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ISSUE 3, 2014

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## **PUBLISHER'S NOTE**

**I**t's great to be back in your hands! In the last few weeks, the editorial team has worked tirelessly to bring you a publication that meets your very high taste of quality. Both in print and content. To ensure, you don't miss out on our previous editions we have uploaded them on our website. [www.rxevolution.com.ng](http://www.rxevolution.com.ng) including this current issue.

This edition is loaded as usual with interviews and articles that promise to hold you spell bound such that you wont drop the magazine till you finish digesting the content from cover to cover.

Our cover story focuses on a rare jewel of inestimable value in the Pharmaceutical profession. She is Pharm Folasade Lawal, CEO of Victory Drugs, Festac, Lagos. Her very insightful interview is one you don't want to miss. Are you concerned about the abuse of Oral contraceptives among young ladies in Nigeria, then the article on oral contraceptives is just for you.

Are you opening a new pharmacy store and you need some quick tips to start strong, then our marketing article would do you a great deal of good. Some of you have always wondered how we came up with the Panel and how we have managed to keep it running for 6 years non stop, well luck just shone on you. Just get a chilled drink of your choice and enjoy the exhaustive behind the scenes interview.

To all our advertisers, we say a big thank you. We really appreciate the faith you have in us. To all our readers we say, merci boucoup! The only reason advertisers partner with us is because you are reading this right now. As you go through this timeless piece, we trust you will be thoroughly impacted. Till we see again in the next edition, ENJOY!

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# THE PANEL: FROM CONCEPT TO CONQUEST



The Panel 2013

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***P***regnant with an idea, little did he know that his idea would spark a revolution in the practice of retail Pharmacy in Nigeria. Meet the Convener of the Panel, Pharm. Adeshina Opanubi, as he shares his insights into the challenges he had to overcome to sustain the tempo of the Panel over the years. *Flourish crew reports.*

### ***What exactly is the concept behind the 'Panel'?***

The Panel is an annual retail pharmacy business summit that seeks to provide practical solutions to the day to day issues faced by retail pharmacists.

### ***What differentiates it from other pharmacy programs in Nigeria?***

The key distinguishing feature of the Panel is that it is strictly focused on business. We don't discuss medical or clinical issues neither do we

delve into the politics of Pharmacy profession. We concern ourselves basically with the business and strategic aspects of retail pharmacy.

### ***Why did you decide to set up the 'Panel' project?***

We decided to embark on it because we realized that there was a big knowledge gap within the retail pharmacy sector of our profession. We discovered that, as pharmacists, our training didn't really equip us with the business acumen to become successful business owners, rather our training centered majorly on providing clinical services to our patients. In spite of this, we discovered a few pharmacists who still managed to excel in the field of retail pharmacy. We then decided to move closer to them in order to discover their secret success formula. We realized that their success was primarily premised on the fact that they had

good business acumen and a totally different mindset from the generality of the populace in business.

### ***So what happens at the Panel?***

At the beginning, we were very big on teaching so we invited about 3 - 4 speakers in the first 2 editions. However, having dealt with basic business issues in the first 2 editions, we then felt it was time to move to strategic issues in business which commenced in Panel 3. So from Panel 3, there was a strategic change in the format of the Panel summit. It comprises a three-session event: a keynote lecture which opens the event, followed by a panel session comprising seasoned community Pharmacists as the experts and lastly, a brainstorming session which seeks to provide participants with hands-on problem solving skills.

### ***Why did you adopt this unique format?***

Our general belief was that the keynote address speaker would provide deep, provoking insights into the theme of the day; this would be followed by a panel discussion where other panelists join the keynote address speaker to address questions raised by the audience. At this stage, the panelists provide answers to questions raised by the audience regardless of whether the questions are related to the theme of the keynote lecture or not as long as it is a business-related question. Then, the brainstorming session comes lastly to handle business case studies. Here, participants work in groups as teams to solve business problems given to them to handle. The general idea of this format is that the keynote address should serve to provide enough insight to solving problems. If one's peculiar problem remains unsolved, then the panelist session becomes a good platform to providing answers to the specific problems bothering the person. If such persons are not satisfied with the answers they get, they still have the chance to take it to their teams in the brainstorming session for solution.

### ***You seem to attract the crème de la crème of the Retail Pharmacy world, how do you do it?***

I thank God every time I think about this because I can only ascribe it to God's favour. People who have graced the platform of the Panel are mostly my mentors and teachers. Others are senior friends and perhaps friends of mentors. In the beginning, they were strictly my teachers and mentors. These were Bukky George of Healthplus, Abiola Adekunle of Kunle Ara Pharmacy in Ibadan, Charles Omoregha of Ignita Marketing and Richmond Dayo Johnson, then from the UK but now CEO of Radio Continental. These are people who believed in me when there was nothing to show. They just believed in the idea and the mission and they have been with us ever since. Along the line, other giants joined us. These include Sir Ike Onyechi of Alpha Pharmacy, Chris Ehimen of Nett Pharmacy, Lere Baale of Business School Netherlands, Remi Adeseun of Rodot Consulting, Claire Omatseye of JNC International, Jimi Agbaje of Jaykay Pharmacy to mention a few. We thank God for these people because not only have they given their time and talent to the Panel, some of them actually sponsor the Panel financially to ensure the vision keeps growing.

### ***It has been six years since you started the Panel, how has the journey been?***

It has been a roller-coaster ride since inception. We have had our fair share of ups and downs. From a humble beginning of 25 paid attendees to our current status of over 100 hundred paid attendees, it has only been by the grace of God. Along the way, we have had challenges but we never gave up. On 3 different occasions, the major speakers for the programme didn't turn up due to unforeseen exigencies, but the interesting thing was that we were able to swiftly restructure the program in a way that the audience didn't notice the absence of the speakers. After the first event in 2009, a few well-meaning friends advised me to step down the quality of the event so that I do not incur losses in setting up the event. I bluntly refused

their advice because I believed deep down that there were still a few people who would appreciate what we were trying to achieve, and we didn't want to disappoint those few.

***What new thing are we expecting this year?***

For this year, we are planning on staging the biggest panel yet. We plan to invite eight resource persons including the lead speaker to steer the Panel. For the keynote address, we have invited Mr. Peter Bamkole, Director of the Enterprise Development Centre of the Pan African University (formerly Lagos Business School). He will be bringing his vast experience base in the sphere of SME business management to bear on the Retail Sector of our profession. We are also inviting Mr. Joseph Ebata, the President of DMS Retail West Africa, to lead a session on Retail Business Management. The Panel session for this year will focus on the possible introduction of Foreign Direct Investment into the Retail Pharmacy environment.

