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RETAIL MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS
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The Best Pharmacy POS Blogs of 2016

Rx

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Retail Management Solutions
The industry leader in pharmacy point-of-sale innovation

INTRODUCTION

In 2012 I wrote my first ever blog post. It was the middle of the holiday season and after a month of talking with crazy busy, overwhelmed, RMS customers, I thought I might be able to help. So I embarked on writing a blog article focused on helping pharmacies prepare for one of the busiest times of year. It seems silly now, but when I clicked the button to send that article off to our VP of Sales and Marketing, I thought I might be sick from my nerves. Little did I know, that first blog was just the beginning. The RMS Point-of-Sale Point-of-View Blog has become something we are very passionate about at RMS. We know that helping pharmacies to succeed goes way beyond providing great point-of-sale technology and support infrastructure. You have to look at the bigger picture and how everything ties together. And as readership of our blog continues to grow year after year, it appears that today's pharmacy owners and managers are in agreement.

As I reviewed the most popular blog posts from 2016, I was expecting to find some sort of trend. Maybe that our readers liked articles on creative uses for technology more than they liked customer service articles. But what I found was that our blog readers are interested in a broad range of topics. And while this variety doesn't necessarily help me to figure out what to write about over the next year, it does make for a great e-book compilation. I hope you enjoy this recap of our 12 (because 10 didn't seem like enough) most popular posts in 2016. We'll start with #12 and countdown to our most read post for the year. Be sure as you're reading to check out our links for other RMS publications and E-Books. Thanks for taking the time to read this insightful e-book, and here's to a successful 2017 and beyond!

Sincerely,

Karen Deckard

Customer Success Manager

Retail Management Solutions

#12) WHY INVESTING IN YOUR PHARMACY EMPLOYEES IS BETTER THAN RELYING ON RAW TALENT

BY KAREN DECKARD, CUSTOMER SUCCESS MANAGER, RMS



Several months ago, a graphic started to make the rounds online. You may have seen it on Facebook, LinkedIn, or Twitter. With a refreshingly unhidden agenda, the graphic was titled ["10 Things That Require Zero Talent"](#). It is exactly as it sounds and at first glance it seems to be something that shouldn't even need to be said. (Being on time, work ethic, effort, body language, energy, attitude, passion, being coachable, doing extra and being prepared) The importance of these characteristics is something

we all should have learned after our first day of work at our very first job. And as a pharmacy owner or manager, they are certainly characteristics that you should be looking for when you hire new pharmacy staff.

I think we can all agree that everyone should pay attention to each and every item on the checklist, and do their best to display these characteristics (especially when working in customer service). But I think there's more to it than acknowledgement. In the world of pharmacy, so much of what you do is amplified because pharmacy customers are relying on you and your staff to help them get healthy and stay healthy. It's not only you who needs to see that your employees are on time and passionate, but your customers as well. After all, at the end of the day, it's their opinions that matter the most.

To accomplish this, you need to do more than set expectations with your employees. Instead, provide them with the tools and infrastructure to make sure that your pharmacy customers can see how much your employees can shine. Here's a closer look at how you can help your employees succeed in the eyes of your customers in some key areas.

Being on time and being prepared – In a pharmacy this goes far beyond showing up to work when you're supposed to. Being on time means serving your customers in a timely manner and having their prescriptions ready when they expect them to be. There are so many different factors involved in every transaction that the only real way to accomplish this is by implementing systems to help you. Knowing that there are additional prescriptions available for pickup so the customer doesn't leave without one and being able to quickly check customers out without unnecessary delay are a couple of major things that will help customers see your pharmacy as efficient and on time. These same tools help you seem well prepared in all of your customer facing interactions.

Work Ethic – Work ethic is defined as “a belief in the moral benefit and importance of work and its inherent ability to strengthen character.” Of course there’s individual work ethic which is so important, but your customers really won’t see work ethic on an individual basis (unless someone goes way above and beyond or falls short of the bar). What they will see is that your pharmacy employees seem to understand the importance of what they do and are striving towards a common goal. This is where your [Mission and Vision Statements](#) come into play. Display them for your customers to see and make sure your pharmacy employees know these statements inside and out.

