



We Can Learn New Tricks

by Liz Tiefenthaler



It all started with a new website.

When Alan and Jane Lovich opened North Brunswick Pharmacy in 2000, pharmacy was a different business. Reimbursements were higher, competition was less, and the Internet, while growing in importance, was not a required part of a marketing plan. Alan Lovich recognized that he needed a website for a number of reasons. His New Jersey pharmacy attracts many of its new patients through word-of-mouth, and there was no place for these new patients to go to learn more about his pharmacy. Also, patients wanted to be able to refill prescriptions online.

Fast forward seven months, and not only had Lovich embraced his new website, but he has also started using social media, including advertising on Facebook.

"I wanted to find a new customer for my pharmacy," Lovich says. "I am tired of filling prescriptions at less than I can collect for them. It just doesn't make good sense from a business perspective. I wanted to attract an older demographic who would prefer to pay cash for their prescriptions." Lovich decided to target these patients by offering an Extended Supply Discount Program. Now, there are plenty of independents who provide similar incentives to their patients, but using this as a vehicle—in conjunction with social media—to attract new cash patients is a progressive way to market. In the first month, there were more than 600 visitors who clicked on his ad and went to the North Brunswick website. Lovich also combined doctor detailing with his Facebook advertising and is seeing new physician referrals coming in to his pharmacy. As a new and innovative marketer for his pharmacy, Lovich is proof that we can learn new tricks and should be open to trying something new.

As you look at your marketing plan for 2016, be willing to trying different avenues for reaching new patients. For

example, if you have always used radio, maybe this is the time to take that money and try something new. Ryan Summers, who owns four pharmacies in Missouri, did just that. He has switched his marketing budget from radio and billboards to boosting ads on Facebook. Summers is able to measure his return on investment by the number of people who click on his ads and go to his website. "On Facebook, you can see clicks and comments. As pharmacists, we are trained to look for results, and I can see what I am paying for," he says. Summers uses Facebook to promote his Kid's Free Vitamins, compounding, and most recently, his \$4/\$10 program.

"I really like to use Facebook to promote not just new programs, but also our \$4/10 list," Summers says. "When I did that, it went over really well. I wanted to let people know about a program that we have done from the very beginning. It is important to keep educating patients on current programs and remind them of offerings they may have heard about but have forgotten."

We can learn new tricks if we are open to change. Not all of it is guaranteed to be a success, but if you aren't willing to try different marketing tactics, then you are hurting your chances of finding new ways to grow your business. Lovich and Summers threw out preconceived ideas and are embracing new ways to market their pharmacies. We can all learn a lesson from them. ■

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