



**BUSINESS FIT**  
**FOR THE FUTURE**

# let's talk *tech*



## Using technology to drive your business

This guide looks at how you can make the most of technology and the commercial opportunities it offers your pharmacy business. It is designed for pharmacy managers but contains useful information for the whole team.

## Connecting with your customers

**90%**

In 2018, 90% of adults in the UK were recent internet users (i.e. used the internet within the last three months)<sup>1</sup>

**80%**

Recent internet use in the 65 – 74 age group increased from 52% in 2011 to 80% in 2018, closing the gap on younger age groups<sup>1</sup>

You can see from this how customer habits and interactions with technology are changing. How have you adapted to meet these changing needs, and is there anything more you could do to reach customers beyond the walls of your pharmacy?

One way you can engage with new or existing customers in a different way is via social media.

**There are a number of different types of social media that you can use to appeal to your customers.**



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### Twitter

As you are probably aware, **Twitter is an online news and social networking service** where both businesses and individuals post and interact with messages (**tweets**). You can have followers and follow others.

#### How can I use it?

#### Keep up-to-date with what's happening in pharmacy

and find inspiration for your CPD or day-to-day practice. There are plenty of active pharmacists on Twitter sharing views and opinions that you can engage with. Try following organisations such as:

**@TheGPhC, @online\_his, @NHSEngland, @MHRAMedicines, @MHRAPress and @NICEcomms**

#### Reach your customers

Decide whether you want to tweet as a pharmacist, your pharmacy, or both. You can use Twitter to promote services, such as the flu jab and travel clinics, or to share information about health campaigns that you are following, community events or charities that you are supporting. Your pharmacy Twitter profile can also have opening hours and a contact number.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/itandinternetindustry/bulletins/internetusers/2018> (Last accessed March 2019)



## Facebook

Facebook began as a personal networking site to connect friends but has evolved to encompass the business world and can be a great way to reach specific groups of people.

### How can I use it?

#### Build your online presence with a Facebook business page

You can include useful business information, pharmacy news and updates and include a link to your website. You can direct people to your Facebook page via Twitter and display information about them in the pharmacy.

#### To advertise

Facebook is a cheap and cost-effective way to target specific customers in your local area, for example by demographic group or by their interests. To use Facebook advertising, go to Facebook Ad Manager from your business page. Make sure you are clear on your objective – for example, to increase the number of customers who use your pharmacy services. Once you have set your budget, you are guided through the process of creating your ad.



## Instagram

An increasingly popular image-based platform.

### How can I use it?

This is another way to reach out to customers. Instagram is visually led, so think about events, health campaigns and services in your pharmacy that you could capture photographically. You can set up your business account in a similar way to Facebook.



## LinkedIn

This platform is designed mainly for professional networking and business use.

### How can I use it?

Pharmacists can set up their profile and link with others in the networking hub, giving a great opportunity for professional networking and knowledge sharing. You will find most large organisations and pharmacy bodies that you can follow, e.g. **General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC)**, **Royal Pharmaceutical Society**.

## Guidance for using social media

Remember to follow the principles of good customer service, as well as professional guidance. Once something is posted on an open platform it is available for all to see, so only content that the pharmacy manager or owner is completely happy with should be posted. It doesn't have to be the pharmacist or the pharmacy manager managing these accounts, but anyone who posts should be trained and follow the company's social media guidelines. If you work for a pharmacy group, they may also have guidance/Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that you should be aware of in relation to any online activity.

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society has social media guidance and the GPhC document 'Demonstrating professionalism online' sets out standards to follow, which include:

- Act professionally
- Treat people with respect
- Think before you post – anything online can be copied and redistributed
- Don't get drawn into negative discussions.

Bear these in mind when responding to customer complaints or poor reviews that may be posted online.\*

When you post online, you are effectively publishing, and as such could potentially be sued for libel, copyright infringement or breach of data protection, so be careful and think about the content of all words and images. When using social media, keep your strategy in mind – what is it that you are trying to achieve?

You also need to keep regularly posting and checking information is up to date, so plan how often you will post and what should be posted. Having out of date information can be detrimental and not being aware of contact made through the social media activities could have a negative effect on your business.



\*If a customer mentions use of a product and that they are experiencing any untoward effects, these need to be reported to the relevant Marketing Authorisation holder.

# What about *apps*?

Apps for health advice or ordering prescriptions can all enhance the customer experience. New apps are being developed all the time, so it's worth looking into the ones that are already available for you to take advantage of.

Apps can also be a source of competition, such as those that make it easy to get prescriptions delivered directly to customers' doors. If you don't keep abreast of changes and what customers are looking for to improve the convenience of a service, you could miss out.

