

# Chapter 1

## The Basics of Pharmacy Management

### Definition of a Pharmacy Manager

If you're reading this book, most likely you're an aspiring pharmacy manager or fairly new to the role. What, in a nutshell, do pharmacy managers do?

Regardless of the setting, a pharmacy manager plans, directs, and monitors pharmacy operations and the work of employees. Responsibilities may include hiring, promoting, and terminating employees as well as delegating duties and responsibilities to employees and taking corrective action, if necessary. Several factors determine how many people report to the pharmacy manager, but the primary driver is the number and complexity of the pharmacy team's responsibilities. Pharmacy managers also ensure adherence to applicable state and federal laws and regulations.

An example of a job description for a pharmacy manager appears in Figure 1-1, on page 2. Before stepping into a pharmacy manager role, you should be given a job description so you're clear about your level of responsibility.

Pharmacy managers serve a multifaceted role, which involves both operating the pharmacy and managing people who work there. This chapter gives you an overview of the following:

- Roles and responsibilities of a pharmacy manager
- Managing teams
- Management styles
- Valuing diversity
- Communicating with success

Figure 1-1 | Example of a Pharmacy Manager Job Description

**Summary:** The Pharmacy Manager supervises the daily operations of the Pharmacy Department and works with the Pharmacy Supervisor to accomplish the goals and objectives for the pharmacy.

**Responsibilities:**

- Maintain clinical competency and function in patient care activities 50-80% of their time
- Develop and maintain department policies and procedures, goals, objectives, quality assurance programs, safety, and environmental and infection control standards
- Manage the appropriate purchasing, control, and security of all drug products and medical supplies
- Respond to any concerns, including complaints, errors, reactions, and safety procedures, that are brought forth by pharmacy customers, health care providers, and pharmacy employees
- Hire and ensure proper training for all new pharmacy employees
- Prepare employee work schedules, evaluate employee work performance, and make recommendations for all pharmacy personnel actions
- Attend all meetings as required for pharmacy management members

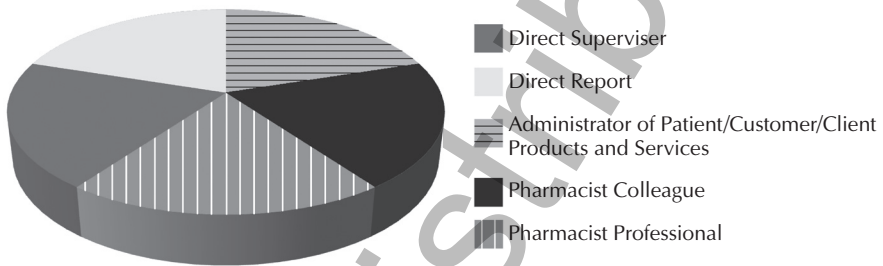
**Minimum Qualifications:**

- Doctor of Pharmacy degree or Bachelor of Science degree in Pharmacy
- A minimum of five years of staff pharmacist experience in this practice setting
- Current pharmacist license in this state
- Excellent communication skills, flexibility, and ability to work as part of a team
- Self-directed with excellent time management skills and able to work independently

## Relationships and Expectations

Although the definition of a pharmacy manager's role may sound simple, the reality is much more complex and involves multidimensional relationships. Figure 1-2 gives a sense of the relationships a pharmacy manager must maintain.

Figure 1-2 | Roles of a Pharmacy Manager



To further elaborate on the pie chart in Figure 1-2, the pharmacy manager fulfills these roles:

- **Direct Supervisor** – overseeing other personnel such as pharmacy technicians, student pharmacists or pharmacy interns, and both nonlicensed and registered pharmacy personnel in the pharmacy.
- **Direct Report** – reporting up to someone else, such as a middle or senior manager or the pharmacy owner. The pharmacy manager may also interact with other senior management members.
- **Administrator of Patient, Customer, or Client Services** – ensuring that the products and services needed by the targeted patient, customer, or client groups are available and maintained. As an administrator, a pharmacy manager has to interact and communicate with people on the receiving end of these services as well as those who can assist in providing these services, such as wholesale distributors and suppliers.
- **Colleague to Other Pharmacists** – participating as a member of a group of pharmacist professionals who may be consulted for mentoring, training, education, or advice.

