



Retail Management Solutions

The leader in pharmacy point-of-sale innovation presents:

Independent
pharmacy
from A-Z

Everything a pharmacy owner needs to know
to innovate through technology and POS

Before We Begin...

At the age of 90, renowned cellist, Pablo Casals, was asked why he continued to practice. He responded simply “Because I think I’m making progress”.

No matter what our profession is, we are never done learning. There’s always something new coming just around the corner. Without exception, those of us in the pharmacy industry are always having something new thrown our way. Rules, regulations, technology, or even just new ways of doing things.

Learning and trying new things are important factors in running a successful pharmacy. But there are so many facets to every business, where does one start? In this E-book, we’ll explore independent pharmacy from A to Z. You can learn how technology is changing the way that pharmacy does business, Investigate new customer service techniques, and much more. So without further ado, lets dive in to 26 ways that you can boost your pharmacy’s success.



AIS For Accuracy

Mistakes are costly in so many ways. In the pharmacy industry, your customers put their health in your hands every day. But the importance of accuracy in your pharmacy goes way beyond precise dispensing of medication. Mistakes at the point-of-sale cost time, money, and lose you customers. But a good pharmacy point-of-sale system can help you avoid costly errors and keep your customers happy

In a nutshell, a POS system keeps the guess work out of transactions. It knows your customers, receives information about prescriptions and keeps your product organized. Every dollar that is spent in your pharmacy runs through your cash registers, so having a system that is built for use in your environment is especially important.

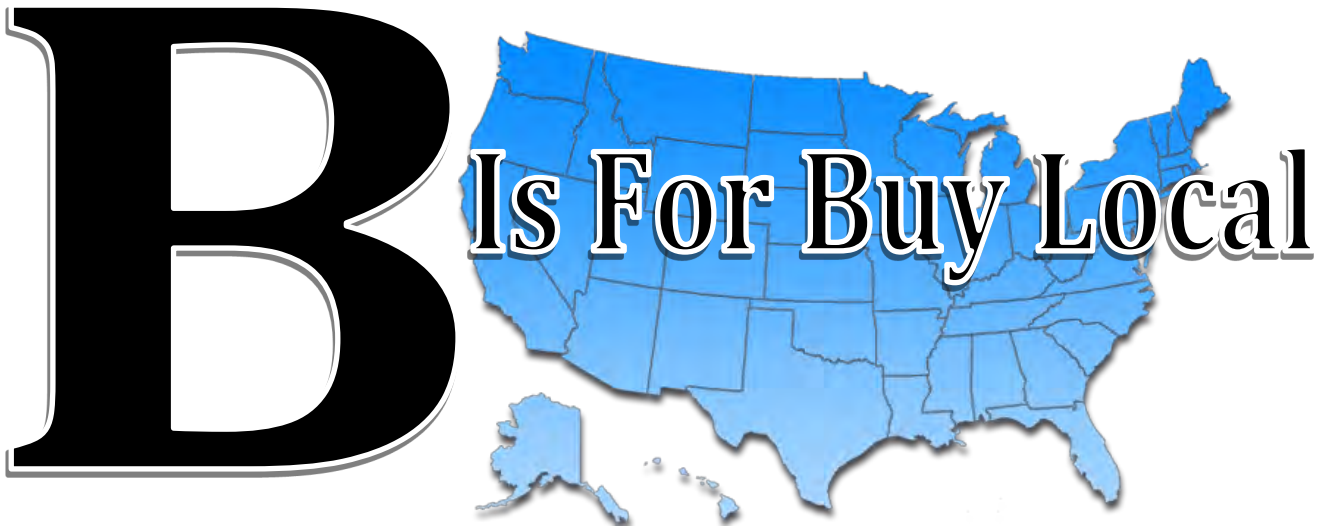


One of the major ways that a pharmacy point-of-sale system can help you with accuracy is by keeping your pricing up to date. If the pricing on your product is different than the pricing in your POS system, you're going to create upset customers when you try to charge them more than the price that is marked and lose money when you are forced to discount product below what you intended to. Instead of stickering each item individually, use shelf labels integrated with your POS system. That way, when prices are updated, you can quickly re-sticker the shelves to reflect accurate pricing. You reduce your chance of missing an update and you save time by updating a product with one sticker instead of 12.

POS systems can also help you keep accurate count of your inventory and keep you from ordering product that you don't need and help you to identify shrinkage. Order product by setting minimum and maximum quantities to have in stock or order based on replenishment. Regularly do a physical scan of each department to make sure that actual counts match up with the system and look for discrepancies to reveal shrinkage and theft.

Making mistakes is part of being human. But leveraging technology can help you minimize errors and run a more streamlined and successful business.

B Is For Buy Local



Everyone has driven through that town where the only store you see for miles around is a huge mega store. These places seem like barren wastelands, devoid of personality. Independent, local businesses enrich the communities that they serve. Not only by keeping those communities as unique as the people that live there, but by being an active part of those communities. Whether you donate to charities, participate in local events, or provide a unique service that helps your community to thrive, your independent pharmacy should be not just another business, but an integral facet of your community.

There's never a wrong time to remind your community why shopping local is an important part of living local. Take some inspiration from how RMS supports local, independent business:

- RMS purchases all office supplies, kitchen necessities and other sundries from local independent companies. We found better service, better quality, and in many cases, lower prices. Sound familiar?
- In 2012 we took our commitment to independent and institutional pharmacies one step further by reimbursing 100% of employee's prescription co-pays as long as prescriptions are filled at an independent, independent chain, or institutional pharmacy.
- RMS employees are given the latitude to contribute to their communities with paid time-off to volunteer with local charities and non-profit organizations.
- We help pharmacies to give back. At trade shows, you won't always find us giving away tablets and other gadgets, but you may find us donating scholarships to the local school of the winning pharmacist's choice.

Doing these kinds of things makes us feel good. We love that we can give back to our community, and to the communities of our customers. And our commitment to local business also makes us a better partner for independent pharmacies, just like your commitment to your community can make you the best choice for your customers.

**WHEN YOU BUY FROM A MOM OR POP BUSINESS,
YOU ARE NOT HELPING A CEO BUY A THIRD
VACATION HOME.**

**YOU ARE HELPING A LITTLE GIRL GET DANCE
LESSONS, A LITTLE BOY GET HIS TEAM JERSEY,
A MOM OR DAD PUT FOOD ON THE TABLE,
A FAMILY PAY A MORTGAGE, OR A STUDENT PAY
FOR COLLEGE.**

**OUR CUSTOMERS ARE OUR SHAREHOLDERS AND
THEY ARE THE ONES WE STRIVE TO MAKE HAPPY.**

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES!

