

Pulling in the profits...



Laurence Sprey managing director of Brighton based Ashton Pharmacy refitted and re-branded his business to better meet customer expectations. Here he tells John Hilditch how the investment has paid off...

As the government's agenda for pharmacy continues to move forward at an incredible pace, now might be the perfect time to give your pharmacy a makeover and get it ready for the New Year, by focusing on steps you can take to enhance and sustain your professional image.

It's often said that a complete refit incorporating a brand identity package and a distinctive, professional image is one of the best things you can do for your pharmacy's long-term health.

Creating the right shopping environment so as to boost footfall, reverse falling or static sales and positively shape customer attitudes and purchasing behaviour is very important.

But it is just one part of the solution. A major refurbishment may be called for, too, as far as your business's marketing approach and activity are concerned.

Good quality presentation and effective retail merchandising on an ongoing basis is also essential for improving your image, communicating your brand and for increasing your turnover and profits.

A prime example of how to succeed as a marketing-savvy retail pharmacy is Ashton's Late Night Pharmacy.

The Brighton-based pharmacy has carved an even bigger place for itself in the market using a disciplined approach to the marketing and merchandising of an environment with help from Dollar Rae.

The pharmacy has seen customer loyalty and revisit rates improve dramatically following a redesign, rebranding and refit.

Ashton's attention to presentation, quality, atmosphere, and the creation of a positive shopping experience is a big attraction from the customer's viewpoint. The category management and front-of-shop POS merchandising are professionally executed. Products are displayed and presented in an aesthetically pleasing manner. The pharmacy's clean, coordinated look continues to the customised POS material, including uniform channel strips for the shelves.

Ashton's employs an in-house marketing manager. It also sought professional help in order to have procedures laid down for man-



Investing to succeed: Laurence Sprey, managing director of Ashton's Pharmacy (above)

aging and communicating effective point of sale and in-store merchandising standards throughout the business.

The pharmacy's sales turnover for this year is "substantially" ahead of the previous year's total, according to managing director Laurence Sprey. In keeping with its ethical and professional status, medicines are the largest contributor to the pharmacy's success, representing about 75-80 per cent of total sales.

"The Ashtons name and brand connect positively with both customers and employees," says Laurence. "Retail is detail. We spend a lot of time on category management and every week we fine-tune our stock merchandising. Every week too we are promoting a different healthcare-related campaign. This week it is Mouth Cancer Awareness. Last week it was in support of National Depression Week. Our marketing, promotional and merchandising skills play a pivotal role in attracting business and improving the performance of the pharmacy."



Later opening times, plus a private consultation room and improved customer service from trained staff make Ashtons Pharmacy a winner with customers

"Embracing marketing and always seeking ways of improving our presentation have paid off handsomely for us. Superb customer service from our well-trained staff is what gives us an extra competitive edge. Our image and message are expressed clearly, consistently and coherently. They are projected and communicated every time a customer sees the corporate identity, collects a prescription, browses the illuminated shelves for a healthcare medicine, or has a private consultation with the pharmacist."

"From day one of re-opening after Dollar Rae's incredible transformation, with less retail space and less stock, we are serving more customers."

Before the refit work started, Ashtons carried out extensive market research with 500 patients to identify its true market, target customer profile, customer needs, and product or service gaps. Plans are afoot to back it up with another survey soon. "You need to be constantly monitoring what the customers want and ways of keeping them happy."

"There is an integrity about the whole Ashtons package," says Dollar Rae's managing director John Hilditch. "Professionalism and quality are seen all the way through the business."

Mr Hilditch adds: "As a company we can provide the means and create the right environment for a client. But the long-term success and performance of the client's business ultimately depends on his maintaining the professional environment by delivering and maintaining good standards of presentation, merchandising, personalised service, customer care, and staff training. And not allowing these standards to slip into the mediocre and ordinary."

John Hilditch is managing director of Dollar Rae Limited, leaders in retail pharmacy design and development throughout the United Kingdom.

