

# Building a better practice

**T**he palatial grounds of the Oakley Court Hotel, Windsor, provided a splendid backdrop at the latest instalment of CIBA Vision's MBA course, held on September 8-9. However, the beauty of the surroundings was somewhat wasted for the most part, as the line-up of entertaining and informative speakers meant no one was looking idly out of the window.

Over 50 practitioners attended and those spoken to by *Optician* were positive about their experiences.

The first day saw **Patrick Myers**, chief executive officer of optical consultancy Myers La Roche, present on issues pertinent to improving financial performance. He was followed by **Gary Gerber**, president and founder of US consultancy The Power Practice, who interspersed advice on increasing patient loyalty with his trademark magic tricks.

Day two saw **Shelly Bansal** give his opinion on methods to increase revenue per patient, followed by group exercises and then Gerber took to the stage again, outlining a suitably bombastic guide to delivering powerful patient presentations. An informal and friendly atmosphere was cultivated through regular breaks for tea and chat.

The first MBA was held over one year ago at the historic Coombe Abbey Hotel, near Coventry, and including the Windsor event there have now been seven MBA courses, featuring some or all of the speakers mentioned above.

So does attending the carefully devised course translate into real benefits for

The speaker panel at the latest MBA course: (l-r) Gary Gerber, Shelly Bansal, Patrick Myers and Mark Draper (CIBA)



CIBA Vision's Management and Business Academy (MBA) has reached its first anniversary. *Optician* reports from the latest event and speaks to past attendees about how it has changed their practices

practices? 'It was a very positive experience for me,' says Mike Patel, owner of an independent practice in Croydon, who attended the inaugural MBA at Coombe Abbey last year.

'The talk Patrick Myers gave was very relevant for me and the break out group exercises were priceless as a networking opportunity. I've implemented several changes to my practice based on the advice there. I've changed my recall system completely and designed a brand new practice management system in addition to introducing practice satisfaction surveys and pre-exam questionnaires,' explains Patel.

'Since making these and other changes I have noticed how many more patients we are dispensing and the increased value of their spend. This is because of the pre-exam questionnaire which lets us know a bit about what they want from us and also our recall system is now 10 times better because of the new practice management system and we are doing a complete refit.'

## Motivational speakers

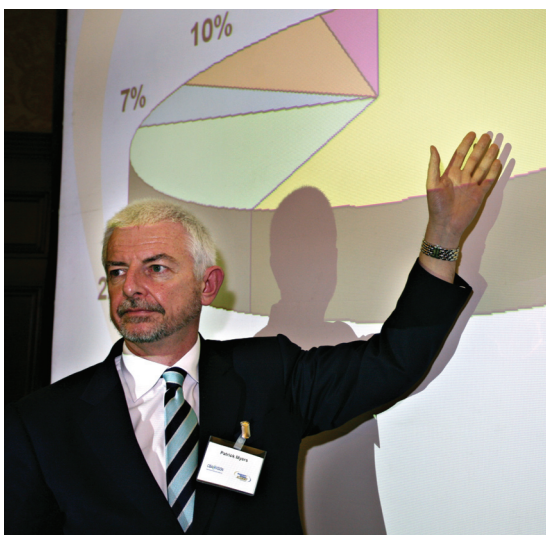
Brendan Murphy, partner of Peacock & Murphy in Verwood, Dorset, who attended a Coombe Abbey MBA in May 2008 described it as brilliant. 'I found it to be very motivational and picked up quite a few pointers about how to correctly run your business. As an independent you can be cut off because you don't get much feedback or chances to discuss with colleagues from different practices. The MBA gave an insight into an efficient way to run your business. What is really

conveyed to me was the importance of being efficient with your time and Gary Gerber was extremely entertaining too.

'Since attending we have implemented staff training presentations and integrated contact lens direct debits into the practice. The more transparent pricing structure that this gives us is important as we do a lot of contact lens business – roughly 20 per cent of our revenue – and it pleases our customers. Beyond that it has given me a good deal more enthusiasm and direction about what I was doing with the practice. I was really pleased I went.'

'The MBA was very enjoyable experience both socially and professionally,' says David Baddeley, practice owner in Harefield, Middlesex, who attended the latest Windsor event. 'Shelly Bansal's lecture on the benefits of charging professional fees on a monthly basis has spurred us to develop this business plan from contact lenses, which we already sell in this fashion, to frames too. This is part of a process at my practice to target the highest spending customer more effectively.'

After attending the MBA, delegates can revisit the material presented and even ask questions of the speaker via a devoted website. CIBA Vision is also taking its own advice about feedback – questionnaires completed by delegates on the usefulness of the MBA mean future courses should build on the success of the first year. They will continue to help practice owners by honing the content of future meetings to give an even closer fit to the needs of those attending. ●



Patrick Myers presents on improving financial performance