

vcpn

vision care product news

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**YOUNGER
OPTICS**
The Optical Lens Innovators

David Rips, CEO



BRAND NEW FROM YOUNGER OPTICS!
SEE A DEMO AT VISION EXPO EAST BOOTH LP4413

NUPOLAR
infinite gray

Spring Fashion.

“ ‘A’ list celebrity stylist Kate Young loves to mix vintage glamour with modern details. This aviator has round shaped lenses, giving it a vintage vibe. The Italian acetate Windsor rim adds a luxurious detail, making this frame modern and chic for today’s fashion-savvy woman. ”

– Julie Allen, Senior Brand Manager, Tura And Kate Young



“ As mixed material frames are trending high this season, we have focused on using both metal and acetate in the majority of the collection. The combination of metals with animal print acetates and glitter acetates in deep earth tones is finished with muted gold and rose gold hues. Pearlized and multi-colored acetates give a new perspective to combination frames. Metal accents such as double metal bridges, inlays and brow line details are key. This season shapes range from round to square and modern cat eyes. ”

– Beverly Suliteanu, Vice President, Product Development, WestGroupe

PURPLE *crush*

"ULTRAVIOLET" IS THE 2018 PANTONE COLOR OF THE YEAR, AND THERE'S NO SHORTAGE OF FRAMES TO STAY ON-TREND



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MARCHON

NIKE VISION GOLF COLLECTION

STYLE: PIVOT SIX

Five sun styles incorporate Nike Course Tint technology designed to block sunlight, balance light and intensify colors to assist in reading course greens and amplify the white of the golf ball. Lightweight frames include high-tension hinges, cushioning and ventilated rubber nosebridges to prevent fogging.

800.645.1300
 Marchon.com
 NikeVision.com

MODO

ECO BIOBASED COLLECTION

STYLE: PO GRYT A

Frames come with a magnetic sun clip-on, are made of 63% plant-based material from the oil of castor plants and are available in colorways such as horn/light blue gradient, gray tortoise and red tortoise gradient. For every ECO frame purchased, one tree is planted.

800.223.7610
 MODO.com

IC! BERLIN

RUBBER COLLECTION

STYLE: TOMMY G.

Three stainless steel ophthalmic frames have been coated with a polyurethane-based thermoplastic elastomer to create an elastic rubber that is scratch and heat resistant and suitable for those with latex allergies. Named after company employees, styles come in three colors each.

866.634.8990
 ic-berlin.de

KIRK & KIRK

SPECTRUM COLLECTION

STYLE: MILES

Designed in England and made entirely in France, six ophthalmic models (three women's, two men's and one unisex) are made of acrylic and come in eight laminated color combinations that create a fun look.

267.773.6670
 KirkandKirk.com

WESTGROUPE

KLIIK DENMARK

STYLE: K-603

The bold square frame of men's model K-603 integrates thin acetate made with a side-by-side lamination technique on the frame front and temples. Blends of wood grain patterns and a metal end cap offer sophisticated appeal. Walnut black, oak black and ebony black round out the color choices.

855.455.0042
 WestGroupe.com

20 Questions WITH MICHAEL SULITEANU



WestGroupe president Michael Suliteanu discussed with VCPN's John Sailer what it's like running a family business and how to compete for space on frame boards throughout the U.S. and the world.

1. What was it like growing up in the family eyewear business?

I learned how to be an entrepreneur and the importance of standing out and doing your own thing in order to be successful. I also learned a very healthy work ethic. As a kid, on weekends or during spring and summer breaks, I would work with my dad in our lab or in the warehouse. I did everything from grinding lenses to packing boxes. My father was very diligent about making sure I learned the business from the ground up. When I joined the company in 1990, I started as a sales rep carrying the bags.

2. How do you balance working with family?

Working with my father and sister, the most important thing is respect for each other. My sister and I respect where our father brought the business, and he respects where we want to take it. As long as we respect each other's strengths, contributions, and opinions, there is no reason for us not to get along. The most important thing my father wanted was for us to lead the business with honesty and integrity and to realize that family is the most important thing.

3. How has the company evolved?

The company has evolved from a Canadian company that imported branded products to sell in our market to a global company with distribution of its own brands and products in over 45 countries.

4. What is your father's current involvement?

He is semi-retired but our confidante. We run ideas by him for his invaluable feedback as he has extensive knowledge of the business and the industry.

5. Any plans for the next generation?

It is going to be up to them. Between me and my sister Beverly, we have four children who we would love to be a part of our business. As of right now, one daughter is interested, but plans are always evolving. Time will tell if she sticks to that path or finds a different one.

6. What is your favorite aspect of your eyewear business?

Building a culture that makes people want to come and work with WestGroupe.

7. What are the biggest challenges in the eyewear business today?

Maintaining our differentiation from other companies, especially when so many are consolidating. You have to be unique and give people a reason why they should deal with you.

8. What are the greatest opportunities in the eyewear business today?

Because of consolidation, those gaps left in the marketplace are the greatest growth opportunities.

9. What growth strategies are you implementing?

We want to do it the right way, have products we are proud of and customers who believe in what WestGroupe stands for and are proud to sell WestGroupe frames.

10. You're in 45 countries. What's it like appealing to different cultures?

Before I started doing this, I thought every culture and country were different. I have learned that although there may be some differences, they all face the same challenges. It's about finding a nice frame that fits and complements the face. Business practices may be different, for example, in Europe they may see their reps maybe three times a year, while in North America some want to see their rep six times a year. But at the end of the day, their needs are exactly the same – a nice frame that fits a face.

11. From your perspective as a Montreal native, what unique views do you bring to the eyewear business?

We have a more European flavour because of the French and English languages merging here in Québec. This influence translates into what makes us different and the way our frames look and feel.

12. To what do you attribute your success with non-licensed brand eyewear?

Our styling is different than those of most licensed brands. Also, our commitment to what we create and staying true to the key elements of our brands' DNA has definitely played a part in our success.

13. How do you find and keep good sales reps?

We have worked hard to maintain our family culture. We have a lot of respect for our sales reps as we know how hard their job is. I think they appreciate that they are all known by their name, not their sales number. The fact that we are continuing to grow within the U.S. market has allowed us to attract and keep top quality salespeople.

14. If three to four companies represent 60% of the board space plus, what is your strategy to compete with the other 100 plus companies looking to take that last 30% to 40%?

We focus on highlighting what we are strong at. We create product that is different from what they already have on the board, product that will sell through and make them money. We respect and treat our customers with honesty and integrity, and they appreciate that.

15. What keeps you up at night?

Fighting to keep our family culture in a corporate business structure, motivating people to build together and be part of the growth of the business.

16. How important are trade shows?

They are important for meeting our customers and for our customers to meet the people who are behind the business. Trade shows are also the best place to meet potential customers.

17. What is your biggest challenge in the next five years?

Staying relevant in an ever changing marketplace.

18. What advice would you give our readers who own their own businesses?

Surround yourself with great people, conduct yourself with integrity and honesty, and most importantly, love what you do.

19. How has online eyewear sales affected your business?

Any type of competition, whether online, mass merchants or retailers, pushes you to be better. If you stand still, everyone will pass you by.

20. What do you like to do in your free time?

Spend time with my whole family. ■