



Helping Vision Benefit Pros Bring Their Eye Health Promotion Strategy Full Circle at Transitions Academy

Havas PR and Transitions Optical, Inc., Jan 1,2013

Summary: 2013 Silver Anvil Award of Excellence Winner — Events and Observances (Seven or Fewer Days) — Business to Business

Almost half of employees don't use their vision plan. But many of them don't know how risky that can be to not only their eye health but also their overall health. And employers sometimes aren't aware of the serious impact that can have on their healthcare costs and productivity rates. Transitions Optical Inc. (TOI), the leading supplier of Transitions® lenses (photochromic eyeglass lenses that automatically adjust in changing light outdoors and protect eye health by minimizing glare to reduce eyestrain and by blocking damaging UV rays), needed to elevate the importance of vision plans and those plans that cover Transitions lenses. In response, @havaspr developed a managed vision care (MVC) education event for employer influencers—benefits brokers and vision plan representatives—that emphasized vision plan value, strengthened partner and media relationships, and generated prominent media coverage.

Events and observances (seven or fewer days) includes programs or events scheduled for one to seven consecutive days (not including planning and preparation). Events may include commemorations, observances, openings, celebrations or other special activities, and must occur within a time span of one week.

Full Text: “The focus of this year’s managed care track was eye health and the aging U.S. workforce. According to a new Transitions study presented at the conference, baby boomers are missing out on critical preventive care despite their risk for age-related vision problems, eye diseases and chronic conditions. ”
—California Broker, March 2012

SITUATION ANALYSIS

Almost half of employees don't use their vision plan. But many of them don't know how risky that can be to not only their eye health but also their overall health. And employers sometimes aren't aware of the serious impact that can have on their healthcare costs and productivity rates. Transitions Optical Inc. (TOI), the leading supplier of Transitions® lenses (photochromic eyeglass lenses that automatically adjust in changing light outdoors and protect eye health by minimizing glare to reduce eyestrain and by blocking damaging UV rays), needed to elevate the importance of vision plans and those plans that cover Transitions lenses. In response, @havaspr developed a managed vision care (MVC) education event for employer influencers—benefits brokers and vision plan representatives—that emphasized vision plan value, strengthened partner and media relationships, and generated prominent media coverage.

RESEARCH

We needed to show HR professionals how important comprehensive vision plans and employee education are for their bottom line. TOI's own annual national employee omnibus survey (conducted by Ipsos) revealed in 2012 that nearly half of employees don't take advantage of their vision plan, by not enrolling (having no perceived eye health problems was the most common reason) or not using it to get an eye exam. Employees, it showed, don't understand the importance of preventive eye care, which contributed to limited perceived value and usage of their plan—a lost opportunity, given the prevalence of vision issues in the workforce and the serious impact they can have on healthcare costs and productivity.

In addition, industry research revealed that 70 percent of eyeglasses are purchased through MVC, so it is an important business strategy for TOI to promote coverage of Transitions lenses in vision plans and to persuade plans to integrate messages about the product's advantages into employee benefits communications. But primary research surveys through Synovate (now Ipsos) and HR.com showed that HR professionals place a low priority on vision benefits due to an overwhelming focus on higher-priced medical benefits. A key insight we made is that if employers aren't promoting vision, that sends a signal to employees that eye health and vision benefits aren't important.

PLANNING

The results of all this research underscored the need for more HR and employee education. @havaspr has worked with TOI since 2008 on the Transitions Healthy Sight Working for You® (HSWFY) program, educating benefits professionals on the importance of eye health, vision benefits and eyewear for employee health and productivity. Our 2012 initiative further advanced this plan.

The brokers who advise employers on their benefits selections heavily influence employers' decisions about which vision benefits to offer, so @havaspr recommended a comprehensive education experience for key benefits brokers (and the vision plan sales representatives who call on them) to jump-start a change in behavior and increase time and focus spent presenting the vision benefit. The event would reinforce TOI's commitment to partners and their healthy sight education, showcase the program's broker/employee education tools and demonstrate how Transitions lenses fit in the plans. Our 2012 budget: \$125,000.

The annual MVC education track that @havaspr recommended TOI add to Transitions Academy—its large education event for the optical industry—is still going strong after four years. For the two-day track in 2012, "Bringing Your Eye Health Promotion Strategy Full Circle," our specific objectives were to:

- Raise awareness of the potential for vision coverage (eye exams and eyewear such as Transitions lenses) to increase employee productivity and enhance overall health
- Motivate the use of HSWFY education tools by vision plans and their brokers
- Provide an opportunity to build and strengthen valuable relationships with vision plan reps and brokers
- Generate credible content to leverage with HR media to spread the program's message

EXECUTION

At Transitions Academy, @havaspr and TOI recruited credentialed key opinion leaders and developed their presentations. Ophthalmologist Vincent Young highlighted eye health needs of employees over 40 (a growing group) and age-specific findings from TOI's annual employee study. And sports vision expert Lawrence Lampert presented on the importance of proper vision for sports and why active employees need a vision plan. We also created two presentations for TOI executives: one on how brands such as Transitions lenses affect the MVC industry and another that featured annual employee research results and a live demo of tools on HealthySightWorkingForYou.org. Plus, we developed a group activity to discuss strategies for promoting vision benefits to employers and create Flip Cam videos highlighting key learnings.

The @havaspr team moderated an HR manager panel discussion focusing on how employee demand for value in their benefits offering is affecting the need for quality vision benefits (we incorporated insights into a white paper published post-event). TOI moderated a broker panel with finalists of the 2011 Transitions Vision Benefits Broker of the Year Award, recognizing those who champion vision and Transitions lenses with clients. We then recognized the winner at an optical awards ceremony attended by the HR media. Plus, we announced a Transitions HR Visionary of the Year Award for employers who provide quality vision plan offerings and education.

Our agency hosted two HR media editors who also attended an exclusive media dinner with optical trade media. @havaspr shared the press kit and sent individualized pitches to media unable to attend.

EVALUATION

Participant feedback: Attendance maxed out with 165 participants at the MVC track. A post-event survey revealed that all speakers received strong ratings (4-5 out of 5) and nine in 10 attendees strongly agreed (4-5) the content was useful to their business. Attendees also rated HSWFY education tools very highly (4-5). Many brokers said the experience helped them realize the need to focus on vision, and 100 percent agreed Transitions lenses is a brand evolving in an innovative direction, and that they would recommend the lenses to customers.

Increasing use of tools: In 2012, traffic to the HSWFY website exceeded 2011's (4,900 visits versus 3,600). New visitors to a Healthy Sight Calculator, allowing employees to calculate vision plan savings, grew 10 percent in 2012 over 2011. VSP, the largest vision plan provider, includes a co-branded version of the calculator on its website (with 23,000 views in 2012) and features a co-branded version of the HSWFY website on its portal for brokers.

Partnerships with vision plan providers: The event was a valuable relationship-builder with vision providers, which created their Transitions-related marketing initiatives across several media. VSP/Eyefinity heavily promoted its satisfaction guarantee on Transitions lenses in 2012, and WellPoint rolled out a plan featuring coverage of Transitions lenses for children in several markets in 2012, with more planned for 2013. TOI credits these growing partnerships as a key reason for the product's continued success in a tough economy.

HR media relationships: We generated more than 4 million nonpaid editorial trade impressions in 2012, including 32 quality bylines, features, blog posts and news release pickups in our six most targeted publications, exceeding 2011 levels of 2.8 million impressions. @havaspr also placed seven trade print/online ads and advertorials, as well as Facebook ads. Our second-annual Transitions Academy cover story appeared in California Broker; the editor ran four bylines on vision benefits—arranged by @havaspr—in 2012. Another cover story, in Human Resource Executive (our No. 2 target), highlighted the employee research, HR panel and paper. HealthCare Consumerism Solutions is now featuring HSWFY education materials on its website and is co-sponsoring the Transitions HR Visionary of the Year Award. And our No. 1 target publication, HR Magazine, published an employee research feature and perspective piece on the value of vision benefits by TOI on its website, SHRM.org.