

WHO WANTS TO BE A KEY OPINION LEADER/INFLUENCER?

MIDDLE
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In March, many witnessed the dawn of a new movement—Ophthalmpreneurs—the brainchild of Amanda Cardwell Carones, MPH, and Francesco Carones, MD. This conference, held in Stresa, Italy, attracted a diverse group of individuals from many countries, all of whom share an interest in the business of ophthalmology. What set this conference apart was its extensive coverage of ophthalmic enterprise. It featured true experts (mainly nonophthalmologists)

in various areas, including finance, marketing, risk management, negotiation, intellectual property management, and exit and acquisition strategy.

I had the pleasure of comoderating with Dr. Carones, the joint AECOS-Ophthalmpreneurs symposium “Becoming an Influencer.” This enlightening session included rising stars in ophthalmology, such as Radhika Rampat, MBBS, BSc(Hons), FRCOphth (United Kingdom); Domenico Boccuzzi, MD (Italy); Başak Bostancı, MD (Turkey); David Smadja, MD (Israel); Nino Kobakhidze, MD (Georgia); and Pei-Fen Lin, MD (United Kingdom).

These days, the term *influencer* often brings to mind prominence on social channels such as Instagram and TikTok. This is one important aspect of the role, but as the panelists discussed at the symposium, there are many avenues to becoming influential, each with different motivating factors. Valuable insights from the ophthalmic industry substantiated some of the points raised. For brevity, I have compiled a list for *CRST Global's* readership to consider:

- **No. 1. Opinionated.** This was perhaps the most important factor noted by panelists. Many did not set out to be influencers but inadvertently found themselves in that position after seeing things from a unique perspective and then establishing their presence through effective communication.
- **No. 2. Knowledgeable and current.** Influencers exhibit a broad knowledge base and, in some cases, niche expertise.
- **No. 3. Creative and communicative.** They use whatever media they are comfortable with to express their opinions. These range from reels on social media to podcasts to publications to active participation at meetings to public speaking.
- **No. 4. Curious and charismatic.** These qualities are essential for effectively conveying information and ideas in a meaningful way.
- **No. 5. Energetic.** This attribute is vital for accomplishing tasks.
- **No. 6. Collaborative.** Influencers, in their ability to communicate, are bold and seem able to network with individuals at all levels, always in search of a win-win in their collaborative efforts.

Many ophthalmologists possess the aforementioned six qualities and achieve success. However, what sustains a key opinion leader/influencer over the long term is a value system that promotes ethical conduct, maintains professional standards, and when necessary, challenges appropriately (ie, calls out issues that may violate integrity and honesty) with absolute decorum.

Thus, those of you aspiring to become influencers can consider and perhaps cultivate the six characteristics described earlier. More importantly, however, reflect inwardly and remain authentic. Yes, feel free to be opinionated and communicate effectively in an easy and personable manner, but always keep that ego in check! ■

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