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Doctor-owned optical labs provide vertical integration, sustainability

Sharing in the profits returns more income to the independent optometrist than the traditional model.

Primary Care Optometry News, December 2016

Optical labs owned by optometrists are becoming a necessity in the industry, according to **John McManus**, chief operating officer at Black Lab Optical Group, based in Phoenix.

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Larry D. Holle

Black Lab Optical was created to accomplish vertical integration, the executives said.

"Independent optometrists should be looking to horizontally and vertically integrate for future sustainability in the marketplace," Holle said. "Black Lab Optical is offering independents a way to vertically integrate and participate in lab sharing profits. Re-channeling those dollars traditionally spent at a corporate optical lab back into the doctor's practice is what Black Lab Optical is all about."

All doctor-owners initially sign a Lab Participation Agreement contract, which McManus explained includes a one-time fee. The optometrist has 365 days to request a full refund if it is decided the service is not right for him or her.

"Optometrists are amazed that no one has done this before and they think it's a great concept," McManus added.

For more information:

Larry D. Holle, OD, CEO of Black Lab, can be reached at tec@totaleyecareaz.com.

John McManus, COO of Black Lab, can be reached at jm@blacklaboptical.com.

Disclosures: McManus is COO and Holle is CEO of Black Lab Optical.

The 1.5-year-old full service digital lab provides Kodak, Shamir and its private label, Black Lab Extreme, digital progressives, in addition to other conventional lenses, including bifocals and single vision lenses with premium in-house antireflective coating.

"We are an independent optometry, doctor-owned and doctor-driven business model," McManus told *Primary Care Optometry News*.

"We designed this model because the optical side of retail for the optometrist – whose practice is typically 50% medical and 50% retail optical sales – has always been controlled by three of the largest conglomerates," he said.

Black Lab wanted to take control of the lost revenue and saw it as an opportunity. "Instead of subbing out 50% of that business, we wanted to own that model," McManus said. "We are trying to change the norm."

Currently, Black Lab has 17 optometrist-owners and another 20 clients that use the lab.

"Every independent optometrist should begin to care about every dollar that is being spent and who those dollars flow to," Larry D. Holle, OD, of Total EyeCare Centers in Phoenix and CEO of Black Lab, told PCON.

"Everyone is looking for quality, competitive turnaround time and a good price," McManus said. "We provide extreme quality and, by being doctor-

owned, we understand the strategies that are being capitalized on in the industry and are giving those strategies back to the doctor.

"We are, in a sense, the foundation of the buying groups, without fees," he continued. "There is no cost except for the first time buy-in. If you're not satisfied you have 1 year to ask for your money back. There's opportunity for unlimited growth."

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