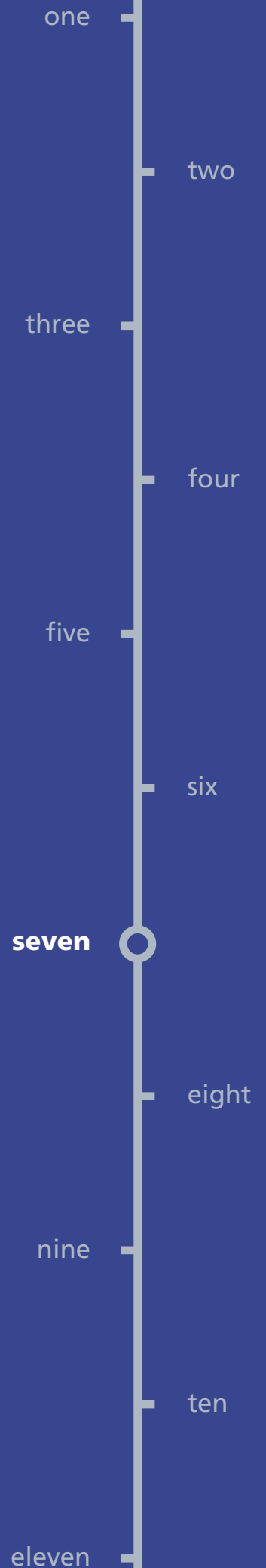




# The Customer Journey

## Touchpoint **seven:** Handover to Dispensing Optician



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This is the stage where many practices lose the opportunity to sell new eyewear to their patients, as well as to exceed their expectations and delight them. Often this is due to a break in the Customer Journey, especially if the Optometrist brings the patient out of the consulting room and tells them to take a seat and that someone will attend to them in due course. The rapport that was started by reception and continued in the consulting room risks being broken, leaving the Dispenser to start all over again. Because of this it is unlikely that most people will want to consider the best eyewear solutions they can afford, unless the Dispenser has exceptionally good patient communication skills. By following an agreed handover procedure this can be avoided, ensuring all patients have an equal opportunity to discuss the best options. When the handover is done well, the Dispenser will be considered by the patient, as a professional member of staff, rather than 'just' a sales assistant.

### Handover to Dispenser

Every Optometrist must be encouraged to introduce each spectacle/contact lens wearing patient to a Dispenser after an eye examination, regardless of the outcome. The introduction should include a summary of the results of the eye examination, along with any dispensing recommendations the Optometrist may have made, albeit in a generic manner. For example, the Optometrist may have discussed varifocal spectacle lenses with the patient after finding the requirement for a small reading addition. During the handover the Optometrist might say something like this:

#### What to say

***'This is [patient's name]. There has been a slight change to the distance vision prescription in the left eye and there is a need for a +1.00 reading addition. I have explained varifocal lenses, but you are the best person to help him/her decide which design would be best for them.'***

This will help the patient to understand that the Dispenser is a skilled professional, not just a sales person. To gain maximum benefit for the patient this conversation must be done in front of them. This avoids

the patient feeling that they are being spoken about. In addition, the patient has a second chance to hear the Optometrist's summary and recommendations, which will be further reinforced in the patient's mind. Whilst Optometrists should be encouraged to discuss lens types, frames and other options, if they have time, it is better to leave the final decision to be made when the patient is with the Dispenser. This way the Dispenser will have the opportunity to discuss all options with the patient, rather than just one!

Another benefit of the handover process is the opportunity for the Optometrist and Dispenser to discuss the implications of the patient's completed lifestyle questionnaire. For example, the patient may be a full time spectacle wearer who occasionally plays sport for which part-time daily disposable contact lens wear may be appropriate. Alternatively the patient may be a full-time contact lens wearer who does not have an up-to-date pair of spectacles. An introduction to a Dispenser, by the Optometrist, will provide the patient with no excuse for not having a pair of spectacles with a current prescription.

### 'No change' prescriptions

For patients leaving the consulting room with 'no change' in their prescription, it is still recommended that they are introduced to a Dispenser. Just because the prescription has not changed does not mean that they will not want to buy a new pair of spectacles or consider the benefits that contact lenses may offer them. The Dispenser will have an opportunity to:

- inspect their current spectacles to assess their condition and make any adjustments, as well as tighten any screws, before handing them back to the patient.
- advise of options to improve their appearance and wearing comfort.
- demonstrate that spectacle frame design and technology has changed a great deal in the last two to three years.

Thinner and lighter weight lenses have become more readily available too. If they rely on their spectacles for driving or working, they can be reminded that they should have a second pair not just as a back up, but

as an alternative. If the current pair are showing signs of wear they can be told that these would be ideal as a second pair, which would be ideal for wearing when gardening, DIY or housework. A new, more fashionable and comfortable 'first' pair will be suitable for all other occasions. This is often an ideal opportunity to review the customer's lifestyle needs for their eyewear. For example, do they have hobbies, interests or vocational needs that could be enhanced with specialist eyewear or contact lenses? Perhaps they would benefit from a pair of prescription sunglasses or reading glasses, to keep by the bed or at the office.

This approach has been shown to increase the number of dispensings and reduce the number of people who feel they cannot have new spectacles because their prescription has not changed. In fact, it is better to avoid the expression 'no change' completely and consider alternative terms to describe the same thing. The use of a phrase, such as: *'The good news is your prescription is stable.'* is likely to lead to more spectacle purchases than just saying there is 'no change'.

### What to do if a Dispenser is not available

Of course there will be times when a patient is brought out of the consulting room and the Dispenser is busy with another customer.

How would this be handled in your practice?

Ideally the options you suggest will all include the patient receiving a handover from the Optometrist to someone, rather than suggesting they just take a seat.

Some practices encourage the Optometrist to introduce the patient to a more experienced Optical Assistant, who is able to help the patient choose frames, whilst waiting for the Dispenser. Alternatively, some Optometrists ask to be interrupted by the Dispenser when they are free. Then a proper handover can take place in front of the patient. Although this does mean that the patient in the consulting room has their eye examination interrupted.

# Touchpoint seven

## Action Plan

Discuss and agree the best ways to ensure every eligible patient is handed over and introduced to a Dispenser by the Optometrist. Also, agree what should happen when a Dispenser is not available.

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....
4. ....