

by Julie Mais
Editor



Seeing 20/20

I will forever remember walking out of my hometown eye doctor's office at age 7 donning my first pair of glasses — round, metal and colorful. A tree in the parking lot caught my gaze, and I exclaimed, "The tree has leaves!"

To my now-corrected nearsighted vision thanks to prescription eyeglasses, that tree, which looked like a tall blur about an hour before, now had pristine detail. I could see clearly now.

I've upgraded those frames a dozen times over since then, and I now often wear contact lenses.

I use both of these inventions each day. But I didn't consider my eyewear "out of date." No, not the style of the frames or strength of prescription needed for my slowly deteriorating vision. What I didn't realize is the resolve to wear eyeglasses that cost hundreds of dollars, even after utilizing vision insurance, was behind the times.

Thankfully, someone did.

The disruptors

In a 2016 TED talk, "The surprising habits of original thinkers," organizational psychologist Adam Grant tells a story of two students who approached him in 2009 about investing in their new web-based business. Their plan was to disrupt an industry by selling the product online. After some questioning and receiving some answers he wasn't confident in,

Grant concluded to not invest.

Seven years later, in 2016, that same company was worth more than \$1 billion, and in 2015 was named Fast Company's most innovative business beating out well-known innovative companies like Apple and Google.

Their company, Warby Parker, markets eyeglasses online. They design glasses in-house and sell directly to customers, cutting down costs. Also, by partnering with various non-profits, for every pair of glasses sold, a pair is given to someone in need.

In a 2015 interview with CBS This Morning, co-CEOs Neil Blumenthal and Dave Gilboa describe their business and its quick-found success. "This industry hadn't innovated in product or the distribution side," Gilboa said. "Eyeglasses were marked up 10 to 20 times what they cost to manufacture."

Blumenthal added, "We relate directly to consumers and are able to sell more affordable glasses."


The key here is the founders of Warby Parker didn't find success as inventors, but as innovators.

Blumenthal and Gilboa are original thinkers.

I encourage you to look up this TED talk and learn more about what Grant has learned about original thinkers.

Icons of Innovation

In this issue, "Icons of Innovation," you'll read more about original thinkers and how implementing innovative ideas has moved the Angus breed and agricultural industry forward.

As I wrap up writing this month's column looking through my very own Warby Parker glasses, knowing our industry is full of innovators and progressive thinkers, I'm optimistic about the future of Angus and the beef industry. 



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