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14 Brand Narratives From Conception to Consumer

BY DEIRDRE CARROLL / SENIOR EDITOR

The climate of today's competitive eyewear market reflects the increasing importance of consumers relating to a brand's story and image to forge a connection and prompt them to make a purchase.

Product developers, sales representatives and retail staffs have had to become storytellers, weaving a brand's tale in just the right way to capture the buyer's interest, imagination and finally, their hard-earned money. But in order to do so there must be a story to tell.

In the next several pages, *Vision Monday* takes a look at the way a number of eyewear brands convey their messaging to their accounts to ensure the end customer understands and is engaged by their story. From established lines to those new to the market

and from licensed collections to original eyewear brands, we spoke directly with a select group of people who help conceive and support these stories about how they help eyewear retailers and ECPs communicate these brand narratives.

Sprinkled throughout the story, *VM* also tapped the perspective of a few leading ECPs and optical retailers about what they feel is important when talking about and presenting an eyewear brand to customers.

A few of the things we discovered in talking with these suppliers and retailers is that the role of the sales representative has evolved. They have become brand ambassadors, as opposed to just commissioned sales people hawking a company's wares. They are often the first contact an account has with a brand, especially a brand looking to establish itself, and they have become tasked with the responsibility

of taking a retailer through a brand's journey, as well as its product line.

We've also learned how important a robust and compelling suite of visual materials is in supporting a brand's messaging and helping to craft its story both in the training of a store's staff and in the buying process for the customer.

Additionally, we uncovered how social media has allowed brands to have a direct relationship with the end consumer and created an additional touch point for a brand to tell its story consistently, repeatedly and with a degree of integrity they have more control over.

Ultimately, it's become more about engaging the account, and through them the consumer, on several levels; talking *with* them, not *at* them, to make an impact and illicit an emotional response to a brand's story and its products. ■



"I love to tell the story of how a specific vendor started, where they are based and who designs the product, especially if I've met them. Anytime we have a frame vendor visit the office, I make sure all of our staff glean a few tidbits about the company or manufacturing process."



Cindy Harmon

Manager, Sonoma Eyeworks

Santa Rosa, Calif.

www.sonomaeyeworks.com

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HANNAH SARBIN

Vice President
Altair Brands

“Collaborating with an established brand like Bebe, where there is a well-developed brand DNA, makes it easy to build a consistent message. The brand cache and loyal customer base lends itself to fluid extension of our business into the customer’s personal style.

Altair is innovative in the digital space, creating content that can be shared through web-based programs, video conferencing, company developed applications—like the Bebe style quiz—and digital catalogs and product tools. Our approach through interactive training provides each of our new accounts in-depth training regarding ad campaigns, editorial, social media and new product releases. It gives each account a comprehensive view into the Bebe world that they can get excited about.

To further build upon these virtual relationships, our sales reps do in-person meetings with



each of their accounts at Vision Expo East and Vision Expo West. This face time with their accounts is what ultimately what seals the deal and makes our sales team an integral part of the Altair strategy. As sales consultants they also act as brand ambassadors to each of our accounts, communicating the brand essence.

We make sure to arm them with extensive training that exposes them to information from all lines of the

business on a regular basis. These monthly educational sales seminars cover all the vitals of the business, from product to sales, marketing programs to increase engagement and public relations initiatives for added exposure. This way, as our brand ambassadors, they are knowledgeable about what distinguishes Bebe in the market.

In addition to the in-person and digital sales training on a monthly basis, Altair provides sales reps a comprehensive website (www.altaireyewear.com), sales guide sheets with specific talking points, and brand books and sheets that can be easily downloaded, as well as press releases, editorial placements, strategic promotional materials and consumer gifting pieces.

We’re lucky that maintaining the integrity and consistency of the Bebe brand is an easy one. The brand DNA is so strong and exceptionally well supported with a captivating media campaign from the brand itself. Our relationship ensures that we’re cohesive when it comes to brand and marketing initiatives specific to eyewear. Together, our partnership is seamless and we’re able to make sure the end consumer receives the full Bebe experience that they’ve come to identify with.”