- **Pharmacist Professional** – living up to the responsibilities that come with the formal education and training of a professional pharmacist, such as maintaining licensure and staying competent to ensure that mandated services are diligently performed.

Table 1-1 details some responsibilities and expectations of pharmacy managers.

Table 1-1 | **Responsibilities and Expectations of the Pharmacy Manager**

Pharmacy Manager Role	Expectations
Direct Supervisor	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Communicate and direct the pharmacy's goals.</li><li>2. Support direct reports as they accomplish tasks, including offering guidance, resources, training, and a listening ear.</li><li>3. Develop and nurture an environment that will help direct reports succeed.</li><li>4. Solve problems and answer questions quickly and accurately.</li><li>5. Represent the views of your team to others, both inside and outside of the organization.</li></ol>
Direct Report	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Accept accountability for the pharmacy operations.</li><li>2. Motivate direct reports to support organizational goals and initiatives.</li><li>3. Formulate and follow up on pharmacy plans.</li><li>4. Balance the group's interests with those of others.</li><li>5. Protect the reputations of superiors and of the company.</li></ol>
Administrator of Patient Products and Services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Represent the pharmacy.</li><li>2. Accept accountability for the pharmacy's ability or inability to provide products and services.</li><li>3. Provide methods or plans to ensure that products and services are available for acceptance, integration, and delivery.</li><li>4. Do what is best for the patient, customer, or client.</li></ol>
Colleague to Other Pharmacists	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Represent the pharmacy.</li><li>2. Share needed information and resources.</li><li>3. Set agendas and build networks.</li><li>4. Treat peers as partners.</li><li>5. Do what is best for the organization and profession.</li></ol>

## It Takes a Team

To carry out your responsibilities and achieve your desired outcomes as a pharmacy manager, you need an effective team in place. You're no longer responsible only for your individual goals; now you need to lead other people. No single person can accomplish everything that has to be done in the pharmacy.

To achieve your given responsibilities, your key efforts will fall into these categories:

- Setting the agenda
- Building a team and network
- Managing teams
- Assessing goals

### Setting the Agenda

The pharmacy manager sets the agenda for the pharmacy—that is, the overall plan that allows the pharmacy to meet important goals. Often, the pharmacy manager's supervisor is the one who hands down the goals that need to be met, including the following:

- Financial—budget, payroll, etc.
- Patient/customer—satisfaction, utilization of pharmacy services, etc.
- Pharmacy personnel—training, professional and skill development, etc.

In setting the agenda, your challenge is to develop and articulate strategies that will help your team support the company's objectives and to ensure that those strategies are implemented.<sup>1</sup> To be an agenda setter, pharmacy managers must:

### The Pharmacy Manager— Making it Simple

Just as becoming a pharmacist takes commitment and hard work, so does becoming an effective pharmacy manager. The basics include:

- Define the pharmacy manager's roles and how these roles play out in your multiple relationships.
- Develop the steps needed to achieve the responsibilities and goals of a pharmacy manager.
- Demonstrate the ability to employ an appropriate management or leadership style, depending on the situation.
- Communicate, both orally and in writing, to all those who contribute to the pharmacy's operations and management.
- Recognize the value of diversity and its role in managing the pharmacy.

- View themselves as an entrepreneur running their own business and address all the forces that may make or break their business.
- Expand their perspective to include not only their pharmacy team, but also the larger organization, as well as the industry and business environment in which their pharmacy operates.
- Maintain a budget to support their agenda—which may involve developing the budget, too, depending on their pharmacy.
- Balance any tensions between their team and other groups or the larger organization, including clarifying priorities and making mutually acceptable compromises.
- Accept that the identified priorities may not necessarily be shared by direct reports unless the pharmacy manager communicates his or her vision.

Agenda setting is a complex process of thought and decision-making that allows the pharmacy manager to take into account multiple factors beyond your individual pharmacy team. Often, you have to depend on additional networks of both personal and professional contacts, which you must develop and nurture.

