



" Life is Too Short to Limit Your Vision "

Somboon Chaowanakosol, better known as 'Master Bobi', has a dream - to give a better quality of life to people through his hi-end eyeglasses. "Life is too short to limit your vision," he says. All of us start to gradually lose our eyesight by the time we get to our 40s, thus we start to limit our capabilities. At Isoptik, Master Bobi's technology in progressive lenses is helping thousands of satisfied customers to get rid of their sight limitations and to live life again to their fullest potential.

Charismatic, knowledgeable, energetic, assiduous, these are just a few of the adjectives that first spring to mind when you meet this likeable character. And when you start talking about Hi-End eyeglasses, it's easy to see that he is incredibly passionate about what he does. To say he is driven might be the understatement of the decade, for Master Bobi's on a mission - to restore youthful vision for life and maximize people's performance, intelligence and creativity. "Life is beautiful and sight is life," says Bobi.

As a pioneer in the world of optometry, Siamese Magazine recently talked with Master Bobi about ISOPTIK, his philosophy on eye care and what the future holds.

*Exclusive Interview***A New Discovery**

It was at around the same time that he first came across the invention that would change his life and his attitude to vision progressive lenses. Whilst progressive lenses were actually first developed in the early 1900s, it is only in the last ten years or so that they have become a practical alternative to other types of lenses used in eyeglasses. In the past, anyone who has a problem seeing close up objects, say reading the newspaper, and also in focusing on distant objects would be forced into having two pairs of glasses, or alternatively adopting bi-focal lenses. However, developments to progressive lenses changed all that providing the wearers with a smooth transition from distance through intermediate to near, with all the in-between corrections included as well. The constant graduation of the prescription means that you can look up to see in the distance, look ahead to view your computer in the intermediate zone, and drop



Master Bobi in Advance Progressive Lenses Training in Shanghai



Master Bobi in Advance Progressive Lenses Training in Bangkok

your gaze down to read all without having to concentrate or change glasses. Bobi still clearly remembers the first time he fitted progressive lenses for a client, a 60 year-old man who had previously used bi-focal glasses but was unhappy with the quality of vision they offered. "The results surprised us both; he said he felt young again because he could clearly see at all different distances with no effort." "I just thought wow, if progressive lenses can help people see like they are young again then I have to try and recommend them for everyone. I have to try to tell the world and help everyone to have a better life." So began a mission which he has pursued with an unyielding determination. "I made a decision to put all of my heart into progressive lenses. At the time a lot of people didn't know anything about them and there were a lot of very negative feedbacks relating to them from doctors and opticians. I didn't understand why because when I tried them they worked perfectly since the first time!" After this Eureka moment Master Bobi dedicated all his spare time to find out more by spending 16 hours a day studying progressive lenses. "I was lucky that I already had lots of customers, there are a lot of people for me to practice on," he says laughing. "I was able to focus on all the aspects of the process: the concept, the design, the technology and I found out that what worked for some people may not work for others." "It can be quite a complicated procedure as there are so many different variables to consider, for a start there are 300 different types of lenses! The detailed adjustment to the lenses and the frames all make a vital difference." Aside from the hands on testing, Bobi also spent a lot of time talking to other experts in this field and questioning many professors from manufacturers of progressive lenses who were based in Japan, Germany and worldwide to find out more and to ensure that his clients received the very best level of service and satisfaction. "The thing was the more questions I started to ask the fewer answers people could give me. In the end, they began to say Bobi you know more about this than us, so they now learn from me and ask me questions!"

Exclusive Interview*The vision field of conventional progressive lenses**The vision field of premium progressive lenses**The vision field of hi-end progressive lenses***What makes ISOPTIK different from other optic centers?**

At other optics centers, maybe a customer with presbyopia, for example, will be given a prescription with a different focal range of vision for each eye, so one eye might be for driving and the other for reading. However, with this kind of monovision you lose your depth perception and, as a result, 50% of your performance. The opticians at these places do a quick eye test before prescribe something and they only really care about getting your money.