C Is For Customer Feedback

With internet access at the tip of our fingers, the power of word of mouth has infinite reach. Experiences, positive or negative, can be shared instantly. Easy access to mobile apps and social media sites means that consumers can instantly share experiences. And they do. In a 2013 survey 58% of respondents said that they share more experiences now than they did 5 years ago. And when they do share, they are reaching an ever expanding number of people. The average person has a circle of influence of 300 people. So now an experience shared by one customer has the potential to be read and shared over and over by an ever expanding group of potential customers.

Because people are more likely to share a bad experience than a good one, you have to be on your A-game not only in customer service but in monitoring and responding to customer comments and feedback from a variety of online sources. Here are some tips to help you better manage customer feedback in your pharmacy.

- Make it easy for your customers to provide feedback. Whether you have a submission form on your website, leverage social media, or simply have some comment cards on your front counter. Providing the opportunity for your customers will not only allow you to learn from their experiences, but also help your customers to feel involved and heard.
- Respond to the feedback that you receive. It's important to recognize feedback, both positive and negative. Remember that most consumers don't go the extra mile to tell you that they are happy. Take a moment to thank them for their feedback. On the flipside, the only thing worse than not knowing about a problem, is knowing about it and not doing anything. Some concerns don't have obvious solutions, but just acknowledging the problem can be a big help.



Opening your business up to customer feedback in a more active way can be daunting, but without it, how can you know where you excel or where you fall short in your businesses? It's a great way to learn, grow, evolve, and remind your customers why they shop at a local independent pharmacy.

D Is For Discount

People don't always choose the least expensive option. If they did, completion would be a thing of the past. Big box stores would win just because of the sheer volume of products that they order and sell. But luckily for us, cheapest doesn't always win out. Quality of product, level of service and convenience are all big factors in where consumers choose to spend their money. But sometimes a sale can give you a competitive edge. Here are a few pricing strategies to help you make the most of sales and discounts in your pharmacy.

1) Everybody Likes Free Stuff. The simple truth of the matter is that consumers like to be rewarded. And while nothing in life is truly free, even a buy 10 get 1 free program or a small percentage reward can help you drive sales on specific items and can make your customer feel good about their purchases.

2) 10 for \$10. One of the great things about this promotion is that it really doesn't have to be that big of a discount for consumers to want to take advantage of it. Since \$1.00 per item may not always be a reasonable price point for many items in a pharmacy setting, you can alter this same tactic to your advantage by setting it as a 5 for \$10, 2 for \$20 etc. As long as the customer perceives it as a deal you should see some success with this program.

3) Impose limitations. Limitations create a sense of urgency for the customer and it's likely they won't even realize it. Limit the amount of a certain sale item that each customer can purchase and you'll increase the chance they'll buy in higher multiples than they were planning on. It's also a great way to make sure that you don't run out of an item that's on special promotion. You can also consider combining this strategy with your 10 for \$10 type deals to increase the likelihood that customers will buy 10 of those sale items instead of 5.

4) Numbers Psychology. Most pricing strategies already reflect this rule. Whether it's a bottle of allergy medication priced at \$9.99 or a car priced at \$9,999.95, consumers will be more accepting of that number as a good deal vs. \$10.00 or \$10,000. The first number in your pricing strategy will be what sticks in the customer's brain. If you've ever gone to the grocery store and wondered how the total got so high, this pricing strategy probably had something to do with it. Check out your current prices and see how many of them match up to this strategy.

5) Keep it simple. Customers are often in a hurry and don't want to take the time to calculate complicated discounts. A quick \$2.00 off is probably better than an odd percentage like 15% or even 25%. Even if it's the same amount, the easier pricing is for your customers to figure out, the more likely they'll be to make the purchase. Features within your POS system can help you set the discount and even print [signs and shelf talkers](#) to promote the sale.



E



Is For Efficiency

Efficiency can sound like a very cold word. Something that sharply contrasts with the general warm feeling of a community minded pharmacy. But a lack of efficiency can ruin a customer's overall experience.

When it comes to your customers, that's what efficiency means showing them that you are mindful of their valuable time by not wasting it unnecessarily. This means having your processes and procedures down to a science. It means being streamlined so that the customer interaction can run smoothly. What it doesn't mean is turning your pharmacy into an assembly line with one-size-fits-all service. And it definitely doesn't mean robotic, impersonal exchanges. If you define efficiency in these ways, your pharmacy will not only run like a well-oiled machine, you'll have excellent customer service. Better yet, dealing with the process related part of your business will give you more time to spend with your customers. So let's break it down a little further.

Defining processes and procedures: Consistency is a huge part of efficiency. If everyone does the same task a different way, not only is your staff probably wasting time, but you can bet mistakes are being made. Not every way can be the best way to do something so your challenge is finding the way that works best for your pharmacy. Once you've done that, invest in training so that everyone understands the established procedure. Allow time for practice and make time for practice so that processes and procedures become habitual, rather than a trial for any employee to complete. It's also important to listen to your employees and take any suggestions they have for improvement into consideration.



Streamlining: This is all about your pharmacy technology. It's what allows you to take the processes and procedures you have identified and take things to the next level. From getting rid of paper by going to electronic storage of signatures and other data, to policies in your [POS system](#) that restrict certain activities and prompt others. Investing in Training is also a must.

Just like in any aspect of your life, balance is one of the hardest things to achieve. But balancing good practices with good customer service is of the utmost importance in the overall success of your pharmacy.

F Is For FSA



Not so long ago, FSA card acceptance and IAS compliance were the hottest topics when it came to pharmacy and pharmacy point-of-sale. Anyone who went through the process in the early months of 2009 probably remembers the mass confusion, constant changes and general feeling of disbelief that most of us felt as the scope of the new IRS regulations governing purchases with FSA and HRA cards came to light. Even so, we traversed the maze and when the June 30, 2009 deadline came around we all breathed a collective sigh of relief as RMS customers continued successful processing of newly regulated health benefit cards. Eventually, FSA became a normal, manageable part of everyone's daily routine.



So where are we today? Believe it or not, FSA card acceptance is still of vital importance for independent pharmacies. Adoption of benefit plans including an FSA/HRA card is on the rise and ignoring FSA can be detrimental to an independent pharmacy.

