

Dynamic Demos

New Dispensing Tools Are Bringing Lenses to Life for Patients



JEFF HOPKINS / CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Chances are you wouldn't buy a house without seeing it in person. After all, you're going to be spending a significant amount of time there. Yet most of us spend almost every waking hour "living" in our eyeglass lenses, but we don't actually get to experience them until after we've purchased them.

That's the eternal problem of selling eyeglass lenses: you can tell patients that digital designs will work better than the standard designs they are wearing today, that a premium AR coating will help them see better and look better, and that every day, they'll enjoy a fuller, more satisfying visual

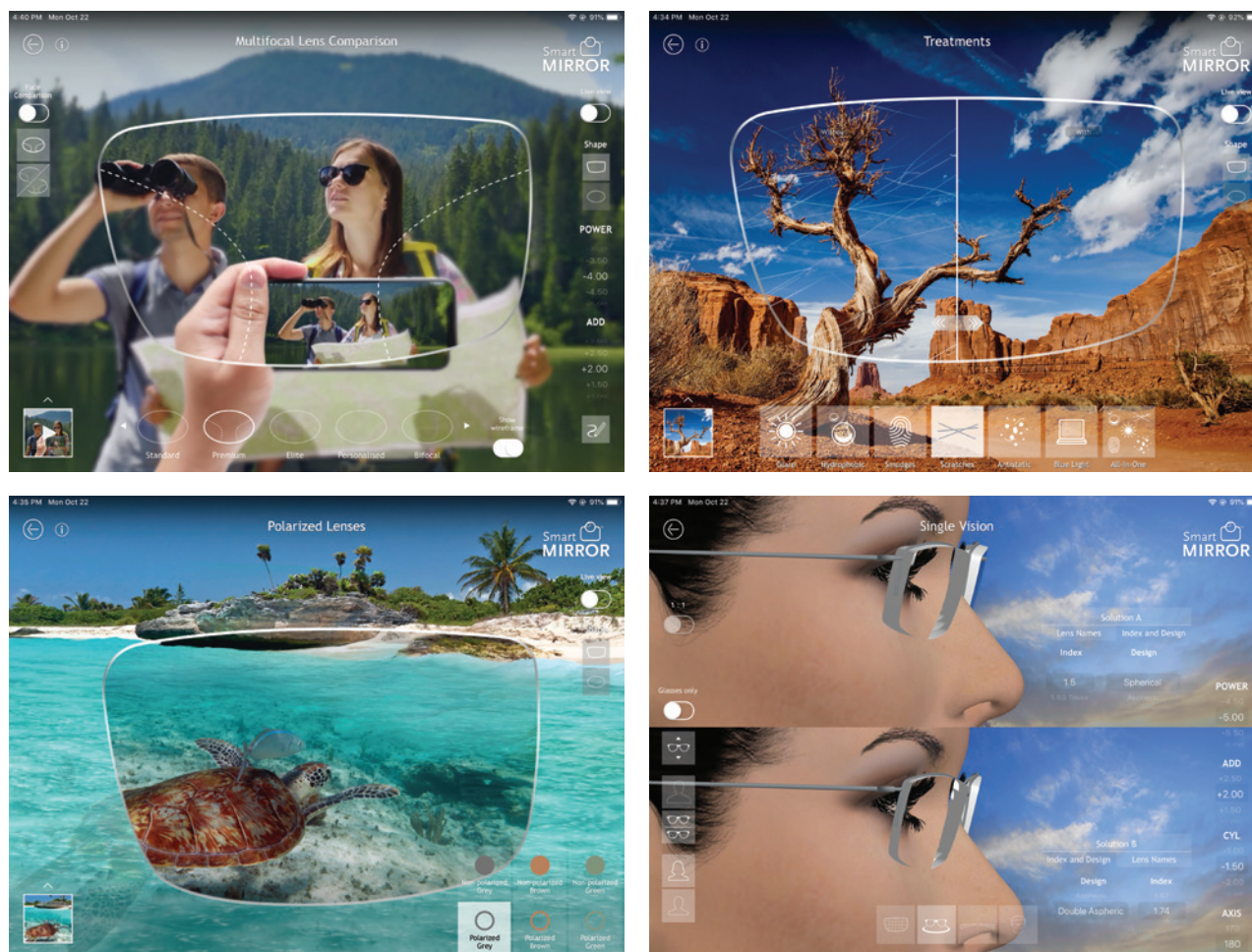
experience. But how do you make them see the difference?

