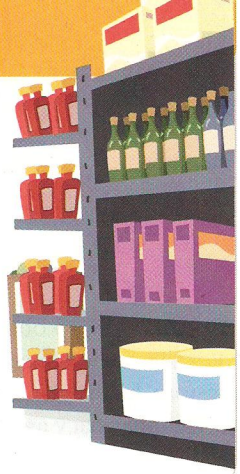
30 smart ideas

We asked our favourite experts for their BEST TIPS to help you succeed in challenging times



Make design work for you

Wayne Caverly has seen the future of pharmacy design—and it is adjustable.

I think pharmacies need to investigate adjustable height counter tops. Ergonomically, it's impossible to build a pharmacy work counter (whether it be filling, checking, or otherwise) that is perfect both for a 4'11" employee and one who is 6'5". Adjustable height counters are available and are used in other industries, but their cost has been prohibitive for pharmacy. I've got a couple of companies looking at ideas that we hope can solve that problem.

We need to find new ways to create and make better use of space within pharmacies. My article on high-density shelving ("What's the best pharmacy shelving layout?" archived on www.pharmacygateway.ca) describes one such solution. Another is multiple-use work counters. Counters that can be work spaces within the pharmacy when it's not too busy, and easily converted to a patient-contact point (reception, cash or counsel) when needed.

We need more modularity in the way we construct the working cabinets in pharmacies. With wood cabinets, making changes almost always means junking all the existing cabinets and starting over. A few companies are approaching the construction of pharmacy cabinets differently and these new approaches make adjustments much easier (for instance to handle changes in pharmacy practice).

In technology, the next major section to address is 'Will Call.' Will Call currently takes much too much staff time and is open to too many errors (when placing items in it, finding and retrieving product from it, and purging the section of unclaimed items). There are numerous solutions to this problem, including software-only and software/hardware solutions that make handling Will Call items fast and easy, eliminate errors, and generate reports that let staff know exactly what needs to be purged. A number of the companies offering automated Will Call systems also interface with Interactive Voice Response systems, allowing automated out-bound calling to patients to tell them first, that their Rx is ready to be picked up, and secondly, if it hasn't been picked up, that it will be returned to stock in so many days if not picked up.

From both a design and technology perspective, the use of computer modelling to validate changes (before making them in the real world) is an area of significant growth. When I began in the pharmacy design business (1984) we drew in pencil, by hand, on a drafting table with T-Squares. Now, almost everyone involved in design uses CAD (computer-aided design) programs. Computer modelling has been used by Fortune 500 companies for years to help them evaluate changes before making decisions. This technology is now available to pharmacy to assist with making decisions in design, technology, and even staffing changes.

Wayne Caverly is president of Caverly Consulting Group and Efficient Pharmacy Solutions.

FIVE THINGS

to do if you want to be in business in five years

by Tom Shay

1 **UNDERSTAND YOUR FINANCIALS.** Having cash on hand will cover a multitude of mistakes. The majority of businesses that fail are actually profitable when they close–they just ran out of cash.

2 **KEEP TRACK OF ALL OF YOUR CUSTOMERS.** Reaching out to them every month lets them know you care about them and want their business. The majority of people that change where they do business do so because they think the business no longer cares.

3 **CONTROL YOUR INVENTORY.** Know what the fastest moving items are in your pharmacy and never run out of them. If you need money to keep them in stock, get rid of the slowest moving items.

4 **EDUCATE YOUR STAFF.** Make a commitment to teach them how to sell; how to take care of customers; how to make your pharmacy look good by keeping it clean and the merchandise 'faced and fronted.'

5 **LOOK FOR A NICHE THAT OTHER PHARMACIES MISSED.** It could be disease management and education, compounding, or medication therapy management services. Don't settle for being a 'generalist.'

Tom Shay is head of Profits+Plus, a company dedicated to helping small businesses stay profitable through resources, seminars, webinars and e-newletters. www.profitsplus.org