

Association Management

Background

A large number of pharmacists serve as volunteers in a variety of pharmacy-related professional (individual members) and trade (company members) associations—either as officers (elected) or as committee members (appointed). A smaller but still substantial number of pharmacists choose association management as a career pathway, turning their pharmacy background, experience, and leadership skills into a challenging, full-time career. There are many functional areas found within the scope of pharmacy association management including government relations, clinical education, professional development, and professional advocacy.

Today, more than 135,000 associations exist in the United States, representing nearly every industry, profession, charity, hobby, cause, and interest. A breakdown of this figure by Gale Research, publisher of the *Encyclopedia of Associations*, shows more than 115,000 local, state, and regional associations, and 22,200 national associations. An additional 23,000 international associations are also headquartered in the United States. (Source: <http://library.dialog.com/bluesheets/html/bl0114.html#AB>. Accessed June 27, 2007.)

Pharmacy has many national, state, and local associations. “Broad spectrum” associations, representing all pharmacists, such as the American Pharmacists Association, exist at the national level and in all 50 states. Narrower, special-interest organizations of pharmacists (e.g., representing various practice areas) exist at the national level and to a lesser degree at the state or local levels. Virtually all such organizations have pharmacists employed within their full-time professional management team, frequently including the chief executive officer.

Recognizing the need to educate pharmacists for careers in association management, the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) began an Executive Residency in Association Management in 1968. Other pharmacy associations began residencies in the 1990s and those currently offering programs include ASHP, the National Association of Chain Drug Stores (NACDS), and the National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA). The American Pharmacists Association (APhA) offers externships and internship opportunities.

One respondent from Washington, DC, relishes “the ability to advocate on behalf of the entire profession,” while another from Maryland noted the “ability to participate in health policy development.”

Characteristics

Forty pharmacists responded to the 2007 *APhA Career Pathway Evaluation Program* survey. Seventy-six percent of the respondents hold an entry-level degree in pharmacy; 16% hold a PharmD degree. Forty-one percent indicated they had an advanced degree (MA, MS, MBS, PhD, or other), while 23% had been through a residency program. In addition, 25% had been through a certificate program and 11% reported completing other training. Such additional education might be outside the field of pharmacy, as would be the case in attaining Certified Association Executive status from the American Society of Association

Executives (ASAE).

Nearly all respondents indicated that they were satisfied with their job with 78% indicating “extremely satisfied”—the third highest among the careers surveyed—and 22% indicating “somewhat satisfied.” On an even greater scale, the respondents said that they felt the job was very challenging with a full 65% indicating “extremely challenging.” Another 35% indicated they felt the job was “somewhat challenging.”

Respondents’ average age was 45 years old. More than half (58%) of the respondents were female. Thirty percent reported incomes between \$80,000–100,000. Sixty-two percent earn over \$100,000 and 16% indicated income levels in excess of \$170,000. In the words of one respondent from Maryland, “Every day is different and you are constantly learning.” The average time worked per week was 42.8 hours and respondents represented 10 states.

Insider’s Perspective

What aspects of the job are most appealing?

Associations offer a number of programs and services to their members and the public, including professional education meetings, public information and education, codes of conduct/ethics, professional and safety standards, and/or the development of statistical information that are heavily depended upon by businesses and government. This diversity of scope is reflected by respondents, with 30% finding the “ability to advocate on behalf of the profession” as the most appealing aspect of the position, followed by “the diversity of work” at 10%.

What aspects of the job are least appealing?

No one single factor was listed by the respondents as a least appealing feature of the position. Both the amount of travel and long hours were each cited by 10% of the respondents as the least appealing aspects they see. Comments such as “continuous e-mail,” “demanding workload,” and “long time away when traveling” were frequently repeated.

What advice should students and practitioners consider when selecting the option of association management?

Twenty-five percent of the respondents identified “having prior practice experience” as the most important advice to those contemplating a career in pharmacy association management. Thirteen percent indicated that those seeking positions in association management should understand the need for interpersonal and communication skills. One respondent from Tennessee summed this up by stating that pharmacists in association management must “acquire excellent interpersonal, writing, and communication skills.” An additional 8% indicated that those considering this field need the ability to be self-starters and to multitask.

