

SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ESSENTIAL FOR SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS

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C.P. Peoples Chemist (CPPC) has served Broken Hill and outback NSW for nearly 100 years and was the winner of the 2014 QCPP Pharmacy of the Year's Excellence in Community Engagement award. While the business has evolved, the drive to support and engage with the community it serves has been consistent. This article looks at unique ways the pharmacy responds to community and consumer needs, and how ongoing business transformation has been fundamental to its success.

Founded in 1916 by Connell Peoples, grandfather of current owner Con Peoples, C.P. Peoples Chemist has strived to provide the Broken Hill community the best possible pharmacy services for nearly 100 years. For the past ten years, Con Peoples, Jason Harvey, Andrew Johnson and Alex Page have owned and managed the pharmacy.

The partnership is part of the self-developed Outback Pharmacies brand, which has three pharmacies in Broken Hill.

As the needs of the community have evolved, so too has the pharmacy, a process which Con describes as a 'metamorphosis'. This evolution has been essential in maintaining a viable business and ensuring community engagement remains relevant, targeted and sustainable.

Building networks and servicing your community

Self-described 'boys from the bush', three of the four owners were born in Broken Hill and all four are recognised as intimately connected with the community. They are committed to supporting the communities in which they operate, while also fostering relationships with key stakeholders.

'We try to put the community first,' says Jason. 'Strong relationships within our community are essential for the continued viability of our organisation.' Having a healthy community is one of the major aspects that the team try and encourage as pharmacists.

'We have always been strong donors to local sporting and community groups throughout the region. Participation and support of these activities enhances the professional status and credibility of our profession; and allows us to become an active contributor to promoting the health of our community.'



Building professional networks

The pharmacy has built a strong network of health professionals and services in the region such as Maari Ma Local Aboriginal Health Services, Far West Local Health District, and Southern Cross Care who are all vital stakeholders in servicing the community. CPPC also have a 50 year association with the Royal Flying Doctor Service, which supports some of Australia's more remote residents.

Part of building professional networks is to support and foster the next generation of professionals.

The pharmacy has been a strong supporter of the University Departments of Rural Health's Pharmacy Program in Broken Hill. In recognising the importance of such programs to the future of health in the region, the pharmacy aims to make placement students invest not only their work in the pharmacy, but also commit to experiencing everything that the far west has to offer.

Supporting patient care

The pharmacists provide training to the care staff at many of aged care facilities in town and also sit on various medication management and safety committees in the area.

The pharmacy was also the first in Australia to offer a system for prescribers and hospital staff to access the medicine profiles of DAA patients (with consumer consent) to enhance patient safety and improve medicine reconciliation. This project has dramatically reduced medicine errors and misadventure, particularly on hospital discharge.

Health Promotion

The pharmacy often supplies a pharmacist to talk with local support groups, such as the Dementia Carers Support Group, Rotary Club and stroke support groups. Similarly, their pharmacists can often be heard on local radio discussing health issues. Jason notes 'by participating in these activities we aim to further strengthen our relationships within the community and increase health literacy'.

Strengthening the business

CPPC has undertaken substantial business changes in recent years to improve productivity and be responsive to consumer and community needs and a rapidly changing pharmacy environment.

The pharmacy utilised the skills of pharmacist/accountant, Dan O'Halloran who specialises in business and financial management, to help the team review its business structure.

SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This involved a SWOT analysis and planning days which reviewed the existing functions and structure. The SWOT analysis identified key areas for improvement such as process efficiencies, staff engagement, clinical care safety and sustainability, record keeping and formalising management roles. The key responses to these issues included

- Formalising and digitalising processes and procedures in the business
- Improving staff engagement through improved communication and more active staff management
- Significant investment in technology and infrastructure to improve business efficiencies
- Enhancing value proposition of business to consumers through community engagement activities which developed a profile for key personnel within the business
- Improving patient safety and business efficiencies through improved collaborative care.

