



# TIME TO FIRE BY GABE TRAHAN THE BOSS

Don't let fixtures, plumbing,  
and walls dictate store design

*Photography by Gabe Trahan*



*Examples of Front-End Overhaul (Right to Left): 1. Nice looking rolling display; however there is not the right space for it. Place displays and/or merchandise where they belong, not where they fit. 2. Product taken off free rack and displayed on end-cap. Notice companion sale item, ACT, was added to the display. Header card used on end-cap originated from the rolling display. See more examples of end-caps by going to Front-End Overhaul and click on galleries. 3. After adjusting departments to their more efficient sizes, four feet of merchandising space was unearthed. Canes were displayed in the space across from the antacid/laxative department. The store owner reports new interest in canes now that they are displayed in a more 'main street' area. 4. Instead of blocking aisles with two separate cardboard displays, displays were dismantled and product was used for creating a dynamic end-cap. Floor display header cards repurposed as attractive signage for end-cap. Front-End Overhaul recommends this to avoid narrowing aisles with displays.*

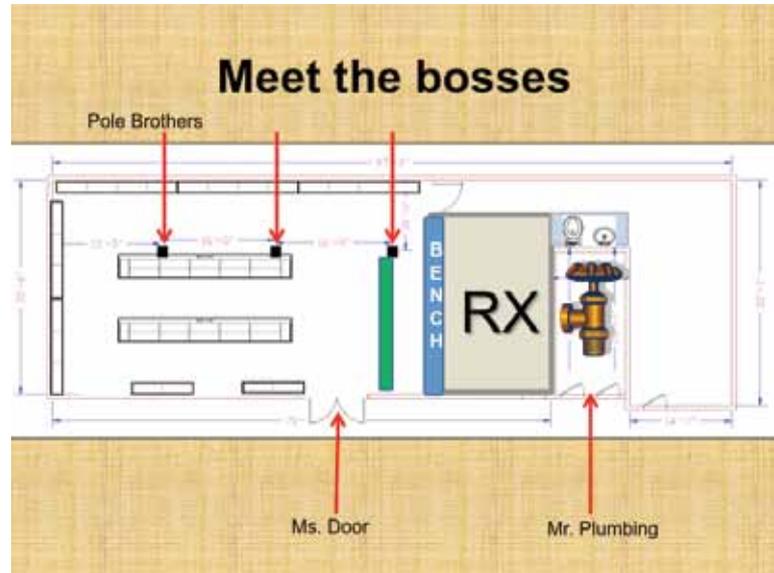
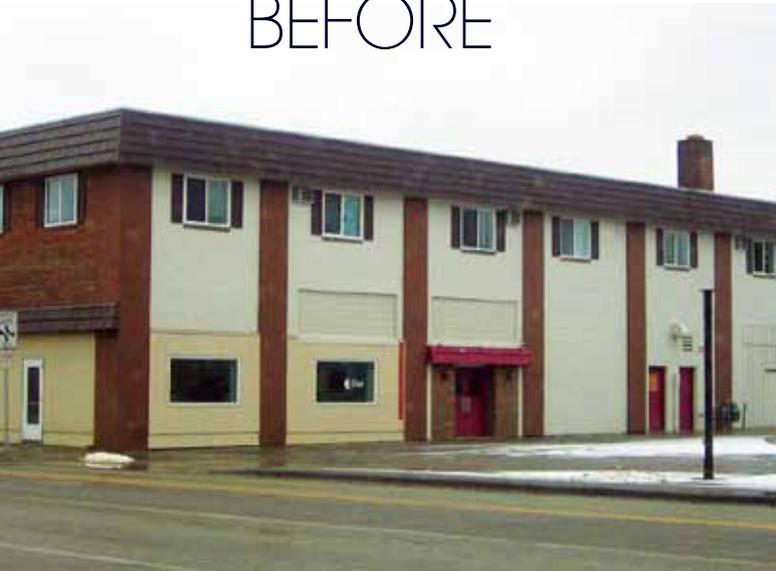
**YOU WOULD BE AMAZED** if you knew who or what is making crucial decisions on how a new or remodeled store will look. It may surprise you that more often than not it isn't the owner. Oddly enough, at times the boss of the project makes a decision without saying one word. For example, when a new store is being designed or an older store is being remodeled, the physical placement of the pharmacy is determined by two bosses: plumbing and the drive-up window.

Sound familiar? It doesn't matter if the pharmacy would make better retail sense being placed somewhere else—a 1 ½" sink trap is having the final word, and easy access to the hot water source seconds the motion. After all, every pharmacy has to have a sink. There's not much you can do. Once I asked a contractor if he could move a sink from one wall to the opposite side. His reply? "Anything can be moved, you just apply money." He explained that the amount of copper I would need in the

big picture is not something to lose sleep about, and PEX tubing is even cheaper and easier to install. What about the drain? You can get a drain pump system for between \$223 and \$400. This project was going to cost less than \$1,000, and the owner of the store had planned on being in the same location for at least 25 years. The pharmacy was placed where it belonged for fewer than 11 cents a day. Two years ago a new store owner and I looked into moving a drive-up window that was estimated to have an annualized cost over a 25-year-span to be between 25–30 cents per day.

