



Sometimes It Really Is All About You

by Liz Tiefenthaler



A week ago I happened to stop in a little gift store a few blocks from my house. I needed a hostess gift and wanted to keep my money in the neighborhood. After five minutes of “hello?” as I tried to find the proprietor, a person appeared from a back store room. While I was able to find something nice and the overall experience was a good one, it made me think about all of you. How often do people have to look for help and perhaps more importantly, how many patients who come into your pharmacy know that you are the owner? You know, the “buck stops here, I care, I want and appreciate your business” type of owner.

Patients complain about nameless, faceless mail order and chains where people wait interminable lengths of time to have a 30-second interaction with a pharmacist who doesn't know them by name. Yet, so much of the marketing materials I see from independents fail to capture the reason people should come to your pharmacy—namely, here is the face of someone who really does care about you.

This inspired me to come up with five guidelines for putting YOU front and center in your marketing.

1. Whenever possible, use photos from your store and of your staff instead of stock photography. This is not to say that stock photography is wrong; in fact, it can be very effective to illustrate a point. But whenever it gets personal, it is nice to use the faces of people a patient will see. This includes images on your website and, for heaven's sake, on your social media. Who wants to go to a Facebook page and see a generic post that

you could read anywhere? You don't have to post daily. I am sure all of you have time to post something personal from your pharmacy once a week. Kyle McHugh of Gaston Pharmacy in South Carolina recently did a mailer that includes real photos of his family. He took the pictures and when they were put into the design, it became a wonderfully personal piece.

2. Leave the safety of the counter when people need help. No more pointing at your allergy end-cap; you can afford the time to walk someone to the right aisle and then to answer their questions and make recommendations. You own the place—who has more knowledge about what you offer?
3. Don't be afraid to put your name out there. Nelson Showalter of Broadway Drug Center in Broadway, Va., has shelf talkers that say “Nelson recommends” with his photo! What a great way to sell products. Add your photo to your business card. Another idea would be to include a bag clipper on the prescription bag of every first-time patient with a photo of the staff member who filled a patient's prescription along with an invitation to call with any questions. Oh, and of course, a thank you for your business.
4. Train your staff. For your pharmacy to be all about you and your vision and mission, you need to get your staff on board. I hear so often about synchronization programs that fail because some of the staff don't like to promote it. Let's put an end to that! Josh Rimany of Dilworth Drug and Wellness invested in half-day retreats for his staff so that they could all understand and embrace his vision for his pharmacy.

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5. When you give back to your community, don't be shy. People can't divine that you donated money for a new slide in a park or that you helped out the schools with a cash donation. Charitable giving is a part of marketing, so don't be bashful about promoting what you do. Make sure that you have a high-resolution logo to put on promotions surrounding your gift, and perhaps a nice photo.

Your current patients know you and love you. Now it is time to let new people know who you are and how personal this is for you. Don't be that nameless, faceless mail order or chain pharmacy when you can showcase your ownership and your personality, and make a case for why you are different. ■

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