

Fruth Pharmacy reduces costs and improves customer service by standardizing on Lexmark printers and supplies.

Fruth Pharmacy improves customer service, retains pharmacists with Lexmark printing solution

The Organization

When was the last time you stepped into a neighborhood drug store, where the pharmacist knows your name? Even with rising health care costs and a challenging retail climate, Fruth Pharmacy, an independent chain with 22 locations, has flourished by focusing on customer service and helping its pharmacists do what they do best - take care of customers.

What separates Fruth from its competitors is the company's attention to service. This approach has made life-long customers of the people who live in Southern Ohio and Western West Virginia. However, retaining these loyal customers hasn't been an easy task.

Laddie Burdette, President of Fruth Pharmacy, knows firsthand how important it is to maintain a high level of customer service. He started working at the company more than 25 years ago as an intern. Today, his many tasks include provisioning the stores with the technology required to operate efficiently.

"Technology keeps driving our business," said Burdette. "We need to do things that make us more efficient and more reliable. Everything is workflow in our business."

The Challenge

Nowhere in the store is technology more important than in the profit center of the pharmacy. Approximately 80 percent of company revenues come from pharmacy sales. The company also recognizes that the pharmacy brings in regular customers who contribute to the remaining 20 percent of crucial front-end sales.

Burdette first specified Lexmark technology in 1995 at the recommendation of his prescription dispensing software vendor.

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—Laddie Burdette
President
Fruth Pharmacy
Point Pleasant, W.Va.
www.fruthpharmacy.com

The results were immediate: faster label output, a quieter workplace and improved document quality.

However, after using Lexmark for eight years, Fruth made the decision to switch to another brand of printer. The performance of the commodity printer was problematic and the anticipated savings on supplies was quickly negated by a steep increase in service interventions.



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With the commodity printers, Fruth’s pharmacies began experiencing a high number of label jams.

“The commodity printers frustrated the pharmacists,” said Burdette. “We’d have to remove the jams and send the printers back to be fixed. My tech administrator said our stores were going to revolt on us. This was extremely disruptive to the pharmacies. We couldn’t work like that.”

The Solution

Within less than one year of making the switch, Fruth is now re-standardizing on Lexmark equipment and supplies.

Fruth uses Lexmark T632 monochrome laser printers to print vial labels, patient information and monographs. Retail signage and other special media applications are also printed on this equipment, allowing Fruth to leverage the robustness inherent in Lexmark’s technology.

The ability of Lexmark to support several different applications within the store provides Fruth with the added benefit of printer redundancy. With decreased service issues, nearly 100 percent up time and quiet

and fast printers, the pharmacy can focus on customer service and not on printer issues. The pharmacists and customers certainly appreciate the difference.

The Results

According to Burdette, Fruth customers don’t care what brand of printer the pharmacy uses. They simply want their prescriptions filled quickly and to have easy access to Fruth’s trusted and knowledgeable pharmacists. It became clear that customer service was directly linked to Fruth’s choice of printer manufacturer.

Keeping pharmacists on task, by filling prescriptions and consulting customers, instead of struggling with technology malfunctions, is an important variable in retaining qualified staff and maintaining high customer service rates. Burdette estimates that the cost of identifying, qualifying and training a new pharmacist is nearly 20 times that of the cost of a quality laser printer.

Deploying the right equipment in the pharmacy can make a difference in the morale of the pharmacist and whether he or she works at Fruth or for a competitor.

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The ultimate benefits to Fruth are improved customer service and satisfied pharmacists. The latter benefit goes straight to the bottom line when pharmacists stay at Fruth for the duration of their careers, saving the company tens of thousands of dollars in pharmacist recruiting and training costs.