

Chain Community Pharmacy: Management

Background

Chain pharmacy provides two primary career paths for pharmacists: management and staff. This profile focuses on management, while the staff position is discussed in a separate profile. As a general definition, a community pharmacy is considered a “chain community pharmacy” if the organization consists of four or more stores.

In chain community pharmacy, the breadth of duties of a manager is defined by the size and requirements of the pharmacy or organization. At the store level, the pharmacy manager is typically in charge of the staff, clinical services, inventory management, recruitment, training and development, and general business management. In larger chains, especially corporate owned, there are many more levels of management that extend from district managers to pharmacy operation executives to vice president of pharmacy operations, with the scope of responsibilities expanding accordingly. Pharmacists are critical in upper management of corporate chains because they can provide real-world practice knowledge when making crucial pharmacy business decisions. More details about this type of role can be found in the profile for Corporate Management.

In the past decade, the role of the manager has continued to evolve and change to include complying with new regulations and business practices. As one pharmacist from Rhode Island explained, “A community setting has many challenges as there is a great deal of pressure to perform with time and personnel constraints.”

Recent legislation that provides prescription drug coverage for those aged 65 years and older through Medicare Part D also provided challenges from a process and information standpoint as pharmacists try to assist patients in making informed decisions. With these new regulations, pharmacies have had to update computer systems, prescription processing, and the way they counsel and help their patients. Reimbursement for medication therapy management (MTM) services is also impacting practice, however it is too early in the process to provide any meaningful data for this survey.

Characteristics

A total of 98 chain pharmacists responded to the survey with 41 of these respondents indicating that they are in management positions. This profile is related to chain pharmacists in management positions. Eighty-eight percent reported having an entry-level pharmacy degree, with 25% having a PharmD degree. Ten percent had obtained an advanced degree such as an MA, MS, MBA, PhD, or other. Eight percent had been through a residency, 15% had some type of certification, and 10% had completed some other type of training.

Respondents' average age was 43 years old. Slightly more than half (56%) of respondents were female. Income data show 10% earn between \$80,000–\$100,000, while 90% earn \$100,000 or more per year, with 7% earning greater than \$170,000. The average time worked per week was 44 hours. Respondents represented 34 states.

The majority of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with their work, with 47% indicating “extremely satisfied” and 32% indicating “somewhat satisfied.” Fifty-one percent of respondents said that they felt the work was “extremely challenging” and 39% indicated it was “somewhat challenging.”

Insider’s Perspective

What aspects of the job are most appealing?

Fifty percent of chain community pharmacy managers indicated that “patient care/contact” was the most appealing aspect of their work. Twenty-two percent indicated that pay/salary also was an appealing aspect of the position.

Respondents to the survey highlighted “teaching student pharmacists and residents,” “flexibility,” and “clinical activities” as roles they enjoyed most about being a manager in a chain community pharmacy. One respondent from Arizona summed up many of the appealing aspects of chain community pharmacy practice when stating that “clinical responsibilities [screenings, disease management], student and resident training, patient contact, and flexible hours” are enjoyable aspects.

What aspects of the job are least appealing?

In contrast to the most appealing aspects, 37% indicated that “insurance” was the least appealing aspect of practice. In addition, 15% cited “corporate and management issues” as the least appealing portion of their work.

In this case, the category of “corporate and management issues” is much broader than simply within the pharmacy. Much of a chain community pharmacy manager’s time can be spent interpreting and resolving insurance issues for a patient. One Illinois respondent stated “having multiple bosses and ‘new’ policies always coming down from above” was unappealing.

What advice should students and practitioners consider when selecting the option of chain community pharmacy management?

The most important factor cited by respondents (48%) was to consider the pros and cons of working with patients and the general public. While some felt this was a very appealing aspect, others voiced concerns about those who complain about non-pharmacy issues. One respondent from New York stated, “The general population needs to be educated in what a pharmacist does as well as management...patient safety and healthy outcomes should be the priority.” The very nature of community pharmacy is working with the public continually, and an individual must be willing and prepared for that level of interaction to be successful.

