

How to Train Staff on New Tech

By **Fred Gebhart**, contributing editor

Training pharmacy staff—and yourself—to make the most of a new technology shouldn't be a major challenge. Vendors provide training along with their new products. Don't they?

Yes and no, says Carlie Traylor, PharmD, associate director of Strategic Initiatives for the National Community Pharmacists Association. She



Traylor

was previously director of clinical services for an independent pharmacy group and oversaw staff training.

“Yes, vendors provide training, but vendor trainers go home eventually,” she said. “Training tasks fall to the store in the end. What you have to remember is that training, including technology training, is never done.”

So what's a store owner or manager to do?

For starters, rethink the term “training.” Talk of staff training raises too many visions of tedious sessions trying to learn a task or a skill that is totally impenetrable. The problem isn't the subject, but the way it is presented.

“It is all about your approach,” says Beth Tomac, owner of Broad Street Pharmacy in Chesaning, WI. A long-time pharmacy technician, she became a pharmacy owner when a prior workplace sold to a chain and the working atmosphere changed dramatically.

“You can tell your staff they have to learn something, and it won't go very well,” she explains.

“Or you can talk about the excitement of a new technology and how it is going to solve a specific problem that everybody knows about and make their lives

easier. And about how utterly cool this new tech is going to be. When everyone knows that a new technology isn't going to interfere with their position but will enhance it, attitudes change. You just gave them reasons to succeed instead of reasons to fail.”

No argument from pharmacy management system PioneerRx. The company prides itself on on-site customer training, says education manager Will Tuft. Training teams spend a week at each pharmacy on every installation. But the pharmacy's approach to training has a lot to do with the success of new management software.

“It is a huge expense to implement new technology in the pharmacy, so there's a good reason you are making that investment and making that huge change in the way you and your staff work,” Tuft says. “If you look at it like

Training Resources

Most pharmacy associations have a training department, but many are focused on clinical and business services such as medication therapy management or expanding immunization programs. Staff training materials can be harder to find.

The National Community Pharmacy Association devoted multiple sessions at its 2019 convention to staff training and training techniques. The group will release a new series of staff training videos later in 2019.

NCPA also has a training webinar, Management Techniques to Increase the Pharmacy's Financial Success. A six part online course, Comprehensive

Motivational Interviewing Training, can help staff train patients in a new technology or help change behavior as part of tobacco cessation or diabetes education program. Both are available through the NCPA Innovation Center.

The Association for Talent Development (TD.org) trains trainers—and pharmacy owners/managers.

Every CE session is a training seminar. Don't just listen to the content, watch how the presenter structures the information and the mechanics of their teaching techniques. Some work well, some don't—and all can help you to brush up your own teaching skills. ■

‘Hey, here’s this new technology you have to learn; you just made the new technology a roadblock instead of an opportunity.

“If you focus your team on the why—why we are implementing this new technology, why we’re climbing this learning curve and how much it is going to help—you can get buy-in from your team to make that big push. Your attitude, and their buy-in, makes all the difference.”

Patients are part of your team, too, Tomac says.

It becomes clear when staff are training patients on a device like a new glucose meter or talking through familiar issues such as medication adherence. Staffers can make mastering that new patient-facing technology easier for the patient.

“It’s all about making their life better, not making it more complicated,” Tomac says. “If the patient isn’t comfortable with that new insulin pen or glucose monitor or whatever, they won’t use it. It’s all about helping them understand the advantages to learning that new device, how it is going to help them. It’s all about your attitude.”

One way to help acclimate patients to new technology is to talk about it. When Broad Street Pharmacy installed their ScriptPro robots, Tomac encouraged staffers to talk about it with patients, letting them know the pharmacy was installing the latest and greatest technology to make filling scripts faster and safer. Those conversations drove home the idea that the pharmacy cares enough to make a significant investment to make life better for patients.

That’s a double message, Tomac says. Talking with customers about the wonderful new tech helps shape public perception of the pharmacy.

When patients have to do the learning, they better understand the rewards technology can bring.

“Talking about what we do behind the counter with technology just reinforces the message that we care and that we

are always available to help,” Tomac says. “And it reminds the staff what a difference they are making, too. Just by changing your approach you have changed a task (learning new technology) into a goal (making your life better).”

That kind of attention to attitude plays out in larger pharmacy organizations, too. Tabula Rasa HealthCare doesn’t let new technicians anywhere near a dispensing line until they have finished a training program. For managers who focus on the bottom line, training is a dollars and cents issue.

“Pharmacy techs used to be readily available and now not so much,” says



Gilbert

Steve Gilbert, Tabula Rasa vice president, Performance Improvement. “You don’t want to create a revolving door with constantly bringing people on board. We can either

prepare them to succeed or prepare them to fail. Preparing people to succeed is the right thing to do, but it’s an economic decision at the same time.”

Training staff to succeed helps them be more comfortable in their role, Gilbert adds, which can ultimately lead to better productivity. Better training also means fewer mistakes. Minimizing errors improves patient safety. And it’s cheaper to fill a script correctly the first time than to have to replace something that was misfiled.

“Every time you teach a system or a device, you become more competent yourself,” Traylor said. “Tech vendors have great training videos, but the staffer who actually uses the system is the best one to help the trainee translate the video to the specific system they will be working with. Don’t ignore vendor resources, but it’s up to you to make their resources work within the system as configured for your store.”

Pharmacy owners and managers are responsible for training, but they shouldn’t be doing it all personally. Leave training to the operational expert. The

NEW PHARMACY TECH

The Equashield Pro automated compounding unit is in beta testing in several US sites. The company says its closed system reduces surface contamination with antineoplastic agents, is faster to compound, and covers more routes of exposure than alternative compounding robots.

QS/1 introduced its new SharpPOS and a new register during the summer. Improvements include automatic SIGIS file updates, checking and issuing a refund in the same transaction, and unlimited department keys. The new register runs both the current POS system and the SharpPOS with dramatically reduced footprint compared to current registers.

HBS has released the integration of its Pharmacy Services Portal with PickPoint’s will-call retrieval and bagging systems. The integrations mean a single application can help pharmacy staff cut wait times and improve service.

Capsa Healthcare released the new Kirby LesterKL-SR robotic dispenser for busy retail and hospital outpatient pharmacies. It manages filling of a pharmacy’s most common scripts using universal cassettes that require no technician calibration, eliminating an important source of error when changing the medication in a cassette. ■

manager is seldom the most knowledgeable person about any specific system or technology; let the staffer who knows more about the system than you train the newcomer. ■