

KL1 Paid For Itself In 3 Months

Ottawa Health Mart Pharmacy, Ottawa, IL

Summary

Two expenses – inventory and labor costs – were on Chris Thrush’s mind when he began talking with Kirby Lester about improving his pharmacy’s operation at the Ottawa Health Mart. “This industry can be wildly expensive if you aren’t careful,” says Mr. Thrush, operations manager. “It’s a formidable expense just to buy meds. You need to be sure your computer matches what’s actually on your shelf. And it’s also expensive to staff up. We were walking the line of paying more in OT, or hiring another person.” He found the ideal technology to help address both concerns. The KL1 compact tablet counter made inventory simple and accurate, and it also helped speed up dispensing medications.



Setting

In 2010, Mr. Thrush and his pharmacist-wife Elizabeth built the new Ottawa Health Mart. Even with six other retail pharmacies competing in this quiet town 90 miles southwest of Chicago, IL, the new Health Mart has been thriving. Focusing on retail script filling and specialized organic supplements, the Thrushes anticipate slow, steady growth.

- Daily Rx volume: Average 150
- Staff: Typical shift is 1 pharmacist and 2-3 techs

Challenges

When Mr. Thrush began talking with Kirby Lester about automating, he wasn’t convinced his business needed help. That was only for the mega-pharmacies or chains with deep pockets. But when volume started rising, a light bulb started glowing. “The more I talked about it, the more it made sense,” he says. “Busy times could be unpleasant. Lunches were skipped. We got backed up. We were at a point of maybe needing to hire another person.” A device like the KL1 could help. But still, could his small business *actually justify* pharmacy automation?

Solution

He found he *could* justify it, with ease. After buying the KL1, Mr. Thrush estimated that the device paid for itself two times over – in just 3 months! Inventory was more accurate. Busy periods were smoother and customers were satisfied with their quick service. No more overcounts or customer disputes. The KL1 even fit perfectly into their existing workflow. The staff first scan-verifies every order with the McKesson Enterprise computer system, then they count with the KL1. “When I told the staff I was buying the KL1, they said, ‘You pay me to count. Why do we need that?’ But the first time they didn’t have to do a 270-count by hand, they came around real quick” says Mr. Thrush. “I’d have some pretty angry women if I unplugged it and sent it back!”

Results

- 1. Speed, Especially During Peaks:** The KL1 doesn’t take the place of a person, but it is invaluable during the busy parts of a day. “It’s not feasible to hire someone to be there right away during a busy peak,” says Mr. Thrush. “Kirby helps us keep up with the rush. We are always caught up.”
- 2. Accuracy:** “No more hand-counting 180 lisinopril, or hand-counting our 2nd check for controlled meds. Kirby is just good at counting,” Mr. Thrush says.
- 3. No More Customer Disputes:** The open layout of the pharmacy allows customers to see the pharmacy staff filling orders. “People see we are using technology. They don’t try to pull a fast one anymore and claim they were shorted when they see us scan-verifying everything and counting their meds through Kirby,” Mr. Thrush says.
- 4. Inventory Assurance:** “If you have 160 in the bottle and the computer says you have 160, and your Kirby says you have 160, you feel better. You can anticipate orders and inventory,” he says.

A pharmacy technician processes scripts with the KL1 (below)



“Why resist technology? It’s there to help you. The machine has paid itself off twice at least (in just 3 months). Compared to counting with a spatula all day, I’m loving the Kirby Lester. So is the staff.”

Chris Thrush
Operations Manager
Ottawa Health Mart Pharmacy