GLENN RUSK

Commercial Senior Vice President
Safilo North America

“The Bobbi Brown brand story lends itself particularly well to the eyewear industry, giving added value to eyecare providers who are looking for a unique concept. Bobbi Brown was a pioneer of approaching make-up as a way to enhance rather than transform a woman’s natural appearance. This distinct point of view really sets her apart within the cosmetics industry, and will do the same in the eyewear industry. Safilo has partnered with Bobbi to help women select frames in exclusive color palettes that complement their skin tones and personal style to enhance their overall look. Everything that has been created for Bobbi Brown eyewear has been done in collaboration with Bobbi Brown Cosmetics, and we will continue to partner with them to

ensure her message is consistent on all touch points.

Her innovative approach wherein you choose your eyewear based on your personal style, face shape and skin tone opens up opportunities to change the way eyewear is perceived, by looking at it as a way to enhance one’s natural beauty. To convey this, Safilo will be offering in-store training to all accounts, supported with educational presentations, brochures and videos. Accounts will receive training



and tips directly from Bobbi Brown in the videos, introducing them to the concept and collection structure, and teaching them how to help their patients pick the perfect Bobbi Brown frame in the perfect color.

We are presenting a holistic program to our accounts, not just product. The program will consist of educational P.O.S. materials to help the consumer ‘pick their perfect frame’ with Bobbi’s approach, including counter cards, displays, brochures, brand images, videos and a mobile promotion. We have also launched www.bobbibrowneyewear.com to provide the most updated information on the collection.

Our sales force is also critical to the success of the Bobbi Brown collection. Safilo is providing a comprehensive sales toolkit to introduce them to the brand and its unique approach, and in turn, enable them to train store staff online or in-person. We will also sponsor selective in-store events to bring Bobbi Brown eyewear to life. Additionally, we are very excited about this year’s Vision Expo East, where customers will have the opportunity to see Bobbi present the brand and the entire collection.”

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"We've mounted tablets to our frame boards that play videos about the brands of frames and lenses we carry. I think a moving message gives words life and helps capture the customer's attention. Research shows that 72 percent are more likely to take actionable steps when a video is present."



Krystal Patterson

Executive Manager, My Eye Xpert
Gurnee, Ill.

www.visionsource-myeyexpertgurnee.com

LINDA RYNO

Vice President, International Brands
Marchon Eyewear

"The existing brand awareness of a licensed brand generally creates a 'shortcut' since the customer already knows what the brand stands for, may already have an emotional connection to it and is willing to pay for the intangible benefits they get from associating themselves with a brand that makes them appear cool or fashionable. However, while G-Star Raw is an established premium denim brand in Europe with a loyal following, it has lower brand awareness in the U.S. so the above mentioned shortcut does not exist in most cases. It provides an opportunity for us to properly educate the accounts and ensure the appropriate brand image is understood and communicated. Our eyewear collection helps reinforce the accounts' understanding and perception of G-Star Raw since it so closely aligns with the brand's philosophy.

An account may be a consumer's first touch point with G-Star Raw, so it's critical the account have a complete understanding of the brand's history, philosophy, consumer demographics and particularly the features and benefits of our eyewear. As brand ambassadors, our reps play a critical role in helping to establish a new brand such as G-Star Raw in the U.S. optical channel. Often times they represent an account's first experience with the brand, so they are critical in establishing the initial emotional connection.

This connection is reinforced through consistent and frequent messaging whether it is in-store staff trainings, trunk shows or external touch points such as trade shows and trade marketing. With G-Star Raw in particular, sharing the impressive U.S. growth plans is also necessary to help build confidence in the brand. Although a licensor store visit is always a plus, it's often not possible so reps can take them on a virtual tour of the brand's website and share other social media outlets.

The brand experience is further delivered through product, packaging, marketing support and service that is consistent with the brand messaging. G-Star is represented in-store through institutional



displays and collateral that is consistent with the brand DNA. Multiple touch points are utilized and additional support materials include a G-Star Raw Eyewear training video, iPad presentation, sales sheets and merchandising guidelines.

Accounts are reminded to follow the brand via their multiple social media outlets such as Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest etc. This messaging is further emphasized through email blasts and newsletters from the brand team. Most importantly, we ensure the integrity and consistency of the brand story by partnering with the right accounts who not only understand and believe in the brand but who properly execute the brand's merchandising and service guidelines."