Patients are used to the vision experience provided by their current lenses; their brains have learned to ignore whatever limitations those lenses have. That can set them up for a nice "wow" effect when they put their new lenses on, but until that point, the idea of "better" is somewhat abstract. Choosing better lenses, then, is to some degree an act of faith, and given that the best lenses today represent a substantial investment, the stakes for the patient are fairly high.

In the old days, dispensers relied on demonstration techniques that were two-dimensional in more ways than one: pictures in a brochure or

on a dispensing mat, or the classic hand-drawn "hourglass" sketch showing the differences among progressive lens designs. Aside from the obvious drawbacks (like dependence on the artistic skills of the dispenser, in the latter case) these types of illustrations don't necessarily jibe with the idea of a premium-priced, high-tech digital lens.

But we live in a digital era, and the development of digital lenses is paralleled by the development of digital lens demonstrators. Today, ECPs have access to a range of tools—some virtual, some "live"—that provide interaction, a little drama, and above all, a vivid realism to demonstrating the advantages of upgraded lenses and lens treatments.



Through comparisons, ABS Smart Mirror allows patients to see the benefits of products like personalized progressives and AR coating.

Virtual Demos

For demonstration purposes, lenses cry out for animations that show how a customized progressive expands wearer's clear vision zones, how AR wipes away lens reflections, how photochromic treatments darken and clear a lens. Static images can give the idea, but they can't bring it to life. Lenticular displays (pictures that change as the viewing angle changes) were a first step toward more dynamic demonstrator tools, but their effectiveness was limited.

The first virtual displays on the market were lens try-on systems. These systems used a camera to photograph patients wearing different frames, allowing patients to compare images

of themselves wearing different frames side-by-side, and patients with strong prescriptions to see themselves clearly in different frame styles.

A big breakthrough came when lens manufacturers developed digital measurement systems, like Zeiss's i.Terminal and Essilor's VisiOffice. Since these systems included digital cameras and displays, it made sense to include lens demonstration features. Tablet-based measurement and lens demonstrators allowed a more interactive discussion with patients, as they could sit side-by-side and view lens options together.

Typical systems incorporate three different functions: fitting measurements, including position-of-wear measurements used to customize ad-

vanced freeform lenses; frame try-on; and demos of lens features like standard vs. customized progressives, anti-reflective coatings, and photochromic tints. A system like this, loaded into a tablet computer, provides a dispenser with a portable tool that can be used in every aspect of the patient's experience in the optical shop.

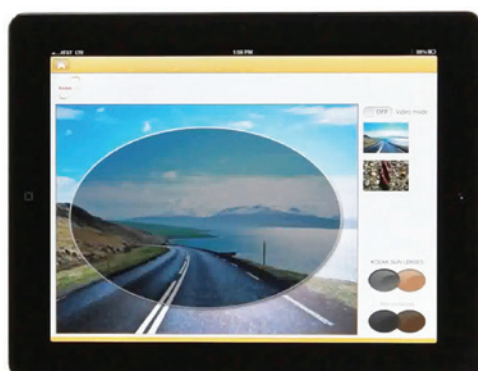
The interactivity that a digital demonstration can offer allows the demo to be personalized in a way that is analogous to the personalization of lenses. A static demonstration tool like a dispensing mat can only show generic comparisons; for example, the difference in field of view between a standard and a customized lens for an average prescription, or an