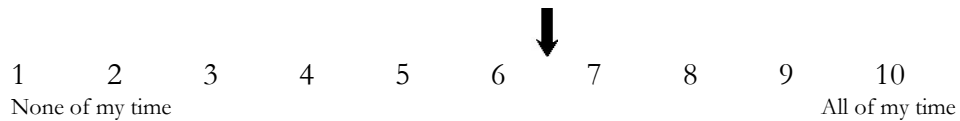
Twenty-four percent advised student pharmacists to be aware of long hours (some 12-hour shifts) and the need to multitask much of the time. Pharmacists are also advised to be aware of the workload. Additional management responsibilities can mean longer hours and less personal time.

Critical Factor Ratings

Interaction With Patients

Interaction with patients was mentioned by chain community pharmacy managers as one of the most satisfying aspects of these positions and this rating shows that it occupies a good portion of their time. Whether it's talking with patients or communicating with pharmacy staff or upper management, working with people is one of the core characteristics of being a community pharmacy manager. One Washington state respondent noted that the interaction provides the "ability to make a difference in patient health and quality of life."

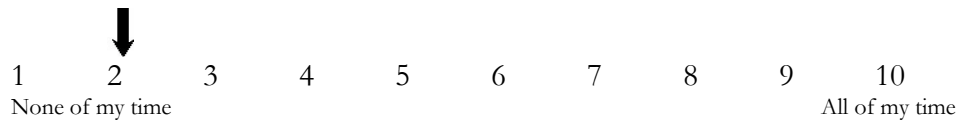
= 6.5
 $\sigma = 1.9$



Conducting Physical Assessments

The level of involvement that managers have in conducting physical assessments depends on the management position they hold, the size of the pharmacy, and the corporate policy on clinical services.

= 2.1
 $\sigma = 1.8$



Interpreting Laboratory Values

Taking into account the roles that chain community pharmacy managers have, there is little opportunity to interpret laboratory values for patients. Again, this can vary depending on the specific store in a chain and whether that store is involved in special projects or has an agreement with a specialty clinic to have access to this information.

= 1.7
 $\sigma = 1.3$



Continuity of Relationships

In a chain community pharmacy, managers have the opportunity to build relationships with the pharmacy clientele as well as their coworkers, staff, and colleagues. One manager from Illinois mentioned "having rapport with my regulars," which supports the idea of ongoing relationships.

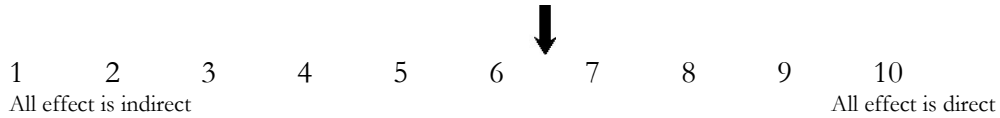
= 6.7
 $\sigma = 2.3$



Helping People

This factor scored mid-range on the survey with a 6.5 rating. Working with people is a large part of a chain community pharmacy manager's role. One respondent from Illinois even stated "being their trusted source of information" as an appealing aspect of their work. Managers are responsible for guiding and educating coworkers and patients.

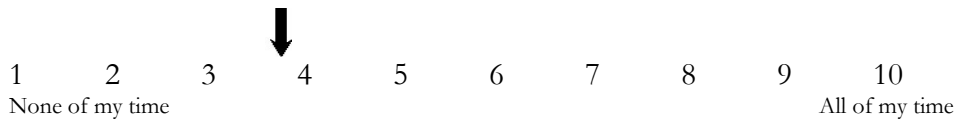
= 6.5
 $\sigma = 1.9$



Collaboration With Other Professionals

Time spent collaborating with other professionals will depend on the level of management held by the pharmacists and their management style. Pharmacy managers have regular interaction with physicians and nurses in their community, but it typically occurs through telephone conversations. In general, corporate managers (compared with store managers) are very limited in their interaction with other health care professionals.

