

***BASICS FOR YOUR PRACTICE***  
***Peace of Mind***  
***Third in a series***

By Mary Schmidt  
EyeSystems

By now, you've looked over the basics of your practice. You've decided how you want it to run and how you want it staffed. Now the question is how can you maintain that? The reality is you will see change as a constant in your practice. How will you and your staff handle those changes?

The first article in this series dealt with how efficiently you wanted to run your practice. We looked at your day and your behavior. The next article asked you to look at your office manager's role and how to maximize his or her role in your success. This article will deal with the physical environment. You will learn how to critique each area of the practice to confirm that it is running to its maximum potential. If you want your practice to run well, you need the right systems, quality staff and an environment that emphatically communicates both.

Begin in your parking lot and methodically move through the front door and then step-by-step through the entire office. Have everyone on staff walk through individually and give their perspective. Look at everything from a systems point of view. At each area ask, 'does my staff (do I) know what to do here? What does my patient think when they see this? How could this improve?' Do not rush through this process. Each person must take their time. They must sit where the patient sits and look around. What do you see? What do you hear? Does it represent the image you want for the practice?

Here is a check list to assist in evaluating

**WALK THROUGH - PARKING LOT**

1. Accessibility?
2. Identifiable, signage?
3. Cleanliness?
4. What do they see?
5. What's good?

6. Patient expectations? What are they? Are they being met, exceeded?
7. What could be done differently?
8. Does it match with mission statement?
9. My perceptions.

#### **FRONT ENTRANCE**

10. Hours posted?
11. Clean?
12. What do you notice?
13. Signage?
14. My perceptions.

#### **RECEPTION AREA**

15. What happens? Does the patient know what to do? Role-play greeting?
16. Greeting by receptionist?
17. Appearance of staff?
18. What do you see? Decor? Cleanliness?
19. Sit & observe in silence. Physical comfort?
20. Magazines.
21. Printed information, pamphlets.
22. Welcome to office, info about the Drs.
23. What's good?
24. Waiting time...what is said...role-play.
25. What could be done differently?
26. How is this fitting with the mission statement?

27. Patient expectations? What are they? Are they being met, exceeded?
28. My perceptions.

**TRANSITION TO PRE-TEST  
PRE-TESTING**

29. Decor?
30. Cleanliness? - Hand washing?
31. Comfort?
32. How is message conveyed? What is said? Scripts? Role-play new message?
33. Are the benefits to the patient explained?
34. What's good?
35. What could be done differently?
36. Patient expectations? What are they? Are they being met, exceeded?
37. Is this fitting with the Mission Statement?
38. My perceptions.

**TRANSITION TO EXAM  
EXAM**

39. Decor?
40. Cleanliness? - Hand washing?
41. Comfort?
42. Discussion of :        what, why, how
  1. Findings
  2. Next visit
  3. Referrals
43. Staff awareness of what happens in exam room.
44. What's good?
45. What could be done differently?

*Fee presentation?*

- 46. Patient expectations? What are they? Are they being met, exceeded?
- 47. Is Mission Statement being fulfilled?
- 48. My perceptions.

**TRANSITION TO CL TRAINING  
CONTACT LENS TRAINING**

- 49. Decor?
- 50. Cleanliness? - Hand washing?
- 51. Comfort?
- 52. What's good?
- 53. What could be done differently?  
*Fee presentation?*
- 54. Patient expectations? What are they? Are they being met, exceeded?
- 55. Going the extra mile:
  - 1. Sunglasses.
  - 2. Solutions.
  - 3. Tip sheets.
- 56. Is Mission Statement being fulfilled?
- 57. My perceptions.

**TRANSITION TO DISPENSARY  
DISPENSARY**

58. Decor? - Visual Merchandising
59. Cleanliness?
60. Comfort?
61. How are needs assessed?
62. Niche marketing.
63. Multiple pairs - all options - duty to warn.
64. When will glasses be ready? Role-play?
65. What's good?
66. What could be done differently?
67. Patient expectations? What are they? Are they being met, exceeded?
68. Is Mission Statement being fulfilled?
69. My perceptions.

**TRANSITION TO FRONT DESK  
FRONT DESK – DEPARTURE**

70. Decor?
71. Accessibility, comfort?
72. Cleanliness?
73. Signage/policy?
74. Payments?
75. Review instructions?
76. Pre-Appointing?
77. What's good?
78. Patient expectations? What are they? Are they being met, exceeded?
79. What could be done differently?
80. Role play
81. Is Mission Statement being fulfilled?
82. What's the last thing said? Done?
83. My perceptions.

**AREAS OF STRENGTH**

**AREAS TO IMPROVE**

Once everyone has had a chance to walk through the practice and file their report, compile it in an organized format. Use the master checklist and input everyone's findings. This could be assigned to a staff member or the office manager. Hopefully, the report will be long and detailed. Remember: speed is not the issue. The more detailed information gathered, the greater the room for improvement. Once you have the report, schedule a staff meeting and brainstorm with everyone on how to improve. This should be a collective process. If you want staff to "buy in" they must feel that they are part of the solution. Don't be the one with all the answers.

Many of you are aware of the current situation with Toyota cars. Their system used to include employee input. Changes and improvements could be introduced by anyone on staff. They moved away from that and it has cost them dearly. Don't make the same mistake. Use your staff for their strength and knowledge.

If you want peace of mind, each staff member needs to understand and appreciate his or her role in the success of the practice. Use the Toyota example of an organization that lost its way when staff stopped participating. You need to communicate to each staff member just how vital their role is and how much you value them.

The old adage, ***"when something is not working at your practice, the patients know first, the staff will know next and doctor will know last and sometimes not at all."*** Don't fall into that. Empower your staff, expect the best from them and allow them to make the work environment the best it can be. Once you are confident in them, you can sleep soundly every night.

FINAL OF THIS SERIES