At ISOPTIK I want my customers to be able to see the world better so that they have maximum performance. My favourite motto, "Life is too short to limit your vision," means that when you limit your vision then you actually limit your quality of life. A man in his 40s, for example, finds it more difficult to work. It takes more energy to concentrate, he gets tired easily. At the end of the day, he goes home and collapses on the sofa, too tired to talk to his wife. Then, what happens? Before long his wife finds someone else!

My Hi-End progressive lenses are not just helping executives in their 40s, 50s and 60s to have the vision they had in their 20s, but to be able to work all day long as much as if they were 20-year old again, which maximizes their performance. My eyeglasses can give you back your youth.

My guarantee at ISOPTIK is not just the standard guarantee of full customer satisfaction or a one-year guarantee on parts, etc. My guarantee is for a better life. People who wear my eyeglasses must have better a lives. If your life is not better then bring the eyeglasses back.

What makes ISOPTIK different, you ask? Others sell eyeglasses; I sell quality of life.

Why are your eyeglasses so expensive?

Mine are the most expensive because they are of the highest quality you can possibly find in the world. Each pair of eyeglasses that I make is a masterpiece. I want to make the world's best eyeglasses and I put my heart and soul into every single pair.

Exclusive Interview

How can you guarantee that they are the best?

It is clear that Bobi is an expert in his field, this in fact only tells half of the story of the success of ISOPTIK. The other has to be the results that keep customers coming back for more, even when the glasses are up to 20 times more expensive than standard eyeglasses. Bobi is adamant that the cost is irrelevant when compared to the improvement his clients experience. "Normal eyeglasses can make you see better or clearer but ISOPTIK eyeglasses give you instant crystal clear vision at any distances as if you were young again and with no concentration required." As he points out, the key to the store, and Master Bobi's, success is in the seeing. These eyeglasses might cost more but they help you see better, feel better, look better and in turn work better. You can enjoy your life more and, as Bobi explains, they can also help you to earn more money in the long run. For many people, good vision is a key component of their job. If you are a doctor performing a special surgery, a watch or jewellery designer working with miniature parts or even a busy executive studying the markets on your monitor, you need precious high quality vision. As he puts it, Bobi is working with something very precious, the patient's life. "These lenses are perfect

for people who need perfect vision; the lenses we sell are special weapons to help you work with precision all day long. So taking this argument further, if you can work better, then you can earn more money. I believe that they make you work 10% better so you can make 10% more money and make you 10% more relaxed. So after three years, you have more than made the money back that you spent. With conventional eyeglasses your eyes can be tired after a few hours. After a hard day at work you get home and you are tired, you don't have energy to enjoy your family. If you can work better, you can also work faster, freeing up more beautiful time for you to spend with your family. These eyeglasses make people's lives richer in all sorts of ways, they give better sight for a better life," he states, "when you think of it this way they are actually very cheap." What's more, he is so confident in the beneficial properties of his products that he offers a quite extraordinary guarantee to his customer. Any customer who is not entirely happy with their eyeglasses can feel free to return them within six months of purchase. "If you don't feel they are giving you a better life for whatever reason, then you can get your money back, no questions asked," he explains.

Exclusive Interview

"People think I am crazy but we find that when people do come back, they come to order extra pairs not to return the original pair!" He also has the policy of providing replacement glasses at 50% of the original price and will even organise for emergency glasses to be delivered to customers if they lose or break their original pair. "It's strange, people live for 50 years without these glasses but then they find that they can't go for one week without them." As an example, he cites the case of a customer who came in and bought a pair of eyeglasses from ISOPTIK. He was incredibly happy with the transformation they made to his life but there was one sticking point, the fact that his wife didn't like the frames he had selected. Rather than worry about this extra expense Bobi happily changed them at no charge to make sure both husband and wife were happy. Apparently, the client was so impressed with this level of service, he recommended other clients. As Bobi points out: "I don't care about profits, I care about my customer everything else will work itself out in the end. I trust my customers; I believe they have good hearts. The best investment is to invest in the happiness of the client."

Aren't you worried about losing business?