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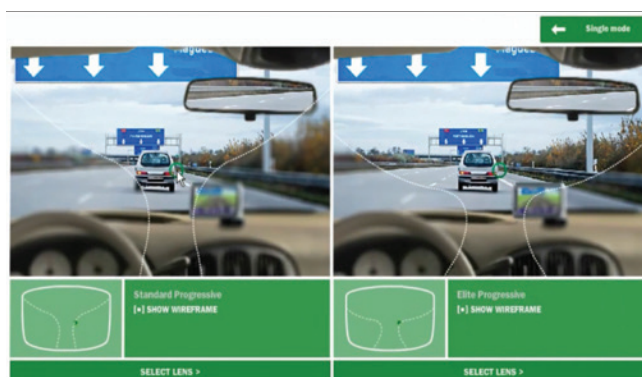
Dynamic Demos



Primarily a system for taking highly accurate fitting measurements, Essilor Instruments' VisiOffice 2 also incorporates frame try-on and lens demo features.



Signet Armorlite's tablet-based Intelligent Dispensing Software (ids) can demonstrate a variety of lenses and treatments, such as polarized lenses in activated and unactivated states. It can also demonstrate the effects of refractive errors.



M'Eye Fit Touch from Essilor Instruments is a tablet-based digital measuring device that includes an education module to show lens simulations and display the benefits of various Essilor lenses more easily.

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average difference in lens thickness.

An interactive digital tool can calculate the difference for the patient's specific prescription (as with the ABS Smart Mirror, Hoya HVC, and Kodak Lens ids), or it can show a broader range of prescription options than a printed display can. This more realistic simulation not only gives patients confidence, but it can also prevent a letdown resulting from overpromising the benefits of the new lens.

Hoya's HVC (Hoya Vision Consultant) works as an adjunct to the lens demonstration features of their Spectangle Pro measurement app. According to Hoya's national product marketing manager,

Heather Padgett, "This app allows for the patient to see the different variety of lenses like they are wearing them. It's a virtual reality app that allows the patient to see the lens like they are looking through it in many different scenarios."

Freestanding or Tablet?

Some companies offer lens demonstration tools in different formats, sometimes in combination with measuring devices. For example, Zeiss' i.Terminal centration device comes in a freestanding version, i.Terminal 2, and a tablet-based version, i.Terminal Mobile. Essilor's VisiOffice 2 dispensing system incorporates a lens demo function, and the compa-

ny's tablet-based digital measuring device, M'Eye Fit Touch, includes an educational module to show lens simulations and display the benefits of various Essilor lenses more easily.

While mobile versions appear to be growing in popularity, a good case can still be made for floor-standing units. These devices have a sleek, high-tech look that make a strong statement in a practice, signaling to patients that the practice is on the cutting edge of technology (always a good thing when selling advanced lenses). On the other hand, they have a footprint that requires some dedicated space, which is often hard to find in a practice.



Hoya HVC (Hoya Vision Consultant) works with the Spectangle Pro virtual reality app, allowing patients to “see” through different Hoya lenses.

Mobile devices, high-tech though they are, are ubiquitous these days and therefore don't make a strong impression (though for measurements, they definitely make a stronger impression than rulers and felt tip pens). On the other hand, you can use them anywhere, and they allow the dispenser to use the demonstration tools with the patient at the dispensing table.

Smart Mirror is available in both standalone and tablet-based versions, but Fabian Bruneau, vice president, operations for ABS, which markets Smart Mirror in the U.S. and Canada, feels that the needs of the American market differ from those of other countries. “Unlike a standalone version that works great in Europe, the iPad version is definitely what is best for U.S. ECPs; it is portable, light-

weight, you can use it standing by the frame board or sitting on a dispensing table, it is very intuitive and is a useful tool to engage customers.”

