

The Latest Lens Technology Will Lead to Steady Sales Growth

Aaron Schubach
Vice President
Standard Optical
16 retail locations,
one surgery
center based in Salt
Lake City, Utah



“Standard Optical’s sunwear business has grown exponentially over the past 5 years. The active lifestyle in Utah, increases in our LASIK volume to approximately 200 eyes per month, and substantial growth in our contact lens sales have primarily fueled the growth. The demise of a substantial regional player, Knighton Optical, who operated 10 ‘Sunglass Shops’, has allowed us double digit growth in most categories, sunwear [being] one that is outperforming some others.

“Nearly 75 percent of our sunwear business can be attributed to second pair sales

Train Staff to Educate Customers on the Best Product for Their Needs

Cindy Henderson and
Genia Durham Owners
Eyeyar Optical, Inc.
7 family-run locations
based in Chattanooga,
Tenn., and 10 fran-
chised locations
throughout the South

third pairs we sell are some type of sunwear. We’d say around 70 percent of our sunwear sales can be attributed to multiple pair sales. As a result, our product mix leans heavily towards Rx-able styles as opposed to fashion or plano frames, 80 percent versus 20 percent, respectively, as Drivewear, standard polarized lenses and polarized clips are very popular with our customers.

“The price point of our sunwear has

Standard Optical

so we have dedicated 30 percent of our product mix to sunwear with an even split of 15 percent in plano suns and 15 percent in Rx-able styles. In 2007, sunwear accounted for about 6 percent of our total revenue. We’ve projected total sales of \$12 million for 2008, with roughly \$900,000 expected in sunwear, or about 7.5 percent of our total revenue. Currently, the average price point for sun is around \$149.95, which has decreased slightly as we’ve expanded our offering to include an entry-level retail price of \$19.95.

“Our sun mix is roughly 60 percent sport, 40 percent fashion. We have an active demographic who ski, bike, fish, etc. Our sunwear customer hasn’t changed entirely, but the spectrum of ages has. We still see a sport focus, especially in the younger demographics, but the older market, age 49 and over, will still be a focus for us, mainly with the fashion lines.

“From a fashion standpoint, bigger is still better in terms of style, and zyl is more popular than metal. Name brands have become less important in this area than functionality, styling in color and shape. Our buying strategies won’t change much from 2007. Typically, styling is the most important, followed closely by function. Lens technology is

important, but other technology like Bluetooth, MP3, and swap-out lens systems are not a major concern. We will continue to carry Zeal Optics, Smith, Maui Jim, Ray-Ban and Optic Nerve/M-Shades in our sports category and BCBG, Prada, Schubach Originals, Gucci, Vera Wang, Lacoste and Kenneth Cole in the fashion category.

“We merchandise our eyewear in collections, not necessarily by demographic, meaning all styles in a brand are shown together and not broken down by gender, and we are drawing our customers in with targeted 1-to-1 marketing. We use some sophisticated ‘cloning’ techniques to purchase mail listings in the appropriate zip codes and demographics. Much of our growth will be fueled by merchandising and dispenser training foremost, and a comprehensive 1-to-1 marketing campaign aimed at all purchasers of contact lenses, LASIK and spectacles to promote repeat business using special promotional sunwear offers, which is especially important for our contact lens and LASIK patients. In the past, marketing to our medical patients—LASIK, PRK, and cataracts—has been hugely successful.

“Going forward, steady growth in the area of 8 percent to 9 percent is important for us. Offering the latest in lens technology will fuel the Rx sun business with new Transitions, Younger Drivewear, SunRX from Vision-Ease, LifeRX Melanin, and Custom Polar Colors—IRX Polaroid from Specialty Lens by Essilor,



more so than frame styling. I expect to see our average price point drop slightly as the economy struggles in 2008 making more affordable frames a sensible option for the patient, especially considering premium lens sales tending to retail at double, even triple the frame price. Growth in LASIK and contact lenses will help the plano business encouraged by attractive promotional offers targeted toward these patients. Lastly, we see an opportunity to mail plano sunglasses directly to a patient’s



home or office in combination with our contact lens services. Convenience will continue to be a selling point for us in all aspects, and with the huge success of our patient home delivery program for contact lenses sunglasses is a natural addition to the program.”

Eyeyar Optical, Inc.

“At Eyeyar, we’re selling more performance and task specific sunwear than we have been over the last few years and we sell a lot of multiple pairs, so the majority of the second and

seen a small increase recently and averages about \$230, though the actual average sale price is closer to \$190.

“We keep our selection geared toward the newest trends, as well as classic designs like the larger ‘Jackie O’ plastic frames. We’ll be adding additional sport specific designs, such as biker goggles, going forward since we are selling more task specific sports glasses to both men and women. We’re forecasting this trend will continue into the New Year as Baby Boomers set their resolutions for 2008 to get fit and get active.

“Not only are we getting more requests for sport sunwear but we’re seeing an increase in customers looking for the latest technology that they’ve read about in magazines like *Men’s Health* or *Fitness*. We also have a lot of fun with our



vintage frames and sell an amazing amount to our 18- to 25-year old customers for their Rx sunglasses. Since we’ve been in business for so long we still have vintage designer frames from the ‘60s, ‘70s and ‘80s in our warehouse that

Continued on page 42