No. Rejection claims amount to only 0.1%. If someone does make a claim then, sure, I may lose 50,000 baht, but that customer will go and tell others about the great service he or she got at my shop.



Professional fitting for vertex distance of progressive lenses



Impression!ST 3D Digital Instant Adpatation System

What's your philosophy on customer service?

When I am shopping I hate it when I go into a shop as a new customer and get first up good service, then when I return to the store a second time I get second rate bad service. In my shop, I am always happy to see the customers. In fact, it is my policy to take care of the old customers first - the new customers can wait. Don't get me wrong, the new customer is never left alone, but after 30 minutes the new customer understands that they will be an old customer too! The customers love this.

ISOPTIK is the most expensive shop of its kind in the world, but my customers say, "After I come here I don't want to go elsewhere." I have many customers who come to buy eyeglasses from me every week. Why? Because their lives got better and they are making more money because of it. They can afford to do it and they love coming here. I believe in 'the ultra-soft sell', never hard sell. My customers support me because their performance has improved three folds. I love my job and Hi-End eyeglasses and I am always happy to work.

How did you get started in the eye care industry?

I am the second generation of eye care business in my family. One of the first memories I have in my life is how the eyeglasses my father used to make could make his customers so happy. These happy customers

Exclusive Interview

The vision field of conventional progressive lenses



The vision field of hi-end progressive lenses

went around and told others and more customers came to his shop. I experienced this for twenty years of my life. One day a customer asked my father, "What will happen when you retire? Where will I get my eyeglasses from?" My father looked at me and told the customer that my son will take over. This is the most cherished memory in my life. What I do now is more than work, a job, a business, it's a relationship. Now the grandchildren of my father's old customers are my customers.

How much can I expect to pay for a pair of eyeglasses at your shop?

The price ranges from 18,000 baht to 80,000 baht. Around the world, people know that the most expensive progressive lenses are sold by me. I am always in the shop and every prescription must pass my approval.

Do you stock any cheapies?

No. If you want cheaper progressive lenses, go elsewhere. All other optic shops are doing it, but not ISOPTIK.

Why aren't other optic shops doing the same as you?

You know, it's one thing I just can't understand why others don't do it like me. They say that their customers want cheap eyeglasses - they don't believe that customers

will pay more money for the best progressive lenses. Do you know that in 1999, I sold 3,000 pairs of progressive lenses in Thailand and that other shops sold none? Others don't believe I can do it. So when the lens manufacturers try to sell to other opticians, they don't believe that I am really selling them at the prices I say I am - they think I must be selling cheaper.

Can I get a discount?

You have to pay for professional treatment. At ISOPTIK, prices are standard whether you are a new or existing customer. So I dare to say that we can do everything for the customers, except discount. Every year we get thousands of customers who try to be the first to get a discount. In fact, one time a customer who spent 500,000 baht tried to get a discount for one baht. I simply said, "Sorry." Don't get me wrong, I try to never say "no" to a customer - it's always a happy "yes," except when it comes to giving discount.

What's the most common question you are asked?

"Why is the price so high?" I simply answer by saying because I am the best and the quality is the best. Come to me and I will give you the best vision. Then they normally ask, "How can I know it's the best?" If it's not true, you don't have to pay.

*Exclusive Interview***Do you have any samples for me to try?**

Yes. You can experience instant clear vision in as fast as two minutes. My technique is famous in the world it's even got German specialists excited. The customer will see exactly what they can get before they pay a deposit. Other opticians make you pay first and you have no idea if the end product will be good or not. At ISOPTIK, the customers can see before they buy. We are totally different from other optic shops.

Can I get progressive lenses with curved frames?

At ISOPTIK, we can make prescriptions with curved frames that still give you crystal clear vision. We make designer lenses for different people, different lifestyles and different occasions. In fact, we have many customers with hundreds of pairs of eyeglasses all made by ISOPTIK.

Where are your customers from?

About half comes from here in Thailand, of which around 20% are Thai and the rest are ex-pats, and the other half comes from abroad. About 40% of all my customers are executives.

What happens if I go back to my home country and the eyeglasses break or there's a problem with them?

