

## No Need to Walk the Path to Independent Practice Success Alone

There is no single correct way to manage an independent practice. There are best strategies, certainly, but every factor that contributes to one independent optometrist's success may not be what works for another. As a result, finding support and ideas from a variety of eye care professionals is a way to keep all parties from reinventing the wheel.



**"The [Vision Source®] network exists to support the independent doctor through reducing cost of goods, education and networking."**

—Dr. Wood

That is precisely the point that **Bobby W. "Chip" Wood, Jr., OD**, of San Antonio, Texas, made when students from University of the Incarnate Word Rosenberg School of Optometry visited his practice during a Vision Source® "practice crawl."

Students visited three Vision Source practices in the area to see the range of opportunities available to them. Dr. Wood told the students that as an elite baseball player,

he was frustrated when his ophthalmologist told him that his changing vision was "good enough," even though it negatively impacted his playing ability. "Being 'good enough' was not good enough, so I dedicate myself and the practice to state-of-the-art medical eye care and providing high-definition vision correction to my patients," he says.

It's one reason that he chose private practice as his career route. After several years of working as an associate optometrist, he started an independent practice cold in 2010 in Uvalde, Texas, and became a Vision Source member right from the start. "The savings for cost-of-goods sold and instrumentation were significant," he says. He supplemented his income initially

by working in another office and, four years later, was able to purchase his second Vision Source office. With his careful attention and commitment, as well as using Vision Source programs for staff training and motivation, marketing, leadership and savings, he has been able to grow that practice by 50 percent in three years. In fact, he has just completed a major expansion of that office.

### His vision for practice and life

Dr. Wood is proud of what his practice offers patients: a high-tech and highly personal experience. "Using the best technology allows me to identify vision issues as well as some learning disorders so that we can help people of all abilities," he says. He's also delighted with the array of products and services that he can offer as a result of the excellent pricing he gains through his Vision Source membership. The strategies he has used have helped him build on that foundation, creating an office that now has a design and atmosphere that

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## Are You Suited for Private Practice? APTITUDE QUIZ Offers Some Hints

What's your aptitude and hunger for managing an independent practice? It doesn't have to be an all-or-nothing proposition, says **Kristin O'Brien, OD**, who helps manage the Vision Source® Next<sup>SM</sup> program. Some ODs have a strong entrepreneurial spirit while others may be firm that the management responsibilities are not something that they want. In between those two ends of the spectrum are opportunities as well. Some doctors may feel more comfortable in the role of an associate, and others may see that as a temporary solution as they work their way into a partnership situation.

Vision Source Next has created a 10-question quiz that can help optometrists and students gauge where their greatest comfort zone and goals align—in starting up cold, acquiring a practice, learning about private practice ownership with the potential toward a partnership or working as an associate. "For some people, where they fall today may not be where they are in a few years," says Dr. O'Brien.

Opportunities and experiences arise that can shift the dynamic. Take the quiz at [visionsourcenext.com](http://visionsourcenext.com).

5 → Which creates the most anxiety for you? \*

<b>A</b> Lack of Balance	<b>B</b> Time Constraints	<b>C</b> Financial Limitations	<b>D</b> None of These
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### SAMPLE QUIZ QUESTIONS

6 → What is most appealing about owning your own eye care practice? \*

<b>A</b> Professional Enrichment	<b>B</b> Monetary Benefits	<b>C</b> Balancing Quality + Control + Profit	<b>D</b> Managing Your Own Time
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## Path to Success

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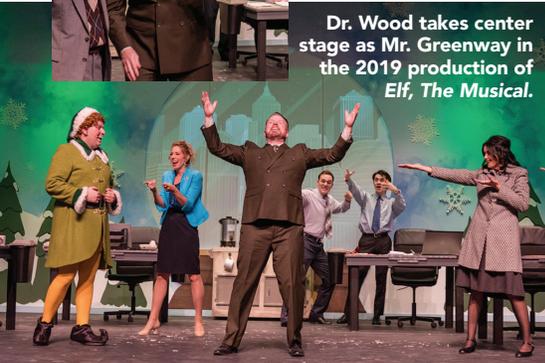
matches the high-end level of care he provides.

"There is so much support within Vision Source; the network exists to support the independent doctor through reducing cost

of goods, education and networking," he says. With the practice management angles



Dr. Wood takes center stage as Mr. Greenway in the 2019 production of *Elf, The Musical*.



Photos courtesy of Siggie Ragnar and The Public Theater of San Antonio

covered, Dr. Wood is able to pursue other activities that bring him joy, such as his participation in community musical theatre. He was Mr. Greenway, the owner of the publishing company, in the 2019 production of *Elf, The Musical* at The Public Theater of San Antonio. In fact, the Vision Source San Antonio Marketing group is one of the top corporate partners of the theater (San Antonio's only professional equity theater), and it has been the theater's feature summer-show sponsor for the past three years, another sign of the camaraderie and willingness to be part of a team.

## Start with support

**Audrey Raley, OD**, of New Braunfels, Texas, says that being a Vision Source practice from the very start has allowed her to achieve more than she might have on her own. For two years between graduation and opening a practice, she had mentors

whose practices reflected the kind of atmosphere and dedication she wanted. She interned at Lakeline Vision Source where **Laurie Sorrenson, OD, FAAO**, encouraged her to open cold. After graduation, she worked at the Vision Source practice of **Casey Packer, OD**, who mentored her in all aspects of private practice.

"I was able to go to Vision Source meetings as a student and a new graduate. From being around these doctors, I saw that this group was not simply a buying alliance but a real team. There was a lot of camaraderie and support for developing leadership potential. I saw there was no reason for me to reinvent the wheel."

Like many new graduates, Dr. Raley carried student loan debt after graduation.



"I thought that opening cold would mean that I would need to get archaic instruments. I wondered how I was going to pay for this and practice the way I wanted to." Through Vision Source, she connected with the consulting group iCare

Advisors, who helped guide her on priorities and maximizing her Vision Source benefits. "I was able to stretch the money," she says, noting she has a Daytona Plus from Optos, the Maestro OCT from Topcon, full exam lane with autorefractor, digital acuity charts, a visual field device and topography with the dry eye suite. "I calculated that I was going to stagnate if I skimmed on the technology I wanted and needed," she says. ●

**"I saw that [Vision Source®] was not simply a buying alliance but a real team."**

—Dr. Raley

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