMonday

Facebook.com/VisionMonday

VISIONMONDAY.COM

Patient Experience/New Solutions Now



EssilorLuxottica 360 Digital Tools Help to Engage ECPs' Patients

NEW YORK—The digital screens available to EssilorLuxottica 360 members offer practices an easy way to modernize with high-quality, curated content from the company's frame and lens brands. Practices with digital screens, which can be tablets or full size screens, present a more innovative and appealing image, convey quality details to patients and attract those who are ready-to-buy. In a recent survey of over 620 ECPs, 76 percent believed practices with digital screens portray a superior quality store versus competitors, the company pointed out.

Noted Joan L. Amrani, optician, Tri-County Vision Associates, Willimantic, Conn., who uses screens, "We love the screen. It brings people into the office inquiring about the frames we have on it. We've seen it increase traffic and therefore profits in our office."

Gloria Chavez, California Oaks Vision Center - Murrieta, Calif., added, "We have our digital screen located by the waiting/sitting area and I did notice that patients enjoy looking at the screen. The best parts are the Transitions and Essilor lenses commercial. We have more patients asking about Transitions and the different colors available. I think it is a great addition to our office for patients and staff to enjoy."

Smart Shopper is another tool which brings the "endless aisle" and virtual try-on to independent practices, which immediately expands the frame board to increase selection and motivate customization. Eighty-nine percent of orders placed through Smart Shopper are custom orders, the company said, resulting in up to 50 percent higher dollar value compared to a non-custom order. Independents can increase their capture rate and grow their sales with this highly intuitive tool.

"I am highly impressed with the Smart Shopper technology. I feel that the quality easily surpasses that of similar applications for virtually trying on glasses. There is also a nice selection of customization options for Ray-Ban and Oakley, with the option to customize the frame color, lens tint and



SmartShopper iPad screens at Bling Eyewear (l). Cardinal Family Eye Center uses Promoboxx to leverage social media.



Dr. Brad Oatney (l) is using many tools including the large image screen at Ohio's Delaware Vision Care.

temples, as well as add personalized engravings, which is my favorite option," commented Brad Oatney, OD, Delaware Vision Care, Delaware, Ohio. He added, "I found the setup very intuitive and user-friendly. Any office could implement this technology around their schedule—setup and training together took less than an hour.

"Our office manager, who received only a brief overview of the technology from me, was able to use the Smart Shopper application with a patient shortly after its initialization. She told me that when she was unsure how to open the virtual try-on, the patient took over and pulled it up immediately. I think this interaction promises more positive experiences."

Customization is another element of the Shopper. "We love the customizable tool to personalize patients' glasses. It makes them feel more in control with their decision on a pair that perfectly fits them," said Kristen Furtado, optician, Bling Eyewear, Cranston, R.I.

Another way to generate patient loyalty is by leveraging those connections via social media platforms. Promoboxx puts the power of big brand marketing in the hands of the independent, according to EssilorLuxottica. This social media management platform helps independent practices elevate their social presence with ready-to-post, professional marketing campaigns from the most well-known frame and lens brands such as Ray-Ban, Oakley, Varilux and Transitions, among others. Helping to increase patient reach and engagement, campaigns from Promoboxx generates up to a 29 percent click through rate, the company reported.

According to Sara Yenter optician, Cardinal Family Eyecare, Chippewa Falls, Wis., "We love the ease of making a social media post that is professional and informative for our patients. Promoboxx is a great tool to have at our disposal to keep our social media accounts active and current." ■

More →

@VisionMonday

Facebook.com/VisionMonday

VISIONMONDAY.COM

Patient Experience/New Solutions Now



Winning Over Teens, Seniors and Remote Patients With My Frame Gallery

BY PRESTON FASSEL / GUEST EDITOR

If you're thinking of changing things up at your practice, look to someone who's already achieved the kind of success you want. That's a sound, time-tested business tactic; and there are few optometry practices more successful than Houston's Vision Optique, a stalwart of the Texas optometric community that's been in practice for 22 years—and which shows no sign of slowing down.