### **Building a Team and Network**

As a pharmacy manager, you'll spend the majority of your waking hours with your pharmacy team members—even more than you typically spend with your family. The manager is at the apex of three critical relationships in the work environment:<sup>2</sup>

1. Manager–Individual Team Member
2. Manager–Pharmacy Team
3. Pharmacy Team–Individual Team Member

Each team member has unique needs, motivations, and style of communication. If you have good communication with individual team members, each person is more likely to work cohesively as a group. You will better understand individual strengths and challenges and those of the team as a whole, and you are better able to influence how each team member relates to the others.

Building a network involves strengthening and sustaining mutually beneficial relationships with everyone you interact with: supervisors, peers, direct reports, patients, clients, suppliers, and people from partnering organizations, such as physician groups. To be effective in your efforts, you must:

---

A pharmacy manager plans, directs, and monitors pharmacy operations and the work of employees.

---

- View yourself as a “people developer” and not a “task doer.”
- Recognize the value in organizational politics of sharing and forming alliances.
- Understand where you fit in the total organization and how to use your position and personal qualities to achieve your goals and get needed resources—as well as how to help others do the same.
- Recognize the importance of developing relationships with people outside as well as inside your pharmacy team.
- Be open to creating opportunities to spend time with your supervisors, peers, and direct reports—such as lunches, meetings, and social events.
- Be willing to be an active participant in your pharmacy and organization to build up your reputation and that of your pharmacy group.

Establishing networks can be challenging and it takes time, because you must build trust with others and demonstrate your competence and professionalism. Keep the following in mind:

- Personal success will be defined by how well the pharmacy team achieves its objectives.
- As a pharmacy manager, your success will also be defined by how much you’ve helped direct reports develop their skill set.
- You may need to ask others for assistance in developing your team’s skills and your own management skills.

# Managing Teams

In most pharmacy settings, working well as a team is paramount. A pharmacy team brings a combination of knowledge, expertise, and perspective that one person cannot contribute alone. An effective team can deliver the following productive results:

- Increased performance and creativity by focusing the team members’ talents on a specific task, duty, or challenge.
- Ability to delegate effectively and have flexibility in assigning tasks.
- Improved communication.
- Effective cross-training so multiple team members can contribute to specialized tasks and assignments.
- Smooth implementation resulting from a team that shares commitment and responsibilities.

## Finding Balance Among Continua

To manage any kind of team—whether in pharmacy or elsewhere—you have to lead the team, which requires you to adapt your managerial style to fit the characteristics of various team members and pharmacy situations. Figure 1-3 shows the four examples of the “team leadership continua” along which managers can move as necessary.

Figure 1-3 | The Four Continua of Team Leadership

1. Embrace individual differences	←.....→	Embrace group identity and goals
2. Foster support among team members	←.....→	Foster confrontation among team members
3. Focus on current team performance	←.....→	Focus on team learning and development
4. Emphasize managerial authority	←.....→	Emphasize team members’ discretion and autonomy

Source: Adapted from Harvard Business School ManageMentor PLUS online program. *Becoming a Manager*. Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing; 2009.



Each continuum shows a pair of conflicting forces that lie at the heart of every team. Sometimes it is appropriate to gravitate toward one polar end or the other, while at other times it works best to settle somewhere in the middle. Where you concentrate along each continuum depends on the skills, knowledge, and commitment of your team members, the performance of the team and the pharmacy, and your style as a manager.

Refrain from spending too much time at either end of a continuum because the team's performance may suffer. Table 1-2 has examples of how a pharmacy manager may spend too much time along a continuum and what can be done to prevent it. Finding the right balance along any of the four team-leadership continua may be a challenge, but it is worth the effort in order to build an effective, flexible, and innovative team that can adapt to changes and challenges that will arise in pharmacy practice.

**Table 1-2 | Imbalances to Avoid in the Team Leadership Continua**

<b>Example of Management Imbalance</b>	<b>Potential Consequence</b>	<b>Pharmacy Manager Challenge</b>
Overemphasizing individual differences within the pharmacy team	Team members may become overly competitive, engage in disruptive conflicts, and develop a "win/lose" mind-set.	Allow individual differences and freedom, but establish goals and an agenda to which all team members are committed.
Overemphasizing support within the pharmacy team	Team members avoid healthy, productive confrontation and suppress their thoughts and feelings to promote harmony.	Find ways to encourage team members to express conflicting thoughts and ideas without letting disagreements become personal or disruptive.
Overemphasizing the pharmacy team's current performance	Team focuses on short-term results and doesn't develop the learning capacities it needs to take on new challenges and be innovative in the long term.	Treat mistakes as sources of learning rather than reasons for punishment. Encourage risk-taking.
Overemphasizing managerial authority	Team members don't have the opportunity to develop their own decision-making and critical-thinking skills.	Decide when to make a decision alone, when to make a decision jointly with another team member, and when to ask for consensus or delegate the decision.