An excellent example of implementing a successful response to the transformation project was the appointment of a general manager to look after day-to-day operations of the pharmacy including human resources management.

'We were trying to do a lot of those jobs [human resources] ourselves and it didn't really work for us at all. We have about 50 staff over the three pharmacies, so it's a big job,' Jason said. This change has allowed the owners to focus on the more strategic business aspects of the pharmacy.

Jason and the team found the review process difficult at times 'but we knew things had to change and rather than trying to please everyone, we focused on what was right for our business and our community.'

'Everything is now much more structured than it used to be. A lot of the processes we adopted, including planning days, communications, and the intranet have been implemented on an ongoing basis.'

'C.P. Peoples strive to have a healthy profitable business as it allows us to provide the services that we do' says Jason.

'A profitable business is essential to support and engage with our community, while supporting and engaging with our community is essential for our business to be profitable. The two are inseparably linked.'

CPPC have many unique challenges, particularly given their remote geography, but instead of being overwhelmed they have chosen to embrace these challenges, identify opportunities, implement changes and became leaders and innovators within the community and the profession.

'We've made some mistakes along the way but we realise it's a constant evolution—it's important to continue to look at things in a different way and not be scared to think outside the square.'

'Having a successful business allows us to invest in technology. It's the systems we put in place which have allowed us to invest in technology which is allowing us to withstand PBS reform'.

The team from C.P. Peoples Chemist will be sharing their experiences at Pharmacy Business Network conference in Melbourne in September. More information available at www.pharmacybusinessnetwork.com

KEY MESSAGES

- Having a successful business funds essential investment in technology. This transformational investment has improved productivity, which has helped the pharmacy withstand the impact of PBS reform.
- A multifaceted approach to community engagement has increased the pharmacy profile and successfully differentiated it from its competitors.
- Responding to unmet customer needs often requires bespoke solutions.

SWOT ANALYSIS: CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES

FACTORS	WEAKNESSES/THREATS	OPPORTUNITY/SOLUTION
<p>BUSINESS PRODUCTIVITY</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processes which hadn't been updated, formalised or reviewed for many years Large number of dose administration aids for patients packed manually <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant management time spent on administrative or HR related tasks Communication gap identified between owners/management/staff Challenge retaining high quality health professionals due to isolation. The resulting high turnover of staff increases medication errors and reduces business efficiency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Underwent successful store refit Development and implementation of new IT systems to aid pharmacy business and operational efficiencies Implementation of a dose administration aid packing robot Virtual server based IT system which provides accessibility from any of the group's pharmacies Maintaining drive to automate labour intensive processes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of an intranet system accessible to staff from any computer, including QCPP Operations Manual Rotating staff through different pharmacies within group to enhance experience and broader team collaboration More frequent and better structured staff meetings Dedicated general manager primarily responsible for managing staffing operations and issues
<p>CUSTOMER COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The pharmacy group services over 250,000km² (approx. 25% NSW landmass) Many customers are isolated and delivery of medicines is a logistical challenge. For example, mail is received once weekly and only monthly access to a doctor (e.g. Royal Flying Doctor Service) Population has some of the highest rates of obesity, diabetes and smoking in Australia The median/average age of the Broken Hill population is 43 years of age, 6 years above the Australian average Broken Hill and outlying areas have a high indigenous population many of whom have poor health literacy and lack of access to health services Increased competition in local market Unclear value proposition to consumers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contracted a pharmacist to the local aboriginal health service to work as part of their chronic disease management team. This pharmacist travels within Broken Hill and outlying towns, conducts HMRs for aboriginal people, and has implemented medication adherence programs Support to Royal Flying Doctor service Maintain home delivery service and distance supply service Adopted program to give local hospital and GP clinics real-time read only access to medication profiles of DAA patients Developed Outback Pharmacies banner, brand and marketing Market the personalities within the pharmacy to the community. For example, a pharmacist or intern pharmacist on the radio each week talking about a health topic or articles placed in the local paper on a regular basis Focus on community support initiatives in marketing activities