



# McCracken's Pharmacy Eases Workload and Instills Unmatched Quality Control

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*Waynesburg, Pennsylvania Independent Complements Trademark Personalized Service with PharmASSIST Enterprise System*

PHONE 607.798.9376



**A**s a mainstay in Waynesburg, Pennsylvania for over four decades, McCracken's Pharmacy has been a faithful servant to a community that has consistently looked to them for quality prescription service and dependable therapeutic advice. McCracken's long-term success has been built on old-fashioned personalized service and a home-like atmosphere in which their customers have placed their trust in the hands of the McCracken's staff.

PharmASSIST<sup>®</sup>

## case study



*McCracken's Pharmacy is an independent pharmacy founded in 1961 by Jack McCracken and currently operated by son Jeff McCracken. The store fills approximately 2200 prescriptions weekly using a PharmASSIST Enterprise System comprised of 3 cabinets, 150 dispensers, and 5 workstations (Order Entry/Rx Imaging, Manual Fill, Auto-Fill, and 2 Rx Verification stations).*

Similar to other independent pharmacies nationwide, McCracken's has faced several formidable challenges during their tenure in Waynesburg. From the arrival of several large retail pharmacy chains to an increasingly volatile local economy to the continual rise in prescription volumes, McCracken's has stared down adversity and looked to the future by implementing pharmacy automation technology. Employing Innovation Associates' PharmASSIST Enterprise System, McCracken's now complements their highly personalized service with advanced automated dispensing technology to offer their customers the ultimate in quality control and patient care.

Jeff McCracken knew he needed automation. His pharmacy was already having trouble keeping up with their 2200 plus weekly volume, and he projected his store would experience a 50% increase in the coming five years. “We were trying to fill 500 prescriptions in a day like we had filled 150 or 250 previously. Our workflow was simply to get the prescriptions from customers, and to stack them in the order they came in and go from there,” says McCracken.

## McCracken’s Challenge

“In a small town, you tend to know your customers, and you look out there and see who’s waiting and where they are in line. If they continued to wait, we’d move them up in line. It was a very inefficient system but it was the way we had done things for years.”

To address his pharmacy’s various issues, McCracken decided to develop a 5-year plan, with a key component of the plan being automated dispensing technology. He shared his vision with his staff during their employee evaluations and one of them asked, “Why will it take you five years to get there?” “I needed to hear that,” says McCracken. “The reality was I could get there a lot sooner. So I sat down and worked out a plan and within a year I had everything taken care of.”

“First and foremost, I needed to bring order to our dispensing process. I felt I had fairly good control over the process when I was here; however, when I wasn’t here, I didn’t feel it was as organized and that concerned me. I needed a system that could help to control the chaos and to manage the process when I wasn’t here.”

To kick off his plan, McCracken expanded the pharmacy by building out the left-hand side of the building. The expansion tripled the size of the original prescription dispensing area and gave him unlimited options in designing the floor plan and developing a new workflow.

## Deciding on PharmASSIST

As the expansion took shape, he revisited his earlier research of automated dispensing systems and began reading his latest pharmacy technology journals. Prior to the expansion, he had strongly considered installing a robotic system. “I was pretty much sold on it, but I just couldn’t bring myself to buy one because I didn’t have enough space at the time,” says McCracken.

“Rx Imaging was absolutely key. I wanted the ability to verify the actual hard copy prescription every time we filled a prescription.”



Although he now had the space, he compared each system's footprint. "Size was still a big issue to me because you can never have enough space in a busy pharmacy," says McCracken. "The PharmASSIST system was real compact and it had several of the quality control features I was looking for." He adds, "Rx Imaging was absolutely key. I wanted the ability to verify the actual hard copy prescription every time we filled a prescription. I also wanted a system that could safely handle the increased volume without having to worry about patient safety."

