

# The Quarterly

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# Building Culture As The Product

When Larry Golson, OD, talks about leadership, he doesn't start with titles or metrics. He starts with culture. Dr. Golson believes that every action moves culture positively or negatively. There are no neutral actions. That conviction has guided his journey from starting Envision Eyecare "cold" in Asheville, North Carolina, in 2008 to shaping one of the area's most distinctive practices. He later launched his own consulting firm, Sherpa Consulting.

For Dr. Golson, culture isn't an accessory to good patient care—it is the product.

His road to ownership began after graduating from Southern College of Optometry and returning to Atlanta, where he worked in both private practice and corporate

optometry. Those early years gave him a firsthand look at the best—and worst—of practice operations and team dynamics. When he relocated to Asheville, drawn by the mountains and the promise of a better quality of life, he brought those lessons with him. Starting a practice during the 2008 recession was far from easy, but it became the crucible where his philosophy of intentional culture was forged.

At Envision Eyecare, culture shows up in every detail. From architecture that feels more like a gallery than a clinic, to phone greetings that set the tone long before patients walk in, nothing is accidental. "If I were a patient walking into a practice, what aspects would set that experience apart from conventional eye care?" he asked himself early on.

**"Culture, accountability and purpose don't happen by accident. They're built."**

That question became the design brief for Envision Eyecare's environment—one that continues to guide its evolution. Patient flow continually is refined to move seamlessly from welcome to exam to eyewear. Behind the scenes, team hiring and training always circle back to Purpose and Core Values. "Defining roles and metrics, keeping our purpose front and center, and practicing direct, caring feedback—that's how we ensure consistency."

The system has paid off. What began as a three-person team has grown to 21, with each leader empowered to make decisions and own their outcomes. Dr. Golson credits frameworks like Traction and Radical Candor for shaping his leadership approach, but he also emphasizes the importance of trust and accountability. "Empowering team members to own decisions and present solutions builds shared responsibility. That's how you get a trusted, high-performance team and a patient-care culture that thrives in a saturated market."

Dr. Golson admits that this mindset was tested early. Launching during an economic downturn forced him to keep a sharp eye on financials and operational data. Even today, he leans on metrics—including those from IDOC's Books & Benchmarks—to stay proactive. "We track trends in revenue, expenses, and patient demand in real time."

Each insight helps guide his decisions on hiring, scheduling,

technology investments and spending. "By reviewing benchmarks regularly and pairing them with on-the-ground feedback, we can spot shifts early and pivot efficiently."

Balancing roles is another hallmark of Dr. Golson's leadership style. In addition to owning and leading Envision Eyecare, he founded Sherpa Consulting in 2019 to help other practice owners elevate their leadership and organizational health. His consulting emphasizes evidence-based leadership, EOS implementation, financial analysis and, most importantly, cultivating culture. "I coach owners to work on their practice, not just in it, so they gain freedom of time."

Maintaining that balance requires structure. At Envision, shared dashboards, weekly leadership huddles, and defined roles ensure progress continues even when he's away consulting. Externally, support from IDOC and a trusted network of mentors keeps him grounded. "IDOC

has been invaluable for benchmarking and peer learning, while mentors and local business leaders provide perspective and accountability."

For Dr. Golson, IDOC plays a vital role in sustaining growth. "Books & Benchmarks provides the financial visibility to spot trends, protect margins and plan investments with precision. It's that combination—clarity and accountability—that helps us strengthen margins, grow responsibly and position Envision Eyecare as a trusted leader in our community."

Looking ahead, Dr. Golson's vision is about elevation. He's working toward fully delegating day-to-day operations to his leadership team, freeing him to focus more on consulting and family while ensuring Envision Eyecare continues to thrive. His ultimate goal is sustainability, not just for himself, but for every practice he coaches. "Culture, accountability and purpose don't happen by accident. They're built."

