

Building A Strong Pharmacist-Customer Relationship



A pharmacist's relationship with their customers plays a defining role in how their pharmacy is perceived as a valuable resource. Independent pharmacists want their patients to feel comfortable and their pharmacy to be accessed by the community it serves. It is important for independents to create confidence in the communities they serve if they want their customers to look to them as reliable and deserving of trust. But reliability and trust doesn't always come easy, it is something that needs to be built over time.

In this blog, we will cover the top three reasons why pharmacists need to build a strong relationship with their customers, and how they might begin constructing that foundation of trust.

1. Customers Care About Customer Service

Step back and take a moment to assess your customer service. Are you taking the time to listen to your customers? Is your staff? Can you show empathy and concern while addressing your patient's needs? Are you doing so with courtesy and professionalism?

These are all huge players in a customer's reason for visiting and remaining loyal to an independent pharmacy.

Some things you can do to sharpen your pharmacy's customer service focus include:

- Addressing your customer by name.
- Listening closely to what they have to say and the questions they ask.
- Educating and training your staff.
- Counseling patients and practicing the "teach-back method" to ensure they understand everything they need to know to have the best possible outcomes.

2. Customers Want to be More Than a Sale

Having a competitive price is important, but customers are also (generally) willing to pay a little extra or spend a little extra time going out of their way to visit a stand-alone pharmacy, if they feel they're going to be treated as a person and not another "sale".

Your ability to effectively deliver valuable customer service (as outlined above) will tie directly into your ability to demonstrate your customers' value to your establishment. Value goes both ways. When a pharmacist and their team acknowledge that the customer is also a part of that "team", dynamic, stronger relationships are built, trust is built, and a mutually beneficial relationship result.

3. Take a Proactive Approach for Better Customer Outcomes

Pharmacists are best known for their ability to dispense medications. But the role of the pharmacist is changing with new guidelines tied to better customer outcomes. Pharmacists — through counseling, medication therapy management (MTM), disease-state management, and other means — have expanded their roles in patient care. And that expansion provides many opportunities to improve a patient's healthcare outcomes. If pharmacists embrace this change and present a proactive attitude toward their patients' care, this will further strengthen the customer relationship.

Some ways a pharmacist can be proactive in a customer's health outcomes include:

- Recognizing why a customer might not adhere to patient medication schedules (can be learned through effective customer service for example) – this is where the "teach-back method" can come in handy.
- Using that knowledge to conduct adherence-check phone calls. For example, contacting patients after a sufficient amount of time (three to four days after a seven-day antibiotic regimen, for example) has passed, when they may be showing improvement and be more susceptible to discontinuing their medication, can be an extremely effective way to show the customer that they're a person first, and their health and improvement matters to you even after the "sale" is made.
- Offering free blood pressure checks, blood sugar management discussion groups, weight management groups, or other chronic conditions, can also solidify a customer's belief that they've made the right choice in choosing a smaller, local pharmacy – because your establishment is considering all their needs and putting their healthcare first.

When pharmacies go out of their way to show a patient they matter, they're increasing the likelihood that their patient will also be proactive in driving friends and relatives to their establishment.

Closing Thoughts

Owning and running a profitable and relevant community-based business requires you to become an integral and trusted member of the community you serve. Fortunately for the independent pharmacist, there are many ways to build strong customer relationships that can help make the foundation of their business stronger and result in a venture that is both financially profitable for the pharmacy, and highly beneficial for current (and potential) customers.

Not sure where to start? Through our partnership with Aspire Health, Keystone has all the solutions to help your pharmacy strengthen the relationships with your customers. To learn more about our solutions, please connect with your Keystone Business Consultant via email at info@kpparx.com.

Sources:

1. <https://www.uspharmacist.com/article/the-pharmacists-role-in-medication-adherence>
2. <https://www.ahrq.gov/professionals/quality-patient-safety/quality-resources/tools/literacy-toolkit/healthlitoolkit2-tool5.html>