On January 1, 2011 the IRS removed many over the counter medicines from FSA/HRA Eligibility. Items such as cold medication, pain relief, stomach remedies and digestive aids and most other OTC medicine now require a prescription for purchase with a Health Benefit Card. Despite the dramatic

drop in eligible products, many things do remain on the list such as bandages and first aid supplies, Wheelchairs, walkers and canes, contact lens supplies and diabetic supplies.



A POS system allows you to be IAS (Inventory Information Approval System) Compliant. For example, the RMS POS system sends key information about the transaction to the FSA card issuer so that they can approve the purchase. The only other way to accept FSA cards is via the 90% exemption rule, meaning that your pharmacy sales are at least 90% eligible products. While this sounds like a great loophole, the problem is that not all FSA card issuers except transactions from 90% exempt merchants so even if you meet the 90% requirements, FSA transactions may still decline.

Even though FSA's 15 minutes of fame have long since passed, it's important to include FSA card acceptance into the scheme of your pharmacy.

G Is For Growth



Growing your business can seem like an elusive goal to achieve. Like Mission Impossible without all of the fun stunts, cool gadgets and oh yeah, a team of highly trained government agents to make sure that you can accomplish astounding, death defying acts and look super cool while doing it.

Heroes in the movies save the world over and over again by breaking down the challenges, figuring out a strategy, and securing the best technology for the job. You can use their tricks to help your pharmacy grow. And you don't even have to get out your climbing gear and repel down the side of the world's tallest building to do it.



One of the first challenges to conquer is how to attract more customers. There are a number of different ways to do this, but one of the most powerful weapons at your disposal will be word of mouth. Mastering the principles outlined in C is for Customer Feedback will help you feel confident that word is spreading and it's all good. Utilizing mobile technology and creating an easy streamlined

In order to grow, you also have to encourage customers to shop more often. Your customers need to think of your pharmacy as more than a place to pick up their monthly prescriptions. Increasing how often they shop at your store means getting them to think of your store as their go to for their OTC medications, health supplies, gift items, beauty products, supplements, or whatever other niche departments you might have. This means working to drive your customers' behavior in a new direction which is easier than it may sound if you implement a comprehensive customer loyalty program. Read on to the L is for Loyalty chapter in this e-book to learn more about customer loyalty.

Once you've encouraged customers to shop more often, you can start working to increase your average ticket size. Sales come in three different kinds; planned, impulse, and companion. Your pharmacy technology plays a key role in this venture. Bundling promotions like buy one get one drives companion sales. Knowing what your best selling products are and placing them strategically in your pharmacy can help drive impulse sales and a pharmacy that runs like a well-oiled machine can help to ensure that you don't lose out on any planned purchases due to lines that are too long or less than stellar customer service.

H

Is For Holiday



The holiday season between November and January is perhaps the busiest for many retail pharmacies. Make the most of the time of year with these tips for a successful and stress free holiday season.

- Make sure your shelves are stocked. Customers that come in to pick up something specific aren't likely to wait in long lines just to ask if you have more. Also keep over stock easily accessible for quick restocking during slack times or after hours.
- Consider extended holiday hours. Everyone is busy during the holidays. So while your customers may not normally be night owls, they'll appreciate the convenience of an extra hour in the evening to do their shopping.
- Staff appropriate. Your POS system should offer you an option to see the customer counts for specified time frames. This will help you to identify peak times for your store so you can staff for when your pharmacy is the busiest.
- Be prepared to make the most of your slack times with pre-assigned projects. For example, have the clerk running your least busy register assigned to stock and tidy shelves during that slow hour in the middle of the afternoon.
- Don't be afraid to get into the spirit of the season! Sometimes we all forget what the holidays are about and that enthusiastic pharmacy assistant may just brighten someone's day and help your store to stand out from the crowd.



I Is For Inventory



Do you know what to do with product that just isn't selling in your pharmacy? Product that isn't moving is more than just wasted space on the shelf and a prevalent problem with dust bunnies. There are costs associated with any inventory that's not moving, otherwise known as inventory holding cost. Here's a [great video](#) on some basics of the carrying costs and all the factors that come into play when you have product that isn't moving.

There are many different things that an independent pharmacy can do when faced with the problem of products that just aren't selling, but the first step will be to identify those products. Your POS system can generate a report that will tell you what items haven't sold for a specified period of time. Once you've identified the problematic products, it's probably time to consider some changes.

Some products are seasonal and you just won't sell them year round. Sales will probably be slower on cold medicines during the summer months and in most parts of the country you may not sell much sunscreen in the dead of winter. But if the product isn't seasonal, or it is and it's in season you should consider moving the product to increase visibility (check out the O is for Organization chapter of this book). You should also check out your competition's pricing. If they are selling it for less, try meeting or beating the price if you can.



If you can't get a certain product to move, it's time to make some cuts. Start marking down the product and clear it out. Make more room for your top sellers and expand your more popular departments. Remember that storing product costs money too, so even seasonal product is better off being cleared out or donated than left hanging around to try to sell next year.



We're all familiar with the story of Goldilocks and The Three Bears. One bed too soft, one too hard, but the third just right. Similarly, that glass slipper only fit perfectly on Cinderella's foot. Bad luck for those evil step sisters of hers. And tough luck for those not quite right Prince Charming type fellows that tried to awaken Sleeping Beauty and Snow White. Sorry boys, the ladies aren't waking up for just anyone. Noticing a trend yet? In the world of fairy tales, there's only ever one right fit that leads to happily ever after.

Call it pickiness or perfectionism, there's something to be said for not settling for second best. It's exactly what you should do in your pharmacy when it comes to picking the right technology and pharmacy point-of-sale system. But what if Cinderella gets a little flat footed in 10 years and that glass slipper doesn't fit exactly right anymore?

While no story book character will actually ever have to navigate the tricky waters of growth and change, your pharmacy probably will. What works for your pharmacy today, may not be the right fit in a few years or even a few months. That doesn't mean you should be afraid of making a decision about new or updated technology just because circumstances might change. Still, you don't want to have to throw everything out and start from scratch just because your pharmacy business grew. That's why it's so important to keep the concept of scalability in mind as you plan for your pharmacy's future.

The First step is to think about where you are now and what you need to solve current problems and inefficiencies. Defining your baseline requirements will help you to narrow your search parameters. But you can't stop there, even though it can be tempting just to throw a Band-Aid on the problem with a less robust system and call it good. Making sure your systems can grow with your business will save you money and a good deal of frustration as your business changes and grows. So take some time to identify your goals. Where do you want to be in 1 year, 5 years, or more? What will your pharmacy technology need to be able to do in order to help you meet those goals and run efficiently when you get there?