Source: Adapted from Harvard Business School ManageMentor PLUS online program. *Becoming a Manager*. Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing; 2009.

Managerial Styles

Table 1-3 describes four typical managerial styles and gives examples of situations in which each style is useful. Often, you have to adjust your management style based on the situation and the people with whom you are interacting.

Table 1-3 | Typical Managerial Styles

Managerial Style	Description of Style	Example of When to Use the Style
Directive or Autocratic	Monitoring a team member closely and providing more explicit instructions and demands.	A pharmacy team member taking a new responsibility (i.e., monitoring pharmacy).
Coaching or Paternalistic	Working with a team member to resolve a concern or issue.	Discussion with a pharmacy team member who feels resentful because he or she was not selected for a new responsibility, to illuminate why the member was not selected for the task (i.e., what skills need to be developed).
Supportive or Democratic	Encouraging a team member to identify strengths and build upon them (so as to gradually take on more tasks and risks).	Working with a pharmacy team member who has been given a new responsibility by providing individualized instruction and continuous feedback.
Delegating or Laissez-faire	Providing a team member with the autonomy and trust with key responsibilities and decision making.	Providing more responsibilities to the pharmacy team member who monitors pharmacy inventory.

Source: Adapted from Harvard Business School ManageMentor PLUS online program. *Becoming a Manager*. Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing; 2009.

To adapt your style effectively, you must assess what each team member needs—which involves observing and grasping the individual's

- Capabilities
- Level of commitment
- Desire for professional development

Over time, team members will accept and trust your versatility as a manager.

---

You must adapt your managerial style to fit the characteristics of various team members and pharmacy situations.

---

## Assessing Goals

Before you became a pharmacy manager, you probably defined success in terms of your individual performance. But now your responsibility is to get things accomplished through other people. Success will be measured differently and will be determined by setting goals.

Goal setting is a formal process in which you define targets for the pharmacy to achieve. Setting solid goals creates a long-term vision for a pharmacy and helps motivate personnel to achieve that vision.

- Goals can have different time frames and levels of importance.
- Short-term goals can be accomplished in one or two months.
- Long-term goals are achieved over the course of several months, a year, or several years.

In terms of importance, goals are usually classified into one of the following categories:<sup>2</sup>

- **Critical:** Goals essential for the pharmacy to continue operating successfully. An example would be a specific percentage of medications processed with a generic equivalent or a lower-cost therapeutically equivalent alternative.
- **Solution-oriented:** Goals helping to provide a more desirable business condition or to take advantage of a business opportunity.

An example would be establishing a specific number of pharmacist-administered immunizations for the pharmacy to provide.

- Nice-to-have: Goals that make improvements to enhance business. Such goals usually relate to making activities faster or easier. An example would be creating a loyalty program for patrons of a pharmacy or a pharmacy program designed to help asthma patients adhere to their medication regimens.

Pharmacy managers should set both individual goals and goals for the pharmacy team. Among the goals you set may be pharmacy goals requiring specific skills that cannot be delegated to one member of the team, as well as goals that reflect the pharmacy manager's contributions to team members' goals—such as providing individualized training so a team member can take the test to become a nationally certified pharmacy technician.

Table 1-4 lists the steps you should follow to set goals—both individual and team-based—so that their success can be measured. Your success as a pharmacy manager will be defined by:

- How well your pharmacy team achieves its objectives.
- How much you have helped your team members develop their skills and manage tasks effectively.
- How strongly your team's achievements have supported the pharmacy's or company's objectives and strategies.

You may feel disheartened at first to know that your individual success is strongly correlated with that of your team, but as you grow in the manager role, you will feel rewarded from different sources than you have in the past. Many pharmacy managers learn to enjoy helping other people develop and succeed, discovering that they can be effective coaches who bring out the talent in others and gaining satisfaction from adapting to their new role and mastering new responsibilities.

