

PRACTICE RESTART – OPTICAL PLAN

SECTION 1: PEOPLE

05-04-20 “I HATE THAT THEY CAN’T SEE ME SMILE”

There are 43 muscles in the human face. By all accounts, and trust me there have been many, I have a tiny face. Big head! Tiny face. And I still have 43 muscles in my face. It takes a minimum of 10 of those muscles to smile. And because humans smile more than they frown, (aside from that one customer, you know the one I’m talking about), those muscles are stronger, meaning they pull on more areas of the face than a frown. My point is, wearing a mask does not mean your patients can’t see you smile.

First, the difference between not wearing a mask and wearing one only matters if the patients are looking at you, which, if you notice, people rarely do. I have one colleague who approached me in full alarm after I practiced a speech I was going to give with her. She said where are your slides?! I said I didn’t have any. She said, that means they’re going to look at you in your **eye!** And pointed aggressively at her eye just to drive home the point. Yup. That’s the risk we all take I suppose. But, in terms of risk, it’s pretty far down the list. Because people are prone to avoiding eye contact. Don’t believe me? Take a walk around your neighborhood around noon today and see what happens.

If they do look at you, unless someone is hard of hearing, they are also unlikely to look at your mouth when you speak. If they look at you at all, people will default to looking at your eyes, unless your barber has recently done you wrong.

Look in the mirror and you’ll see; your smile is written all over your face and certainly not contained just to your mouth. (My ears even move.) We know this because the face wrinkles over time according to our default facial expression, which I hope has been smiling. My wrinkles got me out of showing my id at the grocery store yesterday. Just think what yours could do to convey your mood!

Still concerned? How do you convey a smile when you’re on the phone? How does your family know you’re happy when you’re talking to them? Do they just assume the worst? That you’re miserable all the time? No, because smiling is also in your tone, your word choice, and your cadence.



I gesture more on Zoom than I ever would in real life. Stillness in a board meeting conveys authority. Stillness on a Zoom call conveys you used a cardboard cutout of yourself so you could eat a peanut butter sandwich in your bed and no one would be the wiser.

Overemphasis is the key. Squint more when you smile with a mask on. Nod your head up and down when you agree. Gesture to show approval. And use a higher pitch to convey happiness.

Social distance doesn't mean emotional distance and the struggle to connect during a sales appointment is not new. Please continue to wear a mask and ask your patients to do the same. And remember, to continue to smile.

SECTION 2: PRODUCT

05-04-20 THE REALITY OF PATIENT PPE

Yes, you will need to provide your patients with PPE. For your sake, and for theirs it is recommended you have a stockpile of masks to provide your patients upon arriving to your office. It is strange and foreign and weird, and it feels insulting and yes, all of those things.

Critical to yours, and your patients' adoption of PPE in the practice will be the mindset of the staff, as in most things. Want to sell higher-end frames? We need the staff understand the value of a higher-end product to the end-user experience. Want to move to an appointment-based exam book and away from walk-ins? The staff needs to understand how having a balanced day helps the patients receive the care and attention they deserve. Want to increase contact lens purchases? The staff will need to understand and convey to the patients why the extra time they will spend in the practice will benefit their vision.

If we want our patients to wear PPE, we'll need to examine and diffuse our own bias against it, where it exists.

This process is based on the EBAR Pyramid whereby it is believed that your Experiences effect your Beliefs which effect your Actions which effect your Results.

It's only weird if you make it weird. I'm not saying it will be easy, but what worthwhile thing ever was?

SECTION 3: PLACE

05-04-20 SELLING WHILE SOCIAL DISTANCING

"Don't worry, you can touch them."

I completed my weekly pilgrimage to the grocery store today. I was waiting in line on my little "X" that ensured I was at least 6 feet away from the woman checking out in front of me. She had a full cart on the belt and as it started to move forward, her strawberries got left behind. I looked at them with alarm. Then, I looked at her, eyes wide (because that's the only part of my face she could see). And she said, "Don't worry, you can touch them."

Under any normal circumstance, I would not hesitate to move someone's strawberries onto the belt. Why would I? Why would anyone?! They were in my way after all. And what if she promised her kids strawberry shortcake for dessert? What then?! I thought of them, all depressed and sad. Summer refreshments poured, movie queued up, and no dessert in sight. Their entire evening flashed before my eyes.

“Don’t worry, you can touch them.” Then, we laughed. Because we both knew. No matter what side of the aisle we are on, no matter our belief, or lack thereof, in the current measures being taken, no matter our resolve to social distancing, we both understood that things had changed. And everyone, as they always have, has the best intentions.

That’s how I’m choosing to write my story anyway, from a positive place, and your patients will too but you must control the narrative. For every cleaning cloth you whip out, explain why. For every frame that disappears after being touched, explain why. For every mask, and pair of gloves, explain why.

Anyone who has ever been surprised by a Waterpik to a cavity during a dental exam understands the value of over-communication. Tell the patients what you’re doing before or while you’re doing it and they won’t have the opportunity to assume your intentions.

Critically, this is not the time to employ your quietest staff members in patient interactions. A quiet Optician in a mask will not work. Greet the patient, chat with them, continue talking, the whole time.

“I’m just going to put on my mask in keeping with state guidelines.”

“Here’s your mask, let me know if that’s uncomfortable.”

“I’m just going to clean the frames as we shop.”

“Let’s have you put in your contact lenses to see how they feel.”

Your practice environment will be new to them just as it’s new to you and it’s critical you take the theme park approach and act as the narrator on a brand-new ride. “On your left we have the hand sanitizer... and on your right, a tray of frames I pulled for you while you were having your exam. Don’t worry, you can touch them.”

HOW IDOC CAN HELP

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The IDOC resource center provides links to many helpful articles, forms, webinars and podcasts on these topics and others. You can access it here: [IDOC COVID-19 Resource Center](#)

Our Optical Consultants are available on demand to help you identify your inventory goals and understand your reality. **Call or email them today to review what your ideal inventory level.** Just as we know our annual revenue, these numbers are critical so that we can move forward to our next steps.