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Pharmacy Technician

H A N D B O O K



Top Challenges for Pharmacy Technicians

As a pharmacy technician, you are a key member of the pharmacy team. You're the friendly face behind the counter. And you're the detail-oriented team member tracking inventory in the back. In your role, you face many demands that even the most seasoned technicians consider challenging.

We understand patient care is at the top of your list of concerns. But often you have to wrestle with the challenges of **(1) product knowledge and (2) inventory management**. The way these challenges are met directly affects the success of your pharmacy.

Top Challenges for Pharmacy Technicians

As a pharmacy technician, your challenges may include:

Product Knowledge



Knowing the drugs. You need to be familiar with the drug products that are ordered and dispensed at your pharmacy. Your knowledge prevents the incorrect drug from being ordered to fill a prescription. This ensures that customers are receiving the correct medications, and prevents license forfeiture, which can happen if the wrong medicine is dispensed.



Knowing drug storage conditions. A big part of “knowing the drugs” is understanding the required storage conditions for each drug in your pharmacy. Some drugs must be stored at specific temperatures to maintain potency and avoid spoilage. Knowing and adhering to specific storage conditions ensures that drugs remain viable and available for use by customers.



Dispensing the correct product. Pharmacy technicians are responsible for accurately filling prescriptions and dispensing products to customers. Any errors could result in a customer receiving the wrong medication or the wrong quantity of medication.

Inventory Management



Accurate and regular inventory management. In many pharmacies, inventory counts or “cycle counts” are highly important, and must be done on a regular basis. Typically, technicians must perform these counts with high accuracy while also managing a full shift of demanding pharmacy tasks. But because these counts provide a picture of the pharmacy’s inventory, there is little margin for error; inaccurate counts could cause a pharmacy to order improper quantities of drugs for its inventory.



Accurately identifying controlled substances. For the drug return process, pharmacy technicians must be able to identify and sort controlled substances. In some pharmacies, controls are not identified by the pharmacy’s computer system. In these cases, pharmacy technicians must take extra care to find and pre-sort controlled substances before packing returns to be shipped to the drug returns company. Controlled drugs that are not properly identified cause serious issues with compliance; this may cause the returns to be mailed back to the pharmacy as non-returnable.



Timely tracking of recalled drugs. Tracking recalled products and pulling them from the shelves is an important part of a pharmacy technician’s job. Swift and accurate returns of these products help ensure that a pharmacy’s inventory is stocked only with products that are safe for consumers and therefore viable for purchase.



Tips for Excellent Customer Service

As a pharmacy technician, you're the engine of the pharmacy. You not only manage inventory, but you're also the friendly face who takes care of customers when they walk in. You help them get the medications they need in a timely fashion.

Your strong organizational and inventory management skills keep your pharmacy healthy on the back end. But your helpfulness and customer service skills will keep your pharmacy healthy on the front end. Strong customer service keeps your customers coming back, builds a connection with the community, and helps your pharmacy stay competitive. Following are a few important tips for excellent customer service:

- 1. Be friendly and welcoming.** A friendly greeting as customers approach the counter goes a long way towards making them feel comfortable and valued. Being openly helpful and ready to serve sends the message that the pharmacy cares about their wellbeing, and creates a feeling of trust.
- 2. Protect customer privacy.** The HIPAA law prohibits health service providers from revealing the medical information of their customers. At all times, when interacting with patrons, take great care to protect their privacy. Be discreet when discussing protected medical information such as prescriptions, medications, or medical conditions.
- 3. Learn customer names.** Show that you care about your customers by making an effort to learn their names. Addressing customers by name helps them to feel like you care about getting to know them. This helps them to feel comfortable with your pharmacy and encourages them to return in the future.
- 4. Prepare in advance.** Because the lines at the pharmacy can get rather long, learn to build in shortcuts to your time on the shift. For example, if you know specific customers come in regularly, have their prescriptions ready before they arrive.
- 5. Be friendly on the phone.** As a pharmacy technician, always be courteous and helpful when speaking to customers by phone. If there's an issue that you are unable to assist with, politely let them know that you'll place them on hold for the pharmacist.
- 6. Encourage return of expired medications.** Part of customer care is caring for their wellbeing outside the walls of your pharmacy. If your pharmacy location offers a drug take back program, encourage your customers to come in and dispose of their expired and unused medications at the pharmacy.
- 7. Always be professional.** Always behave and respond in a calm and courteous manner. As a pharmacy technician serving customers, you represent not only yourself but the pharmacy as well. Often, a customer's interaction with the pharmacy technician forms their primary impression of the pharmacy. It's up to you to make sure it's a positive one.