Critical Factor Ratings

Interaction With Patients

Association management pharmacists spend little time interacting with patients individually but do spend some time interacting with the public in general. This varies tremendously depending on what part of the organization the pharmacist is employed. Some projects are tied closely to patient care and public policy while others are not.

$$= 3.8$$

$$\sigma = 2.6$$



Conducting Physical Assessments

Not surprisingly, this group of pharmacists spends a minimal amount of time conducting physical assessments since direct patient contact is not a large component of this area of practice. This factor is tied for the lowest numerical valuation of any of the critical factors for these respondents.

$$= 1.1$$

$$\sigma = 0.3$$



Interpreting Laboratory Values

As noted above, because of the low percentage of time spent in direct patient contact, association management pharmacists spend little to no time interpreting laboratory values. This factor ties with the above factor as the lowest ranked for this group.

$$= 1.1$$

$$\sigma = 0.3$$



Continuity of Relationships

Continuity of relationships ranked in the mid-range for association management pharmacists. This continuity may not refer to patients per se, but rather to ongoing relationships with others in pharmacy or with association management outside the field of pharmacy. Many of the relationships formed are project driven.

$$= 4.5$$

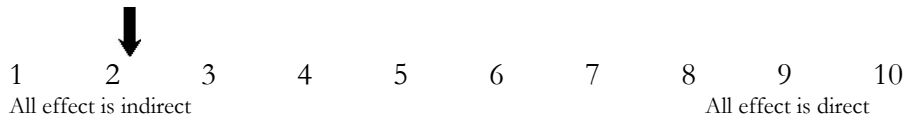
$$\sigma = 3.5$$



Helping People

These respondents indicated a higher level of indirect assistance to people rather than direct assistance. This is not surprising given the low amount of direct clinical responsibility as a function of the position. Association managers do help people—most often the group’s members—indirectly by the education, public policy, research, and other activities undertaken on their behalf. One respondent stated, “If you want to have direct [individual] impact, association management is not the place to work.”

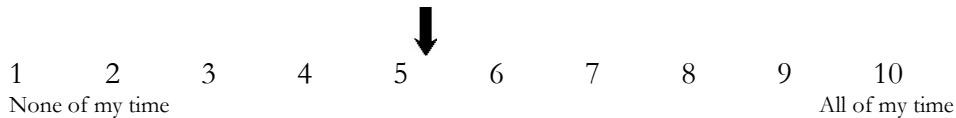
= 2.1
 $\sigma = 1.9$



Collaboration With Other Professionals

Collaboration with other professionals ranked higher on the scale at 5.2. This reflects the need for association management pharmacists to interact with representatives of medicine, nursing, and other fields in exploring public policy issues. Working with legislative and regulatory staff professionals also comes into play.

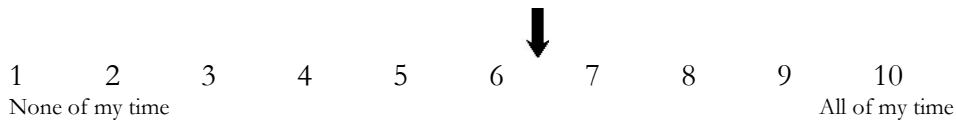
= 5.2
 $\sigma = 2.4$



Educating Other Professionals

A portion of time committed to educating other professionals is indicated in this survey response. This may reflect association managers’ efforts to gain understanding of pharmacy’s positions on public policy issues with other special interests and with public policymakers. Six percent of the respondents’ time is spent advising/counseling health care professionals.

= 6.3
 $\sigma = 2.7$



Variety of Daily Activities

Respondents identified variety of daily activities as an important facet of association management. Simply put by one respondent, “[We work on a] variety of issues.” Repetitiveness is not an issue in this practice environment.

= 8.2
 $\sigma = 2.0$



Multiple Task Handling

Perhaps even more than variety, multitasking is a major feature of association management as indicated by the high rating in the survey response. The inability to control outside political factors is undoubtedly involved, but the nature of the position lends itself to surprises, leading to multiple simultaneous tasks. In a typical day, an association manager may be working toward a publication deadline, meeting planning, responding to new issues or member inquiries, as well as other duties. The ability to focus on the priority task can be an ever-present challenge.

