

- Intro Voice: Thank you for listening to the only podcast dedicated to the business of pharmacy. Welcome to the Pharmacy Podcast Show. You can find all of our episodes at [pharmacypodcast.com](http://pharmacypodcast.com).
- Nicolle: Hi, this is Nicolle McClure, vice president of GRX Marketing, and you're listening to the Pharmacy Podcast.
- Todd: Hey there, this is Todd Eury, the host of the Pharmacy Podcast. Excited about our new show format. For those of you who have been listeners for some time, I'd like to thank you for being listeners. We're starting a slightly new format here. Obviously, our most important part of the Pharmacy Podcast is our interview. We'll be interviewing Nicolle McClure with GRX Marketing coming up in the show, but before we do that, wanted to just share some things that are happening.
- Todd: I went to the HIMSS Conference, H-I-M-S-S, 2015 in Chicago, and I'm going to do a follow-up podcast on the conference. It was absolutely amazing. 45 thousand people there, health care professionals, lots of them obviously specific to healthcare IT, how information technology really affects the care that we have for our patients. It's absolutely amazing. I met with some very interesting electronic health records companies. Majority of the ones that are really trendsetters and innovators are all cloud based obviously. That's where everything's going, but I'll share some information about that.
- Todd: Also, want to mention in Forbes magazine, there was an article mention called Pharmacy Startup PillPack Could Change The Way America Takes Its Medications. It is a brilliant, innovative story about the startup company. It's a company that's up in Manchester, New Hampshire, and they say the company gets sent their prescriptions, they're obviously mail service, mail order driven, but they're doing things much differently. I encourage you to look this up. You can go right to their website obviously just to read about them, [pillpack.com](http://pillpack.com), but it's an interesting story about the business of pharmacy so I thought I'd mention that. Be on the look out, [music stops 00:02:44] listening that is, for our show as a follow-up to the HIMMS Conference, which was fascinating.
- Todd: So, let's get right into our interview portion of the Pharmacy Podcast.
- Todd: For some time, I have been a very big supporter of pharmacy obviously, technology initially, but marketing much more so, especially in the last 10 years. I've met some really inspiring and creative marketers out there who in fact are dedicated to pharmacy owners' businesses and really helping to differentiate them and their marketplace, but they're doing it because they really understand the business of pharmacy. You open up the, dating myself by saying the Yellow Pages I guess, or you go to Google and you put in the word "marketing services," or, "consulting," you're going to get a lot of stuff, but being able to source subject matter expertise specific to pharmacy business and having someone understand that business and then be able to put some marketing strategies

and campaigns behind it I think is a big deal. I'd like to welcome to the show our sponsor GRX Marketing, Nicolle McClure. How are you today, Nicolle?

Nicolle: I'm great, thank you.

Todd: So, we met via Twitter, which just goes to show that the digital marketing of our world today is significant. From that, I started really paying attention to some of the things that GRX Marketing was talking about, and I was very impressed that you really practice what you preach because as some background, which I'm going to turn it over to you, Nicolle, your marketing company is actually a marketing company for some pharmacies in Iowa and that's a primary part of your position, but then you're taking those strategies, and you're rolling it out to other independent pharmacies. So, you definitely get to know what's working because you're exercising and trying and leveraging things in an actual pharmacy business. Tell us about that.

Nicolle: Yeah, definitely. I mean, myself personally, I've been involved in pharmacy marketing for about 11 years now, so definitely experienced all the changes that the industry has gone through and evolved and what not. We have a group of stores in the Central Iowa area, we have 18 locations that our parent company owns and we do quite a bit of marketing from community outreach to patient mailings to social media, that sort of thing. From that, just formed a program to offer to independent pharmacists across the country because just in starting to talk to other local independents, they had a need for helping them with their marketing because they either aren't sure what to do or don't have time to do it or don't have somebody on staff that they can dedicate the time it really takes to fully market your business.

Todd: Yeah but something else, Nicolle, that I want the audience to know about you and then obviously what you bring to GRX is a corporate background flavor of understanding how to manage large marketing initiatives, budgets, campaigns. Based on your background with a larger size organization, which was the Medicap Pharmacies Incorporated. Share with our listeners about that, too.

Nicolle: I used to be a part of the marketing department for Medicap Pharmacies Incorporated, which is here in Central Iowa area. My role was to not only help with large media buys, TV, radio, direct mail, that sort of thing, but also help individual franchises with their marketing needs. That was across the country so really developed an understanding of not every market's different. You can't do the same thing that you might do for a small town as you would for a pharmacy in a large city.

Todd: Well, there's the balance. If that's all you brought to the table then you might be missing some very specific niches for what is independent pharmacy, but what I like about GRX and what you guys do and talk about first, before you actually start marketing anything, is you're really learning about the customer. By learning about the customer, you guys are actually cookie cut ... You're not cookie

cuttering, but you're designing a custom program, so talk about that with our pharmacy owners, too.