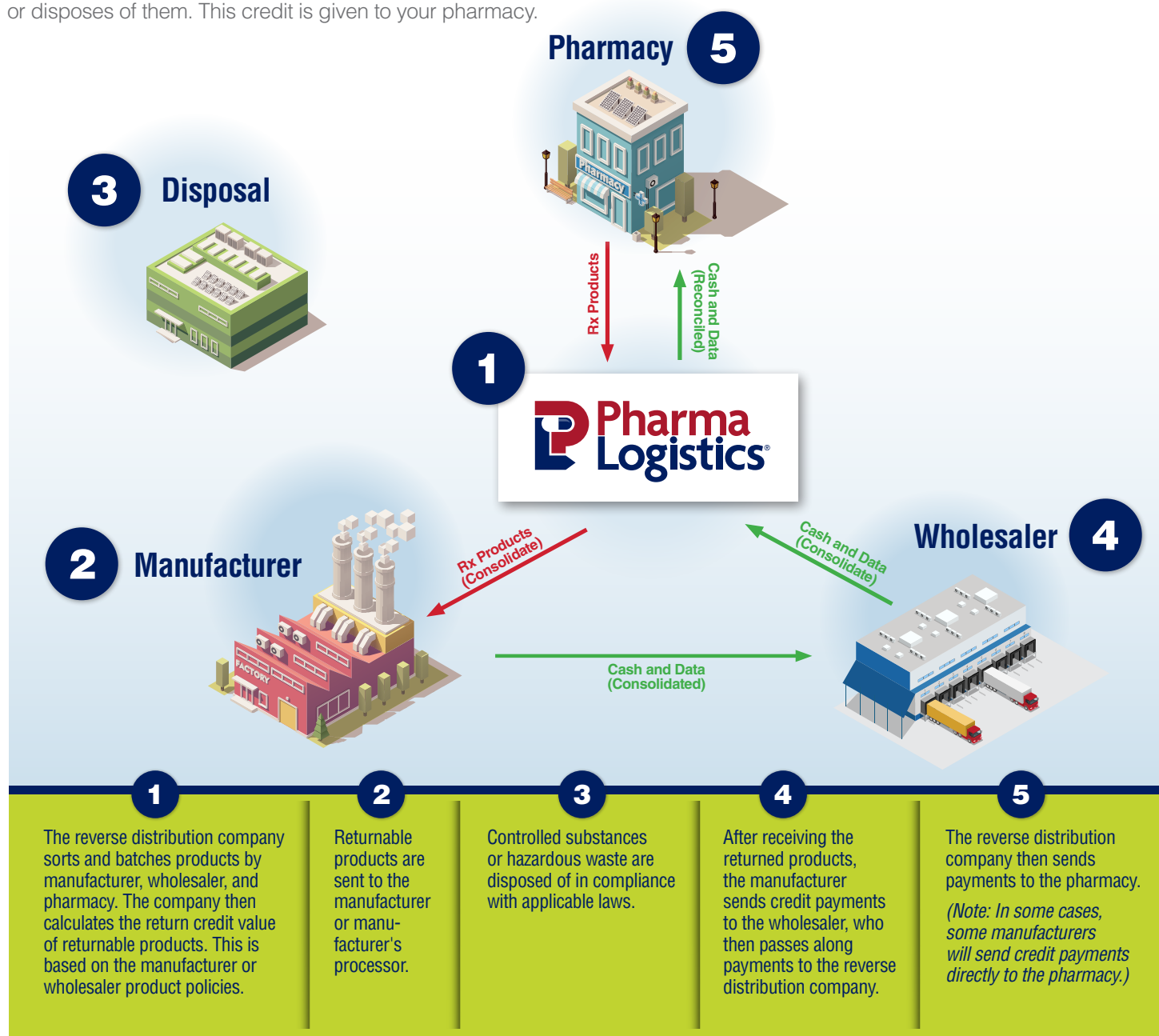


Understanding the Drug Returns Process

A large part of your role as pharmacy technician is inventory management: helping to keep an accurate record of all the products your pharmacy has in stock. Overall, the goal of your pharmacy is to order and sell the right products to customers who will purchase and use them.

This means minimizing the quantity of unsalable products in your inventory by working with a third party to return expired products to your manufacturer or wholesaler for credit. The “drug return” process is also known as reverse distribution.

Often, this process is coordinated by a reverse distribution company, e.g., Pharma Logistics. This company takes your pharmacy’s unsalable, expired drug products, sends them back to manufacturers and/or wholesalers for credit, or disposes of them. This credit is given to your pharmacy.