"It's a completely private and independent practice" said co-founder and managing partner Dr. Bridgitte Shen Lee. "We're not part of any chain. We are a successful primary eyecare practice with three medical sub-specialties. My focus is ocular surface disease, my business partner's focus is specialty contact lens, and our associate doctor's specialty is OrthoK for myopia management."

Despite being a boutique practice with only 1,800 square feet of space, the practice serves thousands of patients a year and has a full-service optical with a wide range of frame lines available for patients.

Dr. Shen Lee said, "Our high end optical offers both luxury fashion brands and unique collections. We've had two generations of remodels in the past 22 years and we're currently working on the third-generation of remodeling. Fashion brands like Kate Spade, Oakley, Ray Ban, Tori Burch, Tom Ford, and David Beckham are our basic collections.

"Luxury collections are Chanel, Dior and Robert Marc. Unique collections like Tom Davies, Gold & Wood, Zero G and Lunor are sourced from around the world. We hope more unique and luxury eyewear collections will consider joining My Frame Gallery so patients can enjoy an extensive virtual try-on experience," she said.

So, how did they do it? "We have focused on technology, service, and earning each patient's trust from day one," she said. "And we've been rewarded by our patients for that focus, because it means we've paid special attention to their experience and make it as memorable and pleasant as possible. Improving patient experience has in-

cluded embracing new technology like My Frame Gallery and creating a full online store.

The new website launched in September of 2020, introducing patients to My Frame Gallery both through the site and through Vision Optique's high-engagement Instagram and Facebook platforms. "When we went into the shutdown in March of 2020, I decided to create a brand-new website and to improve patient experience," Dr Shen Lee said. The new website incorporated patient experience improvements and services—Frames Data was one of them."

"We've been getting more traffic through social media posts," she said. "We consistently post three times a week, and we try to consistently use the same themes, like #TechTuesday, #WellnessWednesday, and #FashionFriday."

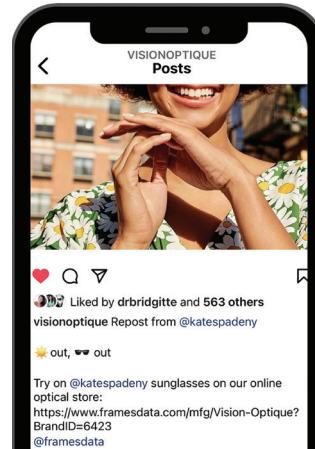
"When a post is about a specific brand of frames, we use the Direct Brand Links that Frames Data gave us, so that readers will be directed right to those frames on our Gallery when they click through."

"We get higher engagements when patients are in office. For example, many teenagers love the new clear Clubmaster, but they want to see how the other colors and shapes look on them. If we don't have the other colors on hand, they can quickly see them from the Gallery."

The younger patients are also drawn to the technology itself. "The teens love the ability to try frames on with their own phones. The fact that we're incorporating this technology into the experience is a real plus for them, and it's something they'll remember the next time they need glasses. They'll come back for more in the future because they appreciate the tech-forward experience."

For older patients, Dr. Shen Lee's opticians offer a similar experience using a laptop computer set up at one of the dispensing stations.

Vision Optique also serves many out-of-town patients, and My Frame Gallery is particularly valuable to them. "We have a lot of college students, boarding school kids, patients who moved away but wanted to remain patients, even referrals from family members... These customers have really en-



Dr. Shen Lee leverages her powerful social media presence to bring attention to the Gallery on Vision Optique's new website.



joyed being able to try-on frames remotely with the Gallery. Once they've selected the frames, they simply communicate with our opticians on the purchasing details. It's nice to have additional glasses purchases outside of our physical optical."

"We're already seeing how effective it is with the younger patients especially, and they're always on the leading edge when it comes to tech. That group of tech-savvy patients is only going to grow over time, which is why we're so committed to using My Frame Gallery in our office to its full potential!" ■

More ➔

For more examples of how ECPs are using My Frame Gallery, please visit the Frames Data Blog at <https://blog.framesdata.com/>.