**Table 1-4 | Steps for Setting Goals**

<b>Step</b>	<b>Issues for Consideration</b>
Identify potential goals	This should be done once or twice a year.
Prioritize and select goals	Identify criteria for prioritizing goals. Review the list of goals and rank their priority—typically in terms of their value and importance.
Write out goals	Create a detailed, written description of each goal, using SMART criteria as a guideline:  <b>Specific:</b> the goal can be described in detail. <b>Measurable:</b> the goal is able to be measured using either quantitative or qualitative assessments. <b>Achievable:</b> the goal is not lofty or unattainable. <b>Realistic:</b> the goal can be accomplished given existing constraints, such as time and resources. <b>Timely:</b> the goal can be achieved within a specified time frame.
Plan how to achieve goals	Identify a strategy and tactics that will assist in reaching the goal. Include considerations such as resources and methods to combat potential obstacles. Establish milestones and time frames.
Pursue goals, while monitoring progress along the way	As progress is made toward the goal, update all parties involved in achieving it. Reassess the strategy or tactics and restructure if necessary.
Evaluate the goals	Periodically assess whether the goals are still realistic, timely, and relevant. You may need to revise the goal, which requires communication and buy-in from involved parties. When a goal is reached, confirm that others agree that the desired impact has been achieved.

# Diversity and Team Culture in Management

Understanding diversity is a very important part of management in any organization. Many people think of “diversity” as issues related to race or gender, but in the workplace, diversity involves all kinds of differences, as shown in Tables 1-5 and 1-6. These differences may influence pharmacy team members’ needs, their ways of communicating and interacting, and their priorities. Misunderstanding and other difficulties can arise, but diversity also is a source of special contributions each person brings to the pharmacy team.

Table 1-5 | Workplace Diversity Attributes

Diversity Attribute	Description
Tenure	Some people may be in high school or college, while others may have more experience.
Cultural background	People may come from different regions of the country or from other countries outside the United States.
Physical ability	People may use various forms of assistive technologies, such as wheelchairs, to perform their work.
Working or learning style	People may approach a task in different ways. Some may approach it logically and methodically, while others are more intuitive and creative.
Professional motivations	People differ in what they would like to pursue in their career. Some may have the goal of a management position; others are satisfied serving as an individual contributor.
Management preferences	People may want more direction and contact from their manager and others may not.
Experience level	People have multiple levels of experience in performing the tasks that make up their jobs as a result of their work history, training, and education, both formal and informal.

Source: Adapted from National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Association Office of Diversity. Tips to Improve Interaction and Communication Among the Generations. <http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/intergencomm.htm>. Accessed April 25, 2011.

**Table 1-6 | Generational Considerations**

	Generations (based on year of birth)			
	<b>Generation Y (born 1978-1995)</b>	<b>Generation X (born 1966-1977)</b>	<b>Baby Boomers (born 1947-1965)</b>	<b>Traditionalist (born before 1946)</b>
Common Motivators	Positive Reinforcement	Entrepreneurial Spirit	Competition	Private
	Autonomy	Independent	Teamwork	Hard Workers
	Positive Attitude	Continuous Feedback	Success Driven	Respect for Authority
	Diversity	Creative	Hard Workers	Trustworthy
	Technology	Loyalty	Dedicated to a Cause	Social Order
Communication Considerations	Create a fun, learning work environment	Use email	Recognize that how they are approached (verbal and body language) is important to them	They are private, so don't expect active sharing of their thoughts
	Ask them for feedback and provide them with constant feedback	Provide regular feedback and share information regularly	Use an open, direct style	Face-to-face or written (not necessarily email) communication is preferred
	Encourage them to take risks	Use informal communication styles	Answer their questions thoroughly	Their time is important—have a purpose and don't waste their time

Source: Adapted from National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Association Office of Diversity. Tips to Improve Interaction and Communication Among the Generations. <http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/intergencomm.htm>. Accessed April 25, 2011.

Each pharmacy team has its own culture, which defines its distinct way of:

- Solving problems and meeting challenges.
- Getting work completed.
- Communicating.
- Learning.
- Dealing with conflict.
- Interacting with patients and other external team members.