***You moved the Panel to Port Harcourt last year, are you repeating it this year?***

We are still looking into it; we are having logistic challenges for this year, though it is still topmost on our agenda. We were also planning to do Abuja this year, but it doesn't seem to be working out as expected.

***Which edition of the Panel has been your best?***

Well, it's difficult to say actually; each event has a unique story around it but I think Panel 3 stands out. This is because it was when we had to take a giant leap of faith. This was at a time when, after the discouragement of Panel 2 where we barely managed to cover our cost, we were at our lowest ebb. To make matters worse, another organization set up a training programme similar to the Panel using the same venue and some of our speakers. At that point, we knew it was time to raise our game to the next level. Personally, I believe in competition because it brings out the best in everyone. So, we went shopping for a new venue, and that

brought us to NECA house. It was much bigger than what we needed and definitely much more expensive, but on stepping into the auditorium, I knew in my heart that it was where we were supposed to be. When we finally pulled off that event, it was simply magical. The rest, like they say, is history.

***The Panel seems to have evolved into other bigger initiatives. Can you let us into this?***

At the end of Panel 5, we felt it was time to raise the game again. It became even more urgent when regular attendees of the Panel started complaining that it was torturous for them to wait for a whole year to get quality business education. Hence, we decided to create another forum, PHARMALLIANCE, where Pharmacists would meet on a monthly basis to discuss the business side of retail. We also decided to provide critical business support services which every viable business needed to have. These include accounting, auditing, insurance, legal and business development services.

***How has this initiative fared?***

It has been simply exhilarating. It shows me every day the immense potential trapped within the Pharma Industry. It is the perfect example of CO-OPERATION. We see Pharmacists willingly lending a helping hand to fellow Pharmacists who are struggling. We are simply having a great time at Pharmalliance. Sometimes, I am tempted to close membership so that we can continue to have a convivial family structure but that would be a very selfish thing to do, so we will keep it open but may make membership a little more stringent.

***So what next for 2015?***

There is a lot we have in the pipeline. But we need to be careful in divulging the information early so that our pipelines won't be vandalized. But definitely, at the Panel for this year, we will be unveiling some new plans and products. You don't want to miss it.



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# ABUSE OF ORAL CONTRACEPTIVES: WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW

Pharm. Adegeye Ayomipo

It is arguable that community pharmacy practice is perhaps the most enjoyable and fulfilling of the various arms of Pharmacy practice. I share the same view not because of my natural inclination to patient-oriented clinical practice, but because of the direct and observable - sometimes measurable - impact and contributions one can make in the lives of people and communities. The community pharmacy serves as a window into the society where the onset and progression of communicable diseases can be spotted quickly and intervention initiated promptly. It could also serve as a window to observe and monitor the societal use and consumption of drugs. Such has been the case for a number of drugs - especially drugs prone to abuse - such as codeine containing cough syrups, antibiotics, emergency contraceptives, libido-enhancing drugs etc. I would like to single out the abuse of oral emergency contraceptives amongst adolescent/young adult women particularly because, in my opinion, the consequences of its abuse have been somehow kept out of the spotlight.

I have observed, with little surprise, the boom in the sales of emergency contraceptives. The deepening moral decadence in the society coupled with easy access to emergency contraceptives over-the-counter in pharmacies has led to an astronomical increase in sales turn-over on this line of products. Some of the most popular ones are those containing

Levonorgestrel 0.75mg, which include brands like Sendinor 2 marketed by Nemmit Pharmaceuticals and Postinor 2 marketed by Society for Family Health.

Fraudsters have also gained much ground in this mouth-watering market. In late June 2013, a batch of falsified Postinor-2® was discovered by the Nigerian Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) at Lagos International Airport, Nigeria. Two large boxes containing 150,000 doses of Postinor-2® were discovered containing no active pharmaceutical ingredient. All these factors have therefore led to the proposal by NAFDAC to reclassify the product status to that of a prescription medicine.

According to a statistical survey conducted by Society for Family Health (SFH), **over 1.8 billion** sexual activities occur in Nigeria yearly, and 80% of them are unprotected. This implies that 8 out of 10 Nigerian men do not use condoms and their reasons range from excuses such as "I am healthy, I don't have infections, flesh to flesh is sweeter" etc... This gives an idea of the staggering number of sexual activities that would be open to emergency contraceptives use or result in unplanned pregnancies. Let me share with you a personal story.

It was a faithful Saturday morning and I was at my desk at the pharmacy attending to clients as usual. I was in my default lively mood just up till when I had the most unlikely client - an innocent looking young girl who was dressed

shabbily. She walked in requesting for the attention of the doctor. I beckoned to her and explained that I was the one she was looking for. She complained that she did not see her period last month. I racked my brain a bit in a bid to probe into the possible causes. I proceeded to ask her a few questions and, upon synthesizing the information she gave, referred her to a laboratory for a 'blood test' (she was only 15 years old, so I didn't want to embarrass her by letting her know it was a pregnancy test). (Interestingly, I did not ask her about possible sexual exposure/activity prior to her missed period because she looked so innocent and smallish that I couldn't muster the courage to ask her such a sensitive question. I just needed the lab test results to rule out pregnancy so that I could focus on other more likely causes and subsequent referral to the hospital if needed).

She returned after a long while (I had quickly forgotten about her!) and presented the sealed test results to me. I opened it without apprehension only to find out, to my utter surprise, that she was pregnant! I was speechless for a moment as I stuttered to find the right words to break the news to her.

I initially demanded to see her parents to tell them directly, but when she kept insisting on the result, I had to let her out of the suspense by revealing the results with heavy heart. And sure she was startled and dumb for several minutes not even able to cry;

I could understand her plight because she just completed secondary school education.

She then looked at me straight in the eyes and asked the next logical question 'Sir, please what can I do? I don't want it and I cannot tell my mother; she will kill me!' I took pity on her and offered to walk her home to help with breaking the news to her guardians. You can understand the shock in the eyes of her mother; that day was too much for my conscience to bear.

