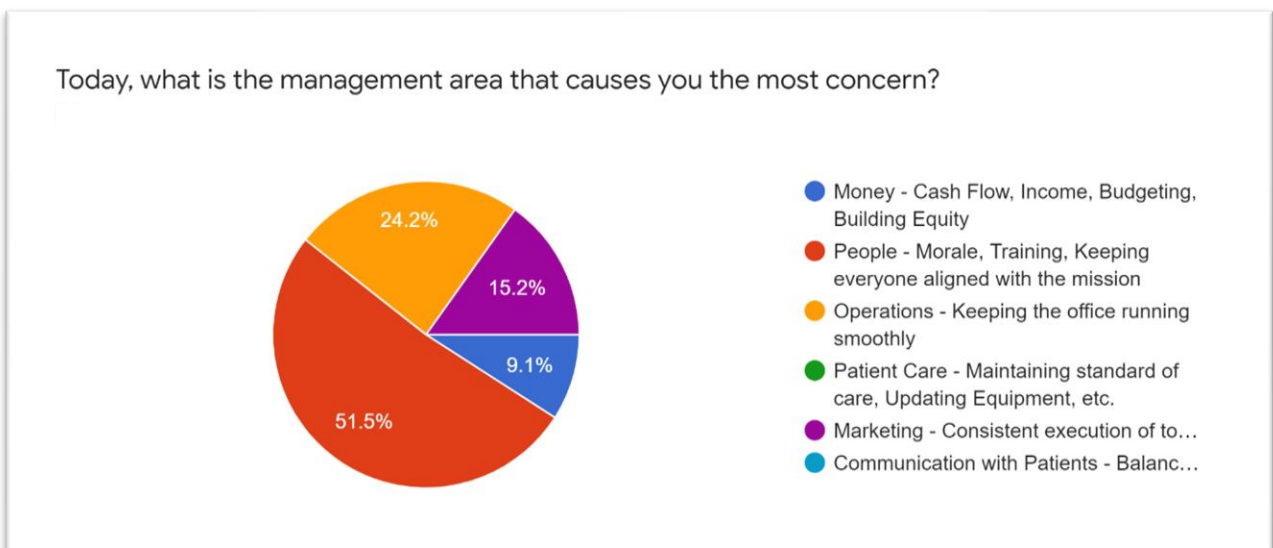


Surprising Responses Reveal Clear Leadership Void

Each year, as part of the Executive Retreat, Leadership OD conducts a “Lay of the Land” survey to gauge the specific needs of the practices that will be attending this unique conference. In 2021, to better accommodate the required flexibility, the survey was opened to Leadership OD readers who were not able to attend the Executive Retreat sessions.

The first question on the survey is traditionally, “Today, what is the management area that cause you the most concern?” Depending on your answer to that one question, the survey can take a variety of turns as we attempt to dig a little deeper into your primary needs.

Historically, the answer to this question has been consistent with about 50% indicating that “People” was their primary management concern and 50% answer “Money.” There have certainly been variations to this phenomenon over the years, but they have been small.



In 2021, about half (51.5%) of the respondents answered “People”, as we expected, but the other half of the responses did surprise us. 24% listed “Operations – Keeping the office running smoothly” as their leading management concern, followed closely by “Marketing.”

Only 9% are listing “Money” as the biggest concern. No one listed “Patient Care” or “Communication with Patients”, which really go hand-in-hand.

So What?

What does this shift in management concern say about how our practices are performing? The deeper dive suggests that recent events have given us an increased comfort level financially due to reduced expenses and successful receipt of stimulus money like the PPP. For the first time ever, optometrists are asking, “What should I do with all of this money?”

This new level of comfort combined with dramatic increases in home prices, construction costs and every other product that we buy should be sending warnings that financial troubles will be back stronger than ever. It will only be a big deal for those who are not prepared.

The heightened concern with “Operations” indicates that we do not have a handle on the “new normal.” We are continuing to react to changes with restrictions to how we practice, as well as our patient perceptions of how we should behave as the pandemic continues.