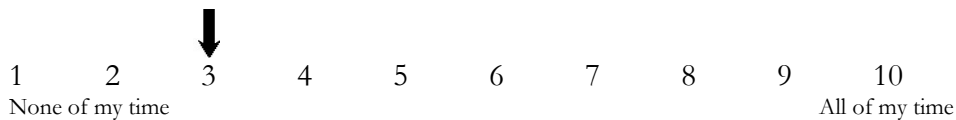
= 3.8
 $\sigma = 2.2$



Educating Other Professionals

Respondents gave educating other professionals a lower score (3.0) than the previous factor on collaborating with them. There are fewer opportunities to educate other professionals in community pharmacy because of the limited face-to-face communication with physicians and nurses. The large majority of education is for patients to help ensure their proper use and adherence with medications.

= 3.0
 $\sigma = 1.9$



Variety of Daily Activities

The day-to-day activities of a pharmacy manager often constitute the same roster of tasks; the variation concerns the patients and staff involved. At the pharmacy level, duties consist of inventory management, customer service, MTM services, and staff coordination.

Corporate level managers may have the opportunity for more variety in that they search for innovative ways for the business to grow through business contracts, incorporation of technology, establishing recruitment roles with colleges, and the expansion of services.

= 4.6
 $\sigma = 2.5$



Multiple Task Handling

At the district and store level of management, managers often deal with several tasks at any given time. District managers deal with issues at several stores on a daily basis and each store requires the same level of attention. Store managers are responsible for guaranteeing good customer service, the accurate dispensing of prescriptions, staff management, and general business management. A number of respondents stated this simply: every manager needs to have the “ability to multitask.”

= 8.1
 $\sigma = 2.2$



Problem Solving

In the chain community pharmacy setting, problem solving ranked 4.6 for managers. This rating most likely reflects that the problems themselves do not vary greatly. Rather it is merely the individual or store involved in the issue that is different. Many cited the need to problem solve to resolve insurance issues.

= 4.6
 $\sigma = 2.1$



Focus of Expertise

Managers require a greater expertise in running a business and coordinating activities compared with other pharmacists in the chain community pharmacy setting. However, pharmacy managers working in a community ambulatory setting do not need quite the same intensive focus as those in more specialized settings (e.g., organ transplantation in a hospital setting).

= 3.9
 $\sigma = 2.3$



Innovative Thinking

The mid-range response of 5.0 indicates that chain community pharmacy managers are involved in some innovative thinking. Opportunities for idea generating in these positions may include workflow streamlining, developing pharmacy services marketing plans, and making the business grow. Some respondents also indicated the need to be innovative with scheduling staff.

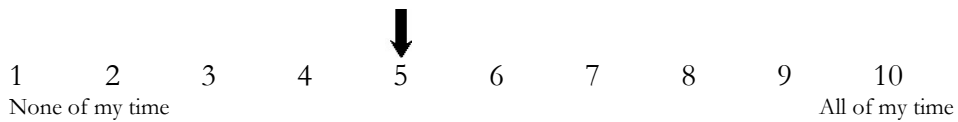
= 5.0
 $\sigma = 2.4$



Applying Scientific Knowledge

Chain community pharmacy managers have the opportunity to exercise the scientific knowledge they gained in pharmacy school about the medications they are dispensing and in helping their patients get well.

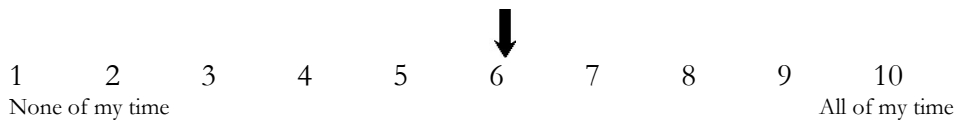
= 5.0
 $\sigma = 2.4$



Applying Medical Knowledge

The score for applying medical knowledge (6.1) was slightly higher than for scientific knowledge.