It is well documented that a large percentage of students of senior secondary and post-secondary institutions in Nigeria engage in pre-marital sex. Moreover, about half of Nigerian female undergraduates are sexually active (defined as having had sexual intercourse within the past 4 weeks). Each year, about 1.5 million pregnancies in Nigeria are unplanned and about half of these (approximately 760,000) results in elective abortions, usually under unsafe conditions (young unmarried women are more likely than other women to characterize a pregnancy as unwanted). Results of the 2008 Demographic and Health Survey in the country showed that 23% of all teenage women had either given birth or were expecting their first child. Studies in Nigeria indicate that more than 60% of women with unplanned pregnancy were not using contraception. **Hence, most of these problems could have been reduced by emergency contraception (Postinor-2®, Sendinor-2® for example).**

But in reality, providing adolescents and young adult women unhindered access to use emergency contraceptives in order to reduce unwanted pregnancies and its ill consequences like unintended child delivery or unsafe abortions (which are the major problems of maternal health) could lead to possible 'abuse' of emergency contraception through **overly frequent use**. University undergraduates are generally at high risk of unplanned pregnancy.

This is because being away from parental supervision, they engage in sporadic and unprotected sexual intercourse. Providing unhindered access to emergency contraceptives could be a license to engage in more risky unprotected sexual practices (**owing to the existence of a back-up, post-coital method**) since they can freely control their fertility at will thereby encouraging the sporadic spread of Sexually Transmitted Diseases including HIV/AIDS.

Emergency contraceptives (EC) have been identified by the **United Nations** as one of the 13 affordable and effective life-saving commodities for reproductive health. It is a type of modern contraception which is indicated after unprotected sexual intercourse, following sexual abuse, misuse of regular contraception or non-use of contraception. It was designed to be used in emergency situations of unprotected sexual intercourse and not as a regular form of birth control. But unfortunately, many young adolescent and adult women abuse it by making it a standard regular birth control measure after every act of sex instead of the more acceptable regular birth control measures available such as condoms, injectables and oral contraceptive pills (OCP's). This is wrong and an abuse of emergency contraceptives use and it comes with serious consequences.

The strength of the active ingredient (Levonorgestrel, LNG) in a tablet of an Emergency Contraceptive (Postinor-2®, Sendinor-2®) is 0.75mg. This is 5 times its strength in a pill of Confidence®/Duofem® (0.15mg of LNG) which is a 28 pill Combined Oral Contraceptive (COC) to be used once daily for a month for family planning contraception. So it means if you use 2 tablets of an EC as usually prescribed, you have used about 10 pills of your COC which is significant (this is a mega-dose). Such high dose levels of LNG are required to provide emergency contraception immediately after sex. [Therefore the maximum amount of EC to be consumed per month is usually limited to 2 packs (4 tablets)]. Therefore, if an EC is used frequently (every month) and indiscriminately, one could get steroid side-effects such as weight gain, depression, gallbladder disease, high blood pressure, ovarian cyst enlargement which may cause premature ovarian failure entering infertility and menopause. It also causes an increase in the incidence of ectopic pregnancies

(lodgment of the human embryo in the fallopian tube rather than in the womb). Frequent use in one cycle may lead to contraceptive failure and irregular cycle bleeding. If used by young girls whose endocrine/reproductive organs have not matured, it may have adverse effects on the development of ovary and uterus.

In an ideal world, every pregnancy should be planned and every baby should be wanted. There should be no justification for an abortion except on medical grounds. But each year, there are many unplanned and often unwanted pregnancies due to lack of contraception or contraception failure. Although effective contraception is readily available, there are times when a condom will break or a woman will forget to take her pill. Emergency contraception provides a safe and effective emergency method for birth control in such situations.

Today, I look back at the case of my client - and numerous other similar cases - and imagine how less complicated her life would have been if she had known about emergency oral contraceptive pills to be taken after sexual intercourse. She probably would not have missed her monthly period and as such no need to have made a case for an unwanted pregnancy. But unfortunately, at her age, no one had given her knowledge about emergency contraception.

In conclusion, we owe our clients a professional duty to communicate the hazards of using emergency contraception as a regular method of birth control due to its abuse potential and subsequent injurious consequences. Let's 'bring back our girls' by promoting better sex education, using proper contraception as our model (e.g. condoms), and adequate drug information.

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# ANCIENT REMEDY, MODERN MIRACLE IN THE HEART OF OXFORD

Pharm. Atai **Okokon**



**O**n a sunny June afternoon just after a delicious meal with Michael, the head gardener at Green Templeton College (one of the 38 colleges of the University of Oxford), I was shown around the beautiful gardens of the college. From Foxglove plant – the source of the Heart failure drug, digoxin to Opium poppy- a gift and curse- the source of Morphine, Heroine and Codeine, GTC's botanical garden boasts of some of the most sought after medicinal plants in the world. However, one plant caught my attention – the sweet wormwood plant (Qinghao) which is the source of artemisinin, the current gold standard for the treatment of malaria. This article will provide a brief history of how this ancient plant became a Modern Miracle. century (after both world wars). Millions of lives were lost, many were injured and many more still carry physical and psychological battle scars from the war. However, it has been said that malaria killed more soldiers during the Vietnam War than bullets did, and despite the many evils reported, one good thing can at least be attributed to the infamous war – the discovery of today's malaria magic bullet, Artemisinin.

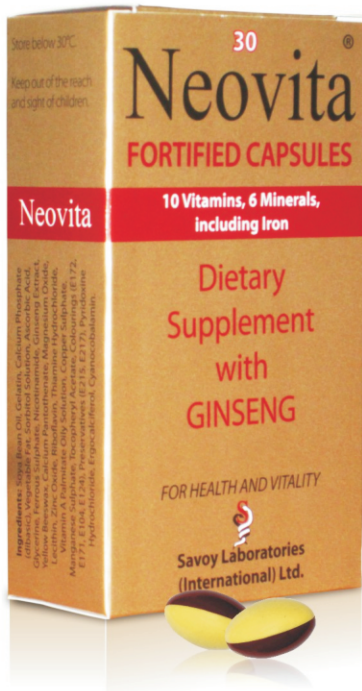
At the height of the war, Northern Vietnamese leaders sent an appeal to China to help provide a solution to the drug resistant malaria that was killing its troops. On the 23rd of May 1967, Chinese leader Mao Zedong commissioned a top secret military operation code named Project 523 which “ordered” more than 500 scientists from about 60 Chinese top institutions to find an adequate cure for malaria. Ancient Chinese traditional medicine literature was combed; rural traditional healers were consulted; thousands of traditional Chinese herbal recipes were investigated; hundreds compiled and tested on rodents until 1971 when promising antimalarial activity was obtained with extracts from the leaves of Qinghao, an ancient plant mentioned on tomb carvings as early as 168 BC and well described in Handbook of Prescriptions for Emergencies, an ancient Chinese book written by Ge Hong (284–346 AD). The scientists used information from this ancient book to properly extract the active ingredient – “artemisinin” from the leaves of this plant and by the next year, the chemical structure of this ingredient was elucidated.