Nicolle: Yeah. That's really how we try to differentiate ourselves. One of the first things that we do with a new client that signs up is we have a phone call with them, and that's really just to figure out what are their goals for the next six months, what do they want to market. Is it increase new patient count, offer a new service, promote a new service? And then we go back and we put together a detailed six month marketing plan for them. So, it's based on their goals and what they want to accomplish. Giving them ideas for each month, that sort of thing, and then all the materials that we do whether it's in-store, a flyer to mail out local businesses, doctors, a patient letter, that sort of thing. It's all completely customized.

Nicolle: We're not going to send them to a website where they're just going to download something that they have to print out there or it's a pre-printed brochure that we're just going to slap a logo on. It's all done with their look and feel, their logos, their colors, that sort of thing. We really try to carry their voice through the marketing materials that we're creating for them.

Todd: What I'm noticing, Nicolle, as the business of pharmacy becomes much more competitive is there are a lot of pharmacy owners who in fact have invested in a marketer who they've brought on staff to do a myriad of different things. When we say the word "marketing," someone that's been in marketing 25 plus years, that's like saying vanilla ice cream. You could put practically anything in that sundae of marketing.

Todd: What's interesting is with bringing someone on staff and who comes on in your pharmacy, they're working just for your pharmacy and they're in your community, they're probably most likely from that community. And by the way, these are all good things, but what you miss when you do that is those outside creative perspectives that might be working in other parts of the country. It comes to the question, I feel like I'm already answering it, but I'll definitely get your insight, is why use an outside marketing company even if I've invested in someone on my own team to do marketing for my pharmacy?

Nicolle: I think you kind of just hit the nail on the head. It's that we bring ideas not only from a market they may be like yours but other markets. Something that's a little bit unique with us as well I think from possible competitors is we're very proactive with our clients so not only if they're contacting us requesting things, working on things for them, but if something or we come across a great idea that another client is doing, we're reaching out to those other clients and saying, "Hey, what about this? Have you tried that?" That sort of thing.

Nicolle: We try to be as proactive as we can. I guess a good example is last year, in the fall, with the hydrocodone change, scheduling change for C controlled substances. We reached out to our clients and said, "Hey, here's some materials

for you guys to notify your patients and your doctors." We didn't wait for them to contact us, so I think just having that funnel of ideas constantly coming down to them that they can use in their local market is definitely an advantage.

Todd: I think something else that's interesting about marketing in the pharmacy industry is I can't imagine bringing in a complete outsider. I'm not saying if you were in the architecture business and you helped architects market, there's pieces of those strategies that could probably roll over into pharmacy. However, the bulk of things happening in the pharmacy place and in community and what it means to be a community pharmacy and a health center, a wellness center, a wellness destination, is being able to really understand the business of pharmacy.

Todd: When I'm thinking of strengths and weaknesses of different marketing programs that are out there, and there's quite a few, what's the differentiator that you're thinking of that really sets apart GRX from other programs?

Nicolle: I would say definitely just pharmacy marketing. That's pretty much all we do, so we're in it all day long, and also just our implementation approach. We not only give our clients the ideas, but we implement a lot of it for them. If we suggest to contact your doctors to promote compounding services for example, we're not only going to write the letter for you, design it as custom, but we'll pull a list of your doctors in your area and send you the list. Once they sign off on it, we'll even handle mail or fax it out to them. We take the projects from start to finish and the pharmacy owner doesn't even have to worry about it. They know it's going to be completed. We also try to do as much follow-up as possible to our campaigns to show the return on investment that they're going to get with the ideas that we suggest.

Todd: So, how about this? If I'm a pharmacy owner and I've invested in a very specific vertical program, let's say it's a diabetes course that I'd like to give to community members that would sign up for it, or I invested in trying to launch a pharmacogenomics program, or I want to let my community know that I've invested in some kind of quick care clinic or even the leveraging the world of telemedicine. If I as a pharmacy owner have invested in something but I would like the services of a very knowledgeable marketing team to help me launch that, could we build a custom program to kind of help launch something I've already invested in?

Nicolle: Oh, definitely. Yeah.

Todd: So, yeah, that's what I was thinking because there's many programs out there that they'll say that it's marketing, right? It's different marketing services, but it's really a program. It's not so much marketing, but I think you need a marketing team to come up behind that investment of whatever you're doing, you're trying to outreach, and put a leader behind it. So, how does it work? I would hire you guys for a specific period of time or is this an ongoing

relationship that you kind of move from one program to another? How do the programs work?

Nicolle: Well, as I mentioned before, we start by taking or creating a six month marketing plan for the client and then we just are working through things each month with the goals that we have in mind for the client. Our program is just a six month commitment, so if you try it for six months and decide it's not for you, you can walk away after that. I think it's definitely worth dedicating at least six months to see if marketing works because it does take time. They say it takes 8 to 13 times for somebody to see a message before they even take an action on that. Just think about how many messages you see throughout the day, so it takes a while to break through the clutter I guess. But that's where our program is different.