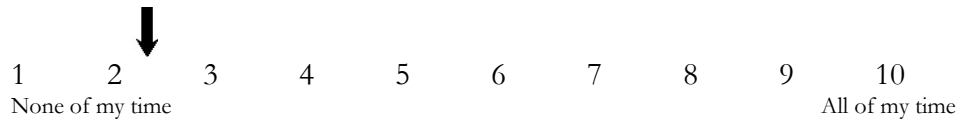
= 6.1
 $\sigma = 2.0$



Creating New Knowledge by Conducting Research

Chain community pharmacy is a prime example of a setting where learned knowledge is applied rather than created. It is an arena where the results of pharmaceutical research and studies are used to improve patients' lives. There are some opportunities to conduct research in the chain community pharmacy setting, mostly in the realm of disease state management. Managers also can serve as preceptors or oversee community-based residency programs that might require research activities.

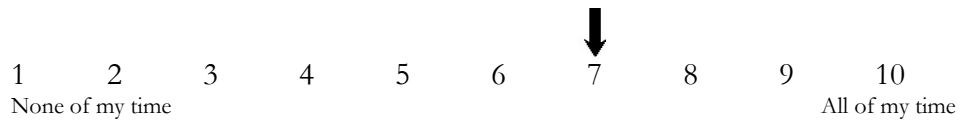
= 2.3
 $\sigma = 1.8$



Management/Supervision of Others

Not surprisingly, management/supervision of others scored high for chain community pharmacy management with a rating of 7.0. An individual's success in management will depend on his or her ability to work with people and solve problems. This specific factor had the third-largest difference compared with chain staff positions, where supervision of others was rated 4.7.

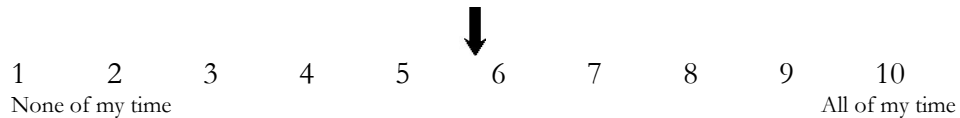
= 7.0
 $\sigma = 2.1$



Management/Supervision of a Business

Although this factor is similar to supervision of others, the dynamic added here is fostering business growth and providing the pharmacy team with an understanding of the business side of pharmacy and clinical practice. This factor had the second-largest difference compared with chain staff positions, where supervision of business was rated 3.2. Managers indicated that they spend 13% of their time on business management issues and just under 10% of their time on personnel management.

= 5.8
 $\sigma = 2.3$



Pressure/Stress

Chain community pharmacy managers indicated that, more often than not, they experience pressure or stress on the job. Being responsible for the proper and successful running of a business that serves the public may contribute to their stress.

= 7.8
 $\sigma = 1.7$



Work Schedule

The predictability of work schedule received a high score for managers, with a rating of 8.2. Although the hours may be longer in some cases, they can be anticipated. Effective managers will have good personal management skills so that they can budget their time effectively between work and their personal life. This factor was rated the third highest by chain managers and was tied for the highest rating in all profiles.

= 8.2
 $\sigma = 2.2$



Part-Time Opportunities

Surprisingly, this factor provided a relatively high score of 7.3. In the lower echelons of management, there are some opportunities for working part-time. However, as an individual becomes more involved in a business, the opportunity diminishes.

= 7.3
 $\sigma = 3.3$



Job-Sharing Opportunities

Job-sharing received a mid-range response for chain community pharmacy managers. Even at this level, job-sharing was the highest rating for any group for this critical factor.

