

5 Ways to Make Your Social Media Efforts More Successful

How independent retail pharmacists can use social media to spread the word about their pharmacy and win new customers.

Jonah's Pharmacy Is on Facebook: Now What?

Everybody's been telling Jonah for years that his pharmacy needs to get on social media. So he finally set up a Facebook page for the pharmacy. He pays his marketing consultant to update the page a few times a week.

Yet after six months, the pharmacy only has 32 "likes" on its Facebook page, and updates go virtually ignored. All the experts told Jonah social media would boost his business, but now he's questioning why he's spending time and money on it at all.

DOES JONAH'S STORY SOUND FAMILIAR?

It's a common theme among independent pharmacies: "We launched a Facebook page, but we're not quite sure what to do next." Despite all the experts touting social media as the way to increase business results, many small businesses struggle with making social media pay off.

WHY WE TRY: SOCIAL MEDIA CAN PAY OFF

If you flip the statistic on its head, the optimistic side of the story is that social media is working for 40% of small business owners.

In fact, while only 49% of Health Mart® pharmacies reported in a 2014 survey they were using social media, **pharmacies listed Facebook as the No. 1 most successful kind of digital marketing** they were doing — exceeding the effectiveness of their website, online directories, email marketing and mobile apps.

Top Reasons Small Business Owners Use Social Media

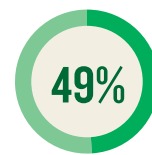
- Create two-way relationships with customers on a wide-spread scale.
- Reach target customers where they already are.
- Share knowledge and connect on a personal level in a way you don't always get to when the customer comes into the store.



of small business owners are using social media to drive growth
(LinkedIn study, 2014)



have increased the time and money they spend on social media marketing
(Manta, 2013)



of Health Mart pharmacies reported they were using social media
(Health Mart, 2014)

The Key *to* Success? Change Your Approach

Social media requires time and a little creativity, but it *can* pay off by keeping your pharmacy business top-of-mind and generating word of mouth to drive new customers to your store. The key is to think long-term, put in the time that it takes and think differently about social media than about traditional marketing. Following are five tips for shifting your approach to social media marketing.

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01 FIGURE OUT THE RIGHT CONTENT MIX

One of the most common questions about social media is: *What should I post?* The answer isn't straightforward. Your social media content should be a mix of education, fun, sharing and promotion. Finding the right balance depends on who your customers are and what they want from you.

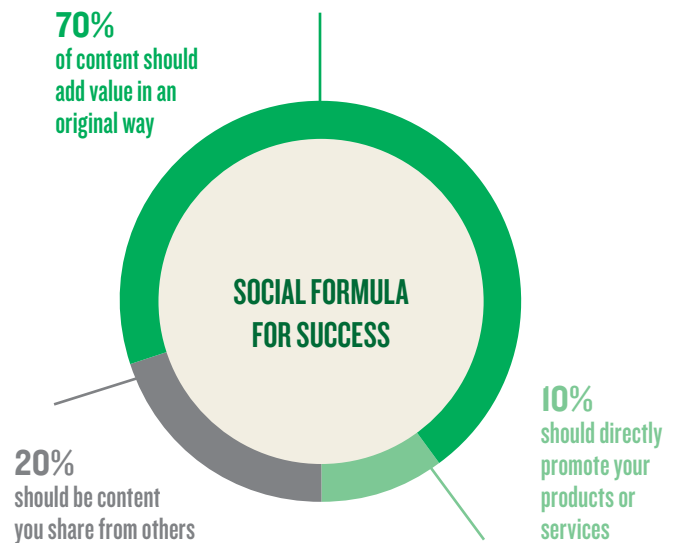
Think about one of your regular customers:

- How old is she? Where does she live? What is her life like? What are her interests?
- How does she use social media? To keep in touch with her grandchildren? To talk to friends or colleagues? To keep up on community happenings?
- Why does she shop at your pharmacy — and what does she expect from her experience there? Does she laugh and talk with your staff? Get advice from you on caring for her aging parents or sick kids? Ask for explanations on using healthcare products?

Do this exercise for two or three different “regulars.” Now, start to think about what value you could bring to their lives. As a pharmacist, you have a whole repository of knowledge in your head that could serve as food for thought and helpful guidance. You also have the pulse of the community and know what's happening locally. And, you can make them laugh or

entertain them the same way you might if they were lingering at your pharmacy counter. (Entertainment can “add value” as much as education does for people on social media!)

Put all these elements together, and you have your social media content mix. See the sample calendar at the end of this guide for ideas on how to spread out your posts throughout a week.



02 GET CUSTOMERS TO TALK BACK

If you're just talking *at* your customers, you might as well be doing newspaper advertising. Social media creates an opportunity to hear back from your customers and have dialogues with them, which helps to strengthen your bond. Make this work for you by giving them reasons to share and comment:

- Be friendly and conversational: *What are you most excited to do this summer?*
- Get people chatting about local issues: *We're loving the new streetscape downtown. What do you think?*
- Give followers a chance to ask questions about health issues: *It's Ask the Pharmacist Day! Are there questions you've always wanted to ask about diabetes? Ask them here and Jonah will answer!*
- Encourage people to get creative or imaginative: *If you had one wish to grant to medical science, what disease would you choose to wipe out?*



03 WORK THE LOCAL ANGLE

As mentioned, your pharmacy is a vital part of your local community, including the small business community. Promote fellow local businesses as well as civic organizations, events and festivals, the Chamber of Commerce, and other local goings on:

- If your friends at the knitting shop across the street are having a sale, post the picture of your pharmacy techs taking their lunch hour to stock up on yarn for their knitting group.
- When the annual street fair is coming up, post regularly about what's happening that day on the street — and in your store.

