




BUSINESS CLASS COLUMNS

FREEDING THE PHARMACIST, IT'S A QUESTION OF TRUST

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Is there a way to turn off the dispensary vortex vacuum? Glenn Guilfoyle thinks so

"Mary" (a pseudonym) is employed as a "forward" pharmacist at Upper Utopia West Pharmacy (another pseudonym!). In her heart and mind, she perceives herself as a "forward" pharmacist, believing that her best value to her employer is in engaging with customers at the service counters, offering health advice and solutions. Not processing scripts in the dispensary.

She is in her comfort zone "out there" and has a passion and natural disposition being nose to nose and toe to toe with customers all day every day. And she regularly reminds her employer of this.

Why then, muses, Joy (again – no reference to any real person), the Retail Manager at Upper Utopia West Pharmacy, do I so often see Mary fussing and beavering away in the dispensary?

Frustratingly for all concerned, including all the "Marys" of the world, Australian retail pharmacy is replete with "Marys". Hearts of gold. Customer focused. Hard working. Honest. Professional. BUT perfectionist and untrusting of team colleagues.

The answer to Jenny's question is that Mary does not even realise that she is abrogating her responsibility to be "forward". She cannot make the distinction that regularly being sucked back into the dispensary is not "forward". Because, in her mind there is an inextricable coupling of delivering forward service directly to customers and going back into the dispensary to

- process because she perceives that the processing function is currently undermanned

- process because she perceives that the a current waiting patient is a complex polypharmacy case and only she could process it correctly
- take the GP phone call because she perceives that no one else in the team could address the query adequately
- address a staff query from within the bowels of the dispensary
- and any other of approximately 675 possible and plausible reasons

The solution?

A mixture of business rules embodied in the roster, leadership and coaching.

- Rosters need to go way beyond the norm of telling Mary which day / time shifts she is on. Rosters need to specify – for all team members – “right place, right time, right tasks, within a team framework where all team members know not only their own right place, right time, right tasks, but also that of their team mates”. Just like any elite AFL/NRL/or just about any other sport team.
- Leadership, communication, exhortation for Mary and all team members in support of the vision of the forward service model and what it looks like. Repeatedly. With the business rules Do’s and Don’ts (task responsibilities and accountabilities).
- One on one coaching for each team member on their role and responsibilities re both points above. Two way – inviting their input as well.

There are literally thousands of “Mary’s” in the retail pharmacy environment who are sub-optimised in terms of an effective forward pharmacy service model.

But many, many of them don’t know what they don’t know in this context. Many, many of these Mary’s possess the inherent DNA to “do it”, and they don’t require massive remoulding to do so. See again the three bullets immediately above.

Let’s emancipate all the Mary’s of the pharmacy world from their unwitting, self-imposed yoke!

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