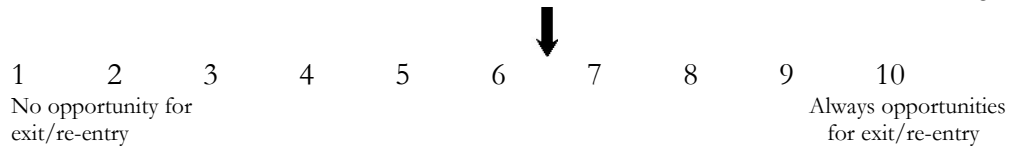
= 4.7
 $\sigma = 3.8$



Exit/Re-entry Opportunities

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

= 6.5
 $\sigma = 3.3$



Parental Leave Opportunities

Parental leave opportunities ranked higher than others in the area of work-related options. Most chains provide the opportunity for parental leave.

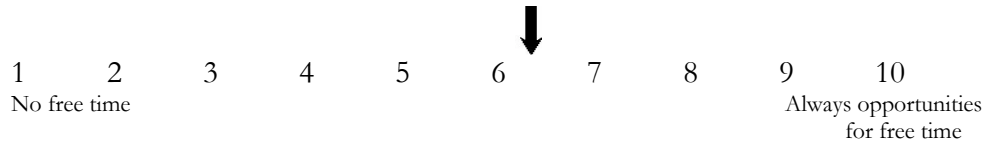
= 7.6
 $\sigma = 3.1$



Leisure/Family Time

With a work schedule that is more regular and predictable, chain community pharmacy managers are able to better plan for leisure time or time with their families. However, sometimes there is a long lead time required when requesting time off.

= 6.3
 $\sigma = 2.4$



Job Security

Receiving the highest score in the survey with an 8.6, managers in chain community pharmacy agree that, on the whole, they are enjoying adequate job security. For the past few years, there has been a national shortage of pharmacists in the workforce and this in particular has greatly reduced the likelihood of layoffs in pharmacy, including management. Chain community pharmacy managers were tied with federal pharmacists in rating this factor the highest across all profiles.

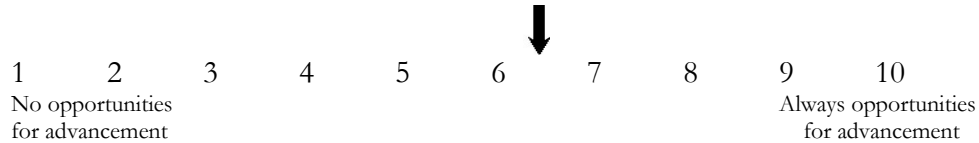
= 8.6
 $\sigma = 1.4$



Opportunities for Advancement

“Opportunities for advancement” scored mid-range with a 6.4 from respondents. These opportunities greatly depend on the size of the organization for which the pharmacist works. There will be much more opportunity to move up the ladder in a corporate chain compared with a privately owned chain with fewer stores.

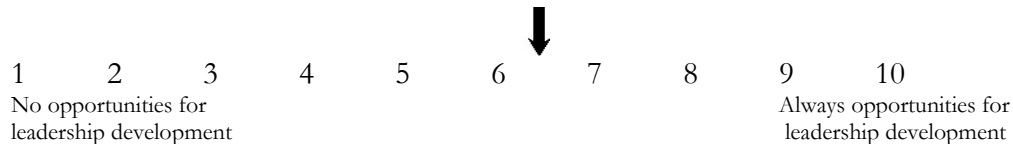
= 6.4
 $\sigma = 2.8$



Opportunities for Leadership Development

Leadership development is often a critical component of personal career development. Respondents indicated that opportunities for advancement and leadership development fall at the same level. Managers must guide those they supervise and work to find solutions for issues and problems, thereby making leadership development a core part of being a manager in chain community pharmacy.

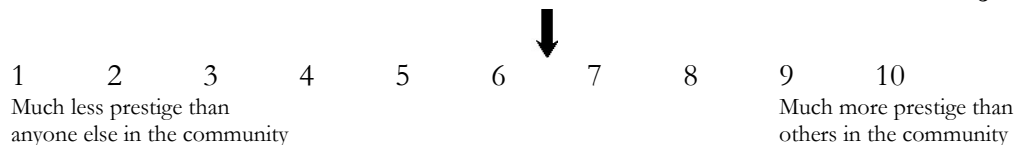
= 6.4
 $\sigma = 3.0$



Community Prestige

In community prestige, chain community pharmacy management scored on the high mid-range at 6.5. Community pharmacists often become well known in their community for helping individuals with health care. However, in higher levels of corporate management this may change because the manager’s efforts are not as visible to the public.

