

Practice Profile **Center For Sight**

Creating a Center for Excellence

Experience matters ... our experience and our patients' experiences.

BY JAMES D. DAWES, MHA, COE, CMPE

Center For Sight was founded nearly 25 years ago by David W. Shoemaker, MD, with a mission to be the best in the world at bringing clear vision to life through caring and trusting relationships and the pursuit of excellence in eye care. His goal was to provide comprehensive eye care and surgery in a way that delivered unsurpassed results and exceeded patients' expectations. When most cataract surgery was being performed in a hospital, and outpatient surgery was looked upon questionably, Dr. Shoemaker knew that he could create a better experience for patients and achieve improved visual outcomes by creating a center for excellence in vision. More than 100,000 cataract procedures later, Center For Sight's experience has proven to be a differentiator for the practice, and the dedication to the patient's experience is even stronger. Today, Dr. Shoemaker still serves as the center's chairman and CEO, and his partner, William J. Lahmers, MD, serves as the medical director. With nearly 200 employees and 20 physicians serving patients in eight locations throughout Southwest Florida, Center For Sight strives to help every patient achieve his or her best personal visual outcome and to make him or her feel special along the way.



TAG READERS

Center For Sight is now using Tags in all of its print marketing. Users can download a free application for their smart phone and then scan the Tag wherever it appears. The smart phone's Web browser will take the user to the Web site associated with the Tag. The Tag reader uses the phone's camera to capture the Tag.



TRANSFORMING THE VISION

Achieving a center of excellence started with the staff. Over the years, Center For Sight has recruited some of the most talented surgeons and optometric physicians in the country. Some of these doctors and several members of the clinical staff have been with the practice for more than 20 years. One of the biggest contributors to Center For Sight's success has been recruiting and retaining people who share a common commitment to always put the patient first. Several members of the managerial team started their careers in clinical or clerical positions and have taken on additional responsibilities over the years. These experienced team members have been important in continuing the legacy that began in a small ophthalmology practice more than 2 decades ago. Center For Sight continues to invest in people, which has proven to be a winning strategy.

"The 12 Characteristics of Excellent Customer Service," as developed by Center For Sight's team members, is the basis of all customer service training for the physicians and staff. The company provides quarterly customer service training for all staff and a comprehensive employee orientation program to ensure that each team member is knowledgeable about the products and services available to patients. Training reinforces the practice's goal of exceeding patients' expectations on every level. Center For Sight monitors patients' satisfaction through on-line and telephone patient satisfaction surveys and the occasional mystery shopper and then regularly shares the feedback with staff.

TRANSFORMING THE ENVIRONMENT

Creating an environment that allows patients to have positive experiences is another core principle of Center For Sight. The environment includes the positive attitude and friendly smiles of the staff, clean physical facilities, and state-of-the art diagnostic and surgical equipment. A friendly greeting on the telephone or at the reception desk can instantly change the patient's perspective and transform the transactional nature of the exchange into an

enjoyable experience. All Center For Sight locations have been designed with similar decorative characteristics that provide consistency and continuity to the patient's experience. In addition to the design, furnishings, and artwork, Center For Sight uses a series of digital flat screen monitors to provide patients with educational information, entertainment, and product messages. A relaxed but informative environment allows patients to focus on their visit and the decisions they may need to make such as choosing an IOL for cataract surgery. This attention to the office environment has helped Center For Sight become one of the country's leading premium IOL practices, with nearly 10,000 presbyopia-correcting lenses implanted.

TRANSFORMING QUALITY OF LIFE

The gift of clear vision is life-changing for patients and staff. The magnitude of this change is never more evident than once a year, when Center For Sight provides free cataract surgery to patients without the means to pay. Mission Cataract is the most moving and inspirational day of the year. Patients often cry when they see the first bit of light during cataract surgery, and by the time the procedure is complete, they are ecstatic. Center For Sight's ambulatory surgery center was designed with private observation rooms so that the patient's family or guests can watch cataract surgery being performed and enjoy this gift of clear vision with their loved ones. Each observation room is staffed by a surgical narrator who not only details every step of the procedure but records it all to a customized DVD for the patient to view at home. Improving patients' quality of life has been a core principle of Center For Sight since day one, and it has led to the addition of several complementary services such as facial cosmetic surgery, medical dermatology, and medical skin care treatments as well as comprehensive hearing services.

TRANSFORMING THE LITTLE THINGS

Holding a patient's hand during surgery, wearing crisp white lab coats, providing courtesy transportation, combining all services on one easy-to-read billing statement, and providing personalized gift bags are the small things that add up to a great experience for the patient. Center For Sight's patients awarded more than 3,000 stars to staff members last year through the company's "Recognize a Star Program," and 98% of patients say they have referred a friend or family member to a Center For Sight physician. At Center For Sight, we pay attention to the details. ■

James D. Dawes, MHA, COE, CMPE, is the chief administrative officer at Center For Sight in Sarasota, Florida. Mr. Dawes may be reached at (941) 480-2105; jdawes@centerforsight.net.