GIOVANNI ACCONGIAGIOCO

CEO
Italia Independent USA

"Creating and sustaining a coherent message in a competitive industry like eyewear is a big challenge. It all starts with product development and it is very important to match the product with the story you are trying to tell. Persistence and repetition of the brand story within the organization, reps and customer base is also key in creating a compelling and coherent message.

We are a relatively new brand and our story is at the center of what we do, from a product and market-

ing standpoint. We have a very tight connection between our sales and marketing teams. Twice yearly we conduct company wide sales meetings to cherish that connection and to further expose the entire team to all the activities, next steps and plans for the brand.

Our reps play a key role in telling our story. They are the true brand ambassadors and the face of our company in the marketplace. They are the ones spreading our story, representing the brand and the connection between our organization, the accounts and the end consumers. Our brand is a big believer of below the line marketing activities, so in-store events, trunk shows and trade shows are the core of what we do. These activities not only support the partnership we share with the accounts but are also an opportunity to access the market directly in a one-on-one level.

Training new accounts also starts with the reps. We provide extensive and comprehensive materials with all the product descriptions, training tools, newsletters and information about the brand in 360 degrees. As our brand ambassadors, our reps are



responsible for passing all information to each and every account. We fully support them and provide handouts such as our company profile book that summarizes our brand message, culture and philosophy, as well as all our brand's activities worldwide. It is a tool that helps tell our story as a lifestyle brand thus helping the accounts so they can tell the full story to the end consumer.

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"Keeping my clients up-to-date and wearing individualized frames is one of the biggest aspects of my business. Every year, I visit the international shows in Milan, Paris and Tokyo to look for manufacturers that make a statement, use bold color and feature exceptional design."



Ann Braga

Owner, Ann's Eyewear Boutique
Twin Falls, Idaho
www.annseyewearboutique.com

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Ensuring the integrity of our brand story to the end consumer is the most difficult point to achieve among all the others. We really count on our reps and keep them updated with twice monthly calls on all activities around the brand so they can support their accounts. Internally, our customer service team is also briefed on all the messaging and activities so at every touch point with our clients the message remains the same. Through social media we have been maintaining a direct relationship with the end consumers and through those channels we have kept the consistency of our story while speaking to our end consumer on a one-on-one basis."

KRISTIN CALIMLIM

Brand Manager
Lafont

"A compelling brand story is not written overnight. In today's market large corporations spend millions of dollars along with countless hours creating an image and most importantly reinforcing that portrayal. Challenges arise when small businesses compete head to head with these giants whose identity is just as, if not more, compelling, but find it difficult vocalizing that identity.



For us, brand training starts not only with the optician who works with the product, but with all aspects of the ECP's practice. It is extremely important for all individuals within an office to understand what is offered at their establishment. A large amount of

attention is paid to helping the ECP understand the depth and variety of our frame line. The moment an optician is as well versed in the product as the sales rep, the sales rep has done their job effectively.

As such, our sales representatives are considered ambassadors for our brand and play an integral role in the presentation of our collection. They are the first contact and face of the brand for each ECP. In-store events such as trunk shows are key to brand recognition and growth within the market. Lafont goes a step further and offers private styling events to interact with end consumers and to ensure the brand story is being reinforced. Though we provide training materials and presentations for the opticians, and leave behind key points that can be reviewed daily, a product like Lafont cannot be justly represented in pixels and text. A collection like ours requires the fit, feel and look of the product to speak volumes for the brand story.

Additionally, trade shows are one of the best stages for communicating an evolving brand story. New releases, designer inspirations, colors and trends of the season, can all be communicated in one venue to several accounts over one weekend.

Repetition and consistent reinforcement in all aspects of media is also important. From our website to our Pinterest page, even a presentation to an optician; we must be consistent so that no matter how the end consumer receives their information the story is the same."

SHANE BAUM

Founder/CEO
Baumvision

"I feel like the word 'develop' is a bad place to start when talking about a brand. The world's best brands are not 'developed,' they exist in the hearts and minds of like-minded individuals that create products and associated materials that speak of their passion and integrity. Louis Vuitton did not set out to create a brand. He built luggage that was stylish, of high quality and distinct in its design; this is what became his 'brand.'

