

Taking care of our customers

Nurturing your staff and clients is perhaps the best investment you can make for your store.



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Every pharmacy strives to deliver great customer service – how often do you and your staff go the extra mile to ensure customer satisfaction every time, whether a purchase is made or not?

Successful pharmacies rarely have to chase the sale – it should naturally evolve in the midst of providing your customers with superior service levels that your competitors can't match! The best product in the world will stay on your shelves if you don't have the supported customer service that makes your product better than the exact same product offered by the pharmacy down the street. Differing factors will affect the lengths you and your staff take to keep your customers happy. Here are some customer service tips that I believe are non-negotiable if you're looking to grow the success of your business.

Recruit and train the right people

The quality of your service depends entirely on the quality of your people. Pharmacies don't help customers, people do! Employ and train the right people to serve your customers with a smile, pharmacy expertise and genuine courtesy every time. You won't get the best pharmacy staff available to work for you at award wages with minimal benefits and training. You need to invest in your most valuable asset if you want to see the returns. Making use of HR pharmacy services that incorporate personality testing, behavioural interviewing, and extensive screening will ensure a return on investment when you invest in sourcing the right people for the right roles.

Treat your staff as you would treat your customers and best friends. Employees generally treat customers as management treats them so if your employees are not as customer focused, as they should be, take a closer look at who is in charge.

Get to know your customers

If you bumped into a customer down the street would you know their name? Would they know you? We all like to feel important – addressing someone by their name is an easy way to do this. If your customers don't feel valued at your pharmacy, they will choose to shop at a pharmacy

where they receive a similar mediocre level of service but with medications at half price! Other tips include sending customers personalised information/articles of interest to them – customers thrive on recognition.

It is also important to train your staff on how to 'read your customers'. Some love to chit chat, others just want prompt service. Once you know what makes them tick, you know how to personalise service to best suit each customer's needs and personality type.

Go the extra mile

It's the little things that cost you next to nothing that bring you huge returns. Simple gestures like sending your customers birthday/get well soon cards, including a handwritten thank you note with their prescription or calling customers to check on how they're feeling with the new medication they have recently started. These are all easy ways to keep in contact with your customers, warm their hearts and keep them close to you and your pharmacy.

Never over promise and under deliver

Nothing annoys customers more than a broken promise. Always strive to exceed their expectations – the best way to do this is to always do what you say you will

do plus a little bit extra, never less. Your reputation is only as good as your word, so keep to it!

Give your customers the benefit of the doubt

The customer is always right. Period. You may know they are wrong but every customer always deserves the benefit of the doubt. Proving the customer wrong means nothing when it will cost you their loyalty and all the negative word of mouth they will spread about you and your pharmacy, if they feel disheartened or let down.

Regularly ask for feedback

You are as good as your customer says you are so it's important to find out what they think of you! You can ask for feedback by including simple surveys such as 'how are we serving you?' forms in their purchasing bags.

Or for a less formal approach, simply ask what they like and don't like about shopping at your pharmacy? What would they change and what can you do better? If an old customer comes back to shop with you with repeat prescriptions from different pharmacies, ask them what caused them to shop elsewhere. Feedback is valuable irrespective of the positive or negative outcome, in fact, negative feedback from a customer

provides you with an opportunity to better your business practice, rather than lose their patronage without you knowing why.

Offer help and advice

Through service, sales evolve. Customers look up to pharmacists and value their knowledge and expertise. I often visit my pharmacist for health advice and help which he gladly offers without convincing me to purchase anything. Short-term loss, long-term gain. I may not buy something every time I visit my local pharmacy, however I know that if and when I do need any medication or OTC items, there is only one pharmacy that I go to!

Throw in something extra

Everyone loves something for free. Throw in small things such as samples you receive from sales representatives, a discount coupon for 10 per cent off their next purchase or product information. Give customers something that makes them feel like they got more than what they paid for and they will come back time and time again.

Successful pharmacies don't just win customers – they keep customers. A great salesperson can perhaps sell anything to anyone once; it's great customer service that keeps them coming back. **RP**