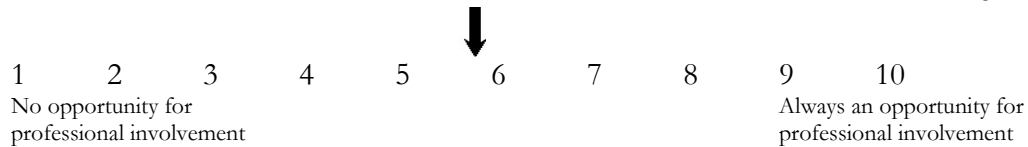
= 6.5
 $\sigma = 2.3$



Professional Involvement

Professional involvement of individual pharmacists is critical to the development of the pharmacy profession as a whole. Pharmacists need to communicate with each other so that the profession can continue to advance in providing optimum health care for the public. In this survey, it was reported that chain community pharmacy managers have a mid-range response regarding the opportunity to be professionally involved in meetings and events. This differs at the local, state, and national levels and from chain to chain.

= 5.8
 $\sigma = 3.1$



Income

As a result of the pharmacist shortage and demand in the job market, pharmacists are enjoying high salary rates in chain community pharmacy, even for those fresh out of pharmacy school. Respondents indicated that they are slightly above the mid-range of being properly versus not properly compensated for their professional services. However, many advised those looking at career opportunities in chain community pharmacy management that it is “important to consider every aspect of the position and not just the money.”

= 7.3
 $\sigma = 2.6$



Benefits (vacation, health, retirement)

Chain community pharmacy managers gave their benefits an even higher rating than their income in the survey. Often managers receive a benefits package that includes bonuses, health coverage, and retirement plans.

= 8.0
 $\sigma = 1.7$



Geographic location

Because there is a continued shortage of pharmacists in some areas of the country, the opportunity exists to relocate within their current company or try something new. Many managers have chosen their work location based on family and other needs, while others are looking to relocate.

= 6.9
 $\sigma = 3.6$



Autonomy

Charged with making the decision calls, a manager has a higher level of autonomy than a staff pharmacist might. Also, a manager in a smaller chain will be more likely to have a higher level of autonomy in decision making compared with an individual in a much larger chain company. Certain business decisions can often be made solely at the store level, but others may need consideration at the corporate level.

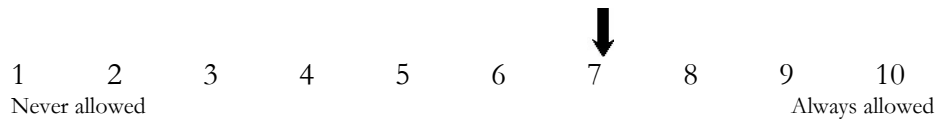
= 6.4
 $\sigma = 2.1$



Self-Worth

Managers in chain community pharmacy build a great deal of their personal self-worth through their ability to solve problems, help people, and contribute to making a business successful. One Rhode Island respondent stated having a good feeling about being able to “help people solve health care problems.”

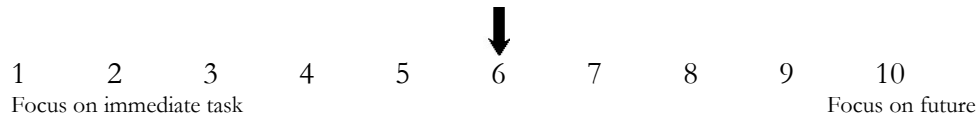
= 7.1
 $\sigma = 2.0$



Future Focus

As with any business, managers must always keep an eye on the future by watching for product trends, planning for increases in prescription volume, adding staff, and allowing current staff to grow and develop.

