

## HEALTH MART SUCCESS STORY



**How Rex Pharmacy's owner navigated change with his staff to drive med sync success**



**JOSH BORER**

*Owner, Rex Pharmacy*

# Keeping up with a fast-changing pharmacy industry

Josh Borer read the writing on the wall: the practice of pharmacy was evolving, and his Health Mart,<sup>®</sup> Rex Pharmacy, had a choice to make: adapt, or be left behind; lead, or be a follower.

He and his staff were already on their way to transitioning their pharmacy to a more patient-centric model by executing clinical programs such as medication therapy management and patient adherence programs. But, like most pharmacies, Josh realized he and his staff needed to change their thought process as well as their approach to managing their patients and filling prescriptions to truly survive and thrive in the new world, layered with DIR fees, performance networks and shrinking reimbursements.

Josh knew to realize this vision, it was imperative that Rex Pharmacy shift their daily workflow and operations from reactive to proactive by implementing **medication synchronization** (“med sync”).

**Involve your team from the start — help them understand why this change is necessary, and how it will benefit the pharmacy and patients**

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We sat down together as a staff and asked, ‘What’s our end result? What is the threat if we don’t do this, what are the opportunities if we do go down this course?’ And we decided for us, the ‘why’ was to improve patient outcomes, to improve our operating efficiencies and to ensure we’re relevant in the future of pharmacy — for both our patients and our staff.

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**JOSH BORER**  
*Rex Pharmacy*

## Preparing staff for implementation: managing change

When Josh decided to implement med sync, he knew engaging his staff from the very beginning was critical to success.

When he first introduced the idea of med sync, his staff thought the upheaval of implementing this workflow was unnecessary, and that med sync was beyond their capabilities. However, when Josh shared the plan with his staff, they were bought-in, committed and understood the benefits — as well as the sense of urgency of implementing med sync in their pharmacy.

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## Stay motivated and be patient – med sync results won't happen overnight

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It certainly is a challenge to change your complete workflow model and change your mindset. To have our staff focus on changing that model was something that was a big task for me. So, we came together as a staff and asked, 'What's our "why"? What's our end result?' We wanted to focus on the 'why.' We decided our goal was to improve our patient outcomes, to improve our operating efficiencies, and just make sure that we're relevant in the future of pharmacy.

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**JOSH BORER**  
*Rex Pharmacy*

Josh cites four key components to successfully leading his staff through this significant change:

1

### Hold a staff meeting to provide information and create a shared pharmacy vision together

Before launching med sync Josh brought his staff together to lay out how the pharmacy industry was changing and how in order to be a leading provider of quality patient care, they were going to have to create significant operational efficiencies. The entire staff agreed that this was the best model for their patients; once they had the operational efficiencies in place they would be able to lift their heads up and spend more time supporting their patients. The staff also realized that this was the best decision for their business; implementing med sync would allow them to remain a leader in the market by providing new patient-focused and clinical services.

Together, the pharmacy created a holistic vision statement outlining how they would differentiate the pharmacy and how they, together, would help to improve the health outcomes of their patients. Med sync was going to be the clear backbone to Rex Pharmacy realizing the overarching vision and mission the team created together.

2

### Identify staff champion for med sync

Josh identified a specific technician to be responsible for managing med sync while it was in its infancy. Realizing this tech would be managing the pharmacy's general population as well as the med sync population, Josh was proactive and took some tasks off the technician's plate so that she was not overburdened and could focus on meeting their med sync goals.

3

### Set shared goals

An additional best practice Josh used with his staff was to set clear, achievable short-term goals along with a vision of long-term success. Josh set the expectation that they would check in weekly to see how the team was tracking against the goals and collaborate as a team in setting the next goal.

4

### Create open lines of communication

Josh also stressed to his staff prior to implementing med sync that open communication was going to be the key to their success. They were all embarking on this new journey together, and assumptions were being made about how things would go. Josh let his staff know they were learning together and through regular check-ins they could identify solutions to challenges and make tweaks to the processes as needed.

