

Stultz Pharmacy Customer Solution Case Study

Pharmacy Relies on RMS' Mobile POS Solution to Continue Business Operations

Stultz Pharmacy Kentucky and Ohio Locations

The pharmacy has provided prescriptions and health information to customers in the tri-state area for more than 30 years. Sister locations are Greenup, Kentucky and Wheelersburg, Ohio, with a staff of more than 80, across the three.

Amerisource Bergen has been the firm's principal wholesaler for more than 15 years, making the three Good Neighbor Pharmacy (GNP) locations. Stultz serves on the GNP Technology Group Advisory Committee, and RMS is a preferred technology vendor with Amerisource.

RMS' Star-Plus POS solution is used for inventory management and point of sale throughout, with a bidirectional interface to the Rx30 pharmacy management system.



The front door makes a poor drive-thru. Stultz Pharmacy demonstrates immediate crisis recovery using RMS' EvolutionPOS™ handheld registers.

"Missed the brake. Hit the gas pedal. Drove straight into our store. Took the front end out."

Third-generation pharmacist and pharmacy owner Brad Stultz tells a straightforward story of the vehicular assault upon his Flatwoods, Kentucky store the afternoon of May 13.

"We were extremely lucky. The last patient walked out about 10 seconds prior to the vehicle entering the store. No customers were standing in the front end area, which is very unusual for that time of day. Early afternoon is usually one of our busiest times. And the car stopped two feet short of our business office, where two ladies were working."



Photo: Kenneth Hart, The Independent, Ashland, KY.

Despite significant damage to facility and inventory, the pharmacy was up and running later the same day. That business continuity owed in part to using EvolutionPOS™ mobile point-of-sale devices from Retail Management Solutions (RMS).

Officer suspects a criminal act

The man who drove his silver SUV into the store is a longtime customer. He too was unharmed.

At the moment of impact, the driver in the next parking place was an off-duty police officer. At the point he saw the car barrel through the glass, he thought the pharmacy was being robbed, so he proceeded to hold the driver in custody until the local police arrived.

The Flatwoods store is one of three Stultz independent pharmacies, stores that do a brisk prescription business.

"We handle about 700 scripts a day there, a busy little store for 3,500 square feet," Stultz explains. Some 98 percent of the business is prescriptions. The patient base at that location is mainly families, with medical needs from pediatric to geriatric. Most days, 15 staff members are on site, making it all the more remarkable that no one was in the path of the errant SUV.

The front-end was primarily over-the-counter remedies, including many classics that "just aren't likely to be found in a big-box store like the CVS or Rite Aid across the street," per Stultz. Some durable medical equipment and gift items rounded out the destroyed inventory.

How to restore patient service?

Quickly, the pharmacist's dilemma became how to continue serving patients.

Fortunately, the dispensing area and its systems, as well as the store point-of-sale system remained unharmed. The pharmacy POS counter at the front of the store, with an RMS touch-screen register, was just beyond harm's way.

Once a structural engineer verified that the building remained safe for occupancy, Stultz moved into the problem-solving phase.

"Our existing single-lane drive-through on the side of the building was wide enough for two vehicles, so we used traffic cones to separate the lanes," he recalls. "Then we stationed two pharmacy techs there, with the handheld, mobile registers." One EvolutionPOS handheld was already used at that location; the other was brought from another store. Secure wireless bandwidth was already in place with signal strength to the parking lot, so all that was required to bring in a new unit was to reset IP addresses. *(continued)*

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More independent pharmacists choose RMS Point-of-Sale systems than any other.



Within just a few hours – and for weeks since – business resumed with pharmacy employees delivering orders via the new twin lanes with mobile technology, plus a new curb-service location in the parking lot.

Card transactions vary heavily among the Stultz stores, from 30 to 75 percent of sales, with that being strongest at the Flatwoods store. Most of the handheld terminal purchases are with payment cards and store accounts.

About the pharmacy and its technology

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Common systems among the locations are an important practicality. The Amerisource Bergen (AutoMed) FastFill 220 is used for orals packaging at each store. The dispensing management system is Rx30. RMS' Star-Plus POS solution is used for inventory management and point of sale throughout, with a bidirectional interface to the Rx30 pharmacy management system.

"Having a single, shared database among our locations may be the biggest advantage RMS gives us," Stultz says. "Customer records and accounts receivable (store charges) are available in any of the stores, yet we have the flexibility to maintain different inventory in each store, in response to its immediate community."

Next step: rebuild, remodel, revamp

"A blessing in disguise" is how Stultz describes the collision from an inventory standpoint. The storefront was reopened about a week and a half after the incident, but it's due for changes in the final reconstruction, to expand the space in the dispensing area and add dedicated rooms for injections and compounding.

Even before this event, inventory was up for review. Stultz and his wife, Leslie, were already planning to remodel and condense the front section this summer, expecting to trim four 16-foot rows of gondola by half.

"We aim to remove most of the items that don't sell, and carry only the ones that do," he explains. "This emergency prompted us to really look at what our business is doing and refocus on what we do best and what our patients and physicians expect from us. This is where the real-time inventory in the Star-Plus system helps. The result will be fewer SKUs, better managed – a more efficient pharmacy."

The Flatwoods store had an extensive OTC selection that was based on plan-o-grams.

"However, with a CVS right across the street, a Rite-Aid a block away, and a Walmart with five minutes of us, we didn't sell a lot of the normal OTC items," Stultz says. Consistent performers at the location include dressings and first aid, as well as DME.

The service standard keeps 'em coming back

"Human interaction is what keeps people coming back," Stultz affirms. "We have the best staff in the world in these stores. They get the credit for making this work so well."

"The customer service has been so efficient that there have been positive comments registered on Facebook and Twitter. Some are surprised, but all are pleased at being so well served."

As for the mobile POS devices, they have proven themselves under battle conditions, Stultz notes. "Customers and employees like them. The learning curve is straightforward. We never expected to run an entire pharmacy's sales through them, but we've proven it can be successful."

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