Today, artemisinin is the gold standard for the treatment of malaria worldwide and it has saved the lives of many especially children under 5 years who are the most vulnerable. Professor Youyou Tu has been credited for this discovery and in 2011, amidst some controversy from colleagues, she was given the Lasker DeBakey Clinical Medical Research Award for saving millions of lives through her discovery.

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## KEEP ME OR LOOSE ME!

Pharm. Olufunto **Olude**

A couple of years ago, I had gone to visit a friend in a particular area in Lagos, and of course after having a nice time, she was seeing me off then suddenly I got a call. There was an urgent need for me to purchase some medication for my granny so we could send them through someone who was travelling home. I knew getting to my own end in good time to purchase these drugs before the pharmacies close meant walking on a tight rope (you know Lagos traffic!). So my friend suggested a retail outlet some blocks away. As we made a bend at the corner, she pointed to indicate the retail pharmacy was just ahead. My first ordeal was finding a spot to park as the supposed parking lot had been taken over by traders who exhibited their goods on the pavement. Eventually, I got a place to park a few meters away.

Next, I went into the pharmacy which looked dingy and saw, from my guess, the sales assistant who was busy fiddling with her phone. When I asked to see the Pharmacist, without a word, she pointed across to an individual who looked pretty grumpy (he wasn't smiling). He got up to attend to us but he was quite unresponsive to my questions and demands and appeared as one who felt he was doing us a favor. He immediately lost me as a first-time customer and my friend as a life-time customer. We walked out and went to another retail outlet streets away where we met with courteous and professional staff in a well laid out premise. My needs were their concern and they made me feel special.

In today's highly competitive market place, quality service is a standard by which companies are rated and their performance judged. This judgment influences patronage and invariably the companies' bottom line. Quality service could include convenient

location, a wide selection of products, speed of transaction and even competitive pricing. It also involves employee courtesy, product knowledge, enthusiasm and empathy amongst others. An orientation of all these will lead to customer satisfaction. A satisfied customer will give a positive word of mouth publicity and repeat business which is critical to long term success while a dissatisfied customer could almost hold a placard with a **#DON'T GO THERE!** # Inscription which is negative publicity.

These days, people are more knowledgeable, demanding and aware of their rights creating a need for better trained and educated service professionals. To flourish in the retail business, you need to keep your customers delighted as much as you can, build their trust and make sure they stick with you or else they'll take a walk just as I did some years ago. It's strongly about exceptional customer service.

### Here are a few useful tips to follow:

- Get a good location for your premise with reasonable parking space as much as is within your power
- Ensure your layout is appealing to customers
- Cultivate and imbibe a service culture which starts from top management and is cascaded down to every member of staff
- All staff must be neat and appropriately dressed
- Learn to profile your customers so you don't handle them all the same way
- Apologize and resolve issues as quickly as possible
- Train all staff periodically
- End each transaction with a sincere thank you.

***Make quality service a resolve, it makes a whole lot of difference!***

**fl**





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# MANAGING A RETAIL PHARMACY IN TURBULENT TIMES

Pharm Abiola Adegunle



**T**he first definition of management I am going to give is interesting because it tends to trace the root meaning back to the Latin phrase “Menu agree” which means ‘to lead by hand’. Therefore management is thus defined to be the process characterized by leading and directing all or part of an organization, often a business through the deployment and manipulation of resource [human, financial, material, intellectual, or intangible]. Leading by the hand implies giving direction that is deeper than just a passing suggestion, yet still fairly gentle in approach. Leading by the hand also implies that the person leading is first going to where the follower is being lead. The leader is not asking the follower to do something that he/she is not willing to do himself/herself. Management has also been defined as “the guidance and control of action required to execute a program”. This definition of management refers to a “program”. This implies that, for management to be effective,

there needs to be some type of defined approach or system in place. This system becomes the plan in guiding others in following such plan. This might explain the downfall of most pharmacists; we have no plan or system in place! As a result, our actions seem random to the people we are managing and this leads to confusion and disappointment. This is why it is so important for business managers to have an employee’s manual. Without the employee manual providing directions, the manager will struggle to be fair and balanced in his/her dealings with employees.

## WHAT IS A BUSINESS?

A business (also called a company, firm or enterprise) is a legally recognized organization designed to provide goods and or services to consumers. Businesses are predominant in capitalist economies, most being privately owned and set up to earn profit that will increase the wealth of its owner and grow the business itself. The owners and operators of a business have, as one of their main objectives, the receipt or generation of financial returns in exchange for work and acceptance of risk. Notable exceptions include cooperative enterprises and state-owned enterprises especially under a socialist system, in which case there are additional goals aside from maximizing or turning in profit. Let's now zero in on the retailer type of business which is where most retail

pharmacists ply their trade. I have not come across a classification of retail pharmacy business per se. I will attempt one here.

**My classification attempt is based on the following factors:**

1. Population density
2. The income group to which the bulk of the prospective customers of the pharmacy belong
3. And lastly, the ease of accessibility of the pharmacy to the prospective customers.

**Based on the criteria above, we have the following classification.**

1. High Income, High Density, Neighbourhood Pharmacy
2. High Income, High Density, Street Pharmacy
3. High Income, Low Density, Neighbourhood Pharmacy
4. High Income, Low Density, Street Pharmacy
5. Medium Income, High Density, Neighbourhood Pharmacy
6. Medium Income, High Density, Street Pharmacy
7. Medium Income, Low Density, Neighbourhood Pharmacy
8. Medium Income, Low Density, Street Pharmacy
9. Low Income, High Density, Neighbourhood Pharmacy
10. Low Income, High Density, Street Pharmacy
11. Low Income, Low Density, Neighbourhood Pharmacy
12. Low Income, Low Density, Street Pharmacy
13. Hospital Practice Based Neighbourhood Pharmacy
14. Hospital Practice Based Street Pharmacy

15. Pot Pourri Pharmacy: this is a mixture of more than one of the above classification without one classification having a clear dominance over the other.

I am sure from this list above, you should be able to pick one class that aptly describes your pharmacy. You should however note that each classification requires a unique strategy to succeed. Now that we have a clear understanding of what management is and what a retail pharmacy business is, the next thing is to agree on what could possibly constitute a 'turbulent' time in managing a retail pharmacy business. The word 'turbulent' means a situation of "violent commotion".

**For ease of discussing 'turbulent time', I will group them into two groups:**

**Indirect Turbulent Times**

These are general negative situations under which a business is conducted which can have an indirect negative impact on the business. Under this group, we have basically corruption which manifests in a lot of ways e.g.