A huge part of your advantage over competitors is your hometown connection. Promote your pride and support for other local businesses, and many of them will do the same for you.

Will Social Media Work *in* My Location, for My Customers?



One pharmacy owner located in rural Georgia recently told us: “I’ve set up a Facebook page, but not many people are following it. I’m starting to think that it’s just not going to work in my town.”

This might have been true at some point, but in recent years social adoption — especially of Facebook — has grown in rural areas. The Pew Internet Study found that 73% of online adults were on social media — and that 71% of online adults in rural communities were using Facebook.

Adoption is also growing among older adults: 60% of online adults 50–64 and 45% of online adults 65+ are using Facebook. The rate of growth among older populations is actually higher than younger people, who are abandoning Facebook for other platforms.

The key is to promote your presence to those who are just discovering and starting to use the platforms — and to establish an online synergy with other local businesses that new social media adopters may follow.

04 MAKE PEOPLE WANT TO SHARE YOUR CONTENT

There are certain tricks social media gurus know will get you more “engagement” — interaction with your social media posts. For example:

- Posts with images get 120% more engagement on Facebook (likes, comments and click-throughs)¹ and 500% more engagement on Twitter (favorites, replies, retweets)² than posts with just text.
- Facebook posts in the form of questions get 100% more engagement than statements.³

Engagement with your content (as opposed to just “likes” and “follows”) is the true goal of social media, and a way to measure your success. The more people show appreciation for and respond to what you post, and share it with others, the better results you’ll get over the long term.

But you also want to make sure you are fostering *true* engagement. For instance, many businesses try to drive up “likes” on their Facebook pages by entering fans in contests or giving them a coupon in exchange for their endorsement. While many users will take the bait, they may not be your most engaged and loyal brand followers in the long run.

¹Wishpond, January 2013: <http://visual.ly/impact-photos-facebook-engagement>

²SHIFT, January 2014: www.mediabistro.com/alltwitter/tweets-with-photos_b54117

³KISSMetrics, January 2013: <https://blog.kissmetrics.com/more-likes-on-facebook>

05 BE YOURSELF ONLINE

If your pharmacy were a person, how would you describe it? Fun and lighthearted? Sincere and warm? Serious and expert? The experience you create for customers who come into your store shouldn’t be completely different from how you communicate on social media.

Many times we see brands try to portray a different image on social media than the rest of their brand — for example, they may try to be “chatty” and familiar, or funny and silly, when their brand is otherwise straight-laced or serious. Businesses sometimes believe that the only way to connect with customers online is to come across as their best buddy, rather than a business.

Consumers see through this technique, and it can be a real turnoff. They follow you on social media because they know you and value what you bring to them and your community. Be yourself; that’s what your customers want! Figure out your pharmacy “voice” and make it consistent in your online content.

Using a Social Media Calendar

Keeping up with social media is one of the biggest challenges for small businesses. A publishing calendar can help you stay accountable to publish regularly and maintain your content mix. We advise mapping out content types, rather than specific topics. Then you can decide a week or so in advance what you plan to post in the slots.

WEEKLY CONTENT IDEAS

- Health and wellness or caregiver tips
- Shared articles from health blogs or newspapers
- Photos and “friendly” posts about regular customers
- Promotions or spotlights on new products
- “Fun” posts or questions (commenting on the weather, asking followers about their summer vacation plans)

What’s the Right Frequency for Social Posts?

Striking the right balance between *top-of-mind* and *annoying* is tough on social media. Studies show the right balance is an average of:

3-5 posts a week on Facebook	3-5 posts a day on Twitter	1 post per weekday on LinkedIn
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SAMPLE FACEBOOK CALENDAR

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Health and wellness tip	Photo/customer post or profile OR fun question/ local post	Caregiver tip OR shared article	New product spotlight or promotion	Health and wellness tip OR shared article	No post	No post

Social Media Savvy Can Lead to Success

So why should you put so much effort into social media? Think about how effective word of mouth is for your business, and then multiply that a hundredfold or more. Social media can be an incredibly effective way to stay connected with existing customers and to reach new ones.

Beyond all these tips for success, the biggest sources of success are patience and persistence: it takes time to generate results. Social media doesn’t pay off overnight. But used wisely, social media can leverage the benefits of relationship-building, community outreach, and word of mouth to build stronger connections with your local customers.

Need Help Getting Started *with* Social Media?

Health Mart Local Marketing Support offers a social media program that generates automatic, customizable health and wellness content for your pharmacy’s Facebook page.

As a subscriber, you can take advantage of the options below:

1. Auto-posts: We’ll post everyday messages or specific topics you select to your account, but you’ll be able to see what’s coming in advance, so you can edit or cancel any message as needed.
2. Select and manage single posts.



Learn more and sign up on the Marketing Hub. (Log in to McKesson ConnectSM and click Online Marketing Hub in the upper right corner.)