Body Language – I sometimes have to consciously adjust my posture because I often stand with my arms crossed over my chest. I don’t usually mean anything by it but it certainly doesn’t send a great message if I’m trying to have an open positive conversation. Despite our natural comfort zone, we should adopt an open relaxed position, smile and maintain eye contact. These are all things that are proven to improve the customer experience. But here’s the thing: if you’ve got a counter between you and the customer, how can your body language make any positive difference? It can’t, unless you remove the counter from the equation. This is where [mobile POS technology can help](#). Removing barriers between your pharmacy staff and your customers can make a big difference in the overall customer experience.

Be Coachable – This applies to everyone in the pharmacy, from owners to pharmacy technicians to clerks. If you can’t accept feedback and adapt accordingly, you’ll never grow. Remember, coaching can come from all different sources. Of course customers may be your most frequent suppliers of feedback, but you should also be open to suggestions from employees. And don’t discount advice from your pharmacy business partners. Your pharmacy system and [pharmacy POS](#) providers should be experts in the pharmacy industry and can often provide insight to help solve a particular problem.

Doing Extra – For a pharmacy, this really means services. Think [Curbside Delivery](#), patient counseling, customer loyalty and rewards, or recommending supplements. All of these things will help your customers see your pharmacy as going the extra mile.

This is a closer look at just some of the characteristics that impact how effectively your pharmacy operates and how successful it will become. I encourage you to focus on one of these areas at a time and think of ways that you can help your employees become better. What ideas do you have? I’d love to see them in the comments section below.



#11) PHARMACY TO-DO LISTS - DO IT RIGHT THE FIRST TIME

BY KAREN DECKARD, CUSTOMER SUCCESS MANAGER, RMS AND COREY BRANNON, SENIOR SUPPORT TECHNICIAN, RMS



To-do lists. We all have them. Personal and professional. We usually take great care in creating them with the idea that this list is how we finally get things done. Some of our items are practical like “finally catch up on the laundry” and some part of the bigger picture like “begin an inventory management process in my pharmacy.” But no matter what items your to-do list is comprised of, none of it matters if the execution is sloppy. If I put a load of laundry in the washer, and forget about it for a day, leaving it to mold away, I didn’t really do anything. I have to start all over again.

Likewise, if you try to implement a new process or service in your pharmacy, without the proper tools, you might achieve an end result that forces you back to the drawing board.

Checking items off your to-do list might feel really good, but it’s even better when the result is something that you can be proud of. Sure, it may take more time and energy up front, but in the long run, time spent making sure something is right in the beginning is time saved many times over in the future. Luckily, you can rely on pharmacy business partners like your POS provider to help you prepare for major changes.

Contact one of our [business consultants](#) and let us explore how we can help improve workflow, increase customer service, and ultimately grow your profits.

“Time spent making sure something is right in the beginning is time saved many times over in the future”

#10) 5 WAYS TO OPTIMIZE THE SPACE ON YOUR PHARMACY RECEIPTS

BY KAREN DECKARD, CUSTOMER SUCCESS MANAGER, RMS



With very few exceptions, customers that walk into your store all walk out with at least one thing in common. Their printed receipt. And whether they file it, crumple it in the bottom of a purse, or put it into their back pocket, chances are that they will see this receipt again.

The receipt you give to your customers can be more than just a record of the purchases they made at your pharmacy. You can utilize the space at the top and bottom of your receipts by customizing the messages printed there. Use your Pharmacy POS system to easily update this information anytime. Here are a few ideas for information that you can print on your receipt headers and footers.

Store Information – Basic but a necessity. Your store logo, phone number, hours, and website are standard pieces of information that should be on your receipt.

Vaccine reminders – A quick reminder that customers can get vaccines at your pharmacy.

Special events – Hosting a clinic or class? Put registration information on the receipt.

