

VISIONCAREPRODUCTNEWS

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SELLING EYEWEAR ON THE INTERNET

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IF YOU'D like to start a din at a gathering of eyecare professionals, just ask the question "Is it time to sell eyewear on the Internet?" and watch the sparks fly.

Selling eyewear on the Internet is one of those "century events" that hits a profession or industry every 100 years or so. While it's not a pleasant subject for some, it's one that you cannot ignore. Eyewear is being sold on the Internet, people are buying it, and sales will increase sharply over the next few years.

Retailers have faced this kind of dilemma before. Sears started selling products from a catalog in the late 1800s and retailers have been doing so ever since.

In fact, catalog sales faced some of the same issues that eyewear providers are facing now with the Internet. For example, the buyer cannot try on a dress displayed in a catalog, yet retailers have sold millions through catalog sales every year. You can't touch and feel that new cordless drill in a catalog, but there are plenty of drills sold every year.

Like it or not, all eyecare offices are now faced with the decision of selling eyewear products on the Internet. You have two options on this issue: be part of it or leave it alone. If you choose to do it, start simply by avoiding products that require measurements.

So why not provide replacement contact lenses on your Web site, for example? How about selling solutions? You could also offer chains, cords, cases, readymade readers, and a host of other non-Rx accessories. The nice part about this is your office will now be open 24/7/365. That's a huge advantage

Your next move might be plano sunwear. There are some sizing and fitting issues of course, but kiosks sell plano sunwear every day in malls across the country without fitting and adjusting. If you want to provide this service, just have buyers stop in with their new specs when it's convenient for the adjustment. Rx eyewear will be a little more challenging because of the fitting and adjusting issues, but technology is on the way to help with measurements. It should be interesting to see what develops.

If you choose not to sell eyewear products on the Internet, accept the fact that you will lose some patients to other suppliers. Right now, that's a very small percentage, but it will grow. You'll have to decide just how comfortable you are with that.

For good or bad, every office has to decide if it's going to sell eyewear products on the Internet.