

Initial Steps to Becoming a Sustainable Practice

Q&A responses by Elaine Grisdale

ABDO Head of Professional Services and International Development

1	<p>This all sounds quite scary. Why is no country on target to meet the Paris Agreement? Surely governments are concerned?</p> <p><i>I'm sure they are concerned but maybe not concerned enough to have made real choices earlier and put verbal concerns into proper action plans. The sceptic in me thinks that there are many forces at work, including financial considerations and governments not wanting to make unpopular decisions which might lose them votes. There is probably a culture of "kicking the can down the road" and leaving tough decisions to others but as we have seen by the statistics, time is running out.</i></p>
2	<p>I am glad you talked about the 2 for 1. It is better practice to provide better quality frames to reuse over a few prescriptions and swop frame use. We do refills on our spectacle lens cleaning sprays. Lenstec do material drawstring bags on jobs sent out. I'm also with you on the bar of soap use, Elaine.</p> <p><i>Thank you – all good and sustainable choices.</i></p>
3	<p>How do you overcome an unwilling practice owner?</p> <p><i>You can't force someone to make changes, they have to buy into the idea. It can start in small ways by changing individual behaviours around the practice which might rub off on the practice owner or other colleagues. I think you have to lead by example. I would find out why they are unwilling and try and counteract any reticence with evidence-based data (there are a lot of references connected to my case study which may be useful). This movement is not going away and will only get stronger. As I mentioned in my talk, it's not just ABDO and other professional bodies in the UK who are encouraging members to modify behaviours, this is Europe-wide with ECOO now putting resources on their website too and following movements in the European parliament in case legislation appears in the future. For me, it is better to be engaged voluntarily and to develop the right mindset and behaviours for our own businesses and cultures at our own pace. Mention corporate social responsibility i.e. engaging with social issues and behaving ethically and how it can give you a competitive advantage.</i></p> <p><i>Also look at change management. If you understand more about the process of change and the different models, you can understand more about someone's objections and how to get round them. ABDO has a workshop in August and online course launching later in the year on the topic.</i></p> <p><i>Some additional reading:</i></p> <p><i>Pomering, A. and Johnson, L.W. (2009). Advertising Corporate Social Responsibility Initiatives To Communicate Corporate Image: Inhibiting Scepticism To Enhance Persuasion. Corporate Communications: An International Journal, 14, 420-439.</i></p> <p><i>Rettie, R. et al. (2012) Normalising Green Behaviours: A New Approach To Sustainability Marketing. Journal Of Marketing Management, Vol. 28, Nos. 3-4, 420-444</i></p> <p><i>Unsworth, K.L. et al. (2021) Employee Green Behaviour: How Organisations Can Help The Environment. Current Opinion In Psychology, 42:1-6.</i></p>
4	<p>This is great for independent practices where you have control over how you buy or set your own company ethics but harder for those working in large multiples. Does ABDO have any plans to lobby the larger optical companies to be more accountable for their eco credentials?</p>

