



Practice Building Blocks

Dawn Kaplan, OD

Costco, Oakbrook and Lake Zurich, Ill.

What makes one practice thrive and another one not so much?

Dr. Kaplan has many secrets to her success. The little things go a long way in making a difference for her patients and practice. First, she's smart about booking exams. "An exam slot is our most important commodity that we can use to maximize our return," she said. Dr. Kaplan typically sees three patients an hour, but that can vary based on the visit reason. "The key is to always be very flexible," she suggested.

It helps that all her staff members are on the same page. She started putting two technicians on during busy summers. These employees are well trained and comfortable taking retinal photos, explaining fees and instructing new contact lens wearers. She said, "I try to have my technicians do as many things as possible as far as collecting data, which allows me to spend more time discussing results and making recommendations." Even

though she's a lot busier than she was when she started at Costco 10 years ago, she still spends about the same amount of time with each patient. The staff members help keep patients moving through the office smoothly, without them feeling rushed.



Dr. Kaplan

To further accommodate her patients, Dr. Kaplan added coverage every other Sunday to accommodate the increase in patient flow. She pays her five associate doctors a percentage of their services provided, instead of an hourly or daily rate. "This makes it in their best interest to take walk-in patients and align with my practice model of patient-scheduling," she said. Her relationship with the optical managers keeps patients in the store, too. "I help them with product recommendations and taking walk-ins, and they help me by taking walk-ins and speaking highly about my practice," she said. "Even though we are independent, it's a synergistic relationship." The optical department staff can share with

Costco members that Dr. Kaplan has upgraded equipment and accepts medical insurance now, and this helps promote her business.

Dr. Kaplan also believes in investing in her practice. Recently, she hired a Medicare consultant to help build upon her and the associate doctors' expertise in providing these services. Also, she has hired a marketing company to help her build a marketing strategy. "I feel that in this economy, you have to do something different to set yourself apart; otherwise, it just becomes a price war," she said. In the end, it's about hiring good people, managing them properly and staying ahead of the trends, she said.

Dr. Kaplan also serves as a mentor for optometry students looking for success in a corporate setting. At the Illinois College of Optometry, many students are very interested in working with Costco. "I want to be the bridge in the relationship," she said. "Costco gives me the tools to build my practice, so I volunteer my time to give back." ■



Community Outreach...

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to parents as a one-stop place for children's eye exams and eyeglasses. "She had no idea what we had to offer," Dr. Grosu said, noting that the office has seen an influx of children and their parents as new patients.

Dr. Grosu partnered with the nearest Sunglass Hut to offer a discount to its customers who need a prescription in their sunglasses. It's a successful collaboration because when customers can't find a certain frame from the selection in her office, she will send them to that Sunglass Hut location. "Customers are surprised when I tell them they can find the frame, and it's just a 10-minute walk away." She encourages them to tell the Sunglass Hut staff she sent them, and assures patients that the recommendation



Dr. Grosu wants patients to know she's there.

will help them receive VIP attention.

Through Luxottica's OneSightSM volunteer program, Dr. Grosu travels to countries in need every year. And she donates her time and services all year through the OneSight program's Year Up participants. This program, active in six states, gives young urban adults opportunities to bring

out the best in themselves. "They were ecstatic to hear we provide free eyeglasses," she said. This is an important step in helping these individuals develop skills towards their future career. "They are limited financially, and they need this kind of opportunity." In the past, this location rarely saw OneSight patients. Now Dr. Grosu sees at least one patient per week through this program. "I'm proud of being able to provide comprehensive eye care," Dr. Grosu said, and that's why this outreach to spread the word about eye health is so important to her.

But she knows she couldn't have done it alone. A leader who has trained many new hires for LensCrafters, Dr. Grosu built a cohesive team of staff members who are on her side. "I wouldn't be able to achieve all of this if the staff didn't believe in it as well," she said. "We work as one." ■