After comparing each automated dispensing system's footprint, features/benefits, and pricing, McCracken decided on a PharmASSIST Enterprise System, Innovation's combined counting technology and workflow solution. "Initially I wanted 200 dispensers but Innovation convinced me that I didn't need the fourth cabinet and they weren't completely sure I needed the third," says McCracken. "I ran a report on my drug utilization to determine the percentage of drugs 150 dispensers would count vs. 200. It showed I could not cost justify the extra expense for the additional cabinet." He adds, "If I was buying the system all over again, I would probably start with 100 dispensers and expand at a later date... but I have to say, I would not give up the third cabinet I have right now."

*“The PharmASSIST system gives you complete confidence in what you're doing. It does a great job of helping to organize the process, especially at high volumes, and its accuracy and safety features are top notch.”*



## Going Live



McCracken's implementation went smoothly as Innovation's customer service rep installed the cabinets and workstations and trained the entire staff in five days. As with any initial integration, the engineering team encountered some issues while integrating PharmASSIST and QS/I, McCracken's pharmacy management system, but all was resolved in a timely fashion.

"The entire installation took about three and half days, and much of that was spent on the initial replenishment of the cabinets," says McCracken. "That probably took a day and a half because I wanted all my employees to be involved. Everybody replenished 20-25 dispensers so they would be familiar with how to do it."

Innovation then spent two days training McCracken's staff on PharmASSIST basics. Says McCracken, "They trained our staff in groups of two because I like to do individualized attention. I didn't expect everyone to be proficient right after the training but I at least wanted them to be familiar with how to do things." He adds, "We still train on the system and move people around to bring everyone up to speed and to have a comfort level on all the workstations."

With Innovation's customer service rep on-hand, McCracken's took the system live the following Tuesday. "I never recommend going live with a new system on your busiest day of the week, which is typically Monday," says McCracken. "That's not being fair to your employees or your patients."



## A Total Transformation



Since installing the PharmASSIST Enterprise System and redefining their workflow, McCracken's has dramatically improved their efficiency, eliminated dispensing errors, and reaped the benefits of a happier and less stressed staff. Two key components that have made a major difference are their new, color-coded basket priority system and their triangular workflow.

The basket priority system sets the stage for the workflow by identifying whether a customer is waiting or not. Highest priority is given to customers who are either ill or have a sick child, or who are waiting for the rest of a partial fill.

The triangular workflow sets a clear path for prescriptions by having workstations at strategic locations within the triangle. The goals are to reduce bottlenecks, keep staff focused on a specific task, and place pharmacists at the end of the triangle where they verify all prescriptions and counsel patients. "Our workflow is the key. It makes our dispensing process operate much like an assembly line," says McCracken. "Each person has a task assigned to them and they focus on that task only. That by far increases efficiency and it makes a person a lot more responsible and accountable. For example, if a problem does occur along the line, you can track where that problem occurred and why it occurred."

Pharmacist Scott Adamson adds, "The PharmASSIST system gives you complete confidence in what you're doing. It does a great job of helping to organize the process, especially at high volumes, and its accuracy and safety features are top notch."

From a technician's perspective, Mary Kay Christopher, who typically handles the Auto-Filling workstation, comments, "PharmASSIST is so easy to use and easy to learn. The Filling and Replenish window's on-screen instructions tell you exactly what to do at every step. Drug changeovers are just as easy. We've done around a dozen and they take no time at all."



*“The system's simultaneous counting makes a huge difference, especially in the mornings when you first come in and the system literally counts 15 to 20 different prescriptions at the same time.”*

In addition to the redefined workflow, a key contributor to McCracken's enhanced efficiency is PharmASSIST's counting technology. "The system's simultaneous counting makes a huge difference, especially in the mornings when you first come in and the system literally counts 15 to 20 different prescriptions at the same time," says McCracken. "When I began looking for a system, I certainly wanted a device that would automatically count my pills, but I really didn't think the system's automatic counting would speed up our dispensing time. After experiencing PharmASSIST's ability to count ahead and to count simultaneously, I realized that it definitely makes a difference and is a great timesaver. That's been a nice added benefit of PharmASSIST."

*Discover our vision of PharmASSIST automated dispensing solutions.*

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627 Field Street • Johnson City, New York 13790