If there's a problem, send them back to get a full refund. Or, if they break send the parts along and we'll fix them. In both cases we will pay the courier costs to and from Thailand. Our eyeglasses are worry free. We offer the best service and best guarantee. I am confident when I say that ISOPTIK has no competitor. Other optic shops are 15 years behind us. I want this shop to have the world's best service in retail business - even better than a five-star hotel. We believe service is the key.

Why do you give training about progressive lenses to others in this field? After all, aren't they your competitors?

Many people ask me this. My answer is simple: There are six billion people in the world and I am only one man. I can't do it all. My goal is to give people

instant, crystal clear vision at any distance just as they experienced when they were young.

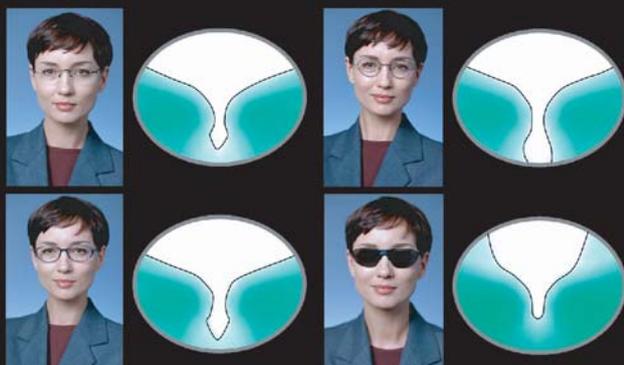
I have trained more than 10,000 students in Thailand, China, Hong Kong and Singapore. It's a difficult work, training for eight hours a day. But the hardest part is changing the negative attitudes that exist in this industry. Others don't believe that customers will pay more for the best progressive lenses. I have to spend six hours changing the way people think and then do two hours of actual training. Then, after they change their mind they are hungry to learn.

How do you get through to others about your techniques?

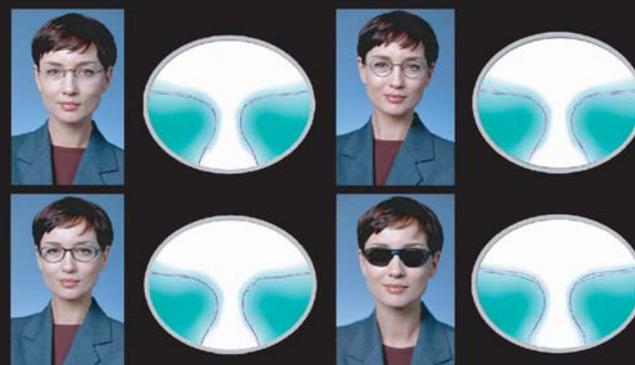
Rock them! I have to make the training session high energy, enjoyable and excite them. Students have told me that "learning twenty years with others does not equal one day with you." There are many trainers out there in this industry with bad techniques and no hands on experience - can you believe they have never made a pair of eyeglasses in their life!



Advance 3D Digital Eye Test

Exclusive Interview

vision of hi-end progressive lenses in 4 difference frames with wrong fitting



vision of hi-end progressive lenses in 4 difference frames with professional fitting

With you breaking new ground in the world of optometry and ophthalmology, is it all plain sailing?

I have rocked the boat but I'm not afraid to do it. Others in this industry may not like what I am doing but I see myself as a bit of a 'Jedi knight' or 'the new hope' to use a couple of Star Wars analogies. There are companies out there trying to sell expensive eyeglasses, advertising quality when really it is only expensive frames with cheap lenses. I say, "Why pay new prices for old products?" And then there are the larger companies in this industry who try to monopolize markets with big brother tactics, making retailers sell their products only.

I feel as though I have to protect the customers from all of this by educating as many of my peers as I can. It's not about marketing; it's about being real. I love Internet as a tool because the truth is easy to prove... and so are the lies. I give answers, not hype.

