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THE ART OF COMPROMISE

GUEST AUTHOR 03/03/2019

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Counter configuration versus service specialisation: a critical pharmacy juggling act, says Glenn Guilfoyle

From the myriad compromises and juggling acts we see pharmacists and their teams needing to live with, one that we still regularly see needing attention is the battle between counter configuration and service specialisation.

To explain, counter configuration relates to your dispensary service counters: how many stand-alone pieces of masonry, how many service subdivisions by way of privacy screens, and the physical proximity and spatial relationship to each other.

Service specialisation relates to your script-in, script-out, and OTC service provision and the degree to which you spatially separate them between counters against combining any of these services into same counter locations.

As the nature of customer service at the dispensary evolves to feature greater and richer engagement, workflow and traffic flow consistency and strategy become commensurately more important.

Processing efficiency decreases (wasted) time on the “production line”, liberating more time for customer engagement at the service locations.

Our workflow studies consistently show that a strategic and consistent workflow delivers relatively high processing speed. And the hallmarks of this strategic and consistent workflow come from separating the counters and services (as defined in first paragraph) as much as practical and possible in your available pharmacy and dispensary footprint.

The positive impact on customer engagement duration is two fold:

- The indirect benefit – as described from liberating time to engage customers as a result of less time (resource) required to process.
- And the direct benefit – from high service specialisation across the available service counters, regardless of processing efficiency.

So where is the juggling act? Service specialisation is resource hungry. If you are to “gazette” to your customers that you want them to come to specific service locations for specific services, then you need to have these service locations manned as close to 100% of trading hours as you can. An unmanned service counter tells the customer to ignore your workflow rules and go to any counter a staff member can be seen.

This then fosters “Rafferty’s Rules” and breakdown of your workflow, traffic flow and the ultimate customer benefits from quick processing and increased engagement duration.

The bottom line

Best = physically separate your script-in/script-out OTC service offers. Man these service locations all the time, and configure them to optimise one-way work and traffic flow.

Better = if you don’t have the prerequisite staffing levels, moderate your service specialisation (eg combine script-out and OTC to the same service location), but don’t compromise on your manning of these service locations.

Good = If you have to compromise on both resourcing level and good counter configuration for service specialisation, at least have a pharmacist stationed at the counter/s where script out and OTC customer conversations can be offered, at all trading hours.

Glenn Guilfoyle is principal of The Next Level. Contact him [here](#) or by calling 0418 519 755



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✍ counter, Glenn Guilfoyle, Pharmacy, service

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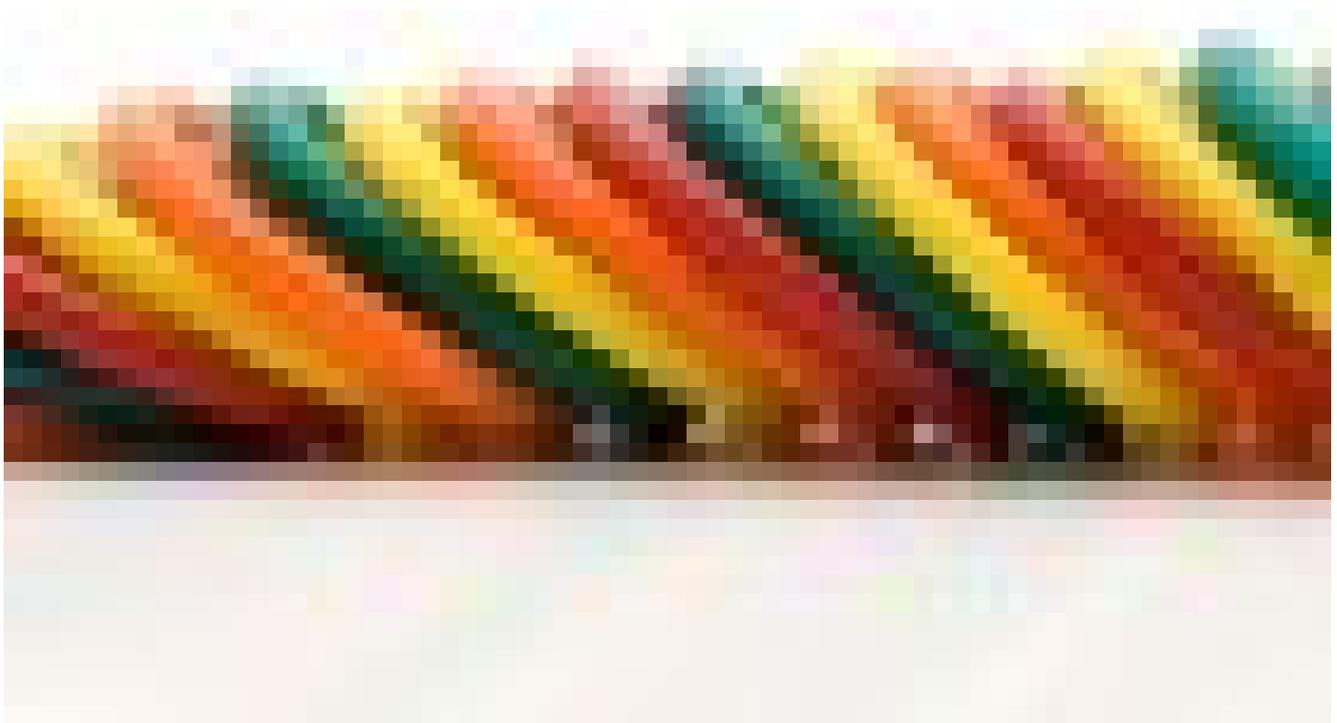
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