Customer Loyalty – Put reminders for customers to ask about your loyalty program and increase your enrollment numbers.

Coupons – drive customer behavior back into the store more frequently than their typical 30-day Rx refill.

These are just a few quick options to get you started. The options are endless and you can change out your messages whenever you need to. And if this isn't an option in your [Pharmacy POS system](#), we can certainly help you solve that problem.

#9) 1 CRAZY EASY WAY TO SPEED UP YOUR CHECKOUT PROCESS IN YOUR PHARMACY

BY KAREN DECKARD, CUSTOMER SUCCESS MANAGER, RMS



So much of the time, business owners focus on big picture changes. Comprehensive overhauls of how they do business. Sure these changes ultimately make your pharmacy better. You eventually see higher profits, increased efficiency and better customer service. But big changes take time, commitment, and a lot of effort. What if you just wanted to do one small thing to make your customers checkout experience faster?

Well the good news is that with a [robust pharmacy POS system](#), there are lots of small changes that can be made to improve the customer experience, as well as big changes that completely shift the way you run your pharmacy.

For many pharmacies, the checkout line can be a trouble spot. Without investing in additional lanes, how do you make checkout go faster? One easy way to do this is to streamline signature capture. For starters, instead of capturing multiple signatures across every transaction, you can set up “one and done” signature capture, meaning customers can sign just once to cover multiple prescriptions and their payment. Another option is to not require signature for credit card transactions under a certain dollar amount. Signatures can help to mitigate the inherent risk of accepting credit cards, but they also slow down the checkout process, especially for someone who’s just run in to buy some antacids and a bottle of water.

Both of these changes are crazy-easy to make in the [RMS POS system](#), especially with the help of some of the best pharmacy support technicians around.

What would you like to improve in your pharmacy? Tell us what you’re looking to change. We may just have an easy solution for you.

#8) GETTING CREATIVE TO ATTRACT CUSTOMERS TO YOUR PHARMACY

BY KAREN DECKARD, CUSTOMER SUCCESS MANAGER, RMS



There are a few prescribed ways to attract a customer's attention. Print ads, the radio, social media, and word of mouth are probably some of your go to methods. But sometimes it takes a little bit more.

Although I've tried to avoid the topic of the most recent gaming phenomenon (Not that I have anything against "Pokémon Go", it just didn't really seem relevant) I recently came across this article about [retailers using the game to their advantage to](#)

[drive traffic to their store](#). While the methods featured in the article may not be viable for your pharmacy, it's a good reminder to think outside the box when it comes your marketing strategy.

We often hear of our pharmacy customers doing things to drive business that are definitely out of the ordinary. Sometimes we get the opportunity to help customers use their [pharmacy POS system](#) to accommodate needs associated with these activities. Everything from hosting exercise classes after hours to a having a wine club instead of the traditional [customer loyalty program](#). While perhaps you don't automatically think of retail pharmacy and dance fitness as going hand in hand, the addition of programs like this help pharmacies to succeed.

So if you're doing something new and different (and slightly unorthodox) in your pharmacy, we'd love to hear about it. Sharing your experiences may just mean your pharmacy is featured in a future RMS blog article.



#7) 5 HIDDEN BENEFITS OF SELLING GIFT CARDS IN YOUR PHARMACY

BY KAREN DECKARD, CUSTOMER SUCCESS MANAGER, RMS



Every year, around September or October, we see a surge in calls requesting to purchase store branded gift cards that can be sold through RMS' POS systems. As retail pharmacies prepare for the holiday season they start to think about bumping sales with gift cards. This isn't necessarily the wrong idea. Gift cards are a popular holiday gift and that popularity is only increasing. But if you're only paying attention to gift cards from October through December, and ignoring them the remaining 10 months out of every year, you're missing out on a big opportunity for sales in your pharmacy.

If you need convincing, there are definitely some important facts and figures you need to take into account. This website has some great [statistics about gift card purchases and spending](#). Here's a quick list of my favorites and why they benefit your pharmacy.

