



## Making the Switch: to ONLY SELLING Eye Protection

Or...How to go From Losing Money on Eyewear  
to MAKING Money on Eyewear!

by Brenda Fishbaugh

**Ed. Note:** This column was originally printed in a 2004 issue of *IST*, and has been the most requested “Eye to Eye” column. Updated this month with new suggestions, we hope salon owners continue to find it helpful.

**If you’ve been paying attention, you’ve noticed that all the salons around you are no longer providing “community” eye protection;** they are selling a pair of goggles or disposables to every tanner who walks in the door. You’d like to “make the switch” at your salon, but don’t know how. How did your competitors start charging for goggles and not upset their customers? How did they escape the nightmare of disgusting goggle soak-tanks and stolen goggles to make eyewear a profit center? And, most importantly, why did the switch to *buying* eye protection get more customers to *wear* it?

In surveys, we find only half of tanners who are PROVIDED goggles are wearing them — only half. There are two reasons for this: **1)** They aren’t convinced the goggles are cleaned properly, and **2)** They don’t know it’s important and essential to protect their eyes.

Interestingly, in salons that require tanners to buy their own eye protection, we see that MORE tanners wear it — about 70 percent! Why the increase?

The answer is two-fold: **1)** They feel their own eyewear is cleaner, thus safer and, **2)** Before buying their own, they had to be educated about why eyewear is important.

If you switch to selling eye protection, more of your tanners are actually going to wear it; so you will be providing a great service by protecting their eyes, and limiting your liability if their eyes were damaged during tanning sessions when they just “closed their eyes” and didn’t use protection.

When I started in the indoor tanning industry two decades ago, virtually all

instituted a new policy – of course they’ll be upset! Ease them into the change over a month’s time.

**Here are some ideas from salon operators who report a smooth transition:**

**1. One month before:** Post signs on your front door and reception counter announcing that in 30 days, you’ll discontinue providing goggles for sanitary reasons. It’s important that you inform your tanners WHY you’re making the switch. Most eye protection makers provide free signs with info about potential eye damage and infections.

*Is it time YOUR salon switched to making money on eye protection? For more info on eye education, email [Brenda@eyepro.net](mailto:Brenda@eyepro.net) and include your full name and address.*

facilities provided each tanner with salon-sanitized goggles at no charge. Now, we see only 30 percent of salons providing goggles, and most are in Ohio, New York and Texas — the only three states required by law to supply free, FDA-compliant eye protection.

Okay, now you are convinced that you should be charging for eye protection! But how do you make the change without upsetting your existing customers? Most importantly, DON’T just announce to your staff and customers you’ve

You can explain that you’re aware of how goggles spread infections and colds (download my past *ist Magazine* columns to share with your tanners). Bruce Woods of No Tan Lines in Chicago, uses an eye damage flip-chart from an eye protection supplier. “Once I show them a photo of “pink eye” contracted from improperly cleaned goggles, they happily purchase their own eyewear!”

**2. Offer a wide variety of goggles and disposable eyewear** and give a free  
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pair with any package purchase. The idea is to make it easy for tanners to transition out of YOUR "free" goggles and into a wonderful, personal pair of their own. You'll want to offer numerous style choices so they can find the one that's most comfortable and best fits their eye shape (contrary to popular belief, all eyes are not created equal.) Most salons SELL their used goggles for under \$1 to those on a budget.


**3. Make it fun, like buying jewelry.** Eye protection comes many colors and types; lay out samples for tanners to select from. There are a number of expensive, high-end goggles out there — give them a choice! "At our salons, customers who purchase bigger tanning packages receive more disposable eye protection or the fancier goggles," explains Michael Chunn of Sandollar Resorts in Alabama.

**4. As soon as the transition begins,** your staff must ask to see each tanner's eyewear every time they come for a session. "The question is not, 'Do you have eyewear?' but, 'May I see your eyewear, please?'" shares Ginger Hobby of Endless Summer in Holland, MI. "If they can't show their eyewear, we ask that they buy a pair of disposable eye protection to use for that session. We've found that the simple policy of asking tanners to show their eyewear and selling them replacement goggles or disposables has increased their knowledge about eye damage, and significantly increased our bottom line," Hobby continued.

"We like to give a pair of disposable eye protection to tanners

who've forgotten their goggles once," say Yates and Corrine Greenhalgh of Hotspot Tanning in MA. "When they upgrade to our best equipment, they get a pair of disposables and an after-tanning cloth at no charge."

Premiere Tans of Jonesboro, AR changed their eye protection policy and now only sells it. Former General Manager Lynn Robert reports, "The transition is very simple if you explain the policy change and make it clear to your tanners that you aren't trying to make a fortune on the goggles. You need to make sure your entire staff is with you and no longer loaning goggles, sabotaging your new program." Premiere Tans co-owner Barbara Gill shares, "Once we explained that we had their health and safety in mind, our tanners were actually very happy to own their own eyewear!"

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### About the Author:

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