

# The Future of Ophthalmic Innovation:

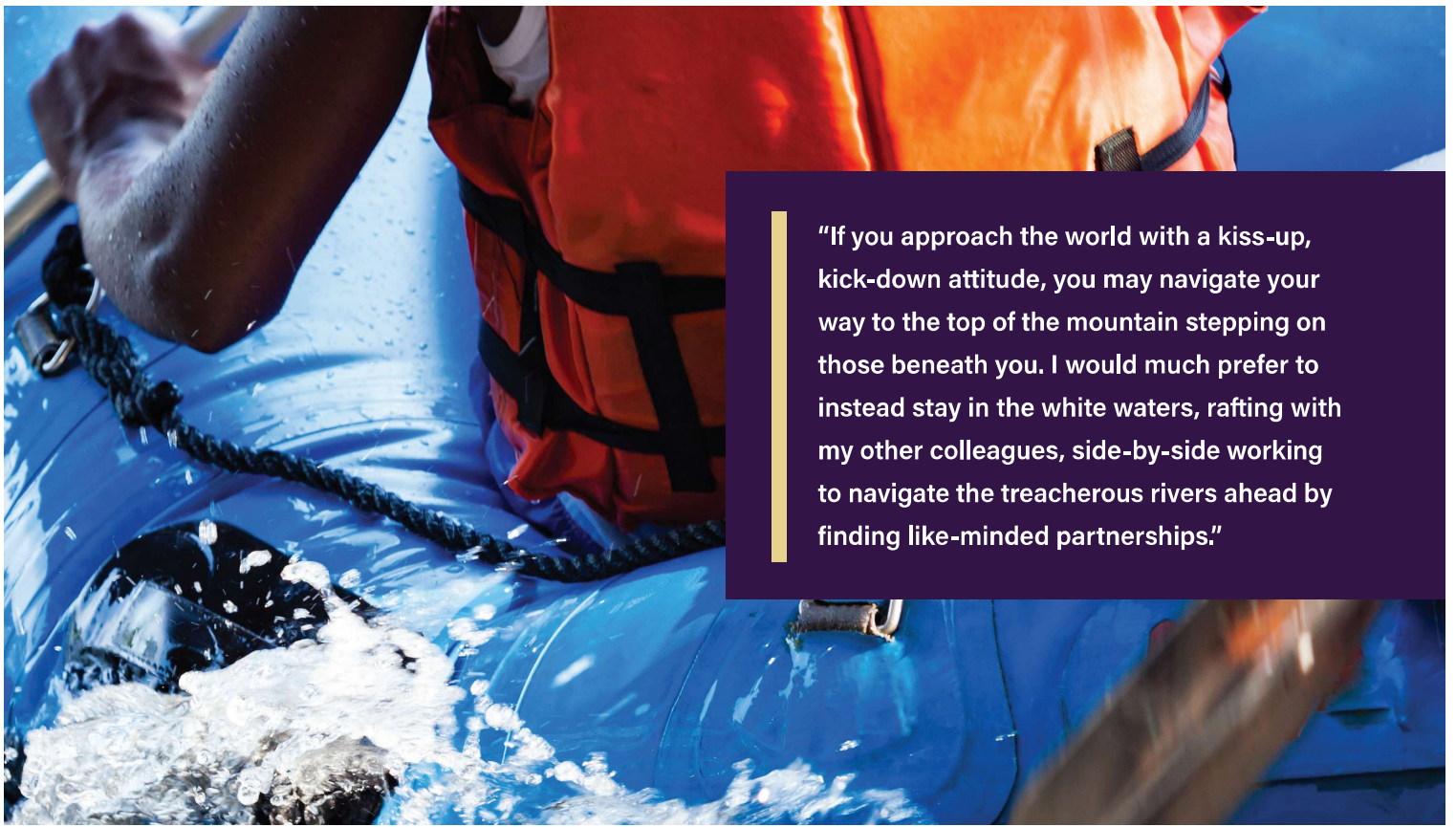
## A Non-Zero-Sum Game

In the very first piece I wrote for Ophthalmology Business Minute, I discussed my love for George Carlin while also noting my inherent disagreement with his statement, “Life is a zero-sum game.” Much of the world adopts such an attitude. We don’t have to look very far to see how this myopic approach can have devastating consequences. Responding to Carlin’s quote in this piece I said, “If you approach the world with a kiss-up, kick-down attitude, you may navigate your way to the top of the mountain stepping on those beneath you. I would much prefer to instead stay in the white waters, rafting with my other colleagues, side-by-side working to navigate the treacherous rivers ahead by finding like-minded partnerships.” Although I meant these words in relation to how we interact with other clinicians, this approach can be extended to the larger medical industry.

Surely, growing up in a capitalist society like the US, I grew to believe that the necessary path to success is to crush the competition. Training at Johns Hopkins was a huge eye-opener for me. Certainly, those hallowed halls had a few surgeons who were grade-A self-consumed narcissists. Seldom, would these

people make it to senior leadership and were often eventually pushed out. It was not the cutthroat but instead, the outward focus that understood the sum can be greater than the parts of the whole that I saw promoted. Peter McDonnell, the chairman at Wilmer has this gift in spades. I watched him appoint division chairs, often many years junior to other members of the division because they possessed a similar gift of motivating a team and making choices that maximize the impact of the team not craft a division to maximize the division director’s personal goals.

In the same way, I look to Peter McDonnell for an example of effective leadership, I have become intrigued with Brent Saunders and the changes he has made as the CEO of Bausch & Lomb. In his short tenure as CEO, he has worked to acquire external assets that once assembled, will certainly provide synergy. Starting with the dry eye portfolio, he led the acquisition of Xiidra, Miebo, Cyclosool, and the Blink OTC line. He also collaborated with Heidelberg to create a surgically augmented reality headset with OCT overlay but also picked up a very capable optical Biometer/topographer, the Topcon Alladin, and made a few key additions to create the SeeNa. This collaborative



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approach is somewhat atypical, which is unfortunate because I suspect it is the most rapid path to true innovation.

A similar collaborative approach can be seen in the leadership of the Lumenis CEO, Tzipi Ozer-Armon. She has made a few key collaborations that have enabled Lumenis to remain a leader in the aesthetics and ocular surface disease spaces. The IPL technology at Lumenis is all internal but the radiofrequency technology is not. Through collaboration with Pollogen, Lumenis was able to rapidly bring first the Legend Pro and eventually the Tri-Lift to market. Through collaboration with Thermi, they were able to rapidly bring the Nu Era Tight to market, and now the OptiPlus which is basically a Nu Era Tight that has been optimized to apply radiofrequency to the eyelids.

This appeal for collaboration over conquering is something driven home in the nightly news. More so than ever in my 43 years, I feel like the US is divided. This divide extends unfortunately globally. In the cruelest bit of irony, our digital interconnectedness has somehow given mankind the impression we are further apart than ever. It is striking that two of the companies I discuss here, Lumenis and Beyeonics, are Israeli. Collaboration is a frame of mind; it requires us to see common long-term goals and check our ego at the door. In the world of ophthalmic innovation and just life in general, I desperately desire for each of us to understand just how inextricably interwoven our mutual success is. I am nearly certain the Beatles were individually happier than Charles Bukowski. Life is not a solo sport and we would all be wise to reflect upon Harry Truman's words "It's amazing what you can accomplish when you do not care who gets the credit."

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