Most demo systems are designed to be used by the staff one-on-one with the patient as part of a discussion of lens options, where the use of a lens demonstrator can enhance the discussion. Some

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Are you missing the **wow** factor in your dispensary?

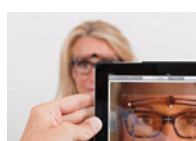
Eyewear Selection



Lens Simulator



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Virtual Try-On



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Near Vision Tests



A conventional product presentation is no longer enough to communicate the benefits of various frames and lens options

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Dynamic Demos



The Zeiss Freestanding Display is designed to engage patients with both physical and virtual lens demos.



Contentling's system features a lens selection tool that educates patients about lens features and upgrades.

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suppliers have noticed that virtual demos are increasingly being used by doctors in the exam room. Bassem El-Hajal, vice president, sales for Optikam, designer of the Spectangle dispensing device, said, "Doctors that prescribe from the chair can start a high-level conversation using these powerful demos, then the optician can build on that conversation using the same tool but with a more in-depth conversation based on the patient's lifestyle."

Some systems are designed to engage the patient directly. Zeiss has recently launched a stand-alone, kiosk-style lens demonstrator for patients to use themselves. The Zeiss Freestanding Display features iPad-based digital demos of UV-blocking lenses as well as physical demos of AR coatings and sun options.

As Zeiss go-to-market manager Paul Gage explained, "Most ECPs' optical or waiting rooms only focus on the frame side—this helps bring the lens awareness throughout the patient journey and to further promote the quality and precision of Zeiss

lenses." The digital demos are also available as a free download for patients, and the software includes a patient questionnaire that creates a lens recommendation based on the patient's responses.

Contentling, a relative newcomer to the optical demo scene, offers a tablet-based point-of-sale system designed to engage patients directly while they are shopping for frames. Contentling aggregates content from various suppliers, allowing ECPs to select the brands and demos most relevant to their offices.

In addition to a try-on system and video backstories about various brands, the system features a lens selection tool that provides education about various lens features and upgrades. According to Tom Perry, Contentling's content manager, "It helps tell robust brand stories while educating patients about lens options while they are shopping for frames."

Physical Demos

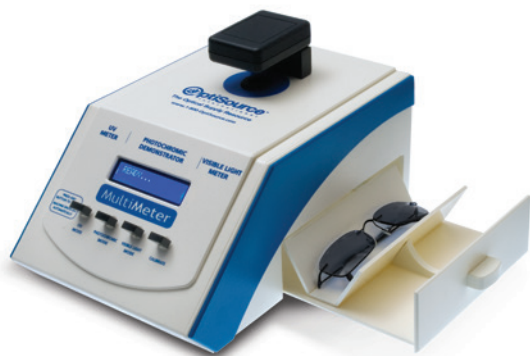
While no system, even with augmented reality, can completely mimic the actual experience of

wearing a new pair of glasses with the patient's prescription, physical or "live" demos, either standalone or performed by the dispenser, can show patients the reality of how a lens feature works.

Not surprisingly, many of these demos pre-date the digital era. One example is the classic anti-reflective coating demo, in which the outer portion of a lens is uncoated, but the center is AR-coated. This provides a simple and dramatic contrast between how patients see (and look) with or without AR.

Sun options can make for powerful demonstrations. Most dispensers don't have the time to take each patient outdoors to see sun treatments in action. But today's simulators make it easy to replicate the effects of the sun indoors.

In choosing a photochromic lens, patients are concerned with darkening and clearing speed, how dark the lenses are outdoors, and how clear they are indoors. Fortunately, these demonstrations are fairly easy to accomplish. Several sup-



The OptiSource MultiMeter can demonstrate photochromic activation, and the UV and visible light transmission of different lenses.



BPI's UV and Blue Light Analyzer shows the UV and blue light transmission of lenses at various frequencies.



