



By HEATHER SUGGITT

ALL-STAR BREAK

Take advantage of any summer lull to get your business ready for fall action



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Summertime ... and the living is easy for many eyecare professionals. At least that will be true for a few more weeks, before the back-to-school season kicks into high gear. Yes, we know you want to spend a good chunk of this summer on the beach or in the mountains, and you can still do that. But by tackling some of these tasks now, you'll enjoy your getaways even more. Here are five ways to take advantage of any lull you're seeing in practice volume this summer.

1. FRESHEN YOUR FRAME BOARDS. Analyze your frame sales and decide which frames to keep and which frames are the slow movers. Don't just eyeball it: Run reports and make business decisions based on numbers rather than personal preference. Meet with your frame reps and ask them about the hot sellers and new trends. Know the target demographic of your practice and be sure that you have appropriate frames to meet their needs. Patients have so many online options. Increase your capture rate by truly understanding the style of your market and create an irresistible optical shopping experience to keep the sale in your four walls.

2. CATER TO KIDS. It's not too late to come up with your best-ever back-to-school marketing plan. Since learning problems can sometimes be tied to poor vision, be sure to use this as a call to action for parents. Create a sense of urgency in your messaging by letting your prospective patients know that "appointments are filling up quickly, so schedule today." Call local media outlets to see if they'd like to do a story on the latest frames and lens options for students of all ages.

Take a kid's-eye view of your office and dispensary: Are children's frames dis-

played in a way that is inviting to kids? Do you make the exam and frame selection process fun? Spend some time catering to your youngest customers. A trip to the eye doctor should be something they'll talk about and to look forward to in years to come.

3. TAKE CONTINUING EDUCATION. Many optometric networks and vendors offer complimentary continuing education courses, and summer is a great time to do these. Make it easy for your staff by sourcing the program of your choice and rolling it out in an employee meeting. Not only will staff members have an opportunity for professional development, but your patient satisfaction will increase ... and so, too, will your revenue.

4. GO ON A "LOST MONEY" TREASURE HUNT. If there was a \$100 bill on the floor, how long would it take for someone to pick it up? In most practices, money hides in dead and expired inventory and accounts receivable. Take the time to do a mid-year inventory, return any unused or expired products to vendors, and collect any hanging invoices from patients.

5. CLAIM YOUR INTERNET DIRECTORY LISTINGS. Want better search engine ranking? Claim your listings on Google, Bing, Yahoo and Facebook, if you haven't done so. By claiming a listing, you can manage, personalize and boost your presence by providing photos, a description and hours of operation. You'll also be able to respond to reviews. If you've already claimed all these listings, consider getting more active in social media this summer. Instagram is a great online showcase for your latest frames, while Facebook and Twitter can help you spread those back-to-school messages.

If your practice stays busy throughout the summer, consider hiring a student who is interested in the eyecare business. This is a great way to handle some of these loose ends without tying up staff members who are involved in the day-to-day practice. The summer staff member will profit from the experience, and the practice will benefit from new energy and a motivated but temporary staffer.

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457 I want to include a satisfaction survey in my next email newsletter. Any tips?

The No. 1 thing is: Don't waste your customers' time, so keep the survey short. Second, don't ask vague questions with vague answer options. Get answers that will allow you to take an action in response. Third, be aware that you shape people's perceptions with the way you phrase the questions. Asking, "Which

do you hate more, telemarketing calls or SMS spam?" taints both. Finally, marketing guru Seth Godin advises, make at least some of the questions entertaining. That reminds us: Have you signed up yet for the INVISION Brain Squad? It's our chance to ask what's on your mind each month — and we have fun questions, too. (What would *you* do if an asteroid were about ready to hit your business?) Visit invisionmag.com/brainsquad.

What's the best way to force a problem staff member to quit?

We take it you either want to avoid paying severance or to escape the potentially ugly confrontation involved in dismissing someone. Neither is really a good reason for trying to make a staff member's life so uncomfortable that he leaves on his own. First,



work out how much damage this person could cause your business. If the issue is security-related, bite the bullet and walk him to the door. If it's one of performance, have a stern talk and put him on 90-day probation. This is one area where being upfront is always best. Letting it drag is a waste of both parties' time and energy.