Once you've got your needs and goals in mind, and you're looking for the right fit, there are two important things to keep in mind. First, look for a solution that offers multiple levels and can easily be scaled up right along with your business. You don't necessarily want to buy the comprehensive software suite that you might need when your pharmacy grows to need a robust inventory management solution, but you definitely need to make sure that you can easily add that on to a more baseline system without rebuilding your technology scheme from the ground up.

The other important side to scalability of your pharmacy technology, and especially your pharmacy POS system, is that it can play well with others. It may seem convenient to have a pharmacy system and pharmacy POS system wrapped all into one, but what if you do need to make a change somewhere down the line? You'll be locked in with one provider and face the dilemma of limited options or starting over with both systems when you may not need to.

K Is For Knowledgeable



It seems a given fact that everyone should be knowledgeable in their chosen professions. And most people are to one degree or another. But how specific is that knowledge? Can you answer this question for the staff employed at your pharmacy and for the companies that you partner with?

Your employees will never be motivated to perform their best if you don't trust their professional judgment and let them take care of your customers. You should endeavor to make your team will feel like it is their responsibility (because it is) to take care of your customers and be a part of running your business when you are not present. An employee that feels a sense of responsibility will not only be more dedicated (which reduces turnover) they'll continue to learn and become knowledgeable about your store and the products you sell. On the flip side, an employee that is constantly under the microscope, disapproved of and micromanaged will become discouraged and will have no reason to grow professionally. Encourage and incentivize and you'll have more knowledgeable employees and more satisfied customers.



If you have dedicated and knowledgeable employees, half the battle is already won. But the other piece is partnering with companies who truly understand your needs. Do they comprehend the business of pharmacy specifically or is business just business to them?

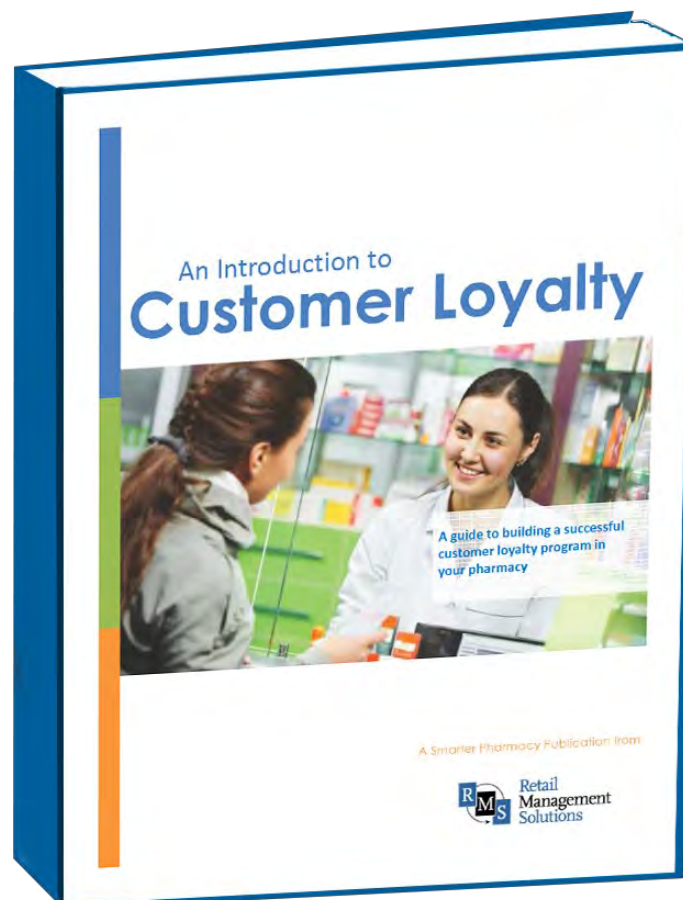
For example, RMS specializes in point-of-sale for pharmacies. This means we are about as drilled down as you can get if you're looking for a pharmacy point-of sale system. Not only do we specialize in point-of-sale technology, we only work with independent and institutional pharmacies. No big box stores, no clothing stores or bike shops or restaurants. Just locally owned pharmacies, hospital and institutional pharmacies and independently owned chains. It's about as focused as we can get which means RMS staff is incredibly knowledgeable about the pharmacy industry and pharmacy POS technology.

If you are surrounded by knowledgeable staff and business partners, your customers will see a difference and it's bound to reflect positively on your pharmacy.



The modern consumer expects to be rewarded for their purchases. Almost every chain store has some kind of loyalty program and being a small independent does nothing in the consumers mind to exempt you from that requirement. If at one store, they can shop and get something in return, and at another, they shop and get nothing but what they paid for, which store do you think they'll choose?

Having a customer loyalty program has become a requirement of having a successful business. But building a program that doesn't cut into already tight margins, drives revenue and provides the value your customers are looking for is tricky. Check out another RMS E-Book, "An Introduction to Customer Loyalty" to learn about different types of loyalty programs and dive into some best practices for making sure that your program is effective and profitable.



MIs For Mobile



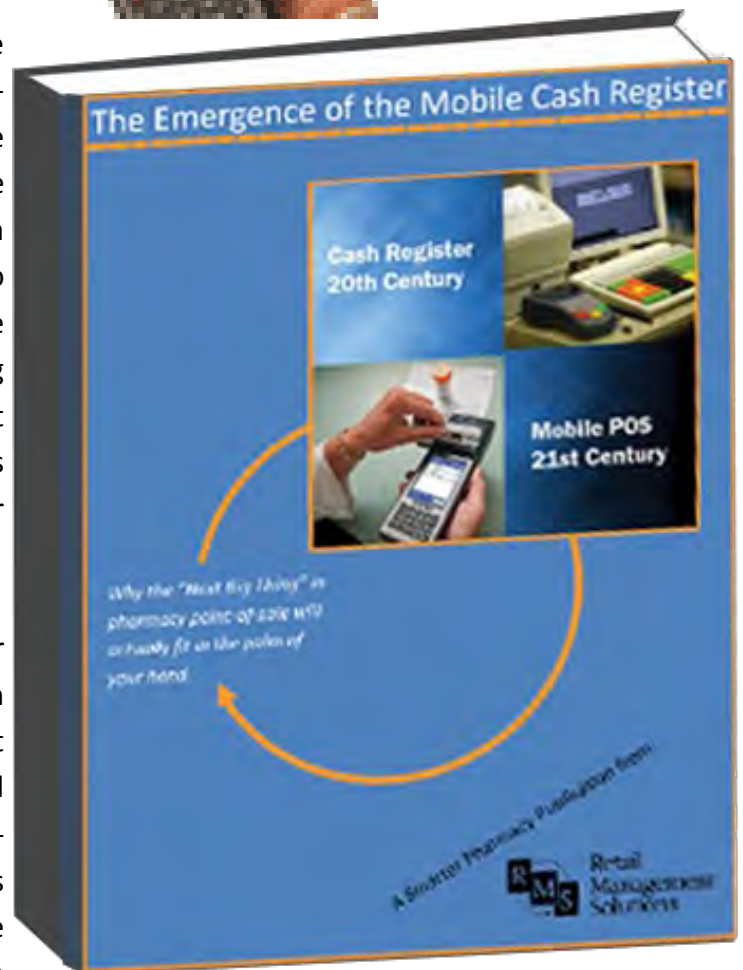
Mobile solutions can help a pharmacy be more successful in countless different ways. In this E-book, we'll talk about a number of those methods in detail. But let's take a quick look not only at how you can use mobile technology in your pharmacy, but why mobile technology is so important.