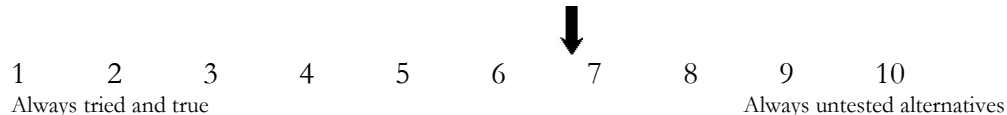
= 8.7
 $\sigma = 1.7$



Problem Solving

A tendency toward solving problems by untested methods is used more often than past methods. Given the wide variety of issues addressed and programs and services offered, it is common for association managers to find innovative solutions. One Michigan respondent summed a number of these factors by stating that pharmacists in association management “must be able to work independently, multitask, and problem solve efficiently.”

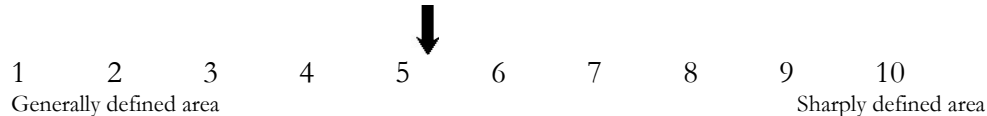
= 6.8
 $\sigma = 1.8$



Focus of Expertise

The amount of generally defined versus sharply defined expertise leaves these respondents precisely mid-range. Because of the wide variety of issues, programs, and services, part of an association management career requires a broad set of skills and expertise. Some association positions, however, may be more specialist than generalist, for example a public policy director or meeting planner.

= 5.2
 $\sigma = 2.6$



Innovative Thinking

Association management pharmacists lean heavily toward the need for innovative thinking as a component of their jobs. Generating new ideas within the profession of pharmacy is a mainstay of the field, according to these data. Again, the variety of professional and public issues that association managers must deal with requires innovative thinking and new approaches. This group rated this factor the highest for all profiles.

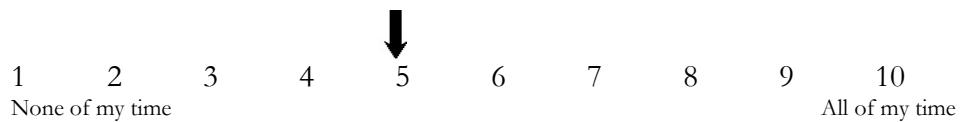
= 8.6
 $\sigma = 1.5$



Applying Scientific Knowledge

Applying scientific knowledge received a mid-range score of 4.9. Association managers may find that their basic pharmacy education is useful background, underpinning their daily functions in management, meeting planning, public education, and writing.

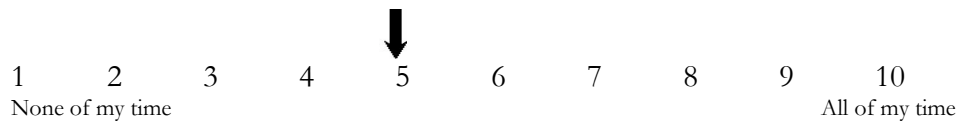
= 4.9
 $\sigma = 2.1$



Applying Medical Knowledge

The same information holds true for this group of respondents as it applies to applying medical knowledge, which also received a mid-range score of 4.9.

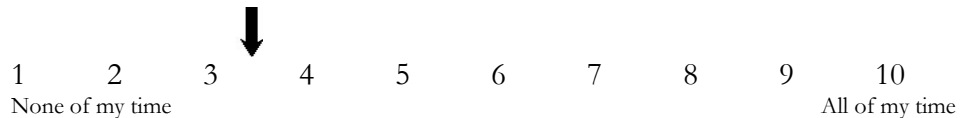
= 4.9
 $\sigma = 2.4$



Creating New Knowledge by Conducting Research

This factor ranks as one of the lowest in time demand for association management pharmacists. The exception may be some staff specialist positions that are responsible for tracking trends and conducting industry research. The typical association management professional may not find the need for a significant commitment to engage in a research activity.

