Why should you want to work in an independent practice?

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PLAN
WHY
HOW
WHEN
CONCLUSIONS

Handout from www.bruce-evans.co.uk
for regular tweets on optometric research

Why do your pre-reg year in an independent practice?

- The most important person in your pre-reg year is your supervisor
  - You must meet them before you take the job
  - You must make sure you get on with them
  - Can you learn what you need from them?
  - Will they give you the environment you need?
  - If yes then you will be fine whether they are a multiple or an independent
- In my view, you are more likely to:
  - Get all the ticks above from an independent
  - Have a more fulfilling career in independent practice – as employer or employee

Why be an independent?
Who are you?

- Are you the “unnamed sight tester”
- Do you want to be the personal, named, optometrist of your patients?
- Are you average?
- If you plan to be below average, then best to hide in the anonymity of being unnamed

Who do you need to be?

- YOU need to be able to see the writing on the wall
- Who wants more optometrists?
  - The corporate employers
- The bottom end of the eyecare market will become increasingly competitive

N.B., there are good corporate employers and there are good optoms working for them

Bruce’s predictions – in 10 years:
Nobody in this room will be
- Working for a supermarket
- Doing 10min sight tests
- Lacking confidence in their prescreeners
- Pressured to sell
- Terrified of lawyers letters
- Hating being an optometrist

N.B., there are good corporate employers and there are good optoms working for them

MORE OPTOMETRISTS
MORE EXAMPLES OF POOR EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES
LOWER SALARIES FOR SOME

UK population per optom

N.B., there are good corporate employers and there are good optoms working for them

UK population per optom
Why develop a private practice?

- My pet likes & dislikes:
  - Like kids eyecare
  - Dislike glasses
  - Like being honest
  - Hate throw-away society
- Politicians priorities for NHS
  - Votes
  - Patients
  - Taxpayers
  - Nurses
  - AHPs
  - IHPs

Would NHS dentistry be as well-funded if there were fewer private dentists?
- Would UK optometry have fallen so far behind USA if it were not for the NHS near-monopoly?
- If over time you become a better clinician, will you earn more or less?

Moving beyond NHS optometry

- The ageing population & unpopularity of taxes mean that the NHS will always be under-funded
- NHS optometry will become increasingly unsustainable
- More outlets & the internet mean that spectacle subsidy of sight tests will become less profitable
- You need to build private eye exam income to help support NHS work
- This is only really feasible in the independent sector

Will patients pay for private optoms?

What patients say
- "Eyesight matters so much to me"

- Go upmarket
  - You are worth it
  - You are worth it to your patients!

Plan

WHY

HOW

WHEN

Conclusions

Being different

Typical multiple
- One approach fits all
- Hard sell
- Staff on commission
- Rush sight test
- No time for difficult patients
- Irritated by fussy patients
- Delegate everything they can

Progressive independent
- Individual approach
- Only sell when needed
- Don’t
- Enjoy challenging cases
- Good at communicating
- Encourage individuality
- Communications with clinical emphasis

What patients say
- "I've not had that done before"

- Being seen to be different

Typical multiple
- Shop or store
- Optician
- Customer
- Avoid saying "no change"
- Don't recommend ready-made
- Discuss profitable options
- Strong corporate theme
- Glossy mailshots for sales

Progressive independent
- Practice
- Optometrist
- Patient
- Tell if suitable for ready-made
- Discuss all options
- Encourage individuality
- Express your passion
- Communications with clinical emphasis

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Why buy into a going concern?

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"I want to be independent, but I don’t want to run a business"

Where?

- Thinking people

- Lots of thinking people

Has your career progressed in the last 10 yrs?

- In 2008 the Institute of Optometry launched a Doctor of Optometry degree in collaboration with London South Bank University

- 5 year part time professional doctorate
  - Year 1 has 13 taught days & 2 assignments
  - Year 2 has 8 taught days & 2 assignments
  - Years 3-5 are supervised doctoral research
    - Research most likely to be clinical, in practice

  - "the ultimate Higher Qualification for UK optometrists"

Communication is the key

- Kings College London Research
  - The Practical Work of the Optometrist 2. ESRC-funded Knowledge Exchange Project of Kings Work Interaction and Technology Research Centre & College of Optometrists. Dirk vom Lehn, Helena Webb, Christian Heath, Bruce Evans, Peter Allen, Will Gibson

- Patients value eye contact
  - Record-keeping is important, but so is eye contact
  - At key times make sure that eye contact is restored
  - Loss of eye contact can lead to the patient repeating

- Patients may feel that they should not have symptoms if it is a routine check
  - Think about how what we say is heard by the patient

- Try to watch yourself with video

Conclusions from case scenarios

- The speaker’s personal perspectives
  - The eye exam is a “set piece”
  - This enables us to mind-read
  - From experience, we can learn to predict what the patient is about to think (usually!)
  - Then, we can reassure them before they become concerned

- Always address the presenting symptom
- A happy patient is a patient for life
When?

- Now!
- An investment in communication is an investment in the future
- You will be more valuable to your patients and to your employers
- You will enjoy your work more
- Make sure you are working for someone who allows you to bank your new skills

Plan

- Why
- How
- When

Conclusions

- Earning a living from NHS patients is likely to become increasingly difficult
- Our NHS contractual status makes it easier for us to build a private practice than other UK healthcare practitioners
- Start working now to build your private practice
  - Look for work in the independent sector
  - Invest in your relationship with patients
  - Invest in equipment & training
  - Specialise
  - Excel in communication

How to get a pre-reg job with an independent practice

- Ideally, start a couple of years ago!
- Personal contact is best approach
  - Your optom or family optom
  - Did you do work experience?
  - Write to local optoms
  - Go to local optom association meetings
- If unsuccessful for pre-reg, but you want a career in the independent sector:
  - Foster links with independents now

Conclusions

Some famous people who were dyslexic