

Dispensing Optician of the Year

Combining experience of teamwork and customer care with technical expertise is how Eve Lambert put herself ahead of the field

Spreading her skills and passion for optics was one of the traits that won Eve Lambert the accolade of Dispensing Optician of the Year and talking to her you can see why those characteristics leapt out from her entry.

To wow the judges, her entry explains not just the technical skills of finding solutions for a very highly myopic young woman with learning disabilities and a severely hyperopic nine-year-old, but the way in which she did it.

Providing the best cosmetic and technical solution is one thing, making it affordable to the patient by personally intervening is another. 'You have to balance the budget and the lifestyle needs,' she says.

Her career started on the reception desk of Boots Opticians in St Austell as a teenager. 'When I went to college I discovered the social side of things,' she admits sheepishly. A glittering academic career was put on hold. She later switched to Dollond & Aitchison where she was to stay for 10 years. It was with D&A where the path of her career was to change when it sponsored her through ABDO's distance learning and a block release DO course at Godmersham.

This put Lambert's career on a steeper trajectory that saw her appointed branch manager during the second year of the course. The move to Penzance meant a long train journey each day, but she says this provided ample study time.

Despite starting study a little later than some, she graduated with additional credits in her final exams. 'I was a bit older and I could see the benefits long term and I was ready for a career,' she says. Having worked so long as a receptionist, she also understood the role. 'That's the really good thing about optics, you can try before you buy.'

As well as developing her DO roles



and taking on more senior positions, Lambert had also become an NVQ assessor. This enabled her to pass on those skills to others, something she really enjoys.

Her other passion is customer care. 'I believe in really good customer care and customer service,' she says. This is because it is not just professionally and personally rewarding, but because it also brings back repeat business. Her years on the reception desk also help her understand that, by looking after the whole team, the business will benefit. 'From a management point of view, I believe that if you look after the people then the people will look after the numbers. And it's easier to be nice,' she concludes.

Truro and beyond

Underlining her personal mix of caring professional and business-focused manager, she adds: 'I love problem solving, getting the dispense right without having to go to a re-test or a re-make. I also enjoy a good sales

'I remember my name being read out and going up but I don't remember coming back down!'

day because you get a buzz.'

Lambert's move to Truro, which was closer to home, was brought about because of the merger of Boots and D&A something she feels was a positive influence on her career. 'The merger opened up quite a lot of opportunities within the group.'

The merger also led to her entry to the awards. 'Boots is very proactive in recognising people's achievements when it comes to awards,' she says. This ultimately led to her inclusion in the competition. She also says she was encouraged by seeing other Boots employees entered for, and winning the awards and getting encouragement from colleagues such as Max Halford from the Plymouth branch, who was also shortlisted.

She says she was delighted with the entry process, but she was glad of the help from Boots. 'It was difficult. Am I showing off? But I had done all of these things,' she concludes.

She also found the night itself very enjoyable and went along as a guest of CIBA Vision and sat with other shortlisted entrants. She knew another Boots DO was on the shortlist and admitted to feeling that 'they had the award in the bag'. But it was to be her night.

Since then the trophy has been featured on the Boots intranet, in the local newspaper and even taken a trip down a flight of stairs. 'It clunks, I'm not sure if the trophy or the marble stairs came off worst.'

Confidence boost

Things really started to heat up for Lambert after she won the Dispensing Optician of the Year award. She is currently practice manager at the Exeter branch, she won the regional branch manager of year competition and she has had congratulations from the 'very top' of the Boots organisation.

'I never expected people at that level to congratulate me,' she says. Entering the awards was a confidence booster she would recommend to everyone.

In terms of her experience on the evening of the awards, she says: 'I was delighted to be shortlisted but going on to win was something else. I remember my name being read out and going up but I don't remember coming back down!' ●

DISPENSING OPTICIAN OF THE YEAR

● **Winner** Eve Lambert, Boots, Truro

● **Shortlisted**
Mary Chapman, Specsavers Teignmouth
Martin Varley, Christopher Nixon Kirk Dilly, Boots, Swindon

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