For Leisure Society, translating our passion and the product's 'reason for being' is the first step in introducing it to new accounts. Educating the account, and ultimately the consumer, on the levels of quality and why they should consider paying more for something that will ultimately be a better investment.

In my estimation, with the prevalence of online cloud-based ordering systems and real time inventory management, sales reps are turning more into sales incentivized marketing agents for our brand in charge of education, merchandising, events and local advertising. We provide them with well-articulated brand books, seasonal movies and individual marketing plans to help them support accounts.



We are constantly communicating the evolutions of our brand stories via our website, blogs, social media, our sales agents and anybody that's unlucky enough to sit next to me on a long flight. It is all about repetition and keeping it simple. For my signature collection, Leisure Society, the product messaging is one sentence; 'Leisure Society is a classically designed 12, 18 and 24 karat gold plated titanium collection with the best of the best polarized lenses in a real leather case.' After that, it gets interesting... 'The designer is this crazy guy from Iowa that moved to California and likes to listen to indie rock, fly fish and go on British pheasant shoots with the royal family.' As such, it's up to me to keep the story evolving as the 'brand' is simply sharing interesting chapters with those I love the most."

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JOE TALLIER

Vice President of Global Sales
Ogi Eyewear

“The main challenges when developing a compelling eyewear brand story are staying original, remaining relevant and possessing the ability to evolve the brand over time to keep pace with current pop culture. For a brand to be successful it must continually evolve. Ogi Eyewear is quickly becoming an industry leader in the fashion optical market due to its constant commitment to high quality, on-trend designs and unprecedented price points. A synergy of fashion, new technology and affordability continues to create a solid foundation for the line’s success.

Our Seraphin line is an elite collection that reflects the essence of classic eyewear with a sharp modernistic edge. It does not aim to simply bring back to life eyewear from the past but to synthesize the tradition anew. The best way we are able to communicate these brand positions is through our highly trained professional sales team, trade magazines and trade shows.



Sales representatives are the most important part of the equation and they serve as our brand ambassadors for communicating the purpose of our products. The sales representatives at Ogi provide in-store training at the client’s request and trunk shows and fashion shows

are all done in conjunction with our sales force. Brand training for the accounts is a continuing, on-going effort that makes our training and education unique from other companies. It is a vigilant effort to communicate to our clients the special features, benefits and highlights of our products. This is done through trade advertising, our website, our sales reps, our direct mail program, our presence at trade shows, and through our online education offerings. Ogi also provides brand books, P.O.P. materials, an interactive website and direct email updates to accounts.

Trade shows specifically are events where the ECP can have a one-on-one presentation with the brand and the product to further familiarize themselves with our products. In our opinion, trade shows are very important for the ECP. If a company is busy at a trade show it generally equates to the success of their brands. At events like these, we are sure to communicate consistently through our all of our brands and use the finest materials throughout each so that the fit and finish, or as we like to call it, the hand of the product, is consistent throughout the respective collections while staying luxurious and superior when compared to their competitors.”

LUCA FUSO

Global Head, Proprietary Brands Division
Safilo Group

“A brand story needs to be believable and credible to create an emotional connection with the consumer, while being rooted in the brand’s DNA. In the case of Polaroid, our brand positioning is relevant, differentiating and sustainable. We are true to who we are: the inventor and expert in polarization. In essence, Polaroid eyewear offers a superior quality of vision at a very competitive price and this translates as a very tangible benefit complementing a unique heritage.

Training of the Polaroid message is supported via print and digital means. Our Polaroid ‘Smart Book,’ available on safilorep.com, incorporates all the training required to be successful including our brand positioning, our lens/technology story, product over-

view, merchandising options, role playing and selling tips (e.g., overcoming obstacles). Additionally, national sales meetings are conducted annually to highlight new product releases, merchandising options and selling best practices since our sales reps are always the driving force behind the way a brand is present on the market. They play a critical role so it is very important that reps can learn from one another’s best practices and selling tips. Sharing insights on how to overcome obstacles allows reps old and new to better service their clients. We also conduct webinars regularly to communicate calls of action.