**Communicate,  
set goals and  
celebrate them**

“

I think that our success really came from having not only that open conversation with my staff about the ‘why’ and the ‘how’ but then continuously staying in touch to ensure we were all on the same page. This is probably one of my proudest accomplishments: being able to motivate our team and to see them really contribute toward that goal.

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**JOSH BORER**  
*Rex Pharmacy*

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***Seeing that their first patients were successfully synchronized and it was a positive experience for them gave the staff the confidence to keep going.***

## **The messy middle: expect obstacles, and work together to overcome them**

While Rex Pharmacy’s staff was committed to the pharmacy’s new vision, they were still frustrated and overwhelmed as they were getting up and running. Josh cited the following as the keys to his staff’s success in persevering:

### **Enrolling the first patient was the hardest**

Enrolling patient number one was the hardest for Rex Pharmacy. The staff is committed to perfection, and enrolling and synchronizing those patients early on took a leap of faith. From there they grew to 5–10 patients with whom they had good working relationships. Seeing that those patients were successfully synchronized and it was a positive experience for them gave the staff the confidence to keep going.

### **Identifying and overcoming barriers was important**

Whenever you change processes, there are naturally going to be barriers and feelings of resistance that arise. Josh kept in constant communication with his staff during the first 90 days after launching med sync. He worked with them to revamp processes and eliminate barriers as they came up. His med sync technician champion was also available to field questions and serve as a resident expert for the team.

For example, in order to make it easier for the med sync tech champion to manage the initially small med sync population, Josh designated an area in the back of the pharmacy for processing med sync tasks. This allowed the tech champion to step away from her daily tasks and focus on adopting med sync. Josh also identified that the tech champion would manage the med sync patient populations for an hour or two on Mondays and Tuesdays. Dedicating time and space allowed the tech champion to feel less stressed by being able to focus solely on med sync as she was learning the process.

Additionally, as med sync was ramping up, there was a period when the team continued to add patients but the operational efficiencies weren’t yet realized. This was by far the hardest and the “messiest” time in their med sync journey. The staff felt like they were burdened with extra work and chaos but no results were garnered — that is when the staff needed the most coaching and encouragement from pharmacy leadership. Josh assured them that these growing pains were normal and to be expected, and that things would get harder before they would get easier, but the end result would leave everyone feeling their efforts were not in vain. Day-to-day work in the pharmacy would soon be easier and their patients would be healthier.

Throughout the “messy middle” Josh reinforced the pharmacy vision to his staff and diligently reminded them what the end goal looked like.

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*Left: Rex Pharmacy staff, Atlantic, Iowa*

*Right: McKesson's 2016 Pharmacy of the Year recognition event*

### **Tracking and celebrating success kept program moving forward**

To ensure the team created sustained momentum with med sync, Josh continued to set and celebrate weekly patient enrollment goals and eventually began to also focus on “syncing” enrolled patients who were due for their refills. Med sync goals were posted and tracked prominently in the pharmacy. Rex Pharmacy’s ultimate goal was to have at least 50% of their prescription volume filled through med sync.

In addition to noting milestones, Josh also made sure that each goal that was met was celebrated. Examples of celebrations include Josh bringing the staff together for pizza lunches or taking them out for a happy hour.



## **Med sync: the new normal**

Now that Rex Pharmacy has the majority of its eligible patients enrolled and maintained on med sync, its pharmacy staff has only one question left: **“Why we don’t have EVERYONE on sync?”**

Josh and his staff were recognized as McKesson’s Pharmacy of the Year in 2016 for their dedication to their patients and community, their outstanding clinical performance, and their innovative and dedicated approach to enhancing their workflow to adapt to the industry’s “new normal.” Rex Pharmacy, which has been serving the community since 1941, is located in Atlantic, Iowa. Josh bought the store from a prior Health Mart owner and the staff is very heavily tenured. Together, they’ve figured out how to evolve, recognized as outstanding not only by McKesson, but also by their peers, patients and community.



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