Adding mobility allows you to elevate your service beyond anything the big box stores are doing today. For example, you can offer services like curbside delivery. Instead of having to come inside the store, a customer can simply call ahead and a pharmacy employee meets them at their vehicle to ring up their transaction. The transaction can be run from start to finish (that includes scanning items, capturing signatures, and accepting credit card payments) wherever the customer is. In this case, the customer can be helped without ever having to get out of the car.

Mobile technology also helps you protect your pharmacy both financially and in the event of an audit. If you offer delivery services, you can collect payments at the point of delivery, (that means real time credit card payments) and also capture signatures electronically. No more declined credit cards when the delivery driver comes back to finalize the transaction or shuffling through scraps of paper to find a specific signature.

Finally, mobile technology for pharmacy is just plain cool. Whether you're utilizing it for a specific service or just running every day transactions inside your pharmacy, it has a wow factor and will impress those of your customers that are tech savvy and looking to do business with a company that keeps current with the latest trends.

Check out another free E-Book from RMS, *The Emergence of the Mobile Cash Register*, to learn more about mobile technology.



N Is For New Customer



Bringing in new customers is essential for the maintenance and growth of any business. But how do you attract a new customer? And perhaps more importantly, how do you transform that new customer into a loyal one?

The answer to this question lies in understanding the standard buying process that most consumers go through when they are making decisions about what to purchase, who to purchase it from, and whether to go back.

Step 1: Awareness. When a consumer has a need, will they notice that your pharmacy can meet that need? Advertising, partnering with other local businesses and being active in your community are all key factors.

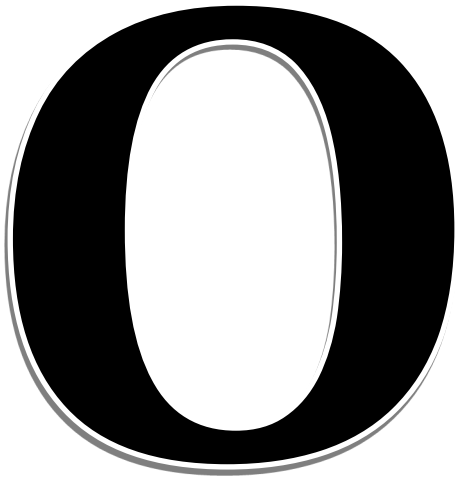
Step 2: Interest. Once a customer is aware of your pharmacy, and knows that you can meet their current purchasing needs, they'll generally try to find out a little more about you. Make sure you have an informational and easy to navigate website, a strong presence in social media, and that you are actively responding to customer comments made through online sources like Yelp.com or other consumer powered review sites.

Step 3: Evaluation. Now it's time for that potential new customer to take a closer look. Remember that saying, "First impressions last the longest"? Well it's true. The impression you make on that first time customer will have an overwhelming amount of influence on whether they decide to come back and will color your relationship with them for years to come. To start, make sure that your store is aesthetically pleasing. Customers make snap judgments based on visual keys and 52% of shoppers will not make a return trip to a store based on aesthetics alone. Check out [these tips for making a good impression](#) and you'll be well on your way to making that first sale and many more to come.

Step 4: Trial. You've gotten the customer in the door. They've found at least one item that they need, and they are making their first purchase. The hard part is over right? Think again. Even when the customer has decided to make that first purchase, you're still under the microscope. Focus on providing an outstanding customer experience..

Step 5: Adoption. This is a customer who's decided to come back to your store. They've decided to fill their prescriptions with you, or pick up over the counter necessities. But you're still not in the clear, even at this stage. Consistency is key here. The customer should have the same outstanding experience every time they visit your pharmacy. Pharmacy technology is key here as you can put workflows and processes into place to make sure that the checkout process is always smooth and easy and your cashiers can focus on customer service, rather than trying to follow complex manual procedures.

Step 6: Loyalty. This is where you want to strive to get to with all of your customers. Loyal customers shop more frequently, purchase more items and they share their experiences with their circle of influence. Everything you've done to take the customer relationship this far will help you earn and maintain loyal customers, but you also need a Customer Loyalty Program to keep up with the competition



Is For Organization



Almost every big box retailer, from grocery stores to department stores takes advantage of a relatively simple marketing tactic. They reorganize their stores on a fairly regular basis. They do this to increase the chance that shoppers will stray from their planned purchases and make an impulse buy. This trick used by retail giants is easy for independent pharmacies to use by following a few simple guidelines.

- Go with the season. Whether it's Valentines day, Easter, Christmas or Thanksgiving, make sure that seasonal product is easily visible when a customer enters your store. Seasonal displays should be colorful, fresh, fun and unique to draw attention.
- Maximize end cap space. End caps are some of the easiest places to move around product with little disruption to overall store layout. Customers are more likely to see product on end caps as they walk by an aisle than they are when it's buried halfway down the aisle. Rotate seasonal or clearance items and show of new products in your store.
- Utilize the space where lines form. Items kept by the register, or where customers wait while prescriptions are filled are often impulse buys. Scatter some of your smaller seasonal items or perhaps candy at the checkout counters or even put out a few key items like pill cutters or vitamins. Rotate these items out frequently to maximize this space.
- Scatter novelty items throughout the store. Rather than counting on customers to go to a specific aisle to shop specialty items like gifts or candy or other local fare and flair, place these items throughout the store to increase impulse buys and overall sales for that department.
- Most importantly, don't be afraid to try new things. Utilize your Pharmacy POS system to monitor item and department sales to find out if your changes are making a difference anywhere. You also need to make sure that aisles are clearly marked, prices clearly labeled on the shelves and that you have plenty of staff on hand to help your customers navigate any new store layout.