- Despite what you might think, Birthdays are actually the most popular reason people buy gift cards. This makes stocking store branded gift cards a year round necessity.
- Over half the people who receive a gift card come back multiple times to spend the balance. This is a built in start to a loyal customer. Not only are you reaching new customers when someone who's never been to your pharmacy receives a gift card, those new customers have to keep coming back. Take this opportunity to sign them up for your [customer loyalty program](#) so that the benefits keep coming.
- Gift card recipients overspend their gift cards. Customers with gift cards buy more than they usually would because it's like a built in coupon. The best part for you is that it's a coupon someone else paid for. Most gift card recipients overspend their card balance by at least 20%. Of those that overspend 75% spend 60% more than the card value.
- Gift cards are better than gift certificates. A quality, well designed gift card is way better than a flimsy piece of paper stuffed into an envelope. Stores that move to gift cards over certificates sell more of these items.
- The gift card transaction doesn't cost anything. Many small businesses balk at the cost of having gift cards printed. It's an automatic hit on the value of the card because you had to pay to have those cards created. But once you have the cards, there are no transaction fees to use them. No credit card network taking a piece of your transaction. No interchange fees or chargebacks. It's a transaction that's completely processed within your Pharmacy POS system (at least with a POS from RMS).

Are you convinced yet? Ready to start selling pharmacy branded gift cards? Here's some even better news. It's really easy for RMS users. The Gift Card program is built into our Accounts Receivable functionality. We can even help you custom design your card: including store logos, photos, or artwork. We've done it all. We'll have the cards printed for you, help you add them into your POS system and you're ready to start selling them. When you sell a card, you just add the value your customer wants to

purchase, and you're done. The card is recognized via a unique barcode on the back so redemption is as easy as accepting cash and your POS system also tracks the card balance.

When you're ready to get started, we're here to help!



**The
Emergence of
Mobile**

PHARMACY EBOOK
Read the RMS guide to going
mobile in your pharmacy with
Evolution POS.

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#6) 3 ADVANTAGES TO BEING AN INDEPENDENT PHARMACY

BY KAREN DECKARD, CUSTOMER SUCCESS MANAGER, RMS



There are a lot of things about being an independent business that are difficult. As such, we spend a lot of time talking about ways to overcome the challenges that face independent pharmacies today. So much so that sometimes we might forget there are a lot of good things about being an independent pharmacy, and that these good things can be used to the advantage of your pharmacy business.

Flexibility to try new things – A corporate box store pharmacy may have some muscle compared to smaller independent chains and local retail pharmacies in certain areas, but when it comes to flexibility, independents definitely have the leg up. You can more quickly respond to needs in your community and constantly be making adjustments that will improve your pharmacy. Whether it's implementing a new procedure that will improve your efficiency, or [adding technology to provide services like curbside delivery](#), you can more easily do what's best for you, and best for your pharmacy customers.

Happier employees mean happier customers- A little over a year ago, a major pharmacy chain made the list of the [12 worst companies to work for](#). Who do you think will be able to provide the better customer experience? A box store whose employees feel overworked and undervalued? Not likely. My bet is on the independent retailer whose employees have the resources and training to excel in their jobs. If your employees feel valued, it's a pretty safe assumption that your customers will feel valued too.

Keeping money spent in the community - It's always great to remind customers that where they shop has a direct impact on the community. Money spent in local, independent businesses stays in the community. Money spent at national (or international) chains isn't going help the community thrive. Remember to highlight the things you do to give back to your community. You are probably aware of all of these points but it never hurts to revisit. Make sure you are taking advantage of all of your strengths as an independent business as well as aligning with technology partners who can help you in that venture.

#5) ARE YOU GUILTY OF AN ESCALATING COMMITMENT TO A LOST CAUSE?

BY MARK EY, VP OF OPERATIONS, CARE PHARMACIES



Many years ago I was privileged enough to attend the APhA/GSK Executive Management Program for Pharmacy Leaders. During the ten-day intensive program I was slightly shocked that almost half of the content seemed to be spent on human behavior, psychology, and negotiations.

