

GLAZING for today's eyewear



WITH A GROWING DEMAND FOR ULTRA-PERFORMANCE, SPECIALISED SUNWEAR AND INCREASINGLY INNOVATIVE RIMLESS DESIGNS, OPTICIANS HAVE A BETTER OPPORTUNITY THAN EVER BEFORE TO OFFER THEIR CUSTOMERS HIGH QUALITY PRODUCTS AND AN IMPROVED SERVICE. TONY HARRIS, DIRECTOR OF EYE INDEX, SPECIALIST PRESCRIPTION LABORATORY, TALKS TO *VISION NOW*.

We all know that consumers are becoming more fashion-conscious and technically aware and here is a wonderful opportunity for opticians to increase the value-added dimension of retail optics - not to mention sales! There are so many new styles of frames (both ophthalmic and sunwear) on the market that it is more important than ever that opticians wishing to expand their services are able to access specialist glazing services. Two examples of this are modern rimless styles and 8 base prescription wraparound sunglass lenses.

Rimless

Rimless styles are still growing in popularity and are definitely here to stay. This is an opportunity for opticians to increase the dispensing value by promoting added value lenses such as high index or Trivex material and thereby increase margin and profits. As for the consumer; well, they are getting the opportunity to wear the most fashionable frames made from the very highest quality materials available. The key is to ensure that opticians feel confident about dispensing rimless styles. We know that some opticians have had bad experiences, but by working with Eye Index we can resolve this and help to restore confidence.

Quality control

Quality control in ophthalmic glazing stems from the use of high quality components and expert manufacturing techniques. Mounts, particularly in rimless glazing, have to be of a consistent quality, using tried and tested materials like titanium. If opticians and their suppliers don't insist on high quality components you will end up with defective parts, unsatisfactory delays and low levels of customer satisfaction. Repeat business is lost at a stroke!

It is also a false economy to use cheap frames. Of course optical stores want to have the best selection of frames possible but in my opinion they shouldn't try experimenting too much with rimless styles. Ideally they should select one or two collections which have the right levels of quality and lens shapes, and avoid chopping and changing too much. There may be more flexibility with other types of frames but with rimless, you could run the risk of taking on a collection that causes problems from the start. Opticians should pick their stock well because there is a tendency to design eyewear without consideration for the fact that the frame is ultimately there for a purpose.

Maintaining quality

One of the problems that opticians may have with rimless is that customers want a product they cannot really afford. They opt for frames or lenses which are more price sensitive and risk sacrificing quality. On the one hand opticians cannot turn these people away, so they need to offer them an alternative, and it is a fine balance. But at the end of the day opticians will be judged on the service they give. Opticians should try to stand their ground on their choice of lens and in my opinion anything less than polycarbonate is far too brittle and will eventually break - leaving you with an unhappy and disillusioned customer. It comes back to that partnership approach; opticians and their suppliers need to reach clarity over what can be achieved technically on

the one hand and the customer's wants and needs on the other. That way customers are not disappointed when labs cannot achieve the impossible and we avoid a situation where it looks to the customer as if they have chosen the wrong optician.

At Eye Index we specialise in working closely with frame manufacturers and are approved by Minima, Lindberg and Marchon Eyewear. We also work closely with Alain Mikli and Philippe Starck products, which are very specialised, higher cost frames and deserve high quality lenses. And it's not all about super-thin products, Dolce Et Gabbana now have some chunkier styles but they are still minimal by virtue of the fact that they are rimless.

Sunwear

Sports and fashion wraparounds are becoming big sellers and this sector will continue to grow and become more specialised. 8-base curvature sports and fashion eyewear is now extremely popular. At Eye Index we are already working closely with major sports companies on their 8 base collections, trying to provide maximum support to the opticians when they are asked for these products glazed to prescription. If opticians are confident that they can deliver a good quality glazed product, this is yet another opportunity for added value. Many are not offering the 8-base wraparound prescription sunglass service at the moment because they are unaware of where or how it is available. This is a shame, since our own research shows that it can become an excellent dispensing opportunity.

Not everything can be glazed but this is where the opticians and Eye Index can work together. Specialist labs need to have the right skills in place, carry out regular training and invest in up-to-date edging equipment and other relevant technology; this is not normal or routine glazing we are talking about here.

Working together

At Eye Index we can confirm what is and is not possible to achieve. We try to exceed our customers' expectations and appreciate that today's consumers are placing more and more demands on the retail sector. Consumers expect a good price, good quality and excellent service. Service is a continuum and has to be emphasised throughout the optical supply chain, from manufacturer to glazing lab and through to dispensers. Receptionists are now playing a key role in understanding the products and increasing their frame and lens knowledge. For our part we are pleased to give practices technical advice over the telephone and provide information on how specific prescriptions can work and look right so that the optician can make the sale. Getting it right means that the consumer receives excellent service and a superior product, and the optician increases sales and margins by broadening his offering. •

Eye Index is just one of a selection of specialist laboratories situated throughout the UK which provides full glazing services for sports and fashion wraps and mirror coating, as well as supra and full rim glazing in Hi-index and polycarbonate lens materials.
Contact: info@eyeindex.co.uk Tel: 01480 499600. Fax: 01480 499609