P Is For Private Label



For most independent pharmacies, profit margins are higher on private label OTC's than they are on brand name even though brand name costs the customer more. If this is the case for you, driving sales on private label OTC's can help increase your bottom line and save your customers money.

Drive Sales with Customer Loyalty. Incorporating private label OTC's into your customer loyalty program is a great way to increase your private label sales. Actively target customers participating in your loyalty program that purchase brand name by printing a coupon for their next purchase of a private label product when they buy a brand name OTC product or offer additional loyalty points on qualifying products.

For most independent pharmacies, profit margins are higher on private label OTC's than they are on brand name even though brand name costs the customer more. If this is the case for you, driving sales on private label OTC's can help increase your bottom line and save your customers money.

Compare and Save. Many people just don't realize the price difference between private label and brand name. Shoppers in a hurry target the product they're looking for, grab it and go. You can make it easy to spot the difference by printing shelf talkers comparing the brand name with the private label product. The RMS Signs & Labels program allows pharmacies to create a Compare and Save shelf talker to easily highlight the difference in price and promote the private label option.

Educate your customers. Your customers shop at a local independent pharmacy for many reasons. One of those reasons is often that they get better care, advice and insight from knowledgeable staff. It's okay to educate customers purchasing brand name OTC's that they can get the same result for less money.

LDR ACETAMINOPHEN 500MG CA
100 CAPLETS
00000000200
\$3⁹⁹
COMPARE WITH
TYLENOL 500MG CAPLETS 100
Regular Price \$5⁹⁹
YOU SAVE \$2⁰⁰

Q Is For Quick



Long lines make the top of the list as the number two over all complaint that consumers have about retail experience, second only to rude staff. And just like you wouldn't tolerate an employee treating a customer badly, you shouldn't tolerate customers having to constantly wait for service in your store. Luckily it's an easier fix than you may think.

If you have constant long lines, there are probably 2 main things that you can change to accommodate the volume of customers in your store. For starters, you need to staff appropriately. Your [POS system](#) should be able to break down transaction volume by date and time. This means you'll know when you are busiest and have staff on hand so that no customer is neglected.

The bigger problem is that if you don't have enough registers, those extra staff members won't do you much good when it comes to combatting long lines. Even the most efficient cashier won't be able to solve that problem for you. So you need more registers. It should be an easy fix. But in many pharmacies space is at a premium and cost is often a consideration. You can't simply ignore the problem and risk losing customers, but traditional solutions won't work either.

If I've hit on a problem that you have experienced in your pharmacy, it's time to consider a technology solution that you might at first find a little unorthodox. [EvolutionPOS](#) is a mobile register designed specifically for use in independent and institutional pharmacies. The first of its kind, [EvolutionPOS](#) allows you to take the power of a full size traditional register wherever you need it. It doesn't take up valuable counter space (a cash drawer is optional and can be mounted under the counter), and it costs less than a traditional register setup. With integrated card swipe, scanner, receipt printer and signature capture, [EvolutionPOS](#) makes adding registers and obtaining much needed mobility cost effective and easy.

With [EvolutionPOS](#), winnowing down long lines is simple using a process we call line busting. Equipped with an easy to use, handheld register, a cashier can pull customers with fast transactions from the line one at a time. For example, the clerk might offer to help any customer that will be paying by credit card and doesn't need to pick up any additional prescriptions from the counter. The Point-



of-Sale becomes Point-of-Service as cashiers are able to ring up a transaction anywhere in the store. A customer with questions on supplements, for example, can be walked by a knowledgeable store employee right to the aisle and complete the sale right where the customer interaction occurs.

R Is For Recommend



How often do you order the chef's favorite at a restaurant, or buy something because it was recommended by someone whose opinion you value? The power of suggestion can do a great deal for retailers, but all too few of them actually utilize this power and guide their customers to purchase specific products. And they really should. It only takes a little bit of planning, a few creative displays, and suddenly, the opinions and expertise of staff members are suddenly helping to drive sales. Especially in pharmacies, customers rely on the knowledge of pharmacy employees to guide them to pick the right product to meet their needs. Here's a few tips to help you nudge your customers in the right direction.

1) Have a "pharmacists pick". It can be anything. A great multivitamin, skin care product, or even a flu shot when the season arrives. Change it out weekly or monthly. Place an eye catching display prominently in your store and suddenly you have a featured product with very little additional work.

2) Set up "staff favorites" throughout the store. This strategy can be used to market some of the more specialty, or perhaps slightly frivolous items in your store. Because customers develop relationships with pharmacy technicians and clerks, their opinions are also valuable to your customer base. All it takes is putting a few special signs on shelves throughout the store. Try putting a picture of the staff member and a quote as to why this particular product is "Kim's Favorite". Customers will be drawn to the different signage and personal touch.

3) Tie in your [loyalty program](#) with any featured products. You don't even need to put the products you decide to feature on sale. But you can incentivize purchase by offering extra reward points for customers participating in your loyalty program when they buy one of your recommended items. Try having a special day of the week or month when members of your loyalty program can get special deals on these items. This helps drive membership in your loyalty program and the limited timeline for taking advantage of the promotion will create a sense of urgency that helps to drive sales

These simple steps can help increase average ticket size and overall sales in your pharmacy. Not only that, your customers will appreciate the personal investment from you and your staff which means increased customer loyalty.



S

Is For Security



In 2014 several major retailers experienced breaches in their organizations that compromised their customer personal information and credit card data. You couldn't turn on the TV or Radio, or open a newspaper without seeing headlines on the latest security catastrophe. It just wouldn't go away, and you shouldn't expect it to any time soon. Since having personal information on file is a necessity for doing business as a pharmacy, it's of paramount importance that you are transparent about what you do with your customers information and take steps to provide a secure environment in which your customers can feel comfortable doing business. Download our free E-book on Point-of-sale Security for an in depth look at some important security topics.



T



Words like reliable and honest seem synonymous with what many people think about their

hometown independent pharmacy. After all, Pharmacists were just rated the [2nd most honest profession in America](#). Customers shop local for a level of service that they simply cannot get anywhere else. Which is pretty amazing when you consider how much the pharmacy industry is in a constant state of flux. To say that there's always something new coming down the pipe would be a bit of an understatement.

