

technology

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business



Get maximum return on your technology spend



by Wayne Caverly

When pharmacy owners spend \$25,000, \$50,000, \$100,000 or even \$250,000 on new technologies, they do so with justifiably high expectations—but are they seeing results?

On the flip side, automation retailers often provide prospective clients with return on investment (ROI) documents showing expected performance and promises of “pay-back.” But are they accurate?

I’m often asked to analyze why a pharmacy has not achieved expected or promised benefits. In truth, there are myriad ways technology can fail to fulfil expectations. Here are the most common.

Improper planning

Before you begin to meet with potential suppliers or focus on a specific type of technology, it’s important to write down your short-term needs and long-term goals. This necessary step provides you with the needs-analysis used to evaluate the impact that specific technologies might have upon your business.

In addition to listing your needs and goals, it’s also important to prioritize them and weight them. Two goals shared by most pharmacies are handling prescription growth (without having to add additional staff) and reducing the risk of medication errors. Depend-

ing on your practice, handling growth may be your primary goal, while this may be secondary for another pharmacy. But whether primary or secondary isn’t enough information, so it’s important to add weight, e.g. does your primary goal represent 51% or 99% of overall priorities?

It can be difficult to step back from your practice and create a view of the future, which is why many successful projects begin by bringing in outside people to part in open discussions and strategy sessions. Such sessions must include people who are familiar with your business (your accountant, lawyer and perhaps some-

See next page for continuation of article (original pages 29 & 30)

will not have a positive effect on your bottom line unless you follow through with your chosen changes.

No preventative maintenance

All suppliers offer warranties for their products, with the extended warranties usually offered in a number of variants (from basic to premium.) In addition to their regular maintenance visits, it is crucial your staff follow the manufacturer’s recommended maintenance schedules. If these are

Letting issues go unaddressed

When maintenance or other system issues arise, especially during peak periods, it is always tempting to leave them for someone else, or for another time. To maximize usage of technologies, it’s best to address issues as they arise. One way to help ensure both preventative maintenance and issue resolution are addressed in a timely manner is to designate (and train) a “super-tech” to maintain all in-lab technologies.

No evaluation, adjustments or additions

Was the recommended product the right product for your needs and goals? Was it customized to match your process flow? Was it properly designed into the pharmacy and were staff adequately trained? Even if the answers are all positive, you may not see maximum benefits without additional adjustments. Changing your practice may open up other opportunities to further improve. You should use the Six Sigma methodology—Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve, Control to review your practice every few months. These mini-reviews may highlight minor changes that can substantially improve productivity and efficiency.

The bottom line

A lot can go wrong when implementing changes to your pharmacy, but if you invest wisely and spend the required time in the preparation stages, your investments will return fantastic benefits to you, your staff, your patients, and your business. ■

This inaugural feature marks the return of Wayne Caverly as a regular contributor to *Pharmacy Post*. An industry expert with more than 20 years’ experience, Wayne is president of Efficient Pharmacy Solutions and Solutions by Design, and executive director of the Efficient Pharmacy Institute. Readers with questions are encouraged to contact him at