

# GUEST EDITORIAL

## *Globalization's Impact on Your VT Practice*

Thomas D. Lecoq

A recent Fortune Magazine article on globalization of the economy, written by Intel Corp. co-founder Andrew Grove, has profound implications when applied to behavioral optometry.

Mr. Grove's company began by building DRAM chips—the volatile memory in which programs run and data are manipulated. Then Japanese manufacturers began making the chips and cutting prices so deeply that Intel abandoned that business to concentrate on building microprocessors.

Globalization has caused most businesses to compete fiercely to be more efficient, productive and flexible. It has also altered how life is lived for every individual on earth.

"... business knows no national boundaries. Capital and work—your work—can go anywhere on earth," Mr. Grove said. The consequence is painfully simple: "Every employee will compete with every person in the world who is capable of doing the same job. There are a lot of them, and many of them are very hungry," he added.

Here is the situation your patients (and their children) face today and for the foreseeable future: "There are two options." Mr. Grove wrote. "Adapt or die. The new environment dictates two rules: First, everything happens faster; second, anything that can be done will be done, if not by you then by someone, somewhere...These changes lead to a less kind, less gentle, less predictable workplace."<sup>1</sup>

How well will people be able to compete in this fierce, globalized world? Will a person be able to keep up with the stunningly rapid changes that are occurring in most fields if they fall asleep while reading, or must read and reread a passage to take its meaning?

Pete Kuykendall is a specialist in computerized management and control

of industrial processes. His work is done throughout the United States. He builds software, special computers and sensors that often replace people.

Adults and children whose vision keeps them from fulfilling their full potential or prevents them from increasing their productivity and the productivity of others may lose their job to a clever young person in Bombay, or to an ambitious woman in Vietnam. Or they may be replaced by one of Pete's process control systems.

How important is vision therapy in such an unkind, rough and haphazard-seeming world?

If parents fail to give their children the visual-perceptual advantage, the consequences are severe.

For accomplished and gifted patients, vision therapy provides the winning edge. Therapy enhances the patient's ability to powerfully perceive and act on every available opportunity. It enables accomplished people to stay current with the literature of their field instead of slowly falling behind. The ability to efficiently read and comprehend helps them spot a key development that may be exploited to cut costs 50% and double production.

For less accomplished patients, vision therapy means being able to avoid mistakes when filling or checking in orders, or being able to enter data and numbers accurately in a word processor database, spreadsheet, desktop publisher or accounting program. Today in America—in the world—work is information-based. Errors taking in, processing and using visual information will push an employee straight out the company door.

Avoiders once got jobs on production lines, became mechanics, built houses or sold things. But Pete's machines are eliminating those jobs. Computers con-

trol cars and run factories where whole sections of houses are mass produced, and have nearly halved the number of manufacturing employees in the United States in less than a decade.

Selling? Better be able to run a computer, keep up with complex technical aspects of new products. And your patients must be able to read, understand and apply new developments in customer service—the new art and science of sales.

Behavioral optometry is paradoxical. It is founded on some of the best scientific and clinical research done this century, including 20 years of vision research by Harvard professors David H. Hubel and Thorston N. Wiesel, for which the Nobel Prize for Medicine was awarded in 1981.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, behavioral optometry is highly practical, always seeking to develop ways to apply the outcome of research to the clinical treatment of patients.

It's no longer news to optometrists that behavioral optometry works, that problem children who receive behavioral vision care commonly begin to excel at life. Behavioral optometry produces reliable, predictable improvements in behavior, academic work and the ability to attain full potential.

Yet most people have never heard of VT, behavioral-developmental vision care, or any of the benefits such care provides. Most people whose vision problems interfere with their ability to perform up to their full potential will never hear about behavioral care.

As an informed consumer of behavioral optometric services, as a person who has devoted 14 years to learning to communicate the behavioral message powerfully, I am sorry to add that the few who do hear about it will probably

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Corresponding author:

Roger A. Johnson, Ph.D.

Old Dominion University

Darden College of Education

Norfolk, VA 23529-0161

Date accepted for publication:

July 26, 1995

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hear a weak, watered-down version of the behavioral vision story.

If your communications regarding behavioral care are weak, too detailed, convoluted or technical, few people will understand that the need for VT is urgent.

If you communicate that the decision to start VT is in any way contingent upon insurance company approval, the parent is left with the clear understanding that therapy is NOT urgent.

If you are overly cautious about stating the probable outcome of therapy, the parent or patient is likely to decide that it is an optional (and expensive) procedure that can be postponed without serious consequences.

I urge you to speak boldly the need for and benefits of behavioral care. Build what you say on a solid foundation of science, but remember that you are speaking to people who haven't a clue what the simple term "accommodation" means. You are speaking to people who daily hear and see powerfully delivered messages that a face cream will transform their lives—yes, empty promises—but delivered powerfully.

By comparison to the TV ad, how does your recommendation sound?

I commonly hear complaints that parents aren't willing to spend money. Yet, orthodontists are filling their books with children whose treatment is not covered by insurance. Perhaps the opinion that parents won't spend money on their children is self-fulfilling prophecy?

I implore you to develop your ability to effectively demonstrate common visual conditions using fingers, simple lenses, filters, prisms or Brock Strings.

Speak about observable signs of vision problems, give parents an opportunity to recognize for themselves that you are perfectly describing their child!

Develop ways of speaking that teach parents how to screen a child for learning-related vision problems.

Give that talk as often as possible, and make sure that each person who recognizes that his or her child has a problem is asked, "Let me take your name and number. I'll have someone call you tomorrow to set up an evaluation."

Perhaps it is time to take a stand and let your potential VT patients and parents know that the price of not doing VT will be paid by the child for a lifetime.

In a world of fierce global competition for jobs and resources, every child you can reach must be provided every possible advantage.

Gather your courage and speak out.

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Guest editor:

Thomas D. Lecoq

4701 Carmonita Lane

Yorba Linda, CA 92686