



Vision Source® TRUSTED COLLEAGUE

Stephen Planchet, OD, FAAO

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The Power of a Second Practice

When Stephen Planchet, OD, FAAO, of Pleasanton, Texas, was thinking about expanding his practice, he stumbled upon another opportunity: to purchase an existing practice from another Vision Source® doctor about 40 miles away in Pearsall. "I realized that there's a lot of power in having a second practice. By putting a process, monitoring matrix measurements weekly, and having a good staff in place, I get to spend more time working on my practice and with my family," he says.

Plus, the idea of purchasing a practice that is already generating revenue was more attractive than expanding his current practice and waiting for the business to build. "When you buy an existing practice, oftentimes the previous owner might want to stay on for a while, so it's an easy transition. If you have a system or equipment that you bring in, you can bring the revenue up almost instantly," he says.

For example, the practice that he recently purchased has an ophthalmologist who comes in one day a week, but his appointments are booked up for six months. "It's not fair for the patients in this rural area. They'll end up going to San Antonio for pediatric exams, red eye appointments, or foreign body removal," he says. So while the former doctor is continuing to work one day a week in the practice, Dr. Planchet also brought on a new graduate, Christopher Prough, OD, who is trained to handle many of these medical cases. The demand is certainly there, and the patients are happy that they can be seen quickly and locally for some of their medical eye care needs. It's also good for the ophthalmologist who can focus on patients who need surgery. "The more you can provide for patients, the more the morale of the patients and staff rises," he says. Typically, Dr. Planchet comes in one day, as well, so he works three six-hour days in the first practice and a full day at his new location. He sets aside one day a week as an administration day.



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Between his time physically spent in the new practice and his administration day, he finds he is able to manage the necessary tasks of adding a second practice, such as community outreach and staff education. "The second practice is in a small town, and people need to know that their eye health provider can take care of everything. As he's working with patients, such as oil field workers with a chemical burn, children with red eyes, or monitoring a patients with diabetes, the staff learns from these patient visits and the word spreads. He finds that this learn-as-we-go process works well to bring up the skills of employees who may not have been aware of the full extent of services that an optometry clinic can provide.

They'll have a chance to learn even more, as the first practice offers advanced instrumentation, such as specular microscopy, visual fields, Optos, wavefront imaging equipment, A scans, B scans, and more. His larger practice is a study in efficiency with two doctors, three exam lanes, and 10- or 11-hour days. "We run six-hour shifts with no lunch. So I have the first shift with my techs and staff, and Samuel Houtkin, OD, comes in at 1 and sees patients until 7 p.m. The office never slows down." Dr. Planchet has arranged for the other doctor to be paid for a 40-hour week, although he can complete patient care in 30 hours. The office has three exam lanes, and the technicians keep them occupied by rotating patients effectively through the rooms.

A former US Army OD, Dr. Planchet is a big believer in establishing a system and rewarding the staff. Dr. Planchet brought OfficeMate electronic medical records into the second practice so that the data from the two clinics could be collected and tracked. "All staff members have statistics for which they're held accountable. I provide them with a statistic to monitor each week. It empowers them," he says.

The two clinics have efficiencies. Although they're 40 miles apart, in an emergency staff or doctors could cover for each other in a pinch. There's a biller in each office, which means that bills can be submitted even if one is out. They also share the lab, providing purchasing clout. As does his Vision Source® membership, of course. "What Vision Source® does for me is Vision Source® saves me a lot of time. I am a researcher by nature. I research equipment; I research contact lenses and other eyewear. I want the best products I can get for my patients. But that research takes so much time and involves many details. Vision Source® has taken a lot of that research over for me. I don't have to wonder if I can get a better deal from another vendor. I don't have to study all the ophthalmic lens offerings because we use TruClear and Visio products, and I don't have to switch from one product to another as prices change. Vision Source® has taken the guesswork out of purchasing for me. "

That's just fine with Dr. Planchet. "I don't have that kind of time," he says. Instead, he can spend it working on the future of his practice.