Patient Experience/New Solutions Now



Techifeye Companies Encourage Indies to See the Value of New Digital Tools

NEW YORK—The people behind Techifeye believe technology is the future and its participants offer many digital tools and services to help independents better manage and offer a smoother digital experience—for themselves, their teams and their patients. The brainchild of founders Brianna Rhue, OD, FAAO, and Jennifer Tabiza, OD, of Tamarac, Florida's West Broward Eyecare, who also are behind Dr.Contact Lens, the duo have parlayed their years of optical industry experience into helping eyecare providers improve their patient services from finding the right EMR to increasing digital marketing reach through web optimization.

At the recent Vision Expo East, attendees were able to visit the participating companies in the Techifeye booth and demo area on the show floor. Attendees were able to get the chance to know Techifeye's services even better while touring the show floor and meeting with Techifeye's digital partners.

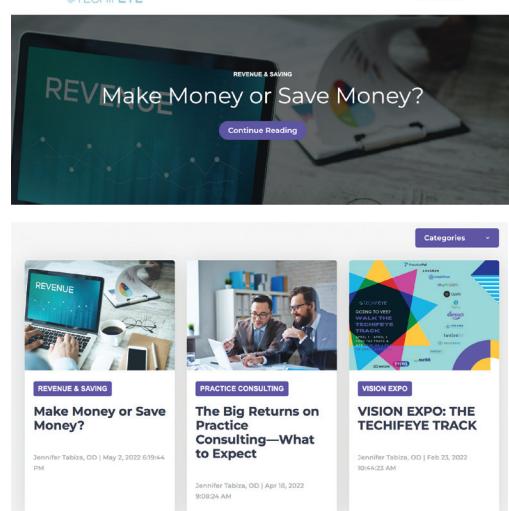
Participating companies offer a range of digital and practice enhancing services. The Techifeye

companies include: OMG!, Contentling, Simplifeye, Optify, Anagram, Weave, Roya, PracticePal, Twelve84, Sunbit, Neurolens, Eyeris, For Eyes Bookkeeping, Spexy, Akrinos, Heru and Dr Contact Lens.

Dr Ruhe told VM, "Doctors today can be overwhelmed at the choices in front of them and we understand that. But we are a collective of companies that can help guide them and show them how to understand the ROI on some of the new tools and services we each offer, show them ways to make more informed decisions and get started in ways that help them support their staff, too."

She added, "With practices short-staffed now, too, we can show them ways that these new technologies can help them manage things better and improve their connections to patients, too. We have the competitive advantage—the brick-and-mortar practice providing excellent patient care. But if we can implement e-commerce or update a website and bridge the technology gap in other ways, we can improve their business, too." ■

TECHIFEYE



Techifeye and its partner tech companies can help ECPs navigate a diverse range of digital options. The group plans several online webinars and short online TechTalks this spring and into the fall.

Eyefinity Is Planning Next Generation Platform to Address 'Digital Acceleration'

RANCHO CORDOVA, Calif.—Eyefinity, a VSP Vision company reports it is actively building their next generation platform that will deliver a configurable, cloud-based solution, "designed to help eyecare providers power their future." Eyefinity's next generation platform builds off the success of Eyefinity practice management and Eyefinity EHR, with an emphasis on new technology to meet the challenges of digital acceleration in the eyecare industry and the broader marketplace," the company said.

"Our next generation solution is more than just software, it is an elevated experience platform that will enable ECPs to engage with patients in a whole new way," said Charlie Biegel, Eyefinity's chief operating officer. "With a tablet-friendly point of sale, ECPs can meet patients where they are with a per-



VSP's Eyefinity is planning an updated "elevated experience platform" this fall and into 2023.

sonalized, human-centric shopping experience."

Eyefinity plans to debut their next generation platform starting later this year for optical chains, followed by independent practices in 2023, the company said. "From providing the best patient



experience possible to keeping ECPs' data secure with trustworthy technology, Eyefinity helps you grow your business with confidence," said Biegel. More details are posted at www.eyefinity.com/experience. ■