### Useful Attributes of a Manager

Some of the attributes below may take longer to achieve than others, but all are important to strive for as you transition into a pharmacy manager position.

**Maintains self-control.** You can be counted on to behave maturely and appropriately according to the situation.

**Always is fair to everyone.** You delegate work assignments fairly, consistently enforce policies and procedures, and avoid favoritism.

**Never is afraid to say “I don’t know” or “I made a mistake.”** No one knows everything, and people respect when someone says so. The key is to utilize resources and networks to find the correct answer and communicate it back to everyone who needs to know.

**Attentively listens.** It is one thing to hear what someone is saying and quite another to actively listen to what a person is saying, asking, or trying to communicate.

**Gains people’s trust.** Once a manager has someone’s trust, it is hard to lose it. With your direct reports, maintaining trust includes being willing to represent your team to higher management.

**Encourages communication.** Building a team environment includes both one-way and multidimensional communication.

**Realizes the importance of understanding the technological knowledge of the work being supervised.** You must know the most efficient methods of operating a pharmacy so you can be an effective coach, teacher, and evaluator of your staff.



- Marking successes and dealing with disappointments.

A team's culture will have developed, in part, from the group members' special and different characteristics, including diversity characteristics. In addition, the team's culture may have been shaped by the former pharmacy manager's style and expectations.

---

Diversity is a source of special contributions each person brings to the pharmacy team.

---

To build effective relationships with new direct reports, don't try to make improvements too soon. Consider the following points:

- Avoid predetermined assumptions about a pharmacy team.
- Learn about the diversity of pharmacy team members, outside of physical attributes, by talking with them and observing them in action.
- Decide how best to treat each member fairly to assist him or her to succeed.

### **Avoid Assumptions**

When first meeting a pharmacy team that is already in place, do not assume that everyone on the team is similar and can be “molded” into what you want. To get to know pharmacy team members better, you have to talk with them, ask questions, and observe them. Your ultimate goal is to understand what motivates each team member, how he or she deals with conflict, and how each member prefers to be managed.

### **Be Fair**

Fairness is an important concept for managers to grasp. Fair treatment does not mean identical or equal treatment; instead it means finding the best ways to help each team member succeed—approaches that may be different based on each person's diversity-related aspects.

Understanding and adapting to a team's diversity, whether you inherit the team or new members join along the way, is an important part of shaping the team and guiding it toward success. Your skills in this area also help identify you as a team leader and motivator.

## Communicating with Success

Being able to communicate effectively is an indispensable skill for any manager. The extended role of the pharmacist necessitates spending a great amount of time talking with people, including physicians, patients, and pharmacy team members.<sup>3</sup> Every aspect of the pharmacy manager's daily activities involves communication, including:

- Patient counseling and education.
- Discussions with middle and senior management or the pharmacy owner.
- Consultations and interactions with other health care providers.
- Interviewing potential candidates for the pharmacy team.
- Coaching, counseling, and delegating to pharmacy team members.

The purpose of communication is not just to deliver a message to the recipient, but to influence or bring about a change in that person's knowledge, attitudes, or behavior.<sup>4</sup> Effective communication must be a two-way process between the sender of the message and the receiver; if the person receiving the message doesn't understand it, communication fails. The receiver should be able to ask questions of the sender, and the sender should take the time to ask questions of the receiver to ensure that the intended message was delivered.

Table 1-7 lists aspects of communication you need to consider when delivering and receiving information in your many relationships. You must train yourself to observe the reactions of people you are communicating with—whether you are interacting in person or some other way, such as telephone or email—to ensure that your message is being received and understood.

You also must become aware of any tendencies you have that could interfere with good communication and cause messages to be misunderstood. For example, you may have extensive clinical knowledge about a disease state and its treatment and be eager to share this information with your patients, but if you concentrate only on providing the information and don't take time to answer questions or you fail to watch for signs that the patient doesn't understand such as a blank stare or lack of eye contact—your efforts will not be successful.

