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“Early indicators, both quantitatively and qualitatively from our patient surveys and central call center interactions are this: our patients want to feel safe and need to be assured that

we take seriously cleanliness and their safety. If that is accomplished, we believe that patients will be more open to the doctor’s recommendations. Some early Google analytics might suggest the patient is asking more informational questions directly to the medical professional, and are less likely to trust a simple Google search. In the office, it’s not enough to just have a posted sign or a message on our website like everyone else, we must make a concerted effort to clean and disinfect in front of the patient.

Also, in a post COVID-19 world, patients will be less comfortable spending big chunks of time in the office. We have most of the intake steps completed by the patient prior to the visit. We reassure them that our protocols will insure a timely, safe and pleasant experience. Doctors are equipped with slit lamp germ guard, masks, paper or full shield and gloves.

After the exam, we will set the patient up in their “safe-zone” which is essentially a dispensing desk and workstation that we clean and disinfect in their presence. This method not only serves its purpose from a coronavirus standpoint, but it is truly a VIP experience. This process has resulted in an average ticket increase of about \$70 and multiple pair KPIs have gone up about 15 percent and, in many cases, the frames that the optician presented were all purchased.

The coronavirus pandemic has reinforced our 3 pronged strategy (in-store, online, mobile) and put projects such as telehealth at the top of our priority list. One of the first things we did in mid-March was reinstate discussions with several telehealth platforms and by May 1 we were seeing patients remotely.

Patient communication via email and text has been a critical component to what we ultimately believe will be a land grab for market share. We have 20 locations and 20 optometry providers who each made, in conjunction with their office manager, a short 10 to 15 second video letting each of their patients know that they were thinking about them, they can’t wait to take care of their eyecare needs in the near future and to let them know we have (5)

regional hub locations for medical and urgent issues. The feedback on social media and review platforms has been overwhelmingly positive. We are close to launching our eyeglass store, which was in the works prior to COVID-19.

The last new technology related strategy is our mobile eyecare program. This is in conjunction with Opticare Vision Services (formerly Opticare of Utah) whereby we offer on-site eye exams and RX services. The system was originally designed for large employer groups, associations, etc. during the pandemic where we offered concierge service to our elite customers and did a non-contact eyecare experience on their front porch.

We use portable equipment from EyeNetra, Topcon and Marco combined with a non-contact frame selection and measurement tool called Smart Mirror by ABS ACEP France. We firmly believe that if we provide excellent in-office experiences, telehealth services from the comforts of the patient’s home and mobile capabilities for onsite eyecare, it will fundamentally change the eyecare delivery system as we know it.

Safe, happy employees will produce safe and happy patients. The most important thing in my mind, in a post-COVID environment, is that the safety of our patients and employees is paramount but it doesn’t have to be at the cost of an easy, fun and memorable VIP patient experience.

Optometry is the primary care expert in vision and eye health related issues, however, over the years google searches and online “exams” may have taken some of that away. Well now is a great time to take back the position in the patient’s mind as foremost authority in all things eyecare and eye health related. Don’t forget to learn from this time.

Standard Optical was founded in Salt Lake City, Utah in 1911 by Henry Schubach, my great grandfather. Over four generations of Schubach leadership this business has survived two world wars, the Great Depression, recessions, countless military conflicts, Sept 11, the 1987 stock market crash, the 2008 housing market crash and much more, including, on March 18, a 5.7 magnitude earthquake here in Salt Lake City. After a few days of serious aftershocks, we began to realize that we can overcome anything, even when it comes without warning.”

Read the expanded version of Standard Optical’s story on VisionMonday.com. Learn more about what 20-location, 4th generation Standard Optical has been up to in the months leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic and read about how they’re adjusting to reopening after both the advent of the coronavirus—and a 5.7 magnitude earthquake.

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