



Space in the market

Two sisters are looking to breathe life into the UK frame sector with their new company, Eyespace

If ever two people were destined to work in the optical industry it was sisters Jayne and Julie Abel. Their father, Phillip, founded International Eyewear in 1988 and the pair became involved with the company and the wider optical profession while they were at school.

Now the duo have pooled nearly 40 years of experience to create Eyespace, a frame supplier targeting independent practices – and it has some ambitious plans for the future.

Jayne can call upon almost 20 years as an optometrist as well as a product and marketing director role with the old family business. As an optometrist she has worked for both multiples and independents and has detailed knowledge of the frame purchasing side of the business from all sides.

She is now joint managing director with Julie, a qualified chartered accountant who was operations director of International Eyewear and managing director for five years after the company was sold to Eschenbach Optik. As time went on, the sisters began to feel the urge to embark on a new project and plans were drawn up for a new company after leaving International Eyewear in 2012.

What independents want

Their Eyespace vision is to breathe life into the frame sector here in the UK. The strategy is simple – provide independents with the best possible products at the best possible price. Delivering that aim will call on every last bit of experience the pair have gained from the industry in frame design and manufacturing, marketing and clinical practice. ‘Jayne was in the unique position of always being able to recognise what the opticians wanted,’ says Julie on the task at hand.

When creating the brand, the company has spent months carrying out market research that has looked beyond the optical industry. The pair say they have looked at companies such as Apple to gauge how it markets products and have studied aspects



Cocoa Mint, a range designed to bridge the gap between high fashion and more classical styles



right down to the simple fonts it uses – which has inspired some of the material that accompanies collections.

The Eyespace name is inspired by new forms of progressive social media and what they describe as the simple fact that glasses occupy the space around the eyes.

Working in practice, Jayne says she quickly found a love of frame design that was equal to her love of the clinical side of the profession. ‘I like the patient to look great, have a positive experience and have a piece of eyewear that they can be proud of. It’s also important for the practitioner to have confidence in the product that they are dispensing.’

JN8000, one of 38 models in the Jensen range

With the launch of Eyespace, practitioners are spoilt for choice, as there are over 400 SKUs spread over six collections at launch. A seven-strong sales force has been tasked with visiting independent practices and Julie and Jayne are confident they will be busy in the coming months.

The pair are quick to point out that every frame in the collections is designed from scratch and that there are no ‘off the shelf’ shapes in the collections. ‘We know what practice portfolios look like so have catered for them accordingly in conjunction with our strong in-house design team,’ says Jayne.

Although the Eyespace name and brand is quite progressive in its nature, frames across the collections are very inclusive and no patients will feel left out. The women’s Cocoa Mint range is one of the pair’s favourite collections. ‘It has been designed to bridge the gap between high fashion and more classical styles,’ says Jayne. ‘It’s a range for patients that don’t quite have the confidence to wear a high fashion frame but want something stylish,’ added Julie. The 30-strong collection features easy to wear silhouettes in a palette of subtle pastel hues.

Men’s collection Jensen is designed with a European feel. The range comprises 38 models in total, with eye sizes ranging from 50 to 58. Styles range from sporty to clean cut and colours include on-trend dark matt shades. The range also includes a selection of titanium models.

Younger patients are covered by the Basebox and Rock Star ranges. Frames in the Basebox collection have been designed for teens and young professionals with the aim of offering shapes that provide the appeal of high end, costly fashion frames at a much more accessible price point. Rock Star is for children between five and 15 and is inspired by American preppy fashions.

More Eyespace collections will appear in future issues of *Optician*.

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