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Eye to Eye

A “Fun” Eyewear Policy

By Brenda Fishbaugh



I recently chatted with Lance Donnelly, President/Owner of the Tan Republic Franchise Company – the largest salon chain in the western U.S., with 65 stores and growing. They are now located in Oregon, Washington, Nevada and California.

“My wife and I started the very first Tan Republic in 2005. From Day One, we knew that we wanted to have conversations with customers, not just ask, ‘How many minutes do you want? Room 23,’” explains Donnelly. “We knew we wanted to have a fun place for employees to work and to entice customers, and we really wanted to create a truly enjoyable experience.”

Of course, I asked Donnelly about his eye protection policy. “From the beginning, we conversed with our tanners and explained that we don’t loan eye protection but only sell it, and how important it is,” he shares. “Almost every tanner, in every store, walks in with their eyewear and lotion in hand. We instill it into our culture. Our competitors make eyewear an uncomfortable struggle, and we make it as fun as it can be.” He says that every customer gets educated and the tanning consultants create a conversation with tanners to build trust. “We don’t get serious with them right away; however, we ask them to ‘please have your eyewear and lotion ready when you walk in.’” He explains, “It would be annoying if I have to ask you for it, if I was asked for it – so let’s find a way to skip that part.”

Donnelly says his team doesn’t want tanners to find eye protection to be uncomfortable in any way, so they offer several different kinds. “We like goggles that come in a protective case,” he shares. “I want clean, protected eyewear for myself, so that’s what I want for our customers. We discuss how clean eyewear prevents infections, and the tanners understand the value of buying goggles and keeping them

clean and protected. We also carry Lash Room Wink-Ease® disposables, which we sell to anyone who forgets their goggles.” While they don’t want to scare tanners, the staff has a tool to help convince those who don’t want to wear protection: an educational counter mat showing graphic photos of eye damage that can happen.

Although they take a light-hearted approach to eye protection at Tan Republic, if you *don’t* have it, you can’t tan. “When a product is required to be used during tanning sessions, we believe salons should charge for it. Eyewear is required by law, so why give it away and not profit from it?” adds Donnelly.

Finally, I asked about Tan Republic’s red-light services. “We sell the dark, disposable eye protection made for red light sessions and it’s the same eyewear policy for all beds: wear it, or you don’t tan here,” says Donnelly. Why take the chance of hurting a customer’s vision? Help your customers, and in turn, it helps you as an owner,” he concludes.

Tan Republic salons are not located in any states that require eye protection to be provided for free (only PA, NY and TX require free eyewear – really!) Email Brenda@WinkEase.com and I’ll send you your state regs to prove it! ■

Would you like a copy of Tan Republic’s fun eyewear sign? Email Brenda@WinkEase.com and I’ll share it with you!



About the Author:

Tanning industry veteran Brenda Fishbaugh is president of Eye Pro, Inc., makers of disposable eyewear. She travels extensively training salons

on the effects of UV light on vision.