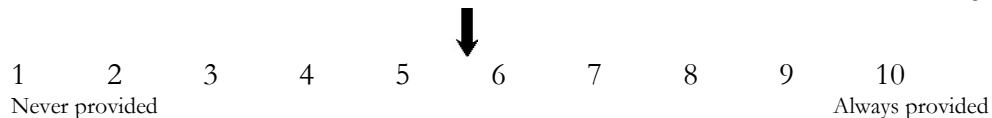
= 6.0
 $\sigma = 2.3$



Professional Prestige

Professional prestige, to an extent, is related to the earlier rating on collaboration with other professionals. Since community pharmacists are typically limited to short telephone conversations with other health care providers, they may not be as well known professionally as perhaps a pharmacist working in a large university hospital. However, community pharmacists do develop a reputation within their communities for providing thoughtful and thorough service.

= 5.7
 $\sigma = 2.7$



Unique Practice Environment

The opportunity for a unique practice environment depends greatly on the management of the particular pharmacy organization. Just by the nature of business, innovative opportunities are more frequently available in smaller, independently owned organizations rather than larger corporations because there is less red tape to negotiate for making changes to the pharmacy practice environment. However, more and more chain managers are offering specialty services, such as diabetes education and immunization, with the support of their corporate office.

= 3.5
σ = 3.0



Advanced Degree

In management, an advanced degree will typically be needed in the higher rungs of the corporate ladder. An MBA, for instance, may not be as necessary in a smaller company or at the store level.

= 2.4
σ = 2.9



Entrepreneurial Opportunity

Entrepreneurial opportunity varies based on the individual chain corporation. In a privately held company, some owners may offer their pharmacists a share of the business as employment incentives and other owners let their pharmacists run the pharmacy as though they owned it themselves. There are fewer entrepreneurial opportunities available in the larger, corporate chain pharmacies.

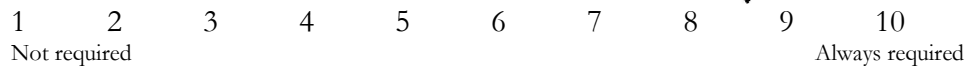
= 4.2
σ = 3.0



Additional Training

This factor was tied for the highest rating for these respondents at 8.6. Managers may elect to obtain additional training in a number of areas. Such training may involve developing management skills, learning advanced disease management skills, or becoming certified to give vaccinations. Effective business managers are always looking toward the future and improving their business. Opportunities for additional training may vary at different levels of management. Many chain corporations have developed internal management training programs for pharmacists aspiring to management positions.

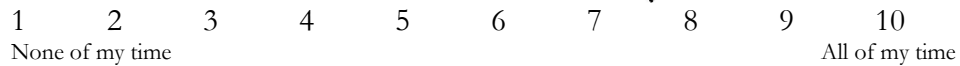
= 8.6
 $\sigma = 2.3$



Interacting With Colleagues

As one would suspect, chain community pharmacy managers interact with coworkers on a daily basis.

= 7.6
 $\sigma = 2.2$



Travel

Chain community pharmacy managers for the most part have lower needs to travel for their day-to-day activities. However, attending corporate training programs can provide some travel opportunities.

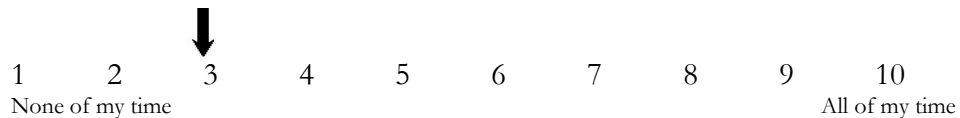
= 2.4
 $\sigma = 1.9$



Writing

Respondents were in the low range regarding writing. While managers do have to file reports, many of these are templates that require financial and personnel information to be filled in.