- i) Poor Legislations: Issue of practicing license, orphan drugs issue with NAFDAC
- ii) Multiple taxation e.g. Local Government levies, vehicle levies etc.
- iii) General System Failure: e.g. Failing bank issues, power failure as it affect storage of drugs, implementation of IT solution for the pharmacy, lack of social infrastructures e.g. shopping malls with all the necessary facilities like water, parking space e.t.c.

**Direct Turbulence**

These are difficult situation that have a direct negative impact on any business. Under this group, we have among others the following situations:

1. **Competition**
2. **Cash and Inventory Management**
3. **Staffing**

*This write up will focus on direct turbulence as these factors are within our control. Indirect turbulence refers to things outside our control hence we just have to manage around them.*

### **Competition**

Competition is inevitable in business. It has its advantages and disadvantages. One advantage is that it has the potential to bring out the best in you. Things that you thought you could not do before, you find yourself doing them with ease. On the part of the consumer, it ensures that quality products and services are being delivered at reasonable prices. So, you must continuously study your business environment. You must know your competitors and be able to analyze their strengths and weaknesses.

**You must then device strategies to match them. Let's discuss some of them.**

- a) **Quality of product:** This is where sincerity comes in. In fact, in pharmacy business, this is the base line. It is on this premise that all other strategies are built and effective. Also, the depth of pharmaceutical knowledge would be put to task here.
- b) **Quality of service:** This is all encompassing. You talk about pharmacy outlook, neatness, courtesy, time spent in the pharmacy, language of communication, parking space e.t.c.
- c) **Price:** This is a very sensitive issue. As far as I am concerned, you must be able to sell at the same price level with the market leader regardless of how much

you buy. So it is your responsibility to discover the right places to purchase.

- d) **Culture of the people:**  
You must recognize the culture of the people you are serving and take this into consideration when relating with them.

### **Cash and Inventory Management**

It is important for us to know that what we are managing in retail pharmacy business is the asset of stock and not our fanciful shelves, furniture, floor or even ceiling. This all-important asset fluctuates between stock and cash all the time. Therefore adequate attention must be paid to it. Strategies must be devised to prevent shrinkages, pilfering, overstocking, understocking. There must also be a purchasing policy in place which must be based on peculiar market dynamics,

### **Staffing**

Apart from the Pharmacist, what are the responsibilities of your workers and what educational qualification should they possess to run a pharmacy successfully? What I can admit, with a reasonable amount of confidence, is that no matter the kind of staff you get or level of educational qualification they possess, there is need for an in-house formal training arrangement for them. This will serve as a clear direction for them to follow for the attainment of business goals. In our day to day business life, we are always faced with one form of turbulence or the other. For us to succeed, we need to be able to anticipate these challenges and properly position ourselves to ride the waves of these challenges.

*I wish you luck.*

***This article is an excerpt of a presentation made by Pharm Abiola Adekunle at the first edition of THE PANEL.***



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EVE'S DESIRE ...Restoring the joy of womanhood

# 25 YEARS & STILL COUNTING

**S***elfless and peerless in the philosophy of retail Pharmacy practice in Nigeria, many who walk within her inner circles know what jewel she has become for the image of the profession. Meet Pharm (Mrs) Folasade Lawal who almost became a Mathematician if not for the timely intervention of her parents. Flourish Crew reports.*

## ***Can we meet you Ma?***

My name is Folasade Olufunke Lawal. I attended Yejide Girls' Grammar School, Ibadan from 1974-1979. I proceeded to write my A' Levels at Queens School, Ibadan from 1979-1980. I then got an admission to study Pharmacy at University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University), Ile-Ife where I bagged a Bachelor's degree in 1985. I also hold an M. Pharm degree (2006) in Clinical Pharmacy from the University of Lagos.

## ***How has been your work experience after school?***

After graduation from the university, I did my internship at Commercial Medicine Stores, Yaba, Lagos from 1985-86. I later embarked on the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme where I served as a Pharmacist at Federal Housing Authority staff clinic from 1986-87. Afterwards, I secured a job at Adebowale hospital, Amuwo in Lagos where I worked for one year (1988-89). I left to set up my current retail

pharmacy business - Victory Drugs at Festac Town, Lagos which I have managed from 1989 till date.

## ***What attracted you to retail pharmacy business?***

I was attracted to the retail pharmacy business because of my quest for patient-focused clinical practice.

## ***What challenges do you face in this business?***

Let me start by quoting a medical doctor whose hospital is just a few months older than my business and who has known us for the past 25 years we have existed: "...I know what it is to persevere and be dogged and professional and through these to remain afloat for 25 years in this difficult and unpredictable society..." Generally, the country is more product than service oriented. Therefore, it is easier for people to pay for product than to pay for service and the government does not make adequate provisions for pay for service either. This to me is the major challenge healthcare professionals face. For instance, a patient sees a doctor or consultant who charges him or her N20,000 and writes a prescription to go and fill at the pharmacy. The most likely reaction will be that the patient wonders why he paid so much without being given any drug! Most healthcare costs are still paid from out-of-pocket. This has contributed in



no small measure to the sub-optimal healthcare service being rendered in the country making ethical practice rather difficult. Most services rendered in community pharmacies are not remunerated despite the bible saying “a workman is worthy of his wages”.

Another major challenge is finance. For now, it is a bit easier to access loan from banks but the interest rates are very unfriendly! Other challenges include:

- a. Impatience by patients: For example, unwillingness by patients (clients) to drop their prescriptions and come back to pick their drugs so the pharmacist has enough time to go through to fish out drug interactions etc, and label appropriately.
- b. Poor access to stock: Sometimes, we still have to go to pick our drugs from distributors

c. Insecurity is another challenge limiting operational activities and time of operation.

d. Lack of adequate and regular supply of electricity: This, of course, results in very high running cost which cannot be transferred to patient's costs.

e. Loss from expired products: Apart from direct loss from expired products, we have to pay to dispose of them.

***You seem to practice with very high ethical standards. Why have you decided to operate at that level?***

I believe God expects nothing less from me and my first allegiance is to God, to please Him in all possible ways. I feel compelled to keep to and abide by the Pharmacist's oath I swore before practicing. Besides, Nigerians deserve to benefit from ethical practice.