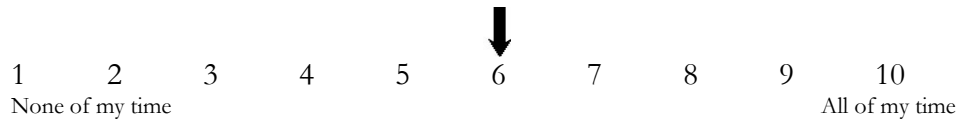
= 3.4
 $\sigma = 2.3$



Management/Supervision of Others

Response to this factor depends on the nature of the position and whether the pharmacist is in a management or staff role. Those in management positions supervise others, although compared with the other critical factors and comments, many positions are self-motivating and self-directed. In addition, with the continual change of projects, supervision may change quickly from personnel issues to project task issues.

= 6.0
 $\sigma = 3.2$



Management/Supervision of a Business

Not surprisingly, more than half of an association manager's time is devoted to management and supervisory activities. Management of a business (or project) differs from the above factor in amount of time spent in this role. Twenty-eight percent of the respondents reported business/organization/department management as the activity performed most often. Adding in project/case management time, this rises to over half of the workweek at 51%.

= 6.4
 $\sigma = 3.2$



Pressure/Stress

Association management pharmacists report experiencing a high level of pressure and stress in their work with an upper range score of 7.4. Related factors (e.g., workload, frequent shortage of resources) may be likely contributors. The political pressures of professional leadership responsibilities also may contribute to stress in these positions. One respondent from Virginia stated that stress can occur and association managers must "be ready to multitask with little staff backup."

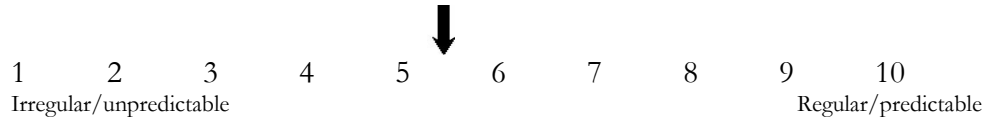
= 7.4
 $\sigma = 1.9$



Work Schedule

Association managers report their work between predictable and unpredictable with a rating of 5.4. This may reflect the different types of positions held within the association environment as well as seasonal variations (e.g., during active legislative sessions, near annual meeting time).

= 5.4
 $\sigma = 3.0$



Part-Time Opportunities

Relatively little opportunity for part-time employment of pharmacists in this field exists with a score of 4.0. Variations exist among national, state, and local associations. Many state or local specialty associations cannot support a full-time executive and either hire a part-time pharmacist or contract with an association management firm.

= 4.0
 $\sigma = 2.7$



Job-Sharing Opportunities

Job-sharing is not a common practice in associations, which is reinforced by the low ranking of this factor.

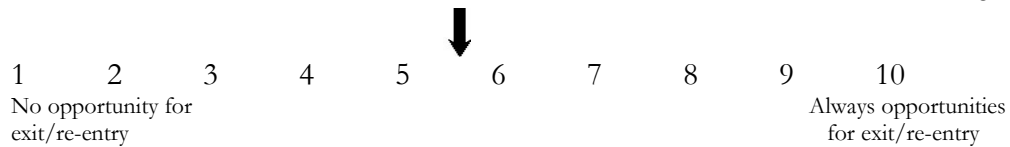
= 2.8
 $\sigma = 2.3$



Exit/Re-entry Opportunities

Exit/re-entry opportunities are mid-range in this practice environment.

= 5.6
 $\sigma = 2.8$



Parental Leave Opportunities

Parental leave opportunities ranked higher than others in the areas of work-related options. Most associations provide the opportunity for parental leave when possible.

= 7.4
 $\sigma = 2.8$



Leisure/Family Time

Association management pharmacists are able to enjoy a relative amount of free time for family and personal activities. Satisfactory scheduling of personal time seems manageable.

= 7.1
 $\sigma = 2.2$



Job Security

Job security of association management pharmacists was ranked at 8.4 on the likert scale. While chief executives in this field usually hold employment contracts, they are employed by a board of directors with many members. As the board's composition changes, so can the group's priorities and their assessment of the chief executive's position. Overall, job security is still relatively high, reflecting the fact that most staff members do not report to volunteer boards but serve as employees.