Maintaining a business that runs like a well-oiled machine regardless of what's going on behind the scenes is difficult to say the least, but there's one thing that the most successful pharmacies do that gives them an edge above the competition... They invest in training. And not just training on new regulations or required continuing education, but training from their business partners.

Here are a few good reasons to invest in ongoing and recurring training in your pharmacy.

1. Manage employee turnover -It's less expensive to train and maintain the skills of an existing employee than it is to start from scratch with a new one. And employees that feel like they are being invested in by the company they work for are more likely to stay loyal. Additionally, if they are consistently well trained they'll be more confident in themselves and the work that they do and you'll get a more efficient and effective employee. Finally, if you did have some employee turnover, or growth meant your staff grew, it can be useful to have a professional trainer firm up processes and procedures and make sure that those new employees have a well-rounded understanding of technology operations in your pharmacy.

2. Address the capabilities of the system compared to the new requirements of your pharmacy - Hopefully your pharmacy has experienced some growth and change for the better. So what you needed to get out of your technology a year ago may not be the same as what you need to get out of it today. Experts in the technology and in the industry can identify inefficiencies, see gaps in processes, and make recommendations for change. Many systems are very robust and it takes a while to learn everything that a system is capable of doing

3. Get help with big changes - It's possible that the coming year already holds something new and exciting for your pharmacy. Whether you are adding some new software capabilities, moving to a bigger location or implementing a complete overhaul of your technology, there's no need to take that on without help from someone who specializes in these kinds of changes. The right trainer can make sure the process goes smoothly and help you to implement new features.

If you haven't made room this year for some advanced training, I highly recommend taking a good look at your pharmacy and seeing where there might be some room for improvement. An expert both in your technology and in the industry can help your pharmacy become the well-oiled machine that your customers expect and continue to grow.

U Is For Update



The technology that you use in your store says a lot about you and, believe it or not, can have a major influence on the way your customers perceive you and how successful you are at building long lasting relationships with those customers. In a [2013 survey](#), 90% of those surveyed said that use of outdated technology in a business could cause them to take their business elsewhere. That's a pretty high number and a large amount of business to risk in an already competitive market.

For many consumers, the aversion to outdated technology may just be superficial. With sleek ultra-modern smart phones in the pockets of most consumers, walking into a business running on obviously old systems just gives us a bad feeling. We wonder, if the computers here are 10 years old, what else around here isn't quite up to date? Superficial or not, these image focused customers can't simply be ignored and they'll react positively to a business that obviously takes pride in maintaining a clean and modern image.

Your more technology savvy customer will react negatively to outdated systems for completely different reasons. Many older computers run operating systems that are no longer supported or secure, which increases the risk that your business will be compromised and experience a breach of secure personal and credit card data. Of course it is possible for an older system to run securely, but the more modern your technology scheme is, the more faith those security conscious customers are likely to have in your pharmacy's ability to protect their information.

Finally, up-to-date and modern technology in your pharmacy helps to show your customers that you respect their valuable time by investing in your businesses continued ability to run smoothly and efficiently. While sometimes it is true that slow and steady wins the race, when it comes to how well the systems in your pharmacy run, faster really is better.

Although it does seem that all things retro eventually do come back on trend sooner or later, when it comes to your pharmacy technology, you'll definitely be better served by maintaining a streamlined and contemporary strategy. My best advice? Keep that old school hometown service that your customers love, but make sure your technology is cutting edge. Take a moment to check out the modern solutions that we offer at [RMS](#). With small form factor computers to save on space, attractive all-in-one touch screen systems, and [handheld mobile options](#), we can help you make updating your pharmacy crazy easy.



V Is For Virus Season



Virus season. That time of year when the cold sets in, the winter coats come out, throats start to ache and noses start to run. It may not be as jolly as the holiday season, but it's an important time of year for retail pharmacy. Here are some tips for surviving the season of sniffles in one piece with satisfied customers.

Merchandise-Make it easy for customers to find everything they need to battle their bug. No one wants to run around the store trying to find the cold medicine, Kleenex and disinfectant with a runny nose or a sick and cranky child. Put together an end cap filled with cold & flu items that is easily visible as soon as the customer walks in the door. You could even set up 2 end caps, one for adult medication and one specifically for children's medication.

2) **Bundle**- Your customers may be sick today but just getting over their current ailment shouldn't be the only thing on their mind. Bundle together purchase of a cold medicine with a good multi-vitamin so that they can not only feel better today but be healthy enough to fight the next virus to come knocking tomorrow. Pair your multi-vitamin with the sale of your [higher margin private label products](#). Offer 50% off your recommended multi-vitamin with the sale of specific cold & flu remedies. *Hint: use your [customer loyalty program](#) to create a special offer to automatically discount the paired item when a qualifying item is scanned at your pharmacy POS system.

3) **Recommend**- Your expertise is invaluable to overwhelmed customers. Which medication will best alleviate my symptoms but not make me drowsy? What medication can I take with my current prescriptions? Helping your patients to choose the right OTC medication will help your customers to feel better faster and they'll be more likely to become repeat customers. Add some flair to that cold & flu end cap by posting some pharmacy favorites and recommendations with the products.

4) **Educate**- Push flu shots in your pharmacy. Because only 35% of adult Americans actually get a flu shot each year, the opportunity for growing the number of patients receiving a shot each year is pretty much limitless. Promote your flu shot hours, provide documentation of the benefits or just talk to people about why they haven't been vaccinated yet.

5) **Incentivize**- Buying cold medication for a sick child is never going to be the highlight of anyone's day, but you can make it at least a little bit more palpable with some incentives for your [loyalty](#) customers or a unique BOGO promotion. Offer double points for rewards members on cold & flu products. Or set up a promotion where buying a specific cold & flu product results in a free box of Kleenex. *Hint: Run these promotions on your [higher margin private label product](#).



Your customers can buy everything they need for the cold & flu season at a big box store or even a grocery store. What will set you apart and keep customers coming back is the level of service and individualized customer experience that your pharmacy offers that chain stores just can't compete with.

W

Is For Website

The strength of your pharmacies online presence can have a huge impact on how much new business is driven to your store. And while that strength depends on many different factors (customer reviews, social media, etc.) one of the most important things you can have is an informative easy to navigate website.

Your website should always be a work in progress, evolving and changing with your business. But there are also a few necessities. Basic requirements and features that every website should have.

Put contact information, location and store hours on your home page where they are easy to locate without an extensive search. Often times this is all people are looking for when they visit your website so have this information in plain sight.