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***What are your dreams for the practice of Pharmacy in Nigeria?***

They are very many and include: optimal ethical practice, distinction of roles within the health sector thereby enabling the pharmacist to contribute maximally to healthcare. (I look forward to a time when all medical doctors and other healthcare professionals authorized to prescribe would write prescriptions for patients to fill in pharmacies). I dream of a pharmacy practice driven by state-of-the-art technology, a pharmacy practice that will enable the pharmacist concentrate on pharmaceutical care services while technicians take over the traditional role of drug dispensing. I foresee Pharmacy practice with specialties and consultancy services and with strong presence in the rural areas.

***You recently celebrated 25 years of service in business. How has the story been?***

It has been quite fulfilling, despite many enormous challenges. My happiest moments have been when people express satisfaction with our services and testify about how God used us to save them from one illness or the other. Pharmacy is a call to save lives. We have, over the past 25 years, evolved various care strategies. The most recent being the compilation of a medical diary to empower clients play very active roles in their health management and to engage other healthcare professionals with the best interest of the client as the focus. The medical diary is also a tool to promote inter-professional interactions.

God has constantly been our help and strength in moving us every year to a higher pedestal. We have grown from staff strength of just 2 at the beginning to about 22 workers; from a one-room outlet to a six-room pharmacy premise. It has pleased God to give us a brand name and we have enjoyed

a lot of His favour and faithfulness. We have also enjoyed a fairly stable staff mix with the longest serving pharmacist having been with us since 1999 to date.

Victory Drugs has been a training center for many pharmacists who have distinguished themselves in their various practices. We have also been a passage for young people to the university. Many of those who passed through us are now well-qualified professionals in medical fields including pharmacy, nephrology, gynaecology etc. We have not left the immediate community behind as we have impacted them in diverse ways ranging from health awareness campaigns to free screening services and maintained a structure that accommodates all strata of the community including the poor and the rich, the young and the old. Anybody who needs our service can always access it easily.

***How have you managed to remain relevant in the last 25 years when most businesses that started with you have since folded up?***

It has been God all the way. It pleases Him to keep us. I must say here that I did not start with the mind to remain in business because I did not even start with business in mind. All I wanted to do was render pharmacy service in a Godly way strongly focusing on the patient/client. I had no vision or mission statement! I had no idea what they were. I was a complete novice and business nonentity! However, my passion for excellent patient care compelled me to submit to all relevant training I could afford including going back to school for a Master's degree in Clinical Pharmacy about 18 years after my first degree. God used the passion he put in me to keep us in business by endearing the practice to not only the immediate beneficiary - clients, but also members of staff and other healthcare professionals.

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I owe a lot to these people who God used to support our passion. It behoves me also to say that I have enjoyed tremendous support from members of my family and friends. They have contributed different complimentary roles to the success of Victory Drugs.

***Do you have any mentors in life and the profession?***

Yes I do. Pa Akinloye Obisesan, my father and primary mentor. He is a father indeed who has taught me from infancy, in words and deeds, that a good name should not be traded for anything; Rev. (Mrs) Oluwagbohun, my spiritual mother whose life consistently teaches humility and reverence for God; Prof. Fola Tayo, my lecturer in Pharmacy who has consistently imparted on me academically, professionally, morally and spiritually; Prof. (Mrs) J. A. A. Ajuluchukwu, my lecturer in Clinical Pharmacy who is an advocate of excellent professional practice.

***With your passion for development of the pharmacy profession, why haven't you taken up any elective position in the industry?***

I have, and am still contributing to pharmacy development through my position as Chairman of Drug Information Center of ACPN and other committees I serve on presently, though by appointment. Suffice to say that our leaders in ACPN and PSN are very passionate about and are encouraging active participation in development of pharmacy practice.

***As the present National Coordinator of the Drug Information Centre of ACPN, how do your roles and functions benefit the society?***

We perform various roles which include organizing training and professional updates

for pharmacists, thereby improving pharmacy practice and, of course, the society is better for it. We promote health education through information leaflets, health awareness campaigns, talks, medical missions etc. we produce periodically, a magazine titled "You and Your Pharmacist" which peculiarly provides medical information to the public in a hilarious, simple-to-understand form. We produce the Association of Community Pharmacists of Nigeria (ACP/N) Drug Bulletin for pharmacists and other healthcare professionals thereby empowering them to render better services to the public. We have also put in place measures to promote inter-professionalism within the health-sector which also has a direct positive impact on patient care and improved outcome. We provide Drug Information Services.

***You are not only a Pharmacist but a hair dresser, public speaker, creative writer and youth worker. How have you been able to develop yourself and manage these conflicting roles effectively?***

It is said that where there is a will there is a way. God who put the will has always made a way. I owe it all to God's enabling grace. I enjoy doing them all and that is the motivation. I do my youth work and hair dressing as hobby. Sometimes, I tell myself jokingly that I don't have a social life. They take priority over other engagements. I am by God's grace a member of Scripture Union Nigeria and a member of African board of Family Impact Africa.

***As a career woman, how do you manage the job of running a business and a family successfully?***

God made it easy for me. He blessed me on all fronts. I have a very supportive husband and privileged to have my pharmacy at the basement of my caring parents' house.

I have enjoyed tremendous support from them all. I work Monday to Friday while I stay with my family on Saturdays and Sundays. I hardly take on any engagement that takes me out of the house on Saturdays, to afford me quality time with my family since Sunday is for church service and other Christian activities.

### *What is your philosophy of life?*

Godliness with contentment (which the Bible says is great gain, as we brought nothing into this world and we cannot take anything out of it; 1 Timothy 6:6).

### *What next for Victory drugs?*

We shall continue to aspire to be the best community pharmacy in the world while replicating in other communities through franchise or other means.

### *What advice do you have for pharmacists interested in retail business?*

They should see the opportunity as a call to save lives and do all they can before God to fulfill this call like the biblical injunction which says “Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and other things will be added to you (Mathew 6:33).” They should get mentored by those who have not only run the race ahead of them but have run it well. They should try to understand the intrigues of community pharmacy practice before starting and be ready to nurture the business patiently. They should also be ready to keep updating themselves professionally and keep abreast of pharmacy best practice globally.

### *What advice do you have for young pharmacists?*

My advice: Study to show yourself approved unto God (and man) a workman that needs not be ashamed, rightly portraying pharmacy

as the noble profession that it is. Patiently and prayerfully identify which area of pharmacy God wants you in and pursue it with all humility and utmost regard for professionalism bearing in mind that Godliness with contentment is great gain (1 Timothy 6:6). Be very diligent and never trade integrity for anything. Mentoring is a good tool that helps you avoid the mistakes of your predecessors; learn from his successes and do better. Do not neglect mentorship!