Nicolle: It's a comprehensive approach so it's one message that people are going to see in various mediums, so in your local newspaper, on your Facebook page, in the pharmacy, that sort of thing. I think that's something that makes us unique as well is that we not only have ideas and programs to help get new customers in the pharmacy but also to get more spending out of your current customers, making them more aware of services that you offer or OTC, specialty products, that sort of thing.

Todd: Yeah, I have two things to say about that. Number one, consistency in marketing builds trust in your community. Number one. Number two, your existing customers want to see fresh stuff. So, it almost sounds like I contradicted myself with both sides of that coin, but it's really true. Number one, you have to be consistent, you have to deliver something. That's why I completely agree if you're going to sign up for this, you have to sign up for six months so you can really be dedicated to it because there's going to be some change. Everybody knows things are habitual. You're going to break some of those, you're going to get out of your comfort zone, you're going to implement a new program, you're going to stick to it for six months, which is going to do two things. It's going to build a new brand for you as a pharmacy owner, you might not have had it before. Number two, it's going to give your community this new consistency that they can rely on month after month, different things happening.

Todd: On the flip side of that, you're bringing fresh content to your existing customer base. They're like, "Wow, this is my pharmacy and they're not stale and old and stuck in 1972," or something. What I like about your program, Nicolle, also, that I want you to describe to the listener is talk about measurement of statistics and measurement of your tactics so that as a pharmacy owner, I know that I'm getting a good return on my investment.

Nicolle: Okay. What we do is with traditional type media, we always suggest that you put a coupon of some sort in the advertising or direct mail, that sort of thing, just so it's easy for them to see the number of coupons that are coming back in to the pharmacy. Online advertising, there's definitely a lot of analytics that you

can get with that, whether you're doing it on social media, Google AdWords, that sort of thing, and we'll keep track of those reports, share them with the clients after it's over. Part of our program includes as well an email program, so we'll send a newsletter or a happy birthday message, any custom email message that the client wants to go out to their customers, and at the end of each month, we'll send them a report that shows how many people open that campaign, how many clicked on a link in the email, that sort of thing.

Nicolle: With any letters that we do ... For example, one of the first things that we do is a lost patient mailing. Anybody that's just stopped coming in the pharmacy for the last six months for whatever reason, we'll pull that list of customers for the pharmacy client, mail the letter out and then each month, we'll pull a list of by last use date and compare that to the mailing list that we sent out to see who exactly is coming in the pharmacy. After three months, the end of the campaign, we'll send that information to the client, so they can see, "Yes, I had 20 percent of the people from the mailing come back," or that sort of thing. Just really trying to ... Because we know our pharmacists are very number driven so anything that we can do to show that what we're doing is valuable, and they're getting the return on investment is good.

Todd: I'd make a comment to that, kind of to the science of marketing and definitely sales because that's kind of where I started from right out of college, and that is when you're gathering these metrics and you're seeing what's working and what's not, you can actually change sometimes or adjust mid-stream in a campaign to kind of make things a little bit better or to get a different reaction from your customer base. But it's more expensive to generate a new customer than it is to establish an ongoing satisfied customer. By doing exactly what you're helping these pharmacy owners to do, Nicolle, through GRX's strategies, you're reaching out to a patient or a customer who hasn't been back in your store maybe for some time and you're recapturing the investment it took to get them in the first place, and I think that's an excellent strategy.

Nicolle: Yeah, definitely. Things like the lost patient mailing or say they want to promote a compliance packaging, we can target a mailing to patients that take five plus meds a month and send a letter out to them as well. Again, we can track that and see who signed up for that packaging program and compare it to the mailing list to see what the results are.

Todd: Well, before we go, before we wrap things up, Nicolle, I want to let the listeners know if you're listening to today's show, I want you to reach out to GRX Marketing with questions about marketing, about pharmacy marketing specifically, something that you want to tackle. You want to grow your business, you got to have a good marketing base infrastructure to really build off of that. It's grxmarketing.com. Once again, grxmarketing.com. Ask for Nicolle obviously. You have a special offer today for Pharmacy Podcast listeners.

- Nicolle: Yeah, we are. We are offering 100 dollars off the first month to anybody that mentions the podcast.
- Todd: That's awesome. What I will do is hint below the podcast player. I'm going to insert some links for you listeners so that you can click on the link. You'll go right to the contact page, you can get ahold of Nicolle and please let her know that you heard the Pharmacy Podcast, and you want more information on how they can help transform your pharmacy business. Well, Nicolle, I thank you for coming on the Pharmacy Podcast Show. This was a lot of fun.
- Nicolle: Yep, thank you so much for the opportunity.
- Todd: You're very welcome. You're listening the Pharmacy Podcast. We were on with Nicolle McClure with GRX Marketing, which can be found at [grxmarketing.com](http://grxmarketing.com), and we thank you for listening.