Polaroid is in many ways different from other brands and this is worth communicating. For ‘big story’ product releases, we provide posters, counter cards, displays and other P.O.S. marketing collateral to support and promote the Polaroid brand. In addition, logo plates, sales trays and mirrors make a strong brand statement. We communicate our brand story on all marketing materials, via our ‘Perfect Vision’ tagline and reinforced with our Point of Sale Tool Kit. Our premium brand tools offer practical and persuasive sales support and add impact to the brand experience. Every merchandiser includes a lens tester, side-by-side comparison mirror and polarization benefits with striking icons in line with consumer communications.

By sticking to our space and the belief that ‘Polaroid = Eye Care offering High Protection and Superior Vision’ on all product, communications, P.O.S. materials, training and education, we continually ensure the integrity of the brand story to the end consumer.”



"We merchandise our frame displays by brand and use plaques and counter cards to help define each one. We are also fond of keeping Look Books in our waiting area. Companies like Barton Perreira, Andy Wolf and Salt have creative ones that definitely help depict each brand's attitude."



David Schultz, OD
 Owner, Urban Optics
 San Luis Obispo, Calif.
www.urbanoptics.com

SHEILA HAILE

Director, Marketing & Creative Services
 ClearVision Optical

"The challenge when developing an original eyewear brand begins with ensuring a complete understanding of the marketplace before development begins. Once this research is complete, and a solid brand DNA is developed, a coherent brand story can effectively follow.

Developing the brand DNA is key to telling a compelling story. We start by establishing key terms that represent what the brand stands for. For PuriTi, our new private label titanium eyewear collection for men, we knew that anyone interested in titanium would be interested in quality and design. We intentionally wanted to marry this with a price point that was advantageous to the ECP. We also clarified exactly who the target demographic is. While developing PuriTi, we named our target consumer and pasted his image up in the marketing department. We consistently asked ourselves... 'What would Rodger want?' This helped ensure we were staying true to the essence of the brand.

A compelling story is developed through consistency; the selection of colors, taglines and materials that reflect the established brand DNA and communicate the essence of the brand visually. For



PuriTi, we are launching a consumer facing video the ECP can play in their waiting room. These tools engage and educate the ECP and empower them to speak to the consumer about the brand. For 2014, we launched a new tablet based system.

We have multi-page tablet presentations for each brand our sales representative can use with an ECP. Additionally, we train our reps on brand strategy and positioning at our sales meetings throughout the year. The rep is critical. The rep knows and understands at a base level, the issues an associate can face. He/she can explain how to address specific questions and how to explain the product to a consumer in a way the associate can best relate to and relay with confidence.

Trade shows and events are also key. They allow us to showcase the brand to a large audience at one time. They also allow for one-on-one conversations and demonstrations where questions can be asked without the pressure of an actual sales call. CVO also has a robust trunk show program. Our reps are well versed in speaking directly to consumers and often do well through this venue. Last year, we launched our 'State Show in a Box' concept, which has proved successful and this year we will be attending a third more shows than last.

In terms of merchandising, for PuriTi, we developed a retail-inspired suite of materials, including a brand ID, counter card, a features card for consumers, a hanging banner and a custom window display. Created to complement each other in store, these retail materials reflect the sophistication of the PuriTi consumer while visually promoting the advantages of titanium. The data proves that consumers relate to brands that represents what they stand for. For PuriTi, we hand selected the materials, the shape of each merchandising item and the colors so it represents what appeals to our guy. The more consistent the brand positioning is in the optical store, the quicker and more fully the consumer recognizes the brand. The more fully a consumer recognizes a brand they relate to and trust, the more apt they are to select that brand for their eyewear."

KEVIN HACKETT

In-House Sales Manager
 Raen Optics

"Raen was created with the intention of creating a truly unique, handmade product while embracing our motto of 'Modern-Classic,' modern in terms of materials, craftsmanship and attention to detail but classic in terms of product design and overall inspiration. For Raen our challenge was to develop a brand story that was all about authenticity and remaining true to this founding fundamental brand DNA. It would have been easy for us to chase trends in eyewear and mold our company to be a replica of other successful brands, but we choose a slightly different route.



