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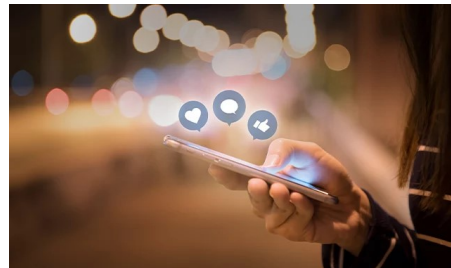
Why Advocacy and Social Media Outreach Works

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[Fred Gebhart](#)

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New platforms can increase exposure and traffic in your stores.



Advocacy works. Just ask [Steve Hoffart](#), PharmD, President of [Magnolia Pharmacy](#) in Magnolia, TX. Hoffart was one of several pharmacists who worked with the Texas legislature to remove pharmacist gag clauses in PBM contracts. He went national in 2017 in television news interviews, describing the negative impact of gag clauses that prevent pharmacists from informing patients of potentially cheaper alternatives.



Steve Hoffart,
RPh

“Television news gave us another platform to tell our story,” Hoffart said during a panel discussion on advocacy and social engagement during the ThoughtSpot 2019 general session.

“You work so hard every day to protect your patients. You need to tell anyone who will listen what you do and why. That’s what advocacy is all about and that’s why it works. You are telling your story and educating.”

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Federal legislation banning pharmacist gag clauses was signed into law in 2018.

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One of pharmacy's biggest problems is that no one really knows what pharmacists do except other pharmacists," added [John Hickman](#), RPh, President of [Dyer Drug Store](#) in Farmersville, TX. Patients, legislators, payers, policymakers, prescribers, and other decision makers hear endless stories of pharmacy. But those stories most often come from PBMs, drug manufacturers, chain and big-box retailers along with other players with active lobbying and public relations operations.

"Don't let other stakeholders tell the story for you," Hickman said. "Tell your own story and tell it straight from your heart. That kind of approach works so well."

Hickman said he was inspired to act at a pharmacy meeting six years ago. Attendees complained endlessly about PBMs, contracts, pricing, and other familiar issues. The third-generation pharmacist decided that instead of complaining, it was time to act for a change.

He began working with pharmacist groups to testify on independent pharmacy issues. At the state level, he became a vocal spokesperson for independent pharmacy, where he was meeting regularly with legislators and their staff, and contributing to campaigns. Hickman invites legislators to visit his store to see the realities of pharmacy for themselves.

"Everyone in this room can make those same changes," Hickman said. "We've been at it for a while and it's making a difference. When I go into a legislator's office now, they know what a PBM is and what they do. They know what retroactive fees are and why they are so tough on independent pharmacies. I don't know if these fees will go away, but we will continue to educate. If you don't educate and advocate, there won't be any change."

Hoffart, like many successful Good Neighbor pharmacies, tells his story on Facebook and Instagram as well as in legislative hearings and on national news.

"I didn't really have a choice," he said. "One of my kids was working in the store and

complained that we didn't have an Instagram account. He told me that if people can't see you, they can't come to the pharmacy. And he was right. If we don't all get out there and tell our stories, we don't have a future."

Prescribers are another group ripe for education and primed to learn more about the value that independent community pharmacy can provide.

"They (prescribers) know you on the phone, but they don't know you in person," explained [Amy Galloway](#), RPh, owner of [Brasstown Professional Pharmacy](#) in Blairsville, GA; and co-owner, [Southern Drug Company](#), Blue Ridge, GA.

"And they don't know what you can do besides filling prescriptions. It's up to each of us to talk with prescribers in our own communities to let them know how we can help improve care and outcomes for their patients."

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Galloway schedules short visits, as little as five or ten minutes, with local prescribers.

Prescribers are just as swamped as pharmacists, she cautioned, so visits should be brief and to the point about precisely how you can support and magnify their efforts.

Her two stores have busy compounding operations, so she focuses on how it can help make pharmaceutical therapy easier and more effective by tailoring the product to specific patient needs.

"Most prescribers aren't familiar with compounding and are willing to learn," Galloway said. "They need to learn that you care for and about their patients. It makes all the difference when they realize you are there for them and for their patients."

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