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	<p><i>The SEE Summit (Sustainability, Environmental and Ethical) was supported by a number of different optical partners in the UK, one of which is FODO, who liaise closely with the big groups and optical chains. So, definitely, ABDO is in touch with the large multiples this way.</i></p> <p><i>Lobbying also has to come from within, from practice staff to branch managers, to then feed up to area management then to regional management and finally to head office level. I talked about Corporate Social Responsibility and many companies do take this seriously. In France, I know that there are laws in place for companies to adhere to regarding sustainable development and many companies have departments to engage with these laws and to follow trends. I mentioned Porter and Kramer in my talk and their writings regarding Creating Shared Value (see refs below), which stress that business can engage in corporate responsibility and benefit society whilst flourishing economically and competitively. I'm sure this is not lost on the multiples.</i></p> <p><i>Porter, M.E. and Kramer, M.R., 2006, Strategy and Society: The Link Between Competitive Advantage and Corporate Social Responsibility. Harvard Business Review, 84 (12), 78-92.</i></p> <p><i>Porter, M.E. and Kramer, M.R., 2011, Creating Shared Value. Harvard Business Review, 89, 62-77.</i></p>
5	Is this topic being or going to be part of the curriculum for DOs and OOs at university level?
	<i>I haven't heard anything to this effect, it might appear in modules looking at new frame materials but maybe not as a module on its own.</i>
6	Do we know if any contact lens solutions are more environmentally friendly? And do you have any thoughts on reusing contact lens cases for up to three months?
	<p><i>Sarah Smith has a research paper on the relative impact of different modalities of contact lens wear:</i></p> <p><i>Smith SL, Orsborn GN, Sulley A, Chatterjee NB, Morgan PB. An investigation into disposal and recycling options for daily disposable and monthly replacement soft contact lens modalities. Cont Lens Anterior Eye. 2022;45(2):101435. doi:10.1016/j.clae.2021.03.002</i></p>
7	In practice we use Terracycle to recycle contact lenses and the packaging. Is this a viable option?
	<p><i>There are limited options for contact lens recycling right now so this is probably the only viable option. Read more about waste recycling at https://www.abdo.org.uk/dashboard/see-hub/see-hub-2-2/see-hub-aow/</i></p>
8	Will frames without dummy lenses look that they are not new to patients?
	<i>According to the questionnaire from Simon Berry, it didn't seem to be an issue for the people who were questioned. However, he does run a sustainable practice and his patients might be already engaged ethically so this may not be representative of other patient populations in the UK. You might want to ask your patients and let us know. There are obviously frames where they have to exist such as rimless and supras, but for full frames – I'm not so sure.</i>
9	Who makes frames out of dummy lenses, please?
	<i>In the webinar I mentioned Millmead but they are taking lenses only from a number of people due to logistical reasons. There is the option of connecting with Opticlean https://opticlean.eco/</i>
10	Do you know what dummy lenses are made from - can we put them into recycling?

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	<p><i>The majority of dummy lenses are made from cheap-grade polycarbonate which never fully decomposes and if dummy lenses end up in landfill, they will take several decades to break down into smaller pieces. They never entirely disappear and end up as tiny particles which harm the environment. Recycling is an option and the webpage https://www.conserve-energy-future.com/is-polycarbonate-recyclable.php can help with ideas about recycling polycarbonate.</i></p> <p><i>There are companies like EyeSpace who are now incorporating more ethically sustainable dummy lenses made from biodegradable AC polymers. They are more than three times the cost of traditional dummy lenses but the advantages of these dummy lenses is that they will break down in landfill into non-toxic substances in around five years. These new AC polymers used for the more ethically sustainable dummy lenses are tested to ISO 15985:2014, which is the International Standard which specifies a method for the determination of the ultimate anaerobic biodegradation of plastic materials under high-solids conditions.</i></p>
11	Can you tell us the places that recycle dummy lenses again please?
	<i>Read more about waste recycling at https://www.abdo.org.uk/dashboard/see-hub/see-hub-2-2/see-hub-aow/</i>
12	For those working in large multiple practices, what would you recommend in terms of putting pressure on the whole business to reduce waste such as dummy lenses/single-use plastics?
	<i>See question 4 – the desire to do something has to drip feed up.</i>
13	Also demo lenses help to measure more accurately, as if they are not present pxs are more likely to push them up their nose as their eyelashes are not hitting off the lenses as they will when their rx goes in. Wouldn't we then have to remake the lenses causing more waste?
	<i>You can still measure a BVD without dummy lenses and check that the eyelashes are free of where you expect the RX lens to sit.</i>
14	What advice would you give to practices who have a charity box for frames that would have originally gone to Vision Aid Overseas? What to do with them?
	<i>Vision Aid Overseas and other charities have made the ethical decision to help build infrastructure in countries without eyecare services instead of sending used items so that people can be self-supporting. I believe that the Lions' Club are still taking donations. You might like to check with your local branch. (See also Question 20)</i>
15	In my practice, unfortunately recycling frames have been discontinued due to Covid. We get patients coming almost on a weekly basis to drop their frames off to be sent to third world countries through Vision Aid Overseas. What could be an alternative to that?
	<i>See Question 14 / 20</i>
16	Since Covid there seems to be a reduction in outlets accepting used spectacles. Can an alternative be recommended to replace this?
	<i>See Question 14 / 20</i>
17	I've heard in the past that complete spectacles can be sent to third world countries for reuse. is this a possibility?

