



*Vision Source*  
SIGNATURE EYE CARE

# TRUSTED COLLEAGUE

## Derrick Pierce, OD

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### Fill Up Existing Bandwidth. Add Capacity. Repeat.

Derrick Pierce, OD, who opened his Bentonville, Arkansas, office cold in 2012, has been using the strategy of growing until he is at full capacity, then adding on to allow more growth. It's been a good way for him to manage expenses of his new practice.

"When I opened, I had more time than I had capital to spend on marketing," he says. "So I immersed myself in the community. That has paid off." He became heavily involved with local charities, serving as a mentor in the Big Brothers, Big Sisters organization through a local middle school. That has connected him to the faculty there. He has served as secretary for the local Lion's Club, is a regular blood donor at the Red Cross and speaks to four medical sciences classes at the high school each semester. In addition, he's an avid runner and CrossFit enthusiast. "Just being active in those communities has been a way to introduce myself to potential patients. I get to know others in the community, and they pass my name along."

Dr. Pierce says that he gained another boost from his Vision Source® membership. "I met with Vision Source® Arkansas administrator Rusty Simmons, OD, before I opened, and I joined. I was able to purchase all of my equipment and all frames with Vision Source® discounts, so that was a huge blessing. I was able to buy into more lines and acquire a larger inventory than I was planning on having initially," he says.

When he opened, he hired one staff person who answered the phones and whom he trained to take on some of the tasks of an optician. He did his own pretesting and whatever else was needed. "I was at the office just 50 percent of the time, working as an associate in other offices," he recalls. It took about 18 months before he could leave those part-time jobs and commit himself full time to this location. He made the decision to do so when his appointment calendar was routinely booked a week in advance.

Much to his happy surprise, the shift quickly escalated practice growth. "I anticipated that my revenue per doctor hour would decrease. I expected that I'd see roughly the same number of patients but be in the office twice as much," possibly cutting that metric in half. Instead, his revenue went up.

"From the first day, we saw an increase," he says. Part of that was attributable to him being able to accommodate patients who called and were able to get a same-day or next-day appointment. When he made this move, he also hired a licensed optician and a technician, bringing his staff to three. That meant he could be more productive with his time and see more patients per day. About six months ago, he equipped his second exam lane, again reaping the advantages of Vision Source® pricing. "I've added a retinal camera, and I can bill medical insurance for fundus and anterior segment images."

Now, almost four years after opening, he has two exam lanes, a pretest room and a special testing room. His schedule is again booked a week in advance, so the next step may be to hire a second technician. "Adding a second technician might fill in the only remaining down time we have in the patient flow process," and it could allow him to schedule another two to four exams per day.

Then he'd work to build his capacity to overflowing again. "I want to get to the point where we're just busting out of this location. Then I'd feel like I recouped the costs I put into creating it," he says. He initially hoped that would be around the five-year mark, and that, indeed, might be the case. So far, every time he has added capacity, he has found the patient volume to fill it. That's a pattern he plans to continue.



### *Vision Source®* **Meetings Provide Mentors**

As a relatively new business owner, Dr. Derrick Pierce says that the quarterly Vision Source® meetings provide him with great ideas. "I get to hear what's working for some offices, as well as what's not working. This is the first practice I've ever owned, so it's nice to have experienced ODs who are willing to share ideas and serve as a sounding board."