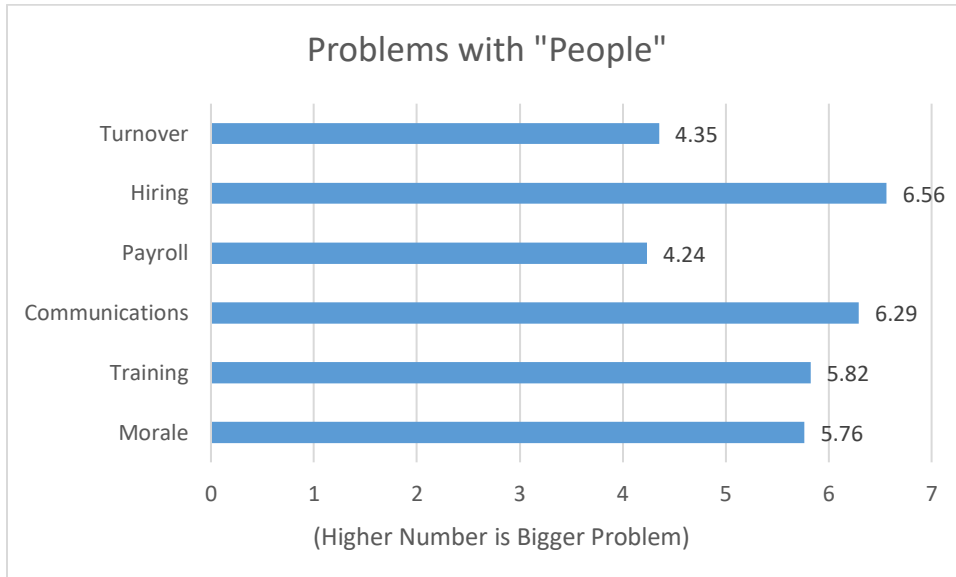
We have developed a comfort level with the “temporary” adjustments that we made to our normal way of doing things. The time has come to take a real look at these changes to see if they need to persist or change again. These new changes may be more like the old way, but most like will have some lessons that will sustain.

And what about “Marketing”? This represents our lack of confidence in knowing how to “talk to” our patients and communities. This goes back to not having a clear direction with what’s next. If we don’t know where we are going, we cannot craft a clear message to set expectations.

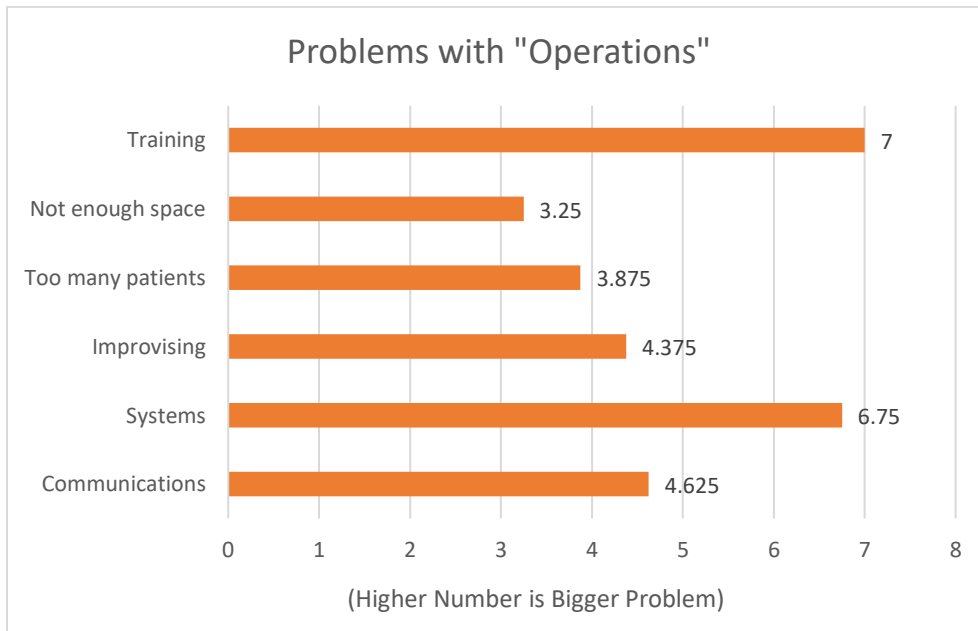
A Deeper Dive

The survey dives a little deeper with into each respondent's "Primary Concern." The average responses are displayed in the graphs below. On a scale of 1 – 9, each category was graded with the higher numbers representing more of the issue.

These responses solidify the evidence of widespread Leadership Void.

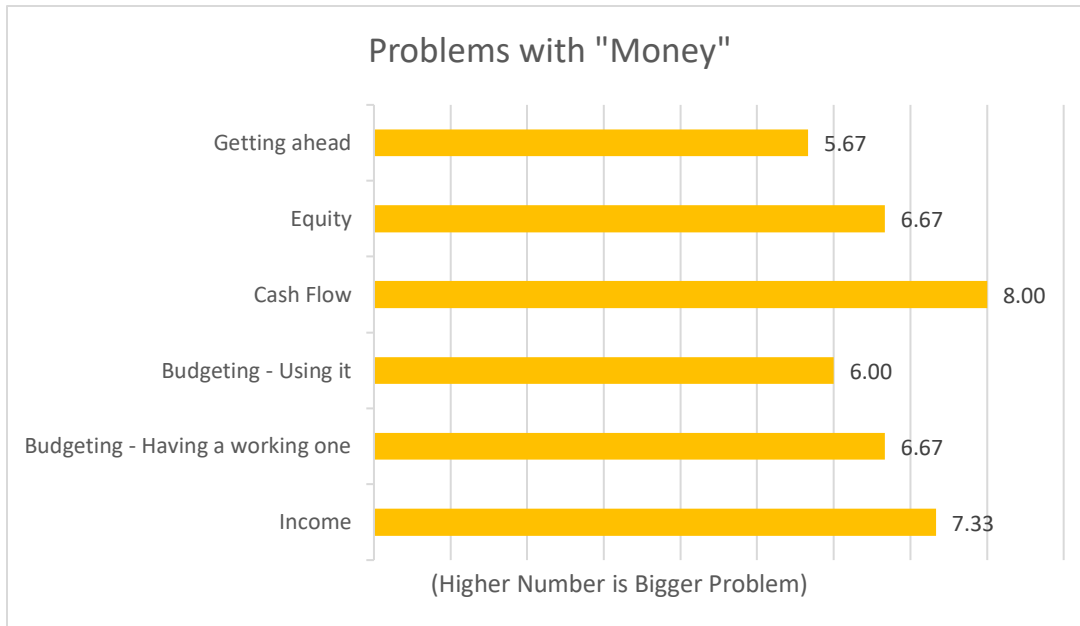


Of those that listed "People" as the primary concern, 71% chose "Operations" as the secondary concern.

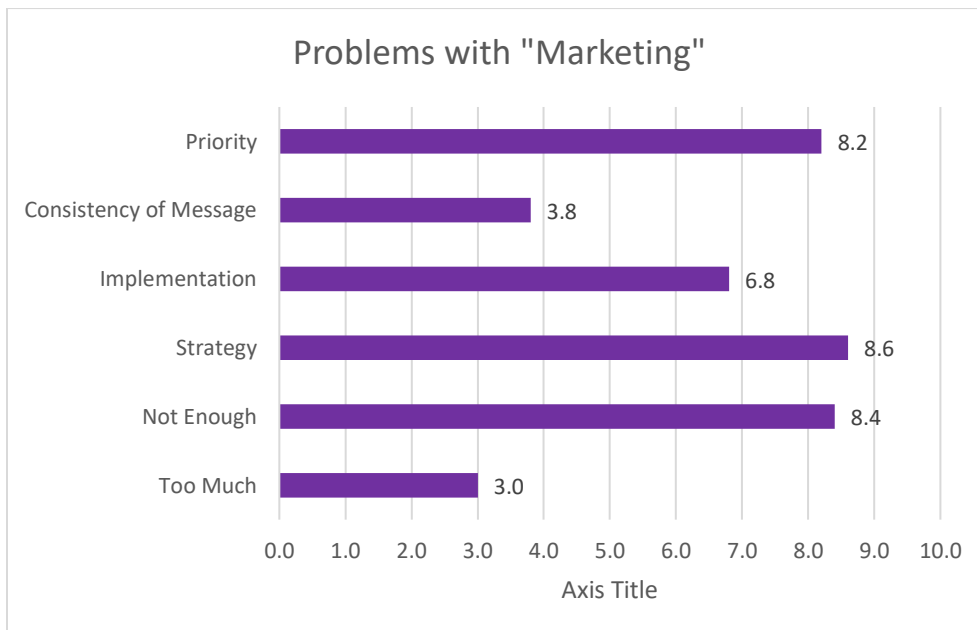


Of those that listed "Operations" as the primary concern, 63% said the second biggest was "People."

"LAY OF THE LAND" SURVEY RESULTS



67% said "Marketing" was their second biggest concern.



40% said the second biggest concern was "Nothing - Just Marketing"

Comments

The “Lay of the Land” survey also offers the opportunity to free write comments related to the practice concerns. This is where it breaks down into a multitude of individual concerns that are extremely specific at the moment.

The comments varied from decreasing motivation to CL distribution. We consistently wrestle with protocols to keep things falling through the cracks, keeping people, staff turnover and creating systems. We received responses about some employees not valuing others, system implementation, loss of connection within the team and not enough time in the day. Some are looking for help with consistent marketing messaging, moving away from reliance on VCP’s and getting re-branded.

This variety of comments clearly displays the breadth of issues that we face on a regular basis to continue serving our patients while striving to improve every, single day.

Conclusions

There is a void of clear direction within eye care practices which is both understandable and real. It is understandable because of the year of fear, panic, reaction and toleration that this public health emergency has caused for all of us. However, nothing can stay an emergency forever. The fear and panic will fade to confidence and education. The reactivity must yield to planning and “visioncasting.”

The time for renewed leadership has come.

Reset your Vision: Spend some time with your team, or quiet (uninterrupted) time alone and fully think out the new direction of your practice. Explore the lessons you have learned from this time and clearly define how your practice will deliver care in the future. Define what services you will add, improve and what you will discontinue.

Implement the New Plan: AFTER you have a clear vision and direction of where you are going, develop a plan for your entire team on how you will make it real. Look at all Five Zones of your practice and redirect them toward the new vision. Rewrite the Process Manual if you must and redefine your marketing / patient communication strategy. Engage every member of the team and hold them accountable.

Mind Your Finances: All the experts are predicting an economic collapse. Prices are rising, unemployment is still up, some industries won’t return, and most will be weaker for quite some time, including eye care.

Nobody knows for sure but get ready now for tough economic times and hope that it is not true. Leadership OD recommends [“Unemotional Pessimism”](#) when evaluating your financial management plan this year.

Leadership OD can help with any of these objectives when you are ready.