Top Reasons Why Drugs Are Non-Returnable

Sometimes, drugs cannot be returned to the manufacturer for credit. There are many reasons why a product may be classified as non-returnable. Reasons typically depend on the return policy of each individual manufacturer.

Manufacturer policies are constantly subject to change. For this reason, it's important to maintain access to the latest version of these policies to know which drugs in your inventory are returnable. Generally speaking, below are the most common reasons that a drug product may not be returnable:

Poor Condition

1. **Damaged product:** The product or container has visible damage.
2. **Damaged label:** The product label is defaced.
3. **Not in original package:** The product has been repackaged.
4. **Has prescription label:** The prescription label is still on the product.



Designated Non-Returnable

5. **Sold as non-returnable:** The product was sold by the manufacturer as explicitly non-returnable.
6. **Lot number:** The product has a non-returnable lot number. For example, products sold in discounted or specially priced lots are generally non-returnable.
7. **Partials not accepted:** The manufacturer does not accept "partials," i.e., returns of partially filled product packages.
8. **"Returns not accepted":** The manufacturer does not accept returns.

Out of Returnable Date Range

9. **Too far out-of-date:** The product is too far past its expiration date. In general, the eligibility period for returns ranges from 3 to 12 months after product expiration.
10. **Too far in-date:** The product is within its expiration date as deemed by the individual manufacturer policy.



Top Reasons Why Drugs Are Non-Returnable

Free or Discounted

- 11. Free product:** The product is a complimentary item or a sample.
- 12. Discounted, short-dated:** Products close to expiration, i.e., “short-dated” products that were sold at a discount are usually non-returnable.

Other

- 13. Below minimum quantity or dollar value:** The product is below the minimum quantity or below the minimum dollar value that the manufacturer will accept.
- 14. From an unauthorized distributor:** Products purchased from unauthorized distributors are not eligible for return credit.

Types of Pharmaceutical Returns Services

With the range of reverse distribution services offered by various companies, it can sometimes be challenging to determine which ones may be right for your pharmacy. The following is a brief overview of the types of expired pharmaceutical returns services available today.

Two Main Service Types

Generally speaking, there are two core services available for completing pharmaceutical returns:



Onsite Service



Prepare and Package. Trained and licensed representatives from a pharmaceutical returns company come onsite to handle ready-to-return materials. They check paperwork, ensure proper packaging, and prepare shipping for carrier pickup.

➤ **Benefit:** A service that saves you and your team time that can be spent focusing on patient care.



Box & Ship Service



Your pharmacy can choose to manually pack and ship its own returns manually, sending them directly to the pharmaceutical returns company, which provides the boxes and prepaid labels in advance.

➤ **Benefit:** A great, lower-cost option if your pharmacy team prefers to prepare and send in their own pharmaceutical returns.

Types of Pharmaceutical Returns Services

Additional Services

Additional services depend on the capabilities of the pharmaceutical returns company you select, and could include:

Rapid Credit



A hospital pharmacy can receive credits for returned items quickly—within 14 days from the date the items are received by the pharmaceutical returns company.

➤ **Benefit:** *An excellent way to boost cash flow quickly—with reduced reconciliation time—instead of waiting 12 months, the industry standard.*

Controlled Substance and Waste Destruction



The pharmaceutical returns company will handle removal and disposal of controlled substances and pharmaceutical waste to ensure compliance with applicable FDA and EPA regulations.

**Note: Pharma Logistics is one of the few companies that have this capability, which requires special licensing from the EPA and DEA.*

➤ **Benefit:** *Ensures that your pharmacy stays in compliance with current laws regarding management and disposal of controlled and waste pharmaceuticals.*

Consumer Drug Take Back Services



The pharmaceutical returns company helps your pharmacy coordinate a community “drug take back” program. Consumers are encouraged to safely dispose of unwanted pharmaceutical products.

➤ **Benefit:** *Helps protect your community from prescription drug abuse and accidental poisoning; reduces the dangers of pharmaceutical waste through environmentally safe disposal.*



Why Choose Pharma Logistics?

We Handle Your Expired Drug Return Process—From Start to Finish

As a pharmacy technician, a key function of your job is inventory management. And the pharmaceutical drug return process is an important part of inventory management:

1. The first step in the returns process is **clearing your pharmacy's shelves** of expired, damaged, or otherwise unsalable inventory.
2. The next step is **sending back returnable items** to the manufacturer or wholesaler for credit and arranging for proper disposal of non-returnable items in compliance with federal laws.
3. **Return credits** are then sent back to your pharmacy as coordinated by the reverse distributor.

This Is Quite a Bit of Work.

Some pharmacy teams choose to handle this work themselves.



