



BECOME A PART OF *THE INSTITUTION*

The term *institutionalization* can be defined as the process of establishing something as a convention or norm in an organization or culture. Transforming your medical practice into an institution in ophthalmology requires a shift in mentality and the willingness and capability to do the following three things.

Invest. You have to move from a *cash now* mindset to a *creating the future* mindset. In other words, rather than focus on the money you can make now, focus on building a team and a reputation that allows you to grow your practice. This requires you to create a vision and a strategic direction by setting standards in the industry and by being a leader in innovation. To achieve this, you and your business partners need to invest in your employees, groom their talents, and become the employer of choice in your neighborhood.

Share. You must also move from a *me* mindset to a *we* mindset, which, admittedly, can be difficult to accomplish. Consider teaming up with the right partners who can share both business risks and benefits. Also be sure that your business activities are organized in a way that allow the business to still function effectively when the surgeon is not there.

Give away full control. Finally, you must move from a *this is my decision* mindset to a *this is the right business decision* mindset. The decision-making criteria in a business setting should take into account all of the variables or

characteristics that are important to the organization, and the criteria should help the decision-maker evaluate the available options. For example, if all of the diagnostic instruments you are evaluating have the same price and maintenance cost, then that characteristic should be disregarded in the decision-making process. Focus instead on evaluating things such as ease of use, durability, and reliability.

I have seen many colleagues in eye care struggle to share their wealth of knowledge and experience with their communities. Often these doctors become increasingly frustrated with their diminishing role and voice in eye care. The best way to ensure that they and others continue to play an active and integral role in this rich field is to encourage all current and future ophthalmologists to embrace and optimize the opportunities they have to join the institution. Together we can all lead the evolution of health care within this rapidly changing environment of eye care. ■

ERIK L. MERTENS, MD, FEBOPHTH

CHIEF MEDICAL EDITOR