My competitors complain that I am too honest and I admit that I have had conflicts with lens manufacturers, but I don't care. My priority is to protect the consumer, not the lens manufacturers. If lens companies lose millions of dollars, I don't care - at least it's not my customers losing their money. Lens companies make massive profits. It's not fair - big profit but no guarantee. Then, if there is a problem, they blame the opticians. They believe that they are untouchable.

If you pay \$50 for a product and there is no guarantee, then OK, fine. But spend \$500 and you expect something more for your money, right? The name is nothing without quality and service.

How did you start up ISOPTIK?

I am the sixth child in a family of eight. My family comes from the South of Thailand but when I came to Bangkok I came with nothing. I did optic training workshops both in Thailand and abroad that allowed me to finance ISOPTIK. I have invested everything I have in this.

What plans do you have for the future?

Business is growing fast. Now we occupy 300 sq.m. here at the Erawan Bangkok building but we need more space. Right now, I am looking for like-minded people to invest in this expansion of ISOPTIK.

This year I want to invest 50 million baht to open up another 450 sq.m., get more testing rooms, equipment, and develop a bigger service team. Next year I plan to invest 200 million baht and open up another 1,000 sq.m., then in three years, another 3,000 sq.m. In five years, I want to invest one billion baht. In the future, ISOPTIK will have 400 eye test rooms and be able to service 1,000 customers per day by the best team of ophthalmologists and optometrists in the world.

I love Erawan Bangkok and want to make this building the Hi-End eyeglasses place. This will be the capital of Hi-End eyeglasses, right here in Bangkok. In the future I would be proud if this building was called 'ISOPTIK Erawan Bangkok'. People won't have to ask where it is - this will be a landmark that everyone knows. I would also like to open up ISOPTIK after-sales service centers in major cities around the world.

Exclusive Interview

Pantoscopic Tilt Angle

My dream is to make ISOPTIK a comfortable place for families; a place where everyone can come and enjoy. Also, in the future, we will have specialist eye treatment facilities for babies. If you can improve an infant's vision in the first thirty months of their life then in 50% of cases that child won't need eyeglasses in the future.

In the long-term future, after I finish this ISOPTIK project, my dream is to set up a new business like a Hi-End shopping center and Hi-End food center that caters specifically to the Hi-End market; a place where you get what you pay for, and if you don't like it then you don't have to pay. My dream is to letting people being able to have exactly what they want.

Hold on, if you're giving children perfect vision, aren't you hurting your business in the long run?

My philosophy is to give happiness to others. If I can make parents happy by improving their child's quality of life, then this makes me happy. As far as business goes, those parents will walk away happy and tell other parents about what we can do here at ISOPTIK.

I am the most expensive man in the world of eyeglasses, but I don't work for money. I am the man money can't buy and because of this I am a free man.

What is happiness for you?

Happiness for me is when I see one of my customers try on a pair of my glasses for the first time, blink once or twice to adjust their eyes, then open up to a new better world and says "wow." I am 42 years old but I never feel like I don't want to work anymore. I love doing this even if it means hard work and long hours.

What is something that makes you very proud?

It actually concerns one of my former students who, like me, is the son of an optician. Before he was a student of mine, his father heard about my story and what I was doing but he didn't believe it, so he came to one of my training workshops. He went home excited and told his son that he must go and learn from Master Bobi. The son thought his father was crazy but after he came and did the training with me he declared, "It's true." It changed his life forever. I told him, "Do what I say and a miracle will happen in your optic shop." Normally he was lazy and his shop made only 10,000 baht in a day. After the change, he was turning over 50,000 baht a day. A few months later, I saw this student again and he said to me, "Master Bobi, before I was lazy. You changed the buffalo to be a man. You changed my life." That was the best compliment I have ever received in my life.

What is your belief?

I am Christian. I believe it is my destiny to create a better world before I die. If I can give anyone a better life, I am happy. I want to pass on my philosophy to the next generation. If I died today I would have no regrets; I have 10,000 things that need to be finished, but I believe the next generation will do.

Send us an SMS indicating your name and address to +66 81 538-4200 for a complimentary ISOPTIK Eyecare DVD

ISOPTIK Eyecare TV program  True Visions Ch.24 every Saturday at 11.40 pm.

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