### *Do you think there is hope in the profession?*

Great hope! I am persuaded of a better and more glorious future for pharmacy practice in Nigeria with the unflinching inclination of colleagues to pharmacy best practices and a paradigm shift to patient-focus, among other things. Pharmacists in Nigeria are dissatisfied with status quo, so they are responding more positively to improved pharmacy practice through various self-development programmes and networking e.g. Pharmalliance. The Pharmacy Academy set up by our dogged president of the Pharmaceutical Society of Nigeria (PSN) is a step in the right direction to improve pharmacy practice from the grassroots. I see light at the end of the tunnel.

### *If you weren't a pharmacist, what would you have been?*

I probably would have become a Mathematician, barring parental influence, because Mathematics was my best subject in secondary school.

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## PHARMALLIANCE INTERVIEW WITH MD /CEO OF DLIGHTSOM MOUNT PHARMACY



***S***eeking a forum of like-minded pharmacy entrepreneurs, Pharm George Okon explains how 'Pharmalliance' fills this void by creating a network of business strategists who are interested in making their retail pharmacy businesses flourish. *Flourish crew reports.*

### *Can we meet you sir?*

My name is George Okon. I had my Primary and Secondary education at Subuola Primary school and Gbaja Boys' High school respectively, both at Surulere, Lagos. I then proceeded to the University of Uyo where I studied Pharmacy and graduated in 2001. I began my Pharmacy career as an Intern Pharmacist at Tabade Pharmaceutical Chemists Ltd. During the period of my internship, I enrolled for a program with FATE Foundation called 'FATE Aspiring

Entrepreneurs Programme (AEP)', where I was mentored by a renowned Pharmacist, Jimi Agbaje. After my internship, I worked at Critical Rescue International (CRI) Medi Clinic as the pioneer Pharmacist at VGC. Currently I am the Superintendent Pharmacist / Managing Director of Dlightsom Mount Pharmacy.

### *When did you start your retail pharmacy generally?*

Like I stated earlier, I started my retail Pharmacy practice during my internship at Tabade Pharmaceutical Chemists Ltd, Onike branch in 2002, where I came face-to-face with the reality of the abundant potentials in retail business. After working briefly as a Medical Rep. for a few companies, we started Dlightsom Mount Pharmacy in February 2011.

### *What attracted you to retail pharmacy business?*

Was there any attraction? For me, I fell in love with retail pharmacy knowing that it was the backbone of the pharmacy profession. But unfortunately, some pharmacists do not appreciate this fact. Some pharmacists see retail pharmacy business as a regular corner provision store in the neighborhood. I thank God that today the face of retail pharmacy business in Nigeria is changing because pharmacists that have the passion for retail pharmacy and who understand that retail pharmacy is not different from other businesses are getting involved.

### *What challenges do you face in this business?*

The challenges are many but simply put as follows: Human resources, Inventory, stocking, power generation and expiration of drugs. These I think are challenges we face on a daily basis.

### *What do you think is the biggest problem of retail pharmacy in Nigeria?*

I think it is regulation! With a proper regulatory system, more than 90% of the problem confronting retail pharmacy in Nigeria will be solved. I believe with the recent reconstituted board of PCN and the appointment of a new Registrar for PCN, there is hope for retail pharmacy in Nigeria.

### *Why did you join Pharmalliance?*

Before the creation of Pharmalliance, I had always wanted a forum where community pharmacists of like minds come together to brainstorm on strategic growth, challenges facing the retail business and proffer solutions. Pharmalliance provided the forum where retail pharmacists could come together to do just that.

### *How has the experience been?*

It has been wonderful, interesting, motivating and inspiring. I must confess it is an MBA class in the making. We discuss virtually everything that are been taught in MBA class starting from human resources, strategic planning, sales and marketing, accounting and inventory, customer service, budgeting, etc. All these topics are very vital in lifting retail pharmacy business from where it is presently to where it ought to be.

### *Do you think the investment is worth it or do you think it is expensive?*

A forum where retail pharmacists of like minds come together to discuss on strategic

growth that will enhance the growth of their retail business is commendable. I think the investment is worth it. It is a bumper package where retail pharmacies access a common pool of shared resources such as financial services, insurance services, business development services and legal services.

### *With your strong leadership attributes, why haven't you taken up any elective position in the industry?*

I am presently the Zonal Secretary of Association of Community Pharmacists of Nigeria (ACPN), Eti-osa zone.

### *What advice do you have for pharmacists interested in joining pharmalliance?*

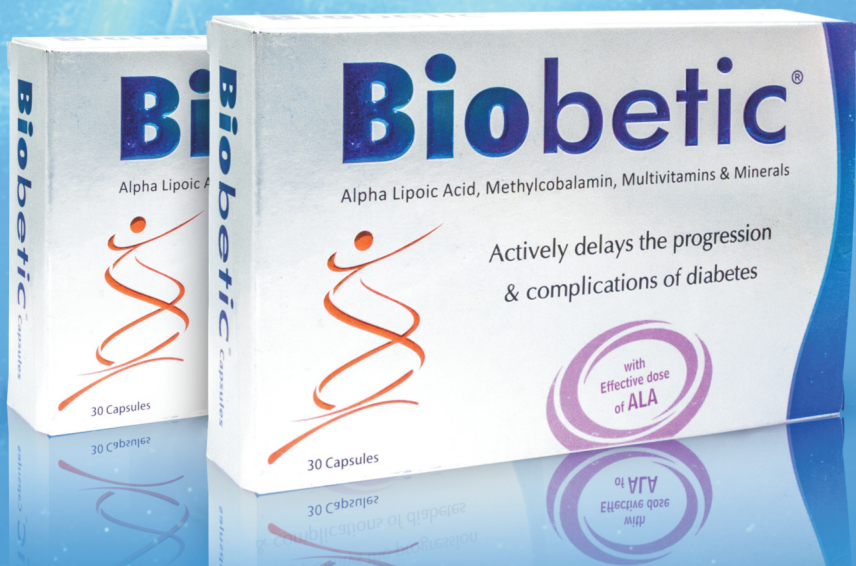
Being a Pharmacist can only give clinical skills but not enough to be managers and entrepreneurs. There is still a lot to learn in running a sustainable and successful retail pharmacy business. For Pharmacists that are interested in joining Pharmalliance, I encourage you to come on board. There is a lot to learn from this forum that will be beneficial to you and your retail business.