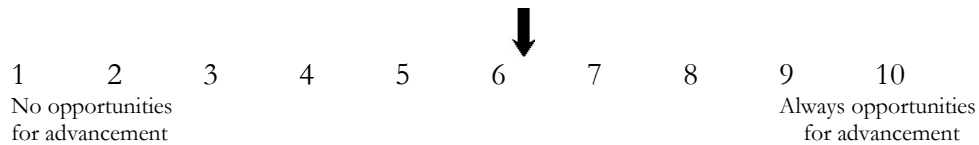
= 8.4
 $\sigma = 1.2$



Opportunities for Advancement

Association management pharmacists reported a mid-range level of opportunities for advancement. Generally speaking, state and local level pharmacy associations are not large organizations when compared with the national associations where greater opportunities exist for advancement. One Washington, DC, respondent indicated, "Association management provides a career ladder from entry-level positions through senior management and executive leadership."

= 6.2
 $\sigma = 2.2$



Opportunities for Leadership Development

At 8.0, association managers report ample opportunities for leadership development with near unanimity. This may not be surprising, given association management pharmacists are, almost by definition, in positions of leadership within the profession. In addition, many national associations provide leadership development to its members, thereby providing this service to staff as well.

= 8.0
 $\sigma = 2.1$



Community Prestige

Association managers enjoy a high level of respect within the community for the positions they hold. In part, this may be due to their visibility within the community, for example in legislative and public affairs, as well as their relationships with other association managers outside the field of pharmacy.

= 8.0
 $\sigma = 1.5$



Professional Involvement

Far and away with the highest-level response (9.6) for this group, association management pharmacists report ample opportunity for professional involvement. Pharmacy meeting attendance is more than an opportunity—it's a requirement of the position! State and national association gatherings, inter- and intra-professional opportunities, and association management seminars are among areas of involvement. This factor was rated the highest by this group across all profiles.

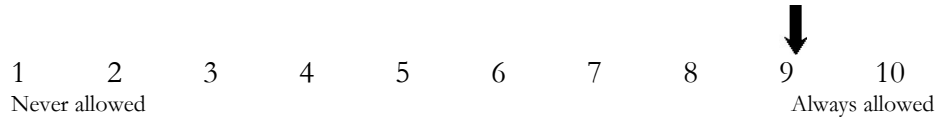
= 9.6
 $\sigma = 1.1$



Self-Worth

The second-highest rating for this group, at 9.1, indicates that association management provides growth opportunities, leading to advancement of self-worth. This evaluation may be closely linked to similar ratings in professional involvement, leadership development, and prestige. This factor was scored the highest by this group across all profiles.

= 9.1
 $\sigma = 0.9$



Future Focus

Association management is primarily a future-focused career. Because they interact to a large degree with pharmacy thought leaders, association management pharmacists are always trying to anticipate the profession's issues in tomorrow's context. They gather information, work with the volunteer board and committee members to formulate strategy, and have a high degree of autonomy in its implementation. Future focus was scored the highest by this group across all profiles.

= 8.3
 $\sigma = 1.2$



Professional Prestige

Respondents enjoy a high level of prestige both within pharmacy and in other public arenas. The political realities and public spotlight create a crucible that not many pharmacists would find comfortable, therefore they hold those in esteem who can stand up to such pressures.

= 8.6
 $\sigma = 1.4$



Unique Practice Environment

As the third-highest score among this group (9.0), respondents identify their practice as a highly unique environment. There may be only one association management practice setting in many, if not most, states. Coupled with the high degree of autonomy, these practitioners also have the ability and the opportunity to mold their practice environment, further enhancing the uniqueness.

= 9.0
 $\sigma = 1.2$



Advanced Degree

The 4.0 response indicates a low mid-range view of the necessity of an advanced degree. Nonetheless, data earlier mentioned reflect that 41% of the respondents have earned advanced degrees. The issue may be whether an advanced degree is required or merely desirable.

