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# In-Office Education: The Key to Better Capture Rates

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So many of us get caught in the trap of "marketing=discounting" while the true definition and the heart of marketing is really communication. Marketing involves activities that make people aware of a company's products and services and making sure that the products or services are available to be purchased. It's the communication between you and your customers with the goal being to sell your product or service to them.

**That four-letter word, *sell***

That four letter word, "sell," in the definition of marketing somehow makes us cringe. We aren't "sales people," we are professionals.

So what if we simply replace the word "sell" with "educate" or "communicate"? Yes, your dispensary sells eyewear. Let's change that to your dispensary "educates patients about eyewear" or your dispensary "communicates the benefits of eyewear." How does that change your perception? More importantly, how does it change the patient experience in your office?

**Two keys to success**

The keys that unlock a successful internal marketing plan are education and communication. Our job is to educate patients about the best visual solution for their lifestyle and daily visual demands. As professionals, it's our job to do this whether the patient purchases from us or not. When we stop thinking about our dispensaries as "a place that sells glasses" and start thinking about the dispensary as our "eyewear education center," the entire dynamic within the offices changes.

Ideally, the education process starts even before the eye exam. After patients check in to your office, they are directed to the dispensary where the optician can read out their current prescription, assess the condition of their lenses and frame, and discuss what they like and don't like about their current eyewear. The patient then continues through the office and at the end of the eye exam, is very naturally handed back to the optician to explain the results of today's prescription and educate the patient about the best products available to meet his/her needs.

**The indispensable dispensary**

Even if your office flow doesn't allow for education before the exam, every patient with a prescription should be directed to your dispensary to finalize the visit to your office. Your opticians are experts in

eyewear prescriptions and explaining the benefits of lenses and the latest technology. Opticians know the differences in lenses and frames at every budget level and can communicate those differences to the patient. Today's consumers want education; there is no better place to deliver that education than in the dispensary.

When internal marketing for the dispensary takes the shape of a full patient educational experience, it no longer feels like anyone is selling anything. Your dispensary then simply feels like an extension of the eye exam. Shifting your dispensary from "the place that sells glasses" to the "place where patients learn the best technology for their prescription and lifestyle" results in better informed consumers who are more likely to purchase from the professionals in your dispensary.

**Bottom line**

Internal marketing is at its best when it's delivered as an education process. Yes, ironically, in this case, if you stop trying to *sell* eyewear, sales will increase.

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