What helps convey our product story is compelling marketing that depicts the everyday life of a Raen enthusiast, as well as using our brand ambassadors and influencers to live the story of the brand. For instance, our #throughtheeyes campaign showcases that we are adventurers, seekers, craftsman, artists, etc. and Raen is just another outward extension of ourselves.

When we bring on an account, we do everything possible to partner with the newest member of the 'Raen Family' and ensure that their staff has been given all the brand and product education we can provide. Whenever possible, our Raen sales force will hold a product clinic to break down the brand; explaining not only the features and key distinctions

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of our styles but our founding story. We find that our story allows for sales staffs to create a conversation with the customer, rather than a sales pitch, and that customers not only buy into the story of a California-based, independent optics brand offering competitively priced eyewear, but they buy into the actual brand. Raen customers will often stop each other in passing to ask, 'Are those Raen frames?' There is a definite sense of inclusion when people buy Raen, and we are stoked to have a growing family of fans.

When we communicate new product or evolutions of our brand we cast a wide net via email blasts to our retail family, as well as a sales rep specific email with dialogue that should be shared with all accounts. On a more micro scale, we try to contact each and every retailer to notify them of exciting updates. Social media has also been a huge component of keeping our fans and retail family engaged with the brand. Followers are always supplied with breaking Raen news and updates.

As a tight knit crew of passionate and detail-oriented Raen employees, keeping continuity of the brand DNA and conveying the appropriate story to our consumer is of the utmost importance. It always starts with providing the best product we can at a reasonable price and never deviating from our 'Handmade & Heartfelt' brand motto. Next, marketing must remain true to the brand, design-driven, ahead of the curve and putting the focus on the core message while never losing sight of subtleties. Lastly, part of our message is appreciating our retailers; when you buy into the brand, you buy into our family."

NICOLAS ROSEILLIER

Creative Director
REM Eyewear

"An established, or licensed brand, like John Varvatos, Converse or Tumi, has advantages because of the high level of loyalty gained from its history and the consumer's associations to the brand. Both are key factors in their decision to buy a frame from the eyewear collection. Communicating an established

brand story is much easier than having to tell a story without a history.

However, challenges arise with communicating an established brand if there are any negative perceptions that consumers may have from a past experience with the brand. Compelling communication is more difficult than ever because consumers are savvier and there is increased competition in the marketplace. To get past these limitations, we have to really understand the customers, understand the brand, and the relationship between the two.



That makes brand training essential for our sales reps at REM. We consider all of us to be brand ambassadors and believe that every interaction is an opportunity to build the brand. In order to tell the brand's story properly, we make sure that all sales reps have a crystal clear understanding of the brand, including products, target audience and the core message. The main flow of brand information to our accounts consists of: exclusive brand videos, training guides and brand-specific courses, as well as other supporting material that identifies the brand DNA.

Those supporting materials are a must in order to fully tell a brand's story. We always provide our clients with the latest P.O.P., counter cards and train-

ing guides with each brand's latest campaign images. We also have a very strong marketing program in the form of co-op where we work with our accounts to customize their retail space to tell a more powerful story.

REM sales reps also play a vital role in our organization. They are our eyes and ears on the ground which makes them a great source for valuable information. We are always receiving important information from our reps that often turn into positive changes in our products, trade shows and business in general. Additionally, new developments are communicated to our accounts through our sales reps who are equipped with iPads, brand books and new press so they are always prepared to really be brand ambassadors. From the home office, I think we do a great job with our account engagement through Facebook and Twitter and of course through email updates directly to our accounts.

The best way, however, to ensure the integrity and consistency of a brand's story to the end consumer is to always create fresh new products that appeal to them every season. At the end of the day, a licensed brand with a strong reputation is the result of continuous delivery of the right quality products to the right consumer."