### *What advice do you have for retail pharmacists?*

It is time for retail pharmacists to take possession of their profession. The fact that you are a pharmacist does not guarantee the fact that you will run a successful retail business. Like I stated earlier, being a pharmacist only gives clinical skills but not enough to become entrepreneurs. Retail Pharmacists should attend business seminars, workshops, pharmacy trade shows, read business related books or better still join Pharmalliance where retail pharmacists meet monthly to discuss business growth. More importantly, the attitude of retail pharmacists to business must change. We must all step-up our game.



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# MARKETING IDEAS

FOR A NEW PHARMACY Pharm. Gabriel G. Nmadu



**Y**ou have opened your new pharmacy. You have mobilized funds for your pharmacy and have secured a very good and suitable location. Your premise has been inspected and approval given to open shop. You have set up the shelves and counters and fully stocked your new pharmacy. You have employed your staff and they have resumed work. Now your business has opened and you are faced with the ultimate question. How do I get customers for my pharmacy business?

A business without customers is heading for death. It will be closed down in a very short time, it is dead on arrival. So in order to ensure that your business flourishes and grows as you have anticipated when you set out to start it, you must devise strategies for bringing customers every day. Below are a few ways to get customers to your new pharmacy.

**1. Create Your Business USP:** USP stands for Unique Selling Proposition. It is a statement which summarizes what differentiate you from the other players in

your industry. Example of an USP is that of HealthPlus Pharmacy - "Love Life! Feel Great!" By creating your USP, you are separating your business from the crowd. Your USP is the message you pass to your customers about what they are expected to experience. Once you have created you USP, you can now start your customer acquisition efforts.

**2. Hold A Grand Opening Day:** You should not just come up one day and open shop for business. People should not just be living in a place and just out of nowhere, a pharmacy business is around the corner. Make proactive effort to announce your presence. Set aside a day to open your business. Invite the people living around the area and other business owners to the opening ceremony. Hold the ceremony in a grand style. During the ceremony, deliver free health lectures and include other healthcare activities for your invited guests.

**3. Offer Free Services:** Set aside the first week or month of your opening to deliver free health services to your community. The activities to include in this programme are free blood pressure measurement, free blood glucose level test, BMI calculations, drug counselling and so on.

**4. Distribute Health Educational Fliers:** You can produce fliers which educate the community on general healthcare or some disease conditions. You are providing free community service and the benefit you get is that the community will patronize your business in return.

**5. Use Large Banner:** Make a large banner to inform your community that you have opened and also announce any special services you are offering to your

community. You may want to make series of banners with inscriptions like 'Opening soon', 'Countdown to Opening Day', and 'Newly Opened'.

**6. Build Partnerships:** You can approach hospitals, outpatient consulting clinics and laboratories to announce your opening. You can ask them to send their patients to you and even offer them special discounts.

**7. Give Gifts:** You can give gifts to your first sets of customers to appreciate their patronage. Your gifts should be something that is beneficial to their health. They will reciprocate this gesture by doing business with you again and again and even help refer others to your business.

The strategies shared in this article can be employed by any pharmacy business no matter the age or customer base. Ensure to check with your local regulatory agency to find out what is permitted and to what extent you can go in your marketing efforts.

Gabriel Gambo Nmadu is the team leader at [www.PharmacyMBA.com](http://www.PharmacyMBA.com). He writes on how to make success in pharmacy practice and business. PharmacyMBA.com is targeted at educating pharmacists on how to start and run successful pharmacy businesses using proven and profitable strategies.



# ENHANCING RETAIL PERFORMANCE

DMS Retail West Africa



**M**anaging a retail store, a group of stores or an entire retail organization is a much more sophisticated endeavour than it sometimes appears to the general public. To be sure, there is a Store Management Process at the foundation of it all...it's not a 'fly by the seat of your pants' or 'learn on the job' kind of thing.

The Store Management Process provides a strong framework to be used as a basis for everything we need to do to drive a retail business forward. It starts with people. You know that you should be hiring the very best people you can afford. But, before you can hire the best people you can afford, you need to know what you're looking for. Figuring this out is not difficult when you know exactly what to do. Of course, once you know what you're looking for,

you need to be able to interview applicants with intent. Otherwise, you'll ask canned questions and, not surprisingly, you will likely get canned answers.

That is, you will get answers that aren't really going to tell you all that much about the particular applicant. This is simply not the recommended way to go about getting the very best for your payroll dollars.

Once you have your great people on board you need to train in four distinct areas. We all have our own idea of which area is most important but, to get the job done the way it should be done, all four areas must receive our attention. Retailers must ensure they are providing top-notch training in:

- 1. Sales**
- 2. Customer Service**
- 3. Product/Service Knowledge**
- 4. Process & Procedure**

New employees must be given a solid foundation; additional, more advanced skills can be layered on to as they progress in their career.

For the retail store, region or organization to excel, it is imperative that the leadership communicate clearly defined goals and objectives. This pertains to more than just sales targets. Consider all of the strategies that are in place in the organization and put together clear goals and objectives to support each and every one of them. Beyond sales, think about customer service targets, other expectations and the development of a performance culture. This is not an easy part of the executive team's job, to say the least. But, it is a critical one.

Indeed, one of the most difficult issues is to continually check for understanding of the goals and objectives. It's not enough to communicate them. Surveys show that most employees either don't know what the company goals and objectives are or they don't understand what part they play in achieving them. On-going follow up is key! You must define & measure metrics & KPI's that are appropriate. The most important Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for your organization needs to be identified. Then you must establish a bullet proof method of measuring, reporting and monitoring each one. Balanced Scorecards are invaluable and can be easily implemented for every position.

Never forget the power of motivation - both internal and external. Our words and actions impact our people and that impact cannot be underestimated when it comes to achievement.

Executive and management teams possess various types, and levels, of leadership skills. It is the duty of these teams to eliminate obstacles to success; to ensure the hierarchy of needs is well understood by all and to ensure that a 'pat on the back' is something widely, and genuinely, done throughout the organization.

Too often, this next 'must-do' is seen as a time consuming annual project and, unfortunately, a headache... with everyone scrambling to pull facts and figures together; feverishly trying to remember everything that went on in the past year. That, of course, is not the way it's supposed to work if you want to succeed.

1. *Emotions*
2. *Lack of experience*
3. *Lack of skill*
4. *Fuzzy guidelines from their superiors*

Finally, you must ensure appropriate rewards and incentives are in place. All of the following must be addressed:

1. *Monetary and non-monetary rewards and incentives*
2. *Personal growth*
3. *Professional growth*
4. *Promotion.*

If you can adequately put all these ideas to practice, you can be rest assured that your business would soar to the high heavens! All the Success!

*Joseph Ebata is the President of DMS West Africa, a leading global retail consultancy.*

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