The Nupolar LED Glare demonstrator from Younger Optics uses LED lighting to show how polarized lenses reduce sun glare.

pliers, including Transitions Optical, Zeiss, VSP Optics Group and OptiSource International offer a simple UV flashlight that can be used to demonstrate all of these aspects of the lens. Transitions has several ways of using their UV flashlight or UV demo unit, including lorgnettes and demo lens cards. Not only do these demonstrate the basic performance features of photochromic lenses; they can also illustrate differences among Transitions products.

For a more in-depth demonstration, OptiSource offers a multimeter spectrophotometer that can not only demonstrate photochromic activation, but also UV transmittance of any lens and the light transmittance of colored lenses.

Blue light awareness and control is an important issue in eyecare today, and the industry is developing ways to increase awareness and demonstrate blue light filtering. Hoya has a spectrometer that attaches to an HVC-enabled tablet. This tool illustrates blue light intensity from light sources, and can be fitted with lenses

to show how blue light treatments reduce transmission. Brain Power International (BPI) has a UV and Blue Light Analyzer that evaluates lens transmission at 400, 430, 470 and 505nm. The transmission percentage at each range is displayed along with the Wertheim Protection Factor, a merit-based figure that expresses the blue light blocking capability of the lens.

New tools also make it easier to demonstrate the benefits of polarized lenses. The NuPolar LED Glare Demonstrator from Younger Optics, as the name indicates, uses LED lighting to simulate the effect of the sun hitting a horizontal surface and creating glare. A lorgnette with polarized plano lenses provides an effective demonstration of the glare-blocking properties of polarization. A similar demonstrator is available from Zeiss.

EnChroma develops lens technologies and high-performance eyewear for color blindness. The company recently released six new lenses specially engineered to address specific types

and severities of red-green color blindness in a broad range of lighting conditions. To help ECPs demonstrate the properties of the lenses, EnChroma is offering a lens trial kit containing the six different lenses in fit-over frames that allow color blind patients to understand exactly how EnChroma lenses can enhance their color perception. A new and improved online EnChroma Color Vision Screening Test, and Lens and Frame Advisor Tool, will help eyecare professionals select the ideal lens solution for their color blind patients.

"Our network of authorized eyecare professionals are critical for the color blind to understand and try EnChroma products, and to the success of our business strategy," said Mark Mattison-Shupnick, vice president of business development for EnChroma. "This next generation of six lens types will expand opportunities for private practitioners and enhance the EnChroma experience for color blind patients."

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Beyond the Office

Online retailers brought eyewear demonstration directly to consumers with virtual frame try-on systems. Now some lens companies are following suit. Many lens companies' consumer websites feature interactive demonstrations of lens features, along with animations and videos.

Other online features, while not lens demos as such, provide an additional level of relevance to lens features for an individual consumer. The Essilor and Zeiss sites include interactive questionnaires that uncover information about the consumer's work habits, leisure activities and current vision issues. This information is used to create a personalized lens recommendation that a patient can then take to a doctor's office. The recommendation leads the patient to demonstrations of specific features of the lens.

Transitions has developed a Snapchat in-app experience that allows consumers to take a selfie with their glasses on or "virtually" try other frames, and then see how the glasses will darken when outdoors. And since social media thrives on sociability, one of the benefits of this demonstrator is that it allows patients to share the product and technology with friends.

Shamir's Visual Reality App is a video designed to run through a VR headset for use in a practice or by consumers at home. Videos have been developed for Shamir WorkSpace and Attitude III lenses. According to the company, the latter "will take the viewer through a variety of daily outdoor activities highlighting the advantages of the lens." The app is available through the Google Play and iTunes stores.

ABS Smart Mirror's Smart VR simulates the benefits of various lens coatings in lifelike situations using an Oculus Go virtual reality headset. Bruneau feels this brings elements of drama and fun to lens demonstrations: "You can empower the viewer/your patient to see ophthalmic lenses benefits in action. You can have your patient virtually travel to destinations and see with or without polarized lenses, and with or without AR without ever leaving your practice."