CLAIRE GOLDSMITH

Managing Director
CG Eyewear and Oliver Goldsmith
Sunglasses

"I heard that at Silmo 2013 there were 900 exhibitors. So the challenge is to stand out when surrounded by so much competition. You have to be singularly focused and have total belief in what you are doing, stay true to your values and philosophies and concentrate on communicating that story to retailers. Although the end customer is key, you need to do a lot even before someone picks up a pair of your glasses. A brand like mine, Claire Goldsmith, is lucky to have a unique story. Its relationship with Oliver Goldsmith gives it a lineage, but the heritage is meaningless if the product is not in keeping with its history.

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"I involve our staff during the frame buying selection so we all get a chance to ask the reps questions. We like to find out if a famous figure or advertisement may be associated with a certain frame so it can be conveyed to our customer. Involving the staff helps everyone understand what we stock and why."



Jana Lewis
 Manager, Spectacle Eye Design
 Austin, Texas
www.spectacleeyedesign.com

When it comes to accounts, it starts with a relationship and mutual respect. Many of our accounts around the world have become friends of the brand and know my team and I personally. If we can translate our vision and our story correctly to them, then it makes their job much easier. We provide every new account with an introduction pack, information about the brand and everyone who works in the business, so they have a complete full circle understanding of what they are selling. I try to keep P.O.S. to a minimum as a lot of stores we work with see it as 'clutter.' However, if we do make P.O.S., it is useful or fun in some way. We make brand story books in five languages, tote bags with Audrey Hepburn and Michael Caine on them, little sunglasses candies, large CG Union Jack cleaning cloths, tea cups (we are British after all!) and so on.

We also travel and visit all year long. We make the effort to go and see our customers in their stores to show them that we are as invested in their business as they are in ours. As such, sales reps are vital. You can have the best product in the world but if you have no one selling it, then it's hard to move forward. These days, sales are not really done at trade shows, though



we do six a year in all corners of the Earth. We use them to connect with our reps, clients and retailers. Shop owners come to shows to choose the brands they want to work with, however, when it comes to actual buying everyone knows that if the staff of a store is involved, they sell it better.

So, we find in-store trunk shows an incredibly successful tool as well. With the amount of products available and all the licensed frames on the market, people are quite disconnected with what they are buying. To meet the owner or the designer is something people respond to amazingly.

Last year, we also started a social media lifestyle campaign, hashtag #mycglife. An ongoing photography competition across Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, it gives us a visual feed of our frames on customers, friends and retailers. One look at the #mycglife feed instantly gives you an overall impression of the brand and our customer. The campaign is translated into brand material, such as banners and P.O.S. It is also featured heavily in our booth branding, which is a great way of introducing people to our brand, as well as for current stockists to spot their customers and friends.

By only working with independent opticians and eyewear boutiques, we ensure that there is consistency in the commitment to be the best. The store owners and their staff, who will be telling our brand story, have enormous integrity and passion not only for our brand but the industry itself. If we do our job properly at the beginning, it allows for the journey of that story to be translated well to the end customer."

MILENA CAVICCHIOLI
 Vice President of Marketing
 Luxottica North America

"The challenge in developing a compelling, coherent brand story is distinguishing the brand's persona and finding the right formula to build a deeper connection. It's a matter of identifying the right touch points, language and tools to communicate the richness of the brand to our clients and to the end consumer.

This is where we have had great success with Ray-Ban. The brand is committed to developing powerful narrative that aligns the brand heritage with the market's deeper interests. By tapping into the target's inner needs and desires, we are able to build an emo-

tional response. That authenticity has resulted in solid consumer awareness and demand over the years and across the globe.

We like to speak about education and sharing with accounts rather than 'training.' It entails in-depth storytelling on the brand's history, DNA codes and its



icons. It also includes providing comprehensive information on the consumer target, positioning and messaging. Moreover, it is about finding ways to inspire our accounts by creating an interactive and dynamic environment for sharing information and ideas.

Luxottica provides continual training and materials on the brand and the latest collection launches. We offer an extensive set of tools and resources that are created in-line with the brand's strategy, art direction and visual design. Sales reps are the ambassadors and backbone of the brands while online training, in-store events and trade shows create a platform to further build brand awareness.

Ensuring the integrity of the brand story to the end consumer is the most challenging but it is extremely important. It is a matter of supplying accounts with the right knowledge and tools so they are able to understand and showcase the brand accurately." ■

Additional reporting by Catherine Wolinski.