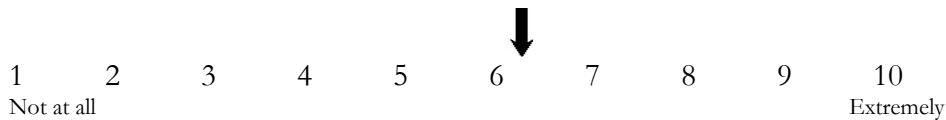
= 4.0
 $\sigma = 3.1$



Entrepreneurial Opportunity

Entrepreneurial opportunity ranks in the mid-range among association management pharmacists. Since associations are, for the most part, nonprofit organizations and are “owned” by the pharmacist members, there is little ownership opportunity in the traditional sense.

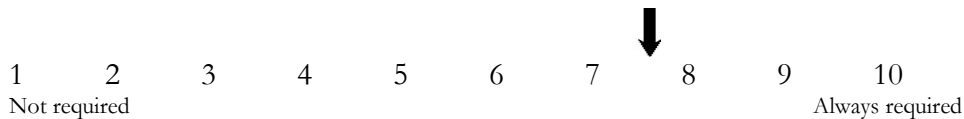
= 6.2
 $\sigma = 3.0$



Additional Training

Most respondents indicated that other training (e.g., association management) may not be a job requirement but may be highly desirable, as noted earlier in opportunities for development. This is especially true given the unique nature of the job and the wide variety of activities it contains.

= 7.6
 $\sigma = 2.4$



Interacting With Colleagues

Association management pharmacists indicate that they interact with colleagues often. This reflects the interaction that occurs on specific projects and the need for multiple people to be involved in special functions such as annual meetings.

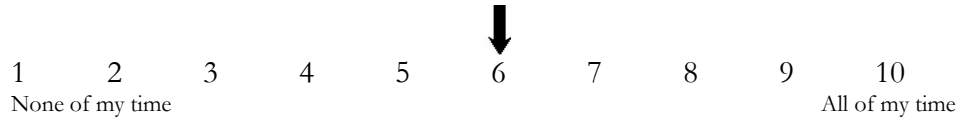
= 8.1
 $\sigma = 1.7$



Travel

Although listed in the mid-range area, travel by association management pharmacists depends somewhat on the type of association, level within the organization, and specific project. Most respondents travel minimally once a year for the annual meeting of the organization. Some may travel monthly or multiple times each month.

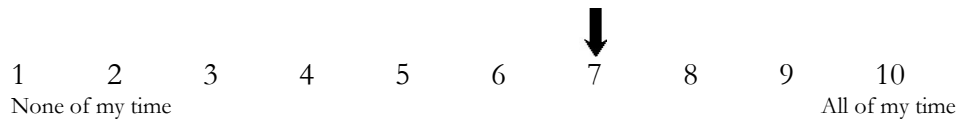
= 6.0
 $\sigma = 2.0$



Writing

Writing skills are necessary in association management. Project reports, editorials, speech writing, white papers, and journal articles are just a few of the resources written by this group. One respondent stated the necessity to “hone your communication skills, written as well as oral presentations.”

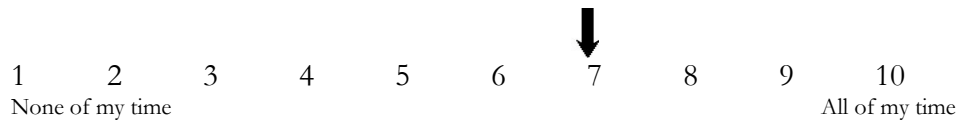
= 7.0
 $\sigma = 2.0$



Working With Teams

Respondents tend to have some team-related projects. In addition, there is a need to share information across different departments; therefore, working as a team is very helpful to keep everyone informed.

= 6.9
 $\sigma = 2.1$



“On Call”

Respondents indicated a low “on call” need for the positions. This changes when the association has its annual meeting, thereby necessitating that many are “on call” for a specific amount of time. In addition, specific project activities may require an “on call” status.

= 3.6
 $\sigma = 3.1$



Work on Holidays

As noted under the work schedule factor, respondents tend not to work on holidays at their place of employment. However, if project completion requirements fall near a holiday, hours may need to be completed on a holiday.

