



## Marketing Health Can Make Your Pharmacy Healthier

by Liz Tiefenthaler

It is clear that the traditional model of a retail pharmacy that just dispenses prescriptions is not a formula for financial success. Today's successful independent identifies niche markets and value-add services to differentiate its pharmacy from others in a crowded marketplace.

For example, some of you offer compounding, which can be a great differentiator and is successful with

niche markets such as veterinarians and BHRT where prescribers understand the benefits. Yet other pharmacies differentiate themselves through adherence offerings—multi-dose packaging, synchronization programs, and reminder software—which is worthy and important work. But what was once territory owned by independents is now getting some challenges from the chains. Whether or not they do compliance packaging as well as you

do is not really the issue. It is another reason that you need to market your pharmacy and to constantly be evolving to stay ahead of your competition.

I often talk to independents about the importance of being disruptive in the marketplace. When we look at other industries, you will see that it is not just independent pharmacy that has to deal with change. Even the big guys find themselves being disrupted by newer and bigger ideas, like iTunes does with Pandora and Spotify. We saw the travel industry upended years ago by the Internet. It adapted and came up with easy-to-book online websites and competitive pricing. Yet, once again they are being disrupted by the new kids on the block, such as Airbnb and VRBO. No more middle man means savings for consumers and an opportunity for entrepreneurs to make money. As this column is being written, my son and his wife are staying with a family in Istanbul in a fabulous private apartment for much less than the cost of a hotel. Watch out, Marriott!!

What does this have to do with marketing health and wellness in your pharmacy? Health and wellness offerings can be the new marketplace disruptor. Along with fitting in with most pharmacies' mission of caring for patients and their families, it positions you as a health care provider and takes the insurance companies out of the equation. Now that sounds good, doesn't it?

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This month's issue of *America's Pharmacist* discusses helping our patients with smoking cessation. This is just one of many ways that you can become a health care destination for current as well as new patients. Many of you offer classes for patients with hypertension or diabetes. Consider partnering with a physician to offer classes in smoking cessation. You could bring in someone to teach a yoga class to show people a way to calm themselves when breaking their habit. By broadening the offerings in your pharmacy, you begin to position your store as a place that people can come to for more than just filling prescriptions and become a resource for health advice and support. ■

Liz Tiefenthaler is the president of Pharm Fresh Media, a full-service marketing company focused on helping independent pharmacies gain new customers and build loyalty with their current customers. She can be reached at [liz@pharmfreshmedia.com](mailto:liz@pharmfreshmedia.com).