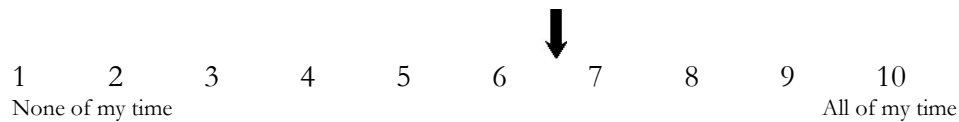
= 2.9
 $\sigma = 2.2$



Working With Teams

Notably, this factor provided the greatest difference in scoring between managers and staff pharmacists in chain community pharmacy: managers rated working with teams at 6.7 while staff rated this factor at 3.7. For the most part, the manager is the one who interacts with others in the chain on a daily basis regarding store concerns and business growth.

= 6.7
 $\sigma = 3.2$



“On Call”

Respondents indicated a low “on call” need for their positions. Specific project activities may require an “on call” status, but these are not commonplace.

= 2.0
 $\sigma = 2.0$



Work on Holidays

Respondents rated this factor mid-range. Many stores are open for some holidays and a few chains are open 365 days a year.

= 4.8
 $\sigma = 3.0$



Work on Weekends

This is similar to the above statement, although more work is required on a weekends versus holidays. Most chain managers create a schedule that alternates pharmacists every other weekend. Larger volume stores may have fewer weekend hours because there are more pharmacists to cover these shifts.

= 5.3
 $\sigma = 2.7$



Presentations

Presentations ranked in the low range. While many do not give presentations, others who are involved with colleges of pharmacy may provide occasional presentations to student pharmacists.



Mean Scores for Critical Factors

1. Interaction With Patients	6.5
2. Conducting Physical Assessments	2.1
3. Interpreting Laboratory Values	1.7
4. Continuity of Relationships	6.7
5. Helping People	6.5
6. Collaboration With Other Professionals	3.8
7. Educating Other Professionals	3.0
8. Variety of Daily Activities	4.6
9. Multiple Task Handling	8.1
10. Problem Solving	4.6
11. Focus of Expertise	3.9
12. Innovative Thinking	5.0
13. Applying Scientific Knowledge	5.0
14. Applying Medical Knowledge	6.1
15. Creating New Knowledge by Conducting Research	2.3
16. Management/Supervision of Others	7.0
17. Management/Supervision of a Business	5.8
18. Pressure/Stress	7.8
19. Work Schedule	8.2
20. Part-Time Opportunities	7.3
21. Job-Sharing Opportunities	4.7
22. Exit/Re-entry Opportunities	6.5
23. Parental Leave Opportunities	7.6
24. Leisure/Family Time	6.3
25. Job Security	8.6
26. Opportunities for Advancement	6.4
27. Opportunities for Leadership Development	6.4
28. Community Prestige	6.5
29. Professional Involvement	5.8
30. Income	7.3
31. Benefits (vacation, health, retirement)	8.0
32. Geographic Location	6.9
33. Autonomy	6.4
34. Self-Worth	7.1
35. Future Focus	6.0
36. Professional Prestige	5.7
37. Unique Practice Environment	3.5
38. Advanced Degree	2.4
39. Entrepreneurial Opportunity	4.2
40. Additional Training	8.6
41. Interacting With Colleagues	7.6
42. Travel	2.4
43. Writing	2.9
44. Working With Teams	6.7
45. "On Call"	2.0
46. Work on Holidays	4.8
47. Work on Weekends	5.3
48. Presentations	2.8

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

National Association of Chain Drug Stores (NACDS)
413 North Lee Street, Alexandria, VA 22313
Tel: 703-549-3001
www.nacds.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 Pharmaceutical Association (NPhA)
107 Kilmayne Drive, Suite C, Cary, NC 27511
Tel: 800-944-NPhA Fax: 919-469-5870
www.npha.net

Retail Industry Leaders Association (RILA)
1700 North Moore Street, Suite 2250, Arlington, VA 22209
Tel: 703-841-2300 Fax: 703-841-1184
www.retail-leaders.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.