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Enchroma's lens trial kit contains six different lenses in fit-over frames that let color blind patients see how the lenses can enhance their color perception.



ABS Smart Mirror's Smart VR simulates the benefits of various lens coatings in lifelike situations.



Shamir's Visual Reality App highlights the advantages of Shamir WorkSpace and Attitude III lenses by showing patients what it's like to wear them while doing various outdoor activities.

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Implications for the Practice

For the ECPs who use them, new lens demos enrich patient conversations about lens options, and in many cases, they are having a noticeable effect on the practice's bottom line.

Metro Optics has 15 Smart Mirror units in their four Bronx, New York locations. Brett Schumacher, general manager, feels that Smart Mirror is a system they've needed for years. "The system demonstrates what we opticians/salespeople have been doing for decades, but in a more interactive, vibrant way."

He believes that the most effective demo is lens thickness, because it is one thing that is very hard to demonstrate in any other way. He likes the fact that it can show the actual percentage difference in lens thickness for the patient's specific prescription. Without it, he said, "You would literally need to take a patient to a lab in order to show them everything."

Thomas Gosling, OD of Optical Matters in Littleton, Colo., a user of the Hoya HVC system, noted another reason to use demo tools is to overcome a staff member's lack of personal experience of a type of eyewear. "A 23 year-old has never worn a progressive, so it's difficult for him to explain the difference between a standard, customized and personalized lens. With the camera on the tablet, a patient can actually see from their own point of view how much less distortion there is in a customized lens."

ECPs credit point-of-sale demo tools with increasing patient engagement in the optical, and, ultimately, higher optical sales. Dr. Gosling felt that a good demonstration can flip a discussion from price to benefit. "When we describe AR to a patient, they often hear the price and say 'tell me again why I want that.' But if you show it to them in a realistic way, they're more likely to ask about the price themselves, because they want the benefit."

Said Brian Abert, OD, of Vista Eye Care in Thornton, Colo., "We've seen sales go up by somewhere around 12 percent to 13 percent, and I credit that to Contentlinq's ability to help us con-



Becky Furuta, co-owner of Avenue Vision in Golden, Colo. uses a penlight supplied by Transitions Optical to activate the photochromic reaction in a Transitions lens.

vey our message to our patients."

Becky Furuta, co-owner of Avenue Vision in Golden, Colorado, believes that the Transitions demonstration tools used in the practice help to enhance what she sees as a strength of her practice, the "shopable environment" they have created. "In an industry that's increasingly being taken over by online sales, one of the benefits of being in the physical presence of the practice, is being able to experience those products, and touch them and hold them and activate them yourself. It's a more engaging shopping experience." But they are best viewed as an enhancement to and not a replacement for a conversation with patients, because, "the most important tool is your staff."

For Lynne Roberts, global brand manager for Signet Armorlite/Kodak Lens, new demonstrators are not just a matter of providing the best technology, but of meeting heightened patient expectations. Referring to the Kodak's tablet-based Intelligent Dispensing Software (ids), which incorporates augmented reality lens demos with frame try-on and measurement, she said, "Kodak Lens ids and its capabilities

are incredibly important these days because patients want to be a part of the experience and be educated on what is unique about their lenses."

"Experience" is the key word with regard to the benefits these tools provide, and the experience practices are trying to create in their opticals. Today, consumers are looking for more than a product. And with ever-more competition in the eyewear business, much of it price-based, it's more important than ever for ECPs and optical retailers to give them a differentiating experience, and show them the benefits of premium lenses as vividly and powerfully as possible.

The best demonstration tools provide patients with a realistic and engaging look at premium lenses that not only enriches the overall practice experience, but is more appropriate to customized, precision eyewear than a photo in a brochure or a handmade drawing. And by deepening their understanding of the lenses being recommended, dispensers show that they respect their customers as decision makers, while providing them the means to increase their satisfaction with their new premium eyewear. ■