



HOW WOULD APPLE RUN *your practice?*

WHAT LESSONS CAN YOU
LEARN ABOUT RETAILING
FROM THE MOST PROFITABLE
COMPANY IN HISTORY?

By Conor Heaney

Stroll into your nearest Apple store and you will see ordinary people excited about telephones and computers. It will be packed with people happily paying premium prices to get the latest Apple product, not because they need it, but because they want it. This is why Apple is the most profitable company in history and why it leads U.S. retail in sales per square foot.

Although you may have never thought of it, Apple's success is particularly relevant to optical stores and optometric practices for two big reasons.

IT'S ABOUT CONTROL

The first big reason is if you are an OD in an independent practice you have more in common with Steve Jobs than you think. Most ODs and practice owners don't see themselves as retailers. Most distaste retail or downplay its importance to the success of their practice. Jobs wasn't a retailer either. He was running a technology company.

So why did he risk everything and open Apple retail stores across the globe? Investors expected him to fail. If you read his biography you'll discover there was only one thing on his mind about this decision, control.

Control is why he bet the company on his

belief that Apple needed to open its own retail stores. He wanted to control everything that happened within the four walls of any Apple store, to control Apple's destiny and not leave it to chance.

Jobs exercised complete control of the customer experience, the marketing and the sales process, from how product was displayed, to pricing strategy and presentation of price, to the environment and feel of the store, to the staff's level of passion and training, to the customer journey. He understood that is where the profit is. That's the lesson not to miss: You need to design and control everything that happens inside the four walls of

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your practice. It was Apple's route to success, and it is yours too.

My message to fellow ODs is that you are already in retail. The truth you might not want to hear is that the biggest area of unrealized potential in your practice is retail and eyewear sales. By designing new processes for your customer experience and the presentation of your practice, your products and your prices, you can create more revenue growth for your practice than anything else you can do.

By following Apple's lead and redesigning the sales processes in my own practice, our average eyewear sale has climbed to over \$1,000. Like Jobs, if you exercise complete control of the customer experience, the marketing and the sales process, you'll discover that is where all the profit lies. This approach is the antidote to your growing competition and the headache of managed care.

TRANSFORM THE EXPERIENCE

The second big reason for Apple's success is transformation. Almost 20 years ago, when Apple opened its first retail store, nobody cared about phones, and only computer geeks got excited about computers. Apple changed all that. This is the challenge ODs need to overcome if we want our patients to see eyewear as a desirable, emotional purchase and not purely a functional necessity.

Apple took a boring, functional product and completely transformed how the world feels about it. We can do that too. We can change how our clients feel about eyewear.

People buy what makes them feel good, and ultimately, they buy what they desire. Just like Apple, if we make eyewear desirable, people will happily spend more and purchase more frequently. We've been working on this for years in my practice, and the result is that our clients are just as excited about their eyewear as they are about the latest iPhone



or iPad. They wear multiple pairs of glasses, have a wardrobe of eyewear and eagerly await new frame arrivals.

Apple changed how people feel about computers by transforming the experience encompassing their product. That's the strategy of transformation. Transform every customer's experience. Change what it feels like to walk into your practice environment. Change how products are displayed and how prices are presented. Transform the service that your customers and patients receive.

A trip to the optometrist can be an ordinary experience, with ordinary prices, ordinary products, in an ordinary practice. Or it

can mean walking into a special place. When you turn your practice into a "special place" that is where the profit is. *

Optometrist Conor Heaney's practice, Jones And Co. Styling Opticians of Manchester, England, has the highest average eyewear sale in the U.K. at over \$1,200 (£900). He is director of Optical Success Academy, working with independent practices to help them differentiate and successfully increase optical sales revenues. His free report "The 9 Keys That Unlock the Hidden Profits In Your Practice" is available at OpticalSuccessAcademy.com.