It wasn't until I left the program, that I began to see the concepts they were so adamant about us grasping in each and every day of my life. The one concept I see most commonly is "An escalating commitment to a lost cause of action." Time and time again people rationalize the amount of time, effort, and money they are

investing in something that will never generate a reasonable return on investment. The thought is often, "How can I get back what I already have invested in this project" and not "will the value of this project supersede the total amount I will have invested in it after all is said and done." Casinos make a fortune on this very human behavior tendency.

I recently told an owner who commented that they were not replacing their technology because they planned to sell in a few years that it was the equivalent of avocado green appliances in a home for sale. When a buyer walks through a pharmacy with old technology, all they see are the bills they will incur to get the pharmacy current with systems.

Stop and look around you and see if you are overinvesting in a lost cause of action. Is your computer system, dispensing software, [point of sale](#), or delivery vehicle at the point of lost return? Is it time to break free of the endless cycle of repairing, upgrading, and not replacing? Don't forget the value of your time when you are calculating the amount you plan to invest in that old system.

#4) 10 OF THE BEST POS REPORTS TO USE IN YOUR PHARMACY

BY KAREN DECKARD, CUSTOMER SUCCESS MANAGER, RMS, KIKKI HARRIS, SUPPORT MANAGER, RMS AND BROOKE BRONSON, ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT SPECIALIST, RMS



In a [previous article](#), I talked a little about why robust point-of-sale reporting capabilities are so important to your pharmacy. Utilizing reports can help you identify areas for improvement. They can also help you to streamline processes so that you spend a lot less time on certain tasks.

But what reports should you be running? Where do you look to get some of the basic metrics that you need to see how your business is really doing? This week I asked our expert support staff to list some of the reports they are most frequently asked for. We ended up with a pretty great list of reports that can give you some really in depth information.

Daily Cash: This report is a must have. It provides you with a summary of sales. You'll see net sales, voids, paid ins/outs, taxes, your methods of payment and more. If you're looking for a quick but detailed reading of how well your pharmacy did on any given day, look no further.

Sales Analysis: Run this report daily or monthly to see your sales totals.

Sales Distribution: The Sales Distribution Report offers you a breakdown of sales by any number of categories so you can see how specific areas of your store are performing. View sales by department, fineline or GL.

Tax Breakdown: If only the Tax Breakdown report weren't necessary, but every pharmacy will need it at one point or another. It gives you a more detailed breakdown of taxes than your Daily Cash report.

Methods of Payment: This report provides you a breakdown of credit card transactions with totals. Very basic, but also a great metric to know.

Movement Report: When you need to know quantities sold of front-end merchandise, including OTCs, the Movement Report gives you that information. You'll see monthly totals over the past year. An invaluable tool if you're looking to make some changes in what front end products you carry.

Performance Report: Want to know what exactly your clerks are doing at the till? Discounts, refunds, voids, price changes? The Performance Report gives you this information so you can address problems before they get out of hand.

Customer Count: Should you extend your hours? Add extra staff? To answer these questions, you need to know how busy your pharmacy is at any given time. Use this report to review your sales based on

time increment. You can see how many transactions are run and the dollar amount sold for the timeframe you select.

Trial Balance: For pharmacies utilizing accounts receivable, this report is handy to provide balances on all accounts.

Aged Accounts Receivable: If you're looking for all of your past due accounts then use the Aged A/R Report for viewing accounts that are 30, 60, 90, and 120 days overdue.

Sometimes it's easy to forget about something as seemingly simple reporting capabilities in the shadow of new gadgets and intriguing new functionality. But reports are an important foundation in any POS system and they should not be undervalued.

A promotional graphic for a 'Customer Loyalty Guide'. The top half has a blue background with a tilted image of the guide's cover, which shows a pharmacist and a customer. Below the image, the text 'Customer Loyalty Guide' is written in white. The bottom half has a white background with the text 'Read the RMS guide to building a successful customer loyalty program in your pharmacy.' and an orange 'DOWNLOAD >' button.