**Table 1-7 | Aspects of Communication**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Additional Considerations</b>
Tone of Speech	The tone of a message often influences whether the receiver is going to listen and therefore whether the message is received. For example, a whining tone may elicit a different response than a friendly tone.
Accent	In today's society, you encounter many different accents. Some people may have to listen closer and harder when communicating with those who have accents.
Listening and Questioning Skills	This involves hearing the message, asking questions regarding the message, and observing during the communication process. Ask open-ended questions when possible—those that can't be answered with a simple "yes" or "no"—to ensure that the message is understood. Also, pay attention to body language, facial expressions, gestures, and eye contact.
Body Language	A person's body language conveys to others his or her approachability and receptivity to viewpoints and opinions. Body language includes gestures, facial expression, eye contact, physical contact, body posture, body space, and proximity to other people.

Clear verbal and nonverbal communication is critical for pharmacy managers. In addition to using language that is easy to understand and avoiding overloading patients with too much information, you often need to repeat key messages to ensure that the most important points stick in the listener's mind. For example, when talking with patients about medications, if they seem confused or are unable to repeat instructions back to you, you need to restate the information in different words and verify that they comprehend. Knowing how to clarify issues without using emotion is valuable for managers—especially in conflict situations, which will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Pharmacy managers work in an environment with many potential barriers to effective communication and must constantly assess their skills.



## **Brian Ellsworth, PharmD**

**Pharmacy Team Leader  
CVS Pharmacy**

**Q: Talk a little about your professional background.**

I graduated from the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy in May 2010, receiving a Doctor of Pharmacy degree. I've worked for CVS Pharmacy since 2004 and signed with the company as a pharmacy team leader upon my graduation. I'm certified as a provider of both cardiopulmonary resuscitation and immunizations. My affiliations include the American Pharmacists Association, Maryland Pharmacists Association, Kappa Psi Pharmaceutical Fraternity, and Phi Lambda Sigma Leadership Fraternity.

**Q: What advice would you give to a student or staff pharmacist with the goal of being a pharmacy manager?**

Take time to understand the business. Successful pharmacy managers know how the business runs and what makes it more efficient; they become a student of the business. Because pharmacy is much more than filling prescriptions, the pharmacy manager should be able to identify what makes the business flourish and know how to execute these activities.

**Q: What prepared you to take a pharmacy manager position?**

My experience with the company played an essential role. I was always curious to know why we did things the way we did and how we could do them better. I took the time to ask questions and learn about the business. I also have a strong desire to challenge myself; I wanted to work in a pharmacy that had several opportunities to improve—and to take advantage of those opportunities.

**Q: What challenges did you face as a new pharmacy manager?**

Although I had experience with the company, I did not have experience being a pharmacist, so my most important challenge was learning how to balance best practice with running a business.

With most of my technicians close to my age or older, I faced interpersonal challenges. As the pharmacy manager, your staff has to respect you as a

leader and respond accordingly to the challenges, praise, and criticism you present to them.

**Q: What benefits and rewards have you experienced as a new pharmacy manager?**

Being a pharmacy manager has been a great experience thus far. I've grown tremendously as a person and professional. I enjoy being the face of the pharmacy and have no problem accepting responsibility for anything that takes place at the pharmacy. I'm thankful to be in this position, as it's the first step in further advancing my career. Knowing how to resolve conflicts is a key skill for successful pharmacy managers and is useful in both professional and personal life.

**Q: What role has networking, having a mentor, or involvement in professional associations had in your development as a pharmacy manager?**

It is very refreshing to know that I am not alone in being a pharmacy manager. I had mentors every step of the way and absorbed as much information as I could from them. I studied everything they did, every managerial decision they made. Networking and professional associations have also been essential as I can share my experiences and get opinions and advice from my peers.

**Q: From your perspective, what are the attributes of a manager? Of a leader?**

I believe managers and leaders share numerous attributes. They need to be able to solve problems under pressure while ensuring they are making sound business decisions. They need to be innovative, always finding ways to advance the practice and profession. Managers and leaders must be patient; the world cannot be changed overnight. It is very important to set goals; however, those goals must be realistic and given the proper time to be achieved.

Managers and leaders must understand that criticism will be given to them, whether they were involved in a situation or not. They must be prepared to pass on praise to others, because teamwork is essential to success. In working with a team, a manager or leader must be able to delegate tasks. You get greater productivity, efficiency, and engagement when you involve the whole team rather than trying to take on everything alone.