Make sure your home page is clean but informative. It should say something about you are as a business, what you believe in, what your primary business mission is, etc. For example, if you visit www.rm-solutions.com, one of the first things you see are the words “The leader in Pharmacy Point-of-Sale Innovation”. You don’t want to leave who you are as a company up to guess work or require website visitors to go digging around.

Have an “About Us” section to your site. Give people a chance to get to know your business and your people if they want to. Many independent pharmacies have a rich history that potential customers will enjoy learning about. And if your business is relatively new, it’s still helpful for people to feel that they can get to know you and your staff.

Check out what your website looks like when accessed from a mobile device. Web traffic via cell phone and tablet is only increasing. Make sure that if people go to your website from a mobile device they will still be able to easily view pertinent information.

The power and influence of the internet will only continue to grow. Make sure you don’t get left behind.

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X

X Is For X-Factor

So what does “X –Factor” mean to the independent pharmacy? This will be different for every business. What makes your pharmacy special in your community is exclusive to you.

What’s truly important is making sure that your customers see things on a regular basis that make you stand out and are continually reminded of why your store is special.

Here’s an easy, inexpensive trick you can try to engage customers, boost sales and remind people of products and services that make you stand out.



All you need is a sandwich board style sign and a little creativity. Label the sign “5 things you can’t leave the store without” and then brainstorm 5 items or services that are must have for the season. For cold and flu season you might push Tissues, vitamins, a private label cold medicine, hand sanitizer and a flu-shot. For the holidays you could boost sales in your gift department by listing specialty items, gift wrap and gift cards or in the summer promote supplies like first aid kits, bug spray, sunscreen , picnic supplies and more. If you have specials running on these products you can make a note of the sale price right on the sign.

Make your sign colorful and eye-catching. Enlist the help of artistic employees to make the sign pop and before you know it, you have an inexpensive and unique marketing tool, and you’ve reminded your customers that you are more than just a place to pick up prescriptions.

Y Is For YOU!



That's right, you are key to your businesses success. In large part because of your passion for what you do.

Passion can be thought of and defined in many different ways. For our purposes, I'll take the first definition in Webster's Dictionary. "A strong feeling of enthusiasm or excitement for something or about doing something." This is a feeling shared by RMS staff about what we do each day. We hope that our passion is shared with our customers in our interactions, newsletters, blog posts and product offerings. We believe that our passion for helping independent pharmacies succeed is part of what makes us stand out from the crowd.

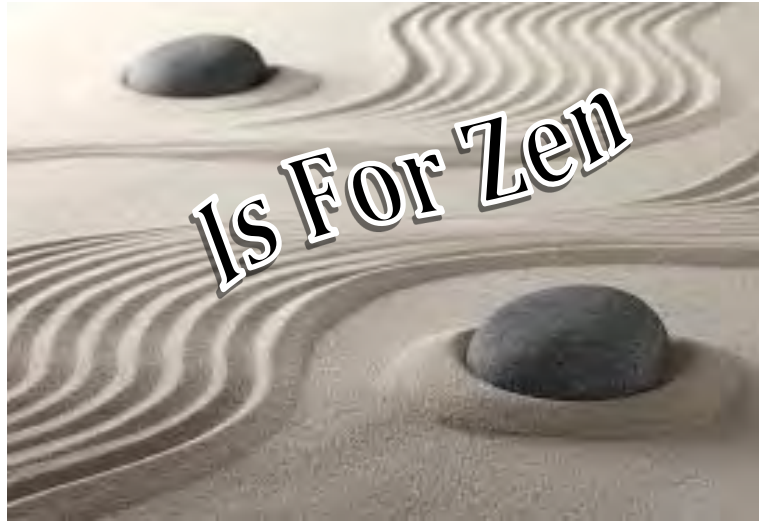
Likewise, your passion for your pharmacy can help you to stand out from the competition if you can find ways to share that feeling with your customers. Just like it's hard not to smile back at someone who's smiling at you, it's hard not to feel involved and enthusiastic along with a person, or even a business as a whole, with obvious passion for what they do. And that kind of feeling creates loyalty, which is a key component for helping your store to grow. Here are a few ways you can share your love of your business, your customers, and your profession.

Get social-People who love what they do love to talk about it. They don't run every transaction and every customer interaction like it's the same as the last because it's not. Talk to your customers about what's new in the store, things you're involved in within the community or even just make a product recommendation based on the customers purchasing habits.

Share your knowledge- As a pharmacist, you have a great deal of expertise that you can draw on for the betterment of your customers. Make it easy for your customers to draw on that expertise. You can do this by publishing a monthly or quarterly newsletter, writing a blog like this one, or even sharing via social media like Twitter or Facebook. Write about or post news about vaccinations or the newest supplement trend or the best ways to battle the latest virus that's sweeping through the community. Tie it all together by hosting a workshop or clinic on a specific health topic. Involve other local businesses and make it an open house.

Involve your customers-This can actually be a lot easier than it sounds. You can tailor your [Loyalty Program](#) to a specific set of products that you're passionate about promoting. Instead of the ABC Pharmacy Loyalty Program, you could have the ABC Pharmacy Vitamin Club. Showcase specific products by setting up promotions in your [POS system](#) and educating your staff on that specific product. This not only shares your enthusiasm, but can help to boost sales.

Most of us did not choose the paths we are on because it was the easiest avenue open to us. Something led us to where we are today. And I hope that like me, whatever that something was, you get to come to work each day and find something to love about what you do. Don't be afraid to share that with your customers and your staff. When all is said and done, your pharmacy can only benefit



Hopefully as you come to the end of this E-Book, you have at least a few new things to try in your pharmacy. But before you go piling thing onto the to do list, it's time to take a moment to relax and reset.

Don't try to tackle everything at once. Instead, set reasonable goals and concentrate on reaching them, no matter what the circumstances. You may hit some bumps in the road, and you may get discouraged. That's okay. It happens to the best of us.

In moments of stress, if you set yourself goals you can reach, no matter how small they may seem to you, (or anyone else) you can grant yourself some sweet odds of success. And the more often you succeed, the easier it gets the next time. You can learn, and you can win, even when others think you're losing. If you can't learn, grow, and enjoy small joys, even when adversity surrounds you, you'll waste valuable minutes of your life you can never get back

So set some hard to reach goals, but also set yourself a few that are easily achievable. Enjoy the victories, share them with your pharmacy staff and then move on to the next mountain to climb..



We hope you'll give RMS a chance to help you achieve whatever goals you set in your pharmacy. Wherever you're headed, we can help you grow your business, become more efficient, increase profitability, and still get home in time for dinner.

**Learn more about
RMS**