Throughout this process, your pharmacy team will need to track the status and processing of returns and credits to account for every item that has left the pharmacy.

Why Choose Pharma Logistics?

But Did You Know That There Are Reverse Distribution Services Available to Handle Most of These Steps For You?

Pharma Logistics offers service options to help you and your pharmacy team to:

- **Clear your inventory** of unsalable items and return them for credit, or send them for disposal.
- **Provide chain of custody** and compliance with DEA Form 41 for the removal and disposal of controlled substances.
- **Quickly track the status** of returns and credits with a self-service tool that's easy to use and provides visibility into the overall process.

Pharma Logistics provides tools and services to handle most of the reverse distribution process for you – **including onsite packaging and shipping.**

With Pharma Logistics

From packaging to disbursement, your entire expired drug return process is completely handled—with clear and easy tracking every step of the way.



Real-time Analytics and Reporting

Not every vendor gives you reports showing where your credit is in the return process, and how much you can expect to collect. It can be hard to make business decisions and review your expected return value without real-time insight into the process. Pharma Logistics provides you analytics and a dashboard highlighting each return project, manufacturer payouts and where your credit is in the process. And all of the data can be exported to support compliance and financial reporting.

Pharma Logistics Services

Handling Your Pharmaceutical Returns Process the Easy Way



Box & Ship Service

A hassle-free way for you to mail in returns...

For on-demand pharmaceutical returns, Pharma Logistics offers a convenient Box & Ship service. Simply file your DEA 222 form, and send your returns in the prepaid pack-and-ship boxes—and we'll handle the rest.



With the Box & Ship service, you receive:

- Prepaid UPS shipping labels
- Tamper-proof bags
- Online access to DEA 222 request forms
- Online access to Schedule III-V inventory forms



Onsite Service

Full-service support for pharmaceutical returns...

Save hours of paperwork and labor with the Pharma Logistics Onsite Service. Our Onsite Service is the easiest way for your pharmacy to stay compliant and collect payment for pharmaceutical returns.



With Onsite Service, a Pharma Logistics bonded service rep takes care of it all:

- Removal of any products you can't dispense
- Controlled substance inventories
- Legend and OTC inventories
- DEA Form 222 completion
- In-person account summaries to keep you informed

Pharma Logistics Services



Rapid Credit

Receive pharmaceutical return payments within 14 days...

With Rapid Credit, Pharma Logistics issues payment within 14 days after receiving your expired pharmaceuticals. With quick and easy signup, your team can immediately reduce inventory carrying costs, minimize reconciliation time—and boost cash flow on demand.



Pharma Logistics is able to offer this powerful prefunded option based on a patented processing system for calculating the expected return value (ERV) of pharmaceutical products to a high degree of accuracy. This is the fastest way available today to get credit for your pharmaceutical returns.

With Rapid Credit, you receive:

- Analytics to track compliance and credit returns
- Payment within 14 days from receipt of returned items.
(Not all products are eligible for Rapid Credit payment)



Pharma Logistics: Additional Services to Make Your Pharmacy Job Easier

Customer Drug Take back Program

To reduce pharmaceutical waste in the environment and to ensure the overall safety of local communities, Pharma Logistics offers a Drug Take Back program. Pharma Logistics will provide your pharmacy with secure bins where customers can place their unwanted pharmaceutical products. Once they are full, simply ship the bins to Pharma Logistics and we'll take care of disposal. This program is designed to reduce prescription drug abuse and other safety issues by removing excess pharmaceutical products from the public.



Pharma Logistics: Keeping You Compliant

Pharma Logistics takes licenses and regulations seriously—and we are committed to keeping you fully compliant. We focus on generating timely and accurate credits for your pharmacy while following strict company procedures for maintaining regulatory compliance.

- The industry's first Verified-Accredited Wholesale Distributor (since 2011)
- Drug Enforcement Agency license for Schedule II–V
- Licensed or approved in all 50 states and Puerto Rico
- Statement on Standards for Attestation Engagements No. 16 Type 1 attestation
- Healthcare Distribution Management Association Returns Task Force member
- Fully bonded and insured
- Environmental Protection Agency Large Quantity Generators status

Not only do we adhere to the applicable local, state and federal statutes, but we schedule regular and ongoing continuing education for our entire staff. All service reps adhere to proper procedures and know how to help ensure your compliance with:



DEA: Drug Enforcement Administration



DOT: Department of Transportation



EPA: Environmental Protection Agency



JCAHO: Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations



FDA: Food and Drug Administration



NIOSH: The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health



OIG: Office of Inspector General



OSHA: Occupational Safety and Health Administration



HIPAA: Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act



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