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	<i>See Question 14 / 20</i>
18	Can you advise of anywhere or anyone who will take in/recycle old lenses?
	<i>Read more about waste recycling at https://www.abdo.org.uk/dashboard/see-hub/see-hub-2-2/see-hub-aow/</i>
19	Is there anywhere that recycles old lenses from when we do a reglaze and the patient does not want to keep the old lenses?
	<i>Read more about waste recycling at https://www.abdo.org.uk/dashboard/see-hub/see-hub-2-2/see-hub-aow/</i>
20	<p>The Lions Club charity now collects spectacle lenses</p> <p>https://www.lionsclubs.org/en/resources-for-members/resource-center/recycle-eyeglasses</p> <p><i>The above was a comment from a member which we have also added to the website. You can search for a local club too.</i></p>
21	<p>Not a question... but wondering if you can give us any insight? We recently bought some <i>Sea2See</i> frames, thinking from the basis how many of our patients have spoken about being very eco-friendly type people, yet and no one seems to want to buy any, regardless of how we promote the frames. As a practice we are completely puzzled.</p> <p><i>This is why thinking about your overall strategy is important. Their range of frames may not be right aesthetically for your patient population or be attractive from a quality or price point of view. I know some ethical frames are not very colourful (not sure if this is the case of Sea2See). I think it's a case of not choosing a range just because the story is good, it has to fit in with the rest of your frame buying strategy.</i></p> <p><i>You could ask the rep if they have had similar problems in other areas and ask what they did to engage the frame buying public, that was successful.</i></p> <p><i>There are also certain demographics of patients who will be more likely to choose an ethical option and this can be deciphered or estimated looking at voting behaviours, newspapers they read, age ranges and so on. It's not an exact science but there are ways to estimate whether you will have success with such frame ranges. As I said, being an ethical business is not just about the frame ranges you keep – although it's nice if you can incorporate them successfully.</i></p> <p><i>There are many different studies looking at consumer habits regarding sustainability which may be helpful. A small selection is listed here:</i></p> <p><i>European Commission (2009) Flash Eurobarometer: Europeans' Attitudes Towards the Issue of Sustainable Consumption And Production</i></p> <p><i>Fisher, C. et al. (2012). Demographic Impacts on Environmentally Friendly Purchase Behaviors. Journal Of Targeting, Measurement and Analysis for Marketing, Vol. 20, ¾, 172-184.</i></p> <p><i>Hanss, D. and Bohm, G. (2012) Sustainability Seen from The Perspective of Consumers, International Journal of Consumer Studies, 36. 678-687</i></p> <p><i>Macneughton, P. and Jacobs, M. (1997) Public Identification with Sustainable Development: Investigating Cultural Barriers to Participation, Global Environmental Change, Vol. 7, No. 1, pp5 -24.</i></p>

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	<p><i>Ritch, E.L. (2015) Consumers Interpreting Sustainability: Moving Beyond Food to Fashion. International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management, Vol. 43, No. 12, pp. 1162-1181</i></p> <p><i>Schlegelmilch, B.B. et al. (1996) The Link Between Green Purchasing Decisions and Measures of Environmental Consciousness. European Journal of Marketing, Vol. 30, No. 5, pp. 35-55.</i></p>
22	<p>What about practices that do not use iPads or technology to take heights etc? How would that work with removing demo lenses for the sake of climate change?</p>
	<p><i>This may be controversial, but I think that some sort of electronic device is a minimum these days when we are dispensing products which potentially cost hundreds of pounds. The effect of having someone take measurements just with a piece of plastic (however skilled), is, from an image point of view, not optimum. I would always use a ruler to check and of course, the accuracy of an iPad system or similar is only as good as the user. People tend to have more confidence in procedures if technology is involved.</i></p>
23	<p>Environmentally, are the electronic promotional adverts better than posters?</p>
	<p><i>That's a conversation you need to have with the people who make the electronic devices. The one I was thinking of came from ACEP (email: jps@acep.tech) and they have a virtual customer journey. I am sure there are other companies who do similar things, if you do some research you will find them. It's worth having a conversation with them.</i></p>
24	<p>Will ABDO provide any funding for projects?</p>
	<p><i>Not that I am aware of.</i></p>