The following are examples of apps that are currently available and could support your interactions with customers and your business:



**NHS app** – this is currently being rolled out (not yet with full functionality, and not to all GP surgeries, but due to be complete by June 2019). It allows customers to make GP appointments and order repeat prescriptions.



**Patient access** – customers can use this to book GP appointments or order repeat prescriptions to be dispensed at a nominated pharmacy.



**BNF app** – gives you access to BNF content on your mobile device. It includes medicine profiles and an interaction checker.



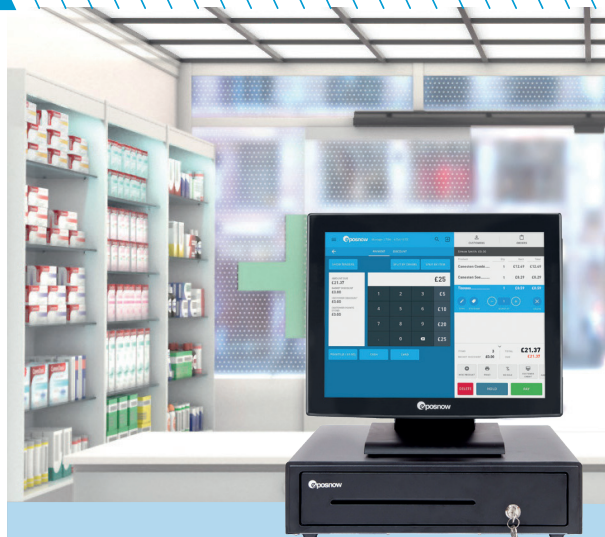
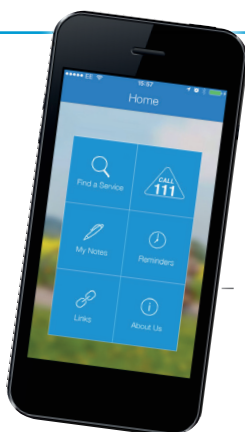
**Swipii** – an app for small businesses that supports them to run a reward scheme.



Apps such as **NHS BMI calculator**, **NHS Smokefree**, **calories/fitness trackers** or **alcoholic drinks trackers** may be useful for customers to use to support healthy lifestyle changes.

As well as health- or prescription-related apps, there are also accounting apps, apps to help manage employee schedules and apps such as Slack for communicating with the team.

If there's an activity that you do there may well be an app for it!



## Retail technology

There is plenty of technology you can use to your advantage in retail. An EPOS (electronic point of sale) system is an essential tool for retailers today to be able to effectively manage stock, track sales and organise their shelves with the best-selling items.

You can generate reports about how different ranges are performing and spend time analysing the data available. You can see seasonal trends and adjust stock levels accordingly.

Effective stockholding stops money from essentially sitting on your shelves, at the same time as making sure the goods your customers need don't run out.



# future pharmacy

It is useful to have an awareness of what other pharmacy-related technological advances exist. Many of these could save you time, allowing you to spend more time with customers. Examples include:

- Using dispensing robots for automation of some of the dispensing process
- Using patient medication record (PMR) systems effectively to help drive service delivery

- Having electronic systems for data such as: fridge temperature monitoring; Responsible Pharmacist log; CD register
- Running 24-hour prescription collection machines.

There are also companies that offer private GP services from the pharmacy consultation room via an online consultation with a clinical station, which allows associated diagnostic testing such as blood pressure measurement.



## next steps

After reading this module, think about what you can do in your pharmacy to harness all the technology and digital platforms available. Bear in mind any guidance you should follow from head office if applicable.

### 1. Retail sales

- If you have EPOS, are you using all the functionality effectively?
- If you don't have EPOS – should you consider investing?

### 2. Dispensary

- Is your PMR system still fit for purpose?
- Do you have FMD (falsified medicines directive) scanners?
- Are all the team trained to use the PMR effectively?
- Is it used to support service delivery?

### 3. Customers

- Can you use technology to attract new customers?
- How might technology help you to better support customers?
- Could you make use of prescription ordering apps or health apps?

### 4. Social media

- Decide what you want to achieve
- Depending on your company guidance – can you set up a Facebook business profile?
- Can you set up an account on other platforms?

### 5. Research

- What happens when you Google your business?
- What happens if you Google a service you offer and your location – is it visible?
- Are their apps or other technologies that you could use in your pharmacy?
- Research what other pharmacy managers do e.g. search [pharmacymagazine.co.uk/category/news/practice](http://pharmacymagazine.co.uk/category/news/practice)



## Additional resources

You can access a short e-module about how different technologies in the pharmacy can be embraced to support your business and help customers here:

[www.p3pharmacy.co.uk/lets-talk-tech](http://www.p3pharmacy.co.uk/lets-talk-tech)

Scan this code to go straight to the e-learning:

