

BEST PRACTICES

Practice Management Insights From the Experts

To Scribe or Not to Scribe?

The Secret to Successful Staffing



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BEST PRACTICES

TO SCRIBE OR NOT TO SCRIBE?

The Benefits of Leveraging Scribes in Optometry Practice

In everyday practice, many eye care professionals seek new and innovative ways to increase productivity and streamline processes while enabling better engagement with their patients. To help, utilizing scribes has become increasingly popular among practices in recent years. 2023 Best PracticesSM Honorees Dr. Zachary Holland of Cornea & Contact Lens Institute of Minnesota (CCLIM) in Edina, Minn., and Dr. David Holler of Clarity Vision of Apex in Apex, N.C., recently shared their experiences with scribes and how they have revolutionized their practice and patient experience.

Who or what inspired you to start leveraging scribes?

Dr. Holler: I bought my practice from a doctor who was already using scribes, so I adopted that same structure when I took over. At the time, the practice had four exam lanes and saw 40 or more patients a day. The exam rooms were large enough to easily accommodate a third person—in our case, our scribe—which enabled me to give my undivided attention to each patient, while my scribe would input the appropriate information into the computer.

Dr. Holland: Personally, documentation is my least favorite part of my job. I felt like I was never able to add in as much detail about each exam as I'd ideally like. My scribe can input

all of the information I need and, at the same time, I get more quality face-to-face time with each of my patients and can answer their questions more thoroughly.

What have been some of the biggest benefits of utilizing scribes in your practice?

Dr. Holland: Simply put, scribes have revolutionized my practice. When I bought it back in 2020, I converted one of my front desk staff members who was interested in learning more about the clinical side of things and taught her to scribe. After being in the exam room with me and listening to how I communicate with and educate my patients, she inadvertently learned everything, which makes her an even more valuable asset to the practice.



HONOREE
Dr. Zachary Holland
Cornea & Contact Lens Institute of Minnesota (CCLIM)
Edina, Minn.



HONOREE
Dr. David Holler
Clarity Vision of Apex
Apex, N.C.



MY SCRIBE HAS MERGED INTO A TECHNICIAN AS A SECONDARY ROLE, AND I'VE HARDLY HAD TO TRAIN HER BECAUSE SHE WATCHED AND LEARNED SO MUCH THROUGH HER EXPERIENCE SCRIBING."

—DR. ZACHARY HOLLAND

Dr. Holler: When in the exam chair, patients don't always know exactly what we're doing, why we're doing it, or what it means to their eye health. Utilizing a scribe has allowed me to give my patients my full attention and to talk through the "technical jargon" a bit more thoroughly while my scribe takes notes. Patients see it as a positive because it gives me a chance to put my entire focus on being a doctor, while leaving the administrative tasks and computer input to my scribe.

Have there been any unforeseen challenges or obstacles you've had to overcome with the use of scribes?

Dr. Holler: We have moved locations a few times since I first bought the practice. Due to the size of my current office, I am unable to comfortably fit a scribe in the exam room with me. As such, we've started looking into leveraging virtual scribes instead. It seems like the easiest, most logical en-

hancement we should make next.

With virtual scribes, we'd be paying someone who is experienced and trained to perform these specific tasks, so we won't need to go through the same training or on-boarding process we normally would.

Dr. Holland: In my experience, your scribe should already feel comfortable in patient care and feel confident with the software you use and all of the medical terminology—like a senior technician, for example. That being said, since my scribe started behind the front desk and has moved into scribing, she's now capable of performing other tasks as well. It's become a consistently evol-



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—DR. DAVID HOLLER

ing position that I've learned about as we go, and I've made adjustments along the way.

Are your scribes cross-trained to perform other in-office duties? If so, what?

Dr. Holland: My scribe has merged into a technician as a secondary role, and I've hardly had to train her because she watched and learned so much through her experience scribing. She can also bill and code, order contact lenses, pre-test patients, and perform minor dry eye procedures. Her title is "scribe," but she's also become an all-encompassing clinical assistant.

Dr. Holler: Our scribes were trained in some other administrative duties, including front-desk work, billing, and insurance.

Based on your experience, what would you tell other ECPs who are considering utilizing scribes in their practice?

Dr. Holland: I would never practice without a scribe again—there's no reason to. Leveraging a scribe has saved me so much extra time and energy, and has allowed me to build even stronger doctor-patient relationships.

Dr. Holler: Using scribes in your practice will increase your efficiency, streamline processes, fill in the gaps, and most importantly, enable you to focus on being a better doctor.



Interested in learning additional practice efficiencies? See how **Dr. Melissa Tada**, 2022 Best PracticesSM honoree, utilizes new technologies in her practice.

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THE SECRET TO SUCCESSFUL STAFFING

How to Hire, Train, and Motivate Your Team

An optometry practice is only as strong as its staff—but finding and maintaining a quality team can be an obstacle for many practice owners. 2023 Best PracticesSM Honorees Dr. Mary Hoang of South Bay Family Eye in Long Beach, Calif., Dr. Megan Lott of Belle Vue Specialty Eye Care in Hattiesburg, Miss., and Dr. Janet M. Wilson of Bella Vision in Spartanburg, S.C., share their advice about successful staffing, from hiring and training to retention and motivation—and everything in between.

What is the most impactful decision you've made in terms of staffing?

Dr. Lott: Hire for personality, not experience. You can train someone to fit the mold of the position you're looking to fill, but you cannot train personality—and in such a people-focused profession, characteristics like friendliness, attentiveness, and effective communication are an absolute must. Based on a candidate's skill set and strengths, I determine which role will be best suited not only for them, but for the betterment of my practice.

Dr. Wilson: I agree with Dr. Lott. The best decision we made in terms of building our team was taking the philosophical shift from finding the best

resumes to finding the best all-around people who will genuinely care for our patients. We look for individuals who are trustworthy, consistent, and are driven to achieve personal and professional growth.

Have you ever leveraged "secondary employees" (non-ODs) to help increase the scope of your practice?

Dr. Hoang: We utilize sales representatives for training. In addition to planned training sessions or luncheons, I've had sales reps train my staff members on things like fitting rimless frames in our optical shop, or on the ins and outs of blue light filters. The way I see it, sales representatives are subject matter experts, so I

lean on them to train us on what we could be doing better or more efficiently in our practice.

How do you keep your staff motivated and engaged?

Dr. Hoang: We're big into including our entire team in decision-making processes, no matter their job title. We offer bonuses to staff members who bring ideas to the table that could enhance our practice—whether it's something to do with streamlining the patient experience, or to be more efficient behind the front desk. We'll hear out every idea, try it, and if it works—and ultimately elevates our processes—they'll receive that bonus.

Dr. Lott: A while back, I conducted a survey with my staff to see how they prefer to be rewarded, since there are many different ways to make a person feel valued. Some preferred a cash bonus, others appreciated extra time off work, and some just wanted a simple a card of appreciation to acknowledge their work. I also asked for their favorites like color, snack, drink, and hobby, so that when I'd like to reward someone, my acknowl-



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Dr. Janet M. Wilson
*Bella Vision
Spartanburg, S.C.*

edgement to them is tailor-made to the individual.

Dr. Wilson: We reward MVBs, which stands for "Most Valuable Bella." Each quarter, our staff nominates a team member who has gone above and beyond for our practice, our patients, and each other. But similar to what Dr. Lott does in her practice, when we onboard a new employee, we take note of how they communicate, what their professional goals are, what type of recognition they prefer to receive, and what's important to them in their personal lives. Whether it is through our MVBs, patient reviews, or just a simple "good job," we make it a point to acknowledge each other when someone has made progress or learned something new.

Finding and retaining quality staff members is a challenge for many practices. What's your approach?

Dr. Wilson: When we hire, it is an in-depth, multi-step process that includes a written application, phone screenings, in-person interviews, assessments, and job shadowing. As a team, we all agree that we'd rather work a little bit harder for a little bit longer than most when it comes to finding the "right fit"—as opposed to quickly filling an open spot because we need an extra set of hands—because it almost always works out better in the long run.

Dr. Hoang: I think the secret is to find people who believe in you, your practice, and your core values. I would rather hire someone

with little to no experience with a great personality than someone who has years of experience and is unwilling to adopt our practice's values and standards. Find people who believe in what you do and what you stand for—the rest will fall into place.

Learn how to cultivate a high-performing staff from 2021 Best PracticesSM honoree, Dr. Melanie Frogozo.

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Have you implemented any specific training methods to maximize your staff's contributions to your practice?

Dr. Wilson: We've begun leveraging certain training videos and webinars on a more regular basis as part of our daily schedules, for new hires and seasoned staff alike. I've found that a blend of training videos and active participation around the office is an effective training method that fuels growth for both my staff and our practice.

Dr. Lott: I teach a class for vision therapists. I'll have vision therapists from my own team sit in on the class and once they know the material well enough, they'll step up to help teach these classes with me. I've found that by having them take—and later teach—this class, it's just as much a training method as it is a practice motivator because it makes them feel valued, boosts their confidence, and gives them a meaningful goal to work towards.



Try making it personal like Dr. Nicolette Scott, 2021 Best PracticesSM honoree. Dr. Scott trains her staff to customize the patient experience by personality type.

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