Customer Loyalty Guide

Read the RMS guide to building a successful customer loyalty program in your pharmacy.

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#3) WHAT MAKES A PHARMACY SUCCESSFUL?

BY KAREN DECKARD, CUSTOMER SUCCESS MANAGER, RMS



Do you ever wonder what sets the successful apart from the not so successful? What allows some people to go from just getting by to being among the business elite? Is it motivation? Smarts and Education? Personality? Or maybe just pure dumb luck?

In reality it's probably a combination of all of these things, plus some other obscure factors. But sometimes we get some insight into what sets those incredibly successful individuals apart if we hear them speak, or read a book they've written

This article has some [great quotes from Mark Cuban](#). (You've heard of him right?) If you need some inspiration this Monday morning, or just need a nudge to think about your pharmacy business in a different way, I highly recommend taking a few minutes to read through. If you're short on time, here are a few of my favorites.

"Wherever I see people doing something the way it's always been done, the way it's 'supposed' to be done, following the same old trends, well, that's just a big red flag to me to go look somewhere else."

"Always wake up with a smile knowing that today you are going to have fun accomplishing what others are too afraid to do."

"It's not in the dreaming, it's in the doing."

"Know your core competencies and focus on being great at them. Pay up for people in your core competencies."

Make it a great day!!

#2) 4 WAYS TO REDUCE THEFT IN YOUR PHARMACY

BY KAREN DECKARD, CUSTOMER SUCCESS MANAGER, RMS



With so much hype, albeit well deserved hype, about credit card fraud, data breaches, and other more electronically based mischief, we sometimes forget to pay attention to just plain old fashioned theft. But I know from conversations with many pharmacy owners that theft is still a major issue for independent pharmacies. It's not pretty to think about, especially when you have to open your eyes to the possibility of employee theft, but there are a few things you can do to minimize your risk of being the unwitting victim of theft.

Know what's on your shelves – In [my blog 2 weeks' ago](#), I briefly mentioned that it was important to conduct regular inventory counts. One of the reasons this is so important is to identify inventory shrinkage. Basically, is what shows in your POS system as being in stock actually on the shelf? Or are items mysteriously disappearing? Monitoring and tracking this can help you identify trouble spots in your pharmacy. Inventory shrinkage could be due to theft by customers, employee theft or a combination of both. But if you know that certain products, or certain departments are being targeted, you can monitor those specific areas of your store more closely.

Know your customers – If you have a problem with theft that's based with your customers, one of the best things you can do is train your staff to greet every customer that walks into your pharmacy. Look up, make eye contact, and ask if you can help them find anything. Having a staff member out in the retail floor, if your pharmacy is larger, can also help as they can identify and assist customers aimlessly wandering around. Don't treat customers as potential thieves. Just offer great, attentive customer service and you'll cut down on theft in your pharmacy.

Control cash drawers – Turning attention to the possibility of an untrustworthy employee is never fun, but sometimes it's necessary. This is why having specifically assigned cash drawers is so important. If you regularly have cash shortages when you count out your tills at end of day, and all the cashiers use a community cash drawer, then you'll never be able to fully identify the employee that's causing these shortages. You can use dual drawer functionality so that 2 clerks can share a single register. When a clerk runs transactions, drawer 1 pops open. When clerk B runs transactions, drawer 2 pops open. This ensures employee accountability and allows you to pin point exactly which employee caused a shortage. Whether due to theft or just an employee who needs a little extra training on cash handling, having the knowledge of precisely where the problem lies, is extremely valuable.

Use biometrics – Another important thing for any pharmacy is to control who is accessing the system and what level of access they have. You should have trust levels set for employees based on their operational needs and capabilities. But if employees are sharing passwords, or you have a universal user for your POS system, it's all for naught. Make sure that each employee is set up with their own specific user information and then use biometric fingerprint readers for login. Fingerprint login is automatically strong, unique, and secures your systems much more effectively than a username and password.

Having to deal with theft in your pharmacy is an unpleasant necessity for any independent pharmacy. Luckily, Pharmacy POS systems can help you secure your pharmacy from some of the troubles commonly faced today.



