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SPECIAL FEATURE

Introducing Dover Eye Lab, a Rising Star Among Wholesalers

A Start-Up Carves a Niche in Custom Lens Manufacturing

BY SARAH MCGOLDRICK / CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

In an optical market that continues to be dominated by multinational corporations, many independent optical labs are finding a niche by focusing on customer service and custom lens designs. After nearly 20 years in the optical industry, this is where Dover Eye Lab founder and CEO Scott Rosenwald knew he could corner the market.

In 2021 he took the plunge, opening his lab in Dover, New Jersey in the middle of the pandemic. His goal was to provide everyday and custom lens products, backed by one-on-one customer service. But his journey to offering bespoke lenses started years earlier when he was working for his family doing basic dispensing and finishing.

"I got a job cutting lenses and adjusting frames. I realized that I liked it and enjoyed working in the optical industry," Rosenwald said, reflecting on his early days in optical. He soon enrolled in an optical dispensing program and got a job working in an optical lab. The rest, as they say, is history.

Rosenwald soon developed a deep passion for optics. He saw there were many gaps in how a job was completed that created repeat errors and could cost a lab a customer. So when he opened his lab, he took the lens-making process and broke it down into the most important components to find where these gaps could be repaired.

"I started by asking what a dispensing optician wanted?" he said, noting there was a quick realization that aside from a flawless lens, opticians simply wanted exceptional customer support to ensure a job was done ac-

curately. "People want to be accessible and to get a human on the phone."

To ensure this need was met, Rosenwald stepped up his customer service so that when you called his lab there was no waiting to talk to an expert. He focused on hiring customer service professionals with optical experience to make sure his customers were speaking with someone who knew the product and could troubleshoot problems.

Rosenwald also made sure that he was available to talk to customers to deal with more complex jobs. He believes one of the most common reasons why jobs end up in a cycle of redos is because there is no one looking at the finer points of the jobs and finding an effective solution to ensure the lens is made correctly.

Rosenwald also adjusted his inventory to provide his customers with a larger selection of lenses so that no job couldn't get made.

"We are working with an independent lens brand and their technical support has been phenomenal. We also offer optics for every material possible," he said, noting that working with independent lens suppliers means there is a greater opportunity for more complex customization. "There is no pre-existing architecture until we get the Rx."

Rather than relying solely on "name brand" lenses that already have components built into the lens, Rosenwald has made sure to include lens products in his catalogue that allow the optician and the lab to start from scratch and create a fully customized lens. The lab is presently working with Lensync, an independent lens company which bases their designs on artificial intelligence. He is also planning to add IOT lenses to the lab's lens portfolio.



Scott Rosenwald

Dover Eye Lab's product mix differentiates it from competitors. "The results with our accounts have been terrific," said Rosenwald. He encourages others to open labs in the area and believes that independents that differentiate themselves can compete with mega labs. "There is room for everyone in the market," he said.

Building a Dream

It may have seemed crazy to outsiders to try and build a lab during a global pandemic and equipment supply shortage. But Rosenwald didn't let any setbacks, global or otherwise, stand in his way.

"The better answer is patience and commitment. As well-planned as everything is, there are always unexpected delays," he said. "For

Continued on page 106

SPECIAL FEATURE

Dover Eye Lab Takes a Craft-Oriented Approach to Lens Customization

An Independent Start-Up Shows an Eye for Detail

Continued from page 104

example, our first air compressor fell off the truck's lift gate during delivery. We had to wait a week for the replacement."

Rosenwald said his success is a result of persistence as well as taking each step of the lab building process into account, and then carefully planning and executing it. "It starts with the LMS. You have to figure where this falls short and grow with your LMS," he said. "Then you have to look at your equipment and ask 'What's your goal? What are you planning on producing?' The goal is to make a high-quality lens so the equipment has to be extremely accurate and produce high-quality lenses every time."

For Israel Hochman, CEO of My Glasses Guy in Spring Valley, N.Y., this attention to detail and unwavering commitment to only creating the best lenses have led to Rosenwald getting the nickname "The Lab Geek." Hockman said, "He knows what the customer wants to see. I had shopped around with a bunch of labs for a polarized gradient. The technology that he came up with and integrated is top-notch."

Hochman said he turns to Dover Eye Lab for all the tough jobs that other labs won't touch. "Anything you need, he can pull off, and there is always someone to talk to. It's not extension after extension. He wants to make it as efficient as possible," Hochman said. He added that this is a huge benefit, particularly to new opticians who are fresh out of school and can benefit from this level of hands-on support."

This is one of the many reasons Ben Herbst, owner of MS Optical in Brooklyn, N.Y., began sending his work to Dover Eye Lab. He believes Rosenwald's commitment to customer satisfac-

"I have been in the business for 27 years and my dad, who founded our company, has been in the business for 48 years. We dealt with all kinds of labs, independent and commercial, and by far we are most satisfied with Dover Eye Lab."

- Ben Herbst, owner of MS Optical in Brooklyn, N.Y.

tion and hands-on approach has allowed him to provide a higher quality lens to his patients.

"I have been in the business for 27 years and my dad, who founded our company, has been in the business for 48 years. We dealt with all kinds of labs, independent and commercial, and by far we are most satisfied with Dover Eye Lab," Herbst said. "The most important thing in a retail to lab connection is communication. We can talk to a live person, someone with full knowledge of where your order is and what it's status is."

He said the idea of offering lenses with AR only was a "clever and thoughtful" move on Rosenwald's part. He added that thanks to the support he receives at Dover Eye Lab, he has seen a significant increase in profit.

"To our bottom line, we are profiting about 32 percent more and getting a much better result," he said. "From edged jobs to uncut, perfection is key with Sam Abramzon (Dover Eye Lab production lead), while Scott won't allow inferior production and is hands-on, top of the sales team."

Herbst believes that despite being a new lab, they provide exceptional customer services. "Their attention to detail coupled with their professionalism is rare and hard to find. They are amazing and out of this world when it comes to that. They create and surface the lenses as if they were the ones wearing it and they only want the best."

Customer Satisfaction

Building a relationship with clients is what has driven these "terrific" experiences for customers, according to Rosenwald. He believes an open line of communication with his customers has not only helped build positive and lasting professional relationships.

"Find people who understand what a lens is, what a base curve is," he said. "When customers call in, you want to be sure you are speaking to someone who understands the materials that go into a frame."

Rosenwald knows that clear communication between the patient and the optician, and the optician and the lab, is crucial. Being able to produce an accurate pair of lenses for difficult jobs starts with opticians listening to their patient's specific needs and relaying this information to the lab. This allows the lab to produce a lens that is highly customized to the patient's needs.

"It comes down to practice and taking the time to fit the lens. The better it fits the better it performs," he said. "Talk to the patient and understand what the patient needs."

Rosenwald believes that success starts with a commitment to work through all the little headaches. "There are different vendors for products from blanks to generators to consumables to Wi-Fi that all have to align," he said. "It's tons of details that all have to be worked out to make lens delivery to our accounts appear seamless." ■