= 2.1
 $\sigma = 1.8$



Work on Weekends

This is similar to the above factor, although more work is required on a weekend versus holidays. This especially holds true of the national level associations where annual meetings and other functions occur on weekends to allow more participants to attend.

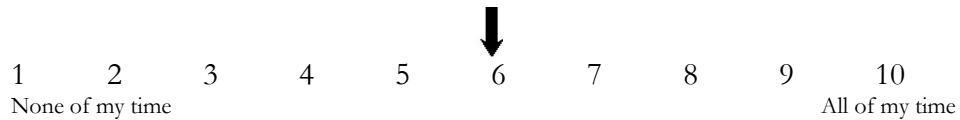
= 3.7
2.1



Presentations

Presentations fall to the mid-range for these respondents. Again, this differs based on the type of association and level within the association. Specific presentations to membership, the board of directors, and policy makers are included as some of the more common presentations given.

= 5.9
 $\sigma = 2.2$



Mean Scores for Critical Factors

1. Interaction With Patients	3.8
2. Conducting Physical Assessments	1.1
3. Interpreting Laboratory Values	1.1
4. Continuity of Relationships	4.5
5. Helping People	2.1
6. Collaboration With Other Professionals	5.2
7. Educating Other Professionals	6.3
8. Variety of Daily Activities	8.2
9. Multiple Task Handling	8.7
10. Problem Solving	6.8
11. Focus of Expertise	5.2
12. Innovative Thinking	8.6
13. Applying Scientific Knowledge	4.9
14. Applying Medical Knowledge	4.9
15. Creating New Knowledge by Conducting Research	3.4
16. Management/Supervision of Others	6.0
17. Management/Supervision of a Business	6.4
18. Pressure/Stress	7.4
19. Work Schedule	5.4
20. Part-Time Opportunities	4.0
21. Job-Sharing Opportunities	2.8
22. Exit/Re-entry Opportunities	5.6
23. Parental Leave Opportunities	7.4
24. Leisure/Family Time	7.1
25. Job Security	8.4
26. Opportunities for Advancement	6.2
27. Opportunities for Leadership Development	8.0
28. Community Prestige	8.0
29. Professional Involvement	9.6
30. Income	7.8
31. Benefits (vacation, health, retirement)	8.9
32. Geographic Location	5.1
33. Autonomy	8.2
34. Self-Worth	9.1
35. Future Focus	8.3
36. Professional Prestige	8.6
37. Unique Practice Environment	9.0
38. Advanced Degree	4.0
39. Entrepreneurial Opportunity	6.2
40. Additional Training	7.6
41. Interacting With Colleagues	8.1
42. Travel	6.0
43. Writing	7.0
44. Working With Teams	6.9
45. "On Call"	3.6
46. Work on Holidays	2.1
47. Work on Weekends	3.7
48. Presentations	5.9

Reference

Schommer JC, Brown LM, Sogol EM. *Career Pathway Evaluation Program 2007 Pharmacist Profile Survey*. June 2007.

Professional Organizations

American Pharmacists Association (APhA)
1100 15th Street NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20005
Tel: 800-237-APhA Fax: 202-783-2351
www.pharmacist.com

American Society of Association Executives (ASAE)
1575 I Street NW, Washington, DC 20005
Tel: 202-626-2723 TDD: 202-626-2803 Fax: 202-371-8825
www.asaenet.org

American Society of Consultant Pharmacists (ASCP)
1321 Duke Street, Alexandria, VA 22314
Tel: 703-739-1300 Fax: 703-739-1321
www.ascp.com

American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP)
7272 Wisconsin Avenue, Bethesda, MD 20814
Tel: 301-657-3000
www.ashp.org

National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA)
205 Daingerfield Road, Alexandria, VA 22314
Tel: 703-683-8200 Toll-Free: 800-544-7447 Fax: 703-683-3619
www.ncpanet.org

National Council of State Pharmacy Association Executives (NCSPAE)
5501 Patterson Avenue, Suite 200, Richmond, VA 23226
Tel: 804-285-4145 Fax: 804-285-4227
www.ncspae.org

NOTE: For further pharmacy organization information, please visit the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy Web site at www.aacp.org and click on the “Related Pharmacy Organizations” link.