Recently NCPA's **Front-End Overhaul** ([www.ncpanet.org](http://www.ncpanet.org)) and the owners of a store in the Midwest developed a plan to relocate an entry door in a cement block building, and in its place install a window. The cost of this project was to be approximately \$2,000–\$2,500. In the long run this was going to be a bargain. (See photos on next page) When thinking

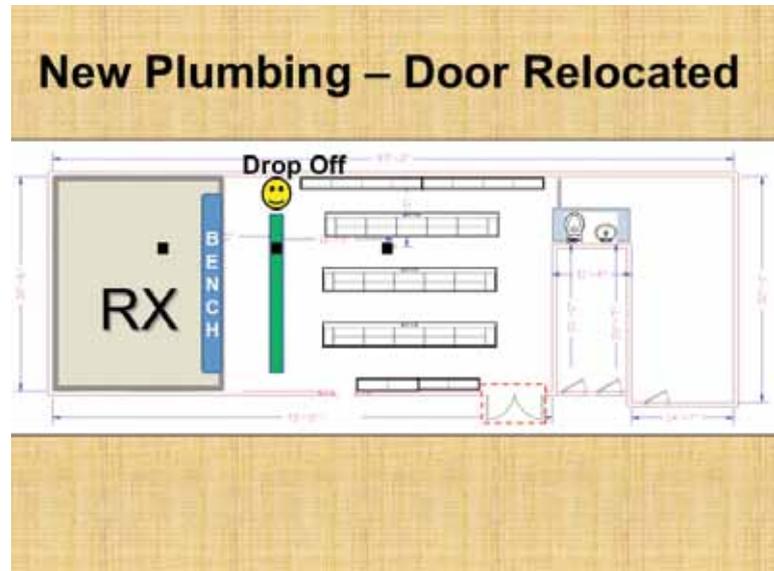
# BEFORE



*Left Image: Original building before moving door, adding window, signage, and awning.*

*Right Image: Original drawing of pharmacy with wrong bosses in control. Notice door location would lead customers directly to pharmacy counter and the OTC area of the store would see little or no foot traffic. Luckily the real owner, Independent Pharmacist, took control of their new location.*

# AFTER



*Left Image: New entrance to a stunning pharmacy with a floor plan created to compliment the entire store. Store owners Beth Wharam, RPh, and Kari Pastorek, RPh, are great pharmacists, true bosses of their own stores, and destined for a continued prosperous future.*

*Right Image: Door moved. Plumbing concerns addressed. Now customers will enjoy seeing the complete store. Position of drop off is crucial.*

about remodeling or designing a new store, you are the boss. Look at the cost of each project involved, divide the cost by the number of years you plan on being in that location, subtract a portion for gained sales for designing the store the right way, and then make your decision. And it should be YOUR decision. After all, you wouldn't design your home by where it is easiest to put the plumbing, would you?

### Fixated on Fixtures

Who is the boss that decided the sizes of your OTC categories? Sadly, in almost every case it is the fixtures. Once at a presentation in front of 100 people I asked, "If a fixture was 24-foot-long, how many of you would make your cough and cold department 12-foot-long and the pain relief 12-foot-long?" All the hands went up. Yes, all. I then asked, "If the fixture was 20 foot, how many of you would go with 12-foot cough and cold and 8-foot pain relief?" All hands went up. How about 16-foot, 8 and 8? All.

Obviously the department's sizes in many stores have been determined by a boss named Fixture Length. If that boss is in your store, then you need to fire him. With the combination of recalls, reformulations, and product line extensions, departments need to be adjusted. Oversized departments will cost you money, significantly diminish the turns of inventory you need to make a profit, and turn you sour on keeping product on hand. Oversized departments are one of the big reasons why some stores tragically harness their sales in growth by stocking only one of each item on the shelves. Twelve feet of skin care with one of each on the shelf will not have better sales than a 4-foot section that has been correctly inventoried. It is time to re-evaluate each of your over-the-counter departments. If you end up with empty sections, then do one or all of the following:

- Double face your private label (two of the same item side by side).
- Double face the major brands that your customers are looking for when shopping.
- Cross merchandise for companion and impulse sales.
- Take down the fixtures to allow more room for your customers to shop.

There is one more boss you may have to toss out. His name is Free Display Rack. He may be the trickiest

### CHANGE YOUR PHARMACY'S RED SNEAKERS

Putting the customer first and providing superior service is the competitive edge of independent community pharmacy, and in this environment of shrinking margins, that edge becomes more important every day. In November 2011 NCPA hired popular industry consultant Gabe Trahan to launch a new initiative to help members sharpen that edge—NCPA's Front-End *Overhaul*.

Trahan's signature is his red sneakers. Picture a well-dressed man wearing, instead of wing tips, red sneakers—something in the picture does not make sense. Trahan has spent most of his career in pharmacies and has seen that many of our stores have their very own pair of red sneakers, something that just doesn't fit; something that takes away from the image of the store. The Front-End *Overhaul* program has been developed to help you find and change your red sneakers, to improve your image and build traffic and profits in your front-end.

Trahan will be making multiple presentations for attendees of NCPA's 2012 Annual Convention and Trade Exposition in San Diego, Oct. 13-17. For more information, visit the members-only Front-End overhaul section on the NCPA website ([www.ncpanet.org](http://www.ncpanet.org)).

of them all. Not all displays are bad, just the ones who trick you into putting them where they fit and not where they belong. F.D.R. (apology Mr. President) will end up in places that block your aisles, discourage customers to continue browsing, and eventually become an eyesore. Many F.D.R.s are sentenced to stay on the floor until the last item sells, and that could be years. Merchandise things where they belong, not where they fit. Be the boss. **ap**

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