**POINT-OF-SALE
SECURITY GUIDE**

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#1) 4 WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR PHARMACY'S TELEPHONE MANNERS TO CREATE A BETTER CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

BY KAREN DECKARD, CUSTOMER SUCCESS MANAGER, RMS

You text, email, Facebook, Instagram, and Tweet. These are now standard forms of communication and there are countless articles in recent years detailing how to use these outlets for your business. This is all well and good but it's leaving out one big and very important mode of communication. The telephone. For all too many businesses, the customer experience over the phone has taken a back seat, or no seat at all, doing damage to patient/pharmacy relationships before the relationship even truly begins.

Today, not everyone seems to be taught the basics of proper phone etiquette. It's hit or miss as to whether you'll receive a cheery "Thank you for calling, how can I help you?" or a sullen "Hello" when making a call to a business today. Sure, it's easy to forget because the phone is overshadowed by the myriad of other communication methods available today, but that doesn't lessen the importance of proper phone conduct. Here are a few things that should be a part of every phone conversation in your pharmacy.



A standard cheerful greeting: If you call the main line at Retail Management Solutions, you'll likely hear something very close to "Thank you for calling Retail Management Solutions. This is Lori, (or Brooke, Rebecca, Laurie, or Robin), how can I help you today?" You'll notice there are a few key components to this greeting that should be a part of every businesses greeting. We include the businesses name, so customers know they've called the right place, and we make sure that customers know the name of the person they are speaking with. We also open the doors to the conversation by asking how we can help our callers. If you've ever called a business and gotten a "Hello" or a flat "ABC Systems" you'll know that it can be off-putting. Before they're even in the door, customers could potentially feel like they are being bothersome or that your pharmacy staff is lazy. Or worse, they won't even think they called the right place because your staff didn't announce the business name upon picking up the phone. Even if your IVR system has a standard greeting, making sure your staff are warm, friendly, and informative, when they answer the phone is still important. Although I sit down the

hall from our admin staff and I hear our phone greeting dozens of times each day, it never gets old because I can hear through those greetings that our admin staff is warm, friendly and genuinely eager to help.

Use the customer's name:

We will always respond to our name being used. It's the most important word in our vocabulary. And no, that doesn't make us self-absorbed. We're just programmed from the time we are babies to respond to our names, so when someone uses it, we automatically pay better attention. When a customer calls, train staff to ask the customer's name and use it during that conversation. It will not only personalize the interaction, but allow the customer to better absorb the information given during the call.

Set expectations for hold times:

We know that pharmacies are often crazy busy. The ringing phone can just be one more stressor to an already overwhelmed staff. As such, staff may often have to put customers on hold to either research a question, help a customer at the register, or have someone else pick up the phone. Politely asking a customer to hold is fine. Just make sure to set expectations. "I apologize but I need to look something up in regards to your question. I'll be back in about 5 minutes" is much better than a curt "hold please" and a 5 minute wait the customer wasn't expecting. If it's going to be longer than expected, make sure to take a second to pick up the phone and let the customer know you are working on their request. Otherwise, you'll risk them thinking they were forgotten and hanging up.

Make sure the customer doesn't have to explain themselves twice:

We've all been in this situation more than once. We call a business, explain our needs, and are promptly put on hold so we can speak to someone who can better help us. Seems logical, but yet something gets extremely lost during this transition. Person #1 doesn't tell Person #2 what the call is regarding and you have to start all over again. It's not only frustrating to the customer, but a waste of valuable time on both sides. A little bit of communication goes a long way towards keeping your customers happy, particularly if they are ill.

Because so much of our interaction with pharmacies is over the phone, we know just how important it is not to compromise the level of service we provide over the phone. We know that even these seemingly small things can make a huge difference. Give them a try for yourself.

We hope you enjoyed our Best Blogs of 2016! If you're hungry for more, don't worry, we publish new articles every week. Subscribe to our blog to get updates on the latest articles from RMS

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