
Where Have All the Vendors Gone . . .

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It is conventional wisdom among publishers that the amount of advertising that is carried by a magazine determines the amount of editorial copy that is published. This is particularly true of controlled circulation magazines, like *Optometric Management* and others in the ophthalmic media. Controlled circulation provides for more favorable (read that less expensive) mailing costs. The regulation requires that publishers send the magazine to everyone in a grouping (e.g., all licensed optometrists) whether they pay for a subscription or not.

Having said that, it behooves publishers to get a minimum of 40% of the total pages of a publication as paid advertisers in order to come close to breaking even. Most publishers strive for a 50/50 split between ad pages and editorial (non-advertising) content. If, and when, the percentage gets to be more than 50% advertising, it is time to break out the champagne bottles and celebrate.

As many readers know, I became the editor/publisher of *Optometric Management* (OM) in 1971. Under the previous owners, the magazine scored high in every readership study but it was a disaster in the financial arena. The publication, before I came to the helm, was averaging about six pages of ads—in a good month. That is unsustainable unless the owners have deep pockets. Or decided to reduce the editorial content to one or two articles, which made it thinner than a comic book.

Long story short, we hired a great advertising team and it soon solicited more ads than we needed for a 50/50 split. We never turned down advertising (of course) and never did we publish the magazine with less than half editorial material. Having a modern, attractive format, with four-color ads, and professionally written articles were inducements both to readership and for advertiser support.

In cleaning out my store of memorabilia recently, I came across the March, 1973 issue of OM, published two years after our team started producing *Optometric Management*. That issue had 45 different advertisers with nearly half of them taking multiple pages! My pride in this success is comparable to my sadness wondering where all these companies have gone. Rarely do we see the “missing companies” have ads in any ophthalmic medium.

Look at this list of those who advertised in the March 1973 issue of OM: Abbott Laboratories; A.I.T. Industries, Inc.; Allergan Pharmaceuticals; Alpa Corp.; T.A. Altschuler; American Optical Corp.; Armorlite Lens Co.; Art-Craft Optical Co.; A.V. Scientific Aids, Inc.; Ayerst Laboratories; Central Labs, Inc.; Conforma Laboratories; Continuous Curve Contact Lenses, Inc.; Corning Optical Products; Crown Optical Co., Inc.; DMV Contact Lens Co.; Eye Kraft Optical, Inc.; Frames; Gordon Contact Lenses, Inc.; Histacount Corp.; Kontur Kontakt Lens Co.; Liberty Optical Co.; Martin-Copeland; J.I. Morris Co.; New Hermes Engraving Machine, Corp.; Nikon, Inc. Instrument Division; Novamatic Systems; Oculite Company; Omega Instrument Co., Inc.; Optometric Center

of N.Y.; Patti Co.; A. Lemay Co., Inc.; PPG Industries; Replacement Lens, Inc.; Sitler's Supplies, Inc.; United States Optical Co.; Univis, Inc.; Victory Optical Mfg., Co.; Vision-Ease Corp.; Welling International; Whitney Optical Co.; Wise Optical Co., Inc.; and Raymond S. Wright Insurance Agency.

When I drafted this article, I had the June 2016 issue of OM on my desk. So I looked at the Index of Advertisers. Only one company that had advertising in the 1973 issue noted above was listed in that 2016 issue! It was Allergan and it had dropped the "Pharmaceuticals" in its name. The 2016 ad was for a drug ("Restatis") while the 1973 ad was for a contact lens eye drop ("Blink -N-Clean").

My, have times changed!