

# Ask The Expert

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## *What impact does workflow software have on choosing dispensary automation?*

**T**he most significant impact of workflow software on dispensary automation is the switch from processing prescriptions on a FIFO (first in – first out) basis to “fill on demand”.

Without workflow software, the pharmacy management system usually triggers dispensing automation: Once the prescription is data-entered (and usually while the vial label is printing) the automation is directed to count.

With workflow software, the request to count is done via bar code scan, and is only done when that particular prescription is required at the filling station.

This is a benefit because workflow software eliminates products being dispensed before they are needed and the potential errors this FIFO method might engender.

Therefore, the important variable to look at in counting technologies increasingly is count speed. When you use count-on-demand every second is crucial. The last thing you want is staff standing around waiting for their technology to keep up.

If you’re evaluating counting technologies that dispense a 60-count in 6 seconds, vs. 30 or even 60 seconds, the choice should be obvious: faster is indeed better – because it’s more efficient and more productive. It’s important also, especially in robotics, to evaluate the process speed (see *The Efficient Pharmacy*, Vol. 3, No. 3 “*Robots for Community Pharmacy*”).

Even if you don’t currently use workflow software you eventually will (and probably sooner rather than later) so you should be making your dispensary automation decisions with that fact in mind.

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(For more information on workflow software see [The Efficient Pharmacy](#), Vol. 1, No. 2 “*Pharmacy Software*” and Vol. 3, No. 4 “*Profile: Causey Pharmacy, Natchitoches, Louisiana*”)