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# 6 STEPS TO DIFFERENTIATE YOUR BUSINESS

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In our December issue we discussed how the role of greeting your customers can create a point of difference to your pharmacy as well as how it can increase your sales.

This month we will be looking at the second step to creating a superior customer service model – Observation. This is a very powerful tool as, when used properly, it can have a major impact on increasing the average sale of your pharmacy.

How is 'observation' defined in retail terms? Observation is the ability to watch your customer and your environment to obtain an understanding of what the customers' needs may be.

Many retail businesses make the mistake of 'pouncing' on a customer as soon as they enter the store. In the instance where the customer knows exactly what they are after, then this is fine. This type of customer though is rare and only represents a very small percentage of overall people.

The downsides to this method are it closes down the sale very quickly, making it difficult to achieve an 'add on' sale, and creates an intimidating environment for the customer.

To use observation and make the sales process more effective, it is best to allow your customer to enter the pharmacy and look around for a

small period of time – allowing them to browse. Where observation is effective is having a team member watching the customer browse, pay particular attention to:

- o What categories of the pharmacy they visit
- o Any products they may pick up and pay attention to
- o Any point of sale material or promotional items they may read or pay attention to

After observing this behaviour, the team member has been able to assess what interests the customer may have, provide them with a point of discussion to open dialogue with the customer and have been able to identify any potential 'add on' sales. More importantly, the customer has had the opportunity to become comfortable within their shopping environment.

The important thing to note here is observation should not be allowed to be a lengthy period of time as the customer may lose interest and think the opposite of your pharmacy – there is no service! The recommended amount of time for observation should not exceed 5 minutes.

Other benefits the pharmacy can take advantage of when using observation are:

- o Having more team members involved in the observation exercise reduces the opportunity of theft as there is a much higher level of awareness on the sales floor

o It creates the perception of having an attentive sales team

o Team members become more aware of what their peers are doing allowing them to assist with tasks (time permitting)

How do you effectively create an environment within your team to best utilise observation? It starts by dividing your sales floor into 'zones' and having enough team members to service these. Depending on the size of your floor space, most pharmacies will only require 4 to 5 zones including your Door Greeter and Back Counter team. By implementing this, you break your sales floor up into more manageable areas for your team.

The next step is to ensure you have a key team member overseeing these zones and ensuring they are covered during peak trading periods. I recommend this person be your Retail Manager if you have one. If a team member is required to leave the sales floor, this person is responsible for covering their zone until they return – ensuring a seamless service model is maintained.

I suggest you implement the service zones first as you may be required to adjust them to best suit your pharmacy. You may even wish to consider combining zones in slower trading periods as this will free some team members up to complete tasks around the pharmacy.

In our next edition, we will be looking at Clarifying Needs and how both of these processes work together. +

